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

May 6, 2022 - Issue 10

Department of Education

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Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

## **SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE**

Department of Education

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Chair: Sherry Gambin-Walsh, MHA

Vice-Chair: Joedy Wall, MHA

Members: James Dinn, MHA  
Jeff Dwyer, MHA  
Paul Pike, MHA  
Scott Reid, MHA  
Lucy Stoyles, MHA

Clerk of the Committee: Sandra Barnes

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Appearing:

### **Department of Education**

Hon. Tom Osborne, MHA, Minister

Dr. Greg O'Leary, Deputy Minister

Eldred Barnes, Associate Deputy Minister

Robyn Hayes, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services

Scott Linehan, Assistant Deputy Minister, K-12 and Early Childhood Learning

Brad Clarke, Director, Programs and Services

Rob Feaver, Director, Student Financial Services

Mary Goss-Prowse, Director, Early Learning and Child Development

Regan Power, Director, Post-Secondary

Tracy Stamp, Departmental Coordinator

Marc Budgell, Director of Communications

Tina Lamb, Executive Assistant to the Minister

### **Also Present**

Hon. Bernard Davis, MHA, Minister of Environment and Climate Change

Hon. Siobhan Coady, MHA, Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board

Barry Petten, MHA

Scott Fleming, Third Party Office

David Hamlyn, Government Members' Office

Darrell Hynes, Official Opposition Office

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Bernard Davis, MHA for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, substitutes for Paul Pike, MHA for Burin - Grand Bank.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Barry Petten, MHA for Conception Bay South, substitutes for Jeff Dwyer, MHA for Placentia West - Bellevue.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Siobhan Coady, MHA for St. John's West, substitutes for Scott Reid, MHA for St. George's - Humber.

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

**CHAIR (Gambin-Walsh):** Folks, we will call the meeting to order. Today we will have, shortly, substituting for MHA Pike, Minister Davis will be substituting. Substituting for MHA Reid, we have Minister Coady, and substituting for MHA Dwyer, we have MHA Petten.

We don't have any independents here right now and if they do join us, we will allow them 10 minutes at the end when everybody is finished if the Committee is okay with that.

So we will probably take a break around 10:20, 10:15, just so whoever is on the other side can know when we are going to break also, if that is okay, or whenever we are at the end. If we finish early, we will keep going.

When it is your time to speak, I want you just to remember to make sure your red light is on, to identify yourself and if the light doesn't come on, just give a gentle wave. They will be just looking to make sure who is speaking. I am going to ask the Committee – so the employees have to wear a mask, but Members do not have to wear a mask. We can put them on or not put them on. So I just want to let you know that.

I am going to ask the Committee Members to introduce themselves first then I will ask the minister to introduce his members or get them to introduce themselves when we call the meeting to order, and then the minister can have his few minutes and we will start the questions.

Okay, the Committee – MHA Petten.

**B. PETTEN:** Barry Petten, MHA for Conception Bay South.

**D. HYNES:** Darrell Hynes, Director of Research and Legislative Affairs with the Opposition Office.

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

**CHAIR:** We are waiting for a red light down there on the end.

**S. FLEMING:** Scott Fleming, Researcher, Third Party Caucus.

**D. HAMLYN:** Dave Hamlyn, Sessional Support, Government Members Office.

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

Bernie Davis from Virginia Waters will be with us momentarily.

**L. STOYLES:** Lucy Stoyles, MHA, Mount Pearl North.

**CHAIR:** Minister Osborne.

**T. OSBORNE:** Thank you.

Tom Osborne, Minister and I guess we will start with the eldest of our group.

**E. BARNES:** Thank you, Minister.

Eldred Barnes, Associate Deputy Minister.

**G. O'LEARY:** Greg O'Leary, Deputy Minister.

**R. HAYES:** Robyn Hayes, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services.

**M. BUDGELL:** Marc Budgell, Director of Communications.

**T. STAMP:** Tracy Stamp, Departmental Controller.

**R. FEAVER:** Robert Feaver, Director of Student Financial Services.

**S. LINEHAN:** Scott Linehan, ADM, K-12 and Early Learning.

**R. POWER:** Regan Power, Director of Literacy and Institutional Services.

**B. CLARKE:** Bradley Clarke, Director of Programs and Services.

**M. GOSS-PROWSE:** Mary Goss-Prowse, Director of Early Learning and Child Development.

**T. LAMB:** Tina Lamb, Ministerial Liaison.

**CHAIR:** I just want to mention also if you could please not adjust the chairs and that there are water coolers on each end right here for your disposal.

