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Social Services**

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

SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

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

Chair: Perry Trimper, MHA

Vice-Chair: Helen Conway Ottenheimer, MHA

Members: James Dinn, MHA
Sherry Gambin-Walsh, MHA
Carol Anne Haley, MHA
Christopher Mitchelmore, MHA
Craig Pardy, MHA
Pam Parsons, MHA

Clerk of the Committee: Kimberley Hammond

Appearing:

Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development

Hon. Brian Warr, MHA, Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development
Aisling Gogan, Assistant Deputy Minister, Policies and Programs
Linda Clemens-Spurrell, Assistant Deputy Minister, Child and Youth Services
Michelle Hunt-Grouchy, Director of Communications
Sharlene Jones, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services and Performance Improvement
Dave Martin, Departmental Controller
Susan Walsh, Deputy Minister
Kelly White, Executive Assistant

Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation

Hon. Brian Warr, MHA, Minister Responsible for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation
Paul Abbott, Executive Director, Regional Operations, Program Delivery
Doug Jackman, Director of Finance/Quality Assurance and Risk Management
Julia Mullaley, CEO
Melanie Thomas, Director of Policy, Housing and Homelessness
Mike Tizzard, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Kelly White, Executive Assistant

Also Present

Derrick Bragg, MHA
Siobhan Coady, MHA
Jeff Dwyer, MHA
Hon. Elvis Loveless, MHA, Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture
Hon. Tom Osborne, MHA, Minister of Education
Tony Wakeham, MHA
Steven Kent, Sessional Political Support, NDP
Nathan Ryan, Sessional Political Support, Official Opposition Office
Susan Walsh, Constituency Assistant, St. John's Centre, NDP Office
Carlson Young, Special Projects\Office Manager, Official Opposition Office

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Derrick Bragg, MHA for Fogo Island - Cape Freels, substitutes for Carol Anne Haley, MHA for Burin - Grand Bank.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Siobhan Coady, MHA for St. John's West, substitutes for Sherry Gambin-Walsh, MHA for Placentia - St. Mary's.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Jeff Dwyer, MHA for Placentia West - Bellevue, substitutes for Helen Conway Ottenheimer, MHA for Harbour Main.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Elvis Loveless, MHA for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, substitutes for Pam Parsons, MHA for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Tom Osborne, MHA for Waterford Valley, substitutes for Christopher Mitchelmore, MHA for St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows.

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

CHAIR (Trimper): All right. Well, thank you, everyone, for gathering this evening for the Estimates of the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development and for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation. My name is Perry Trimper and I'm the MHA for Lake Melville. It's good to be back in this seat, may I just say that. It's good to be back in this seat.

We will proceed, first of all, with the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation. We have officials, along with the minister, representing that department of government, so we'll start with them. When we've concluded with those folks we'll break momentarily and allow the CSSD people to come in. Depending on the time we may take a break then. I'm going to try to allow everyone to have a little stretch break about every 90 minutes or so. We'll see how it goes through this evening.

I know that Kimberley was instructing most of you. If you haven't sat through an Estimates yet this season, we're working with COVID-19 protocols, so I would ask each one of you that if

you do get up from your chair to please make sure you wear your mask if you're having to leave or move about the room, but as you're sitting there that's just fine.

In terms of working with the Broadcast, especially folks out to my left, they may not be familiar with who you all are. To identify yourself sometimes you just need to wave your hand and they will become very closely associated with you. You can just introduce yourself, I'm so-and-so, and then respond to the questions that will come from the opposing side.

With that, Minister, I think I'll turn to yourself and maybe introduce your team. I think I'm also going to go to my right and we'll have everybody introduced. Then I'll turn back to you, Minister, to have some opening remarks for 15 minutes. So if you want to start with introductions on my left, please.

MS. MULLALEY: Julia Mullaley, CEO of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

MR. WARR: Brian Warr, Minister Responsible for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

MS. THOMAS: Melanie Thomas, Director of Policy, Housing and Homelessness.

CHAIR: Just put your hand up there. There you go.

MR. TIZZARD: Mike Tizzard, I'm the Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services at Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

MR. JACKMAN: Hi, I'm Doug Jackman, Director of Finance with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

MS. WHITE: Kelly White, Executive Assistant to Minister Warr.

MR. ABBOTT: Paul Abbott, Executive Director of Regional Operations and Program Delivery with the Housing Corporation.

CHAIR: Thank you very much.

I'll turn to my right and I'll just start right here right immediately adjacent to me.

MR. WAKEHAM: Tony Wakeham, MHA, Stephenville - Port au Port.

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

MS. S. B. WALSH: Susan Walsh, Researcher with the NDP caucus office.

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

MR. KENT: Steven Kent, Researcher with the NDP caucus.

MR. YOUNG: Carlson Young, Researcher, Opposition office, PC Party.

MR. RYAN: Nathan Ryan, Political Support –

CHAIR: You need your light on. It will come on just –

MR. BRAGG: Derrick Bragg, MHA for the historic and scenic District of Fogo Island - Cape Freels.

MR. OSBORNE: Tom Osborne, MHA, Waterford Valley.

MR. LOVELESS: Elvis Loveless, MHA, Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. COADY: Siobhan Coady, St. John's West, MHA.

MR. PARDY: Craig Pardy, MHA, District of Bonavista.

CHAIR: Broadcast, there's one more individual that we need to – just put your hand up, Sir. There you go.

MR. RYAN: There we go; we have the light now.

Nathan Ryan, Political Support, office of the Official Opposition.

CHAIR: All right. Thank you, everyone.

We are not recording this visually, but we are recording your voices from an audio perspective, so just try to pause when you see the light then speak away and I'll correct you as you go.

With that, Minister Warr, I'll turn it over to you, Sir, to introduce and opening remarks for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

MR. WARR: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good evening, everyone.

As Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, I'm pleased to be here to discuss this year's Estimates for the corporation. I won't go through the – actually, I will. Here with me are Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation's Julia Mullaley, CEO; Mike Tizzard, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services; Paul Abbot, Executive Director of Regional Operations and Program Delivery; Doug Jackman, Director of Finance; and Melanie Thomas, Director of Policy, Housing and Homelessness. Also with me is a face I think most of you know, my Executive Assistant, Kelly White.

Through *Budget 2020* our government is pleased to provide an investment of over \$50 million to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation enabling the delivery of vital programs and services that address a diverse range of housing needs across the province, from those who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness, to low-income individuals and families facing challenges with housing affordability. These investments assist those with direct needs, including seniors, youth, persons with disabilities and those with complex needs that require access to stable housing options that they can afford.

In April 2019, stemming from the National Housing Strategy, our government was very pleased to announce a nine-year federal-provincial agreement that will provide \$270 million in combined funding. This funding is designed to preserve, renew and expand social and community housing in Newfoundland and Labrador and bring new housing solutions to many people in core housing need.

Budget 2020 supports the maintenance and operation of the corporation's public rental housing portfolio that provides access to safe, quality and affordable housing for almost 12,000 low-income clients. Investments include, for example, \$13.8 million for the repair, renovation and modernization of this public rental housing. Funding of over \$6 million is also provided to support operations of partner-managed and co-operative housing providers throughout the province. These housing providers offer subsidized housing options to over 1,600 households with low to moderate incomes.

Budget 2020 also invests \$11.4 million to support the corporation's Rent Supplement Program with private landlords, expanding the available housing options and assisting over 2,000 low-income individuals find safe and affordable homes. Over 50 per cent of rent supplement clients are seniors. Our government recognizes the benefits of aging within our homes and our community and having the supports to live independent, active and fulfilling lives close to families and friends.

Budget 2020 provides \$12.8 million to provide much-needed financial assistance to over 1,400 low-income homeowners throughout the province, most of whom are seniors. This includes funding for the Provincial Home Repair Program, to address needed home repairs; the Home Modification Program, to improve accessibility; and the Home Energy Savings Program, to make energy efficiency improvements and reduce heating costs.

Through *Budget 2020*, government has provided \$4.6 million to provide emergency accommodations, food, transportation and supports to over 1,000 individuals annually throughout the province who are experiencing homelessness. This includes the recently announced funding to The Gathering Place here in St. John's to establish a much-needed low-barrier, 30-bed temporary emergency shelter for individuals experiencing homelessness.

Complementing the ongoing work of End Homelessness St. John's and its community partners, this initiative will also support a response to help meet the needs of the homeless population in preparation for any potential second wave of COVID-19. This shelter will be

based on a low-barrier, housing-first model that focuses on accepting unsheltered individuals as they are and assisting them to move to permanent housing as quickly as possible. This shelter recently became operational and will be in place for one year. A request for proposals was recently issued for a permanent low-barrier shelter to be in place by September 2021.

Budget 2020 also provides funding of \$8.8 million to the 10 transition houses throughout the province to support over 800 clients. These transition houses provide safe, short-term accommodations, services and resources to support women and their children who are vulnerable or at risk of or have been subjected to intimate partner violence.

Through *Budget 2020* government has continued its investment of \$7.6 million to the Supportive Living Program. This program provides funding to over 20 non-profit community-based groups throughout the province to prevent homelessness and provide individual supports to foster long-term housing stability. In the most recent year, over 800 individuals were housed through the Supportive Living Program and over 4,300 individuals were supported that were at risk of and/or were experiencing homelessness.

In closing, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to highlight a number of key *Budget 2020* investments designed to address housing and homelessness issues in our province. We recognize that housing is a basic necessity of life. Investments that support stable, affordable and good quality housing for those most in need are critical in enhancing individual health and well-being, as well as fostering social inclusion, community development and growth.

I thank you for attending this evening and I'll certainly take the opportunity to answer any questions that you may have.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

I'll turn to the representative of the Opposition Party for any opening remarks. Do you have any opening remarks or would you like to dive in to the questions?

MR. WAKEHAM: We'll dive in to the questions.

CHAIR: Dive in.

Okay, then I'll ask the Clerk to call the first heading, please.

CLERK (Hammond): 1.1.01.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 carry?

I'll turn to the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

MR. WAKEHAM: Thank you.

I have some general questions, as well as some particular questions. The general questions are pretty quick ones. The first one, of course, is: Can we obtain a copy of the minister's briefing binder? I think that's pretty standard.

MR. WARR: Absolutely. I think we have those on hand here.

MR. WAKEHAM: Are you still applying zero-based budgeting?

MR. WARR: Yes, we are.

MR. WAKEHAM: Okay.

Are there any errors in the published Estimates book?

MR. WARR: Not that I'm aware of.

MR. WAKEHAM: Okay.

Is the attrition plan still being followed?

MR. WARR: Yes, it is.

MR. WAKEHAM: Okay. If so, what are the changes for last year and this year? How is it being measured?

MR. WARR: I'll pass that over to Julia.

MS. MULLALEY: Sure. We do have some attrition targets for the current year coming up that's \$77,200. We would have submitted a plan

on that for the positions and that will be done through attrition.

MR. WAKEHAM: Okay.

How many people are employed in the department?

MS. MULLALEY: There are 309 positions in total across the province.

MR. WAKEHAM: 309, okay. How many people retired last year?

MR. WARR: There were three management and nine bargaining unit retired in fiscal 2019-2020.

MR. WAKEHAM: Any vacancies not filled?

MS. MULLALEY: There are a number of current vacancies that are moving through the process for hiring now.

MR. WAKEHAM: Do we have a number?

MS. MULLALEY: Thirteen under recruitment currently.

MR. WAKEHAM: That's 13 out of 309?

MS. MULLALEY: Yes.

MR. WAKEHAM: Okay.

What about positions eliminated in the last year? What were they, if any?

MR. TIZZARD: There were no positions eliminated last year at NLHC.

MR. WAKEHAM: Okay.

MR. TIZZARD: As Julia mentioned, there are positions – a plan submitted for this year's attrition target.

MR. WAKEHAM: No layoffs last year?

MR. TIZZARD: No, no layoffs,

MR. WAKEHAM: How about new hires?

MS. MULLALEY: There would have been, again, a normal hiring process throughout the year. I don't know if I have the exact number of hires there? No. Certainly, we can get that for you.

MR. WAKEHAM: Okay.

How many of the positions are contractual and short-term employees in the department?

MR. WARR: There are 300 permanent, one seasonal, one contractual and seven temporary for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020.

MR. WAKEHAM: Okay and that's your 309. Thank you.

Did you guys receive any funds from the \$200-million contingency fund to date?

MS. MULLALEY: We will be receiving some funding to support The Gathering Place – a low-barrier shelter for The Gathering Place. That's from the contingency fund.

MR. WAKEHAM: Right. How much was that again?

MS. MULLALEY: It was \$437,000 for the current year.

MR. WAKEHAM: How much?

MS. MULLALEY: \$437,000.

MR. WAKEHAM: Okay.

The COVID fund: Did you receive any money from that?

MS. MULLALEY: That's the funding I'm talking about it.

MR. WAKEHAM: That was that, okay. The contingency fund, the other fund, you didn't get necessarily anything from that one.

Okay, I'll move quickly so we can get done. Under Grants and Subsidies, 1.1.01, last year there was \$1,492,000 more spent than was budgeted in total. I was just wondering for a breakdown of what caused that.

MS. MULLALEY: The key difference there would've been, again, funding shortfall for the emergency accommodations that we would've had to go to Treasury Board for last year. That's the most significant.

MR. WAKEHAM: This year it's gone up over last year's actuals significantly. What's the rationale for that?

MS. MULLALEY: Perhaps I'll bring you – from the budget '19-'20 to the '20-'21 Estimates?

MR. WAKEHAM: Yeah, I'm looking at '19-'20 actuals of \$46.7 million and I'm looking at the Estimate of \$50.5 million.

MS. MULLALEY: What we would have had in the current year is some additional funding from the Home Repair programs and also from our Home Energy Savings plans as well.

MR. WAKEHAM: So it's an infusion.

MS. MULLALEY: Correct.

MR. WAKEHAM: Excellent.

The revenue from the federal government seems to have dropped, the revised balance. It went from an original budget last year of \$770,000 and then no actuals. This year we've dropped it down again to \$518,000.

MS. MULLALEY: Of course, you're probably familiar with the Low Carbon Economy Fund from the federal government. This is a program we have that is also cost-shared with the federal government, the energy savings plan, again, and the home-heating energy savings plan. That particular one is – the money is received from the federal government.

