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**Proceedings of the Standing Committee on  
Resources**

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Department of Immigration, Skills and Labour

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## **RESOURCE COMMITTEE**

Department of Immigration, Skills and Labour

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Chair: Christopher Mitchelmore, MHA

Vice-Chair: Jordan Brown, MHA

Members: Paul Dinn, MHA  
Carol Anne Haley, MHA  
Pam Parsons, MHA  
Chris Tibbs, MHA  
Perry Trimper, MHA  
Sherry Gambin-Walsh, MHA

Clerk of the Committee: Mark Jerrett

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Appearing:

### **Department of Immigration, Skills and Labour**

Hon. Gerry Byrne, MHA, Minister

Renzi Cej, Director of Immigration & Multiculturalism

Debbie Dunphy, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services & Policy

Steve French, Departmental Controller

Bradley George, Executive Assistant

Deanne Howe, Manager of Operations, Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Review Division

Cynthia King, Director of Income Support

Fiona Langor, Deputy Minister

Walt Mavin, Assistant Deputy Minister, Employment, Skills & Regional Services

Tansy Mundon, Director of Communications

Dana Spurrell, Assistant Deputy Minister, Immigration, Workforce Development & Labour

### **Also Present**

Alison Coffin, MHA

Hon. Bernard Davis, MHA, Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation

Hon. Lisa Dempster, MHA, Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation

Craig Pardy, MHA

Scott Fleming, Researcher, Third Party Office

Brad Russell, Director of Policy & Research, Official Opposition Office

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Bernard Davis, MHA for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, substitutes for Pam Parsons, MHA for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Lisa Dempster, MHA for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, substitutes for Sherri Gambin-Walsh, MHA for Placentia - St. Mary's.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Alison Coffin, MHA for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, substitutes for Jordan Brown, MHA for Labrador West.

The Committee met at 9:07 a.m. in the Assembly Chamber.

**CHAIR (Mitchelmore):** Good morning, everyone.

We'll start the Estimates meeting for Immigration, Skills and Labour.

Just before we turn things over to Minister Byrne for any introductory remarks, I'll just remind everyone, for the purposes of *Hansard*, that when you speak to identify yourself and wait for the light before you speak. If you need to, if the light is not coming on, just wave. This is being recorded. It's not being webcast, but the Broadcast is certainly watching the proceedings this morning.

If you're going to be moving around the Chamber you need to wear your mask as part of our COVID policy.

With that, I would like to ask Members of the Committee and the minister to introduce his team.

**MR. BYRNE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Delighted to be here, and thank you for everyone assembled. I'll begin by allowing each and every member of the Immigration, Skills and Labour team to self-introduce.

I am Gerry Byrne, Minister of Immigration, Skills and Labour, and a minister who also is responsible for the reporting of WorkplaceNL. This is an autonomous agency, of course. I'll ask

for leave in a minute if Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Review, and elements thereof, could be heard first.

With that said, thank you very much. I'll turn it over now to start with Fiona Langor.

**CHAIR:** Can we get Fiona Langor? She's sitting in the Minister of Education's chair. If we could get the light on. In the Minister of Education's seat, could we get the light for introductions?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**CHAIR:** Oh, it's not working, okay. The light is not working in that chair.

**MS. LANGOR:** Good morning.

Fiona Langor, Deputy Minister.

**CHAIR:** Can we get the light on for the Justice and Public Safety chair?

**CLERK (Jerrett):** They're having technical issues. He's wondering if you could take a short recess.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

We're having technical issues, so we'll recess for five minutes.

### Recess

**CHAIR:** Thank you, everyone.

It's now 9:30. We'll convene our Estimates Committee meeting for Immigration, Skills and Labour. My apologies for the technical issues we had earlier, but we will go right into introductions.

Minister Byrne, you had introduced yourself.

**MR. BYRNE:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Do you want to take things away to hand off to your staff?

**MR. BYRNE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The motto on the coat of arms of the Department of Immigration, Skills and Labour reads: Adversity meets with resiliency. We're experiencing that very same motto today, consistent with our approach.

I think we should introduce members of the executive team of Immigration, Skills and Labour, Mr. Chair. Again, I am Gerry Byrne, Minister of Immigration, Skills and Labour and also minister who is responsible for the reporting of workplace health and safety, WorkplaceNL.

With that said, I don't know if we should move laterally. Fiona Langor, our deputy minister, has moved to meet the microphone challenge in the back of me; Dana Spurrell is to my immediate left. Should we move that way?

**CHAIR:** We can go to the left, yes.

**MS. SPURRELL:** Dana Spurrell, Assistant Deputy Minister of Immigration, Workforce Development and Labour.

Good morning.

**MR. GEORGE:** Bradley George, I'm the minister's Executive Assistant.

**CHAIR:** We'll go to Minister Loveless's desk if the light will come on.

**MS. LANGOR:** Fiona Langor, Deputy Minister.

**MR. MAVIN:** Good morning.

Walt Mavin, Assistant Deputy Minister of Employment, Skills and Regional Services.

**MR. CEJ:** Good morning.

Remzi Cej, Director of the Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism.

**MS. HOWE:** Deanne Howe, Manager of Operations with the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Review Division.

**MR. FRENCH:** Steve French, Departmental Controller.

**MS. DUNPHY:** Debbie Dunphy, Assistant Deputy Minister of Corporate Services and Policy.

**MS. MUNDON:** Tansy Mundon, Director of Communications.

**MS. KING:** Cynthia King, Director of Income Support.

**CHAIR:** Now we'll move to Mr. Dinn.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Paul Dinn, Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**CHAIR:** Ms. Coffin.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you.

Alison Coffin, Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi and Leader of the New Democratic Party.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Lisa Dempster, MHA for the beautiful District of Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

**MR. DAVIS:** Bernard Davis, Minister of – I was going to say advanced education, skills and labour but that's in a previous life – Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation. I'm happy to be here today.

**MR. TRIMPER:** Perry Trimper, MHA for Lake Melville.

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

**MR. PARDY:** Craig Pardy, MHA, District of Bonavista. I'm here as an observer.

**MR. RUSSELL:** Brad Russell, staff with the Office of the Official Opposition.

**MR. FLEMING:** Scott Fleming, Researcher, Third Party caucus office.

**CHAIR:** Okay, I thank everybody for convening this morning. During the recess we had discussed that we would start with subhead 6.1.01, Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Review.

I ask the Clerk to call the subhead.

**CLERK:** 6.1.01.

**CHAIR:** Shall 6.1.01 carry?

I move to Mr. Dinn for his line of questioning.

**MR. P. DINN:** This should be quick; I won't keep you here long.

Starting first with Salaries, I see that there was approximately \$65,000 less spent. Can you explain the decrease in Salaries?

**MS. HOWE:** Sorry (inaudible) question.

**MR. DINN:** Approximately \$65,000 less was spent last year. That was less than what was budgeted in actuals.

**CHAIR:** We go to Deanne Howe, if we could have her light.

When you speak, if you could say your name just for *Hansard* purposes.

**MS. HOWE:** That was due to a couple of vacancies we had throughout the year and a delay in some of the recruiting processes.

**MR. DINN:** Thank you.

Deanne, you're going to get a quick number of questions there and probably similar answers.

**MS. HOWE:** Sure.

**MR. DINN:** Looking at Transportation and Communications, again, there was a substantial reduction there; in fact, less than half was spent. Can you explain that as well?

**MS. HOWE:** Yes, much of our travel and communications is done near the end of the year. We don't do a lot of travel in January and February, so March is a significant travel month for us. We had scheduled for all four full-time review commissioners to be on the road. Because of a combination of the significant weather event we had in late February and then COVID, it suspended travel at that time.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Under Professional Services, we're looking at a similar reduction of about \$61,000 compared to last year.

**MS. HOWE:** In the past year, the \$75,000 allows for the appointment of part-time review commissioners. Last year, there were three, in total, full-time review commissioners appointed. We had one part-time review commissioner and three vacancies. The \$75,000 allows for the appointment of either a full-time or additional part-time review commissioners.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Moving right along, Purchased Services: Again, you had budgeted \$45,000 last year and the actuals were a little over \$12,000. Can you explain that discrepancy?

**MS. HOWE:** We had less transcription services than we had anticipated and we also had much less hotel rooms due to the slowdown due to COVID and the suspension of travel. The bookings for rooms out of town, we travel a lot out of the regions in the month of March, and that did not happen due to COVID.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Looking at Property, Furnishings and Equipment, I'm seeing approximately \$2,300 less spent. Again, an explanation for that, please.

**MS. HOWE:** That was due to many items being on back order when COVID occurred. There were a lot of things on order and they didn't come in until the new fiscal year.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

You mentioned in some of your responses you talked to full-time commissioners, you had four. How are we doing with the number of commissioners when I think the full complement would be about approximately seven?

**MS. HOWE:** The legislation allows up to seven, yes.

**MR. P. DINN:** What's the breakdown right now of our –?

**MS. HOWE:** Right now we have a full-time chief and three full-time review commissioners.

**MR. P. DINN:** No part-time currently?

**MS. HOWE:** No part-timers right now.

**MR. P. DINN:** How many appeals do we have in the system currently?

**MS. HOWE:** Excuse me?

**MR. P. DINN:** How many appeals do we have in the system currently?

**MS. HOWE:** We have 94 cases waiting to be scheduled right now. That doesn't include the number that's waiting on a decision and that have already been heard, et cetera.

**MR. P. DINN:** So 94 cases, does that equate to 94 people or is there a difference in the number of people involved?

**MS. HOWE:** Typically an applicant is either a worker or an employer.

**MR. P. DINN:** Can we get a breakdown of that?

**MS. HOWE:** It's usually about 80 per cent workers, anywhere from 80 to 90 per cent in any given year, and 10 to 20 per cent employer applicants.

**MR. P. DINN:** All right, thank you.

With 94 cases in the system, if a worker filed an appeal today how long would he or she expect, before a hearing, to wait?

**MS. HOWE:** Provided all parties were available and there were no issues with the case, you're looking at about five months, five to six months. Right now we're scheduling cases that came in in May. We do have cases that are older than that, but any one before that has been offered a date or we've attempted to reach them.

**MR. P. DINN:** Just a question for clarification: Is that the normal waiting period, or is it exacerbated by COVID?

**MS. HOWE:** That's actually better than where we have been. Last year this time we had almost

200 cases waiting to be heard and now we're down to 94 cases waiting to be heard. That is a direct reflection of having full-time review commissioners.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

How many hearings would you have in a month normally?

**MS. HOWE:** We typically schedule anywhere from 18 to 24 hearings a month. We do have a certain number of postponements every month, so we typically tend to end up with around 18.

**MR. P. DINN:** I have, I guess, one last question here for the minister, actually. It's related to the injured workers' fund at WorkplaceNL. Can you tell me if there has been any impact on that fund due to the downturn in the markets?

**MR. BYRNE:** I'm not aware of that answer. I'll ask (inaudible). Do you have additional intelligence you would like to offer?

**MS. HOWE:** My understanding, just from the annual reporting, is that it has not been impacted. But that would be more of a question for WorkplaceNL, and not us.

**MR. P. DINN:** I think Debbie was going to add to that as well.

**MS. DUNPHY:** Yes, Minister, WorkplaceNL operates on a calendar year. They did recently table an annual report. The annual report to the end of 2019, obviously, there was no impact. I think, like most, they're still trying to weigh out the various impacts of COVID on the injury fund, certainly not to a degree where it would be below the shareholder agreement amount, percentage funded. There will likely be some impact, but I think it would be minimal and I think they have seen an improvement since March.

**MR. P. DINN:** With the annual report, I assume that's a public document?

**MS. DUNPHY:** That's been tabled, yes.

**MR. P. DINN:** Secondly, when does that come out? How soon after the end of the year do we see those reports?

**MS. DUNPHY:** Normally it would be tabled in June, according to the legislation; however, there was an exemption under the temporary variance legislation to extend that deadline to the end of September. So it has been tabled.

**MR. P. DINN:** Okay, thank you.

I'm done for this section.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr. Dinn, for your questions.

I'll move to Ms. Coffin.

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

You've asked all the numbers questions, but that's okay because economics is less about numbers and more about policy and allocation of resources.

I guess the thing that comes to top of mind here would be the independent review of the workers health, compensation act. Can you give us an update on the progress? I'm looking at the website; I notice that it's in two phases right now. Have you completed both of them? Are both ongoing? Give me a sense of what you're hearing from the review and where we are with it and what we can expect to see in the next little while.

**CHAIR:** Minister Byrne.

**MR. BYRNE:** There is an ongoing statutory review of the workplace health and safety. The review paused, briefly, amid the global pandemic. That's to say that the review did not pause but the consultation process did pause. The consultation process resumed. There was in-person sessions held this fall. I believe we just passed the deadline for written submissions last week and the review committee is now, the panel is now assembling their inputs, their consultations and will be making recommendations accordingly.

One of the things, it is required for them to meet or to provide that input before the year-end. However, one complicating factor is any considerations, any recommendations that they make has to receive the input of an actuary to determine costs, what would be the

consequence. My understanding is that the review itself is working away. It's working well, despite the global pandemic. It's meeting its targets and hopefully we will be able to report before year-end.

**MS. COFFIN:** Are you doing two phases? I noticed that on the website it directs you, say, the first phase – and this is from, I guessing it's 2012, I'm not sure if the website is particularly clear about this. The first phase was supposed to be a comprehensive examination of the act to identify areas for improvement and modernization. Then the second phase was consulting the system, focusing on maximum compensable assessable earnings, labour market re-entry, medical management, the role of stakeholders, occupational disease and financial sustainability.

Are you working on both of those, or is the focus just on one or is the focus slightly different than what I'm seeing here on the website? This is the website where I'm into ISL, labour, working together and drop-down menu there. It's the link from employees and employers.

**CHAIR:** Minister Byrne.

**MR. BYRNE:** The hon. Member asked some history, back to 2012, so I'll –

**MS. COFFIN:** I'm just wondering if the current review is doing the same thing as the former review. If so, where are we in both of them?

**MR. BYRNE:** Not knowing the previous history, I'll ask either Fiona Langor or Debbie Dunphy.

Debbie, I think you may be best equipped.

**CHAIR:** Debbie Dunphy.

**MS. DUNPHY:** The current review had a terms of reference that highlighted three areas that we've asked the committee to look at. There was significant work from the 2013 review that's already been implemented. This statutory review was focusing more on the three areas that were a part of the terms of reference. As well, if anyone brought forward issues to the committee, certainly the committee could take those concerns and include it in their report.

**MS. COFFIN:** Where would I find those terms of reference? I've pulled up both the Immigration, Skills and Labour website as well as the Workplace Health and Safety website and I don't see the review in either one of them.

**MS. DUNPHY:** If you look on the EngageNL website –

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay.

**MS. DUNPHY:** – there would be like a discussion document. The themes were there. The themes were also included when we announced the committee. If you like, I can certainly send you the links after.

**MS. COFFIN:** That'd be lovely. Thank you.

A couple of more questions now. Can I have a breakdown of the number of people who are receiving workers' compensation by industry, please?

**MS. DUNPHY:** That will have to be something we can certainly provide to you after. I don't have that here.

**MS. COFFIN:** No problem. That would be lovely to see.

**MS. DUNPHY:** The number receiving workers' compensation benefits by industry.

**MS. COFFIN:** By industry.

**MS. DUNPHY:** Okay.

**MS. COFFIN:** As narrow as you find that, that would be just lovely. That'll give us some sense of where we have problem industries. That would be great.

