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**Proceedings of the Standing Committee on  
Government Services**

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Service NL  
Public Procurement Agency

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Honourable Perry Trimper, MHA

## **GOVERNMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE**

### Service NL and Public Procurement Agency

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Chair: Pam Parsons, MHA

Members: Derek Bennett, MHA  
Derrick Bragg, MHA  
Alison Coffin, MHA  
Elvis Loveless, MHA  
Loyola O'Driscoll, MHA  
Barry Petten, MHA  
Sarah Stoodley, MHA

Clerk of the Committee: Kim Hawley George

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Appearing:

#### **Service NL and Public Procurement Agency**

Hon. Sherry Gambin-Walsh, MHA, Minister  
Michael Delaney, Assistant Deputy Minister, Regulatory Affairs  
Alan Doody, Assistant Deputy Minister, Government Services & OHS  
Sean Dutton, Deputy Minister  
Robyn Hayes, Departmental Comptroller  
Marlene Hickey, Chief Review Commissioner  
Deanne Howe, Manager of Operations  
Melony O'Neill, Director of Communications  
Heather Tizzard, Chief Procurement Officer  
Kelly White, Executive Assistant

#### **Also Present**

John Haggie, MHA  
Carol Anne Haley, MHA  
Paul Lane, MHA  
Kevin Parsons, MHA  
Laurie Bonia, Official Opposition Office  
Susan Williams, Researcher, Third Party Office

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, John Haggie, MHA for Gander, substitutes for Derek Bennett, MHA for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Carol Anne Haley, MHA for Burin - Grand Bank, substitutes for Elvis Loveless, MHA for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Kevin Parsons, MHA for Cape St. Francis, substitutes for Barry Petten, MHA for Conception Bay South.

The Committee met at 6:02 p.m. in the Assembly Chamber.

**CHAIR (Parsons):** Good evening, everyone, and welcome.

I think we are ready to start now; we're pretty much right on time. We'll start, of course, with the department introducing themselves on this side and then we'll go around the room.

So we will start over here, please.

**MR. DUTTON:** Sean Dutton, I'm the Deputy Minister of Service NL.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Minister Sherry Gambin-Walsh.

**MS. TIZZARD:** Heather Tizzard, Chief Procurement Officer, Public Procurement Agency.

**MS. HICKEY:** Marlene Hickey, Chief Review Commissioner with the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Review Division.

**MR. DELANEY:** Michael Delaney, Assistant Deputy Minister of Regulatory Affairs.

**MR. DOODY:** Alan Doody, Assistant Deputy Minister, Government Services Branch.

**MS. HAYES:** Robyn Hayes, Departmental Controller, Service NL.

**MS. HOWE:** Deanne Howe, Manager of Operations with the Review Division.

**MS. O'NEILL:** Melony O'Neill, Director of Communications with Service NL.

**MS. WHITE:** Kelly White, Executive Assistant to Minister Gambin-Walsh.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Loyola O'Driscoll, Ferryland District.

**MS. BONIA:** Laurie Bonia, Researcher, Official Opposition Office.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Kevin Parsons, Member for the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis.

**MR. LANE:** Paul Lane, Member for District of Mount Pearl-Southlands.

**MS. COFFIN:** Alison Coffin, St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

**MS. WILLIAMS:** Susan Williams, Researcher for the Third Party.

**MS. HALEY:** Carol Anne Haley, Burin - Grand Bank

**MR. BRAGG:** Derrick Bragg, Fogo Island - Cape Freels.

**MR. HAGGIE:** John Haggie, MHA for the District of Gander.

**MS. P. PARSONS:** Pam Parsons, MHA for the strong District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave and I'll be chairing the session this evening.

The minister has 15 minutes to introduce her Estimates. The Member speaking immediately in reply to the minister has 15 minutes and all other Committee Members have 10 minutes to speak. Also, we can refer to each other by name rather than department or district or portfolio in this matter.

Tonight, we'll be starting with the Public Procurement Agency.

Minister.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Good evening.

As Minister of Service NL, the Minister Responsible for the Public Procurement Agency and WorkplaceNL, I'm pleased to be here this evening to discuss the Estimate figures for these entities.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Members opposite and their staff for joining us this evening. I also want to thank staff from Service NL, the Public Procurement Agency and the WorkplaceNL Review Division for their participation in today's session.

Before we get started, I want to highlight a few points regarding our Estimates. You will see that Service NL, including the WorkplaceNL Review Division, has a net budget of over \$23 million. You won't see our \$139 million in revenue reflected in the department's Estimates. In 2019-2020, Service NL will generate this revenue through such functions as the issuer fees, the Registry of Deeds and especially the transactions at Motor Registration Division. This review is included in the general revenue of government.

Additionally, Service NL also encompasses the Occupational Health and Safety Division or OHS Division, which is responsible for health and safety inspection and enforcement programs. The OHS Division establishes through legislation the codes, standards and practices for safe and healthy working conditions. The costs associated with OHS are recovered from WorkplaceNL so there is offsetting revenue for all related expenditures.

Service NL is responsible for the majority of licensing, inspection, public record keeping and regulatory functions within government and is the primary access point for people who need these services. These range from electrical inspections to restaurant inspections to the production of vital statistics records and the registration of deeds.

Within the Motor Registration Division, Service NL completes more than a million transactions a year. As of April 30, 2018, Motor Registration Division no longer issues renewal notices through regular mail. The use of email to contact clients saves over \$400,000 annually in printing and mail costs. The savings allowed us to address other cost pressures in the department.

For example, there were upfront costs with implementation of the print-on-demand stickers. There was a restatement of \$80,000 in funding from the Department of Transportation and Works mailroom to the Motor Registration

Division for the new print-on-demand vehicle stickers, which are now done from our Mount Pearl location.

Some of these savings were reallocated to our French Services and Commercial Registration Division. All in all, this resulted in \$28,400 as the amount of a year over year operational savings. We also had an attrition target of \$550,600 for 2019-20 which was achieved.

I believe all Members here tonight will have witnessed first-hand at some point the hard work of at least one of the divisions of Service NL, and I'm sure we can all appreciate the commitment of staff to the serving of the people of our province.

The Office of French Services provides French language training and translations services to government. This office also provides support to the Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs. In addition, through the Office of the Queen's Printer, the department provides printing services for the provincial government and the general public.

I'm also the Minister Responsible for the Public Procurement Agency, the central procurement unit of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is responsible for the oversight of the procurement process for goods and services on behalf of all public bodies. The agency also establishes policies for procurement as part of the public procurement framework and provides information, training and oversight of procurement activities of all public bodies. The mandate of the agency is provided within the *Public Procurement Act* which was proclaimed in March of 2018. It has an annual budget of over \$1.9 million.

The WorkplaceNL Review Division reviews decisions of WorkplaceNL to ensure compliance with the act as well as regulations and policies. The division provides vital appeal services to employers and workers and pursues continuous improvement in the area of client service. The costs are recovered 100 per cent from WorkplaceNL.

This is just a quick introduction to the portfolio as well as a brief explanation of some of the significant aspects of our Estimates.

I would like to start with the Public Procurement Agency, then go to Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Review and then onto Service NL, if everyone is okay with that.

**CHAIR:** Okay. We'll have our first speaker, but I'll remind everybody to please identify yourself prior to your questions.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Can we provided with a copy of the minister's briefing binder?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

Are there any errors in the published Estimates book?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** No.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

Are you still applying zero-based budgeting?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

What were the attrition savings last year in terms of dollars and positions?

**MS. TIZZARD:** Our target was \$7,300 and we achieved that through a vacancy rate within the agency. So we didn't use a position to attain those savings.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

What is the attrition target savings for this year?

**MS. TIZZARD:** It is \$7,300. We were able to attain that last year, yes.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

How many people are currently employed in the department?

**MS. TIZZARD:** In the agency?

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Yes.

**MS. TIZZARD:** We have 31 positions; six are vacant right now.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** I'm just going to move on here to section 1.1.01, Public Procurement Agency. The Salary Details for the Public Procurement Agency state the department total is \$1,709,853 but the numbers stated under Salaries in the Estimates is \$1,954,000. There's a difference of \$244,147. Is there an explanation why these numbers would be different?

**MS. TIZZARD:** Sorry, which numbers were those?

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Subhead 1.1.01 under Salaries.

**MS. TIZZARD:** Are you talking about the difference, sorry, between the budget of last year and this year, or between the revised?

Are you talking about the decrease in the budget in the revised number?

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Yes, \$117,300 less was spent than budgeted last year. This year's budget includes \$110,000 over the revised.

**MS. TIZZARD:** Yeah, that was the result of some vacancies within the agency.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** How many positions are included in this amount?

**MS. TIZZARD:** Right now we have vacant two managers of strategic sourcing positions, two buyer II positions and an admin officer position, but they were vacant at different times throughout the year, so sometimes a couple were filled and sometimes they were vacant.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

Under Transportation and Communications, last year \$19,500 less was spent than was budgeted. This year it's \$51,000. How do you explain the revised numbers and this year's budgeted amount?

**MS. TIZZARD:** There were fewer training sessions than anticipated on the legislation. We also had fewer audits in that year.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

Under Professional Services, last year \$45,000 more was spent than budgeted; I'm just wondering why that would be.

**MS. TIZZARD:** We had an extra requirement for auctioneering services. The Public Procurement Agency, in addition to purchasing, oversees the disposal of surplus goods from government. So we had more than anticipated increase of a requirement for auctioneering services for that need last year.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

Under Purchased Services, why was \$49,500 less spent than was budgeted last year, and why is the \$57,800 being budgeted this year?

**MS. TIZZARD:** In our Purchased Services budget, in case we were going to acquire an electronic notification system for the Procurement Agency, we had budgeted an amount in case we needed to do some training for that service, and possibly purchase some training modules for that service. We just awarded the RFP. It was just a delay in the implementation of that system, then a delay subsequently for the training.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

In under Revenue - Provincial, what is included?

**MS. TIZZARD:** The main component of the revenue is revenue from the auctions, as I mentioned earlier, and it's also revenue from the purchase cards. We get a rebate from using purchase cards through government.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** And under the auctions, is that equipment that we're selling off at auctions and stuff like that?

**MS. TIZZARD:** Yeah, so equipment that government wouldn't necessarily use any more – vehicles, for example, ATVs, snowmobiles, furniture, that sort of thing.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

And what explains \$122,000 increase in this revised?

**MS. TIZZARD:** That was greater than anticipated auctions. So we don't exactly know from year to year what's going to be required to auction off. So we just estimate and sometimes we have a greater amount.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Sometimes it would be more, sometimes it would be less.

**MS. TIZZARD:** Sometimes it's less, absolutely.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

Can you tell us how you are doing things differently at the Public Procurement Agency than when it was the Government Purchasing Agency? Is there any difference?

**MS. TIZZARD:** There is. Right now, since new legislation, we have four divisions. Our corporate services division is operating as usual; it's just the policy and financial arm of our agency. And our Procurement division, same thing, it's procuring as we usually did as an operational basis as required. Our Audit, Information and Training division now, which largely had been focused on training and getting the legislation and regulations ready in the last year or so, and then focused in the last year in training for that legislation is now really focused on the audit side, with this new legislation in place now. We also have a Strategic Sourcing division which is just starting to ramp up.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

Initially, there was a lot of talk about strategic sourcing and strategic purchasing. Can you give examples where this is happening now?

**MS. TIZZARD:** We just recently hired a director for that position. That director, now, is working with different agencies, some previous strategic procurement that we had done to renew those, but also working with some different stakeholders on opportunities that we may have to do things more efficiently and try to identify additional savings.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

There was also a reference to joint partnerships. Have you done any across government with ABCs to do that?

**MS. TIZZARD:** Not yet, no.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** All right.

With the new act, local suppliers are supposed to have more opportunities to bid on government services. Has this been occurring?

**MS. TIZZARD:** We can't track for all public bodies the number of procurements that local suppliers take on, but with the new procurement legislation, the thresholds were increased, so it does provide greater opportunities for local suppliers or for public bodies to procure for goods under those thresholds for local suppliers. Anything above those thresholds have to go to an open call, but anything below that, any public body can access a local supplier for that.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

Can we have an update on the electronic notification system?

**MS. TIZZARD:** Yes, as I mentioned, we just recently awarded that so we're in the process, now, of developing a plan to implement that system.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

That's it for me.

**CHAIR:** That's it for you, okay.

We will move on now to the next speaker, please.

**MS. COFFIN:** Great, thank you.

I'm not going to ask anything about the numbers here. They seem to be reasonably well in line. I would like to know what the status of the training and information sessions, the new *Public Procurement Act*, is?

**MS. TIZZARD:** We did a number of training sessions last year. I can't give you a number off the top of my head, but we did a Web-based training. Any request that we had for

municipalities, larger organizations where we were able to cover a lot of public bodies at once. So Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, provincial municipal administrators, we always made sure that we could go out to those any time they had any session, that we were part of that.

We also did, like I said, a Web-based system, so we made sure and requested that every public body took that training.

**MS. COFFIN:** If someone finds that they have a need to do the training, they can go on the Web-based system and do they need –?

**MS. TIZZARD:** Absolutely. They can call us.

**MS. COFFIN:** Wonderful.

**MS. TIZZARD:** We can accommodate any of that.

**MS. COFFIN:** You can facilitate it.

**MS. TIZZARD:** Absolutely.

**MS. COFFIN:** Wonderful. That's great.

Okay, let's talk about social buying, which brings environment, gender, diversity, social enterprise and other policy goals into the procurement. Once upon a time, I heard a rumour about green procurement protocols. Does such a thing exist and, if so, is it being implemented?

**MS. TIZZARD:** Sorry, what buying?

**MS. COFFIN:** Green procurement guidelines.

**MS. TIZZARD:** If you go into our website there is a lens that you can look at, for example, for environmental or green procurement in there. I don't know if that's –

**MS. COFFIN:** It might very well be. It's just something that I'd heard about a while ago. Say, for example, we want to buy lots and lots of paper, reams of paper, is there any regulations or any guidelines that say we have to have 30 per cent recycled paper or it has to be bleach-free or anything like that?

**MS. TIZZARD:** No, but that's the type of thing that's in that lens.

**MS. COFFIN:** The lens is there.

**MS. TIZZARD:** The things that you may want to consider if you want to go down that road.

**MS. COFFIN:** Does anything get filtered out with the lens?

**MS. TIZZARD:** I'm not sure ...

**MS. COFFIN:** If something came in – for example, we're going to buy another set of vehicles and those vehicles were not hybrid vehicles or they're not electric vehicles – do we not purchase them because of that?

**MS. TIZZARD:** I can't speak to the purchasing policy for vehicles for another department.

**MS. COFFIN:** Right.

**MS. TIZZARD:** But, generally, for that lens or those guidelines that we have on our website, it's not mandatory, they're just if you want to go down that road. Any public body could implement its own requirements.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, so it's just a guide. It's not a regulation or mandated.

**MS. TIZZARD:** That's right.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay.

Last year we were told that under the new act, public bodies would have greater flexibility to use RFPs instead of tenders and thus be able to evaluate other factors besides lowest price. How is that working? Has it been used very much?

**MS. TIZZARD:** It's my understanding public bodies, just based on the phone calls that we receive, are starting to use RFPs more. I can't tell you how much they use them versus how much they used them before, because public bodies are responsible for their own procurement.

**MS. COFFIN:** Right.

**MS. TIZZARD:** I don't know how much they're using them but, as I said, just based on the phone calls that we're receiving it indicates that people are using them more.

**MS. COFFIN:** Is there a threshold by which they can use the RFPs? It has to be for anything under \$100,000, or can an RFP be for actually anything?

**MS. TIZZARD:** No, they can use an RFP for anything, there's no threshold. It's just a tool that they can use, depending on the nature of what they're looking for.