I bring the Committee's attention to the minutes that are here from the meeting of May 2 and I ask for a mover.

**L. STOYLES:** So moved.

**CHAIR:** MHA Stoyles has moved the minutes.

Is that accepted?

Carried.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

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

**CLERK (Barnes):** Executive Services, 1.1.01 through 1.2.01.

**CHAIR:** Shall Executive Services 1.1.01 to 1.2.01 carry?

Minister, do you have any introduction?

**T. OSBORNE:** No, I won't bore everybody with a monologue. I'm sure that everybody

would appreciate getting out maybe 10 or 15 minutes earlier, so go ahead.

**CHAIR:** All right, thank you.

MHA Petten.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Minister and staff.

I have some general questions as well that I'll weave in and out, but I'll just do this section first. So 1.1.01, salary increase there in the Minister's Office of \$74,000. Are there new staff?

**T. OSBORNE:** You didn't get the raise, Barry?

**B. PETTEN:** I didn't get the raise?

**T. OSBORNE:** You didn't get the raise; I got a big raise.

**B. PETTEN:** No, you voted that down. We were supposed to get one.

**G. O'LEARY:** (Inaudible) severance payout for one of our EAs.

**B. PETTEN:** Pardon me?

**G. O'LEARY:** That's a severance payout.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay, thank you.

In 1.2.01, Salaries again, \$91,000?

**G. O'LEARY:** Again, Barry, that's our associate deputy, Eldred Barnes. We had to find funding for that within.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

**G. O'LEARY:** And it's partially offset by the fact that we never had an ADM for a few months. So that's where the \$91,000 comes from.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

I just have some general questions that we ask every year. Can we have a copy of the briefing binder or notes? Attrition plan – is that still

being followed or what numbers are associated with that?

**T. OSBORNE:** Every department has the attrition plan – Robyn?

**R. HAYES:** We met our attrition target last year, and we follow it. Our target was met last year, so we're compliant with that.

**B. PETTEN:** What was your target?

**R. HAYES:** Our target was a total of I think it was \$36,000 over two years, and we met that target last year.

**B. PETTEN:** How many retirements or vacancies are not filled in the department? Do you have those numbers, like the general breakdown of all those numbers?

**R. HAYES:** I do, yeah. So retirements the last fiscal year there were four, and we had 19 new hires. Fifteen of those were temporary positions, three were permanent and one was a contractual position. We currently have 50 vacancies, but with the passing of this budget we'll be adding 27 new positions to the department so those are allotted in that 50 that are vacant. We're waiting for those to be created.

**B. PETTEN:** Are they going to be a result of the merger of the school district?

**R. HAYES:** No, the majority of those vacant positions, 22 of those, are resulting from our new Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, there are 22 associated with that. We have four associated with student financial services because of the new Tuition Relief Grant and there is one in K to 12 to respond to the Technology Career Pathway program.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

And what about contractual and short-term employees?

**R. HAYES:** Contractual and short-term employees, we currently have 4 contractual positions within the department. Some of those new positions that we will be creating, there are, I believe, four of those that will be contractual.

Those are federally funded, so any federally funded positions, if they're a management-level position are automatically contractual because they're tied to federal funding.

**B. PETTEN:** So those other four, are they executive positions as well?

**R. HAYES:** Executive positions?

**B. PETTEN:** You said it's four contractual.

**R. HAYES:** Right.

**B. PETTEN:** So where are they to in the department?

**R. HAYES:** We have one in my branch; it's a management position. If you're a temporary manager it's called contractual. There's one of those in our Policy and Information Management Division. We currently have one in Curriculum and we have two in Early Learning, which would be tied to federal funding.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

Did your department receive any funds from the contingency fund last year?

**T. OSBORNE:** The air purifiers were about \$9 million or \$8 million or something – \$8 million.

**B. PETTEN:** Minister, I know your department received a lot of money for education from the COVID fund. So did you receive any funds?