Do you also have any records of people who leave workers' compensation? I know you would leave for a variety of reasons. Some people will come on, they're receiving workers' compensation until they are rehabilitated, or until they age out, or until they are re-skilled to find other jobs.

Do you have any sense of the number of people, the flow of people in and out and why they are leaving? So whether they've been retrained or

they're better and they can go back to the regular job, or if they've just aged out and they're moving into a retirement package. Can you do that?

**MS. DUNPHY:** Again, yeah, we can certainly get that information from WorkplaceNL.

**MS. COFFIN:** Super. Can that be by gender as well?

**MS. DUNPHY:** I can ask.

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

A couple of other quick questions here, one of which is: Can I have a copy of the minister's briefing booklet, please?

**MS. DUNPHY:** Oh, certainly.

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

**MS. DUNPHY:** We have copies for both sides.

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

Do you have a sense of what your attrition is under workers' compensation? I know that most government departments have been tasked with an attrition target.

**MS. DUNPHY:** Yes. Top of mind, I don't have it, but I do know they have eliminated some positions through attrition. I can certainly get that information for you.

**MS. COFFIN:** Lovely. I appreciate that. Thank you very much.

**MS. DUNPHY:** Again, anything, Ms. Coffin, we'll provide to the full Committee.

**MS. COFFIN:** Oh, absolutely. That's what public transparency and public accountability are all about. Thank you very much.

I'm not sure if my colleague, Mr. Dinn – the other Mr. Dinn – has any questions. No?

Okay, thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms. Coffin.



Mr. Dinn, did you have any further questions?

**MR. P. DINN:** This Mr. Dinn?

**CHAIR:** Yes, Mr. Paul Dinn, under section 6.1.01.

**MR. P. DINN:** No, I'm good for now. Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Shall 6.1.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Against?

Carried.

On motion, subhead 6.1.01 carried.

**CHAIR:** I'll ask the Clerk to call the first subhead.

**CLERK:** 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 inclusive carry?

Mr. Paul Dinn.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, running down through some quick figures here. Looking at Transportation and Communications, I note that in a previous year, back in 2018-19, there was about \$36,000 spent. We budgeted a little over \$54,000 this past year but, again, spent just above \$40,000. Can you explain the money that wasn't utilized there?

**MR. BYRNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

One of the realities of living in a province like ours is that we have Members and ministers that live in different regions of the province. We were blessed with a – well, he's gone now. We were cursed with a minister from St. John's. Bernie is gone.

The previous minister had lived in St. John's and, of course, the current minister lives on the

West Coast. Travel back and forth for departmental business is sometimes affected by that, in either a positive or a negative way in terms of the dollar value of travel. With that said, when Minister Davis was the minister, obviously, his travel requirements were somewhat less.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

**MR. J. DINN:** Mr. Chair, (inaudible).

**MR. BYRNE:** Oh, I'll speak –

**MR. J. DINN:** (Inaudible) through the speaker nor the earpiece.

**MR. BYRNE:** I'll speak up too.

**CHAIR:** I can ask the Clerk to see if we can get some support for the Member attending, but if everybody could speak up a little, it would be helpful as well.

Mr. Paul Dinn.

**MR. P. DINN:** Moving along there with the Minister's Office, I'm looking at less Supplies was utilized than previously budgeted for. As well, there was a decrease, of course, in Purchased Services. Can we get an explanation on those two items?

**MR. BYRNE:** Yes, so in Supplies we're down by \$924 from the fiscal year 2019-2020. There were just lower than anticipated supply costs at that time. As well, some of the supplies used in that particular year were held in inventory.

In terms of Purchased Services, the 2019-20 fiscal year actuals were down by \$3,083 from the 2019-2020 original budget. Copier expenses were lower in some respects. There was also some – yes, that pretty well covers it.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Moving along to Executive Support, I'm looking at Salaries again. Last year, there was about \$150,000 more spent in Salaries as compared to what was budgeted. Can we get an explanation there as well?

**MR. BYRNE:** In Salaries for Executive Support, a couple of things here: There was an executive position that had to be backfilled that was on extended leave. As well, for the additional amount for 2020-21 there was additional funding added to cover the 27th pay period.

MHA Dinn, you will probably hear this as a regular refrain during the course of this morning's Estimates, about this 27th pay period. I'm going to ask either Fiona or Debbie to just speak to the record as to what exactly is the 27th pay period.

**CHAIR:** Debbie Dunphy.

**MS. DUNPHY:** Normally, in fiscal year, there are 26 pay periods. For 2021, the way the calendar works, there are actually 27. There's an extra salary cost in all of our activities for this year, only.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Moving down to Transportation and Communication, we're looking at last year there was just short of \$25,000 less spent. Can you explain that as well?

**MR. BYRNE:** In Transportation and Communications, there were lower than anticipated travel costs. Many meetings were held locally and the provincial election, which occurred in June of that particular year, also impacted the propriety of travel and consultations from an interdepartmental point of view. Many were either postponed or cancelled as a result of the writ period.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Looking at Purchased Services, again, just short of \$8,000 less spent there. Can you explain that as well, please?

**MR. BYRNE:** Again, this is a function of copiers and printing. Copier expenses were charged to Administrative Support resulting in actuals including small expenditures such as media monitoring and other things being down somewhat. As well, the copier and printing budgets consolidated under Administrative Support functions, at that point in time.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Looking at Operating Accounts: Operating Accounts in total, of course, was down just shy of \$33,000 spent compared to what was budgeted. In total, was COVID a factor in that?

**MR. BYRNE:** It would have been somewhat a factor. The majority of this decrease in fiscal year 2019-2020 would have been under the Transportation and Communications sections which we spoke about earlier. That was basically a function of, I guess, in some respects partially a function of COVID but not a significant impact as a result of COVID, given the fact that COVID occurred in the very end of the fiscal year itself. This was really a function of the writ period and other things.

**MR. P. DINN:** One final question, I'm just noting with the Executive Support, with the Salaries, there's a contractual position there of \$103,843. Can you explain that position?

**MR. BYRNE:** I'm going to ask either Fiona or Debbie to ...

**MR. P. DINN:** Debbie is waving.

**CHAIR:** Debbie Dunphy.

**MS. DUNPHY:** We had a contractual position on our books, but this individual was actually seconded to a federal agency and the salary was being 100 per cent reimbursed. That arrangement actually concluded on the 9th of October, so that's no longer now a filled position.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

I'm good, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Ms. Coffin.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you.

I think most of the numerical discrepancies have been addressed. I am noticing, though, that – and this is some very rough math – even with the 27th pay period in there, there doesn't seem to be any attrition in section one.

Has that been embodied in the Estimates or has any attrition taken place there?

**MS. DUNPHY:** In the Minister's Office or under Executive Support in '19-'20, we did not have any attrition in those areas. We did have an admin support in the executive area a couple of years ago. But in those two areas in particular, no, there's been no attrition in the last year.

**MS. COFFIN:** And none expected to be in this current year?

**MS. DUNPHY:** What we will see this year, while not attrition, we will see a transfer of one of the executive positions to the Department of Education under the new structure.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay.

So that's not any attrition at all, that's across government departments, we're –

**MS. DUNPHY:** Correct.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, good enough.

Under 1.2.02, I note there are Grants and Subsidies: What are those for? And bang on, \$25,000 was budgeted and spent, and it is budgeted again.

**MR. BYRNE:** Grants and Subsidies.

**MS. COFFIN:** So it's 1.2 –

**MS. DUNPHY:** Minister, if you wish, I can answer that one.

That's a grant to the Stella Burry, Stella's Circle.

**MS. COFFIN:** Right.

**MS. DUNPHY:** So it is \$25,000 to one organization and it is every year.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, lovely.

That's grants for community agency, I guess, not agencies?

**MS. DUNPHY:** Correct.

**MS. COFFIN:** I'm just reading the heading there.

**MS. DUNPHY:** Yeah, correct.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay.

How would someone go about applying for a grant under that?

**MS. DUNPHY:** If you recall a couple of years ago, we undertook a pilot, I guess, to have multi-year grants to organizations.

**MS. COFFIN:** Yes.

**MS. DUNPHY:** The way officials worked through this was certain departments took on certain organizations. Stella's Circle happens to fall under us, so there's no program, I don't think, associated with this in our department. This is just one of the grants – we give a grant to Stella's Circle or Stella Burry through some of our other program areas. This one in particular was actually transferred from CSSD.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, thank you, and thank you for doing it. It is in St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, so I'm delighted to hear that. But it's just funny to have a single grant tucked in there and it –

**MS. DUNPHY:** Right.

**MS. COFFIN:** – doesn't seem to be attached to anything else.

Revenue - Provincial, \$200,000, and we only got \$17,000. What's the anticipated revenue and why the gap?

**CHAIR:** Minister Byrne.

**MR. BYRNE:** So the amount of this revenue does vary from year to year. The provincial revenue itself, if I understand it correctly, is funds that were disbursed in a previous year or were awarded in a previous year but then not necessarily taken in.

Debbie, would you like to highlight that?

**CHAIR:** Debbie Dunphy.

**MS. DUNPHY:** So in many of our programs there are grants issued to various community organizations and employers and such throughout the year. If for some reason they are unable to spend the fully amount sometimes, depending on the contracts, they have to refund the money. Sometimes they can bring it forward or use it for other purposes, but if they have to refund the money, it often happens in a different fiscal year. If they return it to the department in a different fiscal year, we can't re-spend it, it has to go into general revenue. That's what that is.

So it's actually good news that the amount is low, because it means there are less people or less organizations refunding grants or funding that we have provided. But we do budget based on, I think, a four-year history. That is generally what we've been receiving. So we continue to budget that amount.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, lovely, thank you. And that's a good way of capturing it; it just looks a little funny here.

**MS. DUNPHY:** It does.

**MS. COFFIN:** Fair enough.

Okay, let's go on to 1.2.03, also, Grants and Subsidies here: What are those for? That's 1.2.03, page 126, line 10.

**MR. BYRNE:** So this is a program that's been around for many, many years. It's the ability to be able to fund things which may not necessarily meet a specific criteria, as I understand it. For example, this fund has provided assistance to the Council of the Federation award for literacy awards, the Labrador West Employment Corporation, Memorial University MedQUEST and English as a second language trust funds have been established or supported using this particular fund. I believe it's been around for quite some time, but that's the function of this particular program.

**MS. COFFIN:** What's it called?

**MR. BYRNE:** I don't know if it has a particular – it's miscellaneous grants, I believe.

**MS. COFFIN:** How does one apply for such a thing?

**MR. BYRNE:** A reference would be made by a client in the course of a project or initiative they would like to establish. They would identify a particular need, and departmental officers or others, if they cannot find a basis for existing programming to be able to provide support, this could be referenced or referred to this particular fund.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay. So it's really tucked away and it's for other things that don't really fit into anything else. Say, for example, a stranger says: I want to do this particular program and I need some funding. For them to access that money, they would have to be brought into a system, have to consult with individuals, have to be in another program and someone would say: Oh, nothing else covers this particular expense that you need. Then they can reach into this Grants and Subsidies and take some money out for that. Is that correct?

**MR. BYRNE:** I don't know if that's always been the case in the past, as to whether or not it was a program of always last resort, because that's really what I think you're referencing. Sometimes it's just in terms of if there's an expediency, if there's an immediate need that needs to be filled quickly.

Like I say, this has been a program that's not unknown to Members of the Legislature. It's been around for quite some time. Normally, what it is, is to be able to provide maximum flexibility, to be able to meet client needs when they're established. In particular, if it does not appear readily apparent that it can meet an existing program criteria or if speed is of essence or if the amount itself is relatively small enough that the burden of paperwork, the red tape so to speak, would impact the client negatively. That's the function of this particular program, I believe.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay.

I wasn't implying that this was a last resort thing. It's an unnamed pot of money that individuals are unsure how to access. I just wanted to get my head around – there's a little pot of money here that doesn't have a label on it that can be used for funding things that don't fit anywhere else. That's essentially what this is?

**MR. BYRNE:** I think, in a general sense, that's fair to say, yes.

**MS. COFFIN:** All right. Good enough. I just wanted to get my head around what it was.

Revenue - Provincial: Is that another example of money that would have gone out and then been not spent and come back again?

**MR. BYRNE:** This particular line item is related to WorkplaceNL. There was a decrease to invoice for services to WorkplaceNL. We have a working relationship with WorkplaceNL to provide policy services and it did not get paid prior to before March 31 of 2020. Again, it's the booking of that particular revenue.

Debbie Dunphy would you be able to just expand or to confirm what I just said?

**MS. DUNPHY:** Minister, that's correct. We have a relationship with WorkplaceNL. For the '19-'20 fiscal year, there was actually a refund that was sent to us from WorkplaceNL related to an overpayment that they made to us. As you're aware, as an employer we pay the full cost of WorkplaceNL. We don't pay the assessments, so there was an overpayment. The \$46,000 that's referenced there is actually that refund, but normally what is in this line is the reimbursement that WorkplaceNL pays us to help them with their policy, navigating the government system.

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

May I have a list of the people who had received the Grants and Subsidies under 1.2.03? Can I have a list of the individuals who received those last year?

**MR. BYRNE:** Absolutely.

**MS. DUNPHY:** It will be included in the binder that we have for you.

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

It's tricky when you don't have the binder. You can just kind of guess at some of the questions.

Thank you very much, that's my questions for this section.

**CHAIR:** Mr. Paul Dinn do you have questions on this section?

**MR. P. DINN:** Yes I do, thank you.

I'll be quick. I'll cover some more of the dollar figures things. I think my colleague here has asked a lot of the questions.

I'm looking at 1.2.02 the Salaries area, I note that in 2018-19, the Salaries were around, just over \$2 million, \$2,195,900, then we budgeted for \$2,134,700 and now we've dropped down in actuals in 2019 to just over \$2.1 million. Can you explain the decrease there and the increase then for the Estimates coming up?

**MR. BYRNE:** Thank you.

We're dipping back into 2018, if I understand correctly?

**MR. P. DINN:** Yes, Minister, I'm just trying to look at the trend there in terms of where it was going. It's sort of been tailing off but now it's sort of going back up again.

**MR. BYRNE:** Sure. Well perhaps the best answer there may come from Debbie with the corporate history there of 2018-19.

**CHAIR:** Debbie Dunphy.

**MS. DUNPHY:** Mr. Dinn, in 2019-20, we're down a little bit again. It's mostly recruitment, you get vacancies and there's some recruitment. For '20-'21, the increase again, most of that relates to the 27th pay period. There are approximately 40 positions in this activity, so the impact is fairly high.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

I'll continue to ask it –

**MS. DUNPHY:** Absolutely.

**MR. P. DINN:** – as we move along. Thank you.

I assume that also had an effect on the Employee Benefits, similarly? Or would it? Because I see the Employee Benefits went down and are coming back up again.

**MS. DUNPHY:** Minister Byrne, do you wish ...?

**MR. BYRNE:** No, no, you go ahead there, Debbie, you seem to ...

**MS. DUNPHY:** The Employee Benefits, in this instance, is not actually the employee benefits related to payroll. This is the workers' compensation cost for the department. There was a decrease and, as you can see, we have decreased our budget for 2020-21 as a result.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Looking at Transportation and Communications, we also saw a drop, there was \$16,000 less spent. Can I get an explanation there as well, please?

**MS. DUNPHY:** Shall I carry on?

**CHAIR:** Mr. Byrne.

**MR. BYRNE:** I'll just pick up very quickly, but Debbie Dunphy is doing an excellent job of the minutia of the figures.

