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Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development
Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation

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SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development

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Appearing:

Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development

Hon. Lisa Dempster, MHA, Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development

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Dana English, Executive Assistant

Aisling Gogan, Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy and Programs

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Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation

Hon. Lisa Dempster, MHA, Minister Responsible for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation

Glenn Goss, CEO

Jenny Bowring, Director of Communications

Dana English, Executive Assistant

Heather Harding, Director of Program Delivery

Doug Jackman, Director of Finance

Mike Tizzard, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services

Also Present

Derrick Bragg, MHA

Gerry Byrne, MHA

Jeff Dwyer, MHA

Jim Lester, MHA

Angelica Hill, Researcher, Government Members' Office

Darrell Hynes, Researcher, Official Opposition Office

Susan Williams, Researcher, Third Party Office

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Derrick Bragg, MHA for Fogo Island - Cape Freels, substitutes for Sarah Stoodley, MHA for Mount Scio, for a portion of the meeting.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Gerry Byrne, MHA for Corner Brook, substitutes for Elvis Loveless, MHA for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Jeff Dwyer, MHA for Placentia West - Bellevue, substitutes for David Brazil, MHA for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Jim Lester, MHA for Mount Pearl North, substitutes for Paul Dinn, MHA for Topsail - Paradise.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Derrick Bragg, MHA for Fogo Island - Cape Freels, substitutes for Lisa Dempster, MHA for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, for a portion of the meeting.

CHAIR (P. Parsons): Okay, good morning, everyone.

We're ready to start. As you know, we've got about three hours to get through this and I'm sure the department, obviously, will take their time and answer any questions you guys may have.

We'll start on this side by everybody introducing themselves.

MS. ENGLISH: Dana English, Executive Assistant to Minister Dempster.

MS. DEMPSTER: Lisa Dempster, Minister Responsible for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

MR. GOSS: Glenn Goss, interim CEO of the Housing Corporation.

MR. TIZZARD: Mike Tizzard, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services for Housing Corporation.

MR. BENNETT: Derek Bennett, Parliamentary Secretary to the minister.

MS. HARDING: Heather Harding, Director of Program Delivery, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

MR. JACKMAN: Doug Jackman, Director of Finance, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

MS. BOWRING: Jenny Bowring, Communications Manager, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

CHAIR: Paul, we're just introducing ourselves. Do you want to start there?

MR. LANE: Okay.

Broadcast can't hear me over here very good.

OFFICIAL: They want him to move.

CHAIR: They want him to move in the middle. Okay.

Just give a wave there, Jeff.

MR. DWYER: Jeff Dwyer, MHA for Placentia West - Bellevue.

MR. HYNES: Darrell Hynes, Opposition Office.

MR. LESTER: Jim Lester, MHA, Mount Pearl North.

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

MR. REID: Scott Reid, St. George's - Humber.

MR. BYRNE: Gerry Byrne, (inaudible) and Member for Corner Brook.

MR. LANE: Paul Lane, MHA, Mount Pearl - Southlands.

CHAIR: Okay, Jim.

MR. J. DINN: Jim Dinn, St. John's Centre.

CHAIR: I think that's everybody. Obviously, this will be –

OFFICIAL: One more.

MS. WILLIAMS: Susan Williams, Researcher, Third Party Office.

OFFICIAL: One more up there.

MS. HILL: Angelica Hill, Researcher, Government Members' Office.

CHAIR: Okay, so it's obviously an informal atmosphere, a relaxed atmosphere. The minister has 15 minutes to introduce her Estimates. The Member speaking immediately in reply to the minister has 15 minutes and all other Committee Members have 10 minutes to speak. Members also may refer to themselves in the Standing Committees by name, rather than district or portfolio.

With that note, I think we're ready to go.

CLERK (Hawley George): 1.1.01.

MS. DEMPSTER: Good morning, everyone.

Welcome to the Members that are just new to the House of Assembly. You get the exciting privilege to sit here for three or four hours, whatever you need, and go through Estimates. It is a very important process of government as we move along in the transparency and accountability stages. As the Minister Responsible for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, I'm pleased to be here this morning to discuss this year's Estimates for the corporation.

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge Public Service Week right at the start. A tremendous amount of work goes into preparing for the Estimates process, and every day in Housing these guys work in some pretty challenging conditions. We certainly appreciate their efforts and the work that they do and all public servants.

Our government understands that safe, stable and affordable housing is fundamental to the social and economic well-being of individuals and families in our communities. *Budget 2019* has provided significant investments that enable the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation to provide housing programs and services to assist households with low incomes, persons with disabilities, persons with complex

needs and those experiencing or most at risk of becoming homeless.

Highlights of the 2019-'20 investments include \$10.2 million for maintenance, repair and upkeep of public housing priorities to ensure safe and quality homes are available for tenants and \$3.1 million to modernize and renovate public rental housing to sustain the housing inventory over the long term. *Budget 2019* also provides \$11.4 million for the rent supplement program. This program supports individuals, families and people with complex needs. By partnering with private landlords, the program enables the corporation to increase housing options and help more people find safe, affordable homes. I guess I could add that approximately 56 per cent of rent supplement clients are seniors.

Budget 2019 has committed \$7.6 million to the Supportive Living Program for 21 non-profit, community-based groups operating 34 projects throughout the province to prevent and end homelessness. Through a housing-first approach, individuals are housed without preconditions and provided individualized supports to foster long-term housing stability – I'm battling a head cold, so work with me, bear with me. Government will also maintain its support for the Housing Hub emergency shelter in Happy Valley-Goose Bay with \$500,000 being provided to the shelter in 2019-2020, enabling them to continue offering shelter to those in need.

Budget 2019 will enable Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation to continue its \$2-million investment in the Home Energy Savings Program. Through this program, grants are provided to eligible households with electricity as the primary source of heat to make cost-effective upgrades to their homes to improve energy efficiency and reduce heating costs.

In January 2019, we announced an additional \$8.5 million, with \$6.4 million from the province and \$2.1 million from the federal government under the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund, to enhance the Home Energy Savings Program over the next four years. In 2019, NLHC will assist approximately 450 clients who heat their homes with oil and 375

clients who use electricity or another source such as wood, propane or diesel, to complete upgrades to improve energy efficiency and reduce heating cost. Research shows that proper energy retrofits can result in up to \$660 in savings annually or approximately 25 per cent of home energy costs.

Through *Budget 2019*, government has continued its \$11.8 million commitment to support initiatives and non-profit groups engaged in the delivery of transitional and emergency housing. The budget also provides an additional \$500,000 for Iris Kirby House to allow them to continue their work in assisting women and children fleeing intimate partner violence, whether it's the Nain transition house, Kirkina House in Rigolet or Grace Sparkes House in Marystown, there is incredibly important, valuable work being done by transition houses and emergency shelters throughout our province.

This year's investment in our home repair programs will enable us to continue assisting households with low incomes by providing funding to help them address structural and safety issues with their homes or improve accessibility. Almost 90 per cent of program recipients are seniors and these programs enable them to continue living independently in their own homes and communities, close to family and friends.

As Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, I'm also pleased to say we recently reached an agreement with the federal government on new funding for the National Housing Strategy to support our shared housing goals. Under the bilateral agreement, a provincial commitment of \$135.3 million cost match by the federal government will allow for a total investment of more than \$270 million over the next nine years. This funding will be used to preserve, repair and expand our social housing stock as well as to preserve and repair partner managed housing and co-ops. It contributes to shared goals including reduced homelessness, a reduction in housing needs and improved housing affordability.

The 2019-28 Bilateral Agreement will provide over \$9.95 million in 2019-20 and will grow to

over \$20 million annually by '26-'27. This represents a significant increase in funding to Newfoundland and Labrador over allocations under previous agreements, and will provide the longest period of sustained federal funding for affordable and social housing since the Social Housing Agreement in 1997.

Reaching an agreement with the federal government that addresses the unique housing needs of the people in our province has certainly been a key priority of mine and our government.

As an organization, the Newfoundland and Labrador House Corporation has been, and will continue to work with community stakeholders to develop housing initiatives and viable options for the people of this province. We are seeing results from our approach, and we will continue to build on our current successes.

Thank you, and I now welcome the opportunity to answer any questions you may have.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Just a reminder, when you speak into the mic, please state your name before speaking.

MR. LESTER: Just correct me if I'm wrong. Do I have opportunity, at this point, to have a preamble to what I would like to say?

CHAIR: Sure.

MR. LESTER: Yes.

CHAIR: You just have your 15 minutes, so, yeah.

MR. LESTER: Sure. Okay.

Foremost, I'd like to thank the department and the minister for providing this opportunity to discuss the proposed budget for the coming year. I'd also like to thank and congratulate them on a well-served year in this past year.

In my district – and I do stand to be corrected – I believe I have the second highest number of units of that of the province, and to deal with the staff on a daily basis, I have nothing but accolades of praise for them.

Often I'll get a call late at night from a constituent who is in dire need; they're homeless. Most often we don't hear from our constituents until it is the 11th hour. I'll quickly send off an email, and when I wake up at 5 o'clock the next morning, someone from the Housing department has replied and said they'll get to it right away in the morning. That just goes to speak to how dedicated the staff are, and I would like to commend them for their service to the public.

In this time of economic duress, we're seeing more and more of a demand for subsidized housing. Last week alone, I had three constituent calls from three very different demographics of society who, all of a sudden, were going to find themselves homeless because their homes, some of which have lived there for 25 years, were now being foreclosed upon.

Yes, a percentage of those are people who have spent beyond their means, but some are just in a situation where they are victims to the economy. They've lost their jobs. They've got medical issues and they can no longer keep up with the cost and pace of life, and I'm so glad that there is a facility there for them to go to.

The problem being is I don't know if we are going to be able to respond quickly enough to the tide that is coming towards us. We are looking at seniors who have been on fixed incomes for 25 years, and their incomes are the same for 25 years, but we all know that the cost of living is going up at a faster pace every year.

A lot of seniors, in particular, are now going to be in a position where they cannot afford to stay in their own homes, so we have to look at, on a go-forward basis, how we're going to respond to that need of not – right now, from what I understand, our inventory of housing is largely family units. We really need to step up when it comes to providing single- or couple-style units, more barrier-free type. They may not have official limitations, but as we all get older, there are some challenges with getting up and down stairs. The risk of getting up and down stairs as we get older, people with physical challenges, that is also an emerging, I guess, demographic within the system. That's something that I would like to see a little bit more focus on, the

transition of multi-bedroom units to single- or dual-bedroom units, one level.

I was really pleased to hear that the energy audit – we did bring this up in Estimates last year, and I was pleased to see that the department did go forward with the energy audit because, number one, it does reduce the cost of providing the services that we are responsible for, but it also makes a big difference on the environment. That is always something that, no matter what we're doing, we should have the third-eye look at for sure.

If I may, do I have the privilege of going right into questions now?

CHAIR: Yes.

MR. LESTER: Yeah, okay.

The biggest question, obviously, is Grants and Subsidies has a budget cut of \$21 million. Can the minister provide details? I do understand that there is federal funding coming to replace that, but that will not top out for another six years. What are we going to do in the interim?

MS. DEMPSTER: Actually, I'm just going to respond to a couple of things that you said first.

You talked about the housing misfits, and, yes, as we go forward – Newfoundland and Labrador Housing is the largest landlord in the province with just under 6,000 units, so they do deal with some very challenging issues day to day. A high percentage of those tenants are seniors.

As we move forward, one of the things where our focus is going to be, especially with the money under the new agreement that we just signed back April, is we have homes that are three- and four-bedroom homes, so we'll be looking at do we actually sell these homes and build two smaller units or do we take that larger home and put it into a duplex. We'll look at the most cost-effective way to do that but, certainly, recognize that years ago there were large families, bigger homes and now it's just mister or miss in the home.

Those are some of the conversations that are happening right now and we're actively pursuing how we're going to move forward on

that. You're right; the energy audit was something that we all heard as MHAs out in our districts, so we are pleased to be able to respond to that.

You referenced emergency shelters. As you know, emergency shelters used to be under Advanced Education and Skills and in June of last year, I believe, it transitioned under Housing. When you transition – we believe that the housing continuum all being under one roof is the best approach – there's always some growing pains that come with that, setting up a call centre and a number of other things.

We're not really seeing an increase in the number of people that's in shelters. Depending on the time of year, it can go up and down; you might have more in the springtime than you do in the winter. Staff are working their way through that.

There is a reduction in the budget. There are a number of reasons for that and I'll just take you through several of them. \$14,311,000 was a removal of a one-time provincial investment relating to CMHC in our Social Infrastructure Fund. The Social Infrastructure Fund was an investment of \$34.6 million from the federal government and \$14.3 million from the provincial government. That went over three fiscal years: '16-'17, '17-'18 and '18-'19. The funding was used to support construction, repair and renovations of affordable housing, shelters, transition homes and social housing units. That has ended.

There is \$2.7 million; a removal of provincial funding for affordable housing capital grants due to an expiry of the CMHC Investment in Affordable Housing, the five-year agreement. We have \$649,400 which is an annualization of attrition management. We are in the fifth year of our five-year attrition program and that is the amount this year. The removal of one-time funding for Low Carbon Economy is \$2,395,000, and the annualization of Low Carbon Economy revenue is \$518,500.

We've had a little bit of moving around because the transition houses from Health also came in under us at the same time emergency shelters did in AESL; so Mokami and St. John's Status of Women Council. That's a grant that was

transferred from the Executive Council and delivered by NLHC. That was \$285,000, too, that went to CSSD – came to Housing from CSSD. I'm looking to –

OFFICIAL: It came to us.

MS. DEMPSTER: Came to Housing from CSSD.

Choices For Youth grant transferred to CSSD and that was \$1,258,400. Corner Brook Status of Women Council grant was transferred to Executive Council under the multi-year, and then, finally, we had the discontinuation of a new Home Purchase Program that was a million dollars.

MR. LESTER: Okay.

Just my recollection of what you just spoke of, we're looking at, basically, 50 per cent of that money is transferred to other departments' responsibilities, but we're still a shortfall of about 50 per cent, so about \$11 million-\$12 million. How do we propose to make up that shortfall until the federal funds kick in?

MS. DEMPSTER: I don't think I did an adequate job of explaining that so I'm going to turn it over to Mike in Finance and let him elaborate.

MR. TIZZARD: The programs the minister spoke of, the Social Infrastructure Fund and the Investment in Affordable Housing, were programs of the federal government that were, for lack of a better term, stimulus funding under the federal government's recent creation of jobs initiative. This was a one-time investment; it was the province's provincial portion to match the federal funding under that program.

It's coming out because it was one time last year. If you look back at the Estimates book last year, you would see our grant increased by \$20 million for the one-time to match and now it's just coming back out, so we're back to normal levels I'll say.

MR. LESTER: Okay.

Were the programs fully subscribed? When I say that, I mean were they fully used?

MR. TIZZARD: I'm just asking if you want me to (inaudible).

MR. GOSS: The programs we spoke of – the Social Infrastructure Fund, the Investment in Affordable Housing – the funding has been totally expended through projects and work that fit the criteria for eligibility under each of those programs. Those are the two you're speaking of?

MR. LESTER: Yes.

In reference to the rent supplement, is there a current wait-list for the rent supplement by region?

MR. GOSS: We don't have specifically a wait-list for rent supplements; we have a wait-list for social housing. Depending on what's available and how it might match an applicant's application, they will either be offered a rent supplement or housing in one of our own units. We don't really have a wait-list for a rent supplement, we have a wait-list for social housing and we use rent supplements to fill in the gap when we don't have enough social housing.

MR. LESTER: Is there a defined amount available for rent supplements per year?

MR. GOSS: There is, in terms of funding. The budget is \$11.4 million for rent supplements and we're serving approximately 1,800 right now. That goes up and down, depending on if a landlord increases a rent or whatnot. If we move that person out, maybe we can move them into one of our own units or move them into another unit that's less rent per month.