The \$777,800 would have been budgeted last year. There's no actual. There was money received but it actually ended up in Municipal Affairs at the time. The department of municipal affairs helps to –

MR. WAKEHAM: Took your money?

MS. MULLALEY: They would've billed us, but the funding itself went through the Estimates over ...

MR. WAKEHAM: Okay, so it's just a reflection of that change.

MS. MULLALEY: Then the \$518,800 is budgeted again this year. We're still part of that particular program.

MR. WAKEHAM: Okay, thank you.

What is the current wait-list for a rent supplement by region?

MS. MULLALEY: We don't have a specific wait-list per rent supp. How the programs work is that an eligible applicant will actually submit an application to Housing to be a part of the wait-list. Then, depending on when a unit becomes available, they may be put in a rent supp and/or Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. So there's no specific wait-list just for rent supps. But for the wait-list in total, across the corporation, across the province, at the end of September, is 1,486.

MR. WAKEHAM: Can we get a breakdown of that by region?

MS. MULLALEY: Absolutely. I do have that here as well, if you would like it now.

MR. WAKEHAM: Okay, you can just send it along.

Is there a wait-list for the Home Repair Program?

MS. MULLALEY: Again, it's not a particular wait-list. We are processing applications as they are coming in.

MR. WAKEHAM: Right.

MS. MULLALEY: So the funding should address the applications.

MR. WAKEHAM: But there is a dollar-value max on it?

MS. MULLALEY: Correct.

MR. WAKEHAM: Once the max is gone, that's it; you're basically waiting –

MS. MULLALEY: Correct. Yes, the problem then will close for the year.

MR. WAKEHAM: – until the following year.

Normally, how many people would you go through in the run of a year in terms of applications? What's the normal type of volume of activity you would see and the average cost of that? Is it possible to get it by region?

MS. MULLALEY: Yes.

MR. WAKEHAM: Okay.

MR. TIZZARD: The average grant in '19-'20 was \$4,251. The total grants given out were 780 under the Provincial Home Repair Program.

MR. WAKEHAM: And we can get, again, a breakdown by region?

MR. TIZZARD: Yeah.

MR. WAKEHAM: Okay.

Is there a current wait-list available for housing by region?

MS. MULLALEY: Yes.

MR. WAKEHAM: What is the total current wait-list?

MS. MULLALEY: Again, that's the number I would have referenced earlier: 1,486 is the full wait-list.

MR. WAKEHAM: Okay, that's the wait-list. We can get that by region?

MS. MULLALEY: Absolutely.

MR. WAKEHAM: How many units do you have in total in the province now?

MS. MULLALEY: In total for Housing, there are 5,575. That's our NLHC units.

MR. WAKEHAM: 5,575?

MS. MULLALEY: Correct.

MR. WAKEHAM: And they would be broken down between one bedroom and two bedrooms. Can we get a breakdown of what that might look like?

MS. MULLALEY: (Inaudible.)

MR. WAKEHAM: Also, how many of those 5,575 units are fully accessible?

MS. MULLALEY: I guess I would say, acknowledging accessibility is a very important issue, particularly given our demographics and the aging population here. At this point in time, the stats we would have are over 500 visitable units, which, of course, are things like the zero-step entry. There's a lot of work as we're in doing maintenance in the various units, there will be work done on accessible features as in grab bars and different things. We do have a list of units that we would have those in.

From a perspective of, I guess, priority-wise over the next two years, we do have a budget committed of \$1.5 million to increase accessibility in the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units, themselves. From the prior investment in affordable housing calls, we would have required one in 10 units across the province when we do that. There are 282 accessible units through the affordable housing program.

MR. WAKEHAM: Were all the funds allocated to the PHRP spent last year?

MS. MULLALEY: They're fully committed, I would say to you.

The funds would have been committed. What happens is there's a process to do inspections and those sorts of things so some of the ones from last year would still be being finalized from, I guess, a cash flow out to clients, but they certainly would have been fully committed.

MR. WAKEHAM: In your budget, in terms of moving the full accessibility, do you have a plan to say we're going to convert this number of units per year or is there a goal that you set? How do you go about determining how many you're able to do in any given year? Is it just a

dollar value that you have, if one costs more that means something else can't get done?

MS. MULLALEY: We do have the \$1.5 million allocated. The work that's happening under the modernization and improvement plan, which is done in consultation with all the regional offices, they would look at a priority, I guess, from a perspective of what's in most need of maintenance and we look at how we would best spend that \$1.5 million integrated into that plan.

MR. WAKEHAM: I'm just wondering how many of your units in terms of age – what's the average age of your units?

MS. MULLALEY: I know that overall it's quite an aging portfolio. It's between 40 and 60 years. Average age –

MR. WAKEHAM: I guess, I'm getting to the point at what stage does it become – does it make sense not to be spending money on renovating but rather spending money on new? How do you make that determination when you evaluate a particular unit? Is that a process that you go through?

MS. MULLALEY: What I would say is, yes, there is certainly a cost-benefit analysis to those aspects. What's really key, I guess, with the federal government and under the National Housing Strategy, a very important pillar for them, and outcomes was to ensure that there are such significant investments made in the stock across Canada for many, many years that it was really important to be able to sustain that stock.

There are a couple of very key elements to that National Housing Strategy and targets. There is a baseline that we've all agreed to. That's over the 5,500 for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, and they have to be sustained. Funding comes with that to help us bring those up and continue to ensure that they are available, affordable options for low-income clients.

There are also targets for maintenance and there's also funding attached to that. There are expansion targets as well. Under the National Housing Strategy and the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing's three-year action plan is very much focused on preserving and sustaining

and maintaining that stock, so there are going to be some significant investments in our housing stock in the coming years.

MR. WAKEHAM: How many on average do you dispose of on an annual basis?

MS. MULLALEY: I think there's –

MR. WARR: I don't know about disposing. Of the 5,575 units, there are 335 vacant units. As of September 25, 2020, we have available for rent 66 units with selections completed; 134 units with selections pending; and units with no demand, there are 13, for a total units available for rent of 213.

MR. WAKEHAM: Okay, I'll come back to that answer after, because I think my time has ran out.

CHAIR: Thank you.

If I could just pause for a second here. We have a little technical issue here, in terms of protocol.

I guess, in the meantime while we're resolving this, I'll turn to the Member for St. John's Centre, Mr. Dinn, please.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

I'll start with some general questions, I guess. Actually, that's probably what it's going to be anyway. It's a very short page.

In April 2019, the provincial government signed a 10-year cost-sharing agreement with the federal government under the National Housing Strategy. In general, \$271 million will be spent on repairs, construction to community and social housing and making it more affordable.

Could the minister outline how some of this money has been spent to date, which organizations or companies will be receiving the money and for which projects?

MS. MULLALEY: The action plan started in '18-'19 and '19-'20, so we're through those years. The majority of the funding, because the funding does start to escalate over the time frame, so the early years of the funding has primarily been spent on modernization and

improvements and repairs to the units. Also, the home repair programs were another key element of that.

MR. J. DINN: Is it possible, then, to have even a breakdown of how that money exactly was spent and which organizations or companies will be receiving money, if that's possible, and for which projects? I don't know if you have that there now.

MS. MULLALEY: Yes, so I don't believe there are any specific organizations. I'm just looking to Mike.

MR. TIZZARD: At this stage, as Julia said, how the funding escalates, there wouldn't be any companies or organizations that would receive funding at this point. The majority of the funding has been spent on individual home repair programs and to fund our expansion, the eight units that are being rebuilt on Froude Avenue right now. That's probably the biggest project that's been done to date.

MR. J. DINN: The units on Froude Avenue, who would be doing that construction?

MR. ABBOTT: It's a local contractor. I can't remember his name right now, but it's a local contractor from the St. John's area.

MR. J. DINN: I guess that's what I'm looking for, is the breakdown of contractors such as who would get the contracts, please.

Last week we read the news about a litany of horrendous problems that people of Spencer Street are facing in St. John's. Unfortunately, theirs is not the only street in the neighbourhood – I think of Allan Square in mine – in this province and other areas facing such problems. Could the minister give us an update on how government plans to deal with the endemic property crime and other issues facing local residents?

MS. MULLALEY: One of the key elements, I think, on all of these particular issues, acknowledging those issues are complex issues and I think it takes a lot of community partners, municipalities, government and organizations and cross-governmental, Department of Health and others. It's very much a collaborative effort

to address this really a systemic issue here in the city.

Our Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, specifically, if we are aware of particular units, we do provide a rent sub – Spencer Street is not one. We do not have any units or subsidize any units on Spencer Street. Nonetheless, it's still an important issue to be part of any ongoing discussion on that.

I guess the other thing I would say is that, very key – and I think you would have been a part of the discussions around Bond Street, because of very, very similar issues. I think what we're very much focused on in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing is to ensure that we establish and recently we were successful working with The Gathering Place on a low-barrier shelter, because a very key element for us is to ensure improved client outcomes by ensuring there's a staffed sheltered response and diverting out of private operator shelters that are unstaffed. That's a key aspect of this as well.

In the meantime, if there are units or any issues going on where we are specifically involved, we do deal with those on a case-by-case basis, working with various departments.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

I understand it's complex, but at the same time, so it doesn't turn into just simply pushing people onto another neighbourhood, I think it's got to be addressed so that neighbours are protected, as well as the people who are vulnerable are protected.

This question I think my colleague asked, but I'll ask it again in a different way: Basically, how long is the waiting list for housing units? I believe the number that was given was 1,486.

MS. MULLALEY: Correct.

MR. J. DINN: I'm just wondering: What's the wait time? To clear this up, to eventually get these people housed, what are we looking at here? It's a significant number and I would assume that's across the province.

MS. MULLALEY: Yes, that is across the province. I would say that's a number that we've

seen for a number of years. Unfortunately, as you often place people, there are other people coming on a wait-list. It depends on the time. Again, there are priority codes that help prioritize individuals on wait-lists, like victims of family violence, homeless, unsheltered. There are different wait codes as well that help to prioritize, so it really depends on individual circumstance how long you're on a wait-list, and certainly the very largest group we do have on a wait-list is from an affordability perspective. So every case will vary, but as you see some moving off, you do see some moving on.

I guess what I would say, again, is a key element of the National Housing Strategy is certainly to expand affordable housing options here in our province as well. We are also working with CMHC, our federal counterpart now, on another stream, a third and final stream, under this National Housing Strategy. It's on a rental assistance benefit. The intent is certainly to increase the number of accessible and affordable housing units. So that is something we're continuing to work hard on to finalize.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

I'll ask the question: Where would the majority of those 1,486 people waiting for housing be? Would it be in the metro area? What portion of that would – 50 per cent, 60 per cent?

MR. WARR: Of the 1,486 there are 840 here in the Avalon, 14 for Marystown, 109 for Gander area, 227 for Grand Falls, 166 in the Corner Brook area, 59 in Stephenville and 71 in Goose Bay.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Minister.

I think my colleague asked for a breakdown by region, so we sort of got that. I'm just wondering if we could also have a breakdown of the number on the wait-list by age, the number of bedrooms required and accessibility. As I understand it also, we probably have a lot of people who are so-called overhoused at this point in time, living in homes that are way too big for them.

As a side note, is there any attempt now to maybe, in some cases we're seeing overhoused

in large houses, maybe break them into smaller units so that you can house individuals?

MS. MULLALEY: Yes, there was a lot of work completed on that particular issue, knowing that our demand is a much smaller unit now versus or wait-list – what our availability of bedroom counts. There is, I guess, some work that was completed to identify, again, based on bedroom count and looking at our wait-list. We're looking at options for which units are probably the best to reconfigure because they can be quite expensive to reconfigure to and there's very much a cost-benefit analysis in reconfiguring versus building new as well. There's been work done on that.

As part of the strategy, I guess, moving forward to look on where we're investing, we are looking at opportunities to reconfigure. I think importantly one of the other elements we're looking at, from a perspective of use of the units, is that we're working with community partners as well to see where there are opportunities to use units in a different way. For example, we do work with Choices for Youth and we have a number of units here in the metro area that they do use to support their programs. Similarly, we have some other units across the province.

We're continuing to work with community groups to repurpose those units. COVID was another example where we were able to look at some community groups in Lab West and Corner Brook as well, to work on options to utilize the units for that purpose as well.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

Just one other question – well, something to include with the breakdown. Also the family units, whether it's single, that kind of information would be useful.

How many units currently lie vacant and what are the reasons for these vacancies? I think you said you have a total of 5,575, correct? How many of those units are vacant and the reasons for those?

MR. WARR: Vacant units actually were 335.

MR. J. DINN: Three hundred and thirty-five.

MR. WARR: Yes.

MR. J. DINN: And the reasons for that? Is that just a matter of funding or ...?

MR. WARR: I guess depending on the location as well. There are certainly units with no demand, units with selections pending. I mentioned that units with selections completed are 66. These are units that are available for rent. Units with selections pending are 134 and units with no demand were 13, for a total units available for rent of 213.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. J. DINN: Oh, sorry.

Chair, I'll just stop there until my next chance. I only have about 10 seconds.

CHAIR: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Dinn.

Before we continue, it's come to my attention that I understand that Mr. Parady, the Member for Bonavista, had been identified as being the lead for the Official Opposition in terms of asking questions. So you've swapped with the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port. I understand that. One little error we did at the start was the allocated time should have been – well, first of all, we should have just agreed that was what was going to happen, but we hadn't received notice. I just need leave from the Committee that we're going to proceed with Mr. Wakeham to be the lead for the Official Opposition.

Unless I see any objections, we'll carry on. Is that correct, Clerk?

CLERK: Close enough.

CHAIR: Yes, close enough.

All right, if no objections, we'll carry on as we are.

I understand Mr. Parady from Bonavista will be observing.

Okay, Mr. Dwyer.

MR. DWYER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I know the question was asked around vacancies and stuff, but do you have an average wait time? Is it a month, two months or three months?

MS. MULLALEY: Again, I know it very much depends on the case-by-case basis. But I will turn it to anyone if we know. Anybody else? No. Sometimes it varies so much from individuals because they are all prioritized based on different codes.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

When somebody fills out an application to move into housing, is there any kind of expiry date or any way of reassessing the application over time?