With that said, in this particular case, there was travel for a director related to audits that is not required in the fiscal year, and lower than anticipated expenses related to postage were also incurred, so there was some reductions there.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Looking at Purchased Services, we see a decrease there of about \$56,000. Can I have an explanation on that as well, please?

**MR. BYRNE:** In this particular case, there was a new contract for banking fees that resulted in significant savings, as well as there was a reduced usage of shredding services. It's amazing how these things can add up. Those were the two most significant causes of those reductions.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

I think my colleague next to me has already asked everything else, so I'm good.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Ms. Coffin, do you have further questions?

**MS. COFFIN:** I'm good, thank you.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

I will ask the Clerk to call this heading.

**CLERK:** 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 1.2.03 carried.

**CHAIR:** I will ask the Clerk to call section two.

**CLERK:** 2.1.01.

**CHAIR:** Shall 2.1.01 carry?

Mr. Paul Dinn.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, looking at the Salaries under Client Services, I hate to be repetitive but I have to ask. We saw last year there was about \$1.5 million less spent compared to what was budgeted, yet this year you budgeted a little over \$1 million more. Can you explain that, please?

**MR. BYRNE:** This is Client Services and there are 417 staff members associated with this particular section or branch. Actuals in 2019-2020 were down by roughly \$1.5 million. This was largely a function of the recruitment process for filling positions and ongoing turnover that occurs throughout the year. I understand it's not completely abnormal for this to occur.

To anticipate your next question, which may be related to the increase in 2020-21, that is a function of the 27th pay period.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Also, just looking at the Employee Benefits, of course, we budgeted for \$3,500, yet there was \$107 spent. Can you explain that as well, please?

**MR. BYRNE:** Employee Benefits take in a wide range of circumstances. In this particular case, the \$3,500 that would have been associated with Employee Benefits also included workshops and training. There were savings due to lower than anticipated workshop fees in 2019-2020.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Last but not least, looking at Purchased Services, again, almost half the budget was used as actuals in the last year. Can we explain that as well, and why it's gone back up again to \$315,000?

**MR. BYRNE:** Yes, to answer the question of the lower expenditures in the previous fiscal year compared to current being examined, there were lower than anticipated costs due to we had a much higher reliance on digital communications, electronic communications, including copier and printing costs, which were representative of just over \$40,000 of that particular cost reduction or decrease. There was decreased use of video conferencing with the transition to a more cost-efficient use of Skype, which amounted to \$32,000 in savings. There were leasehold improvements in 2019-2020 of \$28,000, which varies from year to year, and some other expenditures under this category. There were lower numbers of business insurance claims in 2019-2020 for a savings of \$7,000. General Purchased Services expenditures from shredding to water to couriers, et cetera, were lower throughout the 20 regional offices, and this saved a significant amount of money of just over \$43,000.

**MR. P. DINN:** A follow-up question to that. I know during COVID we've certainly become more reliant on Skype, or Zoom, or Facebook or whatever you call it, in terms of technology and that. Has that been considered in the new Estimates of \$315,700 going forward? Because I think we've come to a new age where we can do a lot of business online and a lot of business

through Skype. Has that been considered in the new figures?

**MR. BYRNE:** It has. You're absolutely right. One of the things you get to – as terrible as a global pandemic is, it also causes you to reinvent and to reassess ways of doing business, and costs related to video conferencing, I won't say are no longer required at all, but Skype is being used at a much, much lower cost, if not no cost, to perform a lot of these duties today.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr. Paul Dinn.

Ms. Coffin.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you.

Looking at Client Services: Can you give me a sense of the number of individuals that we have and where they are working, please?

**MR. BYRNE:** There are 417 staff located within this group, dedicated professionals. Some of whom are paid not only from provincial government funds, general revenue funds of the provincial government, but also some of whom are paid through our federal-provincial co-operation agreements, our labour market agreements. We have 20 offices located throughout the entire province.

With that said, I think maybe if there are any additional questions, Mr. Walt Mavin might be able to provide some further input.

**CHAIR:** Mr. Mavin.

**MR. MAVIN:** Thank you, Minister.

So, as the minister indicated, over 400 staff across two regions. Our Eastern region is Clarenville and everything east. Our Western region is everything west of Clarenville, including Labrador. Staff allocation is pretty close to 50-50 across our two regions.

**MS. COFFIN:** Great.

These Client Services, they're delivering both income support, as well as the skills and labour side of things? This is all the staff for that? I'm

just trying to get my head around where the pockets of money are being allocated and for what.

**MR. MAVIN:** Yes, that's correct. Staff in our regional office will be responsible for delivering all of our income support and our employment and labour market programs.

**MS. COFFIN:** Right.

If you came in and you applied for an income support program, you would go to an individual here. But if you went to something that was like a labour market development agreement, you would also go into that same set of clients and then they would – the same set of, I guess, representatives and they would help move you through that. Okay.

If you wanted to come in under the Self-Employment Assistance program, someone from Client Services and Regional Operations would guide you through that process?

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

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, just getting my head around it.

Then the other Salaries that I see – and I know I'm not supposed to be asking these questions. But the other Salaries that I see are specialized pieces for each of these other specialized sections, yes?

**MR. MAVIN:** The other Salaries, are you referring to other sections?

**MS. COFFIN:** Yes, when I flip the page to 3.1.01, Income Assistance, there's a set of Salaries there, but that's specific to the Income Assistance program. Is that right?

**MR. MAVIN:** Yes. For example, Income Support, we have a division here at provincial office which provides oversight guidance to our regional folks.

**MS. COFFIN:** Right, okay. Yes, that's the separation between working in the Confederation Building and that administrative role.

Okay, thank you.

Trickier question now: How did attrition roll out in the Regional Operations, Client Services? You've got a hand behind you.

**CHAIR:** Debbie Dunphy.

**MS. DUNPHY:** In '19-'20, we actually abolished 10 positions throughout the department. Six of those were from retirements. Again, I don't have the specific details here, but it would be some in Client Services but it could be in other areas as well. Again, that's obviously the biggest portion of where our staff is. The remaining other positions that we abolished, we had some long-term vacancies that we made the decision to not fill and we abolished those as well.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, good.

Thank you very much. I think that's all of my questions for here.

**CHAIR:** With leave from the Committee, Mr. Paul Dinn and Ms. Coffin, we can allow Mr. James Dinn to ask questions.

**MS. COFFIN:** Leave.

**MR. P. DINN:** Leave.

**CHAIR:** We have leave.

Mr. James Dinn.

**MR. J. DINN:** Thank you, Chair.

I think I heard that it's 400 staff, did I hear that correctly, that's split evenly between the Western and Eastern region?

**MR. BYRNE:** It's 417, I think, is currently the complement. And you're correct, they are roughly divided equally, 50/50, between Eastern and Western.

**MR. J. DINN:** Is it possible to get a breakdown of the type of positions? I think you mentioned there in the abolished positions the number of people who deal directly with the clients. I'm just trying to get a breakdown of management



and those who are dealing with the concerns of people who avail of the services.

**MR. BYRNE:** I think, Debbie Dunphy, if you would be able to provide us with an answer as to what kind of level of breakdown we can provide?

**MS. DUNPHY:** Yes, absolutely, we can get you that breakdown. We'll include it in the response back to the Committee.

**MR. J. DINN:** And in the abolished positions, I'm just trying to get a determination as well, in the abolishing of positions, how has that increased the workload, the wait times, the ability of regional operations to respond to the needs of clients. I don't know if that's something you can answer now or when you provide that information.

**MR. BYRNE:** Mr. Mavin, would you be able to comment on whether or not there is a trend of improved client services or increased duration or time lag between client services?

**MR. MAVIN:** Thank you, Minister.

With attrition come challenges in certain parts of our delivery network, but our regional folks, our regional management team look for ways to ensure that services to clients are not impacted. For example, on the Income Support side, that may be some of the way in which we establish our units of work to ensure that if we have one less resource, two less resources that we're able to pick that up by sharing the work around. The world of work today, as we all know, in terms of our ability to do more work online and virtually allows us to share that work across our 20 offices.

**MR. J. DINN:** Thank you.

I guess my concern is that as we talk about sharing the work, that means more things get put on the plate and something has to be taken off, especially if you're not going to burn people out. I would assume that in this jurisdiction, anything dealing with people is challenging enough as it is. My concern would be that in the effort to abolish positions or to find efficiencies and to share work, we're actually increasing the workload and that it does impact eventually the

services clients receive. I can only speak to you from my experience as a teacher, in that, seeing workload pile up, you're still asking the same people to do more of the work.

**MR. BYRNE:** Perhaps I can address that.

The experience that has been communicated to me both by executive and front-line providers is that the opposite is actually the case. When you have discrete, quantized handling of files within a discrete office, you will have times when there are increased demands and lulls, troughs of demand.

Being able to share work around to various offices, some of whom are specialized in handling certain types of requests, applications and situations, what it does – and this is just what has been communicated to me – is that it provides a more consistent, steady workflow. You don't experience those highs or those peak work activities followed by troughs or lulls. Work is able to be dispensed as it occurs and as demand, and by being able to draw upon the network, I guess the expression that would be aptly used is that the whole is greater than the simple sum of the parts. Telecommunications technology, work sharing through electronic means, that's one of the benefits of it.

Just by way of an example: Say, for example, the Clarendville office, which has a specialty function in one area – it has clients within the Clarendville area – that there was a labour-transition issue or some circumstance which created a lot of volume of work or activity. Rather than that one office having to take on that large volume or wave of activity independently and exclusively, by sharing the work around it actually provides a much more seamless, much more consistent window for the client, and for the professional administrator it provides a more consistent workflow for them as well.

**MR. J. DINN:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Are you finished with your questions?

**MR. J. DINN:** (Inaudible.)

**CHAIR:** I'll ask the Clerk to call the subhead.

**CLERK:** 2.1.01.

**CHAIR:** Shall 2.1.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subhead 2.1.01 carried.

**CHAIR:** I'll ask the Clerk to call the subhead.

**CLERK:** 3.1.01 to 3.2.06 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 3.1.01 to 3.2.06 inclusive carry?

Mr. Paul Dinn.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Starting at 3.1.01 – and I'm going to assume the answer but I'm going to ask it anyway – with Salaries, I see that the salaries have gone up again in 2021. Can I get an explanation for that, please?

**MR. BYRNE:** Allow me to field that difficult question. This is again a result of the 27th pay period.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

I'm looking at Professional Services and Purchased Services. I note that, Purchased Services, there was very little of the '19-'20 amount spent and it seems like the difference of that was spent in Professional Services. Can you explain these two items?

**MR. BYRNE:** Within the line item of Professional Services, we have mandatory membership dues or fees related to federal-provincial-territorial working groups and committees. We fund into a secretariat, a national secretariat. Often these secretariats are located within the provinces, within the FPTs themselves. We actually host two of these this year but with that said, those fees have increased. That is the cause of the Professional Services being increased.

On the Purchased Services, there were lower expenditures in 2019-2020 due to expenses for the FPT membership change to Professional Services. These were incorrectly attributed to Purchased Services when they really should have been Professional Services.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Looking at the provincial revenue, can I get an explanation on how that's generated and the dip in that as well?

**MR. BYRNE:** Yes, there was a dip of \$1.6 million. There was a dip, as you say of, a decrease of \$1.6 million. This decrease is due to income support and Employment Services regulation changes due to child support. It was anticipated that collection from Support Enforcement agencies would decrease by approximately \$1.7 million per year as a result of the changes.

This is a bit of a complicated thing that I think Committee Members would like to hear more of, so with that said, I'll turn it over to Fiona; if you want to delegate, Fiona, just to walk through these somewhat important but somewhat complicated changes.

**MS. LANGOR:** There were legislative changes that we did make in the spring relating to CPP child benefit. As a result of that, it means a reduction in revenue for the province and money that's actually collected through our support enforcement agency and putting that money back into the hands of the individuals who would normally be in receipt.

I will pass it over to Walt Mavin or Cynthia King to elaborate on that.

**CHAIR:** Cynthia King.

**MS. KING:** In June of 2019, we made regulatory amendments so that families would be able to keep all of the child support that's due to the children, as well as CPP benefits for children – surviving child and disabled contributor benefits. About \$3.6 million was attributed to child support and \$300,000 to the CPP.

Every year the Support Enforcement Agency would collect amounts that were due to the department for income support that was provided to individuals prior to them being able to access their child support. The department would pay the amount and when the individual was able to receive their child support, that amount was owed to the department. Every year there are collections on that to the department.

When we made the regulatory changes, it was estimated by the Support Enforcement Agency that about \$1.7 million per year would not come to the department in future as a result of those collections not being made for children who are receiving child support, so the money goes to the children.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

How many children would we be talking about?

**MS. KING:** About 1,900 families were estimated at the time in receipt of income support who would have child support or CPP benefits coming to them.

**MR. P. DINN:** A question on that: Would this be considered a clawback, what's happening here?

**MS. KING:** No, we discontinued the clawback.

**MR. P. DINN:** Okay.

**MS. KING:** We were counting child support as income and deducting it from amounts of income support a family would be eligible for. We discontinued that practice and now families get to keep 100 per cent of their child support and CPP benefits and get 100 per cent of the income support that they're eligible to receive at the same time.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Moving along, I'm looking at the National Child Benefit Reinvestment, I did go back looking for a trend, 2018-'19 there's about \$167,000 spent and looking at '19-'20 actuals it's about \$166,000 spent, yet we continue to budget for \$320,000. So what are we looking at there? What's the difference there and with a trend of about \$160,000, why the necessity to double it?

**CHAIR:** Mr. Byrne.

**MR. BYRNE:** So this is a commitment the government has made under the National Child Benefit Reinvestment Strategy with the federal government. This is an initiative that allows for private child care where subsidized child care is not an option for recipients of income support who are employed or pursuing further education and require private child care. This is for non-regulated child care services, as per the National Child Benefit Reinvestment Strategy as detailed within. Basically, this funding is available, it remains available, we'll continue to commit as per our commitments, and we'd like to – basically, the fact that it's not spent, and as you noted, has not been spent totally in the last several years, is an indicator that other services seem to be able to provide that benefit wherever required.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

General question: I know the case loads for income support or income assistance is declining. I mean, it's decreasing mainly because people are aging out of it. So in light of the impacts of COVID on families, do you see a potential for an increase in case loads?

**MR. BYRNE:** The case load for income support comes with a lot of preconceived notions in many – not you, but many people have somewhat ideas or thoughts about who represents the case load, when, in fact, it's quite often not as perceived.

You're absolutely right; we do have a significant portion of older spousal couples that are aging out. Once you, of course, reach the age of Old Age Security benefit or CPP, then, of course, you transition from income support to the federal program and so on. So you're right, it's a very dynamic, very changing caseload itself.

In terms of COVID and the uptake to the federal income replacement programs, such as the CERB, the Canada Emergency Response Benefit, and now the Canada response benefit – they've taken out the emergency and now it's the Canada response benefit – I'll ask Cynthia to give a deep down into the numbers, but they're not maybe what some might expect. They're not large.

Cynthia.

**CHAIR:** Ms. King.

**MS. KING:** The current Income Support caseload is just over 21,000 – 21,526. We've seen a reduction in the caseload since March of about 1,600 cases. That's largely due to income support recipients being able to avail of other federal recovery benefits as well as people not coming on the caseload during that time.