About 1,800 is a good number that we're serving, and that's an increase of approximately 800 over the last seven or eight years, I guess – five or six or seven years. That's in addition to our own social housing and it's, as the minister said, just under 5,600.

MS. DEMPSTER: As you know, NLHC implemented that portable pilot project. We used that from a wait-list of 50 who were already eligible applicants who were already from the rent supplement transfer list.

MR. LESTER: Has there been any consideration given to increasing the rental subsidy cap? I know I've been approached by several landlords and they've indicated that we haven't seen an increase in the cap for about 12 to 15 years. It's to the point now where they're going to have to start tacking on extra fees to the tenants.

I'm sure you recognize that these landlords, in particular, provide a valuable service. Not only do they provide accommodations, it's also community-style housing in some of these larger buildings. They're doing some of the social work aspect to it too; they actually look after the residents to such a degree.

They're getting to a point – they're business people and they can no longer keep the rent as it is. They know their residents can't afford it, so is there any consideration of increasing that cap?

MS. DEMPSTER: I can certainly appreciate, as the cost of living goes up and things like that, it is a conversation that we have had a number of times over the last two years since I've been in this portfolio. I guess the challenge becomes when you haven't had a budget increase for rent supplements, we can keep it where we are and be helping the same number of people or increase the cap and we will help less.

The \$2 million that we put into the rent supplement, the portability attaches that supplement to the tenant and not the landlord. So, in some cases, that has helped. If a tenant's been calling saying the landlord is increasing my rent and then they've been able to go out and maybe find alternate living in a neighborhood of their choice. So that's been a little bit of flexibility, but I hear you, it's not addressing, maybe, the landlord's issue.

Yes, maybe in some cases there is that relationship established with the landlord, but I guess that is what the challenge has been when you're working within a budget, if you increase the cap, then we would actually end up helping less people.

MR. LESTER: Okay.

My time has expired.

CHAIR: We can come back to you.

MR. LESTER: Yeah.

CHAIR: Is that fine? Okay.

Moving on now to the next speaker.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Minister, and you to your staff for the work that you have done in this. It's certainly one of the most important services that government provides. I was a member of a not-for-profit group, a food bank, and when I was president, we used the federal and provincial grants to set-up an affordable housing unit here within the city.

Certainly, after the election, I'm very keenly aware of the housing needs within my own district, not only from going door to door but also from the people we serve within the area in the not-for-profit organization.

My first question: Is it possible, then, to have your briefing book for this portfolio?

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes. We'll get you the materials that we have.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you very much.

My apologies if some of these questions end up overlapping with my colleague to the left because I'm trying to see which ones I've actually heard answers to and to make notes, as you can see, and I've done a poor job of it so far, so.

The Grants and Subsidies – actually, I'm going to start with one that my colleague left off with and that has to do with the Rent Supplement Program, if I may go to that first.

Is it possible to have the current number of rent supplements in total? I think you said it was 1,800 that were –

MS. DEMPSTER: 1,803 to be exact.

MR. J. DINN: Okay, 1,803. Perfect.

How many of those are for mental health and complex needs? Would you have that information as well, Minister?

MS. DEMPSTER: I don't have that breakdown.

MR. J. DINN: Okay, perfect.

MS. DEMPSTER: A large portion of what we serve is low income; it's mental health, it's complex needs. Do we actually –

MR. GOSS: If I may.

There are two: Stella Burry community in St. John's as well as the Canadian Mental Health Association across the province. Between the two, there's in the area of 150. I think that's within a couple of units, but I think it's 150. Those are specifically distributed to those two organizations for clients with complex needs.

That's not to say that there are some other tenants in some of the rent supplement units that are getting support from others.

MR. J. DINN: If I may, just to clarify then, I understand 150 that would be designated to these organizations, but, again, that may not be the full number.

MS. DEMPSTER: No, that's right.

MR. J. DINN: Okay.

MS. DEMPSTER: These are organizations that provide the wrap-around support. They do tremendous work. Some of our heavier cases –

MR. GOSS: Yes.

MS. DEMPSTER: – I guess it's safe to say, would go to places like Stella Burry.

MR. J. DINN: That's to the point, that's fair enough because even within our housing project we wouldn't be identified for that reason, but I can tell you that some of our tenants do have mental health issues. That's fair enough. Excellent. Thank you very much.

How many new rent supplements will be added in 2019, or is there a plan to increase that? I know you talked about increase – I think you referenced increasing the caps but that would reduce the number. Is there any intent to add to the rent supplements?

MS. DEMPSTER: In '18-'19, we implemented a portability pilot project for up to 100 eligible applicants; 50 from the current wait-list and 50 from the rent supplement transfer wait-list and, I believe, we used 34 and 50. Have we used 84 of those?

MR. GOSS: Well, we've approved the total – of that 100, there's been 34 placed. There is some difficulty with it and we're working through that portability pilot, where it was new for us.

Some of the people that have applied off the wait-list, that's the majority of the people who've been served. They've been able to find a place or they already had a place in mind, looking for a rent supplement, we would provide it to them.

Some of our own tenants, the 50 that the minister mentioned that they're looking for a transfer to another unit, we don't have as many of those moved for various reasons. They're having a difficult getting out and finds a unit themselves. Some of them just would rather we do that for them. So, we're working our way through that.

In terms of the total number of rent supplements, there's no plan to increase the overall. It goes back to the minister's comment about the fact that if we can keep the maximum rent that we would supplement up to at \$800, that's also plus – there's an additional heat subsidy that goes with that.

Essentially, the monthly rent would be \$800. So the number of rent supplements would be obviously based on how many people we are serving with the budget, with the cap being \$800. So it'll fluctuate, as I said earlier, depending on if the landlord moves the rent up to where the client can't afford it above the \$800, then we can move them to another unit that's of lesser rent, but all you're doing is – it goes from 1,803 units to 1,802 until they find a unit, then it goes back up to 1,803. So it sort of floats, but 1,800 is a good number and I don't see it increasing right now.

MR. J. DINN: Okay.

MS. DEMPSTER: Just to add to that, Glenn alluded to it, it's \$800 plus utilities or to a max of \$900, utilities included.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

Just to clarify, exactly how many are on portable? Is it a 100, did –?

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes.

MR. J. DINN: Okay.

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes, yeah.

MR. J. DINN: I guess what I'm looking for, then, is the status of that pilot project, I guess, if there are any initial results as to how this is working, and I guess is there an intention, then, to – is there enough information to determine whether there will be a willingness to increase the number of portable rent subsidies because that's 100 out of 1,800. It's not very big, but probably big enough to do a study.

So I'm just curious as to what the status and the findings are so far.

MS. DEMPSTER: So of the 100, we're continuing to process clients, and as Glenn mentioned earlier, 34 clients have identified a home and moved in, and work continues with the remaining on the list.

We wanted to give our tenants the flexibility to go out and look for other units in neighbourhoods of their choice and things like that, but sometimes because the tenants, as you can appreciate, maybe don't have their own vehicle and things like that, they may want to move but it's not that simple. It's trying to find a place that fits their needs.

MR. J. DINN: Right.

The Chair can certainly rule me out of order if I go into the realm of commentary. I guess from the group that I'm with, the non-for-profit, we've kept our rents very low, certainly that's the main thing, but what I've noticed is that certainly people who are on rent subsidies find their rents creeping up or sometimes increasing significantly and they are powerless to really

move for that reason. They're basically stuck in a situation.

So, I'm just wondering, I see rent subsidies in the hands of the renters, of those who are looking to rent, giving them the power of choice and making it more competitive. Attaching a rent subsidy to a landlord actually puts the power, the control, within the hands of the landlord –

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes.

MR. J. DINN: – and they can increase that.

Actually, I was going to switch the question. My colleague asked about increasing the rent subsidies; I'm wondering if there's an attempt for those landlords who have rent subsidies, they have some cap put on what rent they charge, such as the organization I'm with. There are very strict rules around what rents we can charge. There's a maximum that we can charge.

So I'm looking at, in terms of this, is there any interest or appetite, for that matter, when a landlord enters into this agreement that they are committed to keeping rents low as long as they own that rent subsidy, or that it's capped out? Just more or less if there's been any discussion along those lines?

MS. DEMPSTER: So the way it happens right now, just to refresh, the NLHC pays the landlord –

MR. J. DINN: Yes.

MS. DEMPSTER: – the difference between what the tenant is required to pay, which is 25 per cent of a net household income, or for households receiving income support that would be – because we have different tenants, different incomes – \$149 for single persons, \$263 for families and a maximum rent of \$800 per month, excluding the utilities, which takes you to \$900.

So there is, I guess, a variance depending on what the landlord changes, but I don't think we're able to stipulate to a landlord what the cap is that they can charge. We do have choices now to give the tenant as to whether they stay there or whether they look for another unit.

MR. GOSS: If I may, from the Housing Corporation perspective, speaking for the Housing Corporation, we agree with the fact that portability is a good way to go.

MS. DEMPSTER: Yeah.

MR. GOSS: If I'm allowed to choose where I want to live, there's no reason why the individual who's lower income can't do the same. That's fine. We agree with that.

The program we have now, the pilot program of 100 the minister referred to, when we implemented it, we thought that there would be more people who would want to take it up at the beginning, but what we're finding is that they're having difficulty finding their own place, or as the minister said, they don't have the transportation to go find a place. Even if they found it on Kijiji, they're not going to buy it without seeing it, so they've have to get to the unit to have a look.

We're trying to work through those issues that have only come to light since we started the pilot. So, maybe there are ways that we can help them find their first unit, and then apply portability, so whenever they decide they want to go, they can leave, but at least then they've got somewhere they can call home. So, that's a possibility too, but we are going to try to continue to work through it.

MR. J. DINN: Okay, thank you.

CHAIR: Okay, thank you.

The member's time has expired, we can certainly come back to you.

MR. J. DINN: Yes.

CHAIR: We'll move on to the next speaker.

MR. LESTER: (Inaudible) to the, I guess, human resources resource within the department. Has the staffing levels maintained consistency from last year to this year, or projected to be the same this year?

MR. GOSS: Yeah, we have no plans to – other than the attrition the minister mentioned earlier, we're into the last year of a five-year attrition

plan. So there's no intent to reduce the number of positions.

MR. LESTER: So is there any vacancies within those positions, as of now?

MR. GOSS: There are some, and we're working through them. People move, either they – generally what happens, what we find at the organization, people come into the organization and they don't – look at me, we don't leave very quickly. They stay around for a long time.

What we find is that a lot of people are moving to different positions in the organization. They come in at ground level and they work their way up, which creates a vacancy at the bottom. With retirements that are – I think our average age is in the area of 45, 46, so there's some of us who are ready to retire and have been retiring over the last few years and will continue over the coming years, and that will create vacancies that we'll fill. So there's constant turnover in that regard.

MR. LESTER: Okay.

Have there been any specific positions eliminated and new positions or titles created?

MR. GOSS: I guess in some instances there are positions that have been there historically where the individual has retired. We will look at the demand in other programs, other areas of the organization, and then determine whether or not we can take that vacancy and turn it into something else, and take the salary funding that goes with that budget and apply it to a new position.

So, yeah, we have done that. We haven't gone out and created new positions with new money, we've just taken existing salary budgets that, when the person leaves, we'll take that and transition into a new position. So we have done some of that.

MR. LESTER: Is there a defined work plan and target set to complete renovations from the family units to the singular occupancy or couple occupancy, or are we still just in the evaluation process?

MR. GOSS: If I may, we've done what we call reconfigurations where we reconfigure a duplex that has three bedrooms on either side. We have done projects in the past where we've turned it into two-bedroom units on the bottom and two single-bedroom units on the top, so you get four units out of two. We've done that in the past.

It is an expense. We have found that the expense is very similar to new construction, but that doesn't mean that you can't do it.

We have a number of units around the province that we have identified that are configured currently now that will allow us to reconfigure by the way they're constructed. There were some buildings that are constructed back in the '50s, '60s and '70s that just don't lend themselves to reconfiguration. You've got a kitchen two floors above the bedrooms. There is no way you're going to be able to turn that around.

So, we have identified units for reconfiguration, and as the minister alluded to earlier, the National Housing Strategy funding that we've partnered with the federal government now, there is an expansion requirement within that agreement, and some of that expansion will come through those reconfigurations, as the minister alluded to earlier. We will see where it's necessary and where the demographic meets the need for smaller units, then we'll obviously look at that through the funding we're getting through the National Housing Strategy.

MR. LESTER: Okay.

MS. DEMPSTER: Just to add to that, I was looking for some figures for you. On the \$28 million social infrastructure funding commitment to modernization and improvements for the three fiscals '17, '18 and '19, approximately \$24.4 million of projects have been completed, and just \$3.6 million remaining, continuing at the different stages of completion. So, a lot of work have gone in.

Right now, of our 5,590 units, approximately 85 per cent are now considered to be in good condition, and that's when we're looking at the exterior roofs, eaves, siding, doors, windows and steps and landings and things like that.

MR. LESTER: Is the work for retrofit or renovation carried out exclusively by department staff?

MR. GOSS: No, it's not. We've got a combination of contracts and (inaudible) work. Some of the work that we put out to contract is some of the larger renovations. It's more detailed. Our staff will do smaller renovations but also the workload that's required, as I say, by providing some of this work to the contractor, we're also providing employment opportunities and economic stimulus for those smaller businesses too.

Some smaller businesses around the province rely on a lot of the work that we put out. We will put contracts for renovations, particularly the larger ones, out to contract and the smaller ones will be done inside, so it's a combination of two.

MR. LESTER: What is the average time between vacancy of a unit to re-occupancy? Is there a figure that we can look to?

MR. GOSS: That's a number that moves also, depending on the number of vacancies you might get at a particular time. As the minister said earlier, there is movement probably more often in the summer. When you get around school time, there's less movement, people don't want to move their kids from area to another because then they have to change schools.

Around Christmastime in December, you don't get as much movement, so that's also a moving number. If you have more vacancies on hand at one particular time, obviously the period that's it vacant, from move out to move in, is going to be greater.

Generally, our maintenance crew works on a 56-day calendar turnaround time, but sometimes that number changes because we don't get notified by the tenant that they've moved out, it's been vacant and they've left. Or they notify us that it's going to be vacant and they stay there for longer than the notice period they said they were going to move, so that's going to change the vacancy turnaround time.

There are a number of variables that dictate but, generally speaking, our maintenance crew are working on 55- to 56-day turnaround.

MR. LESTER: Are there any specific terms within your client agreements, whether they can or cannot conduct gardening activities on your property, or is that prohibited?

MR. GOSS: We'd love to see it, to be honest with you. We have no issues with people beautifying their properties; we encourage it where we can. It's like the rest of us, pride in your home and that's part of it, keeping not only the structural part of the home up, but the grounds as well.

We have tenants who take great pride in it, are good at it and they maintain their own properties. There's nobody in our organization going to tell somebody they can't plant flowers and that sort of thing.

MR. LESTER: Okay.

MS. DEMPSTER: It's very therapeutic.

MR. LESTER: Yeah, for sure.

When it comes to vegetable gardening, is that allowed, because that would obviously take up more physical space on the property? I know planting a flower bed or maintaining the grass, yes, that doesn't really disrupt the unity of public property, but when it comes to vegetable garden, that may be something different. Is there anything prohibiting someone from doing that?

MS. DEMPSTER: When you look around the province, it varies greatly the amount of space that a housing unit would be on. In that case, we would encourage things like community gardens for them to tend to. I don't think we have any specific examples of vegetable gardens right on properties, do we?

MR. GOSS: We do have a couple of community gardens around the province; one in Labrador. I'm drawing a blank on a couple of others, but I know there's – it's in Rabbit Town too, yes, centre of town here.

There are instances of it but as the minister says, 60 per cent of our units across the province are in the City of St. John's and obviously there are municipal regulations that people have to abide by also, as do we. The space that's provided to units in the centre of town maybe just doesn't

lend themselves to it, but it's not discouraged if that's what you're asking.

MR. LESTER: Let's see, one more question. We would also like a copy of your briefing binder, if that's satisfactory.