MS. MULLALEY: There is a 12-month period, but in more recent years to, again, improve client services, there is a notice that goes out several months in advance of the 12-month expiry to notify the client to see if there are any changes in circumstances and/or if they want to continue to stay on the wait-list if they're still there.

MR. DWYER: Is that just for a new applicant, or is it like –?

MS. MULLALEY: That's anybody who is on the wait-list.

MR. DWYER: So everybody gets reassessed every year?

MS. MULLALEY: If they're on the wait-list for more than the 12 months.

MR. DWYER: I mean, if somebody fills out an application and is approved for housing, does that get assessed anymore after that, or once you are approved you have housing for life?

MS. MULLALEY: Once you're actually in a unit, you mean?

MR. DWYER: Yeah.

MS. MULLALEY: Yes, generally, it's based on a person's income once you're in the unit.

MR. DWYER: How often is that followed up on?

MS. MULLALEY: Again, that varies. Our clients who are more fixed income are reassessed every three years, because it's a fixed income. Otherwise, it's generally annually.

MR. DWYER: Okay, thank you.

Were there any evictions last year?

MS. MULLALEY: There would have been – is there any last year?

OFFICIAL: (Inaudible.)

MS. MULLALEY: No. Okay. No, there is a new eviction prevention policy that the corporation implemented in the past year.

MR. DWYER: If we could get a copy of that new policy that would be good.

MS. MULLALEY: Sure.

MR. DWYER: As my colleague alluded to about the age of some of our housing units, is there any propensity to sell the older units to people that are probably able to utilize them that are utilizing them already? Probably sell them to them in some kind of way so that we can generate revenue to build new units?

MS. MULLALEY: Just to clarify, if someone is a tenant in our unit, selling that to the tenant, is that what you're referencing?

MR. DWYER: Yes.

MS. MULLALEY: No, the program in the corporation continues to maintain the units for the benefit of the full population. I guess I would say the exception is in if there's a unit and there's a vacancy in areas that there is no demand, sometimes there may be a sale of that particular unit.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

MS. MULLALEY: But, generally, there's no policy to sell units to tenants.

MR. DWYER: Okay. Probably explains the age of the infrastructure we have, right?

Also, with emergency shelters, which are very important to homelessness and housing, are there standards for the owners to follow?

MS. MULLALEY: There are, I guess, operating procedures and there are inspections that were completed on the Emergency Shelter Program from when it was transferred over to Housing.

I'm just going to pause and ask if there are any other elements on the shelters.

MS. THOMAS: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Okay, I'll need somebody to speak to a mic.

Okay, Melanie.

MS. THOMAS: Sure, sorry.

Yes, when the program migrated to Housing in 2018 we introduced a number of processes to strengthen inspections and certainly to have a better understanding of the private operators. We currently have an inspection process in place with the city, as well, with respect to ensuring adherence to life-safety standards as well.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

How often do the inspections happen? Are they every month, every six months?

MS. THOMAS: As required. If there are issues that are brought to our attention, we will certainly initiate an inspection at that moment and certainly endeavour to do annual inspections within the private sphere.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

Is there any propensity to shorten that time and have inspections every six months, we'll say?

MS. THOMAS: I think as needed. If there was certainly increased pressure or concerns that were raised in terms of operations within a particular environment, we would certainly look to do a more prompt inspection.

MR. DWYER: What's the average price of an emergency shelter per night now?

MR. TIZZARD: A private shelter right now it's about \$125 a night.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

If somebody has to utilize an emergency shelter, how long would they be allowed to stay at the emergency shelter before moving on to other housing or being protected somewhere else?

MR. TIZZARD: That would depend on a case-by-case basis. These individuals are extremely complex in the issues they're facing, so I mean, it could be someone with three nights; it could be someone with a month. It depends. But we have with Melanie's group, housing support workers, who get in and try to help out the people, assess their case and come up with a housing plan to help them move on.

MR. DWYER: So if somebody stays there for a month you pay \$120 a night? Or is there a better rate or anything like that?

MR. TIZZARD: Initially if it's \$125 a night and once we get a housing support worker to help them out, we'll come up with a plan and if it's a long-term plan – our ultimate goal would be to move someone to a supported shelter if they're going to need that month or longer and to get one of our community partners to help them out. If their only availability would be a private shelter, we would enter into a longer term rate with that shelter provider which would hopefully, in most cases, bring it down.

MR. DWYER: Okay. Just the last question, Mr. Chair.

Are most repairs carried out by the maintenance staff of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing or is there anything contracted out?

MR. TIZZARD: It's a mix. In the Avalon region we have maintenance crews who do maintenance on all our units in all of them. When you get to more rural areas where we don't have crews, you'd see more contracted-out maintenance.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr. Dinn.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

Just carrying on with the number of – I guess looking at renovations, first.

My colleague just touched on that. How many renovations were completed last year? Renovations and/or maintenance, but renovations, in particular, of housing.

MR. TIZZARD: The way the note is written is the last three years: From '17-'18 through '19-'20, we performed 995 interior renovations on our 5,575 units. Over the same time period, we did exterior renovations to 2,006 units for a total of \$25.7 million on the exterior, and the interior was \$8.8 million over that three-year period.

MR. J. DINN: How many are projected to be completed and opened up this year?

MR. WARR: In '20-'21, \$3.6 million is allocated for 40 capital improvement projects, which is 260 units throughout the province.

MR. J. DINN: The last question on that area is – and you just said, I think, there's a mixture of private contractors and the government: Would it be possible to have a list of the contractors who perform work, who receive contracts to do work for the government, or to do these renovations? Especially since we know, what you're telling me, we have \$3.6 million, 40 projects, translating into 260 units over the next year. It would be great to have a breakdown as to who's received the contracts, please.

I think you've talked a little bit already about the number that were made accessible, about 500 that were made visitable. More or less, you have \$1.5 million to increase accessibility, correct? Then, I guess, universal design is the other term that goes around. When it comes to converting houses or renovating homes so that they are universal design, any breakdown of that?

Visiting is one thing, but if someone is now going to live in a place there has to be some

renovations to make it habitable for them, such as the bars on the shower and so on and so forth.

MS. MULLALEY: We do have a listing there of, say, accessible features, like the different grab bars and so on and so forth, which is over 1,200 in our units right now. I think from a universal design perspective, which is very important, I think the focus moving forward is to focus particularly on the investments coming from the National Housing Strategy, which, again, is provincial and federal, during the expansion side of it as well, accessible units and universal design are very key elements of that.

Again, as we go into units, accessibility features like grab bars may not be a full universal design aspect, but again the focus will be continuing to increase the ability to do that in the years coming up through the funding.

MR. J. DINN: Just to clarify, the numbers we're talking about here do not include homes and housing units owned by not-for-profit organizations, Saint Vincent de Paul, or Stella Burry or any of these, right? This is just totally – and St. John's housing, I guess we're complementing that as well. That doesn't include any of the units owned by St. John's housing, right? That's not factored into these equations?

MS. MULLALEY: No.

MR. J. DINN: Is there any attempt to coordinate efforts with St. John's housing when it comes to dealing with the housing issue so that a person, for example, as we find right now, anyone who's in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing is not necessarily eligible for housing units in St. John's housing. Sometimes if there's that flexibility it actually would allow for us, in my district, to resolve some issues. But is there any attempt to find some way to coordinate that?

MS. MULLALEY: There was some work completed, actually, a study that was done through the City of St. John's and Newfoundland and Labrador Housing to explore that particular issue to see if there's some way that we can work together so that there's kind of one wait-list. Some of that work has been done. I think discussions in that area probably haven't

happened in the last little while, but it's probably an issue that needs to be explored.

MR. J. DINN: Well, it certainly will do no harm. I think that coordination would be useful.

According to the Office of the Seniors' Advocate, a growing number of seniors are living in substandard conditions or are facing climbing homelessness. I've seen that for myself.

Does the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation have any targeted plans to address the root causes of this problem for seniors?

MS. MULLALEY: I guess a key aspect of that would be our home repair programs. Predominantly, the home repair programs are very much seniors' programs, particularly in rural areas of the province. It's very high. I think it's 90 ...

OFFICIAL: Ninety-eight.

MS. MULLALEY: Ninety-eight per cent. So it's very much in rural areas and it's very much seniors.

I think that's a very key program we offer. I think, equally, we do have a number, as well, supported by our Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units. Our rent sub is another area that has a significant number of seniors as well, because that really, traditionally, was started as a program to allow single individuals, seniors, to move into units.

A lot of the programs: the Home Energy Savings Program; you're probably aware of the Home Modification Program for accessibility, it's a very key program for our seniors in our rural areas as well; and the Energy Efficiency program as well. There are programs that help to support low-income seniors who are homeowners, but also, equally, there are programs to support from a rental perspective in our units and in our subsidized rental subs as well.

MR. J. DINN: Would you be able to give a breakdown of the number of portable rent subsidies? Is there an attempt or a plan to make them all portable so that lie within the control of the renter and not the landlord?

MS. MULLALEY: There was a pilot project completed on portability. There were about 100 units that we designated, or supplements that we designated, so there is an evaluation done, which we're currently reviewing now as we're moving forward, looking at the work with the CMHC on the federal housing benefit program as well, which is a portable program.

MR. J. DINN: Would it be possible to have the results on that shared with us as well when that's available, please? Thank you.

You mentioned the Home Modification Program, I'm just wondering how many people availed of that last year. Is there a wait-list and what is the budget for this program for the 2020-21 year?

MS. MULLALEY: The Home Modification Program in itself is about \$2.3 million. That's part of our broader home repair programs, so that is the budget that we set aside for that. Depending, then, on the wait-list and how many people apply, you may have some move in from the Provincial Home Repair Program. It's \$2.3 million for the current year.

MR. J. DINN: Okay. And is there a wait-list?

MS. MULLALEY: Again, not at this point because the program applications are still being accepted and they are being processed.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

How many households availed of the Home Energy Savings Program last year and how much is budgeted for this year? Is it to be phased out in the near future?

MS. MULLALEY: The Home Energy Savings Program budget for the current year is \$4.1 million. There's \$2 million set aside for the electrically heated homes and there's an additional \$2.1 million set aside for oil-heated homes.

MR. J. DINN: Okay.

How many households availed of it last year?

MR. WARR: Four hundred and seventy.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

At this point, any plans to phase it out or is this still a going concern?

MS. MULLALEY: I guess all I can speak to, certainly, is there's a budget there for it and these particular home energy savings programs are a component of the current home repair programs.

MR. J. DINN: Sounds like a good answer. Thank you.

Very quickly, regarding Supportive Living Program, community partnerships, Provincial Homelessness Fund, what is the budget for these programs in 2021 and will there be funds for new supportive housing units in 2021, for this year?

MS. THOMAS: The Supportive Living Program currently has a budget of \$7.6 million.

MR. J. DINN: Okay.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Dinn.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

CHAIR: Any further questions?

Mr. Wakeham.

MR. WAKEHAM: Yes, just to follow up from my colleague: The Home Energy Savings Program, last year were all of the funds allocated?

MS. MULLALEY: Yes, they were. Again, some of the applications are still being processed, but the applications –

MR. WAKEHAM: The Home Repair Program and those other ones you mentioned, they're not allocated by region in terms of a dollar budget; they're allocated by province, so anybody can apply at any time and go through the same process.

MS. MULLALEY: Absolutely.

MR. WAKEHAM: I'm interested in the word overhoused. It's an interesting word. I'm

wondering how many of your current tenants would you consider to be overhoused?

MS. MULLALEY: I don't have that particular number here on me now.

MR. WAKEHAM: Would it be 5 per cent, 10 per cent, 20 per cent? Is it a problem, I guess, I'm trying to get at. If it is a problem, what's the significance of it?

MS. MULLALEY: Well, I think from a perspective of when we're using the language overhoused, it would be based on the number of individuals in the household versus the number of bedrooms available. It gets back to, I guess, the whole issue of we want to ensure that we're able to use the housing portfolio the most effective way we can. Part of that would be if there are some other options on addressing and reconfiguring units or using them for a different purpose, it's important for us to always look at that from that perspective.

MR. WAKEHAM: That's exactly why I'm asking the question. If you're overhousing people, then the idea of trying to make those renovations or accommodations because lots of people will ask for – less bedrooms, perhaps, then are available.

I notice there it was given that there are 335 vacant units and what's the reason why those units are vacant. How many of them are because of repair issues? How many of them are because of overhoused units? What's the breakdown? With 1,486 people on a wait-list, we have 335 vacant units. I'm just curious as to why they would be vacant.

MR. WARR: I mentioned earlier on about the units with selections completed and selections pending and no demand. Also, to add to that, we have units that are unavailable for rent. What I had mentioned in the beginning was available for rent, but units unavailable for rent, as of September 25, 2020, there were 109 which needed major repairs; there were 10 used for emergency housing. One was a sale pending, and two were units unavailable for rent and they were used as office space, for a total number of 122.

MR. WAKEHAM: Okay.

Of the 109 waiting for repairs, would they be part of your budgeted for this year? Would they be on the list to be repaired, or are they not going to be repaired? What's your plan for those 109 units?

MS. MULLALEY: Of the 109, they wouldn't address the 109. Some of those are in areas where we continue to look at demand, but we would not have funding for the 109, per se. What we are doing, I guess, is looking at the 109 and looking at the particular areas now. There's an assessment under way in Paul's shop of looking at, of the 109 that need major repairs, how much would it cost to do those, because some of those units would need a full condition assessment. Some of that work is happening.

MR. WAKEHAM: Which goes back to the original questions around the whole cost-benefit analysis. But of the 109 units that are now non-accessible with 1,486 people on the list, you're going to look at and see how many of those people waiting would actually be in that area? The units that are vacant may not match up with the vacancies or the people in demand.

MS. MULLALEY: Absolutely. That's correct.

MR. WAKEHAM: I understand that. So that work's been ongoing.

How many people on your 1,486 wait-list are waiting for accessibility housing?

MS. MULLALEY: I think accessibility we have four request for transfers right now and we have 48 requests for mobility, some modifications.

MR. WAKEHAM: How much?

MS. MULLALEY: We have four transfer requests.

MR. WAKEHAM: Right.

MS. MULLALEY: And 48 requests with some modifications being requested, not a full accessible but ...