The Income Support caseload is not the same 22,000 people all year long. Every single month, year in, year out, we see about 400 cases come on and 400 cases go off, every single month. Since the availability of federal benefits, in May we saw a bit of a reduction, initially, and the reduction of the caseload is a factor of both people not applying as well as people leaving. So we haven't seen as many applications in the last several months and, as a result, the caseload has decreased.

**MR. P. DINN:** I guess, the crux of my question is, in terms of looking ahead, because as you've noted there's been many who are availing of the programing that's there and there will come a time when that programing won't be there. Do you expect to see a greater uptake in income support? I know that we're crystal balling here but, I mean, using your expertise, would you see that increasing after all of these programs run dry?

**MS. KING:** As the minister said, the caseload, there are people who leave the caseload every month due to the availability of other benefits, in terms of aging out at 65 and CPP and so on. There is that natural churn of the caseload. There are still jobs that people are availing of and won't need income support.

It's difficult to predict what the uptake in the future might be. We do predict that individuals who are in receipt of income support before going off on the federal benefits, who aren't eligible to receive EI or the new federal benefits, may return. Those who are receiving the federal benefits, CERB, if they worked prior to, would not come to Income Support. They would continue with the federal benefits for the next year.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, MHA Dinn.

Before we go to MHA Coffin, we're going to take our scheduled break for 10 minutes. I'll ask the Clerk to set the clock. If anybody needs a restroom break or an ability to make a telephone call, feel free to do so and we'll come back at –

**MR. BYRNE:** Mr. Chair, I realize that's standard practice, but where we started a little bit late, and I do know that people do have to make telephone calls and they do need a little restroom break, but do we want to keep going? I don't want to –

**CHAIR:** We can reduce the break maybe to five minutes, Minister Byrne.

**MR. BYRNE:** What do you think? I don't want to – because we do have to sanitize the Chamber before the House. There's a little bit of work so we can't go too, too long.

**CHAIR:** I think the maximum time we can go is 12:45, based on the time for the House, if we were going past 12 o'clock.

As Chair, I think I would like to take a five-minute break and give everybody five minutes to do anything that they need to do and we'll convene at 10:45.

Thanks.

### Recess

**CHAIR:** Okay, we're back to reconvene the Committee.

I'll just ask, maybe, Mr. Jim Dinn if he would have some questions under section 3.1.01 onward.

**MR. J. DINN:** Yes. I'll start with 3.1.01.

I'm just curious, with regard to, again, the positions that are there under Salaries, the breakdown of people who are management versus those who are dealing with client services under 3.1.01. How many people are we talking about in total and what would be the breakdown?

**CHAIR:** I'll ask the Clerk to set the timer as well.

Minister Byrne.

**MR. BYRNE:** These are salaries, as was explained earlier, related to policy reference and guidance for regional services. They're not all management. Some are bargaining position salaries.

Maybe, Debbie Dunphy or Walt Mavin, you might be able to elaborate further on the exact number of people involved in this particular section.

**CHAIR:** Walt Mavin.

**MR. MAVIN:** Thank you, Minister.

Yes, this would be our Income Support Division, housed here at the provincial office which, as the minister noted, provides oversight and guidance to the delivery of income support throughout our regional offices. It would include the director's position and five other positions, in total for six.

**MR. J. DINN:** Six total. Okay.

Would it be possible to get an idea – I know some numbers are thrown around there – but the total number of families that would be served, and maybe the breakdown if you have the number of families, individuals, single people, that kind of thing? Would there be a breakdown of that?

**CHAIR:** Minister Byrne.

**MR. BYRNE:** We can definitely provide that.

There are two reference points in terms of income support, income assistance. There are cases and recipients. A family, obviously, would be considered casework. They may have dependants within a family, so we can divide that into the number of cases and, as well, the number of recipients. Just to understand why the number is different, why the number of cases versus the number of recipients: Obviously, a family with dependent children, the children would not interact directly with the government or with client service officers. It would be their

guardian or parent or whomever. So we can definitely provide that breakdown. We'll follow up with that shortly.

**MR. J. DINN:** Okay.

Would it be possible to have the total number of recipients – I think it's been just characterized as – who inappropriately, to use the minister's words, applied for CERB while they were in receipt of income support? Would it be possible to get an idea of just how many recipients have applied for CERB and who were on income support and are probably facing the loss of income support as a result of that?

**MR. BYRNE:** We can provide what we know to date. Obviously there may be some that are unknown to us, but that's a part of the process. And, yes, to use my words, it is inappropriate if it's contrary to regulation.

**MR. J. DINN:** Is it also possible to get the breakdown, then, of how many of those who applied for it represent families as well?

**MR. BYRNE:** I believe we can provide our best estimates at this point in time.

**MR. J. DINN:** Okay.

The number that was thrown around – or not thrown around, that was put out, sorry – is that there is a reduction in some 1,600 cases after March. If I understand it, from talking to End Homelessness, anywhere from 1,400 to 1,600 cases. The number I heard here were 1,600 cases on income support. Is that a result, as I understand it, of CERB, the people who applied for CERB?

**MR. BYRNE:** I'm going to ask Cynthia King to answer the question as to what exactly we positively know about those 1,600 cases.

**MS. KING:** The caseload is decreased by 1,600 cases. As I said earlier, the caseload changes month to month. People are leaving for a number of different reasons on a regular basis to receive federal benefits, to become employed, for various reasons. We know that the caseload decreased by 1,600 since March and that is due to people who are leaving, as well as people who are not applying. We have to assume that people

who aren't applying have other sources of income and that may be the federal recovery benefits. We don't know for sure why people are not coming to the program, but we do know that the caseload is down 1,600.

**MR. J. DINN:** I'm assuming then, when we talk about the reduction in the caseload, that's also a reduction in any income support that's paid out.

**MS. KING:** Mm-hmm.

**MR. J. DINN:** What would that savings represent then? What's the total money that if we're looking at 1,600, I would assume from the previous year, that's down 1,600 from the previous year as well. This is not a yearly or annual event that occurs. I'm trying to get an idea of what are we looking at in terms of savings here, or the total amount of money that was not paid out as a result of that.

**MS. KING:** I would have to get the exact amount for you. It's approximately \$800 per case.

**MR. J. DINN:** Okay.

For those, then, who inappropriately – air quotes – applied for CERB, what's the process now? To follow up on the questions from the Member for Topsail - Paradise, what will be the process for now? I would tell you that we're going to be in it a lot more quickly than we'd like to believe. I will have phone calls; food banks will have phone calls. This is where the pressure is going to now come. I'm just wondering what will be the process. Take me through that process right now, please.

**MS. KING:** As individuals requiring home support – particularly those who left income support to receive CERB – contact us, we are making every attempt to fast-track those applications. As they call us we do a financial eligibility assessment and it is based on income you received in previous months. From that, we determine when you would be eligible for income support. That's a calculation that takes into consideration the fact that you would not be expected to live on income support rates during the months you didn't receive income support.

Once that future eligibility date is calculated, we have the ability to bridge the gap so that individuals are able to receive funding from us between their application approval and their eligibility date. That will ensure that the negative consequences of not having income, such as housing instability – we can mitigate those consequences for individuals. It'll be based on an individual conversation with applicants, but we are very aware that there is risk for individuals of not having income for a particular period of time. We will be working with individuals to make sure that gap is not created and that we don't see the negative consequences of being without income for a period of time.

**MR. J. DINN:** As I understand it then, there's a 60-day waiting period without income as a means test, more or less. Would that be correct?

**MS. KING:** No. We have what we call a 60-day assessment and we look back at the last 60 days. We look at the 60 days previous to your application of what income you received. We do a financial calculation where we take a percentage into account because we don't expect you to live on income support-type benefits when you're not in receipt of income support. Then, a future eligibility date is calculated.

We looked at individuals who were receiving CERB and what they would be eligible to receive under income support. That varies depending on if you're a single individual or a family, if you're renting, if you're board and lodging. Every case would be different.

There would be several weeks. Nobody would have to wait 60 days, two months, for a future eligibility date. It would just be a number of weeks. We will be bridging the gap for those number of weeks. There will be no waiting period for individuals who express that they have financial hardship as not having any income at the moment, in order to pay rent, pay bills. We will bridge that gap for them.

**MR. J. DINN:** What would be the minimum and then the maximum? What are we looking at as a time frame? I'm speaking to the point of people who call my office and the people I serve, where there can be a significant lag.

I'd also say that a person who's relying on \$40 a week for income a couple of weeks is an eternity. I'm just trying to get an idea of when.

**MS. KING:** It would be the processing time for the application. When individuals express to us during the application process that they have no resources at the moment, whether it's CERB or under regular circumstances, our client service officers have an ability to issue some emergency assistance that would assist them while they're waiting for their application to be processed.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr. Jim Dinn.

Mr. Paul Dinn.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Moving to 3.1.03, I'm looking at Allowances and Assistance. There is a huge decrease there, almost half, that was not yet used. Can we get an explanation for that under the Allowances and Assistance?

**MR. BYRNE:** This is the Mother/Baby Nutrition Supplement. The program focuses on early childhood development. It's based on the public policy known as the National Children's Agenda.

There is a program that provides assistance, prenatal, as well as postnatal. This is the prenatal program. It provides for nutritional supplements for eligible clients. This has not been subscribed to the full budgeted amount for many, many years. Every Public Health nurses is very, very well aware of this program. We want to keep it intact; we want to be able to respond to any increase in demand.

Our major point of contact in communications and dissemination of information about this is through the public nursing profession. Really, basically, this is what the expenditures are of it at this point in time.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

I go back to the national child benefit and how that was approximately half, as well as budgeting. I can appreciate the minister's comments on trying to get the uptake.

Would it be proper to assume that this is due to a decrease in our natural birth rate, less children being born?

**MR. BYRNE:** I wouldn't be able to make that assumption. I know that the program has not been fully subscribed for many, many years. We maintain the budgetary figure based on our commitments, but also we're anxious to make sure that this information is spread far and wide so that any eligible recipient can benefit from it.

Again, the conduit of the information is the Public Health nursing profession, in addition to billboards and other things. But all of those mothers, expectant mothers and postpartum mothers, are made aware of this program should they be able to take advantage of it.

**MR. P. DINN:** I guess a little bit more into the weeds on this one. I'm just curious as to what amounts are available to a mother and her baby. Is this something we would look at in terms of increasing the benefit?

**MR. BYRNE:** Under the prenatal component a benefit of \$60 per month is available, as well as a one-time benefit at the beginning, upfront, of \$90 at the time of birth to eligible pregnant mothers. We'd always be ready and available to conduct a review as to whether or not we might be able to augment or change the program in a meaningful way.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Looking at 3.2.01, I'm looking at Purchased Services. Purchased Services, of course – I'm going to do my math here – about 20 per cent of the budget was utilized last year; yet, we're allocating a similar amount of the budget to this year.

Can you give us a little bit of information on the decrease there and why we're gone back up?

**MR. BYRNE:** I'm sorry, which tab are you ...?

**MR. P. DINN:** Sorry. I'm looking at 3.2.01, Purchased Services.

**MR. BYRNE:** 3.2.01, this is Employment and Training Programs?

**MR. P. DINN:** Yes.

**MR. BYRNE:** Purchased Services. What I feel to be true is that the lower than anticipated savings on Purchased Services, Employment and Training Programs – Walter, do you want to pick up that because I think I’ve lost my –?

**CHAIR:** Walter Mavin.

**MR. MAVIN:** Thank you, Minister.

In this particular area, we did have some costs for some online self-directed employment assistant program, or Career Cruising, which we paid through the Labour Market Development Agreement funding in '19-'20, and as well we did have some funding in there for some data analysis that was lower last year than anticipated.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

I’m just going back up to Salaries now on the Mother/Baby Nutrition Supplement. Of course, we talked about the increase in pay periods, but I don’t see any change in the Salaries under the Mother/Baby Nutrition Supplement. Can I get an explanation on that one?

**MR. BYRNE:** (Inaudible), are we going –

**MR. P. DINN:** I’m on the same page.

**CHAIR:** 3.1.03.

**MR. BYRNE:** Oh, sorry.

**MR. P. DINN:** I just moved up. Just a curiosity on the Salaries because we’ve alluded to the fact that there’s an additional pay period, yet I’m seeing in the Salary there it’s the same right across the board.

**MR. BYRNE:** I’ll defer to that one to Debbie.

**CHAIR:** Debbie Dunphy.

**MS. DUNPHY:** With the Mother/Baby Nutrition Supplement, we do have a staff person identified that handles this program but they also do other work in other areas. It would be a minimal amount, but it’s likely you will see an overage next year. I would suggest it was

probably an oversight or it was just a minimal amount to put the 27th pay period in there.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

I realize it’s a small amount. I was just curious, as it was the same. I think the previous year it was around \$54,600, so I understand where you’re going with it.

Moving to the next page, I’m looking at 3.2.02, the Employment Development Programs. Can you give us an explanation on the Allowances and Assistance and the Grants and Subsidies and what that entails?

**MR. BYRNE:** Allowances and Assistance and Grants and Subsidies, so funding is provided for Employment Development Supports, \$80,000, and the Adult Basic Education placement support of \$562,000. This is 90 per cent federally funded.

**MR. P. DINN:** The revenue there, the federal funding, what pocket of funding is that coming out of?

**MR. BYRNE:** This is the under the WDA. The federal revenue of \$1.39 million is provided under the Workforce Development Agreement.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Moving further on down, looking under Labour Market Development Agreement, 3.2.03. Professional Services, a huge dip last year and, of course, this current Estimates we’re looking at probably a third of what it was budgeted for in the previous year. Can I get an explanation on that, please?

**MR. BYRNE:** Sure.

Under Professional Services, this is funding that’s provided to cover the cost of system upgrades and enhancements, IT system upgrades and it’s also for the cost of the audit. There was a significant decrease in 2019-2020 and that’s because system upgrade work is being performed mainly by OCIO, as opposed to contracted external sources.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.



I see down in the final number under Total: Labour Market Development Agreement, last year the actuals looks like an amount of just over \$7 million. Would that be considered slippage under the program?

**MR. BYRNE:** Under the program itself, there is a certain percentage that can, indeed, be unspent.

I'll ask Walter if he would pick up the cause on that.

**MR. MAVIN:** Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Dinn, no, that would not be considered slippage. Our surplus for '19-'20, in total, came in at a little over \$3 million based on our audit. Under the LMDA, the way the total allocation is funded and flowed from the federal government is that annually we get a notification from the federal government of our total allocation. Annually, we prepare an annual plan that's submitted to the federal government to indicate which areas across the LMDA we are going to spend our funding. We also then follow up at the end of the year with a report to tell the federal government how we spent the money.

Of course, as priorities change throughout the year, one of the benefits of the LMDA is that the minister has the authority to shift money from program area to program area. In this case, in this particular year, there were a couple of areas where, for example, under the apprenticeship trades section for that training, it was in the early fourth quarter that we had projected that we were going to spend less money there, so we actually reallocated that money back to the main LMDA funding area, which would make up part of that \$7 million. The idea of doing that was to try to utilize the maximization of the total LMDA budget.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Ms. Coffin.

**MS. COFFIN:** I'm not sure if Mr. Dinn had been finished with his questions.

**MR. P. DINN:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, all right. It's going to be a little bit disjointed, but that's fine.

I'm going to save Income Assistance for Mr. James Dinn, and how about I jump in at 3.1.02, the National Child Benefit Reinvestment. Can I have the number of people who have received that and the criteria for accessing it, please?