Obviously, you're continuing on in applying the zero-based budgeting, but in light of the social situation that is coming upon us, is there opportunity to get extra funds through any sort of contingency fund, if needed?

MS. DEMPSTER: There have been times that we have had to go to contingency and avail of that, yes.

MR. LESTER: So that will be an option if we so need it this year?

MS. DEMPSTER: Well, I mean you deal with lots of emergencies in housing. You don't sort of just like: We're going to do CSSD next and you're going to see where we've used the contingency. You don't say: I can't take these children from a home to keep them safe because we can't afford it, kind of thing, right?

MR. LESTER: Yeah.

MS. DEMPSTER: Yeah, but we try our best to work within the budgets, obviously.

MR. LESTER: Thank you.

That would be all.

CHAIR: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Dinn.

MR. J. DINN: Continuing on with social housing, is it possible to have a breakdown of the number of applications on the wait-list by age, bedrooms required, accessibility and region? Is it possible to have that?

MS. DEMPSTER: Yeah, I have that right here.

The wait-list – and this is as of June 7 – was 1,250 throughout the province. On the Avalon, of course, where the biggest numbers are provincially, is the highest wait-list of 600; in Marystown, 800; Gander, 114; Grand Falls, 210;

Corner Brook, 188; Stephenville, 58; and Goose Bay, 72.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you very much.

MS. DEMPSTER: If I could add to that –

MR. J. DINN: Yeah, please.

MS. DEMPSTER: – just for some context here.

On a monthly basis, we receive around 186 applications, and it's important for you to know that the applicants that are selected for housing, it's done so on a priority basis. Victims of violence, a woman fleeing with her children or something would certainly be placed at the top of that list, and then that would be followed by those who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness.

MR. J. DINN: That's the total number of applications. Is there any distinction or a breakdown with regard to the number of bedrooms required and the accessibility, along those lines as well? Is that information available?

MS. DEMPSTER: I have that here as well.

We do have a breakdown of the accessible units and where they are. NLHC has 430 units dedicated to seniors, most of which is in the St. John's unit. We continue to track our accessible features, and as of April – I'm not sure if I understood your question, but the wait-list, I am not seeing that here.

One or two bedroom; 93 per cent of our need is one – okay, on the wait-list, 93 per cent – sorry, I was going down a different road.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you very much.

Are there any changes to funding to the community centres in terms of Buckmaster's Circle and these organizations and tenants' organizations for 2019?

MS. DEMPSTER: I'm not sure where that is, but since I came into the portfolio we were able to provide some additional support to the community centres. We put in five – was it five total of additional social workers?

MR. GOSS: If I may –

MS. DEMPSTER: We share three social workers that we shared among five community centres.

(Inaudible.)

MR. GOSS: Yeah, we have –

MS. DEMPSTER: (Inaudible.)

MR. GOSS: I'm sorry. As the minister alluded to, we have increased just a couple of years ago. I'm not really sure when. Heather may be able to help me.

MS. HARDING: In 2017.

MR. GOSS: In 2017 we did increase some funding to the community centres. We also, as the minister said, are providing a couple of social workers to work with, on a pilot basis for lack of a better term, because we want to see how it goes in the city. They're working with the five community centres in the city, essentially focusing on education, trying to get the children in schools, keep them in schools and get them through graduation and move on. Once we see the results of how that may work in St. John's, and maybe do some tweaks, then we can hopefully move it to the other areas of the province where we have community centers.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

With regard to social housing, how many units are vacant at this time, and what are the reasons for the vacancy? This sort of dovetails from my colleague to the left.

MS. DEMPSTER: I guess there are always a number of reasons for vacancies. There could be some units that are undergoing major repair. We always have a number that are used for emergency housing, if an emergency comes up, and sometimes there are sales that are pending.

I don't have the latest number, but we had about – the last time I checked – 84 in our inventory around the province that were in serious need of repair, and then you have to make a choice: Do you put that up for sale because that's cheaper than renovating? So we would have a number of

those sales pending, and then we actually have just a small number of our units, five, I believe, in total, that are used as office space around the province.

MR. GOSS: For employees and community partners.

MS. DEMPSTER: Pardon me?

MS. GOSS: For employees and community partners.

MS. DEMPSTER: For employees and community partners.

MR. J. DINN: Do we have a breakdown of the total number of units vacant? I know you said that there are 84 here that are in need of repair.

MS. DEMPSTER: I said 84 but it's actually 87. I was going from memory (inaudible).

MR. J. DINN: Oh no, that's no – thank you, Minister. I understand those vacancies, but with regards to the other vacancies such as you've outlined?

MS. DEMPSTER: So we have 87 that are unavailable for rent for major repair; we have 11 used for emergency housing; one right now that's pending sale and five used as office space.

MR. J. DINN: Then the 87 that are in need of repair, is there a timeline as to when they would be available for habitation, let's say?

What I'm getting at is – well, actually, I'd like to know how long they've been in repair and what's the time frame? Is there a reason why they are – if it's a while, why they're taking so long?

MS. DEMPSTER: Well, it depends on the pressure points that we have around the province for where the need is. For example, we might have a riding up in Labrador, in a small populated area where there are a handful of really dilapidated units that we've not done any work with to date because there's no wait-list, it's zero, and then you might have Happy Valley-Goose Bay where there's a tremendous need. So the resources that we have to fix those up, we try and get them done in a timely –

because there's an active wait-list and there are pressure points.

So that's kind of what has been guiding, with a budget that we work within and the resources that we have, we're kind of guided by where the pressure points are and we focus on those. I don't know if we would have specific time frames. Some might be in need of major repair a little bit longer than others in areas where there simply is no wait-list, no demand.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Mr. Goss.

I ask that question, too, part of it, because in going door to door I do remember tenants saying in one area that a Newfoundland and Labrador Housing unit had been vacant for well over a year or more, actually, and probably going on two years, and their family is looking for a place to move. So that very well could have been one designated as an emergency shelter, or do they – I guess, is it fluid with those?

MS. DEMPSTER: I appreciate that we, no doubt, run into these circumstances, maybe all of us as MHAs. What I can tell you – and I know you will understand I'm not involving the day-to-day operations of Housing.

MR. J. DINN: No, I understand.

MS. DEMPSTER: But periodically somebody reaches my level and says: I need a place. I have to say, the staff do tremendous work.

MR. J. DINN: Okay.

MS. DEMPSTER: If there's a need and there's a family that needs a place, we do everything we can to find them accommodations in as short a time as possible.

MR. J. DINN: I appreciate that, Minister.

Again, how many units were made accessible in 2018? I know there is a program for that. How many will be made accessible in 2019?

MS. DEMPSTER: We have 83 accessible units right now within the provincial portfolio. There's a breakdown of nine different communities. It'll be in the binder when you get

it, but I can certainly run through them. In St. John's we have 38 accessible units; Grand Falls-Windsor, we have four; Stephenville, five; Fortune, one; Springdale, one; Port Hope Simpson, two; Gander, four; Corner Brook, 27; and Nain, one.

There's another additional breakdown of how we are trying to now capture and track our accessible features. I'm going to run through them because it is a very important focus, not just in Housing but it's a focus of ours as a government. I've been the Minister Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities for the last two years, so we have a whole focus on universal design; we're going through a review of our accessibility legislation right now, so it's very important to us.

We have 1,213 units that have things like grab bars in shower or bath; 566 units have grab bars around the toilet area; 519 units that have a bathroom with appropriate turning radius for accessibility; and 922 units that have ramps and/or level access.

There's more work to be done, but we're pleased with the progress that we're making. Under the Investment in Affordable Housing program, 282 fully accessible units were constructed in 68 communities across the province in partnership with both private and non-profit sectors.

CHAIR: Okay. Thank you, Minister.

The Member's time has expired.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

CHAIR: I understand that Mr. Lane would like to speak, but we would need leave of the Committee.

Do we have consent?

Okay, thank you.

Mr. Lane.

MR. LANE: Thank you, my colleagues, for leave.

First of all, Minister, the first question I had on the top of my list was actually accessible

housing. You answered the question, I appreciate that. There never seems to be enough, I suppose, that's with housing in general, but I know in my district that's been a challenge, accessible units. I think province-wide it's going to be a much larger issue because of the aging demographic.

When we talk about accessible housing, of course, I think traditionally we've always thought of someone who was born with a disability and somebody in a wheelchair or whatever, but it encompasses a lot more than that.

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes.

MR. LANE: Like is said, with the growing seniors' population, it's going to be an issue.

MS. DEMPSTER: Yeah.

MR. LANE: So incorporating a universal design into all new builds and making modifications to existing ones, I think, should be a priority; it sounds like it is.

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes.

MR. LANE: So I'll certainly give kudos for that.

Minister, another question I had relates to this grant program for Housing; I'll speak to my district and area.

We have a lot of seniors in Mount Pearl because all the families are in Paradise – all the young families mostly – and in Southlands and so on. Mount Pearl no doubt has a very strong senior population and there is more and more need for affordable seniors housing. I hear it all the time and I'm sure my colleague for Mount Pearl North does because we hang out in the same places quite often –

MS. DEMPSTER: That's on record.

MR. LANE: – with a lot of the same seniors, so he knows what I'm referring to. That's something that needs to be addressed. The concern I had, I raised it last year and I raise it again this year, is that there are community groups and organizations that I know of for sure

– and this was confirmed last year – that applied for funding to construct more housing, particularly for seniors.

We have a great facility up at Masonic Park, of course, that's sort of like a model, as far as I'm concerned, of the way of what we need. Masonic Park, I'd say, could grow twice the size of what it is and they could probably fill those units. The problem is that they're not there. We need more. The beauty of that system is that it is community groups – in this case it was the Masons – that partnered to build these and they have truly affordable subsidized units for seniors.

I find it a little troubling when I hear of organizations such as the Masons that are applying for grants to build affordable housing that may not be successful, while at the same time we're giving private developers these deals with this \$400,000 and you build something and put 10 units in there that are supposed to be affordable seniors units. The reality of it is they're charging market rates and then, of course, they take \$350 a month off the market rate in exchange for \$400,000 upfront capital. Then, in 10 years' time, they can say I've fulfilled my commitment for 10 years and now I'm going put that \$350 or \$450 or \$550 on top of the normal rent; if you can't afford it, see you later.

I understand that, yeah, it may fill some need and there may be some people who can afford it, but the reality of it is that what we need are more places like Masonic Park, like the Columbus Centre, like Parkdale and so on – I'm just speaking of the Mount Pearl area – where we have truly affordable seniors housing for the long term, in partnership with community organizations that are not there to make any profits, they're there just to basically break even. They might have a staff or two that they have to pay but, generally, it's a break-even venture, no profit margins or very little profit margins. That's where the money needs to go.

I'm wondering what the breakdown was this year. I know last year when I asked, I can remember being told that so much went to the private developers and there was so much went to the not-for-profit groups. I couldn't understand then and I still can't understand why we wouldn't put all the money to the non-profit

groups. If there's anything left over and there's an opportunity for a private developer to make a few bucks and fill in a need, fine, but they should be at the bottom of the list. We shouldn't be dividing it evenly over the two; they should be at the bottom.

Once all of the not-for-profits are looked after and we're getting the best bang for the buck for the seniors, then if there's anything left, fine and dandy. I'm just wondering if you can comment on that. I know it's long winded.

MS. DEMPSTER: There was a lot there.

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MS. DEMPSTER: I'll respond to it in sections. Thank you.

I want to go back. You started talking about accessibility. I just want to share with you that in 2011, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing made universal design a mandatory requirement on all our Investments in Affordable Housing-funded projects – which I'll speak to in a minute – you were just alluding to. That's because many people with or without disabilities in the various stages of their life are helped when we do that.

Right now, when we have gone out building new units, we require that one in every 10 units built under the Investments in Affordable Housing agreement was fully accessible. You asked about the seniors and the units for them. We have 430 units dedicated solely to seniors, most of which are in the St. John's area.

Now I'll just speak in general terms to the affordable housing. We had a program, Investments in Affordable Housing, which has just ended. When I came into the department in '17, we were kind of on the tail end of that and I believe it was in February of '18 that we had \$6 million.

We did go out to private and non-profits, because sometimes we've done all of one or the other and the feedback seemed to be certain areas of the province you might not have a non-profit group that wants to take this on. We went out with both and, as you know, it's around \$125,000 for non-profit and \$40,000 that went to for-profit in this and there was a huge demand.

I think MHA Lester would have been a fairly new MHA and we did put around a million dollars, maybe, into Masonic. I had been up there myself; I agree that is a model for the province. They have their own little community, they're an envy. You would go in 2 o'clock and all these seniors are in with a full-on band going or they're doing some exercise program. It gives you something to look forward to as you age.

We were happy to support Masonic and there's no doubt we need more. While the IAH program has ended, as a part of the new National Housing Strategy with the bilaterals that we did just sign, we have some targets that we have to meet in working with the federal government. One of the targets is that we are to expand our social housing stock by 15 per cent. That means social and community housing, so that potentially could mean areas like Masonic would have an expansion or money could be invested in that area.

The IAH, specifically that you reference, that was the end of that program. That money we expended last year.

MR. LANE: Okay.

Thank you, Minister.

MS. DEMPSTER: My CEO is going to just add to that.

MR. GOSS: Yes, if you don't mind, just to elaborate a little bit more on what the minister just said.

The IAH program that she referred to which has just ended, going to Mr. Lane's question, a lot of the non-profits that availed of that funding of the program were in the larger centres, such as the St. John's metro area, Mount Pearl, Paradise, that area. There were a number of private developers that developed affordable housing units in the rural areas where there were no non-profits that were available to avail of the funding. The privates were not given preference over the non-profits; as a matter of fact, in areas where it was necessary it was probably the reverse, it's just that some privates had to do development in the rural areas.

Also, to elaborate a little bit more on the National Housing Strategy, CMHC has now what they call a National Housing Co-Investment Fund whereby private and/or non-profit individuals or groups can submit a proposal to CMHC to develop affordable housing for seniors or anybody else, and they've got different criteria to meet. They will provide funding towards those projects, so there is opportunity for these individuals also to avail of funding under the National Housing Co-Investment Fund. I just wanted to get that out there too.

MR. LANE: Thank you. I appreciate that.

I have one final question, and that relates to programs such as – somebody called my office the other day. They said they called Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, I don't know if it's correct, but seeing as how you're here – about the Provincial Home Repair Program and so on, and they were told that it's ended or that there's no more funding.

That was a huge – the energy efficiency one is great, but there was also the one, I forget the name of it now, but for accessibility, I forget the exact name of the program. You know what I'm talking about, the grab bars and the showers, there was that program, the energy efficiency and then Provincial Home Repair. I had a lot of people in my district that I referred to that program to get their roofs repaired and things like that, seniors on low incomes.

I was told that when they called Housing they said that program is now ended. I said, no way, there's no way that can be true. Maybe they're waiting for the budget to pass.

So, I'm asking, and I'm hoping you're going to tell me that that is an error and we have not ended that very vital program that so many people have availed of over the years.

MS. DEMPSTER: The Provincial Home Repair Program that assists the low-income homeowners, those that make under \$32,500, and then the other ones you were referencing was home repair, bathroom – home modifications –

MR. LANE: That's it, home modification, yeah.

MS. DEMPSTER: – so somebody that can no longer lift their leg to get in the bathtub –

MR. LANE: That's right.

MS. DEMPSTER: – then we modify the bathrooms and things like that. There is tremendous uptake in those programs.

MR. LANE: Absolutely.

MS. DEMPSTER: The budget, historically, had been around \$5.5 million in total. We have always gone over in that and we've been fortunate, I guess, to find some money in other places. They did close the program while we were in the caretaker mode, because when the writ dropped and we had reached the top of what was allocated, and the department couldn't really make decisions on – lots of times we moved things around to where the pressure points are. We have since opened that program again, right now.

MR. LANE: Okay, I knew that that had to be the case.