MR. WAKEHAM: Okay. Really only 52 of the 1,486.

MS. MULLALEY: That's existing. The four requests, that would be someone is already in the unit.

MR. WAKEHAM: Right.

If you don't have it here, you can get it.

MS. MULLALEY: On the wait-list looking for accessible, it's 28.

MR. WAKEHAM: How much again, sorry?

MS. MULLALEY: Twenty-eight.

MR. WAKEHAM: Twenty-eight are waiting, okay.

Then the last couple of questions I have: Does the department do any inspections, site assessments, period visits to these homes once they're occupied?

MS. MULLALEY: Our own units?

MR. WAKEHAM: Yes.

MS. MULLALEY: From our perspective of the tenant themselves, if there are any particular concerns around the unit, there is a process that they would contact the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation. Then someone is sent out to look at the unit.

MR. WAKEHAM: Similar to any landlord-tenant arrangement.

MS. MULLALEY: Correct.

MR. WAKEHAM: Okay.

In terms of the income assessment, how you determine the rate they pay, is it based on gross income or net income?

OFFICIAL: Net income.

MR. WAKEHAM: Net income, that's after the tax and everything is – okay, good.

Finally, for me, can we get a detailed list of the salary Estimates?

MR. WARR: Sure.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Anyone else?

Mr. Dinn.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Chair. I don't have many.

How many supportive housing units are there in this province and would it be possible to have a breakdown by region?

MS. MULLALEY: We can certainly provide you anything that Newfoundland and Labrador Housing has funded.

MR. J. DINN: Okay, thank you.

Would that include again, organizations that have received government funding for setting up supportive or affordable housing units, as well? Would that be part of that number?

MS. MULLALEY: Yes, anything that we would have funded.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

Regarding emergency accommodations and transition house funding, non-profits that manage emergency shelters and transition houses, what is the budget for these programs in 2021? Would it be possible to have a regional breakdown in spending and the number of organizations receiving funds under this program?

MS. MULLALEY: For the emergency housing program the budget is \$4.6 million for the current year, and for the transition houses it's \$8.8 million.

MR. J. DINN: \$8.8 million, thank you.

Just a few follow-up questions. The RFP for a permanent solution to the low-barrier shelters by 2021 – I think the minister mentioned this in his opening statement – I'm just wondering how this is going to proceed. We've had a conversation on this already, not-for-profit versus for-profit emergency shelters. My very strong feeling is that a lot of the issues we have are because we have it in the hands of for-profit organizations.

I'm just wondering where the emphasis will be? Will this be coordinated through End Homelessness or is this thrown out there for all groups to try to get a piece of the pie? I'm just trying to figure out how this is going to work. Will the emphasis be on not-for-profits or will it be on for-profits?

MS. MULLALEY: So the RFP, as you had indicated, has gone out publicly. It was released publicly several months ago. It closes at the end of October, so we're looking forward to receiving proposals on that. A well-needed solution here, for sure, in the city.

From a perspective of some of the elements of the RFP, I think very core elements of that would've been experience in providing shelter services and services to complex clients. There are a lot of provisions in there for how this would be a successful model, and based on looking at the policies and harm-reduction aspects and others. I don't know if you wanted to add anything, Melanie, but I guess from that perspective certainly we feel quite confident in the elements of the RFP from that perspective.

From a governance side, the RFP will come back and there is a committee with Housing and Eastern Health and the Department of Health and Community Services as well and some discussions. We provided the RFP to End Homelessness St. John's to review, to ensure that they felt it was a good proposal containing all the key elements. They would have looked at that proposal and provided us feedback, which we incorporated. We are also working with them again as proposals come back to ensure there are a couple of very key elements for End Homelessness St. John's in areas of the proposal, such as coordinated access. We'll again engage with them in discussions.

MR. J. DINN: Before Melanie – I don't mean to interrupt you, but my key thing is that what you're looking for here in this, I'm understanding, is that there's going to be a clear proposal for the supports. This is not simply, here, we need a place to warehouse or house people. We're looking for the full-meal deal, wraparound services, whatever you want to call it, to provide supports to the people so that something like Bond Street won't happen, that the people who are put in these homes are

looked after and that neighbours are safe, but also there's a response to the needs of people who are living in the homes, correct?

MS. MULLALEY: Absolutely. The proposal, certainly, it's all the key elements of what you would expect in a low-barrier emergency shelter and the supports on the staffing model that would go with that model. So it's an overnight shelter, again, that we are looking for, but it would be a staffed model.

MR. J. DINN: Okay.

MS. MULLALEY: With the right experience and training.

MS. THOMAS: The only thing I would add to that would be that during the summer months we undertook a fairly extensive consultation with those non-profit providers engaged in the housing and homelessness sector to better understand their current contributions and expertise, but also any acknowledged gaps that may exist with respect to the services along the homelessness spectrum. I think that we've really seized the opportunity to understand what currently exists within the non-profit sphere and the expertise and how do we better devise and design a response that fits the current gaps that exist.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

A final question, Chair, I had, it's sort of an omnibus question in some ways. It has to do with the attrition plan and the people through attrition the positions that would be eliminated through that process. I'm going to tie it in with the maintenance and the renovations of the housing projects and whether we have enough staff to do the work we need to do and that maybe attrition is not the right way to go, especially with the number of units we have.

I'll use this quick example of a person in my district who a year ago had complained about a leaking water tap in the bathroom. A year later it hadn't been repaired, to the point where the ceiling collapsed from moisture. I guess, let's say, a two-hour visit from a plumber turned into a major renovation piece as well, so more or less we're being penny-wise and pound foolish.

I'm just wondering: Do we have enough staff? My constituency assistant can tell you, in trying to get the repairs, sometimes it's difficult to get people to do it because they're stretched thin. To me, hire the people you need to do the job, but I'm just wondering if you care to comment on that, please.

MS. MULLALEY: I guess what I would say from my perspective, certainly as CEO of Housing, looking at the attrition target is we do look at each of the vacancies as they arise. As we're looking at those vacancies, we would make sure that it's not impacting client-service delivery. From a budget perspective, the budgets for the M and I and the maintenance are always fully utilized and we do have staff. In cases, in some rural areas, sometimes in certain situations or if our staff are quite busy and we want to make sure that we're continuing along with planned maintenance and requests, we would contract individuals at that time.

MR. J. DINN: Okay, thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Any further questions? Yes, Mr. Wakeham.

MR. WAKEHAM: Just two quick ones. If someone is in a three-bedroom unit because of family size and family size decreases because people move out, are they moved out of the unit then?

MS. MULLALEY: No.

MR. WAKEHAM: They just stay there?

MS. MULLALEY: Yes.

MR. WAKEHAM: Okay.

I just want a point of clarification on the 109 units that are in need of significant repairs. Did I hear you correct? There's no money in the budget to do any of those repairs?

MS. MULLALEY: No. I think the question was around are we addressing those 109. There is a maintenance and improvement plan to address the units in itself. I don't know if any of it connects to the 109. I'd have to look back at the maintenance plan. What I was indicating is

that there is some work happening currently in Paul Abbott's shop, who's in charge of the regional service delivery, to understand where all those units are. We know where they are, but what type of work and which ones will we assess even from a condition assessment point.

There are some where we know there is demand. I'll just throw an example: Lab West, we know there is a demand and we know we have some major repairs. We're looking at that and trying to assess the cost to do that and then we'll look at that compared to the priorities across the province.

MR. WAKEHAM: I guess what I was trying to get it is in the budget that you have presented to us, knowing that you have 109 units that cannot be occupied for a number of reasons related to repairs, how many of those units are you intending to make functional in this fiscal year? Is there a number that you've looked at? Have you done those assessments already? Because your budget is here, so if the money is not here, where is it going to come from?

MS. MULLALEY: There is a full, I guess, maintenance plan for the entire province on particular units. I'm just not sure if we know if there are any on the list of 109 at this point.

MR. WAKEHAM: Right.

MS. MULLALEY: That's something I can take a look at for you.

MR. WAKEHAM: Absolutely. You can certainly get back to me. My only other question would be: You will not move monies from the programs related to seniors and others who are filing applications for improvements to their houses and move it to this particular area. That's what I'm trying to get at; this is a different pot.

MS. MULLALEY: That's absolutely correct.

MR. WAKEHAM: This is a different pot.

MS. MULLALEY: Yes, it's a very different pot. For us, the key priority moving forward is – with the opportunity, with the increased funding coming from the National Housing Strategy and very particular targets on expansion, repair and preservation, it's now the key opportunity to

look at where the right areas are to invest in a longer term plan.

MR. WAKEHAM: How many units, then, do you effectively discard because they're no longer repairable? Do you have an average per year that you do that with? Is there a number? Is it five units that are considered to be forget it, it's not worth our while and you just sell them off? How do you make those decisions at the end of the day?

MS. MULLALEY: There were no units sold last year. Generally, again, they would only ever be sold if the area has no demand historically and the unit is there. Often, even in those areas, we will work with the communities and the municipality at the time to see if there would be another interest in it for repurposing for another particular purpose.

The sale of units is not something that we normally do, unless it's those types of circumstances where a community, municipality doesn't want it, there's historically no demand and someone approaches to look at it. That would be the only case.

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Chair, I just want to, on behalf of my colleagues, thank everybody from Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. It's nice to see some familiar faces again. Thank you for the time and answering all the questions. We look forward to getting some of the other information.

CHAIR: Okay, no further questions? All right, I thank you very much.

I turn to the Clerk, then, to vote this section.

CLERK: 1.1.01.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is 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: Thank you.

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

CHAIR: Shall I report Estimates of the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

We are done.

On motion, Estimates of the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation carried without amendment.

CHAIR: I would turn to the minister, if he had any final remarks regarding Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

MR. WARR: Yes. Again, I enjoyed the hour and 15 that we've had. The staff of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, Mr. Chair, it's a very demanding job that they do day in, day out. I appreciate the work of the staff. My short time here of two months as minister, they've filled me with a head full of information. I certainly look forward to my time with them and I thank them for this evening.

Thank you so much.

CHAIR: Thank you all.

I'm going to ask that we take a 10-minute recess, enough time for the second part of Minister Warr's team to show up. Then we'll do CSSD. Let's report back here at 7:25 – 1925 hours. Thank you very much.

Recess

CHAIR: I would like to welcome everybody back for these Estimates of the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

I think for the benefit of everyone we will recommence. We have just completed Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. Let's start again with some opening remarks and we'll have some introductions. First of all, I'm Perry Trimper. I'm the Lake Melville MHA and I'm the Chair of the Social Services sector. I'm going to ask Minister Warr and his team to please introduce themselves.

Please note that the way this is working with Broadcast is we are not recording you visually, but we are using visual cues to find out who you are. Some of you are not known perhaps as well as the MHAs. If there's an opportunity for you to speak just please raise your hand or wave and we'll gesture to you. As the questions go back and forth and someone is handling sort of an interchange your mic will probably remain on, but watch and pause for the mic to come on and then you can speak, please. The audio is recorded.

I'll start with Minister Warr's side, please.

MS. WALSH: Susan Walsh, Deputy Minister.

CHAIR: Thank you.

MR. WARR: Brian Warr, Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

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

MS. CLEMENS-SPURRELL: Linda Clemens-Spurrell, Assistant Deputy Minister of Child and Youth Services Branch.

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

MS. HUNT-GROUCHY: Michelle Hunt-Grouchy, Director of Communications for Child, Youth and Family Services.

MR. MARTIN: Dave Martin, Departmental Controller.

MS. WHITE: Kelly White, Executive Assistant to Minister Warr.

CHAIR: Thank you.

I'll turn to my right. Mr. Dwyer, please.

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

MS. S. B. WALSH: Susan Walsh, Researcher for the NDP caucus office.

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

MR. RYAN: Nathan Ryan, Political Support, office of the Official Opposition.

MR. YOUNG: Carlson Young, Political Support, office of the Official Opposition.

MR. PARDY: Craig Pardy, MHA, District of Bonavista.

MS. COADY: Siobhan Coady, MHA, St. John's West.

MR. OSBORNE: Tom Osborne, MHA, Waterford Valley.

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

CHAIR: Back on the floor.

MR. KENT: Steven Kent, Researcher with the NDP caucus.

CHAIR: All right. Thank you all very much.

I will start with – oh, here's one straggler. I'll identify him as the MHA for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, beautiful Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, Mr. Loveless.

MR. LOVELESS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: I'm going to turn it to Mr. Warr to invite him, first of all, to see if he has any opening remarks.

MR. WARR: I do, Chair, and thank you very much.

Good evening to all.

I certainly want to welcome the staff of Children, Seniors and Social Development here this evening. Thank you all for participating in this year's Estimates for the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development has nine lines of business: child protection, in-care, adoptions, youth services, youth corrections, adult protection, persons with disabilities, seniors and aging and poverty reduction. Through a wide variety of the department's policies, programs and services, as well as through our role of supporting horizontal policy development across government, we are able to support individuals, children, youth, families, seniors, persons with disabilities and persons experiencing poverty.

In my new portfolio I have had the opportunity to meet with many of the department's staff at provincial offices, as well as begun to meet regional staff with more regional office visits scheduled in the coming weeks. The department's staff, the majority being social workers, are incredibly dedicated and committed professionals working with children, youth and families throughout the province. From working tirelessly to protect children and youth from maltreatment, to collaborating with other government departments, agencies and community partners, to promote accessibility and inclusion, to prevent and reduce poverty, as well as jointly protect adults from abuse. With the RHAs, my staff are improving policies and service delivery for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I will provide a brief overview of the lines of business in the department. Under child protection and children in care, we have strengthened our commitment to being child and youth centred, family focused and culturally responsive through the department's *Children, Youth and Families Act*. The act also, where available and appropriate, requires that services designed to maintain, support and preserve the family unit are offered where it is in the best interest of the children and youth.

In addition, the *Children, Youth and Families Act* has a number of provisions that ensure Indigenous children and youth in care remain connected with their culture, including the requirement for cultural connection plans and providing notification on significant measures to Indigenous representatives. Through legislation and maintaining a positive working relationship with the Indigenous governments and organizations, we can collectively ensure the overall safety and protection of Indigenous children and youth.