**MR. BYRNE:** (Inaudible) National Child?

**MS. COFFIN:** Yeah, National Child Benefit Reinvestment.

**CHAIR:** Mr. Byrne.

**MR. BYRNE:** You asked the number of people who had received that and what was the —?

**MS. COFFIN:** Yeah, and the criteria —

**MR. BYRNE:** The criteria.

**MS. COFFIN:** — for being able to access it.

**MR. BYRNE:** Sure. In terms of the criteria, those numbers, I'll ask Walter to ...

**MS. COFFIN:** I just watched this go across about four people.

**MR. MAVIN:** Yes, only twice.

I'm going to ask Ms. King if she would elaborate.

**CHAIR:** Cynthia King.

**MS. KING:** Yes, a little fewer than a hundred per month of our families in receipt of income support avail of the child care benefit. The child care benefit is for unregulated child care. People who are able to access regular child care access the Child Care Services Subsidy Program through the Department of Education.

When an individual in receipt of income support has a type of employment where they work an occasional overnight shift, for example, and generally they need someone to care for the children overnight, this amount is intended to offset that cost. It isn't intended to be the same fulsome benefit that you would receive through the Child Care Subsidy Program for regulated child care. You can receive up to \$400 per month for the first child and up to \$200 per month for the second child. It depends on how

many hours of child care you need during that month.

**MS. COFFIN:** Must be hard for someone who's working nights to manage with \$400. Yeah, that's precarious for individuals.

Let's move on to the Mother/Baby Nutrition Supplement. Recently I had a constituent who has had a baby. I followed up and had a little chat with her about it and how are you managing, and she had been struggling a little bit. I said: Have you accessed the Mother/Baby Nutrition Supplement? She said no. My CA gave her a call and then did a little bit of investigation and was told that it wasn't for postnatal. It was just prenatal. Have I gotten that wrong or have wires been crossed anywhere along the way?

**CHAIR:** Cynthia King.

**MS. KING:** The prenatal portion is delivered through this department. The postnatal portion gets tacked automatically onto your Canada child benefit. Individuals, after a child is born, for the first year will continue to receive \$60 per month, but it will be part of the Canada child benefit.

**MS. COFFIN:** The child benefit, does that – if you have a baby – forgive me; I have not had a baby in long time so I'm not quite sure how this works. Anyone who has a child will automatically be given the Canada child benefit and then have the top-up automatically attached to that, no matter what their income?

**MS. KING:** Yes. The \$60 per month, it's individuals who are of low income, so less than \$25,457 per year is the cut-off.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay.

**MS. KING:** Individuals, once they have a baby and they receive the Canada child benefit, this \$60 per month automatically becomes part of that benefit.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, so all of their T4s align with everything else and all that comes in.

I was wondering about this because I don't think that this individual will be able to access it, but I

just wanted to make sure she was going to be okay, because she has an infant and the infant is colicky and there's another child and you just want to wrap them up and say, thanks for having babies because our population is declining so much, right?

Okay, so I think we probably touched on some of the criteria. Do we have a sense of the number of people using or receiving this?

**MS. KING:** Yes, the prenatal portion is about 125 families per month.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, all right.

Well, some people are having babies. Is that a household income under \$26,000?

**MS. KING:** That's household income, yes, \$25,457.

**MS. COFFIN:** Oh, my goodness, there are 125 people making less than \$26,000 per year and having babies. That makes me cry a little.

Okay, let's talk about the number of people using this and accessing it. I know last year we talked a little bit about the fact that we weren't getting enough money out there. I did make a suggestion that we reach out to the Status of Women and see if they could help access that. I'm just wondering: Have there any more concerted efforts to try and reach more people or are we reaching all of the people who are making less than \$26,000 a year and having babies? Do we have a sense that we've reached them all?

**CHAIR:** Minister Byrne.

**MR. BYRNE:** Yes, I won't ask staff to get involved in questions of a political policy.

The best conduit to provide this information would be through public health nursing professionals. As you know, all mothers will receive the services of a public health nurse, in terms of immunizations, in terms of health care checks. What we believe to be true is the best cause or course to be able to get this information out to make sure that all those expecting mothers and postnatal mothers are aware of this is through that particular profession. As well, there

are other avenues through more public communications to be able to get that information out as well. We would welcome any source and opportunity to get the word out far and wide. I could be wrong, but I think that through the public health nursing profession we won't miss very many mothers or expecting mothers.

**MS. COFFIN:** I certainly hope not.

I guess if this is moving out through the Canada child benefit, then it's pointless to go out to the breastfeeding groups, because those are wonderful support groups for mothers doing that. The Status of Women would be a spot; maternity wards would be a spot and then the pervasive Facebook, because I know that a lot of people reach there and oftentimes are more forthcoming on Facebook than they might be with their public health nurse. I think that's a key thing.

Given that we're only operating at about half, we're not spending a \$100,000, is there any potential that we could raise the income threshold so that people making \$30,000 as a household income and having a baby can then afford to buy the food that's going to make them healthy while they are having this child? Is there any possibility that we could do something like that?

**MR. BYRNE:** This particular program flows under the Early Childhood Development Agreement, the national agreement.

I'll ask Cynthia to speak specifically to the single question of is this a national criteria or is there capacity to be able to create an exclusive provincial model.

**CHAIR:** Cynthia King.

**MS. KING:** The income threshold is a national threshold that we use for this program. Of course, we can always undertake a review of the policy for this particular program.

**MS. COFFIN:** So this is not federally funded but we follow federal guidelines. Do you have any latitude in that to be able to say: Well, all right, maybe if you're making \$27,000, we can

still give you this? Is there any local latitude to change the criteria that we can apply?

**MS. KING:** Yes, it is provincial policy and it would be within our ability to make changes to the program. Of course, that analysis can be undertaken.

**MS. COFFIN:** Wonderful. That would be a real blessing, I'm sure, for anyone who's having a child now. It's not easy at the best of times; perhaps we can expand this a little bit. I just want to spend \$100,000 on making sure we have healthy moms and healthy babies. I think that would be a lovely initiative right there.

Okay, I have 51 seconds. Awesome. Let's go on to 3.2.01, Employment and Training Programs. I note that Employment and Training Programs are highlighted in 3.2.01, 3.2.02 and 3.2.04. I know they're for different individuals and they're designed to target different sets of circumstances and different groups. Is there any duplication of these? You probably can't do this in the 22 seconds, so maybe we will have to flip over to Mr. Dinn, then Mr. Dinn and then come back to me.

I know that there are overlaps and I know that there are different target groups; I'm just seeing that it sounds a lot like several of these things are doing very similar activities. Would there be any efficiencies associated with developing a lot of these programs in one spot as opposed to four different spots? My time is up, so maybe we can save that for later.

**CHAIR:** Minister Byrne.

**MR. BYRNE:** Yes, thank you.

A lot of the programming flows from federal-provincial-territorial funding from the Labour Market Development Agreements, from the transfer agreements.

Yes, there are some overlaps, and specifically so. For example, sponsorship to education programs, to post-secondary institutions and the allowances there may look and feel somewhat similar to the Canada Job Grant where we do provide some assistance for other types of training. There are differences and nuances, and the programs are meant to be directed at specific

client groups; for example, the funding for apprenticeships, block funding for apprenticeship training and wage subsidies for apprentices as they try to achieve their requisite number of hours to be able to move from one block to the other.

These are all important components that have been designed to meet the specifics of the labour market and the training requirements. I would suspect that if you were to put it all in one pot, you'd quickly come to the realization that, you know what? It's very, very difficult to make decisions from one pot. Perhaps the best answer is to make allowances for specific circumstances.

The recipe that you are suggesting has its merits on its surface, but I think that you'll also find that given the nature of the funding, the requirements, the program requirements and eligibility requirements from their source, from the federal government – some of the funding from the EI fund can only be used by EI-eligible individuals. Some of the funding from the Workforce Development Agreement does not require EI eligibility. Some of the funding requirements for apprentices – and then even within that group, a very responsible, positive move towards women apprentices.

You're seeing pockets of money, or envelopes of money, designated for specific purposes and intentions. I think if that weren't the case you'd probably be asking for it, and for good reason.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister Byrne.

I go to Mr. Paul Dinn.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to start where we left off with Mr. Mavin on section 3.2.03, Labour Market Development Agreement. We were talking about the total amount there for the actuals for 2019-20. I called it slippage, the little over \$7 million.

Mr. Mavin was explaining what was done with that money. Am I correct in saying that dollar figure was reallocated? Where?

**CHAIR:** Walt Mavin.

**MR. MAVIN:** Yes, it would've been reallocated. Again, one of the areas that I noted was the industrial training program, where there was \$2.5 million; also, from the College of the North Atlantic, \$2 million; and \$4 million reprofiled from LMDA, Allowances and Assistance. Again, it was reallocated and spent on other priority areas. For example, it could've been spent on other components of the LMDA, such as wage subsidies, Job Creation Partnerships, Labour Market Partnerships, research and innovation.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

The \$2 million for the College of the North Atlantic, what was that spent on?

**MR. MAVIN:** Again, when we pulled that money back into the main LMDA, some of that could have gone to JCP, some of it could have gone to wage subsidies. It comes back into the departmental vote part of the LMDA and spent across all program areas where there was a need.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Moving to 3.2.04, Workforce Development Agreement, I have a similar question on Salaries, seeing the Salaries are straight across the board again. No accounting for the 27th pay period. Can I get an explanation on that, please?

**MR. BYRNE:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. P. DINN:** I am too.

**MR. BYRNE:** A good explanation.

**CHAIR:** Debbie Dunphy, please.

**MS. DUNPHY:** This is one of the areas where the staff budget – I'll get into the exciting world of accounting in my role. What we've done here is this is an allocation of salary dollars that we are allowed to claim or that we choose to claim as a part of the Workforce Development Agreement.

The staff are working out in the regional offices and at the end of the day we will do a journal entry to transfer a portion of Salaries spent in other areas to this particular Workforce Development Agreement. It's a notion, a

nominal amount, as opposed to specific: we will say these 10 individuals at exactly \$60,000 each.

It is a journal entry that's done at the end of the year. If we do have a higher expenditure as a result of that 27th pay period, then it will be reflected in the actuals next year.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Looking at the Operating Accounts – and I'm looking at Transportation and Communications – well, we spent about a tenth of what we had budgeted for. Can I get an explanation on that as well?

**MR. BYRNE:** This is a little bit of an anomaly in that staff land line costs, telephone charges, have been charged to the divisional budget. The costs are found elsewhere.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Looking at the Supplies, budgeted \$3,500 last year. Didn't use it and we have it back again this year. Again, what happened last year and what are we going to use it on?

**MR. BYRNE:** So, again, this was a decision that was taken within the financial accounting structure. Office supplies are now charged to the divisional budget as opposed to found within the Workforce Development Agreement.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Moving along to Professional Services, again, we allocated \$11,800 last year; we more than doubled that last year in the actuals, and back down to \$11,800 again. An explanation there as well, please?

**MR. BYRNE:** So as you're aware, under the federal-provincial transfer agreements, we have to provide independent audit work related to those agreements as part of the requirement. There were some new agreement requirements that were audit requirements found within the current agreement. These additional costs are one time only. So we've had some additional audit requirements that were one time only and that's why it's reflected that there was a \$15,000 increase in the audit costs in Professional Services last year. Yet, the budget item remains

the same as previous because we do not anticipate that to reoccur.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Moving along to Purchased Services, I'm not sure if that's a typo. Last year, we had over \$669,000 budgeted, utilized \$8,800 and nothing again for this year. Can you explain what's happening there, please?

**MR. BYRNE:** No, it's not a typo; it's a very deliberate action that was taken. The system upgrade work is now being completed primarily in-house by OCIO at no cost to the department. We're using internal resources, as opposed to contracting.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Property, Furnishings and Equipment, again, \$1,500 last year, not utilized, and we're gone back to \$1,500. Delay in utilizing it, or what's the issue there?

**MR. BYRNE:** As I'm informed, just no requirements in this area for 2019-20. There are some purchased services that may be required.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

I'm looking at the revenue amounts there now. Federal revenue, again, I'm looking at that total amount of \$6.5 million. Can I get an explanation of what's happening there, from the actuals of last year?

**MR. BYRNE:** I'm not even going to bother to try to wax eloquently about this. I'm just going to turn it right over to Walter for him to wax eloquently – or Debbie, sorry, Debbie.

**CHAIR:** Debbie Dunphy.

**MS. DUNPHY:** In 2019-20, we actually received the federal revenue for '18-'19 in the 2020 year, as well as '19-'20 year. It's two years' worth of revenue there.

**MR. P. DINN:** Okay, gotcha.

I'm looking at the \$241 in provincial revenue. What would that be?

**MS. DUNPHY:** That was a mistake.

**MR. P. DINN:** I know it's a small amount.

**MR. BYRNE:** It was doughnuts.

**MR. P. DINN:** Is that ...?

**MS. DUNPHY:** Oh, it was actually a mistake. That should've been over in the Administrative Support revenue. Again, with the shutdown in March, some of our year-end entries – minor ones like this may not have been captured.

**MR. P. DINN:** Yes. Have to count my pennies, you know?

**MS. DUNPHY:** Yes, I understand.

**MR. P. DINN:** Just moving along. I looked at Salaries here. You talked about a notional amount. There's a contractual salary in this of about \$108,045. Can I get an explanation of what that position is for?

**MS. DUNPHY:** A contractual salary under the Workforce Development Agreement? Or is it under the –?

**MR. P. DINN:** Well, actually, it's probably under the Workforce Development Secretariat.

**MS. DUNPHY:** Yes, that is the director of FLMM, the Forum of Labour Market Ministers Secretariat. It's a temporary two-year position for the province to host the Secretariat.

**MR. P. DINN:** Just for clarification: Is that fully funded by feds or by the province?

**MS. DUNPHY:** It's cost-shared between all the provinces and the federal government, but it's 100 per cent offset, yes.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

I look at the Transportation and Communications pieces, the dollars and cents that we've been looking at. I mentioned it earlier about COVID and how we've become accustomed to doing more things online and that. Have we looked across the department in terms of savings that can be gotten under communications, under those dealings?

**CHAIR:** Minister Byrne.

**MR. BYRNE:** Yes, I think it's fair to say we have. Earlier in this Estimates meeting, we talked a little bit about some of those significant savings. Upwards of tens of thousands of dollars have been saved from video-conferencing services, the leasing or purchase of video-conferencing services, going directly to PC-based, laptop-based, Skype and so on. Yes, we're already feeling the benefits of those transitions.

**MR. P. DINN:** Okay, thank you.

I'll pass it on.

**CHAIR:** Ms. Coffin.

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

**CHAIR:** We will go to Mr. Jim Dinn.

**MR. J. DINN:** Thank you, Chair.

As I understand it – and I'm just going back to 3.1.01 – I think the answer was given that there was a drop of some 1,600 in caseloads after March. If I understand it correctly, at \$800 roughly per recipient, that would have resulted in well over \$1.25 million, I guess, in savings.

I'm just wondering: Where would that be reflected here in this? I'm looking at that drop in that money. Where would that be reflected, that savings as such? Or would it be?

**MR. BYRNE:** In this particular one, Income Assistance, 3.1.01, that would not be found in this particular section. Generally speaking, income support would be found in a different subhead or different line item.

Cynthia, would you be able to take the charge up?

**CHAIR:** Cynthia King.

**MS. KING:** Those savings, if any, or reduction in caseload, are cumulative month over month. So even though we reached 1,600, it was a few hundred every month, month over month, since March. They would not have been budgeted savings in the materials that we have before us.