MS. DEMPSTER: Yeah, I wouldn't want to be misleading and say we're going to be able to meet all of the need in the province this year, but it's certainly open again and we're doing what we can.

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MS. DEMPSTER: Sometimes, even when we provide the grant to somebody, they have 60 days in which to complete their work, and if that don't happen, then they may come off the list and then we're able to process other applications from the back end, so, yeah.

MR. LANE: Okay. So, the bottom line is nothing has changed, other than the fact that it was temporarily on hold because of the election and so on.

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes.

MR. LANE: Which is basically what I told that person I figured it had to be. That's good news.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Good, thank you, and I understand Jeff has (inaudible).

MR. DWYER: Just sitting here listening to some of the questions and answers and stuff like that, is there an expiry or anything like that on these applications? Once you get in Housing is it a lifetime thing? Is there any kind of program to transition people back into looking after themselves, I guess kind of thing, as opposed to being in Housing for an unlimited amount of time, I guess?

MS. DEMPSTER: I think that varies on where the clients end up when they come to us. We have people on income support with complex needs, not able to work, that will end their days in Housing units. Seniors, probably a big percentage of what we have in our units are seniors that probably won't move.

If we speak to the shelters that we have, for example, and the reason that we really value our partnerships with groups like Stella here in town that provide the wraparound support, people come into a shelter, and we really have an increased focus now on getting them out of the shelter, getting them into a unit, getting them into independent living with some wraparound supports. Always with a view to integrating them back into society, helping them find work.

The truth is probably the majority of people that come into our units don't move on.

Yeah, I don't know if you want to add anything to that?

MR. GOSS: That's probably accurate.

We do encourage people, where they're able, to move on, but as the minister says, very often, she said earlier, we're the landlord of last resort, and for most of our clients, it feels as though that stays that way for a long time.

We do have people who are successful in moving on, but there is no expiry, shall we say. We don't kick people out because you've been here long enough. They stay if they need us.

MR. DWYER: Just in saying that, too, I'm just thinking about, let's say, a single dad that raising his family or a single mom that's raising her

family and the kids graduate and move on and they're going out to get their own career and stuff like that.

Where's the plan for taking a single person and putting them into a single unit, as opposed to letting that parent stay in a three-bedroom unit for, let's say, five or 10 years?

MS. DEMPSTER: That's what we've been talking about here this morning periodically throughout these Estimates. There is a tremendous – 93 per cent of the people that we have in units that are looking for one and two bedroom.

I mentioned to MHA Lane earlier, the 15 per cent target that we have to meet with our new Housing agreement with the feds for expansion of social and community housing, we also have to meet targets of repair; 20 per cent is the number.

So, a huge focus of what we will be doing is either getting rid of some of our existing larger stock and building smaller units or taking a larger unit and putting it into a duplex – whatever is the most cost-effective way. Those conversations are already started and happening, because we recognize that we have far too many – what I call Aunt Nellies and Uncle Joes – and last year they misquoted me in *Hansard*, I noticed last night, and said Millie, but it's Nellie. We have far too many that are in large units and they have requested to be in the one and two bedroom.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

Are you able to provide the detailed breakdown of the new money in the bilateral agreement announced on April 17, 2019?

MS. DEMPSTER: It's \$135 million from the province and \$135 million from the feds, so it is \$270 million. We are still working out some of the details. Right now, a portion of that is going to go into our first three-year action plan. Most of what we get will go into our Housing and Homelessness Plan, which we are going to be releasing very, very soon. We've not finalized the details on where the specific pots of money will be in what areas.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

So, is it new money or money that was already budgeted for in your (inaudible) –?

MS. DEMPSTER: One hundred and thirty-five million dollars of it is new money.

MR. DWYER: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR: Okay.

Any further speakers? Mr. Dinn?

MR. LANE: Madam Chair, I have one quick question, with leave, or if you have more questions, go ahead.

Sorry, I thought you were done.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

So, with regards to Grants and Subsidies, then, is it possible to have an outline of the budget for each program, plus staffing and revenue? Is that available?

MS. DEMPSTER: We can get that for you.

MR. J. DINN: Perfect.

The federal revenue that you have identified there, that's the National Housing Strategy money?

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes.

MR. J. DINN: That would –

MS. DEMPSTER: No, no, no, no. The National Housing Strategy is coming in July. Correct?

MR. J. DINN: Okay.

MS. DEMPSTER: Yeah. I'll let Mike speak to that in some detail.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

MR. TIZZARD: The revenue you see in the Estimates book is related to the Low Carbon Economy fund that was announced in January 2019. It is a partnership with the federal government for energy efficiency, so that's the

money we'll receive from the federal government for that program.

MR. J. DINN: With regard to the Supportive Living Program Community Partnership and the Provincial Homelessness Fund, what is budgeted for these programs in 2019? I think it was \$8.7 million in 2018. Will there be funds for new supportive housing units in 2019?

MR. TIZZARD: The Supportive Living Program budget for 2019-'20 is \$7.6 million. I think you quoted there \$8.3 million last year.

MR. J. DINN: \$8.7 million.

MR. TIZZARD: The reduction is what the minister talked about earlier in our grant reduction. The money we previously provided to Choices for Youth and the St. John's Status of Women Council, those organizations are provided funding under the government's multi-year grant initiative. They still would receive the money; it's just Choices for Youth comes from the Department of CSSD. They still get the same amount, but it just comes from a different source.

MR. J. DINN: With regard to the First-time Homebuyer's Program, I think that there is a \$70,000-income ceiling for this; it helps people for a down payment. Was the \$1.25 million fully used in 2018 with the target of 100 clients? Was that used?

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes.

MR. J. DINN: The budget for 2019 is the same or has that increased?

MS. DEMPSTER: The combined budget for '18-'19, '19-'20 was \$1.7 million. We set a target each year with the budget to serve around 100 families. We had very good uptake and we're about 15 more families, I believe, to assist this year to reach our target.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Minister.

With regards to the Home Purchase Program, was the \$1 million budgeted for this program fully used in 2018 with the target of 330 clients?

MS. DEMPSTER: We really didn't have the uptake that we had anticipated we would with the Home Purchase Program. We served around \$500,000 and removed the remaining \$500,000 over to support the First-time Homebuyers.

MR. J. DINN: Okay.

The budget then for 2019, will that be the same, or has that been altered then as a result?

MS. DEMPSTER: Where we are right now is as we're working through all of these things with the feds, they are coming with their own program.

MR. J. DINN: Right.

MS. DEMPSTER: They still haven't announced the details, so we don't know what that entails. The First-time Homebuyers will be out in September from the federal government, so we're kind of waiting to see what that's going to look like before we make some budgetary decisions around what we do here provincially.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

Certainly, I have time left on the clock and I'll certainly relinquish that to the independent Member, if everyone else agrees.

CHAIR: Okay.

MR. LANE: Thank you. I thank my colleague for that.

I only have one question that came up when the other Member spoke. It was about persons who are in receipt of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. Do they stay there for life or do they move on? It raised the question in my mind that someone had mentioned to me in the past, and I didn't know the answer so I'm going to ask the question.

If somebody, say, applies for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, obviously, they have to meet a certain threshold in terms of income; I think it's \$32,000 or less, I think, per family, whatever that is. They meet that threshold at that time and they're given a Newfoundland and Labrador Housing unit. Do you assess those people then,

on an annual basis, to see if their income has changed?

The thought that had been raised to me is that you have someone who went in there at a time when they qualified and then, a year later, they hooked up with a good job or they both did or whatever. Now, all of a sudden, they have good income coming in and they really don't need Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, but why not, if they like where they are and their rent is cheap and so on, so they continue to stay there.

Does that happen, or do you every year make sure they're asked for their income tax receipts or something?

MS. DEMPSTER: That's a very good question. That information is captured on the annual lease review.

MR. LANE: All right, well, that's good because there's a perception. Rightly or wrongly, I've heard it.

The only other thing I wanted to ask, now that I've mentioned it, is tiny homes. I asked about that one time before. Is that something you even looked at as a possibility?

OFFICIAL: You and me wouldn't fit.

MR. LANE: No, I wouldn't fit in there. No, we wouldn't fit there.

MS. DEMPSTER: It's a conversation that we have had.

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MS. DEMPSTER: But then there's the bigger picture of municipalities and the zoning issues and things that would come with that, so ...

MR. LANE: Yeah.

They were talking about doing that down in Pouch Cove, was it, or Bauline, or down there somewhere. I remember down there somewhere. It was in the news.

All right, that's it. I'm done, thank you.

CHAIR: Okay. I'm seeing no further speakers.

The Clerk can now call the subhead.

CLERK: 1.1.01.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subhead 1.1.01 carried.

CLERK: The total.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, total heads, carried.

CHAIR: I think we're going to take a five-minute bathroom break right now before we move into the next subhead. We'll welcome in the officials from the department as well.

Recess

CHAIR: Before we get started, if we could have the officials from the department introduce themselves to begin.

MS. DEMPSTER: Good morning.

Minister Dempster.

MS. WALSH: Good morning.

Susan Walsh, Deputy Minister.

MS. JONES: Sharlene Jones, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services and Performance Improvements.

MR. MARTIN: Dave Martin, Departmental Controller.

MR. BENNETT: Derek Bennett, Parliamentary Secretary.

MS. BARNES: Jennifer Barnes, Director for In Care and Adoptions.

MS. GOGAN: Aisling Gogan, Assistant Deputy Minister for Policies and Programs.

MS. HEALEY: Michelle Healey, Director of Healthy Living, Recreation and Sport.

MS. ENGLISH: Dana English, Executive Assistant to Minister Dempster.

MS. HUNT-GROUCHY: Michelle Hunt-Grouchy, Director of Communications.

MR. DWYER: Jeff Dwyer, MHA, Placentia West - Bellevue.

MR. HYNES: Darrell Hynes, Opposition Office.

MR. J. DINN: Jim Dinn, St. John's Centre MHA.

MS. WILLIAMS: Susan Williams, Researcher, Third Party.

MR. BYRNE: Gerry Byrne, Corner Brook.

MR. BENNETT: Derrick Bragg, MHA, Fogo Island - Cape Freels.

CHAIR: I'm Pam Parsons, MHA for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

The minister has 15 minutes to introduce her Estimates and the Member speaking immediately in reply to the minister has 15 minutes, and all other Committee Members have 10 minutes to speak. We can also refer to ourselves by first name rather than portfolio or district here today.

On that note, I think we can get started.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

As I started in Housing, I'll start the same way with CSSD. It is Public Service Week and I would like to thank this team that's around me for doing a real great job every single day. My binder was prepared in the most meticulous way, but more importantly than that, these guys around me in a large social department, they work in really challenging areas every single day.

Child welfare for a long time, provincially, was a stand-alone department. That, in and of itself, takes a lot of time, heavy work and, as you can see from the title, we pretty much, in this department, cover everything from the cradle to the grave, from the children to the seniors. I've got to see up close and personal this last two years the important work that those folks do. Some that have had very long careers in heavy circumstances. No doubt, despite the challenges, they find it very rewarding. Of course, Recreation and Sport is always a little bit of our outlet where we enjoy and appreciate. My director, Michelle Healey, does a great job in that area.

I want to thank you all again for being here this morning to participate in the Estimates of the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development. As a department, we focus on supporting individuals, families and communities throughout the province to achieve improved health and social well-being, as well as reduce and prevent poverty. We work tirelessly to ensure the protection of children, youth and adults from maltreatment, abuse or neglect.

Our department promotes the values of inclusion, diversity and healthy active living. We lead the development of policies, programs and partnerships to improve services and the overall social development of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have a number CSSD offices. Since becoming the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development almost two years – it'll be two years at the end of July – I've had the opportunity to visit many of our offices located throughout the province. In doing so, I've seen first-hand how dedicated and passionate the department's social workers are when working

with our provinces children, youth and their families.

I want to mention the *Children, Youth and Families Act*, one of my proudest moments and most humbled, I guess, working with our team. The direction we've been able to move with regard to a new act. Our government recognizes that the protection and advancement of the interest and well-being of our children and youth is a tremendous responsibility.

Child protection is one of the mandates that lie within the CSSD Department. So in May '18, we commenced a second reading of the new *Children, Youth and Families Act*. This new legislation, which replaces the Children and Youth Care and Protection Act, will actually come into effect very soon coming up. It will be proclaimed on the 28th of June.

Building on the principles of the previous act, the new act is child and youth centered, family focused and culturally responsive. It is truly a progressive new piece of legislation which will have positive impacts and benefits for children, youth and their families. The new act enshrines in legislation the importance of family as the preferred environment for the care and upbringing of a child or youth.

We know that the majority of children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador are able to remain safely in the family home with supports and services. The new *Children, Youth and Families Act* reflects this in its overall philosophy, and it is also reflected in the current work we do with families.

Among a number of new provisions, the new act will increase the scope of the duty to report to include youth 16 and 17 years old, and remove restrictions so that youth in the youth services program can continue to do so up to the age of 21. This was very important to us. Sometimes a young person at 18 – that's a pretty critical juncture in your life, you may not know exactly what direction you're going. So we have now increased the age and expanded the budget to support providing a service to that increased age. To support the expanded scope, we are investing \$1.5 million to hire additional social workers and to assist with the additional program costs to the youth services program.

Prevention and early intervention: I want to note here that my department is also exploring services for vulnerable families not in need of protection. This has been very important to me, very important to staff and to our Premier because sometimes we come on the scene when it's time to remove the children, but we have vulnerable families out there, and it's very important that we provide supports at that stage with the view that, hopefully, we never have to remove the children for a period of time.

Through initiatives like *The Way Forward*, the Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes and *Towards Recovery: A Vision for a Renewed Mental Health and Addictions System for Newfoundland and Labrador*, we are working in partnership with other government departments and community to explore services for all families, but most especially vulnerable families.

Currently, we are working to help families strengthen parenting skills required to create a stable and supportive family environment. We are working towards ensuring supports are available to all families when they need them to help strengthen family wellness. Of course, this is with a goal. We anticipate that this will reduce the number of children in need of protective intervention and, ultimately, the number of children in our care.

As the minister responsible for Children, Seniors and Social Development, I am tremendously proud of this legislation. I truly believe that it will support children, youth and families at a level like we've not seen before.

If anybody saw me at the press conference, you did see me break a little at the end. I was unforgiving of myself about that but I'm only human. I'm very pleased with this new act and the direction it's going to go. I think it's going to make life better for children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Adoptions; this is another area that I take some pride in working with my team. Unfortunately, there are times that a child may not be safe in the care of their parents and adoption or a permanency plan is required. To support this planning, we are investing \$233,100 to further advance the development of profiles for children

waiting to be adopted, and the completion of the matching and approval process.

We actually added some additional resources last year. We have a list of children that we know in the province are never going home and so it was very important to me, not just as the minister or an MHA but as a mom, that maternal side, to move these children out and get them into a home at as swiftly a manner as we could. We've dedicated some extra resources there. It's a key priority for us to ensure that children who are eligible for adoption are matched with supportive and loving families in a timely manner.

Inclusion and accessibility; as a government, we are committed to safe and sustainable communities. I am proud of the work that we are doing and will continue to do to promote inclusiveness and equality throughout our province. We have heard repeatedly and consistently from the community of persons with disabilities and stakeholders that we need a made-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador approach to accessibility legislation and that we need to get it right.

We are pleased to partner with the Provincial Advisory Council for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities and the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities Newfoundland and Labrador to develop and deliver an inclusive and accessible engagement process that took place during this past winter. We launched accessibility consultation sessions as we were reviewing our accessibility legislation. We had a very good uptake. As a matter of fact, most places across the province, if not all, the number of people that showed up for the sessions was actually higher than the number of people that registered. We're very encouraged about that. Persons with disabilities and other interested groups and individuals provided valuable input during the engagement process, with more than 200 people participating. In conjunction with our partners, we are now completing a full analysis of this input, which will inform our work going forward.