In *Budget 2020* we have allocated approximately \$150,000 over the next 18 months to lead, in partnership with the Nunatsiavut Government, an interdepartmental committee. This committee will complete an analysis of the recommendations in the report of the Child and Youth Advocate on child protection services to the Inuit children in the province, *A Long Wait for Change*, and develop potential options for government consideration.

Under adult protection, as a department we are also committed to ensuring the safety of adults in neglectful or abusive situations through setting the policy and legislative framework in the province. The *Adult Protection Act* is a strong piece of legislation that is successfully being implemented throughout the province over the last five years, following the replacement of the previous bill, the neglected adults act.

Just this past year, the department carried out its five-year statutory review of the legislation. This review included an engagement process with a diverse range of stakeholders throughout the province, including police, RHA staff, Indigenous governments, community groups and the public. I am pleased to report that the review of the *Adult Protection Act* is currently being finalized and will enable us to further support and protect vulnerable adults in the province through policy and legislative amendments.

Seniors and aging: With respect to the department's Seniors and Aging Division, our focus is on helping support seniors to age at home and in their communities. This is why my department has several age-friendly programs and initiatives to support seniors and older adults.

In *Budget 2020* we are investing \$95,000 for the annual Newfoundland and Labrador age-friendly community grant program. This grant program provides incorporated municipalities, Indigenous governments and communities throughout our province with the opportunity to obtain support in planning for population aging. We also have a grant program for community transportation initiatives. *Budget 2020* is allocating \$300,000 for the Newfoundland and Labrador Community Transportation Program, which focuses on innovative and sustainable projects that create more inclusive and accessible communities.

In addition, through *Budget 2020* over \$200,000 will be provided for the Seniors' Social Inclusion Initiative to offer funding to eligible 50-plus clubs for participation in community events, healthy aging and mental health and well-being activities. We will continue to work closely with the Newfoundland and Labrador 50+ Federation, SeniorsNL and my Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors to support seniors and older adults throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Under poverty reduction: During the COVID-19 pandemic a spotlight has been focused on people living in poverty. Staff have been working closely with community partners and people with lived experience to address concerns and meet needs as they have arisen. Going forward, staff are reviewing existing actions related to housing, food insecurity and poverty reduction. My department will be leading the development of a renewed government-wide strategy to reduce poverty. This will be done in consultation with stakeholders, experts and communities, including people with lived experience of poverty.

Disability policy: Engaging persons with disabilities and those who speak on their behalf through the department's Disability Policy Office is vital. We are moving forward on the development of new accessibility legislation. Following last year's very successful and inclusive engagement process, we are working with my Provincial Advisory Council for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities and other partners to clarify issues and the approach with community.

This legislation will be a made-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador approach to breaking down and preventing barriers to create a truly inclusive province. This important disability rights legislation will be rooted in the principle of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This enabling legislation will allow us to develop and enforce standards that will prevent, reduce and remove barriers for people with disabilities.

As well, my department has a number of grants to support accessibility and encourage inclusion in *Budget 2020*. This includes investing \$400,000 for the Accessible Vehicle grant program and the Accessible Taxi Grant Program. These grants help to adapt vehicles to be accessible for personal use and to modify taxis to make them accessible. Other grants include \$250,000 for the capacity-building grants, which provide support for capacity building or resource development projects within communities, and \$75,000 for inclusion grants to support community organizations to increase accessibility in their facilities and events.

In conclusion, these are just a few of the programs, services and initiatives that are provided by the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development. There is truly great work happening as we take a lifespan approach to ensure the safety, well-being and best interests of those we serve.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Dwyer, do you have any opening remarks or would you like to get started?

MR. DWYER: Just a quick opening remark to say thank you very much for being here this evening. We really appreciate you taking our questions. We know it's a very vulnerable sector of the province.

From my perspective, as Minister Warr knows, we take care of a lot of things outside the House. It's not a lot of topics that need to be discussed in the House if they can be straightened up outside of the House. Some of the questions I'll ask today is an opportunity for us to work on

some new initiatives and stuff like that with you, but to also bring it to your department's attention, when it comes to our attention, of any flaws in the system.

So thank you very much for being here this evening.

CHAIR: Okay, thank you, Mr. Dwyer.

This evening we're going to proceed in three sections of the Estimates. I think they're obvious, numbers one, two and three.

I'll turn to the Clerk to introduce the first heading.

CLERK: 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 through to 1.2.03 carry?

I turn to Mr. Dwyer first.

MR. DWYER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just have some general questions to start, Minister Warr. Can we obtain a copy of your briefing notes?

MR. WARR: Yes.

MR. DWYER: Or binder, I should say. Sorry.

MR. WARR: Absolutely.

MR. DWYER: Are you still applying zero-based budgeting?

MR. WARR: Yes, we are.

MR. DWYER: Are there any errors in the published Estimates book?

MR. WARR: Not that I'm aware of.

MR. DWYER: Is the attrition plan still being followed? If so, what are the changes for last year and this year? How is it being measured?

MS. WALSH: Yes, the attrition plan is still being followed. For this year, it's \$101,000 that has been removed from our salary vote.

MR. DWYER: Okay, thank you.

How many people are employed in the department?

MS. WALSH: There are 125 positions within the department.

MR. DWYER: How many retirements have occurred in the last year?

MS. WALSH: That I'd have to get you. I don't know that number.

MR. DWYER: How many vacancies are not filled in the department at this time?

MS. WALSH: 122.

MR. DWYER: How many positions have been eliminated and what are they?

MS. WALSH: There have been 11 positions eliminated. I'd have to get you the details on what exactly they are.

MR. DWYER: Thank you. I'd appreciate that.

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

MS. WALSH: There haven't been any.

MR. DWYER: Zero? How many new hires took place in the last year?

MS. WALSH: That I'd have to get you as well. It would be a fairly high number.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

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

MS. WALSH: We have 37 temporary positions within the department, 31 of which are filled.

MR. DWYER: Thank you,

What is the fiscal impact on moving Healthy Living, Sport and Recreation to another department?

MS. WALSH: Fiscal impact – I might pass that over to Sharlene.

MS. JONES: It was approximately \$15 million that was reduced from our budget and transferred to the other two.

MR. DWYER: Okay, thank you.

Did your department receive any funds from the contingency fund? If so, what was it for?

MS. WALSH: Yes, we did. We received \$6 million and it was to assist us with the cost of specialized care for children in care.

MR. DWYER: Thank you.

Did your department receive any funds from the COVID fund?

MS. WALSH: No, we didn't.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

Just to go back to the vacancies that are not filled in the department currently, you said 122. Would we be able to get a breakdown, province-wide, of where those numbers lie in the province?

MS. WALSH: Yes.

MR. DWYER: Okay, thank you. I appreciate that.

CHAIR: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Dinn.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

Again, I'll start off by saying thank you before my times run out and I don't get to do that on record. Thank you very much for showing up here, especially the minister's EA, who gets to sit through two sessions; our long-suffering EAs and CAs, Chair.

I'll start with a few general questions, if that's all right, and we'll go from there.

Back in late July, the minister's predecessor stated that the department was meeting with their goal of 20 cases per child and youth social worker. Does this number hold province-wide,

especially given that there are significant numbers of vacancies in some regions?

MS. WALSH: Overall, the provincial total is 1-22. We have made significant gains in Labrador. We are at the provincial total of 1-20 in Labrador; however, by virtue of doing that, it's created some struggles for us on the Island with folks taking positions there.

Our Central-West region is at 1-25 and our Metro region is at 1-21. Those numbers fluctuate at any given time. Metro could be at 1-20 tomorrow; it might be just we're filling a couple of positions. Metro doesn't tend to have problems with filling positions.

MR. J. DINN: Okay.

If I may ask, in the ratio of, let's say, 1-21, 1-22, how is that determined? I could use the comparison to education, where sometimes we're told the ratio is 1-14 now. I know when that's factoring into it, it's factoring into whether it's the administrators and all the other specialists, those who are at the school board. The reality is, in the classroom, the numbers can be anywhere up to 30-plus students in a classroom.

I'm just wondering, when we're talking about the 1-22, are we actually talking about each individual social worker has 20 cases and you are not factoring into administration or anything like that.

MS. WALSH: No, we are absolutely not. We are actually talking social workers. So we look at the number of social workers we have employed, the number of files or cases that we have opened, and the division is done solely by the number of social workers. The model is such that it's one social worker for 20 files. One supervisor for six social workers. Then, on average, one zone manager for six supervisors.

MR. J. DINN: That's excellent. Got to get that model for education too, then.

I realize that any of the children, when social workers are involved, are probably going to have challenging needs anyway, then. Is there any attempt that – even within that you're going to have children with very complex needs; it's

going to have a range, I would assume. So is there an attempt – do you spread the – when it looks at the composition of the caseload, or is it just strictly numbers and where they happen to be?

MS. WALSH: A supervisor, by virtue of knowing her social workers, given the small numbers, does have a sense of what is the complexity of the cases that each social worker has in their caseload. We are a generalist model in that we don't have – for the most part, now, some, depending on the office, but for the most part a social worker could have a situation of children in care, child protection, youth corrections, programs, kinship services and some of these programs are not as challenging as others, from the time commitment from the requirements around documentation, court work. So the social work supervisor does try to match up that workload, as well with the skill set of the social worker in any issues that they may have at a given time.

MR. J. DINN: Excellent, thank you very much.

MS. WALSH: Where it's possible.

MR. J. DINN: What's the plan, then, for recruiting and retaining much needed – do we have a turnover rate and how do we go about recruiting and encouraging people to stay with the job? Because I would assume any job involving dealing with human beings, especially children, is going to be challenging at the best of times.

MS. WALSH: Absolutely, it's demanding work, there's no two ways about it. So we have put a lot of effort into recruitment and retention. Our biggest gap had been in Labrador. We were carrying a significant vacancy factor for many years, and because of that a lot of effort went in.

We had a recruitment and retention working group between officials of my department, of HRS, and then we had a partnership with the Nunatsiavut Government and the Innu government. We were all on a committee together working on how do we address the recruitment and retention issues in Labrador? We've been very successful. We introduced a new Innu service delivery model, which now, actually, we're at a place where it's a rare

occasion to have a vacancy in Sheshatshiu or Natuashish.

We added two additional resources to that to augment whereby there were vacancies on the Coast, the North Coast. When I say we're at a ratio in Labrador of 1-20, that came after many years of being well above that.

The challenge now is the Island, specifically the North Coast and some more remote areas on the Island outside of metro or St. John's broader area. We just recently introduced a new model in Roddickton as well to have additional supports to social workers there to help recruit because it's one of the areas that is our larger vacancy factor. So, we, on a regular basis, look at where our demands are, where our requirements are and introduce, as we can, efforts around recruitment.

MR. J. DINN: And there is an attempt then to recruit Indigenous social workers or people similar to the IBED program with MUN for education?

MS. WALSH: Yes. We have done that in the past. We've partnered with the Nunatsiavut Government to offer programs, social work programs for Indigenous persons. We've actually had Indigenous people working with us who went back to school and we've augmented the cost of their schooling. Lots of times we then, unfortunately, lose them to other – the NG will hire them from us, which is a win, win at the end of day, frankly, because they're still working with us, just in a different capacity, but, yes, we've looked at many approaches.

MR. J. DINN: How is work progressing on implementing the recommendations highlighted in the independent review of child protection services to Inuit children?

MS. WALSH: We have a working group with the Nunatsiavut Government reviewing all of those recommendations. The minister wrote Minister Kusugak who is the minister in the Nunatsiavut Government for health and social services. There was an agreement that we would work jointly on these recommendations. The advocate was quite pleased with that approach.

We actually met two weeks ago, that was probably our last meeting. We're really focused on tracking the data we have, to be tracking outcomes for Indigenous children in care. That's the place we're starting, but we are also digging in on all the other recommendations to advance a report to the House.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

Could you provide a breakdown of the number of children currently in care by region? How many come from Indigenous communities or households?

MS. WALSH: We know there are currently 970 children in care, which continues to be a downward trend since 2016. We know that 290 of those are Indigenous. I can't give you the breakdown by region currently, though we could provide it to you at a later date.

MR. J. DINN: That would be great. Thank you so much.

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

MS. WALSH: As it relates to the Innu Nation and both Sheshatshiu and Natuashish communities, we have a working relationship with the Innu. That working relationship is dated. We actually, some months ago in 2019, began a review of that and we're working collaboratively with them to update the Working Relationship Agreement.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

CHAIR: Okay, thank you, Mr. Dinn.

Mr. Dwyer.

MR. DWYER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Is there an organizational chart available of the department? Would I be able to get that?

MR. WARR: Sure.

MR. DWYER: Okay, thank you.

What's the average time for an adoption package to be filled out and brought to fruition, that there's an adoption being done?

MS. WALSH: That's a very difficult question.

MR. DWYER: Wait until the next one.

MS. WALSH: The reason being it really depends on the type of adoption. If you're talking about an adoption in province where a child is available and we have some approved on the approved list, it can be fairly quick. If you're talking a child out of province, maybe not yet available for adoption – we're working through the interprovincial adoption desk – it can vary. I'm sorry.

MR. DWYER: No, that's fine.

MS. WALSH: We're not talking years; we're talking months at best.

MR. DWYER: From my understanding, the adoption packages are filled out by the consultants and then down to the social workers. Am I correct in saying that?

MS. WALSH: The adoption packages: The applicants, the people who are applying to adopt, are approved by the social workers.

MR. DWYER: Right.

MS. WALSH: They do all of the work on the social and medical histories, the family visits, the home check and the police check. They do all of those pieces and then submit it to the provincial office for approval by the provincial director.

MR. DWYER: The social worker fills out the adoption packages?

MS. WALSH: The package around the person who's applying, yes.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

When it comes to the kinship programs, like the PRIDE program, is that going to be available in the Native communities?

MS. WALSH: We are in the process of revising the PRIDE package to be culturally aware and working actually with our Indigenous partners on that. Yes.

MR. DWYER: Okay, thank you.

Out of the 970 children you said were in care, how many did you say were Native children?

MS. WALSH: 290 are Indigenous.

MR. DWYER: Indigenous, I'm sorry. I apologize.

Out of that 970 children, how many are on the precipice of aging out of care and moving into adulthood?

MS. WALSH: I apologize, I don't have that number with me but I can get it for you.