**MS. COFFIN:** Are there guidelines in those RFPs for setting out such an RFP?

**MS. TIZZARD:** We have templates on our websites. We have an RFP template right now on our website for anybody to access.

**MS. COFFIN:** Right.

And each individual public body comes up with their own filters or their own criteria.

**MS. TIZZARD:** That's right.

**MS. COFFIN:** Do they have to justify that anywhere?

**MS. TIZZARD:** For using an RFP?

**MS. COFFIN:** No, for what criteria they're using for choosing something that's not lowest price.

**MS. TIZZARD:** No. I mean an RFP, if you're going down that road, is best value. No, they don't have to justify it, they just set up whatever criteria they're looking for within that RFP document and how they're going to evaluate that and proceed from there.

**MS. COFFIN:** They have to have the evaluation in there as well.

**MS. TIZZARD:** Absolutely.

**MS. COFFIN:** That's an upfront thing.

**MS. TIZZARD:** Yes.



**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, so the follow-up question is: What controls are put in place to prevent misuse of such a thing?

**MS. TIZZARD:** Well, the evaluation component within the RFP, they would have to follow that.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay. That would be interested to look at.

Last year, we heard the department were looking at other jurisdictions and doing more consultation about how to incorporate social buying into government procurement. Can we have an update on what was found and what government is planning to do?

**MS. TIZZARD:** That's something that we're still looking into. It's still a new policy piece so we're trying to figure out how best to do something with that, that maintains equity for all of our suppliers. I sit on a FPT committee, federal-provincial-territorial meeting, and it's one of the things that are on the agenda. Other jurisdictions are still looking at that piece as well and figuring out how to implement it.

**MS. COFFIN:** How they incorporate the social buying – one of the other filters you're using there is equity for current suppliers?

**MS. TIZZARD:** The other piece, too, is that with the RFPs, of course, if you're evaluating that then you have the opportunity, through the RFP, to incorporate other components, besides price, in your evaluation. If a public body wanted to incorporate anything in their RFP in that regard, they do have that flexibility under the RFP process and also within the thresholds too. The thresholds are lower than any public body seeking three quotes, for example; below that threshold has some flexibility there as well.

**MS. COFFIN:** Right. What's the threshold?

**MS. TIZZARD:** The threshold for when they have to do an open call, so anything below the threshold. For example, if you need to procure goods, if your procurement is less than \$10,000 for goods, then you can get three quotes from organizations and you can direct those three quotes.

**MS. COFFIN:** That can go through RFP, right?

**MS. TIZZARD:** Absolutely.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, so the social buying filter is a subjective initiative of each of the public bodies if they choose to incorporate it into their RFP process.

**MS. TIZZARD:** They do have that option.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay but it's not an overall government procurement direction.

**MS. TIZZARD:** No.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay. Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Any further speakers to this particular section?

Mr. Lane.

**MR. LANE:** I'm wondering about the new Procurement Act that we passed in the House – I think it was last year, was it? I should say Opposition Members had significant concern at the time because it was so broad. All the details were going to be in the regulations and, of course, there were no regulations. We didn't know what would be in the regulations.

You're kind of saying, yeah, we want a new Procurement Act, but to some degree didn't even know what we were voting for. You had to sort of take it on faith that there would be regulations and they would be good regulations and so on.

The first question: Do we have new regulations?

**MS. TIZZARD:** Yes, we do.

**MR. LANE:** They have all been put in place?

**MS. TIZZARD:** Yes, we do. They came in shortly after the legislation. It was March 2018.

**MR. LANE:** Okay, so there are new –

**MS. TIZZARD:** Yeah, they're available on our website as well.

**MR. LANE:** Okay.

In those regulations then, it was already asked about local preference. What I think you indicated was that if it was an amount that you could just do three quotes, like under \$10,000 or whatever, then you said you could go local.

Again, though, I guess my question is – and it kind of ties into the social buying, same idea. There's a difference between you could go local, you have the option to go local versus you will go local. I just wanted to clarify that we're not saying you will go local.

There's nothing to stop me – if I was procuring some goods and there are local businesses that can provide that, then personally I think that's where we should be going, as long as they are competitive, of course. But let's take the option off, going with some Mainland outfit or whatever and our local people are not seeing the benefit. There are three local suppliers, get three quotes from three locals. From what I'm hearing, someone could choose to say, no, I'm going to go with the national company or something if I wanted to. Is that right?

**MS. TIZZARD:** That's right. Yes.

**MR. LANE:** Okay.

Can I ask – and maybe that's more of a policy decision for the minister – is there any thought around revising that to make it mandatory that if there are local suppliers that you will go to the local suppliers. Not that you may go to the local suppliers but you will.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** That's an option to put in the RFP. As she indicated there is no discussion yet to put it in place that you have to, but it's certainly something we can bring forward. I believe the trade agreements –

**MS. TIZZARD:** For anything over the thresholds, the trade agreements prevent us from doing that.

**MR. LANE:** I understand that, but I guess the point I'm making is that where the trade agreements do not kick in and we're not forced to go with the tender, the standard tender, and the option is there to buy local, then I can't

understand why we would not have as a public policy in this province that we will use all local companies and keep the money here in our own province as opposed to some of these big national or international companies to get the business. I guess that's the point I'm trying to make.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yeah, that's definitely something to consider, but if there are no local suppliers, of course, you have to go outside, right? I hear what you're saying, you're if there are local suppliers –

**MR. LANE:** If there are –

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** – then why are we not putting it in policy that you have to go below the threshold?

**MR. LANE:** Correct.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Okay.

**MR. LANE:** That's the point I'm trying to make –

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yeah.

**MR. LANE:** – I'm trying to get at.

I suppose, arguably, and I understand it's a different issue altogether, but, arguably, what Ms. Coffin was saying even about some of these green initiatives. I'll just use an example, if you're going to buy straws, you can get paper straws, right?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Not necessarily.

**MR. LANE:** I think that's what she means by green; not that we necessarily buy straws, I don't know. Probably we do at the hospitals, but –

**MS. COFFIN:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. LANE:** Yeah, instead of plastic forks, buy biodegradable forks or whatever.

So, I suppose, theoretically, the same thing applies right now that it's not a policy, it's a case of if you want to do it, you choose to do it, fill you boots, but if you don't bother to do it, well no one's telling or even encouraging you that

really we should be doing it. Is that how it stands?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yeah, I totally understand what you are saying. It's also value for dollar; you have to consider value for dollar, right?

**MR. LANE:** Sure, I understand.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** So there are a number of components that you would have to consider in making the decision rather than saying every vehicle you buy is a hybrid or what have you. You have to do the value-for-dollar component also.

**MR. LANE:** Sure.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** An electric vehicle may work fine in the city of St. John's but it's certainly wouldn't work well in parts of rural Newfoundland, right now.

**MR. LANE:** Sure, I understand.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** But there is discussion.

**MR. LANE:** I guess the point would be, there could be something saying if prices are relatively comparable and there are green options –

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes.

**MR. LANE:** – then there could a policy suggesting that you should be going with the green options, if they're available and if they are comparable in cost. That would be my thought anyways.

The other thing I want to raise is, and I'll give an example, I had a situation, someone who came to me about a year or two ago now, and in this case they had put out, I guess, a request for proposal, or actually it would have been a tender, for supplies, it was office supplies at the time; one of the agencies I think.

They're saying we can't get a price on every single item, there are so many different office supplies, so they came up with a list of bid on 50 items or 100 items and whoever had the lowest

price on those 100 items got the contract to supply for two years or whatever.

Of course, then, the little game that you get into is we lowball on the prices of the ones that you bid on, on certain items, but then you charge \$100 for a stapler or something – I know this is a stretch, but you get my point. Let's charge three times as much for the stuff that is not on the list.

Of course, the other thing being, if someone were to bid on Post-it Notes, for argument's sake, and it's some brand of Post-it Notes, and every time you call looking for them, we're out of those, we'll give you these here replacement ones, but the replacement ones were three times as much as the ones that they bid on and that type of thing happening.

So is there any training or anything in place or any policies in place when it comes to those situations and staff in different offices reordering stuff that we make sure that they're getting the low-cost stuff and that they're not being dinged with all the high-cost stuff, that they don't even probably realize that they're doing?

**MS. TIZZARD:** We have training that we are implementing right now for low-dollar-value purchases that we intend to roll out across departments and agencies, just talking about that exact issue. Of course, each time that we go out with a new procurement for something like office supplies, that's the type of thing that we review. So we'll look at what was spent, what was purchased on the list, what was purchased off the list. Are they things now that we need to include on those this time around? So they're the things that we look at.

**MR. LANE:** Okay. Thank you.

The final question I have relates to ABCs and so on. I'm just wondering, what you guys do, is it primarily for core government or – I'll just use an example, what happened with the English School District and buddy who was renting the wheelbarrow for thousands of dollars or whatever he was doing, and that kind of stuff.

Is that something that would fall under your jurisdiction, or they just kind of do their own

thing? Do you audit them regularly, or how does that work?

**MS. TIZZARD:** We procure for core government, but we provide oversight with respect to this legislation to all public bodies. So the School District would be one of them.

With respect to those incidents that happened with the School District, a lot of those went beyond the procurement legislation. So if we're auditing on procurement, we're auditing in accordance with how they follow the legislation. Some of the things that you're talking about that happened with the School District had to do with lack of proper controls, the lack of financial processes, that sort of thing. Some of that went beyond the procurement legislation itself, but we do have an audit function in our agency, and it is to audit public bodies under the legislation.

**MR. LANE:** So when this came about, was that something that came about – that never came about through your audits though, was it? That was the Auditor General, was it?

**MS. TIZZARD:** Yes, it was.

**MR. LANE:** Okay. So you're not necessarily going around constantly auditing all these different agencies, or are you?

**MS. TIZZARD:** We are. Since the training has wrapped up, we've started our audit function again.

**MR. LANE:** Okay.

**MS. TIZZARD:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Okay?

**MR. LANE:** All right, thank you.

**CHAIR:** All right. Any further speakers?

Okay, we got Mr. Parsons.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Paul just went to my question because I was wondering if you guys had a process in place to audit the different the ABCs, and if there's a time frame on stuff like that. How often is it done?

I know that the new procurement agency and the act we brought in, brought in a lot of new regulations. How familiar are these ABCs with all these regulations and stuff like that?

**MS. TIZZARD:** Well, some of them are still ramping up with respect to their familiarity, but we're auditing as we can with the staff we have. So as soon as we finish an audit, we'll start another one immediately. It depends on how long it takes to do the audit.

We're also, right now, in addition to doing, what I call a broad-scope audit, we're also looking at, for example, doing some audit on some of the smaller dollar-value items to look at compliance with those contracts. So we might do a number of those, that will happen more quickly because we're only looking at a small scope in those cases. So it depends on the nature of the audit that we're undertaking.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** How the regional health boards and stuff like that, are they being audited on a regular basis?

**MS. TIZZARD:** Well, we will start auditing those, they will be part of our audit. We just started again since the training wrapped up. That division was responsible for training, getting the regulations and the legislation in order, but we've just started our audit function again this year.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Okay, thank you.

**CHAIR:** All good?

Okay, I think we're ready to vote on this subsection.

**CLERK (Hawley George):** 1.1.01, Public Procurement Agency.

**CHAIR:** Shall 1.1.01, Public Procurement Agency, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subhead 1.1.01 carried.

On motion, Public Procurement Agency, total head, carried.

**CHAIR:** Now, we're moving on to page 61, that's the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Review.

**CLERK:** 4.1.01.

**CHAIR:** 4.1.01.

Minister? Okay.

First speaker over here.

Just give a wave there to Broadcast. There you go.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Thank you.

Last year, \$115,200 less was spent than was budgeted, and this year, an additional \$350,600 is budgeted. Can you explain this?

**CHAIR:** Just give a wave.

**MS. HICKEY:** Okay, thank you.

Variances this year from the budget versus what was spent included some changes with respect to the payment of remuneration to review commissioners. Review commissioners within the Review Division had been part-time, and this past year, we were fortunate enough to have three full-time positions created. So, we moved around some money that we had last year and acquired an additional \$235,000 for extra salary this year. The variance that you are seeing in last year's amount consists of those changes to the review commissioner positions.

Also, we had some changes with respect to some renovations that we made for offices to accommodate new review commissioners. We also had some changes with respect to some new furniture that we bought, all relating to the appointment of new review commissioners.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** That would all be under Salaries, you are saying?

**MS. HICKEY:** Pardon me?

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** All that would be considered under Salaries? Like, with the equipment and stuff?

**MS. HICKEY:** Well, it affected both Salaries and Professional Services.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

An additional \$27,400 is included in this year's budget. I am just wondering why that is – under Transportation and Communications.

**MS. HICKEY:** The Review Division regularly goes into the regions – into Gander, Grand Falls, Corner Brook and Labrador – to have hearings for workers and employers. As part of the appointment of new review commissioners, we hope to be able to have more hearings in the regions, and that is going to result in additional travel costs for us, so the additional \$27,000 is to allow us to move with our new review commissioners into the regions to get the hearings done.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

Under Professional Services, \$139,800 was budgeted last year but only \$50,000 was spent, yet \$75,000 is budgeted for this year. Why is that? What is included?

**MS. HICKEY:** The \$139,000 was a projection that we had based on the review commissioners we had hoped to retain. Part of that explanation is really what I've just explained. We didn't retain all of the review commissioners, and the ones that we did get were much later in the year. So we had a certain savings there, and that's some of the savings that we use, then, moved around here.

The \$75,000 this year is to reflect the remuneration for part-time review commissioners, so there's a distinction between the pay for a full-time review commissioner and part-time review commissioners.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

Under Purchased Services, last year \$27,000 more was spent than budgeted; yet \$12,900 less is budgeted this year. Can you explain this?

**MS. HICKEY:** Yes. So the change there was the renovations for the new review commissioner offices that we had created.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

Under Revenue - Provincial, can you explain this line?

**MS. HICKEY:** The Review Division is 100 per cent funded by way of the injury fund administered by WorkplaceNL. So the cost of the operation of the Review Division is charged back to WorkplaceNL, and that's where that dollar value comes from.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

That's all good for me.

**CHAIR:** Okay, good.

Thank you.

Next.

**MS. COFFIN:** I'm sorry, I should've said this long before now, but thank you very much for everyone for taking your evenings and doing all of this work and listening to a barrage of questions and deflecting them, so thank you very much for doing that. We do appreciate this.

My questions: How many review commissioners did you have in 2018, and how many at present?

**MS. HICKEY:** So the number of review commissioners is always a shifting figure. For most of 2018, we had about five review commissioners; however, by July, we were down to two review commissioners, and into the fall, we just had one review commissioner that was actively involved in hearings.

In December of 2018, we had new appointments, which were the full-time appointments I just mentioned. In February, then, we had another full-time appointment. Right now, we're operating with five review commissioners; four full-time and one is part-time.

**MS. COFFIN:** That's great, and you did all of that without looking at your notes, well done.

There is no shortage at this point?

**MS. HICKEY:** We still have two vacancies.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay.

**MS. HICKEY:** So, with the appointment of the new full-time positions, we're certainly open to bringing recommendations to the minister for additional appointments on part-time. We're very much mindful of the productivity of the new model and how that's going to work, but I can tell you that we're positioned very well moving into the summer and into the fall in comparison to what we were last year. I think the first six months last year we completed 50 cases; the first six months of this year, we expect to complete over 100.

**MS. COFFIN:** That's not bad. Five people – wow, that's impressive.

Are these appeals being decided within 60 days of application as the law requires?