Those would be savings that we're realizing as the year progresses.

**MR. J. DINN:** So that wouldn't be reflected anywhere here in this, that we would see this, in the department in the line items?

**MS. KING:** No.

**MR. J. DINN:** Just out of curiosity, then, with the reduction in caseloads, would these have been people who have, I think, aged out or would they have also been the people who were terminated as well from the program, from receiving benefits?

**MS. KING:** It would be a combination. As I said, it's a combination of people leaving as well as people not coming to us. About 400 people every month leave for all sorts of different reasons, aging out, other sources of income and things like that. A little over 700 is our estimate of individuals who actually left the program to receive federal recovery benefits.

**MR. J. DINN:** If I may then, if they left to receive, is that something they did voluntarily or were their income support benefits terminated is what I'm trying to get at here.

**MS. KING:** Anybody who would have availed of the federal recovery benefits would have done so on their own and then reported to us that they had other sources of income.

**MR. J. DINN:** And at that point then the income supports would have been terminated or suspended?

**MS. KING:** That's right, yeah.

**MR. J. DINN:** Okay.

I'm just curious, then, and I'm just trying to look at the efficiencies in the department, and there's going to be an effect on people themselves, but I note that End Homelessness St. John's have recommended two options: to fully exempt CERB from income support payments or to treat CERB as earned income. Either one, basically, would've negated the need to terminate income support. Also, more importantly, as these people who come back now are going to be looking for support desperately, you've outlined some of the

procedures in the reassessment piece and in the use of bridge funding to make sure they don't go without.

I'm assuming that with that comes an enormous amount of paperwork, time, clerical work and administrative duties. I can only know that just from the work we do in our office in advocating for constituents that it's more than a day; it sometimes takes several weeks to get the person the help that they need.

I'm just wondering if it would've been better in all around savings for the workload, the time, if indeed the CERB had been exempt from income support, as recommended by the federal government and End Homelessness, or treated as income. I'm just looking at the amount of work now that's going to be in place as these people come looking for supports. Certainly, it's going to increase workload; it's going to make our job, even as MHAs, more difficult in trying to get support for the people who are most in need of it.

**CHAIR:** Minister Byrne.

**MR. BYRNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair; thank you for the question.

Myself and six members of our executive of Immigration, Skills and Labour had an excellent conversation with End Homelessness St. John's about two weeks ago. One of the things that we had discussed was some of the assumptions that End Homelessness St. John's had made within their policy documents. They were unaware, for example, that while an income-assistance recipient transitioned to CERB, to the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit, that they were under the assumption that they would lose all supplementary benefits.

We were able to inform the executive director of End Homelessness St. John's that was incorrect. As we do with so many of our clients who find work, we want to make sure that those supports are available to them, those supplementary supports; things such as the drug card, amongst other things. If an individual left income support to go on the CERB, they would be able to retain their supplementary benefits so that they would not be disadvantaged.

From the point of view of the total value of income support versus the CERB, as Ms. King had mentioned, the average benefit under income support is \$800. The CERB and the current benefit, the Canada Recovery Benefit, which will now be eligible up to September 2021, provides assistance of \$2,000 a month.

We chatted through this process about whether or not someone was financially disadvantaged as a result of moving to CERB and therefore not being able to receive their former income support benefits. I think it was a very solid conversation because End Homelessness St. John's did come to the realization that there was actually not less money but more money. If an individual was eligible for the CERB or the post-CERB from the federal government, their household or themselves personally would actually receive significantly more money. In addition to that they'd also be able to maintain their supplementary benefits in the process.

On the question of the transition from CERB, or post-CERB, back to income support, if that was what would be required, End Homelessness St. John's also made an assumption that the total amount of money that would be collected by the recipient under CERB would then be calculated and would be used for the decision of when they could potentially be re-eligible for income support. There was an assumption that was made by End Homelessness St. John's that we were able to correct and they were very appreciative of the correction.

As Ms. King had said earlier, say, for example, someone was on CERB for four months and collecting \$8,000 during the course of that four-month period. End Homelessness St. John's had made the assumption that \$8,000 would then significantly delay, to the extent of months, their eligibility to go back on income support. The folks that we spoke to were, I believe, very reassured to hear – as Cynthia had explained to this Committee earlier this morning – that would not be the case. You would not delay the income support eligibility for a period of months by calculating the full benefit of the totality of CERB and then determining outward.

What Ms. King had explained is that we can actually turn those applications around in days, upwards of a maximum of three weeks. But if

there are individual circumstances that after being on CERB for a period of four months the individual still finds themselves in a position of financial vulnerability, we can do an immediate payment to get them back in operation very, very quickly.

With that said, you talked about the processing times would have been easier just to – with the paperwork being so onerous that it would be better just to ignore the regulation and move forward. In many cases – not in all cases but in many cases – we may have a pre-existing relationship with the income support client; therefore, it's not onerous to be able to process that file.

With that said, I'll just quickly turn it over to Ms. King to see if there's anything that I may have misspoken about or if there's a detail that should be further clarified.

**MS. KING:** No, actually, Minister, that describes it very well. Individuals who were previously receiving income support, we would have a lot of their baseline tombstone-type data in the system and it's a matter of updating the file. We will make every effort to expedite the applications for people returning from CERB and process it in a timely manner, recognizing that there is some financial insecurity that may be experienced by some.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Mr. Paul Dinn.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm looking at section 3.2.06, Youth and Student Services. I'm looking at line 09, Allowances and Assistance. I see there was about \$80,000 not spent last year and we're back up to the budgeted amount that we had back in 2019-2020. Can you explain that discrepancy, please?

**MR. BYRNE:** Funding in this area is for tuition vouchers; expenses not incurred until later this fiscal year, but estimated savings of \$80,000, similar to 2018-2019. In this particular program the uptake was as described. We're always reaching out to try to get more uptake in that particular area, but that's consistent with last year.



**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

I probably know the answer to this one, but I'll ask it anyway. With relation to the tuition vouchers and now, of course, where we had many students going online, are we still allocating the same tuition vouchers with the same amount?

**MR. BYRNE:** Short answer: Yes, the tuition stayed the same.

**MR. P. DINN:** Tuition voucher is the same?

**MR. BYRNE:** Yes, I believe so.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

I'm looking at federal revenue. Last year's budget: \$300,000. Where did that come from and how come it's not showing up elsewhere?

**MR. BYRNE:** This is federal revenue under the Digital Skills, which ended on March 31st of 2020. It sunsetted, the federal revenue did. The revenue related to Digital Skills for Youth Program was lower due to expenditures lower than originally anticipated.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

I'm done with this section.

**CHAIR:** Ms. Coffin.

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

**CHAIR:** Mr. Jim Dinn.

**MR. J. DINN:** Respectfully, Minister, I have to disagree because I was speaking to the director of End Homelessness only last night. I do have his letter that he sent to you with regard to that: "To be clear, EHSJ maintains that the best way to ensure resilience for Income Support recipients in the face of changing financial circumstances is to exempt CERB from Income Support recipients and eligibility requirements ...." Obviously, there is a gulf here in the understanding of that meeting.

I'm still very much concerned that the people I serve, that the people who call my office who are very vulnerable and that in some way, shape

or form this is going to put undue hardship – it's one thing for me in my situation to go without a cheque for a week or for a month or whatever else. It would put some financial burden, but I would be able to survive it easily enough. Not so for the people I serve who also dealing with mental health issues, struggling with addiction sometimes, struggling with precarious housing and a myriad of other issues.

It's the very people that I served with Saint Vincent de Paul and the people I served there and the reason we got into an affordable housing project, as well.

Again, at this point in time, I don't know if it's too late, but, obviously, End Homelessness is very clear in that the best way is to – the two options that they provided – and they still clearly support these to exempt CERB income from income support, or to treat it as earned income. Either way, in this case, the two options that they outlined in their letter to you of October 14 would be viable options.

I'm even understanding, like, an immediate payment of some sort of a bridge funding is still – I don't know what immediate means. Immediate means, to me, I need this, here's the money, take it. I don't know what it would take, but my experience in anything to do with government, it takes longer than – immediate has a very different and a vastly different meaning than what it means to me for immediate, when I talk about immediate assistance.

Immediate assistance, when I was with Saint Vincent de Paul, I need a hamper. We'll have one with you within a half and hour. That's immediate. Now, I don't know what it means, but I know that people that we've helped with housing and that, immediate is not that. It takes a while for it to happen. Usually what happens with us is that we end up going to try and get and ask a food bank to maybe get immediate assistance.

I think this approach lacks a certain amount of empathy. I think it needs to be revisited. I think, in many ways, it's going to save the workload and I think the stress level on the employees who have to deal with and have to make this decision. It would have been much better just

simply to do as End Homelessness had suggested.

They're very much still committed to their position and that needs to be done. It's about helping the vulnerable in this province. People who may not have any financial skills, who don't have the ability sometimes to figure out where their next meal is coming from and are desperate.

That's about empathy, that's about sympathy for the most vulnerable and for the people who have no agency, except sometimes to call their MHA and look for help. Sometimes it's the most frustrating aspect of my role as MHA in the amount of time it takes for me to get help for them and, in some cases, I still can't.

That's the most frustrating aspect in my district, the amount of homelessness, poverty, food insecurity, precarious housing arrangements, is untenable. And I'm sorry, but anything that in some way, shape or form means that they now have to reapply for an income support is untenable, unacceptable and it's placing them in an unfair and vulnerable position even more; we're victimizing them even more.

As far as I understand, the amount of money that was used in many cases, from the people I've spoken to, was used to buy a new bed – they haven't had a bed – or to buy new clothes. It's not something that they went out and – I don't know what kind of luxuries we think people would have, but in many ways it was paying off debts. I can tell you, in Saint Vincent de Paul, the number of people who had owed money for rent, for power bills, who were looking at having their power cut off, was horrendous.

I'm sorry, I do not believe, based on my conversation with the executive director of End Homelessness, that in any way, shape or form that they were dissuaded from their point of view and stance on this. What they're asking from the minister, from this government is a more humane and more empathetic approach to this, and less of a bureaucratic, administrative and clerical approach. We're talking about people, not numbers.

Thank you.

**MR. BYRNE:** Mr. Chair, I don't believe I heard a question, but I will respond to certain facts that should be responded to.

I would put the professionals within Immigration, Skills and Labour up as probably the most empathetic individuals I have ever met in my entire life. Their relationships with their clients are deep. It's professional, but it's often personal. I think that the notion that's been cast that people are getting lost in a bureaucratic sea is unfounded. It's very much unfounded.

The professionals, whether they be the social workers, the client services officers, the front-line individuals who feel a fiduciary responsibility, a duty to support those who are most vulnerable, I believe they perform their job incredibly well, and under difficult circumstances, no doubt. When you're dealing with people who are vulnerable, when you're dealing with people who deserve and need empathy, they provide it.

Mr. Chair, we do have a program that is in place to be able to provide assistance to those who need assistance. There are some details about that that I believe are being misconstrued, that for the benefit of us all, not only as parliamentarians here in this House, exercising our privileges and rights in this Committee, but also for the people outside of this House, we really need to dig deep and to understand the consequences of decisions and the consequences of what we do and set as policy, so I do appreciate the hon. Member's commentary.

The conversation that we had with End Homelessness St. John's, I think, was very, very productive. It enabled the department to get further in touch with a significant community group and an umbrella group that represents many other groups within the province, especially within the City of St. John's, that are dedicated to fighting, overcoming poverty and mitigating its effects in the short term.

With that said, Mr. Chair, we really need to examine the facts as they exist. That is that there were some assumptions; that when the six executive members, when Fiona Langor, the deputy minister of Immigration, Skills and Labour, sat in on this meeting, when Walt Mavin, the assistant deputy minister, sat in on

this meeting, when Cynthia King sat in on this meeting and when many other executives from within the department sat in on this meeting, we did come to a more common, more general understanding that certain assumptions were being made that were not valid, in fact.

For example, what was communicated at that point in time, the primary concern of End Homelessness St. John's was access to supplementary benefits which could, indeed, be cut off once income support had ended or had been removed as a result of receipt of the CERB, that supplementary benefits would no longer be at play, no longer be available. That was proven to be an incorrect assumption. I believe that End Homelessness St. John's really appreciated the clarification.

We also clarified the fact that while over the four-month period of CERB, Canadian Emergency Response Benefit, provided by the federal government, some \$8,000 would be made available to the recipient. As Ms. King had mentioned, the average income support benefit per client was \$800; over that some four-month period the income support benefit would've been approximately, on average, \$2,400. The CERB was \$8,000. There was no reduction in income or reduction in financial capacity. There was an increase.

In the spirit of empathy, as the hon. Member speaks of, we do recognize that these are vulnerable clients; these are vulnerable people. But to say or to make the assertion that there was less money coming in to meet their basic needs, that would not be true. It just simply would not be true. The second point here is that they would not lose supplementary benefits while on CERB, such as the drug card, which is so important to so many clients. The third assumption here is that once the CERB was over, then of course they're facing a lag time.

As we know, the federal government has now offered additional equivalent benefits, the transition from CERB, the Canada Emergency Response Benefit, to a post-CERB federal benefit. There are three streams: a caregiver benefit; an employment insurance eligibility benefit; or a Canadian response benefit, which is basically very, very similar to the CERB benefit. Those who were on CERB before would be able

to transition to the Canadian response benefit and receiving that same amount.

With that said, Mr. Chair, the point has been made, and made clear by Ms. King and by her professionals, that should there be a circumstance where a vulnerability is exposed and that there is an uncertainty to the well-being of the client looking to move from the CERB back into income support, it has been said and it has been done that the client, their individual circumstances, will be assessed and assessed quickly and support given in a very, very timely basis.

With that said, I will always monitor the activities of our client service officers and the approach that's being taken and ensure that services are being provided in a timely basis. But as Ms. King said, we do have records of former income support clients that are able to speed that process up very, very fast. If there are circumstances where the individual, notwithstanding the fact that they made more money on CERB than they probably would have made on – well, definitely made on income support – if they find themselves in a post-CERB world, post-CERB environment, post-CERB situation that they have less money or have increased financial needs, we can respond to that and we will respond to that. We will respond to that with empathy.

Mr. Chair, if Ms. King would like to add anything further, if there's anything further to add – I will not ask her to dabble in the matters of politics, but exclusively of policy – if there's something there that I've misspoken about or said incorrectly, either in terms of the characterization of my conversation, which you participated in as well, with End Homelessness St. John's, if there's anything that has been miscommunicated here, I ask you, I implore you, I give you leave to correct for the record what that may be.

**MS. KING:** No, Minister, there's nothing further (inaudible) –

**CHAIR:** Cynthia King. Your light just came on.

**MS. KING:** Oh, sorry.

No, Minister, there's nothing further that I could add.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

I'd like the Clerk to call the heading.

**CLERK:** 3.1.01 to 3.2.06.

**CHAIR:** 3.1.01 to 3.2.06 shall carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

**MS. COFFIN:** We weren't finished with the questions.

**CHAIR:** Ms. Coffin, I asked you several times if you wanted to ask questions and you had deferred.

**MS. COFFIN:** I'm sorry. It looked like Mr. Dinn was (inaudible) finish.

**CHAIR:** He did not ask a question in his last 10 minutes. For the benefit of the –

**MS. COFFIN:** (Inaudible) I wasn't finished with my questions. I just let you go ahead (inaudible). So are you saying that this is done now and I can't ask anymore questions?