In Budget '19 we are investing \$400,000 for the Accessible Taxi Program and the Accessible Vehicle grant. The Accessible Taxi Program supports companies to modify taxis to make

them accessible, and the Accessible Vehicle Program supports individuals or families to adapt vehicles to be accessible for personal use. We've heard some pretty touching stories at the launch of that funding from people who are now able to call a taxi and get to appointments, weddings, funerals and things that they were not able to do before. We are also allocating \$75,000 for inclusion grants to non-profit community organizations to make their facilities and events more accessible.

Budget 2019 allocates \$300,000 for accessible, affordable transportation through the Newfoundland and Labrador Community Transportation Program. This program provides support to incorporated municipalities, not-for-profits and Indigenous governments and communities to develop, implement and evaluate inclusive and accessible community-based transportation programs. Initiatives under this program focus on supporting active living and healthy aging, as well as promoting social inclusion and individual choice for those facing barriers to transportation, including persons with disabilities, seniors and low income.

Speaking of seniors, we have an enhanced focus on our seniors to support seniors to remain healthy and active engaged citizens living in their own homes and being active in their own age-friendly communities for as long as possible. We have done a lot of work to support an aging population with *Budget 2019*, investing in the continued development of age-friendly communities.

I'll just outline a couple of those initiatives; an additional \$270,000 for 50-plus clubs. This new senior's social inclusion initiative will offer funding to eligible 50-plus clubs for participation in community events, healthy aging, mental health and well-being. Down in Marystown, in the Member across the way's district last September, we heard clearly the benefit of those clubs, the folks and how much they look forward to getting out. We wanted to do a little something additional to support that group.

\$95,000 for the Age-Friendly Newfoundland and Labrador Community Grant Program which offers funding to incorporated municipalities, Indigenous governments and communities to

support planning for changing demographics – almost done, Madam Chair. Healthy, active living; as a government, we are committed to improving the health outcomes of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Health comprises our complete physical, social and mental well-being, all of which is shaped by such influences as genetics, lifestyle choices and social factors.

Improving our health and well-being requires us to incorporate physical activity in our daily lives. We are continuing our work with community partners to increase physical activity and healthier communities through a number of initiatives, including: \$1.7 million for the Community Healthy Living Fund, which supports community groups, recreation committees and organizations offering physical activity, healthy living and wellness programs; \$1.8 million to prevent and reduce tobacco and vaping use – this approach includes public education and awareness, legislation, enforcement, cessation supports and community-based and school initiatives; \$200,000 for the Carrot Rewards program, which rewards users with loyalty reward points for participating in healthy, active living awareness; we have \$130,000 for Eat Great and Participate to support healthier eating and access to healthy food and beverage options.

In conclusion, I just want to say these are just some of the many initiatives that I am proud to highlight from the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development. As a government, we remain committed to working closely with our community partners so we can continue to deliver better services and achieve better outcomes for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians across our province.

CHAIR: Now we'll have the Clerk introduce the official subhead, please.

CLERK: 1.1.01.

CHAIR: Okay and we'll start with our first speaker.

MR. DWYER: Thanks, Minister, for your opening.

I would also like to say thank you very much. Being Public Service Week, I appreciate you all being here and for all the hard work that you do. I guess this is one of the most vulnerable parts of our whole government. We, on this side of the hall, certainly appreciate everything that you guys do as well.

I guess, first thing is first, I can probably obtain a minister's briefing binder?

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes, we'll provide that.

MR. DWYER: Okay, thank you very much.

Just a quick comment, you were talking about the 50-plus clubs or whatever, I actually got to attend a district event this past weekend and what these guys are doing is really unbelievable. It was better than going to the Spirit of Newfoundland type of thing, it was so unbelievable. I think the money that has been earmarked for these 50-plus clubs is certainly a good thing. And next year we'll know if it was enough for each club, kind of thing. Because I think they have to be incorporated to receive the money.

I just think that their theme was that they were all 'seenagers.' They got up and they said they're senior teenagers now, because they've got the life of what you wanted when you were a teenager. You've got your own car, you don't have to go to work, you've got a steady income, all this kind of stuff. So I was quite impressed with how they're doing things, and how involved they are in the community. With our aging demographic, then obviously there's a great need for these as well.

As for the children's side of it, I guess that's the part that, as parents, we all take to heart kind of thing. We don't want to hear any of the rough stories but, unfortunately, they happen. So it's people like ourselves that get the rules in place so that it's the same rules for everybody as opposed to, you know, just singling people out.

To move along to my questions, in your department, Minister, are you still applying the zero-based budgeting?

MS. DEMPSTER: We are certainly applying the zero base, which is across departments as a

part of the flatter, leaner with this government. You mentioned child welfare, sometimes you can tend to need more money than you've allocated in the budget, and we have to deal with these things as they come up.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

Are there any errors in the published Estimates book that you know of?

MS. DEMPSTER: No.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

How many people are employed in the department?

MS. DEMPSTER: Seven hundred and sixty-seven – 697. I am going from memory, here.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

MS. DEMPSTER: Six hundred and fifty-seven.

MR. DWYER: So the Salary estimates show an increase of 22. Was that due to attrition or just new hires?

MS. WALSH: Could you repeat that question?

MR. DWYER: What's that?

MS. DEMPSTER: Could you just give us direction on where you are in your 1.1, and then we will follow you because it's a much larger department.

MR. DWYER: It's in the Salary Report, but there was an increase of 22. It went from 644 to 666.

Is that correct?

MS. DEMPSTER: In the overall?

MR. DWYER: Yes.

MS. WALSH: The number of positions or dollar value?

MR. DWYER: Positions.

MS. WALSH: Yes, we did have an increase in positions from 2018-19 to 2019-20 of 37 positions overall. That's not a salary increase per se; that's an increase in the number of positions. We use a formula related to the number of social workers that we need to hire based on the caseload size.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

MS. WALSH: So our numbers fluctuate as a consequence of that.

MS. DEMPSTER: We have a ratio of 1-22 per caseload for social workers.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

How many retirements occurred in your department last year?

MS. WALSH: We'll have to get you that number. I'm sorry, I don't have it.

MR. DWYER: Okay. No, that's fine.

How many vacancies right now are in the department that are not currently filled?

MS. WALSH: As of March 31, 2019, we had 110 vacancies.

MR. DWYER: Have any positions been eliminated?

MS. WALSH: As part of our attrition, we actually would have had five positions that we gave up as part of our attrition to meet our target. Now, those positions were PCNs, they weren't actually filled positions, so they are vacant positions.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

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

MS. WALSH: There have been no layoffs.

MR. DWYER: No layoffs, okay.

MS. DEMPSTER: We actually have 37 additional staff.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

How many contractual or short-term employees are in the department?

MS. WALSH: We have 33 temporary or contractual positions that are currently filled. We have 16 that are vacant.

MR. DWYER: Did your department receive any funds from the contingency fund and, if so, what was it for?

MS. DEMPSTER: We did receive funding from the contingency in the amount of just over \$11 million – \$15.4 million in total and all of that was for children in care, Level 4. I believe all of it was Level 4. We have four levels starting with foster care and going up based on complex needs; Level 4 being the highest. So we've spent quite a bit but we've done a tremendous amount of work within the department to run a trajectory I guess that looked at what this would cost to not only do this but to have it trending downwards. So I'm pretty pleased with the work that staff have been able to do around that whole piece.

I'll also add to the MHA that we changed a system within the department over the last year. I believe it was March it came into effect. We did have to go looking for an extra \$3 million basically for incumbencers, just for what we would call a cash flow. You know, if you're starting a shift on the front desk of a hotel, you have to start with a float of \$100 or something. It's not really additional money that we needed, it was just to keep the pay system moving – the new system we went into.

MR. DWYER: What was the dollar value on what was borrowed from the contingency fund?

MS. DEMPSTER: Madam Chair, \$15.4 million was the total and \$3 million was that cash flow that we needed to support the new system. The rest was for Level 4.

MR. DWYER: Are we able to get an update on the new provincial disabilities act?

MS. DEMPSTER: Well, in my mandate letter, the Premier asked me to review the accessibility legislation. So we're doing just that. We went

out, as I alluded to in my opening, and launched consultation sessions. It was interesting, I was able to attend a couple of those and some of the feedback we heard pretty loud and clear down at the Sheraton, I believe it was. Actually, they did not want us moving too quickly.

I also have a Provincial Advisory Council for Status of Persons with Disabilities and they said we want to get this right. We've been working closely with a number of groups and now all of that information is coming back to the department and helping us to inform the decisions and inform the legislation that we bring in going forward.

MR. DWYER: When can we expect to see that legislation be brought to the House?

MS. DEMPSTER: I don't have a timeline. We're working closely with the groups and I expect that it's in the not-too-distant future.

MR. DWYER: Just looking at Executive and Support Services –

MS. DEMPSTER: Do you have the number there?

MR. DWYER: 1.1.01.

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes.

MR. DWYER: Under Employee Benefits what was the nature of the revised \$2,500 expenditure?

MS. DEMPSTER: In tab 3, 1.1.01, right?

MR. DWYER: Yeah.

MS. DEMPSTER: It reflects an increase in the '18-'19 budget for conference registration fees.

MR. DWYER: The \$800 is all that's needed for that this year?

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes and that kind of varies. I mean last year, as the minister, I ended up representing the government at two or three things. That could be the Premier this year, it could be me.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

MS. DEMPSTER: Yeah.

MR. DWYER: In Purchased Services, it shows a minor drop balance, then increase. Can you explain that?

MS. DEMPSTER: That reflected a one-time savings from the '18-'19 budget due to lower requirements than anticipated.

MR. DWYER: In 1.2.01, the Salaries, can you explain the revised amount of an additional \$170,800? Was this a new position?

MS. DEMPSTER: Basically, the \$170,800 reflects an increase from the '18-'19 budget as a result of severance and related costs paid throughout the year.

MR. DWYER: With the Employee Benefits, was there a non-budgeted expenditure last year?

MS. DEMPSTER: Are you asking about the \$300?

MR. DWYER: Yeah.

MS. DEMPSTER: That would reflect an increase from the '18-'19 budget, again, as a result of conference registration fees.

MR. DWYER: Under Supplies, why was \$500 more spent in Supplies than budgeted?

MS. DEMPSTER: Basically, that was just increased requirements for meeting supplies. We were bringing in a new system. It's safe to say we probably had a higher number of meetings in the department last year than we normally would because of several things happening within.

MR. DWYER: Under Professional Services, why has this expenditure been eliminated?

MS. DEMPSTER: I'm not sure what number you're looking at.

MR. DWYER: 1.2.01. There was \$200 and then it wasn't used.

MS. DEMPSTER: The \$200 reflects savings as no requirements during the year. The next one reflects a decrease as no planned requirements.

MR. DWYER: Under Transportation and Communications, why are you budgeting \$25,100 this year when you only spent \$20,700 last year?

MS. DEMPSTER: I'm going to let you speak to this add, maybe.

MS. WALSH: Sure.

We've reviewed our requirements within this branch and just moved around where we think the pressure points would be for next year as part of our zero-based budget exercise. We've had some changes in terms of our executive; in fact, all of our executive changed this past year and so some of the travel that was anticipated to be done by the previous exec, having been around for a period of time, changed. We had some vacancies in exec for a period of time as well, until positions were filled.

That would account for why we were a little lower than we anticipated in '18-'19, but now, going into '19-'20, we're back on board in the (inaudible).

MR. DWYER: Okay.

That will be fine.

CHAIR: Okay, we can come back to you.

Thank you.

MR. DWYER: Thank you.

CHAIR: We'll go with our next speaker, please.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

I'm assuming we're on 1.1.01 in the Minister's Office. We didn't have any questions on that, but I just wanted to follow up on some of the questions that my colleague to the left raised, and sort of general in nature in some ways.

I just want to start out with the zero-based budgeting first. As I understand it, it's building the budget from the ground up as to what you need and then looking at how much money is needed, correct? Okay, and then that's the exercise that goes through it. You would be looking at all the programs, number of people.

MS. DEMPSTER: What we've spent, the cost historically and things like that, right?

MR. J. DINN: Okay.

MS. DEMPSTER: What we anticipate looking ahead over the next 12 months.

MR. J. DINN: Fair enough, okay.

I'm looking here – and I apologize, I think Susan Walsh said that there are 110 vacancies and that there was attrition to meet our target. I think there was a comment made along those lines. Can you explain that too?

In answer to my colleague's question with regard to how many vacancies, the comment was made – or something similar to that – allowing for attrition which was to meet our target. Can you explain to me what that refers to, that attrition to meet our target?

MS. WALSH: Yes, over the last number of years there's been an identification, I suppose. At one point our focus was on the number of positions that would be retiring that any department could potentially cut, not have to refill, basically. We've had some change in our approach. In that now, it's a dollar value. Our target – using that word – for '19-'20, the dollar value in terms of the amount of money or cash that would be removed from our budget, is \$189,000.

MR. J. DINN: If I may, to follow up on that – and this is what I'm trying to determine – was there a request for a target for a reduction? If I'm looking at zero-based budgeting – or in education I like to call it needs-based budgeting, and this is what I'm trying to distinguish between how the government is operating. Is it on budget based, which is looking at we have to reach a target of so much money out of the system and find savings.

If you say to a teacher: What are the needs in your class and what do we need to meet those needs – versus we need to save \$2,000 from the budget so find places to chop – there's a world of difference in the approach and the attitude that you have in that. If I'm looking at zero-based budgeting, as I understand it, the way it's been explained now is that it has to do with

needs. I'm skeptical of that, as you can understand.

When I hear then, that basically, as part of the attrition to meet our target, somehow that suggests there's a target that we have to save so much money and that's not really zero-based budgeting, it comes down to we have to find savings. That has little, then, to do with the needs, so I'm trying to understand where that's coming from.

Zero based is truly needs based and you're looking at the needs. If, on the other hand, there's been a target that you've been asked to meet and you have to find savings, that's not really zero based, nor is it needs based. It's about money, it's about the bottom line and it's not meeting the needs. That's the commentary. Where would these targets have come from or are they self-imposed? Where would they come from?

If I'm at a school in a classroom, my principal would say to me: Jim, you need to find at least \$1,000 savings in the budget, so you can't buy as much chalk this year – or not having used chalk in a long time but my whiteboards or my SMART Boards, that kind of thing. Is this something that is sort of generalized? I'm just trying to figure out where this so-called target came from and how is it determined.

MS. DEMPSTER: I'm going to start in response and then let my staff elaborate. While we have to be fiscally responsible – and these targets and attrition and things were put in place because of where we found ourselves provincially with that massive deficit of \$2.7 billion. This department, suffice to say, operates – because it's social – a little bit differently.

The difference in us with zero based is we may have always put X number of dollars in this pot and X number of dollars in this pot. Now, we actually are being more responsible in terms of saying how much did we spend last year, what do we see the needs are, what's the trend in terms of number of children coming into care, but having said that, we have ratios.

We have 350 social workers around the province; we have a one to 22 to help avoid burnout and things like that. We're not going to

say to a social worker you need to have 40 clients instead of 22 because we're trying to stick to this zero based, or we're not going to remove these three children and find short-term temporary living arrangements for them because we can't afford it. That's why we find ourselves sometimes going to contingency to deal because we deal with these heavy social things.

Having said that, we look around and sometimes we're about to find efficiencies through vacant positions that haven't been filled for a while and that goes toward a target. In terms of specific percentages, I'll let Sharlene or Susan respond to that.

MS. WALSH: The budget exercise will tell you how much money you have in each of your lines. That would be where we would've found out what our salary budgets would be and, consequently, that the \$189,000 would be taken off of our salary budget. To the minister's point, it is still zero based because we build up our system based on what we need. As the minister indicated when we first started, we actually have an additional 34 positions in our department from –

MS. DEMPSTER: Thirty-seven.

MS. WALSH: Thirty-seven positions, 34 filled, over last year as the minister is saying.

We are still filling our positions, as we require, to ensure that we're meeting our mandate. We do have a very specific organizational structure that's been approved, it lays out 20 cases to a social worker, six social workers to a supervisor and five to six supervisors to a zone manager. It's a very structured approach and we stay within that.