**MS. HICKEY:** Not all of them. At this point, our numbers on that have also improved. There has been a considerable increase or improvement in the amount of time it takes a full-time review commissioner to have a decision provided versus what it was taking a part-time review commissioner. So our new full-time review commissioners now are taking anywhere from 45 to 60 days. Our part-time commissioners were taking considerably longer than that.

**MS. COFFIN:** Of course, because they're part-time. That totally makes sense.

How big is your caseload?

**MS. HICKEY:** Last year we had 208 applications, and last year I believe we did 155 hearings.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, not bad.

I guess to follow up; do we have any recent caseload statistics? The latest on the website are 2014-2015.

**MS. HICKEY:** So the website should be updated. The new statistics, really, what we're

seeing is we do have about 200 cases waiting to be heard, which we hope to be able to dispose of them as we move forward. The number of cases that we can do a month will be about 24 to 30 cases. If you file an application today, it would take approximately one year to have that application completed from the time you file the application to the time you received a decision.

**MS. COFFIN:** Wow.

**MS. HICKEY:** Which is slightly less than it was last year because I think we were at 14 months last year.

**MS. COFFIN:** Right.

And you have a lot of new people, so they of course are learning the system.

**MS. HICKEY:** We have a lot of new people, yes. And even though those people were appointed in December, they didn't assume their roles until January and then, in January, we started the training program. The training program runs about six to eight weeks and it's very intense because it has to be provided slowly, believe it or not, because it's just so technical.

**MS. COFFIN:** I imagine.

**MS. HICKEY:** So it takes a little while. These review commissioners starting hearing in March and we ease them into it.

**MS. COFFIN:** That's very nice of you.

**MS. HICKEY:** Right now, it is a little bit more challenging trying to get the schedule done in the summer but in the fall we're targeting 25 to 30 cases a month.

**MS. COFFIN:** That's great. I guess the speed with which you get them done depends on the complexity of the case.

**MS. HICKEY:** Exactly. Some people who may have a fairly recent claim with a very less than complex issue may get their decision within 30 days. Other claims that have a number of injuries, a number of different issues, a long history, they're probably going to take in excess of the 60 days.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you very much.

**MS. HICKEY:** You're welcome.

**CHAIR:** Before we go ahead with your question, could we get leave, please, for Mr. Lane where he's an independent Member? Do we have leave from all Members?

Okay, go ahead.

**MR. LANE:** Thank you to my colleagues.

First of all, let me say I'm glad to see that we have some more full-time commissioners. That's certainly something that I've raised in Estimates for the last number of years, and glad to see we're making progress there.

Minister, one of the questions I have – I'm going to ask it here because there's nowhere else to ask it, really – about workers' comp, even though it may not necessarily be the Review Division, per se, but it's all related to the process. I saw a news article recently that the injury fund is in really good shape, even after the increase in benefits that was given to injured workers from 80 to 85 per cent. Of course, there have been two or three reductions in rates given to employers over the last couple of years as well. It speaks well to health and safety, I think, in general and the fact that we're not having as many injuries, which is a great thing.

One of the problems that we have with injured workers, in a lot of cases, is that they don't have anybody to advocate for them. A lot of them don't understand the system and the policies. I know there is this Workers' Advisor that may give some advice at the beginning. Certainly, I know that I've done a number of appeals on behalf of my constituents, but there are a lot of people that don't necessarily – I'm not sure if every Member is going out there and doing workers' comp appeals, to be honest with you.

Is there any thought to having more Workers' Advisors or to set up something so that workers understand their rights and what they are entitled to? I know when someone goes up on workers' comp, they give them the booklet. That's the standard process at workers' comp – I gave them the booklet. I think about PFIs as an example.

There have been many cases I've come across where the case worker at workers' comp never did tell that person: Do you know that there's such a thing as a PFI? In addition to your workplace injury and your coverage, your temporary earnings loss and so on, this PFI exists to deal with the fact that you've lost a function in your hand, your leg, your arm, whatever, and they don't even know about it. When I've gone to workers' comp and brought that to the attention of people, they'll say: Oh, well, they were given the workers' handbook; they're supposed to read it. I've dealt with some people that sign their name with an X, so giving them a book wasn't going to do them any good.

I'm just wondering has there been any thought to putting some additional resources – I don't know if it would be through the Review Division, probably not, probably workers' comp itself or something else – for injured workers, of someone that they can actually go to, to help guide them through the system.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Of course, every case is individual and everyone's reaction to the cases is individual.

**MR. LANE:** Sure, I understand that.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Each individual, once they're injured, are assigned a case worker at WorkplaceNL. Also at the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour and the Newfoundland and Labrador Employer's Council we do have staffed positions there to assist injured workers, so there are people within the system. It may in fact be a communications issue or concern where they don't know where to access those particular resources.

**MR. LANE:** Yeah.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** For individuals who can access the website, of course we're putting more information constantly on the website so they can have constant access to it, but any questions an individual injured worker faces, they really need to discuss it with their caseworker to get that type of assistance. Of course, when you come to appeals, that's when you don't agree with a decision that's been made by WorkplaceNL and, of course you have a democratic right to appeal the case.

**MR. LANE:** I guess my point is that I think there is a lack of communication that's happening sometimes at the case manager level on some of this stuff. I think a lot of people don't even realize there's even such a thing as a Workers' Advisor or whatever. I'm not sure how well known that is. I think if you're someone who may be a public service employee or something like that, like a NAPE member, they might direct you, but if you're someone working in private industry, I'm not so sure they are necessarily aware of that.

I also believe it's somewhat limited as to what they will do. Would the workers' rep that you're referring to at the Federation of Labour, I mean I don't think that they're going to do 200 appeals this year. I'm sure Ms. Hickey can probably comment on that. I would be very surprised, if she does 150 cases this year, that the workers' rep from the Federation of Labour is going to be there presenting 150 times on behalf of those people to help them represent them. I doubt that's happening.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** I understand what you're saying. Individuals have to find the proper supports themselves to help them through an appeals process. The staff, the employee is with the Federation of Labour and the Employers' Council. There's one at each.

**MR. LANE:** Yes.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** But an individual themselves would need to reach out to the Employers' Council – no, the Federation of Labour, sorry, to get that assistance there, but they're not going to help them. They're not going to represent them for an appeal. You have to find that support yourself.

**MR. LANE:** No, they're not. I guess that's my point. Is there any thought in making some changes and additional resources of having something in place to help injured workers with their appeals. If a constituent comes to me and I'm aware of it, I represent them, but there's a lot of people go unrepresented, a lot of them wouldn't even think about going to their MHA.

Again, seeing as how there is a very healthy injury fund there, I'm just wondering would there be any thought or desire to even entertain



the idea of additional resources for injured workers to help them with their appeals?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Two things: Equal representation to the injured worker, equal representation to the employer, so it's an equal system; and the second thing being is that the 2019 stat review is coming up.

**MR. LANE:** Yeah.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** It's certainly an opportunity to bring that type of situation forward for review to see if there is an appetite, once the analysis is done, to add additional supports for injured workers.

**MR. LANE:** Okay, well, I thank you for that. I'll probably go to that stat review and recommend that.

I would disagree with you on the whole employer and employee being equal, because they're far from equal when you've got an employer who probably has a disability manager working within their company or they have contracted out to one of those companies. It's definitely not equal, that I can assure you, but anyway.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** It's a no-fault system, too, right?

**MR. LANE:** No, I understand that. Thank you, Minister, for that.

The only other question I had was around the appeal process. I just want to make sure I understand. It was a 14-month wait. Now it's taking, you're saying, like 12 months or thereabouts, which is obviously way beyond 60 days; it's not even in the same ball field.

Have you ever looked at triaging? I don't know if you do that or not. Is it just based on the date that it comes in or is there any – I'm using the term triaging to say, look, here are a few easy ones that we can deal with fairly quickly and dispose of, rather than having this person wait a full year for something that we can do quickly, waiting in line so to speak, or is it simply on the date that you receive it?

I guess for Ms. Hickey.

**MS. HICKEY:** Yes, we do that already.

**MR. LANE:** Do you?

**MS. HICKEY:** So all of the new review commissioners that just came on, obviously, we're not going to give them a lot of complex cases.

**MR. LANE:** Sure.

**MS. HICKEY:** So that was one of the things that our staff worked through with Ms. Howe, behind me here, to identify some of the cases that were a little bit more straight forward. They were assigned those cases and we do them, not on the date they come in, but as the time allows us to do them and get them into hearings slot.

With respect to people who may have, for example, a wage loss issue, we will try to get them scheduled as quickly as we can, if we can get all the parties together. So there's a fair amount of work that goes into managing the case load and prepping it for hearing.

Often times there are other issues that surface that don't allow us to schedule a hearing, but, for the most part, we're always aware of the nature of the applications that we have. We do engage in the triage. We also try to screen the applications before we actually assign them to hearing to make sure that they're ready for a hearing. So, if we feel that WorkplaceNL has not done something that it ought to have done, we will refer the application back to WorkplaceNL for that kind of follow-up.

**MR. LANE:** Okay. Thank you. That's good to know.

I was going to ask about the wage loss issue because, obviously, someone whose livelihood is depending on it versus someone who's looking for a PFI and a few extra dollars, then I would put someone's livelihood prioritized ahead of that.

**MS. HICKEY:** But that is subject to the availabilities that the parties.

**MR. LANE:** I understand, yes.

**MS. HICKEY:** If you have an employer representative, for example, it may be more difficult –

**MR. LANE:** Sure.

**MS. HICKEY:** – and WorkplaceNL participates from time to time as well.

**MR. LANE:** Sure. Thank you for the answer. I appreciate it.

**MS. HICKEY:** You're welcome.

**CHAIR:** Okay. Mr. Parsons.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** I'm just wondering, Ms. Hickey, about the number of appeals, 60 days, she says it's an average, by law. What time frame are we in now?

**MS. HICKEY:** It's probably taking a full year from the time –

**MR. K. PARSONS:** A full year?

**MS. HICKEY:** – of an application being submitted to the time you have your decision.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Okay.

Are you, hopefully, going to be hiring some more full-time to handle this load? When do you see us getting up to snuff on this and make sure that we're within our 60 days according to the legislation?

**MS. HICKEY:** By our projections, we're looking at approximately a year and a half to 20 months, by the time we get within the range that we need to be in.

So, at this point with the current number of review commissioners, we're projecting about 250 to 300 applications being processed annually. Within those, right now, we're receiving about 200 to 210 applications a year. That's like a 90-number jump –

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Yeah.

**MS. HICKEY:** – on where we have capacity versus what we have for application.

That's subject to a lot of change and so on, but the normal operating caseload for the Review Division is about 70 applications within normal range. We're at about 200 right now, so we're hoping that within the next year, certainly, we'll be able to take a big chunk out of that number.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Are you hoping to hire any more full-time commissioners?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** As you know in the past, of course, this system was on part-time commissioners –

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Yeah.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** – and that didn't work, so we did an extensive review and arrived at the changes to the full-time commissioners.

I am now evaluating, from the time that they were hired and trained to how this system is actually working with the full-time positions and when we would need or possibly need to hire more to address it. You have to take into consideration, of course, the training and the fact they're new and the cases.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Yeah.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** There's a realization, too, that there are some cases that are over at the appeals board that are not moving simply because there might be court involved or they're waiting on other documentation that's not there. So, the number of cases doesn't necessarily mean that that's the full number that's lined up to be heard right now, that's ready to be heard, so that's the other thing you have to take into consideration.

As Ms. Hickey alluded to, we're also receiving, I think, it's 25 to 30 a month. Is that correct? Yeah. So there are 25 to 30 a month, from January. So, the system, with the full-time commissioners, appears to be working well.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Okay.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** But we really need to do a clear analysis and to ensure that they're each – it's the complexities of the cases, too, and when are we going to need to hire more, if we actually do need to hire more?

**MR. K. PARSONS:** When are the new ones in the process of hearing appeals? Right now, are they in the training stages or are they in the stage of hearing appeals, because obviously we must be hearing a lot more appeals every month, are we?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Marlene, you can answer to the stage of each one.

**MS. HICKEY:** All the new review commissioners are currently fully trained and taking on a full caseload as the summer schedule permits.

The two that were appointed in December, they were finished their training by the end of February. We had another appointment in February and she began hearings, I think, late March because we were able to do one on one with her, so everyone right now is in training, but a review commissioner training really goes on for years. It's not something that ends after –

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Yeah, every case is different.

**MS. HICKEY:** Yeah, well, it's not that every case is different. The legislation is very technical.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Yeah, I can understand that too.

Minister, I have a question for you.

Since we brought in coverage for PTSD –

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** – can you give us an update of how that's going?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Well, that'll come into effect on July 1.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** It comes into effect July 1?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yeah.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Okay.

I'm good.

**CHAIR:** Okay?

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Yeah.

**CHAIR:** We're good. One more?

Okay, Mr. O'Driscoll.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** I know there are 200 or 225 waiting to be heard. How many are ready to be heard?

**MS. HICKEY:** About 180.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Ready to be heard? Okay.

All right.

**CHAIR:** Okay, we're good?

I think we're about ready to vote on this subsection.

**CLERK:** 4.1.01.

**CHAIR:** Shall 4.1.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subhead 4.1.01 carried.

On motion, Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Review, total head, carried.

**CHAIR:** Now we're moving to page 51.

**CLERK:** 1.1.01.

**CHAIR:** Shall 1.1.01 carry?

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** I just got some general questions again.

Are you still applying zero-based budgeting?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes, we are.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** What was the attrition savings last year in terms of dollars and positions in this as well?

**MR. DUTTON:** I think the minister noted in her opening remarks, we had a target of \$550,600 that was eliminated from the salary plan for this year.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** How many positions?

**MR. DUTTON:** We currently have 451 positions funded in the salary plan. You'll note from the Departmental Salary details, we had 434 positions reflected there. It was 446 the year before. That includes the positions in the Review Division itself.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** How many of those are contractual or short-term employees?

**MR. DUTTON:** I don't know if I have that figure. What we do have in terms of the salary information is the number of short-term hires was 59 during the course of the 2018-19 fiscal year.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** How many retirements have occurred in that department this year?

**MR. DUTTON:** Fifteen for last year.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Fifteen.

How many layoffs have occurred in the department in the last year?

**MR. DUTTON:** We haven't done any layoffs.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

Any new hires in the past year, do you know?

**MR. DUTTON:** Yes, 23.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Twenty-three?

How many vacancies have not been filled in this department?

**MR. DUTTON:** At this point, again, we have 451 total positions and 434 of them were filled as of the time that the Departmental Salary details report was published. It's a difference of

17 and of course that number goes up and down throughout the year as people retire or resign or move on.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Thank you.

All right, go to section 1.1.01 under Salaries, \$36,100 more was spend under the revised, yet \$34,800 less is budgeted this year. What explains that difference there, the variance?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** That is payment of severance and leave balances.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Severance and, what was ...?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Leave balances.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Leave? Okay.

Down to General Administration, 1.2.01, under Salaries, \$259,600 more was spent in 2018 than was budgeted and \$205,300 less is budgeted this year. Can you explain that variance?

**MR. DUTTON:** I'm sorry, which line are you on?

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Sorry, 1.2.01.

**CHAIR:** It's the whole subhead.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Oh just –

**CHAIR:** Yeah, that's fine. That's the whole subhead that we're discussing now. You said 1.2.01?

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Yeah.

**MS. P. PARSONS:** Yeah, that's fine. Go ahead.

**MR. DUTTON:** Okay, and which ...?

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** The Salaries.

**MR. DUTTON:** In the Salaries?

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Yeah.

**MR. DUTTON:** Okay so in the budget last year we had an attrition target assigned over and above the target from the 2015 budget. Given

the lateness in the year when that was assigned, it was all booked in the Executive Support area for the purpose of capturing the savings. That spread out throughout the department for this year's salary plan to where our plan works out.