**CHAIR:** It has been voted on, yes.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, I will put my questions in writing.

**MR. P. DINN:** There was no vote yet.

**CHAIR:** We just voted, yes.

**MR. P. DINN:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. COFFIN:** Are you done with your questions?

**MR. P. DINN:** No, no, I hadn't voted (inaudible).

**CHAIR:** Not on –

**MR. BYRNE:** I'm more than happy to take more questions (inaudible).

**MR. P. DINN:** I think in openness and that, let's – yeah.

**CHAIR:** Sure, Ms. Coffin.

**MS. COFFIN:** And I'm sorry for changing the order. I wanted to ensure that Mr. James Dinn has the opportunity to talk about Income Assistance before we went too far into 3.2.06. So I'm really sorry for any confusion that may have resulted as a result of that.

**CHAIR:** Please ask your questions.

**MS. COFFIN:** If it's okay, may I? All right, lovely.

3.1.02: We've already talked about the number that had been received. In terms of the criteria for this, we talked about it being for low-income individuals. Can you tell me what the threshold for individuals receiving that, and is this also something that we can provincially adjust the threshold, like we could for the Mother/Baby Nutrition Supplement?

**MR. BYRNE:** I believe it comes with the same threshold as the Mother/Baby, \$26,000 or thereabouts.

Ms. King, would you be the right person to speak to whether or not it can, indeed, be subject to a policy review?

**MS. KING:** The child care benefit under the National Child Benefit Reinvestment fund is intended for individuals in receipt of income support. The threshold will be whether or not you are eligible to receive income support. It's intended to provide a benefit that allows individuals in receipt of income support to participate in the workforce and in training when they're not able to receive child care that's regulated. This particular benefit is for individuals in receipt of income support.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay. I think that's where I was trying to get my head around. Because we're underspending this by almost half, I was just

wondering is there any way we can change the criteria to enable additional individuals to access this. Given the nature of you have to be working overnight and you're not using regulated stuff, I'm guessing no.

The second part of that question would then be: Can we repurpose this money for other things, like housing? Or can it go to help people supplement with their transportation costs, because we know our public transit is very incongruent to the places in which people work and the times in which people go to work. If you're working, for example, at a call centre and you get off at midnight, often buses have stopped running, so that incongruence there.

Is there any possibility that money can be repurposed to better help support individuals as opposed to letting half of it lapse every year?

**CHAIR:** Minister Byrne.

**MR. BYRNE:** Yes, within the vote itself, where they can, we do reprofile funds. On this particular example, I'll see if we don't do that. Cynthia, I don't know if ...

**CHAIR:** Cynthia King.

**MS. KING:** The funds under the National Child Benefit Reinvestment are intended to reduce poverty for children. So the commitment that the province has made under that particular fund is that it directly impacts children, which is why it's intended for non-regulated child care.

**MS. COFFIN:** Great.

Could it also apply for parents with children who have to go to work, and then they could take it as public transit? I mean, that certainly benefits the child as well. Is there that kind of latitude? Are there other ways in which we can manifest this money so we can give it to the people who need it? I mean, this is where my head is.

**MS. KING:** It is provincial funding, so we have an opportunity, yes, to do some analysis.

**MS. COFFIN:** That would be wonderful. I look forward to – would that fall under 3.2.01 on development and implementation of a

comprehensive suite of employment and training programs and supports and services? Would it fall there?

**MS. KING:** Any activity that would be to benefit children we could look at.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, I'm trying to move pieces around together.

We moved to 3.2.01 and it says: development and implementation of a comprehensive suite. I've just pointed out two potential changes that we could have: changing the Mother/Baby Nutritional Supplement and the National Child Benefit Reinvestment. That's two potential ones that if, say, next year this time – no. In six months' time, when we do this again, then when I ask the question which I'm going to ask now: What is under development right now? You will be able to say: Hey, I'm going to do these two. You'll also be able to tell me the follow-up to the answer to the question you're going to give me now: What's being developed right now?

**CHAIR:** Cynthia King.

**MS. KING:** Every year we look at all of our programs with a view to ensuring that we're able to spend that money for its intended purpose. There's always ongoing analysis of where the money is being spent, who's taking up those funds, what those families look like and where they are located. That ongoing continuous improvement of our programs and services happens year in and year out, no different for these two particular budget areas.

**MS. COFFIN:** Lovely. Okay, I look forward to finding ways to spend the money we have not spent for the people who need it the most. There is no doubt.

Okay, let's flip over to Employment Development Programs. I note that this is partly federally funded. Can you give me a breakdown of what Allowances and Assistance is versus Grants and Subsidies? Then I'll maybe unpack that a little further next, please.

**CHAIR:** Minister Byrne.

**MR. BYRNE:** In terms of the Grants and Subsidies, funding is provided – for example,

\$1,368,000 under the Linkages programs, programs that you may be aware of. JobsNL receives \$860,000; Employment and Development Supports, grants to agencies, received \$3.9 million – \$3,922,500. The Poverty Reduction Strategy funding for community collaboration facilitators and transitions to work program receives \$751,000. That's under the Grants and Subsidies.

Under the Allowances and Assistance, basically funding is provided for Employment Development Supports at \$800,000 and Adult Basic Education placement support at \$562,000. The Allowances and Assistance line item is 90 per cent federally funded.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay and the Grants and Subsidies are provincially funded, yes?

**MR. BYRNE:** Are provincial.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, that's lovely.

Going back to my question on 1.2.03, we had that \$21,000 grant or subsidy that didn't have a name. There was no application process and it seemed to be largely discretionary. Are any of those sitting in 3.2.02 or is all that money accounted for? If so, can I have a complete list of all of the Allowances and Assistance, Grants and Subsidies programs and who's received them, please?

**MR. BYRNE:** You certainly can. I'm just going to follow back on your question. So you said ...

**MS. COFFIN:** When we were talking in 1.2.03 – so we can just flip back there a bit. I'm not looking at that section; I'm just making reference to the response.

**MR. BYRNE:** Right.

**MS. COFFIN:** Section 10, Grants and Subsidies, there's \$21,000 there that had no name. It wasn't a particular designated program. There was no application process associated with this. It was my understanding that it was a little bit discretionary, to be able to fund things that didn't really fit in anything else.

Of this \$6.9 million that we're seeing in Grants and Subsidies, are there any more of those

unnamed, no-application little pots of discretionary funding in Grants and Subsidies in 3.2.02?

**MR. BYRNE:** No.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, so you'll give me a full list of that breakdown?

**MR. BYRNE:** Yes.

**MS. COFFIN:** That would be lovely.

In terms of the Labour Market Development Agreement, I understand that is fully funded. Once upon a time several lifetimes ago, I worked with several people sitting across from me and some of the stuff that we did were Labour Market Development Agreements.

I know that a lot of that programming has changed substantially over time. Do you have a comprehensive breakdown in the briefing booklet?

**MR. BYRNE:** No, we don't, but we can certainly endeavour to provide you with additional information.

**MS. COFFIN:** That would be wonderful. So things like what programs are being administered; who's accessing them; how much money is going out; the types of employers that are being funded as well as the individuals that are being funded, including a breakdown of how much money they're getting, what they're being trained for, a gender and maybe a BIPOC – am I getting that right: Black, Indigenous, People of Colour – breakdown of who's accessing those. That would be a lovely, lovely overview of the spending of \$120 million, please.

**MR. BYRNE:** Yes, it probably would. I don't know if we can provide you with a breakdown to that extent as to what proportion is going to Black or People of Colour clients, what percentage. That may or may not be captured.

**MS. COFFIN:** As detailed a breakdown as you can get would be lovely. In particular, gender and Indigenous or a breakdown of as broad a swath of individuals as we can, just to get a sense of who we are helping and if it's actually working. That would be the other part.

**MR. BYRNE:** One of the things, in terms of identifying particular groups or client demographic, questions are not asked if it's not necessarily – if the federal program itself is not designed specifically for priority outreach to Indigenous, for example, we may not necessarily collect that information because it would be gratuitous to the purpose. We'll provide it to you as best we can.

**MS. COFFIN:** Quite often, many of these things are voluntary as well, as is gender or sexual preference and religion. But if that's there that'd be lovely to have a look at.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms. Coffin. I just –

**MS. COFFIN:** Yeah, I see.

**CHAIR:** – go back to Mr. Dinn, if he has further questions in this section.

**MR. P. DINN:** I do not.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Ms. Coffin, would you like to try and clue up this section, just in lieu of the Committee and the time? I will afford you more time to ask questions in this section.

**MS. COFFIN:** I do appreciate that. This shouldn't take much longer. The questions are going to look a lot like some of the other questions we've already seen.

Workforce Development Agreement, I see here: Is that entirely federally funded? It doesn't seem to be, but if you can give me some sense of if it's entirely federally funded or not?

**MR. BYRNE:** This particular section here is for, for example, the Salaries and other things, but it is a federally funded program. Walt Mavin may be able to provide some – it's a partnership between the province and the federal government.

Mr. Mavin, if you would jump in here.

**CHAIR:** Walt Mavin.

**MR. MAVIN:** Thank you, Minister.

Yes, so the Workforce Development Agreement is one of our two labour market transfer agreements: the Labour Market Development Agreement and the Workforce Development Agreement. We negotiated these agreements with the federal government a number of years ago. We are currently in year four of six-year agreements for both.

The distinction between the two agreements: one would be that the LMDA is primarily focused on EI beneficiaries, whereas the Workforce Development Agreement allows us to work with non-EI eligible clients and it gives us flexibility along the client basis.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay. So Workforce Development could include someone who is re-entering the workforce after maybe someone took six years off to raise a family. You wouldn't be EI eligible but you could come in the Workforce Development Agreement, correct?

**MR. MAVIN:** Yes, that's correct, depending on the circumstances.

**MS. COFFIN:** All right. I'm having some familiarity with this. It's just good to have a little bit of a breakdown between these.

Perhaps along this there are a range of programs and services for a range of different individuals. I'm going back to a little comment that Minister Byrne had mentioned a bit earlier. One of the reasons why the pots of money are so segregated is because they, of course, focus on different groups or different times in people's development, or different accessibilities or different types of services that needed to be provided.

When I was working with this department in a similar – well, in a policy development capacity here, one of the things that we were looking at was the continuum of services, so whether an individual stopped working for a variety of reasons and then started on income support. Then, made it to income support and from income support they could have moved to a Workforce Development Agreement. Then, from there they could have moved to the Labour Market Development Agreement and from there they may have become gainfully employed

along the way. Certainly I know that there had been an initiative to track individuals and to see what their attachment to these programs and services were, or the flip side of that would be their attachment to the labour market.

Do you have any data or have you been tracking individuals through these continuum of services? I know that you could be on income support but receiving partial subsidies for a variety of things, and then going back to work and maybe accessing something from the Workforce Development Agreement, or you could be accessing something from Youth and Student Services. Do you have a sense of that, how our caseloads have been changing and what services individuals receive? Do they actually leave and move on to gainful employment or at least some form of self-sustainability? Do we have senses of that?

**MR. MAVIN:** Yes, and people actually do leave. We do hear on occasion – and I say more often than you would think – feedback from our clients who we’ve supported. It might have been with a single intervention or it might have been with multiple interventions over the course of a year or two who find their way in the labour market. These could have been people in receipt of income support, or they may have been, as you indicated, someone who had been out of the workforce for a number of years who’s just re-entering and is looking for access to training and/or some other labour market attachments.

One of the things, when we renegotiated the two labour market transfer agreements, part of that negotiation was the implementation of a performance measurement strategy, which now involves the federal government. There is information that we’re collecting on a client basis. Some of that information is done on a per-program case. One of the areas that we’re looking into is doing across the continuum because you’re right, the guiding principle of supporting someone from their current circumstances to employment labour market attachment is along a continuum, and it’s not necessarily always a straight line to that end result.

Yes, we do have some of those indicators. For example, under the Labour Market Development Agreement, we’re part of a national evaluation

committee which regularly looks at the different interventions and looks at the impact of those interventions. There is some information that’s available based on that, that can be shared.

**MS. COFFIN:** That would be wonderful. Perhaps sometime we can arrange for an overview of the programs and services, because I imagine the role of this particular department is going to become even more pertinent as we make our way through the rest of this year and into next, for sure.

Okay, let me flip back over to here now – Workforce Development Agreement. Employment Assistance Programs for Persons with Disabilities: That’s only half funded or about a third funded from the federal government, yes?

**MR. MAVIN:** It is partially funded by the federal government. The remaining funding is provincial.

Prior to the negotiation of the Workforce Development Agreement, we had a separate federal-provincial agreement: the Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities.

**MS. COFFIN:** Is that JEEPS?

**MR. MAVIN:** Sorry?

**MS. COFFIN:** JEEPS? How long ago was that?

**MR. MAVIN:** That one doesn’t ring a bell with me, sorry. The former LMAPD is part of the Workforce Development Agreement – all that funding – with a requirement, of course, that we allocate 30-plus per cent of our funding under the Workforce Development Agreement to support persons with disabilities.

**MS. COFFIN:** Lovely.

**MR. MAVIN:** The federal funding coming in here is actually coming from the Workforce Development Agreement.

**MS. COFFIN:** All right, well, that’s good to know.

So this is very different than the folks in the Public Service Commission who are being



employed who have disabilities, because they're being employed in the provincial government. This is for individuals to get new skills and to help them find jobs elsewhere, not necessarily in the provincial government, correct?

**MR. MAVIN:** That's correct.

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

Let's flip over to Youth and Student Services now. There's not very much federal revenue there. How many students are we getting and are we keeping them? Do we know if we're keeping the kids that we're educating?

**CHAIR:** Minister Byrne.

**MR. BYRNE:** I'm not sure if the hon. Member is referring to post-post-secondary training or – in terms of the assistance to some of the most vulnerable, such as that provided through Linkages and other things, if the hon. Member could elaborate on what specific statistic you're looking to ...?

**MS. COFFIN:** Are the youth and students who are receiving this assistance, when they get them and they are attaining and maintaining an employment, are we keeping them here in Newfoundland and Labrador? Or are we training them and sending them off elsewhere?

**MR. BYRNE:** These are not necessarily training, some of these are for student, youth and employment and internship. So many of these wage subsidies would be for those already engaged on a track towards post-secondary education. Some of these programs are for youth at risk. So if you're asking the question: Are we tracking students in a post-post-secondary environment? I think that would be most appropriate for you to raise that question with the Department of Education.

**MS. COFFIN:** I've spoken to Education and tracking students. This kind of goes to immigration, not really immigration, I guess; it goes to population development. I guess it kind of goes across a variety of different government departments. I was most concerned with are the youth that we are giving these opportunities to, are they staying in Newfoundland and Labrador.

What I understand, or the impression I'm getting from your response is that these individuals are not being tracked beyond: you are given these skills and good luck unless you come back, and then we'll track you some more. Is that what I am to understand here?

**MR. BYRNE:** No, I wouldn't agree with the premise of your question.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay.

**MR. BYRNE:** We have a number of different programs that do provide outreach. Many of our subsidies, our wage opportunities go to private sector employers; some go to public sector employers. The Community Sector Council, for example, has an incredible program where they outreach with the community at large, and they do follow-up work as well.

I guess in terms of tracking future performance, multiple-year personal decision-making, no. I think from a student employment point of view, the blunt answer is, no, we wouldn't necessarily track from a student employment point of view what their next career move is.