MR. DWYER: Okay, I appreciate that.

We saw, obviously, there were some issues around that in the last month or so. I'm just wondering if we're considering a program to assist to keep these people from becoming homeless, whether it's a leg up for, let's say, the month of the transition so that they know they need to pay their rent. But if they transition out and they're disenfranchised and they don't have a job or anything, then is there a propensity to help give them a leg up to make sure they don't end up homeless or destitute?

MS. WALSH: We have in our policy processes around transition planning with youth and it would start months before they age out. I know the report you're referencing. Sometimes it's a challenge with other systems as well.

We've certainly agreed and had a fair bit of discussion that going forward we are doing a review of our services to youth and a cross-departmental approach, which is actually suggested as well; it's one of the recommendations in a recent Advocate report. We do plan to look at more of a horizontal approach around young people transitioning out of the in-care system and the supports and services they will need in other systems being available.

MR. DWYER: Perfect, thank you.

How many directors are currently in the department? What sort of quality controls do these directors oversee?

MS. WALSH: How many directors? I can't answer that question. We'd have to take that away because one is directors at the provincial office, but then we have directors in region as well. I'd have to get the number.

From the perspective of quality control, yes, I mean directors come into those positions. For us, they are normally very skilled, well-educated people who have had experience in the system that they're directing we'll call it. As a consequence, the responsibility is for oversight of their staff and ensuring compliance with policy.

We have provincial directors, of course – and perhaps when you're talking directors you may only be talking the child welfare aspect, but we have a director for policy, for Seniors and Aging and for Disability Policy Office. We have a number of directors but on the child welfare side we actually have as well, teams so that the directors have zone managers who report to them around compliance. We have compliance reports which we use to ensure that oversight is there around cases and compliance with policy and standards.

MR. DWYER: Thank you.

When somebody applies to be a manager, is there a vetting process through a board or are they hand-picked by one individual? Do they go through the appointments board or anything like that?

MS. WALSH: Well, these would be public service positions, so they would go through what was the Human Resource Secretariat and apply. Of course, it's a merit-based process; it's a full interview process. People are ranked. Do they meet the requirements of the position, the qualifications, both educational and experiential, or any other requirements that would be set out? Then an interview process is done and they are ranked based on how well they do on the interview and recommended.

MR. DWYER: If we have somebody employed in a supervisor's position in the department, they can move to another position within the department and still get paid while the transition occurs. Will a front-line worker in this department have to take unpaid leave during their transition period and have to apply for these new positions? Why would that be?

MS. WALSH: Social workers in our department are all employed, of course, by us, but covered under the NAPE contract. So they would have all rights that the NAPE contract allows them. If they wish to take a leave of absence and apply for same, if they qualify under the contract, we'd certainly approve so. If they wish to transfer to another position and they apply on it and we follow all the requirements the contract sets out around advertising positions, filling positions. That's all compliant with the NAPE contract. They wouldn't necessarily have to take leave if they apply for a position and they get it, either based on their seniority or – normally based on seniority, if it's an internal competition.

MR. DWYER: Okay. Why are front-line workers in the department who apply for a policy and consultant position not guaranteed their old position back if they are not successful in the application for a policy and consult job?

MR. WALSH: So if social workers are applying on a management position, because that's what those other positions would be, and they seek a leave of absence to go to the management position, then they do get a position in social work back in the office from which they came. They may not get the same case load. I think that might be what you're referring to.

MR. DWYER: But would they keep their seniority from ...?

MS. WALSH: Well, up to the time that – again, exactly what the contract dictates.

MR. DWYER: Okay. In the department there are numerous examples of workloads that are unevenly distributed, for example, consult work. These consultants are not the ones doing the day-to-day work with the children and families in question, it is the front-line workers who know the situation the best. Government needs

to look at how we're looking at it from a top-down approach. Is it more important to have many directors and managers than having front-line workers?

MS. WALSH: So we don't have any situation where we're not filling social work positions based on the model. So there would be no situation where we would be saying, well, we're not filling a position because we're filling a management position. That wouldn't happen. We have a model, it's been approved, and if there are 20 cases, there's a social worker. In fact, it might not even be a full 20, because once you get to nine or 10 you're basically really requiring another person. That shouldn't happen.

We do need consultant position because all of the policies, which social workers work under, all of the research that informs those policies, all of the living arrangements, the best practice around approaches to care for children, that's all done at the provincial office level and that supports the clinical practice in the operational side of the department, which is where the social workers deliver the service. They work hand in hand.

They also offer supports. If a social worker is having a particularly difficult situation with a case and she's consulting with her supervisor, they may call a consultant at the provincial office, and do regularly say: We have this strange scenario or this hard situation – and I've done it myself – can you consult with us? Can you talk with us? Would you go do a little bit of research on this case, this matter, whatever it might be, to help inform our practice? They all play a very critical role.

MR. DWYER: If I could just have leave for one last question. My next set of questions are going to be all financial.

Why are employees in zones ineligible to apply to another zone if they have more seniority?

CHAIR: Keep your hand up. There you go.

MS. CLEMENS-SPURRELL: Any front-line social worker, social worker I's, can apply for any position across the province, so they wouldn't be restricted to zones. As Susan had referenced earlier, social worker I positions, it's

obviously a NAPE position, followed by the contract and seniority oftentimes rules. So if you're the most senior applicant anywhere in the province on a particular position, permanent or temporary position, you have the ability to apply and be awarded if you fit within the guidelines of the contract.

MR. DWYER: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Okay, Mr. Dinn.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

Would you be able to describe some initiatives that the minister is currently undertaking to assist communities in planning for population aging in accordance with the Age-Friendly communities program? I know the minister mentioned that in his opening statement about seniors aging at home and in their communities. Something I certainly support, probably because I'm on the long, slow slide into oblivion anyway. I'd certainly be interested in the initiatives and the Age-Friendly communities program.

MS. WALSH: Yes, we've started an interdepartmental committee with the Department of Health and Community Services – we co-chair and a number of other departments are represented on that committee – to look at the whole business of the aging population in the province and how to meet the needs of changing demographics for our province. That group, who works very closely, as well, with Suzanne Brake, the Seniors' Advocate, is well under way and we're looking forward to some of the creative things they will come up with.

As well, as a department, the minister certainly mentioned in his introductory comments, we also have a number of grants that we use to promote healthy aging in the province. Our grants, which are all application based, includes things like our Age-Friendly community grant, which communities can use this money to do assessments of their communities to determine what could they be doing in their community to

make it more age friendly. Then they can reapply a second time, once they got their assessment done, to try to implement some of those initiatives. That's one grant.

The other is the Community Transportation grants. That is something, actually, that the minister recently did the announcement that that grant program just opened. It's looking at community groups to look at trying to develop transportation in their regions that, not only addresses older persons but as well people with disabilities. There was an agreement between both groups that some of the issues cross both populations and so it made good sense. That's a \$300,000-a-year grant program.

The Seniors' Social Inclusion Initiative, of course, is one that was new last year and that sees the 50+ clubs be able to apply for either \$1,000 or \$2,000, depending if they're incorporated or not, to develop programing that really looks at preventing isolation in seniors and promoting inclusion. There is also \$100,000 a year that's provided to the Newfoundland Centre for Applied Health Research, which is out of Grenfell College. That group does some really good research that we've been able to use, and the Advocate has been able to use, around seniors and seniors' issues.

They're probably the primary ones. I don't know, Aisling, if you want to add anything.

MS. GOGAN: Just to say that those programs are really well received by the community and we're so lucky to have such strong community partners. For the Seniors' Social Inclusion Initiative, which was new last year, we had 140 applicants. There were only four that were ineligible because of our close relationship with the 50-plus club, and all kinds of wonderful things that those groups have managed to do with relatively small amounts of money.

If you wanted, specifically, a list of projects that have been approved or anything like that—

MR. J. DINN: That would be good.

MS. GOGAN: — we can certainly provide that, either for that or any of the programs that Susan also mentioned.

MR. J. DINN: Perfect. That would be fantastic.

The project that was to make the Deer Lake beach more accessible, that would cross multiple lines, right?

MS. GOGAN: That was from one of our Disability Policy Office grants. They've got capacity-building grants and inclusion grants. That was an inclusion grant they received a couple of years ago to do that work.

MR. J. DINN: Excellent, good idea.

In the minister's mandate letter, he was asked to address issues important to seniors as identified by the Office of the Seniors' Advocate. Has any consultation with the Seniors' Advocate taken place yet? Which of the issues identified are first and foremost on the list to be addressed by this ministry? How are they to be alleviated?

MR. WARR: Unfortunately, that hasn't happened as of yet. MHA Dinn, it's our plan to get together with Suzanne Brake. I've had the opportunity to sit and have just a social chat with her. We actually were supposed to meet, I think, this week and it got put off — it was today, wasn't it? It was today. Our Estimates were actually supposed to be this morning and it got switched to tonight so we ended up cancelling the meeting; we certainly could have made it. I look forward to having the opportunity to sit with her and obviously discuss aging and seniors.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you very much.

On what projects did you work with the federal government in their Poverty Reduction Strategy?

MS. GOGAN: We work very closely with the federal government. We're actually the provincial-territorial co-chair of the federal-provincial-territorial Poverty Advisory Committee to Ministers Responsible for Social Services. It's a bit of a mouthful.

In that role, provinces and territories generally work very closely with the federal government. Specifically, in Newfoundland and Labrador, we're really looked to for our expertise and our leadership around ensuring that federal initiatives would be well aligned with provincial

and territorial initiatives. There was a piece of work that was done that looked at marginal effective tax rates to make sure that when benefits were implemented, that they would actually make people better off so that people would always be better off by earning more and working more, which is a best practice in poverty reduction.

We also worked closely just on priorities in the development of the federal strategy, so you'll see increased child benefits. Some of the changes that were made for seniors as well, around OAS and GIS, were things that the province advocated for.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you very much.

MS. GOGAN: I'm not sure if there are any specific areas –

MR. J. DINN: No, that's good. Thank you very much. That's excellent.

Is the ministry working to allay the concerns expressed by aging LGBTQ Newfoundlanders and Labradorians regarding discrimination and safety in residential care? Is there a targeted plan on ensuring that they have access to safe and dignified care in old age?

MS. GOGAN: We've been working with the Department of Health and Community Services on that issue. There is a group – we haven't heard from them, I don't think, recently, but I think they're called the Grey Gays – who staff have met with and certainly shared those concerns with the Department of Health and Community Services.

As Susan mentioned, we work really closely with those. That issue is certainly on the radar of the group that Susan mentioned as well and one that we're hearing more and more about. We've also heard some really positive stories at some long-term care facilities in the province, things that they've done to ensure that they have a welcoming and supportive environment to the LGBTQ community.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

How is work proceeding on delivering the new provincial accessibility legislation? I feel like

I'm in class right now. Hands up going everywhere.

MS. WALSH: Work is progressing very well we're pleased to say. Minister Warr has just recently met with the provincial advisory committee for persons with disabilities. We have a new chair for that committee and we had some new members.

We did have a little bit of a slowdown during COVID and Snowmageddon. Primarily, their priorities were really focused on other areas due to COVID, understandably. We certainly supported the disability community through many of their concerns during the height of COVID. Things are back on track and we're full speed ahead.

The legislation, we're working with the Legislative Counsel currently on drafting.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

How many people has the Accessible Vehicle Funding helped this past year?

MS. GOGAN: It helped 17 people in the past year. It's a very successful program but, as you're probably aware, there's generally a wait-list for the program as well.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

CHAIR: Okay, thank you, Mr. Dinn.

Mr. Dwyer.

MR. DWYER: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Just a follow-up on my colleague's question there. We're saying that we get 17 vehicles retrofitted for \$400,000?

MS. GOGAN: The budget for that program is \$350,000. I think the other \$50,000 is the Accessible Taxi Program.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

MS. GOGAN: The maximum amount for that program that someone can apply for is \$25,000.

MR. DWYER: Okay, thank you.

The \$150,000 you said, Minister, that was allocated for Innu children in care, what's that \$150,000 earmarked for? Is there a necessity currently or is it something to add on the programming that's already available?

MS. WALSH: I apologize, \$150,000?

MR. DWYER: You said there was \$150,000 allocated to Innu children in care.

MS. WALSH: My apologies. Yes, that money is for 18 months, a year and a half, for a position to lead the response to the Inuit review that the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate released. While we've been working collaboratively with the Nunatsiavut Government, we really needed a project leader to help both of us move things forward and that's what that position is for.

MR. DWYER: It's for a salary?

MS. WALSH: Correct.

MR. DWYER: Okay, perfect. Thank you.

With the 50-plus clubs and the inclusion grant, you said there were 140 applications and only four were denied. Was all the money used that was allocated for the 50-plus clubs?

MS. GOGAN: \$246,000, if I remember correctly, was allocated of the \$270,000 budgeted. It was a new program and I think COVID at the end – you're dealing with very small clubs who are all volunteers. Our staff worked really closely with the seniors in those organizations. I think if things had been different with COVID it probably would have been –

MS. WALSH: (Inaudible.)

MS. GOGAN: Of course.

MS. WALSH: We didn't have a specific budget for that initiative, but all applications that met the criteria – and as Aisling had said, almost all of them were funded.

MR. DWYER: Okay, perfect. Thank you.

I think that's it for the social questions. We can go right into the financial if you would like.

CHAIR: You're done with the first section.

Mr. Dinn, any further questions?

MR. J. DINN: I don't think he was done with the first section. Were you going line by line in 1.2.01?

MR. DWYER: I was going to go to 1.1.01 under Executive and Support Services.

MR. J. DINN: I think, Chair, he was (inaudible) finished with the general questions, so he's still on the same –

CHAIR: You're free to use your time as long as you're staying within the headings that are called.

MR. DWYER: So we're still in Executive and Support Services?

CHAIR: I've given you guys some leeway because some of the items related to youth services or seniors are in subsequent sections, but that's fine.

Please, we are still within 1.1.01 through to 1.2.03.

MR. DWYER: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for that clarity.

Just on 1.1.01, Minister's Office, item number one is Salaries. Last year there was \$9,160 less spent than was budgeted, yet this year you estimated to spend \$16,960 more than what was actually spent last year. What's the reason for the increase?

CHAIR: Minister.