In terms of the increased spend last year, that also reflects the severance and annual leave payout for two executive positions; we had two assistant deputy ministers retired during the fiscal year. That was partly offset, again, by the attrition target that was assigned to that item for the whole of the department. In terms of the salaries for the year ahead then, there's been no change in the number of executive positions and both of those assistant deputy ministers have been replaced and are sitting by me here.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** That was going to be my next question. Under Employee Benefits, the amount stated in last year's Estimate under this category was \$2,900, yet there's an amount listed as \$75,300 for last year. Can you explain that?

**MR. DUTTON:** Okay, on Employee Benefits in Executive Support, the workers' compensation charges for the entire department, with the exception of the Occupational Health and Safety Division, were paid out from this line item. That, obviously, is a number that fluctuates from year to year, depending on the number of injuries and time missed. That was the reason for the higher than budgeted spend in 2018-'19.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Under Revenue - Provincial, what is included in that?

**MR. DUTTON:** The revenue is essentially the costs in Executive Support related to the occupational health and safety work. Part of the time of the executive that's devoted to occupational health and safety is charged back to WorkplaceNL. I think that may be the only item for this area. There are other federal-provincial revenues in other parts of the department.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

Go to 1.2.02. In the description of the department, the training component of French Language Services is no longer referenced, only the translation is mentioned. Is French training still being provided?

**MR. DUTTON:** French language training is carried out by the Centre for Learning and Development at the Human Resources Secretariat. Some of the funding to help cover that cost is recovered through the federal-provincial Agreement on French Language Services. All of the revenue is booked in French Language Services, but all of the spend related to training is in the Human Resources Secretariat.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Under Salaries there's a considerable variance of \$111,400. More was spent last year and another \$45,600 budgeted for this year. Can you explain that?

**MR. DUTTON:** Sure. This also had come up at last year's meeting. We were at a point during the negotiations of the new five-year agreement last year where we were lobbying for an increase in the federal funding share. When the program was transferred from the Human Resources Secretariat to Service NL, it didn't have funding in the forecast for all four of the long-term positions that are attached to the program. The Estimates showed up last year with funding for two of the four positions at that point in time.

The negotiations went on; we subsequently confirmed that there would be no increase, the funding was frozen for the five-year period and that was the same outcome for all provinces and territories. We made a determination through the budget process that, again, following the principles of attrition, that we weren't to displace any employees who didn't want to go.

Over the course of the year we transferred some funding from savings in Motor Registration to cover some of the salary costs. We have a slightly lesser spend than what we're budgeting last year because one of the four employees was recruited to a temporary position at Justice and Public Safety. She returned before the end of the fiscal year so what we have reflected in 2019-'20 is the historic regular cost of the four positions reflected there, as well as the anticipated revenue offsetting from the federal government.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Under Professional Services what was included in this?

**MR. DUTTON:** The Professional Services line item includes part-time for translation services. We do some of our translation with an in-house translator. Some of the more complicated jobs we have to deal with the Translation Bureau in Ottawa and we have another federal-provincial agreement for how that work is carried out.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Under Grants and Subsidies, what's included in that?

**MR. DUTTON:** That is for the province's membership in the Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie. While it's called Grants and Subsidies, it's really a membership.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

Under Revenue - Federal, I understand that there's federal funding for the program and the agreement expired. I think you answered that already.

**MR. DUTTON:** Right.

Again, that was renewed on the same basis, so it's a 50/50 agreement. Our 50 per cent partly comes from our expenditures in this area, as well as the Centre for Learning and Development. Other funding that the government expends in other departments for projects to support the Francophone and Acadian population can be counted towards meeting our matching target.

That's it there for me.

**CHAIR:** Okay. Thank you.

The next speaker.

**MS. COFFIN:** I was wondering, is there a new Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Agreement on French-Language Services with a funding increase?

**MR. DUTTON:** No. There is a new agreement, there was no increase. The press release was dated April 1. It was signed in February. The funding has been at the same level for a number of years. There was a decision from the federal government not to increase the federal share for any province or territory, other than I think an announcement the year prior that there's been an increase for the territories, but all the provinces

have the same level of funding in the new five-year agreements that they had in the previous.

**MS. COFFIN:** No adjustment for inflation at all?

**MR. DUTTON:** None.

**MS. COFFIN:** Good. Thanks guys.

**MR. DUTTON:** It's not that we didn't ask.

**MS. COFFIN:** I'm saying that on your behalf. I'm with you on this one.

**MR. DUTTON:** Yeah.

**MS. COFFIN:** I do want to commend you on being able to keep Transportation and Communications in check where many other departments have totally (inaudible) that one. I'm not sure what your postage is, but everybody else seems to think that postage has caused Transportation and Communications to go through the roof.

What were your activities in 2018 related to translation and cultural programming of the service navigator pilot project at Motor Vehicle?

**MR. DOODY:** The service navigator was that we had staff volunteer to either assist clients, whether that would be to help them directly get in touch with an individual to help do direct translation or just work with them through using things like Google Translate to help provide services. So at least they had someone who was there to help interact with them. There's –

**MS. COFFIN:** You used Google Translate?

**MR. DOODY:** Yeah. And it works.

**MS. COFFIN:** And it works?

**MR. DOODY:** Yeah.

**MS. COFFIN:** Have you done that? Like, you know, put a sentence in, translate it to a different language and then try to translate it back and get something totally different?

**MR. DUTTON:** I just want to say that our translator would probably have a fit if we said

that we relied on it exclusively. Certainly it gives you the gist.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you.

Linguists all over the world.

**MR. DUTTON:** And we certainly rely on professional translation, especially for formal communication. I think you earlier also asked about the translation activity. Last year, I think, it was the first year that we went over 1,000,000 words translated through the French Services group. So there has been a lot of content that's been added to the government website in French, as well as a number of press releases, particularly things that would be of particular interest to the Francophone community.

So you'll see that a lot of the education releases will also be done in French, and that's an area that is very important to the community and it's been a priority for government.

**MS. COFFIN:** That's good. Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

You don't offer any other languages, just the two officials and ASL? You just do English, French –?

**MR. DUTTON:** It's the French Language Services. It's purely again to advance the bilingual nature of Canada.

**MS. COFFIN:** Yeah, of course, this was kind of a sidebar question of, do you translate into other languages that are outside of the French secretariat? I'm just curious.

**MR. DUTTON:** Sure.

**MS. COFFIN:** All right. Thank you.

I think we've answered the other questions, just a second.

Okay. We're good.

Thank you very much.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Moving on, you're good?

**MR. LANE:** I'm good.

**CHAIR:** Everybody good? Okay.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** I've got a couple.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** You said that through attrition there was a savings of \$544,000?

**MR. DUTTON:** \$550,600.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Okay. How many positions was that?

**MR. DUTTON:** Well again, I guess going back to the numbers to compare year over year in salary details there was a reduction of 12 positions overall across the department. But when you consider that the Review Division had an increase of four due to the matters that were discussed earlier, the impact for the Service NL itself would have been 16.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** How many were eliminated last year in the department – any?

**MR. DUTTON:** Well, I think there were a couple of positions that were reported for the purpose of the new attrition target for 2019 – three? Sorry, yes.

But as far as doing the salary plan, the approach we have taken has been to look at, following the principle, the first review is to make sure that we have enough funding to pay for all the positions that our people are in today, and then we look at, with what is remaining, what are the highest priority positions to fill going forward. We've had a particular focus there on maintaining public inspection and safety services as a priority.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Okay.

The number of positions that were in the budget last year versus the number of positions in the budget this year, what is the variance – is there much difference in how many people are in the department?

**MR. DUTTON:** Well, that would be the difference, the 16.

So if you look at the Departmental Salary Report that accompanies the budget –

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Yeah.

**MR. DUTTON:** – the difference between those two reports would be 16 for Service NL, is a decrease, but an increase of four for the Review Division.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** But you just said that you had 60 through attrition.

**MR. DUTTON:** No, 16 – 1-6.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Okay, 16, I’m sorry.

**MR. DUTTON:** But three PCN numbers, we’ll call them, that were formally abolished.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Okay, all right.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Okay, good.

Seeing no further speakers, shall we vote on the subhead?

**CLERK:** 1.1.01 to 1.2.02 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 1.1.01 to 1.2.02 inclusive carry?

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against?

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 1.2.02 carried.

**CLERK:** 2.1.01.

**CHAIR:** Okay, we’ll have our first speaker, please, on Regulatory Affairs.

**MR. O’DRISCOLL:** All right.

Under 2.1.01 under Salaries, this year’s budget includes an additional \$29,000 over last year. Can you explain that one?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** That’s the additional two positions that are being filled from the previous 2018-19 salary details. The salary plan fully funds the existing positions. They were filled during ’18-’19 fiscal year.

**MR. O’DRISCOLL:** Okay.

Under Revenue - Provincial, what is included in that?

**MR. DUTTON:** The revenue is the application fees that are paid by applicants seeking to have a complaint adjudicated. That would relate, I think, to the residential tenancies part of the division.

**MR. O’DRISCOLL:** Okay.

How are the caseloads in the residential tenancies?

**MR. DELANEY:** So, in terms of the caseloads, there are approximately 1,100 applications they receive per year over the last couple of years, but the new legislation came into force January 1 of this year, and the division has noted an uptick, probably, the start of this year, and they are on track for about 1,250 applications this year.

**MR. O’DRISCOLL:** Has the new act impacted the caseload and the number of complaints?

**MR. DELANEY:** Well, I think in terms of the number of applications, it is certainly up. Whether it is that the process has been more simplified and there are more people coming forward, but certainly they have noticed an increase in the number of applications they are receiving.

**MR. DUTTON:** (Inaudible) increased that boarding houses were covered for the first time.

**MR. O’DRISCOLL:** Okay.

In late March, it was announced that the legislative changes to the Real Estate Act were planned for this spring. I understand it was selected for review to a committee. Can you provide an update on the status of that?



**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** As you know, when the House closed prior to the election that was on the Order Paper, and the objective is to bring it back in and to put it through committee as soon as possible, we can hopefully bring it into the Legislature in the fall.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** In both 2015 and 2017 mandate letters, the minister of Service NL was directed to establish an online, searchable database to alert customers of bad business practice. What is the status of that database now?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** The internal review was completed of the existing disclosure methods at Service NL, including consumer alerts and advisories related to illegal investment activity, mortgage brokering, real estate licences and occupational health and safety. The Office of the Chief Information Officer initiated the development of the consumer notification webpage for Consumer Advisories and Alerts, charges and convictions and the new Consumer Advisories and Alerts webpage was launched on November 1, 2018.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Well, that is it for me.

**CHAIR:** Good for you? Okay.

Moving on to our next speaker, please.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay.

Consumer Affairs – the Salaries, you have spoken to that, yes?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes.

**MS. COFFIN:** Yes? Okay.

Can we have your work with OCIO on a consumer notification webpage for consumer alerts, charges and convictions?

**MR. DUTTON:** Yes. So that is a website that the Member for Ferryland was just speaking about.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay.

**MR. DUTTON:** There was a press release on November 1 where you can find the link to the

information. Also, if you go to our main Service NL webpage then there's a hotlink to the consumer alerts part there.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay.

Payday loans legislation came into effect April 1. Does any part apply to people who borrowed before April 1?

**MR. DELANEY:** The legislation is effective in terms of the licensing, but in terms of consumer protection legislation there still could be issues related to payday lenders. For example, I do believe there were a small number – I think two or three complaints – that were outstanding regarding payday lenders, and I think in particular it related to collection agencies of payday lenders.

To answer your question, yes, if there's a pre-existing condition there might be other pieces of legislation where the protection would apply.

**MS. COFFIN:** Excellent.

**MR. DUTTON:** In terms of what was deemed the *Criminal Code* rates for excessive interest, the government had decided in the previous administration to pursue prosecution on that and made a conclusion that it wasn't something that they could enforce. That was one of the considerations in the government deciding to proceed with payday loan legislation similar to what's in place in other provinces.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, thank you.

How is the department providing information to the public on the new legislation and the public's rights under that?

**MR. DELANEY:** Under payday lending you mean?

**MS. COFFIN:** Yes.

**MR. DELANEY:** Certainly, I mean, the website is updated. I know the director of the division has been out to meet with industry in particular. There are a lot of the requirements around disclosure at the time that someone takes out a payday loan and then there are disclosure

requirements so, basically, the public is informed at the time of making application.

**MS. COFFIN:** So it's at point. Okay.

Financial services regulation; we've heard complaints that insurance companies are increasing their rates to condominiums and some have pulled out altogether. Has your department received any such complaints?

**MR. DELANEY:** There has been an issue, I guess very recently, raised in regard to condominiums, but I think it had to do with condominiums where there were detached dwellings, townhouses associated with the condominiums. I think the issue there is in terms of the insurance. The insurance provider is looking for some sort of history of insurability, so a history of the property, and that's not always easy to come by.

You can imagine if you have a condo development and there are 200 separate town houses all effectively with separate owners who have maintained their properties over the years, while there's knowledge of the external condition of each premises, there is no consistent – trying to gather 200 historical references on all the different properties.

I think there is an issue there, but certainly it has been brought to our attention, but very recently. It's certainly something we'll be looking into in terms of trying to allow them to make sure that they can be insured.

**MS. COFFIN:** That will be the follow-up. Would government play a role if condominium owners can't get insurance and what might that role be?

**MR. DELANEY:** I think at this stage it's very early in terms – the issue that's been brought forward is just simply that they're still looking at what options are available with regard to insurance but, certainly, if there are issues, I'm sure we'd do a policy, do an analysis on it.

**MS. COFFIN:** Excellent. Thank you.

Back to Commercial Registrations, 2.1.04, I noticed that Transportation and Communications

go up there. What was the jump there or what is the anticipated jump?

**MR. DUTTON:** The increase was the higher postage costs and out-of-province travel for conferences.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, because I don't see postage cost increased anywhere else, so it must be travel, hey?

**MR. DUTTON:** No, postage is a part of T and C throughout the department.

**MS. COFFIN:** Pardon?

**MR. DUTTON:** Transportation and Communications, sorry.

**MS. COFFIN:** No, that's not what I mean. I didn't see the jump in several of the other sections.

**MR. DUTTON:** They do a lot of mailing and in Motor Registration we've cut out a lot of mailing.

**MS. COFFIN:** Of course, because you had the emails and stuff kind of got your costs under control there.

All right then, let's talk about Vital Stats. I noticed the number has gone up and gone up again. Did we get more people in Vital Stats?

**MR. DUTTON:** The staff complement is the same, but all of the positions weren't fully funded last year as part of the salary plan. We have all of those positions fully funded in this year's plan.

**MS. COFFIN:** Man, the work you must be getting done now, hey, with everybody in there.

**MR. DUTTON:** Yeah, well, some of the positions throughout the department were temporary, but they were long-term temporaries. In order to balance the plan last year, the temporary positions we had to fund for six months and then see where the savings would accrue, knowing that there were going to be retirements and turnover. We've addressed that on a go-forward basis.

**MS. COFFIN:** That's excellent. Good.

Let's look at the federal revenue. What are the feds paying us for in Vital Stats?

**MR. DUTTON:** We have a number of information-sharing agreements, and they require some data to manage some of their own programs. The federal revenue would be for – particularly Statistics Canada and Elections Canada would need to access the vital statistics information to ensure –

**MS. COFFIN:** Oh, they pay you for that?

**MR. DUTTON:** – the validity of their information. We get a small fee for doing so, of our cost.

**MS. COFFIN:** That's great. Have you ever tried to get data from Stats Can? They charge you three times as much. Unless you're an educational institution, then there are a couple of back doors around that.

Provincial revenue there; is that revenue coming into the province for – it costs you \$20 to get a birth certificate now, or is that something different?