**MS. COFFIN:** All right. I have this much more I want to finish up.

**CHAIR:** Go ahead.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you.

The reason I ask this is once upon a time the Labour Market Development Agreement – and I think there was another program – used to track post-secondary graduates. Once you got your training, you were asked if you got a job, was it in a related field, how much income were you making; things like that. I think, perhaps, I was just mapping that over in my mind and wondering if there was any tracking of these individuals once they receive these services. It seems like sometimes there is; sometimes there's not.

Perhaps when you get the next summary or annual report from the individuals who have received these grants and subsidies, like the Community Sector Council, then I'll have a better sense then of any continuity, if they have been doing that tracking.

I guess the follow-up question here is the same question that I asked with respect to the last Grants and Subsidies. We have almost \$6 million here in Grants and Subsidies: Can I have a complete list of those Grants and Subsidies, as well as the Allowances and Assistance; the number of individuals receiving them; a breakdown by gender as best as possible; and the types of skill supports and trainings that they're receiving? So a breakdown of how we're spending \$6 million.

Then the subsidiary question would be: Is there any money there that's not accountable for? Do we have another little pocket of money like we had back in 1.2.03, that doesn't have a name, an application process and is what seems to be discretionary?

**MR. BYRNE:** The answer to the latter question is no, but the answer to the former is yes.

**MS. COFFIN:** Wonderful.

**MR. BYRNE:** Most of this information is actually available online already, but we can provide it to the extent that we possibly can in terms of the fullness of it.

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

That's my questions for this section.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Just to clarify from earlier, where Mr. Jim Dinn is not an official Member of the Committee, typically they would ask after everybody had questioned. So Mr. Paul Dinn had said he had no further questions. You had been saying no questions so –

**MS. COFFIN:** (Inaudible), I understand.

**CHAIR:** – I didn't want to delay proceedings or not allow you to have your questioning, and you had many questions.

I'll ask the Clerk to call the heading again and we will vote on section 3.1.01.

**CLERK:** 3.1.01 to 3.2.06 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall the 3.1.01 to 3.2.06 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.1.01 through 3.2.06 carried.

**CHAIR:** I'll ask the Clerk to call the remaining subheads.

**CLERK:** 4.1.01 to 4.1.06 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 4.1.01 to 4.1.06 inclusive carry?

Mr. Dinn.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

I'm looking at section 4.1.01 and, again, starting with Salaries, I see the dip in Salaries last year from the budgeted to the actuals and then an increase as well. Can I get an explanation on that, please?

**MR. BYRNE:** On the Salaries you ask: Why are the 2019-2020 actuals down by approximately \$290,000 from the original budget?

We did have to recruit several positions and the movement of individuals within the department for other opportunities. There were people who moved within the department which caused vacancies. The Estimates are down in large measure from 2019-2020 in the budget.

The Atlantic Workforce Partnership, there was a reprofile of salary funding to reflect actual requirements, that was \$32,000. There was a divisional Workforce Development and Productivity Secretariat, we adjusted Salaries to match the actual requirements, which accounted for \$31,000, and additional funding added to cover the 27th pay period in that particular case.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

I'm looking at Transportation and Communications. We saw it budgeted last year for just under \$60,000, less than half was utilized and now we're budgeting for two-thirds of what it was previously. Can I get an explanation there as well?

**MR. BYRNE:** A lot of the travel here is related to FPT in-person meetings. There were less than anticipated travel expenses related to federal-provincial in-person meetings. There was an adjustment to the budget to reflect the actual spending for 2020-21 for this division for the Forum of Labour Market Ministers and for the AWP.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

And mentioning the FPT in-person meetings, is there an opportunity there to reduce this amount more with online meetings and such?

**MR. BYRNE:** Thank you for the question. I don't know if Newfoundland and Labrador would want to be the odd one out to participate in a national meeting of 14 partners – three territories, the federal government and the 10 provinces – and for us to be the only ones to participate virtually.

I will say that in my own experience, a lot of business gets done face to face at these things. We don't have regular contact with a lot of our counterparts, and in my own experience, personally, I always find that the meeting before the meeting is often the best meeting. Just being able to work, establish relationships, establish networks, establish alliances – both within the Atlantic, within other provinces, with common cause – it does make for a much more effective experience and a much more efficient experience for Newfoundland and Labrador. While there are countless – countless – meetings that are conducted by teleconference and video conference, there is still a certain value to meeting face to face, meeting shoulder to shoulder, while maintaining COVID protocols, and having these discussions where you do find where you're similar as opposed to what separates you.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

I wasn't suggesting that we be the odd person out or odd province out. It's just that I think of the travel restrictions on us – and when I say us, I mean all provinces and territories – that there may be opportunity to look forward and see some savings that could be had here. I certainly see the value in face to face, but I also see where we stand right now. We're trying to move towards a digital operation, as this government has come in with a department responsible for that area. So I would like to see us explore more opportunities there in terms of Skype, or Zoom or whatever.

I'll just move along here. I'm looking at Purchased Services. A huge drop in actuals last year that was utilized and then we doubled it for this year, Purchased Services. We're \$65,000 in 2019-20, dropped to \$2,500 and now we've doubled it to about \$120,000.

**MR. BYRNE:** Yeah. On the Purchased Services, expenses related to certain trade shows were not as high as anticipated, which led to some \$62,000 in reductions. That \$62,881 not only was in relation to those trade shows, but also in-person meetings related to exactly what you just spoke of, which was hosting for the Forum of Labour Market Ministers and the AWP were indeed lower.

The hon. Member's point, Mr. Chair, is well taken, that in a COVID environment travel and travel costs would be anticipated to be smaller. With that said, we still have to budget, we have to presume that we may need that money and then we can certainly deal with it once the facts become more clear to us.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

I would assume that this budget was not zero based?

**MR. BYRNE:** Well, budgeting, we always conduct reviews of all line items. There's kind of a constant reference to zero-based budgeting. In terms of anomalies, you're referring to travel costs amid COVID, we have to be prudent and we can't reduce a budget when we know there's a possibility that the budget may be fully required.

**MR. P. DINN:** Good answer. Thank you.

You don't have your crystal ball, no?

**MR. BYRNE:** I think that's what I'm saying.

**MR. P. DINN:** Moving to Property, Furnishings and Equipment, we see a huge drop there, as well, last year in unused budget, and gone back up again. Explanation on that, please.

**MR. BYRNE:** The actuals were \$22,000 down from the original budget. There was some deferral of an annual allocation within the Forum of Labour Market Ministers Secretariat budget to provide us, as the hosting province, for costs associated with hosting the secretariat. We were able to forego those costs, they were a one-off, and so our estimates for next year are down as well. There was a decrease of \$5,300 to reflect the anticipated expenditures for '20-'21, which kind of goes to the zero-based budgeting within the Forum of Labour Market Ministers. Within the AWP there was a decrease of \$1,000 to reflect lower anticipated expenditures.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

I'm looking at number 10 there, Grants and Subsidies. Can I get an explanation on where that money has been going and what it entails? I know it fluctuated a little bit, but I'm more looking for some explanation on what it is.

**MR. BYRNE:** Walter, would you be the best one to handle this one? I'm just looking at some of the notes here.

**MS. SPURRELL:** (Inaudible.)

**CHAIR:** Dana.

**MR. BYRNE:** Dana, sorry.

**MS. SPURRELL:** The accounting for this item is a little convoluted because we have all of the provincial and federal funds that come in for a lead province as the Forum of Labour Market Ministers and the Atlantic Workforce Partnership. Under the Grants and Subsidies, a lot of that money is federal-provincial money that comes in and then it's paid back out via Newfoundland and Labrador for the working groups under those secretariats. So, under Grants and Subsidies, there are some savings there related to FLMM working group expenditures

that were lower than we had anticipated. Those monies were voted on and budgeted through the FLMM and AWP cycles prior to our provincial budget cycle.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

I'm looking at the federal revenue and the provincial revenue. Can I get an explanation on where that's coming from, please?

**MS. SPURRELL:** A similar answer as previous. The budget for FLMM was actually greater than was originally projected. Thus that reduced the PT portion of the revenue. So you will see under federal revenue the federal portion was greater than we had anticipated it to be and the provincial portion was offset.

You may go on to ask about – there's a delay in one of the provinces paying in, so it didn't come in this year and it's picked up in the revenue as well.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for that.

**MR. P. DINN:** Okay.

**CHAIR:** Mr. Dinn, your time has expired.

Before I go to Ms. Coffin, I would like to advise that we have – I know we had technical issues that caused a bit of a delay when we started. But we have gone over our three-hour allocation typically set for the Estimates Committee meeting to go through the subheads. I recognize that we're not through all the subheads. I would either have to defer to the Committee or to the minister, given that the Assembly will be sitting at 1:30 today, that we would either be able to continue for a few more minutes and vote or we would have to look at reconvening another meeting of Estimates. So we would need to have a decision point on this matter.

**MS. COFFIN:** Did you say that we had to vacate the Chamber by 12:45 in order for cleaning?

**CHAIR:** I believe that's –

**MS. COFFIN:** I think five minutes is perhaps inadequate to be able to ask enough questions.

**CHAIR:** I guess that would be – I'll hear from other people, but –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**CHAIR:** Minister, we have the option of either voting, because the three-hour allocation has been awarded for Estimates, as is provided. It's at the discretion of the department if they want to continue going past – I know we had technical issues, but we have had more than three hours going through the Estimates of your department. We have to conclude the meeting by 12:45 to allow for cleaning and matters to happen. So it's a matter of do we vote on the subheads now and the Estimates and maybe officials would provide answers or you can provide answers at some other venue or we reconvene the Committee.

**MR. BYRNE:** Mr. Chair, we have three hours for Estimates. That is our standard practice. We've already extended over. If Members have additional questions they can put them in writing.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

With that, I ask the Clerk to call the remaining subheads.

**CLERK:** 4.1.01 to 4.1.06 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 4.1.01 to 4.1.06 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**MR. P. DINN:** Question, please.

**CHAIR:** We're voting.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** (Inaudible.)

All those against, 'nay.'

Mr. Dinn.

**MR. P. DINN:** I vote against.

No, I would prefer to reconvene, because we have quite a few areas to go through.

**CHAIR:** As I said, the allocation of time that has been set for Estimates is a three-hour time slot to ask these particular questions. I put it to the floor. The minister has advised that he's provided his three hours and if there are further questions that they can be put in writing and responses would be provided.

Yes, Mr. Dinn.

**MR. P. DINN:** Mr. Chair, I understand that, but I know in practice other Committees have been extended, and that's all the leeway I'm asking for here, just a further extension.

**MS. COFFIN:** I concur with Mr. Dinn as well. (Inaudible) a huge chunk of the budget and we're being asked now to vote on spending a lot of money without being able to examine it appropriately and as our fiduciary duty would suggest we must. So I will have to vote against this as well.

**MR. BYRNE:** Mr. Chair, we did allocate time. One Member went on for about 10 minutes and never asked a question. Members have to respect and appreciate that they are the masters of their own house, in the sense that the time consumed to offer commentary as opposed to question is something they will have to examine for themselves.

I have no problem whatsoever with providing additional time. Normally, we would be able to do that. We're already over the time expended, the three hours. We'll have to schedule, because there are certain times that we will be able to reschedule down the road. This will obviously be time that comes off of the Estimates and the budgetary process, which the Opposition will have to accept. That's not my call.

If Members want, at a future time, to convene to go through the final subheads, if we can complete four, these subheads, and then we can get to the final subheads, then I wouldn't have a problem. But it will have to be at our mutual convenience because every time slot from here on in is already consumed.

**CHAIR:** Okay, thank you, Minister.

It seems like the Committee, from what I've heard from the Members who are here and the

vote, that people would like to continue to have further time to discuss, so we'll have to try to find a mutually agreed-upon time to reconvene the Committee.

**MR. BYRNE:** With that said, Mr. Chair, we have to get this process done within the budget cycle. I'm unfamiliar with what this does in terms of the budget itself. I would seek some counsel on this. Are they deemed adopted if they're not approved within a certain period of time? Because all I know is that every Committee slot is now occupied for a period of time, so convening this group is going to be difficult.

I have no issue whatsoever with extending the period of time. I mean, I've sat here for 4½ hours one night. That's not an issue for me. It's getting this done and getting this done properly. I cannot control some of the questions or some of the comments that were made. Was there judicious use of time by Members of the Committee? I don't know. I'll leave that to their own considerations.

Normally, three hours is allotted for a meeting and three hours is what is expended to get the job done. Obviously, for various reasons, we're looking for more. So what happens next is my consideration. We can convene, but I have to get all of this executive back together again. We have to find a slot to be able to do it in a timely – I did not cause the House to open at 1:30. We're facing a bit of a time crunch. I did not cause the House needing to be cleaned for COVID protocols.

With that said, if these Estimates are deemed adopted, if they cannot occur at a particular point in time, if I understand that correctly, then that's fine. I will do everything I can to reconvene. I will commit to that. But I can't have the budget sort of held up unnecessarily.

So I seek your advice, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** Ms. Coffin.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you.

I don't think we're looking to assign blame anywhere. I just think that we have a large department with an enormous budget and I think

we are simply doing our fiduciary duty. Unfortunately, it's not an evening session and we are bumping up against a time constraint. Last time I looked at the Estimates process, I think that Thursday morning and Thursday evening are both available, as well as Monday morning and evening of next week.

Given that we have a limited budget discussion, where we have limited debate on the budget, unless the Clerk can tell us that we're bumping up near the end of that – and I doubt very much if we are – on the number of hours we hold debate on the budget; unless someone is planning on holding a vote on the budget sometime between now and next Thursday, or this coming Thursday, I think we ought to have ample time to be able to do that. I would be more than willing to convene at the pleasure of the Chair and, of course, at the convenience of the department.

And I do thank you very much for your time and efforts.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

It's also reconvening all Committee Members as well. There are seven of us that sit on this besides the Chair. I don't know if any of the four other Members had anything they'd like to add or contribute, because it's ultimately the Committee's decision to decide if we would vote on the particular line items and conclude our Estimates or if we would have to find time to reconvene. It's up to the Committee Members to make that determination. I've heard from two Members, but there are four other Members who are sitting here as well.

MHA Trimper.

**MR. TRIMPER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I guess I would support the Third Party Leader's motion that we attempt to defer, if that's possible. As the minister has rightly pointed out, we may run into a crunch. If that is the case, then the outstanding headings are read into the record and are approved.

This doesn't necessarily cause a catastrophe, but we will endeavour to see if there's an opportunity to reconvene.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

The other point that we have is we voted on the headings that we have voted on in the Estimates process; we'll have to look to reconvene the particular meeting. I don't know if there's another Member who has something they'd like to say, a point to the actual motion. I'll give anybody an opportunity.

Other than that, we have the minutes from the Resource Committee that had met on October 8 for the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation. I would ask for a mover to accept the minutes.

**MR. DAVIS:** (Inaudible.)

**CHAIR:** The Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, the MHA for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

We'll provide notice when the Committee can reconvene to go through clauses 4.1.01 to 5.2.01.

With that, I would ask for a motion to adjourn.

**CLERK:** We need to vote on the minutes.

**CHAIR:** Oh, we need to vote on the minutes, sorry, before I recognize the motion.

The minutes were moved by the minister, but I ask: Shall the minutes carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye

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

Carried.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

**CHAIR:** Getting a little ahead of myself.

A motion to adjourn.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** (Inaudible.)

**CHAIR:** The MHA for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

Thank you.

On motion, the Committee adjourned.