We also, of course, have sometimes – we talked about as we laid out the positions – vacancies. We have vacancies because we have a young workforce often, a female-dominated workforce. We have people coming and going and there are delays sometimes in filling positions. That vacancy factor allows us sometimes as well to operate within that target, still having that money reduced from our salary budget, but we're still able to work within what we have. It's a little bit of rightsizing.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

My apologies, I didn't mean to put you on the spot, but I did have to pick up on that language.

Before my time is allotted, I do have one other point here. I do want to say thank you, Minister, to you and your department. This is definitely a difficult portfolio to be dealing with; you're looking at two groups of very vulnerable people here. I'm not sure how I feel about being eligible to be participating in a 50-plus club or not. I haven't wrapped my head around that yet.

MS. DEMPSTER: You'll enjoy it when the time comes.

MR. J. DINN: I'm already there.

As an educator I well know the difficulty when you're looking at needs and that. It's very specific to me – when we look at the needs of children in front of us – sometimes that we're aware of and many times that we're not, and seniors, too, who are vulnerable, who sometimes don't have family supports. Fortunately enough, for my mother, their family is living nearby, but it must be terribly difficult for seniors who have no family, that they are here by themselves. I appreciate that work and I do want to say my comments in that context.

I have about one minute in this section. We have no further questions with the Minister's Office. Are we eligible to go on to the next section, another section? Are we going through?

CHAIR: Oh yes. Everything within the subsection you can certainly discuss.

MR. J. DINN: I can go on to 1.2.02, Corporate Services and Performance Improvement?

CHAIR: Yes.

MR. J. DINN: Okay.

This we may have already touched on, because I notice that you have contractual, 16 vacancies budget based, but you end up going into the contingency fund by \$11 million. That, I think, speaks to the difficulty in hitting a moving target.

The Salaries; why the overrun in 2018 and the reduction in 2019? That has to do with the Salaries in 1.2.02.

MS. DEMPSTER: 1.2.02. The \$125,600 reflected an increase from the budget as a result of severance and related cost payout during that year.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

And then the reduction?

MS. DEMPSTER: Then, the reduction reflected a decrease, which there was a number of reasons: \$87,700 was annualization of prior attrition decisions and then \$15,600 was decreased requirements as per the zero-based budgeting departmental revision.

Amounts reallocated to cover requirements in other divisions: There was \$11,800 and then some went to Programs and Policy; \$2,400, Executive Support; and \$1,400 to Minister's Office.

MR. J. DINN: Just one thing. You did mention, I think – I'm going back now – 20 cases of this structure. Would it be possible to have that, the structure of the 20 cases per social worker and that structure of how that system is set up?

MS. DEMPSTER: One in 22 we meant.

MR. J. DINN: Yeah.

MS. DEMPSTER: One in 20, yeah. Do you want to just speak to how that –

MR. J. DINN: Oh no, I mean just having access to that.

MS. DEMPSTER: We can certainly provide it. I thought you were asking of the history of how we arrived.

MR. J. DINN: No, no.

MS. DEMPSTER: It predated me, so I was going to have my deputy speak to it.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

MS. DEMPSTER: But, no, we can certainly provide that information.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

CHAIR: Okay, any further speakers in this particular subhead before we move forward?

MR. DWYER: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Sure.

MR. DWYER: 1.2 –

CHAIR: 02?

Just give a wave to Broadcast. Sometimes we have to do the YMCA for them (inaudible).

MR. DWYER: You're picking on the rookie already.

In 1.2.02, Transportation and Communications –

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes.

MR. DWYER: – why was the revised expenditures of \$90,700 less than budgeted?

MS. DEMPSTER: Those savings were derived as a result of travel requirements less than anticipated in a number of divisions within the department; sometimes maybe meetings postponed. It's been a terrible winter, sometimes travel was disrupted altogether, as well as attempts to utilize other cost-efficient, effective.

One of the things we're doing in this really large department with a lot of staff spread all across the four corners of the province is we're trying to be more effective with our electronic mediums like Skype and teleconference and things like that. Whereas, historically, we might have brought staff always in to metro for meetings and now we'll get in a boardroom and use the technology that we have.

So, there were a number of things that resulted in those almost \$91,000 in savings. I will add that the savings that we found there was utilized for other operational pressures within the department.

MR. DWYER: We always love to see savings, right?

On your Professional Services, you spent \$17,000 less than budgeted in 2018-19, but you increased the budget in 2019-2020. Why was that?

MS. DEMPSTER: Well, that's really because the \$17,000 was just a one-time savings. Mainly, that was due to an amount for potential review by an external consultant to help mitigate program growth, but it's not required annually as a part of our work.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

In Purchased Services, can you explain why you spent an additional \$8,400 last year and required an additional \$28,800 for '19-'20?

MS. DEMPSTER: The \$8,400 was primarily due to printing costs that resulted being higher than budgeted and we had some one-off things happening like training, for sure. The \$28,800 reflects an increase from the budget mainly due to transfer back to the department of a \$25,000 budget for medical assessments from Human Resource Secretariat.

So, the Executive Council that had been previously moved to HRS for administration, on behalf of CSSD, that was there for a little while, and the cost will now be charged back to CSSD. So, that's been an intergovernmental change.

MR. DWYER: Under Property, Furnishings and Equipment, can you explain the nature of the \$1,000 increase this year?

MS. DEMPSTER: Basically, as a part of the zero-based budget review mirror adjustments were made within the activity to cover projected requirements.

MR. DWYER: 1.2.03 under Salaries, they were revised and there was a drop of \$167,500. Is this an attrition or a layoff?

MS. DEMPSTER: That was pretty much as a result of vacancies throughout the year.

MR. DWYER: But then Salaries also rose by \$237,400.

MS. DEMPSTER: That would have been as a result of a scheduled step increase for employees; \$16,000 of that, and an additional account of a two-year approval for three additional staff. You know I talked about children that are never going home. So, we actually hired three social workers to try to expedite them through the system to place them permanently in homes, and that's where that additional funding came from.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

Under Transportation and Communications, that had a drop balance of \$27,500 under the revised, but you're expecting to spend an extra \$48,100 this year.

MS. DEMPSTER: As I mentioned, in May '18, we brought the new legislation, *Children, Youth and Families Act*, in and it's being proclaimed on the 28th of June, so there will be requirements – we're projecting additional travel, a fair bit, as we implement this new child protection legislation. That's what that is tied directly to.

MR. DWYER: On Supplies, it's almost double the \$14,100 this year. Is there a rationale behind that?

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes, so the \$6,900 increase is as a result of the increased training supplies and resource materials required for upcoming training. Again, this legislation that we brought in last year is a massive piece of legislation. We have spent an entire year, the staff, working on the policies and the regulations that support that legislation. So, as we start to roll this out now it's going to be pretty busy times in the department.

There are a number of things here in this budget that's tied to us getting to where we need to be with the full implementation of the new *Children, Youth and Families Act*.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

The Autism Action Plan is under that portfolio as well or ...?

MS. DEMPSTER: Sorry, can you repeat the question?

MR. DWYER: The Autism Action Plan that you budgeted, is that –?

MS. DEMPSTER: No, that sits in Health.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

MS. DEMPSTER: Yeah.

MR. DWYER: That's what I was wondering.

In Professional Services, the revised number shows a drop balance of \$95,400 but goes back up to \$194,400. Why would that be?

MS. DEMPSTER: The \$38,600 is reflected in the budget related to the removal of funding for post-implementation support for a new structured decision-making model that we brought in within the department. When I talked about a new system earlier, that's what I was referring to; new structured decision-making model which provides a lot of additional supports to our social workers that are out and about in our coves and communities doing the work that they do.

MR. DWYER: Under Purchased Services, can you clarify why the revised number was down \$35,500 but is budgeted to grow by \$44,000?

MS. DEMPSTER: Basically, last year, in '18-'19, there was lower cost than expected for this year for data purchase from Statistics Canada. There was reduced advertising cost and lower cost associated with outside meetings.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

MS. DEMPSTER: And the increase, just to finish – I think you did ask why the increase – there are new relevant products expected to be available during the '19-'20 fiscal year.

MR. DWYER: Thank you.

Moving over to 2.1 –

CHAIR: No, we will vote on this section before we move to that section.

MR. DWYER: Okay, my apologies.

CHAIR: If there are no further questions – Mr. Lane?

MR. LANE: Yeah, I just have a couple of general questions, and then I actually have to leave. It may not necessarily tie right in there, but with your leave, that's the only way I can ask them, if that's okay.

CHAIR: Yeah, do we have leave from everyone?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

CHAIR: Yes, okay.

MR. LANE: Then I'll be out of here.

First of all, I just want to comment, in general, I will say that, as I said last night, I absolutely agree with the concept of what you're trying to do through attrition. I agree with the zero-based budgeting model. I think that's important. We are in a big financial mess, as we all know, and we need to do what we can to try to get expenses down.

That said, I will certainly agree with my colleague from St. John's Centre that particularly when it comes to this department and what you're dealing with and some pretty horrific situations and everything else, that we can't put a price tag on those emergency situations.

I support the fact that sometimes there are going to be overruns and there are going to be times that you're going to be dipping into contingencies because if a child is in a serious, dangerous position, then you need to do what you need to do, and we can't put a price tag on that.

The couple of questions I got are actually around the Disability Policy Office. I will say, again, upfront, that I have seen some really good improvement on access and accessibility and stuff over the last couple of years, which is very, very good to see – issues around blue zones and stuff like that as well.

I have an organization – it is actually in the Mount Pearl North District, technically, although it is all Mount Pearl – Visions

Employment. They try to obtain employment for persons with intellectual disabilities and so on. What kind of effort has been made, if any, by the provincial government to try to participate in these programs – whether it is Avalon Employment or Visions Employment and so on – to actually employ persons with disabilities within the government, particularly persons with intellectual disabilities? Is there any effort being made to do that?

I know in the City of Mt. Pearl they have hired a couple of people through Visions, and there are a number of employers like Coleman's and stuff that we know of. What has the province done, where there are positions for persons with disabilities, to avail of employment?

MS. DEMPSTER: First of all, I want to say in your reference to blue-zone parking that you were a great advocate for blue-zone parking, so you must take some pride in some of the progress that was made. I think my first days – first weeks, maybe days – in the department, one of the things that myself and the Transportation minister was able to successfully do was – I never could understand why we were parking closest to the West Block and then those with a disability were walking. So that took a few gallons of blue paint, and I am quite happy to have that extra walk. Most days, that is the only exercise I get in this job. So you did a great job there.

I believe, personally, that our disability population, as we look at the bigger provincial lens, we have labour market gaps where we are working hard to bring in immigrants and things like that, and I firmly believe that in the disability population we have a large, untapped pool.

MR. LANE: Absolutely.

MS. DEMPSTER: So, in my department, as the Minister Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities, we have a DPO down on the third floor, we have a gentleman working there who is visually impaired, we have a lady in a motorized wheelchair – most of them with disabilities, visual or non-visual, that do fantastic work. Even on the sixth floor, if you come to visit me, you are going to see the lady that greets you would be someone in a

motorized chair, and they do fantastic work every single day, on par with most of our other employees, I would say.

So it's hard to put a number, because people have to self-identify, but I know that we look for opportunities wherever we can to take those people in and employ them. At the end of the day, everybody wins because we know the benefits of being out and working and having a schedule in your life and things like that. I don't know if staff want to add anything around the numbers or percentages.

MS. GOGAN: I just wanted to say, outside of our department as well, the Human Resource Secretariat has an Opening Doors Program for people with disabilities. The idea of that program, the philosophy is if they can get in the door of the public service, then they can apply for internal jobs and there has been a lot of success in that area.

There's also an element to that program for Crown corporations as well, so that people with disabilities can also get employment in Crown corporations. So there's work going on and we can certainly provide you with some information on those programs. If you're interacting with people, that might be a way in and who might be interested in applying. It's a great program.

MR. LANE: Okay, I thank you for that. I was aware – Opening Doors has been on the go for a long time. I can remember way back. And it's good to hear that there's some of that happening, but I guess, just as a final commentary on it, while I absolutely believe that we should be doing anything we can to support employment with people with any type of disability, most of what I heard was more around physical disabilities, which obviously, we need to do that as well. Again, I'm just sort of thinking of persons with intellectual disabilities.

As I said, there are Visions and Avalon and there are other places. If you talk to the employers – Coffee Matters is another that comes to mind. It did fantastic work with hiring persons with intellectual disabilities. He will tell you that some of the most loyal employees that he would ever have and always shows up to work on time, diligent, right on task and are really able to contribute, and they want to

contribute. I guess my point is that I think that where there are opportunities, where we can find some opportunities, we should be looking to hire some of these people. It could be permanent or it could be on some seasonal opportunities in the summer or whatever, but to try to make a greater effort to work with groups like Visions and Avalon to hire persons with intellectual disabilities, as well as physical disabilities.

MS. DEMPSTER: I meant to touch on that and I didn't. There is some work happening around the elimination of the IQ70, but Health would be the lead, so I don't want to speak for my colleague. I have staff from DPO that would certainly be engaged in some of the policy piece that's happening around that.

MR. LANE: Thank you.

I guess the other question we kind of talked about it – alluded to it – was around accessibility and so on in government buildings. It was fantastic what we did here with the blue zones and so on. I know there was a pilot project that was really pushed for and spearheaded by a constituent of mine, Craig Reid.

I'm sure anybody over there in disability office would know Craig for sure; very, very passionate about those issues. There was a pilot project to get all the schools on the Avalon, assessments done, and they were brought up to standard, but there are still government buildings – and I mentioned this to Minister Crocker last night in Transportation and Works because he looks after the buildings.

I know for new builds now it's all going to be universal design. I know the Corner Brook hospital, we talked about universal design. Absolutely where we need to go with all government buildings from here on in as far as I'm concerned, but there are still a lot of existing spaces, there are leased spaces and so on where it may not be up to code. I would certainly ask the office for persons with disabilities, through that angle at least, to be putting a bit of pressure on Transportation and Works and so on to make sure that we're getting as many of our facilities up to code as we possibly can. It's not just the Confederation Building, there are a lot of others, as you know.

MS. DEMPSTER: Your point is duly noted and that's certainly the direction we've moving in. What we have happening is Transportation and Works officials and Service NL working with people in the DPO shop on that whole piece.

MR. LANE: Thank you.

I see I'm out of time. I thank you, Minister. I thank your staff. It is Public Service Week; you're all doing great job. As I said earlier, I really appreciate the work that a number of you people do with children and so on. I could never do it, some of the work – I don't think I could ever do it. I know I couldn't, but you are to be commended for it.

Thank you all for your time. Thank you to my colleagues for giving me leave to ask some questions. I have to get to a meeting.

CHAIR: Thank you.

In the interest of time – we are at quarter to 12 right now – if nobody has any questions we're going to call this subhead to be voted on.

Mr. Dinn.

MR. J. DINN: Just a general question.

Last year's budget had additional resources for permanency planning for children and youth in care, specifically to hire three new social workers to develop profiles for 120 children and youth waiting for adoption. I think you mentioned there are three, so this would be those. Can we have an update on the permanency planning?

MS. DEMPSTER: Jennifer has been the lead on that file. I'll let her speak to some of the great work that they've been doing.

MS. BARNES: We're quite pleased with this project. We have hired the three staff; in September 2018 they came in to their position. We had 120 children identified as needing to have profiles completed and as of last week we had 52 completed. We're quite pleased to know that about half have been matched with adoptive homes already. We're seeing great progress there.

MR. J. DINN: And another one just –

MS. DEMPSTER: If I could add on.

MR. J. DINN: Yeah, sure can.

MS. DEMPSTER: There are so many of these stories (inaudible). When you have parents who decide to adopt siblings that are 15 or 16 years old and when you have a single parent that adopts a seven-year-old child who's visually impaired, it just renews your faith in humanity, really, some of those stories. It's not all challenging; there are some pretty heartwarming things that we celebrate in the department at times too.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you very much.