**MR. DUTTON:** It's a recovery of cost for secure shipment of certificates.

**MS. COFFIN:** Right.

**MR. DUTTON:** Where that has to be done. Then there's a fee and then the cost is recovered. It shows up in the expenditure and then on the revenue side.

**MS. COFFIN:** All right, I'm looking at Queen's Printer, the revenue there. Gee, didn't quite see as much as we had hoped under revised, but there's a big jump now next year. What are we selling?

**MR. DUTTON:** *The Newfoundland and Labrador Gazette* and copies of the legislation. In *Budget 2015* there was an increase in the subscription fees. It was, I think, 10 per cent that year and then another 5 per cent thereafter. This is the last year of that increase, so that's what accounts for the increased revenue.

**MS. COFFIN:** There's a decrease of almost \$40,000 budget over revised. Even with the fee increases, are we expecting readership to go through the roof? There's some really interesting stuff coming out in the Gazette?

**MR. DUTTON:** Not particularly. We do our best.

**MS. COFFIN:** It's riveting reading.

**MR. DUTTON:** Yeah.

**MS. COFFIN:** I'm just wondering why the rates – it says revised. It only came in at \$56,000; we're expecting almost twice that this year. Is someone selling these in the school, like, check off the magazines and you get a free Gazette?

**MR. DUTTON:** I guess at that point there were fewer subscriptions than anticipated. I don't know whether that projection will hold true or not for 2019-'20, and then we'll have to re-evaluate that for next year.

**MS. COFFIN:** Of course. Thank you.

Let's flip over to Printing and Micrographic Services. Let's see, the Salaries look to be a little bit of attrition and possibly a little bit of severance payout there, right?

**MR. DUTTON:** In terms of 2018-'19, there were some vacancies during the year, so that accounted for the lower expenditure. In terms of the year ahead, there's one fewer position in the salary details compared to the year previous.

**MS. COFFIN:** Right. How much toner do they go through?

**MR. DUTTON:** A lot of toner. Most of the expense in the area is on ink and paper.

**MS. COFFIN:** Right, of course. This is what I expected.

So we're not printing; we didn't print quite as much as we had anticipated. We're down by about a third from budget to revised last year?

**MR. DUTTON:** Yeah, that's right.

**MS. COFFIN:** The Budget Speech was really long, I don't know why?

**MR. DUTTON:** Yeah. That was printed in 2019-20.

**MS. COFFIN:** Right, yeah. Well, the one last year was pretty substantial too, right?

**MR. DUTTON:** Yeah.

**MS. COFFIN:** So, a little less printing happening last year?

**MR. DUTTON:** I guess in terms of the total expenses, I don't have a figure on the number of print jobs, but we've actually reached out to other agencies, boards and commissions during the year to make them more aware of the printing services. Core government uses it fairly regularly, but sometimes agencies, boards and commissions, they may not realize that they could have their print job perhaps done more cheaply through the in-house service than if they went out to market.

There are some jobs that are unusual sizes or that are on particular deadlines that maybe they can't accommodate, but mainly, the equipment is already there and the staff are there, so unless there was excessive overtime for a rush job or something like that, it often can be done more cheaply.

**MS. COFFIN:** Yes.

**MR. DUTTON:** So we've tried to bring in more of that work for other entities wherever possible.

**MS. COFFIN:** Good, that's reassuring.

**CHAIR:** Okay, thank you.

The Member's time has expired.

We can come back to you, but we will move on now to the next speaker.

Mr. O'Driscoll.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** My error there; when I started at first, I just stopped at the first page, so my fault there.

Back to 2.1.02.

**MR. DUTTON:** Yes.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Salaries are \$139,800, less was spent last year and an additional \$147,500 is included this year over the revised. Can you explain the variance here, please?

**MR. DUTTON:** Sure.

There were a number of vacancies during the course of the year; we've had a plan to fill all of those positions. So, overall, if you look at the salary details, there's a reduction in one position compared to the year before, but that was a position that was temporarily vacant that we intended to fill. So we do anticipate to maintain the full staff complement for this year.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

When can we expect to see some action based on the automobile insurance review?

**MR. DUTTON:** Well, the legislation has passed into law; some of the reforms take effect on August 1, those that don't require regulations to support them. January 1 would be the effective date for the remainder of the reforms, with the exception of the adoption of the treatment protocols, that part of the legislation is on a date to be determined because we have to carry out consultations with the health professionals who will be providing those services. That's something a little more out of our control, so we just want to make sure that we have those consultations completed.

So, if someone has a more common injury, then they'll be approved right away for treatments based on an existing schedule and payment plan that will reflect what would be the normal costs associated. It'll work more like when someone's on workers' comp, they will go to get their treatment and it'll be billed directly and then they won't have to come up with the money up front.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** All right.

2.1.03, under Salaries, \$64,800 less was spent than budgeted in 2018, and that amount is back

in the budget again this year. Can you explain that?

**MR. DUTTON:** Yes, so this is the Pension Benefits Standards Division, we have three positions. One of the positions is temporarily vacant, and there's recruitment ongoing. I think it recently closed and interviews are being scheduled. The other is for the director of the division. That was the current assistant deputy minister of Regulatory Affairs. So he's acting as the superintendent of pensions to fulfill the legislative obligations until someone can be recruited. So, we did run a competition, didn't result in a qualified candidate, so we'll be reposting that again during the year.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay, thank you.

Under 2.1.04, under Commercial Registrations, Salaries, \$73,200 less was spent under the revised last year, an additional \$49,800 in this year's budget over the revised amount. Can you explain that?

**MR. DUTTON:** Yes, so the decrease reflected mainly vacancies that occurred throughout the year. Then in terms of the year ahead, the salary details would reflect a decrease of five positions from the previous year. Now, in fact, those five weren't funded in last year's budget. It was related to a project, we call it the verification team, but, basically, we were digitizing records from the Registry of Deeds and turning them into searchable texts. Some of them are handwritten and have to be, not just scanned, but also turned into a searchable text.

We have all of that done back to 1982. It's a multi-year project that had finite funding that was provided, so the funding expired in March 31, 2018, and that accounts for the change.

We still maintained two positions, although that wasn't funded, we found money in the salary plan to retain two. We are going to continue to digitize the older records, at least to be able to preserve them for posterity, because we don't want to lose those records in the event of a flood or a fire at our office.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** That pretty much up-to-date or it is long (inaudible) to catch it up or catch up (inaudible)?

**MR. DUTTON:** Yeah. Well, it will take longer, obviously, with a lesser number of staff –

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Yes.

**MR. DUTTON:** – but they are focused on just digitizing the records as fast as they can. Then some of this conversion will have to occur later, so at least they will be backed up and preserved.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** How far back would that go?

**MR. DUTTON:** Pardon?

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** How far back would that go?

**MR. DUTTON:** 1820, I think.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

**MR. DUTTON:** It goes back before responsible government.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Is that right?

**MR. DUTTON:** Yeah.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

What's the status of the Registry of Deeds digitization?

**MR. DUTTON:** Well, again, up to 1982, we have all of the records digitized, and they're continuing to work backwards. So there sort of regular plans to go through the documents. I couldn't say how many years back they've gone from there; that was our progress as of last year. Again, that's ongoing as a priority to preserve the records.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

Under Employee Benefits, 2.1.04, the amount stated in last year's Estimate under this category was \$1,800, yet it states \$1,600 here for last year's budget. Can you explain that number? They just do not match.

**MR. DUTTON:** Go ahead, Robyn.

**MS. HAYES:** During the fiscal year, we restated our workers' comp to be all under the executive support division, so that's why you would see the difference in the number there. It was the worker's comp for this division.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Under Purchased Services, what is included?

**MR. DUTTON:** Purchased Services (inaudible) was the contract fees with the Unisys. We have personal property security registry that we have with them, and there is a contract that involves all of the Atlantic provinces and the three territories that was renewed last year.

It also is the area where we pay our Moneris fees. People that pay their fees to the registry online, then we have a fee from Moneris for using credit card or debit card information, and other general Purchased Services, which would be a very small amount.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

In Other Services, in the 2018 budget, the Vital Statistics Registry, the Queen's Printer and Printing and Micrographic Services were under Government Services.

**MR. DUTTON:** Yes.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Why have they been moved into the Regulatory Affairs in this budget?

**MR. DUTTON:** So, I mentioned earlier that we had two retirements this year, and it was another opportunity to look at our organizational structure. We made a determination with Occupational Health and Safety, initially when the three branches were collapsed into two, we had Occupational Health and Safety and what was formerly Consumer and Commercial Affairs put together.

With the departure of the two ADMs, we had a chance to look at what was the right mix and skillset to match with those areas. We felt that Occupational Health and Safety was more of an inspection service, so that was more similar to

the sorts of work that goes on in Government Services Branch, particularly around health inspections, Engineering and Inspections Services, and things of that nature, so that aligned better. To retain a relative balance in the number of direct reports, Vital Statistics and Printing and Micrographic Services were probably more on their own within that division. There's still a relative balance of I think six or seven directors per ADM, so the organizational structure was more balanced in that respect.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Under 2.2.01, under Transportation and Communications, \$14,000 less was spent than budgeted last year, but \$13,900 of this is back in this year's budget. Can you explain that?

**MR. DUTTON:** Yeah, they were just for Vital Stats, lower travel, postage and courier costs than anticipated, and it's just a zero-based adjustment in the year ahead. So it was just a minor adjustment, that might have been an anomaly and some of those travel costs may go up and down depending on where the meetings occur.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Under 2.2.02, under Queen's Printer, Salaries, why aren't the salaries listed for the Queen's Printer? And \$44,800 was there last year.

**MR. DUTTON:** The person who was the Queen's Printer retired, and as part of the attrition plan we've combined the roles of the Queen's Printer and the director of Printing and Micrographic Services. So that individual fulfills both functions, but the cost of operating the Office of the Queen's Printer, which has sort of a separate office here in the basement of the East Block, those costs are reflected as still in a separate line item.

So the phone line is forwarded to that individual's desk, and this is where we have to book the expenditure and revenue related to, like I said, as a discrete item.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Under Purchased Services, what is included in Purchased Services? There was \$12,100 less spent than last year than was budgeted, yet additional \$12,000 is included in this.

**MR. DUTTON:** In terms of what's the money for, it's for the various bills and accounts and equipment lease, copying charges and other documents associated with the work for the House of Assembly. In terms of the variance throughout the year, the – sorry, the reduction during the course of the year was just a reduction in the requirement for printed publications. Again, we had a zero-based adjustment but, as we discussed earlier, we'll be monitoring this during the course of the year to see whether, you know, there is a real year-over-year decrease in the amount of subscriptions and use of that material, and may have to make some adjustments into the next year.

**CHAIR:** Okay, thank you.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Time is up? Yes?

**CHAIR:** Yes, you have expired.

So, no further questions here on this particular subhead, we can call the vote?

**MR. K. PARSONS:** I just got one.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** When it comes to the Queen's Printer, is there any stuff outsourced outside the Confederation Building? Do they do any printing for different boards and agencies?

**MR. DUTTON:** Well, I guess the way it works now, all of the former budgets for printing in core government were all reallocated into Printing and Micrographic Services a number of years ago, so there's no direct cost to a line department to have a print job done that they're capable of doing. So they just send in the order and then it's covered there. Service NL covers the cost. I wouldn't call it a kitty – somebody described it as that to me – but, basically, that was for efficiency sake.

For the agencies, boards and commissions, they may choose to do their own printing somewhere, but we've, again, reached out to them to try and encourage them to do more of that work with Printing and Micrographic Services for a lesser expense than maybe they would have incurred previously.

There are some unusual print jobs like large maps or different things that maybe don't fit with the types of equipment that we have in the basement. It can't do every single type of print job, but anything that their equipment is able to handle, they have.

One of the things we had purchased for last year was a new saddle stitch binder to enable us to be able to do the public exams. So they used to be outsourced by the Department of Education. Now, they're doing it in Printing and Micrographic Services, and it saved Education, I think, \$33,000 or \$36,000, which came out of their budget, but there was no offsetting increase because we just absorb it within our paper and ink, and it was a cost-neutral initiative for us that saved another department money.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** But, years ago, the Queen's Printer used to do a lot of printing for Department of Education, like public exams and different boards.

**MR. DUTTON:** Yes.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** I think the NLC and stuff like that, so they did a lot.

Is the capacity down there not what it was 10 years ago compared to what it is today?

**MR. DUTTON:** I don't know about that. I mean, I guess they've been a real strong adaptor of lean approaches to try to make sure that their operation is as efficient as possible, and even just in terms of ergonomics and that sort of thing, what level on the shelves they put the paper and all that kind of thing, and how the office is organized, and looking at how people do their work every day, that they've made a lot of great strides. That was a big part of the department's strategic plan to focus in that area, and those were the sorts of things that we've highlighted in our annual reports as good examples for others to follow. Certainly, there is less stuff probably printed overall than before because more and more things are being pushed to online services.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Do they have all the up-to-date equipment that they need to do at printing services?

**MR. DUTTON:** Yes. They have existing service agreements. Xerox would be one of their main suppliers with the equipment, and those sorts of arrangements are regularly reviewed and updated.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Okay. It's just out of curiosity. I used to be there on a daily basis because I was the one that would repair their equipment at one time. I'm not saying that I was a bad repair person, but I was there on a daily basis.

**MR. DUTTON:** Well, we'll keep that in mind the next time we have a job after 5 o'clock.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Okay. No sweat. Give me a call. I'll take care of it. I take care of everything on the fifth floor right now.

Under Supplies, there's \$109,000 less spent on Supplies than the budget, but almost a full amount back this year. Can you explain that?

**MR. DUTTON:** Are we in Printing and Micrographic?

**MR. K. PARSONS:** I'm doing the Printing and Micrographic Services.

**MR. DUTTON:** Okay.

In terms of the Supplies, the reduced amount was just lower office supply requirements. They tend to vary from year to year depending on the requirements and they use some of the savings in this area to offset overages in Professional Services, Purchased Services and Property, Furnishings and Equipment.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Okay.

Under Professional Services, can you explain the \$41,000 under the revised?

**MR. DUTTON:** Yes. That was a one-time expense and there was some outsourced project management services through the Office of the Chief Information Officer to install an information management system and online ordering system for printing services. They are trying to digitize their orders, so rather than having departments do them by paper, they can

do that through an online service and it'll help to improve efficiency.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Okay.

Under Purchased Services, an additional \$74,100 was spent under the revised last year. Can you explain what's included and what occurred?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** So that was the budget material in 2018 that was sent out to the households for the Department of Finance.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Okay. And that is covered under there?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Under Purchased Services, yes, that increase of \$74,100.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Okay.

**MR. DUTTON:** It was the first time I think that the printing was done differently in past years and so it wasn't something that was an anticipated expense for Printing and Micrographics Services Division and then the Department of Finance covered the postage on the mail out.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Okay.

Is that something you plan on doing in the future?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Well, I think what it was, was that in the past it had been done, and then one year we decided not to do it and then we realized there was a need to do it to get the information out, so we changed it and did it in the following year.

**MR. DUTTON:** It occurred in April. The budget submission had been already put in and then we found out about the expense. So that's been factored into the budget on a go-forward basis as part of the zero-based exercise.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** So it's been factored in on a go-forward basis, okay.

**MR. DUTTON:** Yeah. So we'll make the assumption that may be required again.



**MR. K. PARSONS:** Okay.

Property, Furnishings and Equipment, an additional \$15,000 spent over the revised from last year. Can you explain that?