MR. WARR: The savings of \$9,160 was a result of the minister not availing of the automobile allowance during 2019-2020. The increase this year would be from the budget as a result of the additional pay period for '20-'21.

MR. DWYER: Okay, thank you.

Under Purchased Services, last year there was \$1,754 more spent than what was budgeted for. Why was that?

MR. WARR: Under Purchased Services, the \$1,754 was an overrun from the 2019-2020 budget due to costs associated with an insurance deductible on damage incurred to a rental vehicle.

MR. DWYER: Thank you.

In '20-'21, you estimated \$200 less than what was budgeted for in '19-'20, while going over budget by \$1,754. What factors went into this estimate?

MR. WARR: That \$200 was a decrease from the 2019-2020 budget reduction in expenditures planned, and funds were reallocated to rightsize the budget.

MR. DWYER: Okay, thank you.

In Transportation and Communications the actual that was spent was \$55,583 and it was budgeted last year for \$78,900. When we only spent \$55,000, why would we go back to \$77,300 this year?

MR. WARR: The difference of \$23,317 were savings from the 2019-2020 budget due to reduced travel requirements. Some travel planned in the last quarter was postponed or cancelled due to COVID-19. The minister's travel to the district when the House is in session would be charged to the House of Assembly.

MR. DWYER: Okay, thank you.

The \$290,000 from the \$253,000, what was the new money earmarked for?

MR. WARR: Are you –

MR. DWYER: When you come down to the Amount to be Voted, or the Total: Minister's Office, it's the same thing. Is that because of the increase in the vehicle usage?

MS. JONES: So you're looking at the change from last year's budget to this year's budget?

MR. DWYER: Yes.

MS. JONES: The biggest change there would be the 27th pay period.

MR. DWYER: Oh, okay. Right on. That makes sense.

That's it for the Minister's Office. Will I move on to the Executive?

CHAIR: Yeah, as long as you stay within 1.2.03.

MR. DWYER: Oh, okay.

1.2.01, under Executive Support, Salaries, last year there was \$70,088 less spent than what was budgeted for. Why was this?

MR. WARR: Savings from the 2019-2020 budget as a result of short-term vacancies and staff changes with new incumbents at lower steps and budgeted positions.

MR. DWYER: Thank you.

In '20-'21, you estimated to spent \$108,488 more than what was actually spent in '19-'20. Why is this, and is it the result of a new hire? If so, why is there a new hire required?

MS. JONES: Last year we had a one-time savings of \$70,000, and that was just short-term vacancies. Those positions have since been filled. As well as for '20-'21 there's a 27th pay period, so that's an extra of \$38,000 there. So that would be the difference.

MR. DWYER: Okay, thank you.

Under Transportation and Communications, last year there was \$7,563 less spent than what was budgeted, yet this year you increased the budget by \$200. Why is that?

MR. WARR: The savings from the 2019-2020 budget were primarily due to reduced travel requirements. Trips planned in the last quarter, again, were postponed or cancelled due to COVID-19. The \$200 increase from the 2019-2020 budget is to cover a slight increase in anticipated travel. Again, funds will be reallocated to rightsize the budget.

MR. DWYER: Okay, thank you.

Then under Supplies, last year there was \$3,228 more spent than what was budgeted. What's the reason for that and what was factored into this year's estimate?

MR. WARR: The \$3,228 is overage from the 2019-2020 budget due to increased requirements for supplies and the purchase of new cellphones as the old ones were no longer being supported and presented a security risk. Actually, I think there were four cellphones involved. The \$400 increase from the 2019-2020 budget was to cover anticipated supplies requirement. Again, funds will be reallocated to rightsize the budget.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

I'll go into the next header on the next one.

CHAIR: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Dinn.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

The ministry pledged to encourage and facilitate an increase in the number of accessible taxis, especially in the area where this service was not previously available. I think you mentioned that \$50,000 of that \$300,000 was for that. Would it be possible to provide us with an update on the numbers for this program? How many in total were served through the 2019-2020 budget and does this number represent an increase over the year before or a decrease?

MS. GOGAN: Two new accessible taxis are approved every year. In 2019-20, one was approved in Lewisporte and one was approved in Gander. We were very pleased to get accessible taxis in communities that didn't have any accessible form of public transportation. We don't have numbers yet in terms of how many people have been served in 2019-20. We could get you numbers from the previous years, however.

We hear every day such positive stories from the community of people with disabilities who can just do normal things now when they want to do them and who couldn't do them before. It's been a very successful program.

MR. J. DINN: I agree. A good idea. Thank you.

On to 1.2.02, we see here that actual spending for Salaries was nearly \$300,000 under budget for 2019-2020, yet we see a nearly \$200,000 increase in the budgeted amount over the previous year. Would the minister be able to explain these variances, these fluctuations?

MR. WARR: Yes. The \$282,000 was savings from the 2019-2020 budget resulting from short-term vacant positions. The increase from the 2019-2020 budget is a result of the additional pay period for 2020-2021.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

I think I'm just going to say ditto to that one every time I see it then.

Under Transportation and Communications, we see that actual spending in 2019-2020 was under what was allotted; however, there is a steep rise in this year's budget for this item by nearly \$100,000. Would you be able to provide an overview of the expenses previously incurred and how they differ going into this coming year?

MR. WARR: Again, under 1.2.02?

MR. J. DINN: Yes.

MR. WARR: The \$50,000 savings from the 2019 budget is the result of travel requirements less than anticipated in several divisions as meetings and training sessions in the final quarter, which would have been January to March, were postponed or not attended due to weather conditions and COVID-19, as well utilization of other cost-efficient, effective electronic mediums, for example, Skype and teleconference, for the remaining part of that year. The increase was a result from the decision to centralize funding for training travel. Funds reallocated from the Child and Youth Services to rightsize the budget.

MR. J. DINN: Okay.

So it's not so much as an increase as centralizing it. Okay.

Still with 1.2.02, none of the budgeted \$13,000 for Professional Services was spent in 2019-20, but the budget remains the same for this year. Why?

MR. WARR: The \$13,000 savings from the 2019-2020 budget were mainly due to a one-time savings from an amount budgeted for a potential consultant to develop strategies to address Level-4 costs of residential services not required this year as the CSSD partnered on a larger RFP with Health and Community Services, who covered the costs.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

And the variance, then, under Purchased Services?

MR. WARR: The \$20,000 decrease was savings as a result of a reduction in copying costs and requirements for individual medical evaluations less than anticipated.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you very much.

Under 1.2.03, we noticed here a cut of over \$175,000 in Salaries compared with the budgeted amount from last year. What accounts for this decrease? If staff are being removed or are not being replaced, how does this affect the development and delivery of policy for vulnerable children?

MR. WARR: The \$177,600 decrease from the 2019-2020 budget was a result of funding of \$233,000 sunset in fiscal 2019-2020 for the adoption planning project, partially offset by additional pay period in '20-'21.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

Still with that section, could we have an explanation as to why the cost of Supplies is over double that projected in 2019-2020?

MR. WARR: Under Supplies, the increase from the 2019-2020 budget is a result of training materials required to support crisis prevention intervention and Triple P parenting program: funds, again, reallocated to rightsize the budget.

MR. J. DINN: Okay, thank you.

Still with that section, why did spending for Professional Services come in at \$46,000 under budget and why has this item been cut by over \$100,000 for '20-'21? What services were provided?

MR. WARR: The \$46,360 was savings as a result of \$25,000 planned for work on Poverty Reduction Strategy requiring outside expertise was not required. A balance due to lower cost for post-implementation support for new structured decision-making model. The \$104,800 was a decrease from the 2019-2020 budget to reflect removal of sunset funding for the post-implementation support of the structured decision-making model.

MR. J. DINN: Just one or two questions, Chair, left for me in this section, general questions.

I do want to go back to a comment that was made about integrating or the committees that cut across with other departments such as Health. Where does Education fit into that? I ask that from the point of view is that often schools are the first line; the children that are served in school are also going to be served by your department, by sometimes Health, by also Justice and so on and so forth. That's been a concern of many teachers in schools, that what I like to call wraparound services are not always – it's great in theory, more difficult in practice. I'm just wondering where Education fits into all of that.

MS. WALSH: The Department of Education and the school boards is a critical partner in that for sure. We have a lot of overlaps. While we might have listed certain departments like Health because they are often a primary partner, Education is on a number of these committees as well and we're on a number of theirs. The Education Action Plan, we're represented on a number of the committees that we're working jointly on, in terms of outcomes for children in care, social and notional learning. There are a number of areas where we interact. It will be the same way for any committees that we're leading. Anywhere where there's a relationship around, for example, work we're doing on children in care – youth, for sure – we would have a partnership.

MR. J. DINN: To narrow it down, I'm thinking about even at a very granular level, in terms of the school. I have a student in front of me. As a teacher, I don't particularly need to know all the smallest minutia, but I do want to know if, indeed, I have to be careful or I have to take special caution or measures or make sure to be

watching for certain things. I would expect, though, that the school counsellor would have a lot more significant information than I would, and, for that matter, the school principal. I don't need to know everything as a teacher. I just need to know, look, if you run into problems, here's what you need to do.

I'm just wondering when it comes to the sharing of information at that level. That's been a complaint in many ways: That kind of coordination of services at a very local level has been problematic and that the school often feels cut out of the – the information is drawn from the school, but nothing is coming back to the school as to how it and its teachers can help the children in its care.

MS. WALSH: As it relates to children in care, specifically, but often even children who may be involved in our system from a child-protection perspective, whereby, especially for children in care, we have case plans required to be developed on every situation. They would have teams where all of the appropriate people involved with that child may be involved. That could involve the school, certainly; teacher; definitely guidance counsellor, if there are areas or concerns related to that child that overflow into the school system. Often it certainly would. With children in care, we would want to have a very strong relationship.

Those planning committees which would involve the school, our social worker – it could involve community organizations, certainly involve a foster parent – they would be a partner to that process for sure. In addition to that, through work we're doing with the Department of Education through the Education Action Plan, the Model for the Coordination of Services to Children and Youth is an area that is being strongly explored. Of course, you may recall we had that many years ago. I think some part of that is being reviewed as an option to bring back online.

We are partnered with the Department of Education on that. Should that come to fruition and be implemented, that would be a strong connection between those departments to ensure that the model is implemented, so that there's planning for every child on a regular basis with the school system.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr. Dwyer, any further questions?

MR. DWYER: Two questions under this 1.2.02. Under Employee Benefits, last year there was \$13,156 less spent than what was actually budgeted. What was the reason for that? This year, you plan to spend \$52,656 more than you actually spent last year. What's the reason for that?

MR. WARR: Are you talking 1.2.02?

MR. DWYER: Yes, under Employee Benefits.

MR. WARR: The \$13,156 was savings resulting from the one-time savings from availing of the RNC facilitators for the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Investigative Interview Protocol. The RNC provided this service at no cost.

The \$39,500 increase from the 2019-2020 budget is resulting from the decision to administer workers' compensation costs through this activity for the department. Funds reallocated from the Child and Youth Services as well as elsewhere within the department will be done to rightsize the budget.

MR. DWYER: Okay, thank you.

Under 1.2.03, Programs and Policy, I just have one question. Last year, there was \$48,693 less spent than was budgeted. This year, you estimated to spend \$128,907 less than what was actually spent this year. What factored into this Estimate and why?

MR. WARR: Were you asking about Professional Services?

MR. DWYER: On Salaries.

MR. WARR: Oh, I'm sorry.

MR. DWYER: No, that's okay.

MR. WARR: The savings from the 2019-2020 budget was as a result of short-term vacancies during the year. The decrease from the 2019-2020 budget was the result of funding of \$233,000 sunset in fiscal 2019-2020 for the

adoption planning project, partially offset by additional pay periods in 2020-2021.

CHAIR: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Dinn.

MR. J. DINN: No, that's good.

CHAIR: Okay, thank you.

Seeing no further questions, I ask the Clerk and we'll vote on this first section, please.

CLERK: 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 through to 1.2.03 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

This section is carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 1.2.03 carried.

CLERK: 2.1.01.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 carry?

Mr. Dwyer.

MR. DWYER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Under Employee Benefits, as we move into Child and Youth Services, last year there was \$97,013 more spent than what was budgeted. Why?

MR. WARR: The overrun from the 2019-2020 budget was a result of higher WorkplaceNL costs.

MR. DWYER: Under Transportation and Communications, last year there was \$365,694 less spent than what was budgeted. What was the reason for the savings?

MR. WARR: The savings from the 2019-2020 budget: During budget 2019-2020 additional funds with offsetting federal revenue was added,

recognizing that there may be variances between the Operating Accounts depending upon where funds were actually spent. This, combined with lower travel costs, resulted in savings with appropriate amounts reprofiled in this year's budget.

MR. DWYER: Thank you.

Under Purchased Services, last year there was \$215,861 more spent than what was budgeted for. Why was this? What factors went into this year's Estimate?

MR. WARR: The overage of \$215,861 from 2019-2020 budget was due to increased requirements for items such as copying costs, repairs and rental costs for staff accommodations in Sheshatshiu, but this was offset by federal revenue. The \$21,200 decrease from the 2019-2020 budget was due to lease costs for staff requirements in Sheshatshiu implemented during the year, moved to Transportation and Infrastructure.

MR. DWYER: Under Property, Furnishings and Equipment, last year there was \$21,119 less spent than what was budgeted for. What was the reason for that? Why is your Estimate for '20-'21 \$74,419 more than what was actually spent last year?

MR. WARR: In 2.1.01?

MR. DWYER: Yes, Property, Furnishings.

MR. WARR: Okay. Sorry.

The savings from the 2019-2020 budget were due to lower requirements for ergonomic assessments. The \$53,300 increase from the 2019-2020 budget was a result of planned increased equipment requirements, such as snowmobiles – there were two snowmobiles required for the Labrador region – and expected increased requirements of ergonomic assessments. Again, funds were reallocated to rightsize the budget.

MR. DWYER: The snowmobiles are being provided for staff?

MR. WARR: Yes.

MR. DWYER: Okay, thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Dinn.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

Salaries are budgeted to increase by over \$2 million. Would you please explain the increase? Is it for new staff? What sorts of work will they be doing? Will they be actually delivering new services or is this part of the 27th pay?