If I may, Chair, I'll combine two questions into one. It has to do with the list of activities undertaken by this government in 2018 towards poverty reduction, and the work with the federal government on its Poverty Reduction Strategy, so the overall progress and what was done.

MS. DEMPSTER: I'll open in response and then I'm going to turn it over to our expert within the shop, Aisling, who's a fairly new ADM as well and doing a great job there. I often go back to the fiscal climate that we found ourselves in when we formed government in 2015 with the \$2.7 billion deficit. We've really, really prided ourselves in a number of areas; one with the combined income supplement of \$122 million that's reaching 47,000 seniors' families and 155,000 families across the province.

Every year since we have been in government, we have been increasing the budget for poverty reduction initiatives, and this year our budget is at \$285 million, supporting more than a hundred poverty reduction initiatives. That's up from \$280 million the year before and maybe \$270 million the year before that.

Just to expand on some of the details, I'll let Aisling ...

MS. GOGAN: As the minister said, the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the poverty reduction work has been built over time. We're currently in the process of hiring a new director of Poverty Reduction and well-being, kind of increasing the

focus on prevention and early intervention with families.

You also asked about work with the federal government. We work really closely with the federal government. There's the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Poverty Advisory Committee. The minister responsible for Social Services in Newfoundland and Labrador is the provincial-territorial co-chair for that group, along with the federal government.

A lot of the work early on, before the federal government released *Opportunity for All* was making sure that the federal Poverty Reduction Strategy would align well with the work of provinces and territories, including the work that we've been doing here in Newfoundland and Labrador. That work has gone really well and we continue to work with the federal government to make sure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are achieving full benefits from *Opportunity for All*, and that issues we identify are being addressed, both as a province and then on behalf of all provinces and territories.

CHAIR: Okay, I think we're ready now to vote on this particular subhead.

Clerk.

CLERK: 1.1.01 to 1.2.03.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 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.

CLERK: 2.1.01.

CHAIR: Go ahead.

MR. DWYER: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Just to remind Broadcast now, if we could have Mr. Dwyer's mic?

MR. DWYER: Maybe you could tell them I was sitting in Ches's seat.

CHAIR: There we are.

MR. DWYER: Under 2.1.01, why did the Salaries increase by \$197,700 in '18-'19?

MS. DEMPSTER: 2.1.01?

MR. DWYER: Yeah.

MS. DEMPSTER: I'm not seeing that.

MR. DWYER: Child and Youth Services.

MS. DEMPSTER: That reflects an increase as a result of severance and related pay costs paid throughout the year.

MR. DWYER: Why did Employee Benefits increase by an extra \$19,000? What was this for?

MS. DEMPSTER: That was a result of higher WorkplaceNL costs.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

There's a substantial increase of \$840,000 in '19-'20 for Transportation and Communications. Can you please explain this?

MS. DEMPSTER: That was mainly as a result of increased travel requirements related to federal program delivery. That is recovered under our increased federal revenue and the travel costs overall related to the Innu service delivery model to provide necessary child protection services to the Innu communities.

MR. DWYER: Yeah.

MS. DEMPSTER: We have two First Nation reserves and most of the expenditures that we incur in providing – we have the provincial legislation to provide care for those children, but we are reimbursed federally for the costs incurred.

MR. DWYER: Looking down at Supplies, it's a revised extra \$13,500 in '18-'19. What did that entail?

MS. DEMPSTER: That was higher requirements than anticipated for general office and paper supplies, household supplies and heating costs for staff accommodations and gas for government vehicles in Labrador.

MR. DWYER: Under Professional Services, they jump from \$20,500 last year. Can you explain the increase?

MS. DEMPSTER: Basically, it's an increase from the '18-'19 budget due to unanticipated expenditures for professional assessments required during the year.

MR. DWYER: Purchased Services had an extra \$77,200. Can you explain the revised?

MS. DEMPSTER: That would be increased requirements for items such as copying costs, vehicle maintenance and repair, operating costs for staff accommodations, operating costs for rented office locations and relocation costs.

MR. DWYER: Property, Furnishings and Equipment; this area showed growth of \$4,300 in the revised and budgeted \$7,800. Can you explain the difference?

MS. DEMPSTER: So the \$4,300 was due to the result of a workstation ergonomic assessment that was done. The \$7,800 was due to increased (inaudible) for requirement as a result of – then there were a number of ergonomic assessments carried out and that was another workstation related.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

MS. DEMPSTER: And –

MR. DWYER: Go ahead.

MS. DEMPSTER: – that we anticipate, of course, right? The \$4,300 was the result of an assessment where an ergonomic workstation was required and then the \$7,800 is where we anticipate.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

Under Allowances and Assistance, there's an additional \$15,261,400 that was spent in Allowances and Assistance in '18-'19. Why was that?

MS. DEMPSTER: That was due to increase cost from annualization of growth in previous years of the number of children with complex needs requiring care, having to be placed in what we call ILAs – Independent Living Arrangements. So, those children with the most complex that we just can't place anywhere at a Level 4, and the funding to cover the overrun was provided from savings within Grants and Subsidies, as well as what I talked about earlier when we started today, the \$12.4 million transfer from the Consolidated Funds Services to Contingency, in essence.

MR. DWYER: Okay. Can we get a list of those service providers? Yeah. Okay.

In '19-'20, you plan to spend \$62,922,700, which is just about \$10.5 million less than what you spent in '18-'19. Why is that?

MS. DEMPSTER: Can you repeat that again, please?

MR. DWYER: Under Allowances – item number 9.

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes.

MR. DWYER: So that came in at \$62.9 million, which is \$10.4 million less than you spent in '18-'19.

MS. DEMPSTER: So an increase of \$1 million is the result of additional costs related to the implementation of the new child protection legislation this year and \$3.8 million is due to increased service delivery in Indigenous communities. Once again, as I mentioned earlier, those costs are recoverable from the federal government and they're reflected in the increased revenue.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

Under Grants and Subsidies, why is the budget increased by \$7.7 million in '19-'20 compared to the revised of '18-'19? Can we get a list please?

MS. DEMPSTER: You lost me for a moment. You're adding two together, right?

MR. DWYER: Yeah.

MS. DEMPSTER: So, we had a savings of 2698 as a result of reduction in requirements for group homes and emergency placement homes. The savings were used to partially offset the additional ILAs.

So, I have to say staff have worked extremely hard. We were on this trajectory of going up with children in care – not a sustainable path. Even though we get to go contingency in tough times, staff have done a tremendous amount of work provincially doing a scan, looking to closed-group homes where we could, maybe a couple of beds that we can shut down in a certain community. So that's a result of some of that; savings is a reflection of that work they've done.

The 51 reflects an increase due to a new group home – two actually – in Natuashish and Sheshatshiu; increased salary and operational cost for these new homes. Once again, that's money that we're able to recover from the federal government.

I think it was last summer we opened a new group home in Sheshatshiu, it was the first Innu-staffed, Innu-led group home, something we've been striving for, for a long time, hearing from the Indigenous leaders that they wanted to be able to keep their children in their own communities, connected closer to their culture and things like that. We claimed that money back.

MR. DWYER: Under the federal revenue, there's an additional \$9.7 million budget in 2019-20. Can you explain the reason for the increase?

MS. DEMPSTER: As I was just mentioning, that's due to increased cost recovery for the new group homes in Natuashish and Sheshatshiu –

MR. DWYER: Okay.

MS. DEMPSTER: – as well as other program delivery that we do on behalf of the federal government. For example, \$5.1 million is related

to the new group homes; \$3.8 million is related to increased program and cost recovery; and \$8 million for increased operating cost recovery.

MR. DWYER: Thank you.

MS. DEMPSTER: Sorry, \$0.8 million, not \$8 million for the *Hansard* record.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

Are you able to provide a list of the caseloads by ratios by region?

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes.

MR. DWYER: Okay. We'd like to have a copy of that.

Are any children still being kept in hotel rooms?

MS. DEMPSTER: No.

MR. DWYER: No.

How many families are receiving services, by region?

MS. DEMPSTER: So we don't have it by region, but, provincially, 2,680 families that are receiving services, and we're very pleased that number is actually down by 15 per cent since 2014.

MR. DWYER: I see my time is up, so I'll save my questions if we can come back to me.

CHAIR: Thank you.

MR. DWYER: Thank you.

CHAIR: Okay, moving on now, Mr. Dinn.

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

Unfortunately, my colleague has asked most of the questions I was going to ask.

With regards to Grants and Subsidies and payments to agencies to deliver services, is it possible to have a list of the agencies and companies that are receiving funding?

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes.

MR. J. DINN: Perfect, okay. That's a simple one.

So on to some general questions now regarding that whole section.

Is it possible to have a breakdown of the number of children and youth in each living arrangement, breakdown by region? I know you said you may not be able to do it by region, but, specifically, what we're looking at is kinship arrangements, Level 2 traditional foster homes, Level 3 specialized foster homes and Level 4 staffed residential placements, which has to do with emergency placement homes, individual living arrangements or group homes.

Is it possible to have that breakdown?

MS. DEMPSTER: We certainly can do that for you, we just don't have it here in front of us this morning.

MR. J. DINN: That's fine.

MS. DEMPSTER: We can get you that information.

MR. J. DINN: Totally understand.

Is it possible to have an update on Waypoints Foster Family Support pilot and the Key Assets specialized family-based care Level 3 pilot?

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes, yeah.

MR. J. DINN: Okay.

MS. DEMPSTER: I will say we're pretty pleased with the success of those two pilots and we have a desire to expand, but we can certainly get you more detailed information.

MR. J. DINN: Perfect.

What is the status of agreements with the Innu First Nations and the Nunatsiavut Government concerning child protection and placement?

MS. DEMPSTER: I'll let Susan speak to that.

MS. WALSH: As it relates to the Innu First Nations, both the Mushuau Innu and the Sheshatshiu Innu First Nations, we have a

working relationship agreement with both communities.

Through that working relationship agreement, we work very collaboratively. We have weekly case planning meetings where our social workers in each of the communities would meet. The Innu have actually developed their own resources related to prevention and they have social workers that they have hired through federal funding. So, we work collaboratively with them in case planning, decision-making around supports and services to families, and that's going very well.

As it relates to also the working relationship agreement, we have a more broad group that meets more from a monthly perspective, so it's more at a management level to see how is the relationship working, are there problems, do we need resolution, so we're able to nip things in the bud if there are any communication issues or challenges. Again, that's working very well.

Through the Innu Round Table, which is a tripartite group, we, as in the provincial government, so not just our Department of CSSD, but also Department of Justice, Department of Health, Intergovernmental Affairs, Lab and Aboriginal – I hope I haven't missed anyone – we meet, provincial officials, federal officials and the Indigenous groups – Mushuau and Sheshatshiu First Nations – quarterly to discuss any issues related to, in this case, child-protection matters. We have a pre-meet day where we review any concerns or how things are going. We review any topics that any of us would like to bring to the table.

It's very successful, and we've seen a lot of positive outcomes and good working relationships as a consequence. That IRT is at a chief and deputy, executive level.

MR. J. DINN: Is it possible to have – well, I sense, though, you mentioned challenges, and that was what I was going to speak would be – while everything is moving along collaboratively, this case, and it sounds very positive, which is fantastic, but are there any specific challenges that are addressing? Whether it is funding, resourcing or anything that has been identified that – I know you can nip these

in the bud, but I'm just looking at a long term. What are the challenges specifically?

MS. DEMPSTER: I think it's fair to say we are seeing more children and youth with complex needs. Sometimes in Health you'll hear the minister talking about opioid addictions and things like that. Well, when he's talking about young adults with all of these issues, generally, this is the department that ends up dealing with the children.

I guess, if there are challenges sometimes, in particular with the Indigenous communities, removing children is a last resort. Sometimes we don't talk about the fact that 80 per cent of the families we work with, the children are still in the homes, and we don't focus on that and the good work that the staff does. But when we have to remove children, we always look first for a kinship relationship – so they go with Auntie or Grandma – that's in the best interest, always, of the child is, I guess, the umbrella that we make our decisions under.

Then, if there's no kinship, we look for another significant other or family within that community, and we exhaust these options. We work closely with the Indigenous groups in case – we might have a list of homes and we may not fully be aware, so now we consult with them to say: Are you aware of places that might be able to take these children?

But sometimes we're challenged, and we have to take the children out of settings that are familiar to them and bring them in – you would've been following in the media that places like Roddickton have a higher number of Indigenous children. If there's a positive in that, because there's a number there, they are with children of their own culture in the same setting.

MR. J. DINN: And if I may, that's actually what I was going to follow up with. I know when I was president of the Teachers' Association, some of the concerns brought forward by teachers on the Northern Peninsula, and particularly around the Roddickton area, had to do with the number of children in foster care, and who they felt that maybe they needed supports within the community, and their hearts went out to them because there were separated

from their families. So that's one of the challenges.

I'm just wondering, with regard to the number of children, who would be in Roddickton as an example here, has that increased, kept about the same, or is that decreased when you look at this initiative?

MS. DEMPSTER: The number of children in Roddickton is about the same. I want to mention, when we remove these children from their culture, we did a tremendous amount of consultation before we brought the new *Children, Youth and Families Act* to the House in May 2018. One of the things that we heard clearly, and that is a piece of this new plan going plan going forward, this new legislation, is that any child that has to be removed will require a cultural connection plan. So there will be provisions to bring that child back periodically to their homeland, or they will be connected in some other way where they're placed. The Indigenous groups seem to be pleased with that.

MS. WALSH: If I could just add, because your initial question was both regarding the Innu and the Inuit.

MR. J. DINN: Yes.

MS. WALSH: And we haven't answered the question on the Inuit, and I wouldn't want that not to be answered because we're doing a lot in that respect, too, just from a *Hansard* perspective for the record.

I just follow up to say that, with the Nunatsiavut Government, we work collaboratively as well. Myself and my executive have a monthly telephone call with the Deputy Minister of Health and Community Services, and that department covers the child welfare area as well, but it also covers many of the others in our department, that we are able to talk about seniors and health and well-being, some of those things.

In addition to that, they have family support workers that they employ. So we work very collaboratively with those workers on a daily basis in community for case planning with families. Much like the Innu, we would be doing, often, joint home visits and collaborating on decision-making around best interests for

children. Many discussions before a child would ever be removed from the family member, much less removed out of community.

We have funded a number of initiatives as well with the Nunatsiavut Government. For example, to promote their ability to search for foster parents themselves, to hire positions to search for foster parents, as a means of trying to create resources in communities so that we don't see as many children have to come out.

We, as well, have been running numerous of our own PRIDE training programs. In fact, there's another one coming up next week in Hopedale to licence and approve as many people who come forward as being interested to foster and we're regularly working with community members to do just that.

From your question or your comment about teachers in Roddickton, actually, we met with the principal – myself, last fall, I guess it was – of one of the larger schools in Roddickton. He certainly expressed exactly what you were talking about.

We have held our first cultural event just before Christmas, I think it was, in Roddickton, where we actually brought people from the children's culture, from their communities over, had a couple of days of doing activities that were culturally relevant, brought in community to participate. And they're the kind of things that we want to continue to do. That whole proposal was developed jointly between our department and our Indigenous partners. So there are definitely challenges, but we're really trying.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Member's time has expired.

Again, a reminder that staff will have to prep the House for 1:30, so just to be cognizant of the time.

Do we have any more questions for this subhead?

Okay, go ahead.

MR. DWYER: What is the current number of social workers in your department, and how many social work vacancies are there by region?

MS. DEMPSTER: Three hundred and eighty-four is the number of social workers. Then vacancies ...?

MS. WALSH: We carry an 8 per cent vacancy rate at any given time. And vacancies would vary very much, depending on the area of the province that you're talking about. I would say that on the Island it would be very, very low and it would be solely tied to the recruitment process and just getting through the process. It's a little more challenging in Labrador, certainly in more remote Labrador.