**MR. DUTTON:** There was the purchase of a digital printer.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Okay. That's it for me.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

**MR. LANE:** A couple of quick questions. I'm waiting for the light.

**CHAIR:** Just give it a wave. You have to do the YMCA every now and then.

**MR. LANE:** There we go.

I'm just wondering, prepaid funerals; I can remember there was a significant issue that happened a number of years ago. As a result of that, of course, there are supposed to be prepaid funeral audits and I know that the funeral home operators are supposed to send in documentation, I think, every year to the division and then there are audits.

I seem to recall over the last couple of years there were issues where information wasn't being received on a timely basis from all the funeral home operators, and then there wasn't necessarily audits being done in a timely fashion. I can remember asking and I was told the same guy that does the funeral audits is also the same guy that has a number of other things: insurance and real estate or whatever. It's like multi-tasking, so he doesn't necessarily get time to do everything in a timely fashion, per se.

I'm just wondering, where are we now in terms of prepaid funeral audits?

**MR. DELANEY:** Certainly that is a very top-of-mind issue. There are a number of reviews ongoing. I apologize, I don't have the number in front of me, but there are a few of the funeral homes that have had their licence suspended for the selling of prepaid funerals.

Not to repeat probably the response of the past but certainly it falls under the same division as

the auto insurance review, the real estate legislation, so in terms of keeping up with some of the priorities, it's – and we did have a change in director in that position during the last fiscal year as well.

It is very much an issue that I can comment. The director does get regular calls from a few of the key funeral homes, especially those that are awaiting the final audit of their trust funds. It's something that we will certainly be putting a push on to get done over the course of the next few months, in terms of getting some of these reviews up to date and also in terms of finalizing some of the audits. Some audits are still ongoing for some of these trust funds as well.

There is a bit of difficulty – you're correct – in terms of getting some of the information from the funeral homes. But at the end of the day, in order to allow them to continue to operate, to be able to sell prepaid funerals, we need to get these audits of the trust funds up to date.

**MR. LANE:** Okay. It sounds like we're still sort of floating out there with a lot of this not being done.

**MR. DELANEY:** No, I guess I –

**MR. LANE:** Or at least delays in it getting done.

**MR. DELANEY:** I would say the difference being that I can say with certainty that the director has been working on a couple, actually, over the past week. There are a couple currently in progress, as opposed to on the agenda, to be addressed.

**MR. LANE:** Okay.

**MR. DUTTON:** I think you should add, too, that if anybody becomes aware or has a concern, that they should bring their complaints forward to the registrar of prepaid funerals and it'll be investigated. We have investigative staff there who do the follow-up.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** I just want to add, too, that when they are brought to our attention – the particular funeral homes, if there is one brought to our attention, because often the board can come together and put forward a complaint

– that is addressed immediately and we look at it immediately.

**MR. LANE:** Sure. Obviously, the concern is what led to all this being put in place to begin with. We wouldn't want to see any citizens prepaying and their money is –

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** That's right.

**MR. LANE:** That's why that trust fund was set up to begin with –

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** That's right.

**MR. LANE:** – because it did happen.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes, that's right.

**MR. LANE:** You want to make sure it doesn't happen again.

The only other question I have, overall in the department, or certainly in the areas we're covering here, you're dealing with a lot of documentation and we're talking printing services as well. I'm just wondering what efforts – I'm sure there have been some made. Are there any ongoing efforts to eliminate paper altogether in terms of more opportunities to use technology and do things electronically, as opposed to paper and reports and stuff like this.

Theoretically, this could be on an iPad and we wouldn't be here flipping through pages on a book. I'm just wondering, ongoing efforts in that regard?

**MR. DUTTON:** Yes, just on that part, one of the things the minister referenced in her opening remarks was the email notification project with Motor Registration. That diverted a lot of paper away from the landfill. We've had well over 100,000 people signed up for the email reminders. As you mentioned, that's saved \$400,000 in printing and postage costs that we're able to use to address some of our other financial pressures in the department and put a bit of money towards the deficit at the same time.

Also, the minister had an announcement in March with the Minister of Finance on the MyGovNL portal. Motor Registration is one of

the first programs to be put on there. The idea is that people will have their own digital identity where they'll be able to log in to that website and get their information about their Motor Registration renewals and driver's licence renewals. More and more programs across multiple departments will be added so you'll be able to get to the tell-us-once place and be able to access all of that information in the long run through your computer, through signing in once, to access your own personal information.

That will also provide some enhancements over the type of information that was provided. With the email, as an example, one of the issues some people raised was that they had multiple vehicles, but we designed the email not to have any personal information in it so as to not have an inadvertent breach in the event there was a keying error on the email address. Then they said I have more than one vehicle and I don't know which one it is that's up for renewal. When they log in on the MyGovNL they'll be able to see, if they own two, three or 10 vehicles, which ones are due for renewal at which time. Those are some of the obvious things.

Just in terms of our own use, we remind our own staff that printing in colour costs three times as much and to select monochrome or grey-scale when they're printing drafts at the office and using double-sided paper and all of that sort of thing. The more information we can put out through our website the better. That's one of the key ways that we are reaching out to people is through social media, through the government's website and news releases and so on.

**MR. LANE:** Thank you.

That's all I have for this area.

**CHAIR:** Okay, Broadcast?

For the Clerk, please. I tell you, YMCA.

**CLERK:** 2.1.01 to 2.2.03 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 2.1.01 to 2.2.03 inclusive carry?

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against?

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.1.01 to 2.2.03 carried.

**CHAIR:** On that note, we will take a short restroom break and, say, meet back, Minister, in how long, five, 10 minutes?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Five, 10 minutes?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Five is good.

**CHAIR:** Five is good?

Five minutes folks.

**Recess**

**CHAIR:** Are we all ready? Thank you.

Okay, Minister, so we're ready to get started again. We'll go to Motor Vehicle Registration. It's 3.1.01, and, again, we'll just remind all speakers to please identify yourself prior to speaking.

Good? Okay.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Under Motor Vehicle Registration, in 2018, Motor Vehicle was broken down into three sections: Administration, Service - License and Registration and Enforcement. Why merge all them together in this year's budget?

**MS. HAYES:** So part of the budget guidelines from the Department of Finance asked the departments to look at their various activities and anywhere there were activities that could be consolidated to do so. So we took the opportunity with the Motor Registration Division; they all relate to motor registration. If we ever wanted the information that was separate before, we do have that separated in the financial system should we ever need to get that reporting information, but from an Estimates perspective, it was only required to be in one activity so we consolidated it.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

Under Salaries, 3.1.01, there's a significant difference of \$549,000 in salaries since last year.

Can you explain what occurred there?

**MR. DUTTON:** Looking at the projected revised, the decrease was reflecting vacancies throughout the year, including highway enforcement officers and front-counter staff.

For the year ahead, it reflects the decrease of four positions from the previous year, as far as the comparison in the salary details, and the budgeted amount reflects the actual expenditure that we anticipate for this area. Total staffing complement in terms of funded positions is 111.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** All right.

How many highway enforcement officers do you have currently?

**MR. DOODY:** There are 41 positions and currently 36 of them are filled.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Do you plan to fill the other – go back to 41 once you get –?

**MR. DOODY:** Yes.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Yeah? Okay.

All right, under Employee Benefits, I'm just wondering is that, again, the reinstatement of workers' comp in the number there for \$2,400? It said 572 last year and now it's \$2,400.

**MR. DUTTON:** Yes, that's correct.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay, all right. I'm just checking because that's the way it's been going forward in most of this here.

Transportation and Communications, there's a significant variance in the amounts here with \$196,000 less than budgeted being spent last year, but an additional \$164,600 more being budgeted this year.

Can you just explain that variance for us?

**MR. DUTTON:** Sure.

In terms of 2018-19, the decrease was from lower travel cost and postage savings from the discontinuation of the mail outs for the vehicle and driver's licence renewals; \$115,500 was transferred during the year to French Services to cover their salaries; sort of based on the discussion we had earlier today. So it didn't show up here, but was in the spend in French Services, that amount, and \$73,000 was transferred to Purchased Services to cover the cost for vehicle registrations.

In terms of the new fiscal year, the decrease relative to the previous year's budget was the net change in postage from the savings of the year before and additional costs for 2019-20. We do expedited service delivery for driver's licence cards, so if an individual applies for a new driver's licence now, it comes in the mail, but you can get expedited delivery. There's a cost associated with that of about \$20,000 with related revenue. A person can ask to get an expedited card; otherwise, they will get a receipt that they can use with their old licence, which would be accepted by law enforcement.

There's also an anticipated increase in postage due to the centralized printing and mailing of vehicle registrations, and that's \$144,600. Previously, we were maintaining an inventory of registration stickers at each of our Motor Registration offices. There was also a risk with that in terms of having to maintain the security of those items, so now we're doing all centralized printing and mail outs of the registrations from our Mount Pearl office, so there are some upfront costs associated with that activity.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Many people are still unaware that the licence and the registration renewals reminders are no longer being mailed out and they're getting tickets. One report said there was over 25 per cent increase in the number of people convicted of driving with expired vehicle registrations after government stopped the mail outs.

I'm just wondering, can you tell me how much government has collected over this period of time?

**MR. DUTTON:** In terms of the collection of fines, that is done through the Department of

Justice and Public Safety, so we don't really have direct visibility on that.

As far as the public awareness is concerned, certainly, we had announced the change up front; we were very active on social media. All employees in the public service were sent email notices to sign up and to have their friends and family sign up, and we are encouraging people that visit the Motor Registration offices to sign up. Anyone that goes online to do their renewal, there's a prompt when they go to the website to sign up for email reminders.

We've had some other activity, including a pilot at our AESL offices, where they have computer banks. So people can go to the AESL office, if there's no Motor Registration office in their town, to be able to do their renewal if they don't have access to a computer at home.

There also was a fair amount of media coverage, including the article you referenced, which, in itself, also raises public awareness of the program, and each time those things have happened I think there's probably been a bump in the number of people who have signed up for email reminders.

We've been regularly trying to remind people and, again, more and more people have signed up for the email reminders each and every month. We also accept that if someone doesn't have email, they can have a trusted family member or friend receive the notice. Through the MyGovNL pilot, we're also providing more fulsome information to members of the public who signed up for that service so that they'll get the reminder specific to each individual vehicle.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Just in regard to – I know you did mention it earlier – if you have five vehicles in the household and you went in to look for registration or to go renew, people are saying they're getting them in the mail but not sure which vehicle it is. You can identify each one?

**MR. DUTTON:** Yes, we can. The issue with the email notice was that if we had in the email notification more personal information about their vehicle and it was inadvertently sent to the wrong account then there would be a privacy breach. We do like a million customer contact

points a year in Motor Registration. As a result of the magnitude, if we have a lot of those smaller scale privacy breaches that are inadvertent through access, so we're taking some of these steps to also try to reduce that issue.

The fix for the people with multiple vehicles is through the MyGovNL pilot, but there's another thing. We also allow people to change their renewal from the date of the purchase of the vehicle to their birth month. That makes it easier for people to remember. That will likely be made a mandatory change in the future, but at this point it is a voluntary option that people can change it so that my birthday comes up in June or July, or whatever the month may be, that you'll have your renewal then rather than at some unusual month during the year.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Will the cost be offset then? If you changed it to six months earlier, would you be charged a six-month registration or – to get it back to the date, like your birthday.

**MR. DUTTON:** I think they prorate it, wouldn't they, Alan?

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Prorate?

**MR. DOODY:** Yes, the intent is to give the choice to the client.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Yeah, okay.

The other question on that is let's say a company – and I've dealt with cars so I'm a little bit more aware of it – had 40 vehicles and that is out there that they have 40 vehicles that are due for registration, you can't just go out and look at the licence plate to see which one it is, it's not as easy for those companies. Or have you run into any of that which caused that issue?

**MR. DUTTON:** I guess I would say we also had feedback from some people who said that when they had a larger fleet of vehicles, they also had the office set up in such a way to do more record-keeping on the management of their overall fleet, and not just their registration and renewals, but also around repairs and gas and all that sort of thing. I think more of that issue is people, more in that smaller business cohort, that maybe had five or 10 vehicles would probably

fall more into that, that don't necessarily have the back-office capacity to have been managing that.

The date of renewal is on the sticker of the vehicle, so the information is available to the consumer. We listened to that feedback and that's one of the reasons why the MyGovNL pilot was designed the way it was, to help to respond to those types of complaints. We're always listening to the public about service quality and how we can improve.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** One other question in regard to registration. Somebody that doesn't have the availability to – say an older person, I'm going to say over 65 or 70 that don't have the internet, don't have somebody to help them do this and it's not in their area, is there anything there to take care of that?

**MR. DUTTON:** We do have a toll-free number for Motor Registration and if people want to call in and get assistance by phone, they can certainly do that.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Will you then send that out if they request that, by any chance? Or is that not –

**MR. DUTTON:** I guess the challenge with the design of the initiative, of whether to do it voluntary or mandatory was that if you made it voluntary, that people would default to the lowest common denominator, what they were accustomed to. The only way to achieve the savings was to be able to make it a mandatory notification.

There are other tips that we've given to people about things they can do to help remind themselves; writing it on your calendar or what have you when you receive your sticker in the first instance. We now have gone through over 12 months of this initiative so there's been a year for people to become accustomed. The issue you raised about the tickets, anyone who got a ticket last year, I don't think they're going to get a ticket this year because if they are, they wouldn't have learned from the previous years' experience.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** No, I –

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Member's time has expired. You can certainly come back.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** We'll move forward now to the next speaker.

Is that Ms. Coffin?

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you very much.

Let's have a chat about Motor Vehicle Registration still. Can you update us on what measures you are considering to address the high number of uninsured, unregistered vehicles on the road?

**MR. DUTTON:** Sure.

As part of the insurance reform announcement, that was certainly something that the Public Utilities Board heard a lot about, and that we also heard about through our department-led consultations. One of the important measures that was taken in amendments to the *Insurance Companies Act*, there is an uninsured fund. That is where people access for benefits when they are not insured.

While that is certainly reasonably intended for passengers, cyclists, pedestrians and other people who wouldn't be expected to have insurance, people that are choosing not to buy insurance are currently able to access that fund if they're in an accident. As of August 1 they will not be able to access the uninsured fund for any heads of damage. It gives us the principle that all motorists are expected to share in the costs of the insurance system. If they expect to be able to benefit, then they need to be a full participant.

Also, the government had announced a plan to move to plate to owner. We currently have a plate-to-vehicle system and that's what our mainframe computer is designed to manage. The feedback we had from a lot of people in the public was that if we had a plate-to-owner system and then the plate was assigned to the owner of the vehicle – so when you sold your vehicle you took the plate off and that remained with you to assign to your new vehicle – that

would help to reduce the amount of uninsured drivers and unregistered drivers.

It's not foolproof from what we've heard from jurisdictions that have that system in place, but it's another means by which to help to close the net on the uninsured. That may end up being a multi-year exercise, but one of the things we are looking at is whether there is an option either to procure a pay-as-you-go system. Rather than to trying to budget an upfront cost to buy a new system, we may be able to do it on per-transaction basis with a willing vendor.

We may be also able to access a system from another province or territory and be able to make an intergovernmental arrangement or a joint procurement. We're looking at all of those options and that's certainly a high priority that the minister and her colleagues are very bullish about. We're also taking some steps to address the notification of Motor Registration when someone cancels insurance. Under the existing legislation, operators of ambulances, school buses, buses, commercial vehicles and other school transportation, if they cancel their insurance there is an obligation for the insurer to notify the Registrar of Motor Vehicles 10 days in advance of the expiry of the policy, but we don't collect that information on any kind of regular basis for private passenger vehicles.

That's also included in the legislative amendments, that there will be a requirement for insurers to report when there's a cancellation of insurance to the registrar. We'd have to provide some more prescription in the regulations that'll be drafted and published between now and January 1 on the frequency.