MR. WARR: It is, exactly. An increase in the 2019-2020 budget as a result of the additional pay period for 2020-2021.

MR. J. DINN: Perfect, thank you very much.

Under Employee Benefits, what accounts for the spending of the Employee Benefits? Would that be severance? Are they severance payouts?

MR. WARR: The \$97,000?

MR. J. DINN: In 2.1.01, Employee Benefits, you went from \$30,000 up to \$127,000.

MR. WARR: Yes, so the \$97,000 was an overrun from the 2019-2020 budget as a result of higher WorkplaceNL costs.

MR. J. DINN: Okay.

When you say that, higher WorkplaceNL costs, you mean – would you be able to clarify that? What does that mean?

MR. WARR: Workers' comp.

MR. J. DINN: Okay. That has to do with workers' comp that was paid out or ...?

MR. WARR: Yes.

MR. J. DINN: On Supplies, it increased nearly \$40,000 over budget. What was purchased?

MR. WARR: The increase from the 2019-2020 budget was adjustments made to reflect expected supply requirements, which have increased costs

due to northern locations. Again, funds reallocated to rightsize the budget.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

Under Allowances and Assistance, line 09, it also came in at nearly \$11 million over budget. Who received this money? Why is there an increase in this item by some \$4.5 million in this year's budget compared to last year's?

MR. WARR: The \$10.9 million was an overrun from the 2019-2020 budget. It reflects an increase due to increased costs from annualization of growth in previous years of the number of children with complex needs requiring care having to be placed in individualized living arrangements, otherwise known as ILAs.

Funding to cover the overrun was provided from savings within Grants and Subsidies, as well as a \$6-million transfer from the Consolidated Fund Services contingency. The \$4.6-million increase from the 2019-2020 budget will be a result of the increased costs from annualization of growth in previous years of the number of children with complex needs requiring care having to be placed in an ILA. Funds were reprofiled in budget 2020-2021 from Grants and Subsidies to cover the projected expenditures.

MR. J. DINN: When you say annualization, you're looking at not that we're getting (inaudible) but the needs are increasing, therefore the costs are increasing as well.

MR. WARR: Yes.

MR. J. DINN: Would that be correct?

MR. WARR: You can go ahead.

MS. WALSH: Because if a home opens halfway through the year or three-quarters the way through the year, a particular year only has three months or six months of a cost; the following year will be a 12-month cost, if it stays opened.

MR. J. DINN: Right, okay. In other words, I guess what I'm getting at, are the number of children then increasing or is it just simply the method – it's not that it has to do more with, as

you just said, whether a service opens or a care facility opens up for them, correct?

MS. WALSH: Absolutely. The number of children in ILAs is actually decreasing.

MR. J. DINN: Excellent.

Why was \$6 million in Grants and Subsidies left on the table for 2019-20 and then this item was cut by \$3 million? I think you might have just answered that, if I understand it, the amount that was transferred, correct?

Okay, leave that one.

The source of federal revenue?

MR. WARR: With the \$1.7-million increase in federal revenue as a result of increased cost for the delivery of service to Innu communities and the \$1.663-million increase in federal revenue for two emergency replacement houses in Sheshatshiu and increased cost for delivery of service to Innu communities.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Minister.

Chair, that's it for me.

CHAIR: Okay.

Mr. Dwyer, anything further?

MR. DWYER: Just one last question I picked up on that time.

Of the 970 children that are in care and 299 are Indigenous, how many children out of the remainder are with disabilities?

MS. WALSH: We don't track the number of children with disabilities.

MR. DWYER: Would they have more complex needs? Like, they would need more specialized care.

MS. WALSH: Specialized care: So we do know that we have 60 children in individualized living arrangements, which does tend to be our highest level of care in terms of specialized care, yes.

MR. DWYER: With the projected Autism Action Plan, how will that affect children in this province through your department?

MS. WALSH: I apologize. Could you repeat that?

MR. DWYER: In last year's budget there was an Autism Action Plan announced.

MS. WALSH: Oh, Autism Action Plan, sorry.

MR. DWYER: Yes. I was just wondering how that incorporates into the Department of CSSD as well.

MS. WALSH: As you know, the Department of Health and Community Services is the lead for the Autism Action Plan, but certainly there are situations where we do have children with autism who are in care. We are partnered with the Department of Health and Community Services on that Action Plan and any services and supports that are available – and there are some in terms of their specialized term we're able to link into.

MR. DWYER: Okay, thank you.

That's good, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr. Dinn, no further questions.

Mr. Dwyer, you are done?

MR. DWYER: Yes.

CHAIR: Okay, I'll ask the Clerk and we'll vote on this next section, please.

CLERK: 2.1.01.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

The section is carried.

On motion, subhead 2.1.01 carried.

CLERK: 3.1.01 to 3.1.02.

CHAIR: Mr. Dwyer.

MR. DWYER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As we move into Seniors and Social Development, the Seniors and Aging heading of 3.1.01, under Purchased Services: Last year, there was \$14,165 less spent than what was budgeted for. What was the reason for this? This year's estimate is the exact same as last year's budget. Why is that?

MR. WARR: The \$14,165 was savings from the 2019-2020 budget as a result of a planned *Adult Protection Act* public awareness campaign media was not utilized and an online social media campaign was completed instead.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

Moving on to 3.1.02, Disability Policy Office: Under the heading of Salaries, last year there was \$23,492 less spent than what was budgeted for. This year you estimated to spend \$77,992 more than what was actually spent last year.

MR. WARR: Yes, the \$23,492 was savings resulting from short-term vacancies during the year. The added \$56,500 increase from the 2019-2020 budget was a result of a clerk typist II position moving from Seniors and Aging to Disability Policy Office, along with the additional pay period for 2020-2021.

MR. DWYER: Why was the new hire required?

MS. WALSH: It's not actually a new hire. The position is a shared position between Disability Policy Office and Seniors and Aging. It had been budgeted in Seniors and Aging but actually sits in Disability Policy Office so we just moved it over to where it actually fits.

MR. DWYER: So it's actually budgeted in both departments?

MS. WALSH: It was budgeted in Seniors and Aging but we've moved the funding for the position over to Disability Policy Office. It's not a new position.

MR. DWYER: Okay.

MS. WALSH: It's just a moving of salary.

MR. DWYER: I understand.

Under Transportation and Communications: Last year, there was \$20,318 less spent than was budgeted for. This year you estimated \$24,000 based on last year's actuals. Why is there no change this year?

MR. WARR: You're talking about 3.1.02?

MR. DWYER: Yes.

MR. WARR: I guess the \$20,318 is savings from the 2019-2020 budget as a result of a one-time savings due to a reduced number of advisory council meetings during the year.

MR. DWYER: Okay, thank you.

And \$24,000 that's just – there didn't need to be change for this year? No anticipated meetings I guess or –

MS. WALSH: No, I mentioned earlier in answering a question, the Disability Policy Office, the advisory committee to the minister are individuals who have lived experience in terms of disability. So between Snowmageddon and COVID, just getting those meetings to occur in this fiscal year has been challenging, but that group is very active. We have a new chair. The minister has met with the group, really given them a strong mandate around moving accessibility legislation forward. So we know they're going to meet regularly this year.

MR. DWYER: Great, thank you.

The last question, Mr. Chair, under Purchased Services: Last year, there was \$36,789 less spent than was budgeted for and this year's estimate is \$45,000, the exact same number as last year, why is this?

MR. WARR: The \$36,789 were savings from the 2019-2020 budget re: one-time savings for decreased demand in the meeting room and audio-visual equipment rentals, language interpretation, closed-captioning services and

printing services as a result of reduced advisory council meetings.

MR. DWYER: Okay, thank you.

Under Supplies, you had budgeted nil for last year, and the actual was \$535. This year there's no allocation again. What was the reason for the \$535?

MR. WARR: The \$535 overrun from the 2019-2020 budget resulted from an unanticipated demand for office and meeting supplies.

MR. DWYER: Last question: Within the department when we approve the budget, is there a propensity for any monies to be changed from header to header?

I was dying to hear from him.

MR. MARTIN: Yes, that's something the department would look at, depending upon needs, as long as we remain with the overall operating allocation for the activity. If you have an extra need in Supplies or Purchased Services, as long as you still have the capacity when you're overall operating within that allocation, it's something that we would look at.

MR. DWYER: Okay, thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr. Dinn.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

Under 3.1.01, Salaries, there seems to be a \$55,000 drop in Salaries budgeted from last year. Is this a transfer or has a position been discontinued?

MR. WARR: The \$53,400 savings from the 2019 budget was a result of short-term vacancies during the year. Again, the \$54,900 decrease from the 2019-2020 budget is due to salary for a clerk typist III position moved from Seniors and Aging to the Disability Policy Office.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

Under Purchased Services, less than half of the budgeted amount was spent last year, yet the budget for this year has not changed.

MR. WARR: Under Purchased Services, savings from the 2019-2020 budget were a result of planned *Adult Protection Act* public awareness campaign media buy not utilized, as an online social media campaign was completed instead.

MR. J. DINN: That's why we had the savings, but we're back up to that amount. Are we looking at something different, then, for this year? Less of an online approach? I'm just looking at we saved money, or this would be the typical amount you'd budget for that.

MS. WALSH: Sure. The *Adult Protection Act* has been under review, our five-year statutory review. We anticipate that coming to a close by the end of this year, hoping to bring amendments into the House in the spring sitting. There could be, we anticipate, changes potentially as a result of that that we would need to do some communication, some publication. It's a piece of legislation that affects few people, but the public really does need to know about it.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

Under Grants and Subsidies, line 10, there seems to be a significant fluctuation here, both in the budget from last year to this year and in what was actually spent last year compared to what was budgeted. Why is this the case? And would the minister provide a list of the programs funded with this money? Could he provide it now or maybe later would be better? Whichever is easiest.

MR. WARR: The overrun from the 2019-2020 budget Seniors' Social Inclusion Initiative was announced last year; however, no additional budget was provided for in budget 2019-2020, funded internally from other one-time grant savings within the department. The \$200,000 increase from the 2019-2020 budget was a result of funds added for the Seniors' Social Inclusion Initiative. Certainly, we have no problem sharing that information with you as well, MHA Dinn.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Minister.

Under 3.1.01, what is the source of provincial revenue listed under this item?

MR. WARR: Actually, I was just looking at the grant because you were asking about the grant programs.

MR. J. DINN: Yes.

MR. WARR: I have that here if you ...

MR. J. DINN: Sure.

MR. WARR: Healthy Aging Research was budgeted for \$100,000, the age-friendly community grants for \$95,000; the Newfoundland and Labrador Community Transportation Grant was \$300,000 and the Seniors' Social Inclusion Initiative was \$200,000, for a total of \$695,000.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

Under 3.1.02, under Professional Services, none of the budgeted \$9,000 was used in 2019-2020 and the budget is zero dollars for this year. What were the plans for these funds and what changed?

MR. WARR: The savings from the 2019-2020 budget were due to no requirement for outside consultants during the year. The \$9,000 decrease from the 2019-2020 budget: As there was no planned requirement for outside consultants in 2020-2021, the funds were reallocated to rightsize the budget.

MR. J. DINN: What consultants exactly would have been used, I guess? If we had no requirement, who would they be or what would their specialty be?

MS. GOGAN: In the past, at times, consultants might have been hired to do evaluation and that sort of thing but those are being done in-house. Given priorities and listening to our community partners, as the minister mentioned, the budget has been rightsized so that the monies are all being used for grants for community partners.

MR. J. DINN: Okay. So in other words, when you say rightsized, moving it from consultants and services like that into Grants and Subsidies to directly help people. Okay.

Last question that I have here: Would the minister provide us with a list of the programs – I think he gave us that, so I am good. Thank you, Minister.

CHAIR: I believe I see two white flags are up.

Okay, thank you very much for your indulgence. I'll ask the Clerk now to read the section headings.

CLERK: 3.1.01 to 3.1.02 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 through to 3.1.02 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.1.01 through 3.1.02 carried.

CLERK: Total.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall I approve the Estimates of the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: I thank you very much for your time.

The minutes have been circulated from our last meeting. I need someone to move that they be accepted.

MR. LOVELESS: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: I see the MHA for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune. Thank you very much, Mr. Loveless.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

CHAIR: I also would like to invite the minister to see if he has any final remarks.

MR. WARR: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I certainly appreciate the great questions that were coming from our Opposition Members this evening. Again, as I thank the members from the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, the executive, I also want to thank the members from CSSD. These are the group of people that I spend just about every day with. I get to see Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation people just one or two days a week, but this is my mainstay; they're my main squeezes. Anyway, I certainly appreciate the good work that they continue to do.

We promised the hon. the Minister of Finance that we would be out on time tonight, and Mr. Dwyer was giving me thumbs up on 9 o'clock, so I appreciate that as well.

Thank you to all the Table staff and to you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr. Dwyer, any final remarks?

MR. DWYER: Yes, I would also reiterate Minister Warr's comments and say thank you very much for your time this evening. Thank you very much to the Table staff and the Chair. Thanks to the Committee for giving us some guidance. Thanks to my colleague for asking a

lot of my questions. Great minds think alike, I guess.

Like I said, it's a very vulnerable sector of the province and I would just like to say that we all have to do our due diligence to make sure that – I guess a lot of it stays out of the media because nobody wins when that happens, but sometimes that's a necessary evil. It's nothing personal when that happens. In the meantime, like I said, thank you very much for your time and I think the department is doing a great job.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr. Dinn.

MR. J. DINN: No, I, too, thank the minister and his staff. Any time you're dealing with vulnerable people, it's fraught with risks and dangers. Hindsight is 20/20 in a lot of it, but you're trying to navigate on a day by day, so I understand that as a former teacher. But good work.

The only other thing I would say, except thank you, is to caution my Member that when he uses a saying, he should be aware of the second half of it, which is while great minds think alike, fools seldom differ.

CHAIR: Right on.

Thank you.

A final notice to my colleagues on the Social Services sector, we are back for our next meeting in 12 hours from now, so 0900 hours. So you can just get your pillow out and just sleep comfortable here.

I need now a motion to adjourn.

MR. LOVELESS: So moved.

CHAIR: The Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, thank you very much.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

See you tomorrow.

Thank you.

On motion, the Committee adjourned.