MR. DWYER: Actually, that was just my next question. I was going to ask you about the turnover rate in Labrador. Is the department still having staff fly in and out for those services?

MS. DEMPSTER: We have some pretty remote areas in Northern Labrador; in particular, one is a First Nation reserve I'd mentioned. One of the first places I went as a minister was to get on the ground up in places like Hopedale and Natuashish to talk to the social workers there about their challenges.

We were doing a fly-in, fly out for Natuashish and we actually recently expanded our fly-in and fly out in an effort to try and keep the social worker caseload ratio down. That's been working well. There's been a lot of effort gone into it. As Susan mentioned earlier, a lot of times it's young staff, it's very remote and so they're able to go for a couple of weeks, but then they want to come out. Not to mention, the work they do is very heavy in those communities.

MR. DWYER: Obviously you have increases in spending due to that, but what's the long-term plan to address that?

MS. DEMPSTER: Well, we're doing what we can. I mean those communities are remote; they're fly-in, fly out unless there's a road or something, which is not in the foreseeable future. There are a number of things we're doing, even in working with the federal government.

The federal government has been out, if you've been following the media, and came with some new legislation that's not through the House yet, but where they're looking at giving – those Indigenous groups and communities will have the option of being responsible for their own childcare delivery if they so choose. That's certainly something that we as a provincial government support. We see it as a part of the truth and reconciliation process. That would obviously require a transition and we would certainly work with those communities.

I mean that's one example of some of the challenges we're having. It may be different for them, we don't know. That's not overnight, but the federal government is moving in that direction and so we're just working with them on it.

I'll just let Susan elaborate a little bit more on that.

MS. WALSH: We certainly recognize the challenge that we've had in mostly remote Labrador – so we would be talking Sheshatshiu, even though it is land based or road based – and then then NG communities.

A little over a year ago we established a working group between the NG, the Innu government, our own government – so our department – as well as Human Resources Secretariat, to develop an action plan around what can we be doing. They came up with a number of initiatives that they would like to see and we've been picking them away one by one.

The minister approved the sign-on bonus for staff. We already had a retention bonus. We, as well, developed, as the minister indicated, a brand new Innu service delivery model. We had it as a pilot in Natuashish, so it was a fly-in, fly-out model; four social workers and a supervisor would fly in on a two-week rotation and then switch. The caseload size actually was reduced by over half. It was a remarkable outcome because of consistent people who could get in there and do the work, meet with families and be part of the community.

Based on that, we were very successful in going forward and saying we need to expand that to Sheshatshiu, even though it is land based. It's a

challenging community sometimes to work with from the perspective of there are a lot of social issues that makes it a little difficult. From a human resources perspective, it's very easy to leave and go to the Happy Valley office because it's by road.

We were supported from that perspective and now have this new model which has fly-in, fly out kind of for both communities. All of that is fully recoverable from the federal government because it's on reserve. Those are some of the things we are doing for sure.

MR. DWYER: Just something I thought about as you were giving your answers: Is there any appetite to identify anybody in these communities that would want to become a social worker?

MS. WALSH: Yes.

MS. DEMPSTER: Oh, always.

MS. WALSH: We actually just had a good-news story.

MR. DWYER: Okay, perfect.

MS. WALSH: We had a woman who was working with us as a social work assistant because, as you can well imagine, with the language barriers, et cetera –

MR. DWYER: Yeah.

MS. WALSH: – we have social work assistants, we have community services workers – specifically in Labrador community services workers. We actually supported that person to get her Bachelor of Social Work and she has obtained her social work degree. Now she may actually go to work with the Nunatsiavut Government in that foster home position I was telling you about.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

MS. WALSH: So it's a win-win.

MR. DWYER: Yeah.

MS. WALSH: It's still a win in terms of the children and families we serve and that's wonderful.

I should have also mentioned we also have partnered with the university and had our first group of students do social work placements. We find as a department we really support taking social work placement students, but they've never gone to more remote Labrador – and cost factor, housing, et cetera.

We worked very collaboratively with the School of Social Work at Memorial University. We had two students actually go to Hopedale this year and had wonderful experiences; they did a beautiful video. We're hoping to, in this time – maybe not this fall or spring, but we have two more students and they will be going into the Innu zones.

MR. DWYER: Thank you.

MS. WALSH: We hired one of those students. She's employed with us in Labrador.

MR. DWYER: Can the minister provide an update on the mandatory reporting. How is it working at this point?

MS. WALSH: Mandatory reporting has been a consistent requirement under numerous legislations back in my 29 years of practice, so a long time, probably back to the 60s. That has been working fine for children up to their 16th birthday, so that's always been.

We receive numerous referrals. We have trained social workers who take those calls because it is a clinical function to do the assessment of the information. It is the gatekeeper decision in terms of not wanting to be overly intrusive, but wanting to ensure we are protecting children. It's a very critical piece and we receive referrals regularly. All of our offices have this function and would take calls.

In our new legislation, we actually have expanded our mandate now. We will actually take calls, visits – however we might get the information – for children up to their 18th birthday. That's an expanded scope that the minister spoke to when she introduced the legislation.

MR. DWYER: Thank you.

How many child death reviews have been concluded this past year? Are there any currently under way?

MS. WALSH: Our role as a department is that we would report to the Child and Youth Advocate any deaths and/or critical injuries. This year we reported eight deaths in '18-'19.

MR. DWYER: Are there any currently under way? Like, reviews as to what had happened, or ...?

MS. WALSH: Yes, so the Child and Youth Advocate makes a decision based on the information we provide her, whether she chooses to do a review or not, and she will inform us at the point that she wants to interview our staff on any of this. So, I can't really answer how many she may be currently doing.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

MS. DEMPSTER: She operates independent of the House and we just comply with her request.

MR. DWYER: Okay, thank you.

My time's up.

CHAIR: Okay.

Are we ready to vote on Child and Youth Services?

MR. DWYER: I do have more questions. There's one in particular that I would like to ask because we did get into talking about the Innu and stuff like that, if that's all right with you.

MS. DEMPSTER: Yeah.

MR. DWYER: Is there a possibility of providing an update into the inquiry into the treatment of Innu children in care that was reconfirmed almost two years ago?

MS. DEMPSTER: The Premier met with the leaders and he did commit to an Innu inquiry. The Innu decided that they would like to have the federal government involved. I actually travelled myself with the Innu to Ottawa in

January '18, I believe it was, and supported them in their request. They felt that without a full – and this is very public in the media – without a full tripartite the review would not be complete.

So, there has been some movement by the federal government, as I understand it, towards coming on board. Right now, I believe some of those details are still being worked out, but the holdup is not provincially; they're looking for some extra resources, support for counsellors and things like that.

As you can appreciate, once the inquiry gets underway, it's going to be a difficult time for some of these people going back and rehashing.

My understanding is there are some things happening between the federal government and the Innu.

I don't know if Susan wants to add to that. We're just waiting to hear, but our commitment is there, it's been there since 2017.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

Has the department developed a specific results-oriented action plan to address the issues raised in the Child and Youth Advocate report, Chronic Absenteeism: When Children disappear?

MS. DEMPSTER: The Chronic Absenteeism report, most of the recommendations would have been pertaining to Education and Early Childhood Development more so than us, but, obviously, our very department, many of the Advocate's reports touch us primarily, and any time the Advocate does a report, we embrace the recommendations. We have implemented many initiatives in recent years based on the Advocate's report, because when she comes with recommendations, it's always in the best interest of the child and in implementing those recommendations we're able to make life better for our children and youth.

MR. DWYER: I think I only have one question left.

MS. DEMPSTER: On your question, most of that was in Education and Early Childhood, but

we're certainly working collaboratively with that department in anything that pertains to us.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

The last one: Are you able to provide an update to the issues raised in the Child and Youth Advocate's report, Surviving Child's Benefits: Who Is Missing Out?

MS. DEMPSTER: I'll let Susan speak to that.

MS. WALSH: Yes, this was a situation where young children would've had the parent or parents deceased and there would've been survivor benefits.

Our department would have a similar situation with children who would be in care and if their parent or parents were deceased. We have made a decision that we're absolutely going to be providing those finances to the children. We are working with the Office of the Public Trustee to work out the process for doing that so that the money would be there for them, probably, when they get to a certain age – available to them. So, yes.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

That's it for me, Pam.

CHAIR: Okay.

So are we ready now to vote on this subhead? Okay.

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: Okay.

Now, we are moving on to Seniors and Social Development.

I'm ready for the first speaker.

MR. DWYER: 3.1.01, Grants and Subsidies, can the minister explain the drop balance of \$383,400 under the Revised, and can we get a list of the recipients?

MS. DEMPSTER: So, that \$383,400 was directly related to lower than anticipated requests for the Canada Games funding and delayed implementation of a Healthy Living initiative.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

Under Grants and Subsidies, there was a cut of \$1,153,000 this year.

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes.

MR. DWYER: Improving the health of our population is so important given that we have some of the worst health indicators in the country, many as a result of lifestyle. How can the department promote wellness if there is a reduction in grants to agencies that are focused on wellness initiatives, and which groups will not get a grant this year?

MS. DEMPSTER: So, that is a good question, and I think I have a good answer.

In Labrador, we have the Labrador Winter Games that's been around since 1983 – going from memory here – and it's \$500,000 that we spend every three years. So, we are just coming off of a fantastic Labrador Winter Games in March of this year, so that is \$500,000 that we won't be needing now until three years out.

The Labrador Travel Subsidy, which used to be housed within my department, \$730,000, that just moved to the Labrador Affairs Secretariat. It was felt that the Labrador Travel Subsidy could be better managed closer to the ground. We have a Labrador and Aboriginal office and a deputy minister up there in Labrador, and \$77,000 of that – the smallest piece here – funding for regional playdowns to determine qualifying teams for teams for 2020 Summer Games. That's an increase, the \$77,000, but, to your

question, \$500,000 not happening this year for the Winter Games, so not a cut, and the Labrador Travel Subsidy was just a move.

Sometimes we go up and down, ebbs and flows, depending on the Summer and the Winter Games of what's happening. So \$77,000 is needed for the playdowns, determining the qualifying teams.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

Under Revenue - Federal, why has the budgeted amount increased \$92,000 this year?

MS. DEMPSTER: So, we work closely, as well, with our feds around Recreation and Sport and Healthy Living; some great collaborative relationships happening there. This particular \$92,000 is increased funding from the federal government bilateral agreement for Indigenous sport development initiatives. I'm drawing a blank on the name – Aboriginal Sport Circle is a group that we do a lot of work with, and they had some increased funding.

We've had – I'll just share with you – in March '18, I participated at the provincial games in Deer Lake, and we had an Indigenous team there for the first time ever – saw some great results from that.

MR. DWYER: Cool. That's really good.

I only have one question, Pam, in 3.1.03, if –

CHAIR: Okay. So, it is within this subsection?

MR. DWYER: I can go to that one?

CHAIR: Go ahead.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

Grants and Subsidies, can you explain the rationale for an additional, almost, half a million dollars, and how will this money be disbursed? Can we get a list of how this money was spent in 2018-'19? As well, can we get a list of how you plan to spend money in '19-'20, especially for the additional funding?

MS. DEMPSTER: Okay – you lost me for a moment; 3.1.03 –

MR. DWYER: Yes.

MS. DEMPSTER: – that was an increase from the budget due to grants of various groups under a three year multi-year funding agreement, transferred to the lead department. So Choices for Youth in particular came to us from ...

MR. DWYER: Oh, that was new to your department?

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

MS. DEMPSTER: Yeah, we just implemented multi-year funding and a number of these grants have come in as CSSD is the lead department.

MR. DWYER: Can we get a list of those subheads?

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes, absolutely.

MR. DWYER: Okay, thank you very much.

I'm good.

MS. DEMPSTER: Okay, you're good?

Moving on to Mr. Dinn, please.

MR. J. DINN: I think some of these have been asked and answered. With regard to Grants and Subsidies in 3.1.03 – and I'm not sure but I think my colleague may have asked this – is it possible to have a list of the groups and how much they received in 2018 and that they will receive in 2019? I think the question that was asked was how is it being spent, but I'm specifically asking who are the groups and how much they have received.

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes, there are eight different groups there for that total of 4969 and we can certainly provide you with the breakdown.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you very much.

In 3.1.05, Seniors and Aging, age-friendly transportation grants and assessment research, under Grants and Subsidies, is it possible to have a list of the programs, recipients and the amounts of those grants and subsidies?

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes.

MR. J. DINN: Perfect.

Is it possible, under that same heading, can we have updated stats on reports under the *Adult Protection Act*, including the type of neglect or abuse, and outcomes?

MS. DEMPSTER: Yes.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

Is there an evaluation report on the act?

MS. DEMPSTER: On the *Adult Protection Act*?

MR. J. DINN: Yes.

MS. DEMPSTER: I'll let Aisling, who's working first-hand as ADM to answer that.

MR. J. DINN: Perfect.

MS. GOGAN: The legislative review of that act is about to come up. So starting in July, there's going to be a review undertaken of the act. Also currently, there is a Charter challenge going on with the act, so the results from that will also feed into the review.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you very much.

That'll be available then – when do you anticipate the report on that, if it's going on in July?

MS. GOGAN: It's going to begin in July, so we'll –

MR. J. DINN: Okay.

CHAIR: Order, please!

If we could just keep our conversations down please, the minister is having trouble hearing.

Sorry, go ahead, continue.

MS. WALSH: So it would be broad consultations – consultations as are required. They may not be broad sweeping – the act doesn't require it – but we will be reaching out

to all the pertinent partners. So, coming out of that, there may be – this is all guessing what the process might be now. But there could be a what-we-heard document; otherwise, we would certainly be sharing with all of our partners what we heard for sure.

If there are legislative changes required, they would come through the House of Assembly as part of the process of legislative change. We do anticipate that there would be public information as it relates to anything that we would do.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

I was just looking at a timeline as when you would anticipate a report or review of that, but that satisfies the question.

And one last one to the minister: Is it again possible that we have a copy of your briefing notes for this session?

That's it. Thank you.

CHAIR: Okay, that's it?

And we have one right here?

Mr. Dwyer.

MR. J. DINN: Oh, sorry. My fault, I did have one. I missed it there. Grants and Subsidies is under 3.1.06, Disability Policy Office. That's under Grants and Subsidies, and I noticed that the budget was reduced in 2018-2019, if there's any reason for that?

MS. DEMPSTER: I'm not seeing that.

OFFICIAL: That's a mistake.

MR. J. DINN: Oh, my apologies, take that back.

My mistake, you're wrong, as we used to say in teaching.

Thank you.

MS. DEMPSTER: You're welcome.

CHAIR: Mr. Dwyer.

MR. DWYER: My question is at 3.1.04. Under Grants and Subsidies I note the numbers remain static. Is there any allowance for inflation? And with a fixed budget, how is the centre re-capitalizing the building?

MS. DEMPSTER: I'll let Michelle Healey, Director for Healthy Living, answer that.

MS. HEALEY: The centre provides an annual report each year, which would include their audited financial statements, so the next report will be out in July, but that current entity is not anticipating any deficits. They didn't have a deficit in '18-'19, so they're managing with the current amount.

MR. DWYER: Okay, thank you.

CHAIR: Okay, and you're good?

Any further questions on this particular subhead?

CLERK: 3.1.01 to 3.1.06.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 to 3.1.06 carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.1.01 through 3.1.06 carried.

CLERK: The total.

CHAIR: Shall the totals carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, total heads, carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report these Estimates carried?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development and Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation carried without amendment.

CHAIR: Also, we will need a mover for the minutes for the last meeting. Can I get a mover to accept the minutes for the last Committee meeting for Justice?

MR. REID: I second that.

CHAIR: Mover, okay.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

CHAIR: The next meeting is Wednesday, June 19, for this Committee at 6 p.m.

Before we all take off, can I get a mover to adjourn, please?

MR. BYRNE: So moved.

CHAIR: All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

Thank you.

On motion, the Committee adjourned.