In the past there had been various piecemeal initiatives where various reports have been sent to the Insurance Bureau or their members to sort of do a spot check. Those sorts of enforcement blitz-type of measures can still be taken today, but we'd like to find a more regular – electronic means which would be the optimal outcome because certainly we've heard from the insurance industry that a paper-based process, given the volume of vehicles, was going to be very difficult to administer.

So, all of those measures and one that had been done earlier, the minister signed, the Canadian

Driver's Licence Agreement and that was an updated agreement with the other provinces and territories of Canada. So we've all agreed that when a driver moves from one jurisdiction to another, that now they are going to check their record in the other province for any outstanding fines or fees. That was a measure that we weren't all doing before.

All of those things, cumulatively, are intended to try to reduce the number of uninsured drivers and unregistered, unlicensed drivers as well.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you very much. That's very thorough.

Have the changes to the *Highway Traffic Act* concerning excessive speeding, stunting and street racing made a difference?

**MR. DUTTON:** It would be hard to say at this early stage, but certainly there have been a significant number of amendments undertaken over the last four years to address impaired driving, drug-impaired driving, excessive speeding and street racing. Certainly, there is a lot of public attention when those sorts of charges are laid. It's typically headline news every morning when we come in about the level of efforts and certainly the policing services are active out in the field to try to address that issue.

One of the things that was also announced during the insurance review was the adoption of traffic cameras. That's one of the things that government wants to do to try to extend that reach because police can't be everywhere. Even if you doubled the number of police there are still going to be places where people won't be able to cover. Traffic cameras would be a way to help to strengthen enforcement, so we will have to do some additional *Highway Traffic Act* amendments to give effect to that.

Transportation and Works had done a pilot project last year; they released the results last spring. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is also interested in putting them on the exterior of school buses to capture where people are passing a school bus when the stop sign is out. So those sorts of things are all part of a continued effort to try to improve highway safety.

**MS. COFFIN:** Excellent, thank you.

Are drivers still ignoring the requirement to slow down and change lanes when approaching first responders at the roadside? I know I am very cognizant of this.

**MR. DUTTON:** Well, the legislation was strengthened to provide more specific rules around how much they have to slow down, and there are penalties for that. So, again, that's an area of enforcement. Certainly, the pilot showed that there were a significant number of people that were speeding through posted traffic construction areas, so it's a very significant concern when people's lives are being put at risk; passing school buses the same thing.

We're certainly doing what we can there and also through driver education to ensure that those sorts of things are covered in the driver licensing program.

**MS. COFFIN:** Excellent, thank you.

Let's stay with the driving theme. Is the department looking at the regulations around heavy trucks and other heavy equipment that more modern equipment can be used in the province? I say this because I think the standards in Quebec are slightly different than they are in Labrador or here in Newfoundland and Labrador and that means that vehicles coming over from Quebec into Labrador, transporting back and forth, may not be able to be used on the roads. Are you familiar with that at all?

**MR. DOODY:** There are several MOUs. There's a national MOU and there's actually an Atlantic MOU for vehicle weight and dimensions, and that also covers vehicle configurations under our vehicle regulations. Those standards are adopted across all jurisdictions. The only consideration would be for new technology and weight would be through our consultation with Transportation and Works, with the department, on the ability of our infrastructure to support heavier weights, excessive weights, but I'm not aware of any type of technology that's being used anywhere in Canada that we would not permit.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, but you are aware of the infrastructure, I guess, constraints associated

with it, because if you have a heavier vehicle or you have a wider vehicle on a road that is already pitted by ruts because of maybe studded tires or whatever else is going on, and I know that's a Transportation and Works question, but in terms of taking those regulations coming out of your department and then considering what the alternatives might be or what the implications might be.

**MR. DOODY:** Yes, there's a process in place for anything that's excessive, whether that's load or dimension, and it actually isn't a decision made just within Service NL, it's also made in conjunction with the bridge office from the Department of Transportation and Works before any of those special permits are issued to allow those vehicles to move over our highways.

**MS. COFFIN:** Excellent. That is very good to know.

Maybe I can fit a question in here. Did we finish everything in Motor Registration Division? I think we did.

Support Services, 3.2.01, I noticed we're down a little in Salaries there. Is that due to attrition as well or –?

Your severance was quite low. Normally, I see the severance in the revised but you seem to be a little bit lower there in that section.

**MR. DUTTON:** The decreases in projected revised was associated with just vacancies throughout the year and for 2019-20, the salary details comparison, year over year, reflects two fewer filled positions. So, that's the decrease of \$86,100.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay. Good.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The Member's time has expired. We can certainly come back.

Are there any other speakers for this section? Any questions?

Okay. Who is going next?

Loyola.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** We are back under Motor Vehicle Registration, right?

**CHAIR:** The whole subhead there in the –

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Under Supplies, that's under 3.1.01, an additional \$22,500 is budgeted compared to the budget of 2018. I'm just wondering why that is and what's included.

**MR. DUTTON:** Sure.

So, on the Supplies, the increase reflected the cost of paper and toner and the addition of eight new printers for the centralized vehicle registration printing. So, again, that's the print-on-demand stickers that are being printed from our Mount Pearl office.

For the year ahead on Supplies, the increase over the previous budgeted amount was, again, the toner and eight new printers for the centralized printing, and also an annual renewal increase for licence plate costs, as reflected in the standing offer agreement.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** I understand that the government is continuing to have licences printed in Ontario and that people have to wait for them to be mailed back. Is this a permanent practice now or just something that is temporary?

**MR. DUTTON:** Well, I don't know if I would use the term permanent. We have a contract that was arrived at through a joint procurement with the Maritime provinces, and part of the review that all of us had done came to the conclusion that the only way to achieve some long-term savings was to have centralized printing. So, we joined together on that initiative. I think the contract length is five years.

Of course, then there would be a renewal clause, and then we would have to go back to market at that point, but it would be unlikely to go backwards because the industry standard is centralized printing, which everywhere in North America has a centralized printing location. There was no local bidder in the Atlantic provinces and no printing plant that could handle that sort of job outside of that.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.



Under Purchased Services, an additional \$24,100 is budgeted compared to 2018. Why and what is included in that in Purchased Services?

**MR. DUTTON:** So, in terms of the projected revised, there was \$75,000 for printing of new vehicle registration permits for the print on demand. That was offset somewhat by a lower than anticipated cost for shredding services, which was \$14,700. Secure cash pickups were down \$8,000. The calibration of the portable and fixed weigh scales was down \$15,000; we had bought new portable weigh scales last year. So, that probably helps explain why our maintenance costs are less, because there is newer equipment.

Security and lock services were down \$4,500 and Moneris fees, \$10,000, and there was some funding transferred to Grants and Subsidies to cover some other costs during the year.

For the new year, we have an annualization of the printing costs for the print-on-demand stickers; \$80,000 that the minister mentioned in her opening remarks was transferred from Transportation and Works to help cover this increase. They had savings in their mailroom from not having to do the mail outs. So we have booked that money here so there's no net impact of that \$80,000 on government. There was also \$55,900 in savings, again, due to lower rates for secure cash pickup costs and for the driver licence cards.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

Under Property, Furnishings and Equipment, an additional \$20,500 was spent under the revised last year. Can you explain that?

**MR. DUTTON:** Sure.

So we had an Occupational Health and Safety order to acquire portable eyewash stations for the fixed weigh scales. That was an \$8,000 expense. We also had eight new printers for the print-on-demand stickers, so that was another \$9,000. A new customer flow system for our Corner Brook office was \$2,500.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Were these eight new printers the same as in Supplies up above?

**MR. DUTTON:** Yeah, I think the cost for the equipment is in the PFE. The toners are in the Supplies.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

**MR. DUTTON:** Yeah.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Grants and Subsidies, what's included in that?

**MR. DUTTON:** Grants and Subsidies, again, some of this is memberships, so it's a bit of a misnomer, but there is a \$10,000 grant in this line item for SafetyNL, and that's for the Lids for Kids program, bicycle helmets. Our memberships in the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators and the International Registration Plan are all charged to this item, so that accounts for the other \$31,100.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

The Revenue - Federal, what is included and why the decrease as revised?

**MR. DUTTON:** The federal revenue is offsetting costs as part of a National Safety Code program. In terms of the changes, the decrease relative to the budget in projected revised was just the actual cost of the National Safety Code project. The increase in the new year will reflect the increase in Canadian Council of Motor Transport association annual fees.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** All right.

Under Revenue - Provincial, what is included in that one?

**MR. DUTTON:** The provincial revenue here are funds collected from customers to offset the costs of expedited delivery. So similar to what we're doing in Vital Statistics that we discussed earlier, people choose the option of having something delivered sooner, than they can pay for that cost, and so there's offsetting revenue for that.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

Just a different question. What role will Service NL have now that the pilot project on the highway cameras has concluded?

**MR. DUTTON:** The *Highway Traffic Act* is legislation the minister administers. So it would be expected that if we bring legislation to the House that our minister will be the lead on those legislative amendments and any regulations that would support that. We'd obviously be working very closely with the Department of Justice and Public Safety because one of the objectives would be to ensure that it's written in such a way that it will be easier to secure convictions in court.

So, how it's designed around, for example, how often would a traffic camera have to be calibrated for it to be deemed to be providing an accurate reflection of the speed recorded? Those sorts of things would be considerations, and the realities of what equipment is procured is where Transportation and education will give us some useful feedback as well.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** I guess other provinces would be using that as well, would they? I know they use it in the States for tickets. Would they use it in Canada in that kinds of things? Is that something that —?

**MR. DUTTON:** Yeah. It is used in other provinces and some municipalities across the country use it as well.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

Will Motor Registration, Service NL have a role in the pilot project that has been planned to deal with the outstanding fines from unlicensed, unregistered and uninsured drivers? Will it be entirely the Department of Justice?

**MR. DUTTON:** That would be with the Department of Justice and Public Safety. Once the fine has been administered, it's that departments responsibility to collect it and they will pursue whatever other means they can to have the debt repaid whether in cash or otherwise.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Is the government still paying to have faulty licence plates replaced?

**MR. DUTTON:** Pardon me?

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Is the government still paying to have the faulty licence plates replaced?

**MR. DUTTON:** We allow for people to bring their peeling plates back free of charge, and that continues to be the case. We have waved that fee. If a plate is otherwise damaged, there is a replacement fee, but for peeling plates, they can be replaced free of charge.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

**MR. DUTTON:** The taxpayer is basically paying for it.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Yeah.

Under 3.2.01, Transportation and Communications, \$21,000 less was spent last year than was budgeted, but \$20,900 is back in the budget.

Just wondering if you can explain that?

**MR. DUTTON:** Are we on 3.2.01?

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** 3.2.01, yes.

**MR. DUTTON:** Okay.

In terms of last fiscal year, the decrease was just a result of reduced travel due to vacancies in this division. For the year ahead, again, there's just a zero-based adjustment that we weren't getting back the same amount of money as we had the year before. That's another area that we'll continue to monitor for potential future savings.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** All right.

Under that same section, the Revenue - Provincial, what is included in that?

**MR. DUTTON:** The provincial revenue are fees required for building accessibility plan reviews; fire and life safety plan reviews; design review; registration and inspection of boiler and pressure vessel systems; pressure fittings and repair procedures; licensing of mechanical contractors; propane gas and medical gas installer certificates; testing of pressure welders and

brazers and procedures; the review and approval of sewage treatment systems over 4,546 litres per day and unserviced subdivisions; permits to alter or install pressure systems; and design, review, registration and inspection of elevator and amusement ride installations.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay, thank you.

**CHAIR:** Your time has expired.

Are we ready to vote on this subhead, or do we have any further questions?

**MS. COFFIN:** We're doing all get three, right?

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**MS. COFFIN:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Okay, Ms. Coffin?

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you.

Support Services, the Mobility Impaired Parking Regulations were amended last year to raise the fine. Has this made a difference? I think this is parking in the blue zone; thou shalt not park in the blue zone?

**MR. DUTTON:** Well, I guess it's a relatively new fine, but what we had found, which was what formed its adoption, was where places like St. John's and Mount Pearl had adopted the higher \$400 to \$700 fine, that they got an increase in compliance, so actually revenue was impacted as a result of that.

We don't collect the fines so I don't have any data on how that's worked province-wide –

**MS. COFFIN:** Right.

**MR. DUTTON:** – but we basically adopted that same regime throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

**MS. COFFIN:** That's excellent.

Now we only have to get people not idling in front of the parking spaces out here.

**MR. DUTTON:** Yes.

**MS. COFFIN:** The *Building Accessibility Regulations* were also changed to require power doors, more accessible parking, accessible apartments and accessible washrooms. Have you seen improvements?

**MR. DUTTON:** Well, it's a requirement, so whenever a developer wants to undertake some work on a building or put up a new building, then they are required to apply either to have their plan reviewed or to seek an exemption.

Anything that was built before 1981 is exempted, unless the total cumulative renovations add up to more than 50 per cent of the current value of the property. So there are some buildings that are exempted.

We certainly encourage people, even if they're exempted from the regulations, to look at making investments to help make their buildings more accessible, which will hopefully increase their customer base and would be more inclusive for everyone.

Certainly, that's how we are enforcing it, is that when their plans come in then they're reviewed to ensure that there is compliance on any new builds or any renovations. They're just given that feedback. If it's not a part of the plan, they're told to adjust their plans to incorporate the compliance with the regulation.

**MS. COFFIN:** Does the regulation include all doors that can be accessible to the public do have wheelchair accessibility associated with it?

I say this because quite often I take my nephew around, and he's in a wheelchair, and it's very, very difficult to get a wheelchair and a person through a door when doors aren't accessible. I find that in some buildings that we've gone in, some doors are wheelchair accessible, but not all of the doors in that particular building are. So you have to go to a particular entrance and you have to get ...

**MR. DUTTON:** So for buildings that, again, are subject to the act that don't have an exemption, then they are supposed to be accessible throughout. That was one of the changes in the regulations –

**MS. COFFIN:** Right.

**MR. DUTTON:** – that the minister had announced that came into effect St. George’s Day last year.

So, again, unless they have an exemption from being an older building, then they’re obliged to come into compliance. I think that was a problem that sometimes the first door had a door opener, but then the next door did not –

**MS. COFFIN:** Yes.

**MR. DUTTON:** – and so that wasn’t really truly accessible.

**MS. COFFIN:** You get trapped in that and you can’t get out, right.

**MR. DUTTON:** Yes.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, good, thank you. That’s going to be great.

Regional Services, where in the province are Government Service Centres co-located with Service Canada offices, and are there future plans for co-location?

**MR. DUTTON:** We’re not co-located with Service Canada. We did look at a possible co-location in St. Anthony. Based on the cost evaluation, we would’ve had to pay a certain amount of money to do renovations to their leased space, and their lease was expiring within a year anyway. So we had no certainty that they would still be in there.

I think the current plan is to look at alternate space in the College of the North Atlantic, but, in general, no, we’re not co-located with Service Canada.

What we have done in terms of co-location is to combine with other government offices. Our new space in Labrador City, they’re not actually changing location, but other government departments are locating in the same building and they’re going to have some shared space, so we reduce the overall footprint of the location.

Same thing in Gander. They’re in the mall, they’re going to stay in the same place, but some of their space will be shaved off for other departments. Transportation and Works manages

all that so you won’t find the spend on the leased space in our budget. It’s all been moved into Transportation and Works.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay. Good to know. I look forward to that, too.

Let’s go on to OH&S, Occupation Health and Safety Inspections, what was done in 2018 to address the relatively higher injury rates in municipal government, health care, fishing and construction industries?

**MR. DUTTON:** I’m sorry, I’m not sure I’m following the question.

**MS. COFFIN:** We noticed that there was relatively higher injury rates with municipal government, health care, fishing and construction workers. We’re just wondering if anything had been done to address those.

**MR. DUTTON:** Well, the division develops an inspection plan each year. They focus on the areas that are high risk and where they have receive complaints and those sorts of things. So, whether it’s enforcement blitzes or doing things on a regional or central basis, that’s the sorts of information that informs their inspections yearly.

One of the areas like the fish processing sector was something that’s had some public attention recently, and they’ve been out to inspect at least 22 of the 60 plants up to a month ago.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** This also would be with WorkplaceNL and the safety sector councils.

**MS. COFFIN:** Yes.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** So, that’s the area that you’re discussing right there.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** OHS and WorkplaceNL, of course, work collaboratively together. As my deputy minister just alluded to, the fish processing and harvesting, we are, in fact – with the safety sector councils and the fish processing that you’ve heard in the media recently, there’s difficulty in forming that safety

sector council because the employer and the employee – the worker – they have to come together to do it.

So, right now, we're presently working on additional options to try to move forward, and WorkplaceNL, with OHS, are continuing on with educational component to ensure that it's covered in the plants for the employees while we're waiting to develop the safety sector council, which developed in the fish harvesting but didn't develop in the processing.

I had a meeting this morning, I'll have another meeting on Friday, and we've come to the conclusion that if the employer and employee will not come together, we will continue to put resources in from WorkplaceNL to address the concerns.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay. Excellent.

Thank you.

Are there any plans for a webpage, like the consumer information webpage, that will publish workplace health and safety violations?

**MR. DUTTON:** I think we're aggregating the announcements on Occupational Health and Safety charges through the Consumer Protection website. Certainly, anytime that a charge is laid, there's a public announcement made to make people aware of that.

**MS. COFFIN:** Great, thank you.

When was the last statutory review of the *Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act*?

**MS. GAMBIN WALSH:** I mentioned earlier, we are in the process now of getting ready to announce the next review in, hopefully, 2019. We are overdue because the legislation states that it's supposed to be five years from the last one, so we're overdue, technically, from August 2016. A significant amount of the recommendations from the previous review have been put in place over the last three years, specifically. Right now, we are trying to work through – it was prior to the election, so I just picked that up again to try to get it done.

**MS. COFFIN:** Good to hear.

**MS. GAMBIN WALSH:** So we can announce (inaudible).

**MS. COFFIN:** What is WorkplaceNL's current assessment rate for employers?

**MS. GAMBIN WALSH:** It's \$1.69 per 100 right now but that's temporary for this year. It is \$1.90 per hundred.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, thank you.

You say it's temporary, it's \$1.69?

**MS. GAMBIN WALSH:** Yeah, because in order to balance the injury fund, because there's an excess amount of money, WorkplaceNL announced back in December that there would be a one-year reduction (inaudible).

**MS. COFFIN:** Right.

**MS. GAMBIN WALSH:** It will be reassessed again in the fall. It may have to come up again, not necessarily to \$1.90, it could be \$1.80; it could be \$1.85. This assessment will be done in the fall.

**MS. COFFIN:** Is that fund – I guess it's in a trust – but is earning any interest?

**MS. GAMBIN WALSH:** Yes.

**MS. COFFIN:** How safe is the investment? I would assume very, very safe.

**MS. GAMBIN WALSH:** Yeah, very, very safe. That is how the funding actually grows is through investment and employer contribution.

**MS. COFFIN:** Right. What's the funded ratio? Is it 110?

**MS. GAMBIN WALSH:** Yes, 110 is what we maintain and we're at 119 right now.

**MS. COFFIN:** Right, so you're just bringing it back down.

**MS. GAMBIN WALSH:** Yeah, we were up to 134.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, great, thank you.

**MS. GAMBIN WALSH:** But we've also introduced PTSD coverage, so we have to wait to assess to see the cost of that on the system.

**MS. COFFIN:** Right, of course, that makes sense.

Quick question: Can we have a list of the organizations and amounts of grants for 2018? This is Assistance to Outside Agencies that I'm looking at there. Why was that grant money not fully spent? You didn't spend \$4,000 out of \$9,000.

**MR. DUTTON:** The total grants was a smaller amount. Funding was provided to the Newfoundland and Labrador Occupational Safety & Health Association, Canadian Society of Safety Engineering, SafetyNL, Canadian Standards Association, Newfoundland and Labrador Employers' Council, North American Occupational Safety and Health Week, Newfoundland and Labrador Construction Safety Association, Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour, SafetyNet and the rest was, as you referenced, unallocated.

It's pretty standard that they do every year.

**MS. COFFIN:** I'm just impressed how far the \$5,000 went.

**MR. DUTTON:** Yeah, it's based on the requests that come in.

**MS. COFFIN:** Yeah, okay, of course, but still you listed off about five or six agencies there, probably more, and it was only \$5,000 so someone is making good –

**MR. DUTTON:** They have other sources of funding and some of the safety sector councils, I think, receive funding through WorkplaceNL.

**MS. COFFIN:** I'm just impressed that this much money went that far.

Okay, that's all my questions.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Anyone else have questions for this particular subhead?

Mr. Lane.

**MR. LANE:** Thank you.

I guess it falls under Support Services, 3.2.01, although it's not a line item question, it relates to accessibility, persons with disabilities and so on.

I'm well aware of the 1981 rule. Has there been any thought though – I understand the rationale for – I suppose it was a random date that was chosen, but I understand if you have an old building, which was the thought, I suppose, and it was just going to be unrealistic to make it accessible, like an old courthouse or something like that or whatever, but if you have an old building that's just a square box, for lack of a better term, no different than a building that was built in 2010, other than the fact that it was built before then, it's just as easy to put in an accessible door in that building as it is to put in a brand new modern building. Why would you not adjust the rules to say, instead of 1981, it should be where it can be demonstrated by the owner of the building that it would cause financial hardship or something like that?

Absolute financial hardship for an old building, sure, but a building just because it's old but that can be made accessible just as easy as a new one, no additional cost, no additional work or effort, then I don't know why they get of the hook at 1981.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Very important point; a very valid point.

Right now, the Building Accessibility Advisory Board will be meeting again on July 30 and 31. We're consulting with the business community, because we've done significant consultations with the disability community, so we're consulting with the business community now to arrive at, as you indicated, so that expense is not exorbitant –

**MR. LANE:** Hardship.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** – the hardship – to try to define and determine.

As we move forward with the act, hopefully, in the fall of this year or in the spring of 2020, we will be debating those type of issues here on the floor.

**MR. LANE:** Awesome. Excellent. Just what I wanted to hear.

I guess another question under this category is, right now, to my knowledge, there's only one person in St. John's – one inspector, if you will – that you call. I know I've heard it from ministers in the past, you can call the RCMP and stuff like that in other parts of the province. I'm not sure how engaged they are in any of this stuff. I don't suspect they are too engaged, that's my thought.

Is there any thought to, if not expending staff – at one point in time, there had been a thought of working with, like, CODNL or something, and giving them some abilities to go out and inspect. Are there any thoughts of doing something to increase inspectors or inspection services? Again, it may be farmed out to somebody but – to increase inspections?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** This is definitely an important topic on my agenda, I can assure you, so as I work through this piece of legislation, that is one of the concerns that I have identified.

**MR. LANE:** Yeah.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** We are on a complaints-driven basis right now.

**MR. LANE:** Absolutely.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** We have had significant complaints that we have addressed. So, as we are working through this legislation, it is getting more awareness out in the general public and people are complaining. We've had a number of complaints about some buildings regarding their blue zones –

**MR. LANE:** Yeah.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** – where they are, the accessibility. As you know, we changed the blue zones over here at the Confederation Building.

**MR. LANE:** Yes.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** So, I just think as the awareness component gets out there, the complaints will go up, and as we move through this act and make these changes, in actual fact, we may have to hire more staff, or reallocate more staff within the division to this area.

**MR. LANE:** Yes. Okay. Good.

On that issue, as well, I know there was a pilot project that happened a couple of years ago, an acquaintance of mine and yours was involved with the schools.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes.

**MR. LANE:** I believe, as a result, all of the schools on the Avalon Peninsula are now accessible because there was some sort of a pilot initiative to go out, inspect them –

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes.

**MR. LANE:** – and bring them all up to scratch. That is wonderful. Is there any intention of applying that now to other parts of the province or to other government facilities besides schools on a province-wide – because it's one thing for private employers to not be up to scratch –

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes.

**MR. LANE:** – but it is absolutely reprehensible, to my mind, for public buildings not to be up to scratch. Granted, I know there are a lot of them and you cannot do it all overnight, but it's something that needs to be – as I'm sure you would agree.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes.

**MR. LANE:** I'm just wondering what is going to be done to try to bring other public buildings, outside the St. John's area, up to scratch.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** So, with the Department of Transportation and Works, because they're responsible for infrastructure –

**MR. LANE:** Yeah.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** – if you just look around you right here, this room is not accessible.

**MR. LANE:** Yeah.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** I can't get to where you are if I'm using a chair, right?

**MR. LANE:** Yeah.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** So as we move forward, as the 40 MHAs in this House of Assembly, I think we all hold a degree of advocacy towards making the act so that Newfoundland and Labrador is more accessible.

So, yes, this government, in fact, does – and we are working towards trying to make things more accessible. Like I said, as we bring the act to the House of Assembly here to debate it, hopefully, that will be an outcome.

**MR. LANE:** Excellent. Good.

I want to move on to OHS now, a couple of questions there.

I know there was an issue, I'm wondering is it still an issue with Occupational Health and Safety inspectors in Labrador. There was supposed to be one or two positions at one time, it used to be in Labrador, and I know then we had issues with – we had nobody in Labrador and they were flying them in and flying them out and so on.

Are we still doing that or do we have somebody now in Labrador?

**MR. DUTTON:** The office in Labrador City is fully staffed, or in Wabush, pardon me.

**MR. LANE:** Okay.

**MR. DUTTON:** Yes, and it has been for at least a year and half, two years.

**MR. LANE:** Okay.

**MR. DUTTON:** Yeah.

**MR. LANE:** Okay, I know it definitely was an issue because I can remember asking about it.

You touched on the fish processors council, or sector council, whatever, that was another one that's been on the go for a long time. I know that

the fish harvesters came on board pretty quickly through the FFAW, but it was the processors that didn't want to get involved. At one point in time, they were even offered some money to get it started and so on and they never even took government up on that offer.

So, I guess, as a comment, I'm glad to see that you're taking action to at least get out into the plants, and if you have to do it yourself, they're not willing to come to the table to make it happen – I hope they will come to the table, but if not, I'm glad to see it because, of course, a lot repetitive strain and soft tissue injury, opportunities for that in those processing plants, because you're doing so many repetitive tasks and so on. It's damp conditions and everything else. So, just as a point, I guess, just to say that I'm glad to see you're doing that and I hope you're going to continue.

The final question I have in OHS relates to workers' compensation and occupational disease.

If you look at Ontario, I know with their workers' comp system they have a lot more in-house expertise for dealing with issues around occupational disease. I believe there were even outside expertise that had to be brought in on a couple of occasions relating to the Marystown Shipyard, which I'm sure you're familiar with the issues there.

I know there will be a statutory review and I will bring it up there too, but I'm just wondering, is there any thought around looking at having more appropriate resources at the commission to deal with claims for occupational diseases which is very specialized.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes, very.

You just mentioned the Marystown Shipyard so I certainly will address that one. In actual fact, mesothelioma, silicosis and asbestosis are covered. Under the act right now, WorkplaceNL can in fact form a medical committee, which would include three oncologists, to address that particular situation. They want an intake clinic, which is people coming together just to talk about your problems and discuss your problems, but in actual fact the act covers the medical



clinic. We have offered the medical clinic and have not received a response back.

As it comes to occupational disease and death specifically, the number of deaths is up right now. Of course, it's back to the '70s and the '60s and we're seeing the impact of it right now. We do have access to resources to deal with occupational disease.

**MR. LANE:** Okay.

But, right now, in terms of the resources that you have, is that in-house resources, or that's just bringing in expertise from the Mainland?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** No, we do have some in-house resources but, also, as I indicated, if we were to do a medical clinic specifically for Marystown, we would need to consult; we would need to get three oncologists. We may need to bring them in from out of the province, or there may be someone within the province that specializes, but we would seek them out to form that particular committee.

**MR. LANE:** Okay.

Yes, it's happening in Marystown, but as you said, these things are something that builds up and it takes time before it manifests itself with a lot of these industries. Back in the day, when personal protective equipment wasn't being used, or not used properly, and there weren't proper mechanical controls in terms of ventilation and air handling and all that stuff, a lot of it comes home to roost many years later.

With a lot of these industries, as you say, in the '60s and '70s, now it's all starting to come to the surface. Obviously, it's something that there is going to be a little more, perhaps, attention, more focus on that area.

**CHAIR:** Okay, the Member's time has expired.

**MR. LANE:** Thank you.

That's it. I'm done.

**CHAIR:** Okay, good. He's done.

Are there any further speakers to this subhead?

Mr. O'Driscoll.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Thanks.

Under section 3.2.02, under Regional Services, under Salaries, \$22,000 less was spent last year than budgeted, and an additional \$14,300 is included in this year's budget over the revised amount. Can you explain that variance for us, please?

**MR. DUTTON:** Yes, the projected revised number was lower due to some vacancies that occurred throughout the year.

The budget for 2019-'20 just reflects planned savings to balance the department's overall salary plan. If you look at the salary details one year to the next you'll see three fewer filled positions than the previous year, but it is anticipated that they would all be filled over the course of the year.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

Under Employee Benefits, we went through this already but where are the workers' comp benefits restated?

**MR. DUTTON:** That's under Executive Support.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Just a couple of more there now.

Under 3.3.01, under Salaries, \$259,800 less was spent than budgeted last year. Can you explain that decrease?

**MR. DUTTON:** The revised number reflects – we had vacancies during the year and we had a couple of retirements, so not all of the positions were filled.

Comparing the salary details, we had 46 positions filled in this year's salary details; it was the same number the year prior. We have a budget here to fund 51 positions, so it's still intended that we're going to continue to proceed on with recruitment.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Under Supplies, what explains a \$19,000 decrease in revised last year and an additional \$19,700 in this year's budget?

**MR. DUTTON:** The decrease in the revised was lower than anticipated subscription costs for the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety inquiry services. For the year ahead, the increase just reflects the zero-based budget adjustment based on the expected costs.

The Supplies would include office supplies, uniforms and protective clothing, inspection and testing supplies, promotional materials, materials and supplies for training and food items for meetings.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** One last one there. Under Professional Services, what explains the \$13,500 decrease in the revised last year? What is included?

**MR. DUTTON:** That is lower than anticipated Professional Services requirements due to the new definition of professional services under the *Public Procurement Act*, which is just limited to legal services and certain banking services. Also, there were fewer court proceedings than anticipated.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** One more. Under Revenue - Provincial, what is included?

**MR. DUTTON:** The provincial revenue is the recouping of costs from the WorkplaceNL fund. One hundred per cent of the cost of occupational health and safety work of the department is charged back to WorkplaceNL.

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay, that's good for me.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Are there any further speakers to this? Okay, good to go?

I'll call the Clerk for the subheads, please.

**CLERK:** 3.1.01 to 3.4.02 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** 3.1.01 to 3.4.02 inclusive.

Shall they carry?

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against?

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.1.01 through 3.4.02 carried.

**CLERK:** The total.

**CHAIR:** Shall the total carry?

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against?

Carried.

On motion, Department of Service NL, total heads, carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall I report the Estimates?

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against?

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Department of Service NL and Public Procurement Agency carried without amendment.

**CHAIR:** A reminder, the next Government Services Committee is tomorrow morning here in the Chamber.

Can I get a motion to adjourn, please?

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Those against?

Carried.

Thank you everyone.

On motion, the Committee adjourned.