**T. OSBORNE:** The federal COVID fund?

**B. PETTEN:** Well, I guess both because there has been both streams of money so I was speaking generally.

**T. OSBORNE:** Yeah, so the federal fund would have been under last year's budget.

**B. PETTEN:** Right.

**T. OSBORNE:** And that covered busing and guidance and admin and some extra custodial staff within the schools' cleaning protocols. This year there was no federal – under this fiscal year I don't think – was there? Well, we received it

last year and some of it might have flowed into this year but it was from the same pot.

Provincially, the COVID contingency is what paid for the air purifiers and filtration systems in our classrooms this year.

**B. PETTEN:** I have a question, too, on the attrition. I wasn't really clear on the answer on attrition to be honest. So attrition is continuing on is it? It's going to continue on in future years?

**R. HAYES:** Our last attrition target would have been given to us in 2020-21; it was a two-year attrition target. We have no new attrition targets in this budget. Any attrition targets we had we met last year by the abolishment of a position.

**B. PETTEN:** So going forward there's no –

**R. HAYES:** For the department there's currently no attrition target going forward.

**B. PETTEN:** These are some general questions, Minister.

Amalgamation of the school district into the department, where are we to with that? What's the latest?

**CHAIR:** Minister Osborne.

**T. OSBORNE:** So work is progressing. We're on target. We will see the continuation of the transition between now and September. In terms of, I guess, the departmental and the district review of what the transition plan and phased approach, that work has been done. The transition will continue.

We're looking at things like teacher payroll, obviously. The IT, the differences in IT between the district and government, so we'll be working with OCIO in terms of that, in terms of the infrastructure and maintaining the infrastructure. Some of that will be going to Transportation and Infrastructure once the transition is complete, but we've looked at a number of departments and where things belong once it's transitioned into government. So that process is ongoing.

**B. PETTEN:** Will there be many job losses?

**T. OSBORNE:** Not at this stage. We've indicated that there would be no mass layoffs. There are currently, I think, 500 vacant positions within government. So where there is duplication of services, every effort will be made to redeploy staff if that is necessary.

We've had some attrition at the school district. With the word that the district will be transitioning into the department, people who were able to retire probably have retired so we've had some staff at the district who have retired and so on. Those positions are being looked at very, very carefully before they're refilled to determine whether or not they're needed.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay, thank you.

So any savings that's going to be realized from this merger, I guess, is the plan to reinvest that money back into classrooms? Is that the plan?

**T. OSBORNE:** Yes, that is the plan. So as you know by this year's budget, we had a significant increase in the Education budget this year. Part of that is looking forward and knowing that there will be savings. We've paid it forward essentially and invested it this year. We anticipate this year somewhere between \$1.5 million and \$2 million as a result of the transition in this year's budget. There'll be further savings next year, but, like I said, we've invested it this year based on knowing that there will be savings.

**B. PETTEN:** Minister, the 70 teachers hired under the COVID funding, are they getting renewed next year?

**T. OSBORNE:** Sorry, I couldn't hear the question.

**B. PETTEN:** There were 70 additional teachers hired under the COVID funding. Are they getting renewed next year?

**T. OSBORNE:** The administration and guidance counsellors, for example, we've funded that even though it was federal funding last year, the province picked that up because that funding dried up so we've maintained those positions, for example, so they will continue.

I think the number 70 that you're talking about were the substitutes that we gave contracts to. That process has worked well and we've continued that this year.

Robyn, do you know of the number that we've put under – has it increased from 70 or –?

**R. HAYES:** We did increase it during the COVID year that we were into, I think, it was 100, but it went back to 70.

**T. OSBORNE:** So the 70 is maintained. I mean, that's worked well, so instead of having a substitute bounce from school to school to school, there is a substitute who's basically under contract with a school. That school knows that substitute is there. It makes the job easier for administrators, for the school itself and for the substitutes.

**B. PETTEN:** You mentioned about guidance counsellors. Are there going to be extra resources added to the schools in the coming year? Is that in the plan because that seems to be a bit of a problem to a lot of schools as well?

**T. OSBORNE:** Yeah. I mean, we obviously saw the need. So last year with COVID, under the federal funding, like I said, the additional guidance and admin were funded federally. This year when that funding evaporated, the province picked up that so that's now permanent. It's part of the budget. It will be staying there. We are awaiting the Teacher Allocation Review Process now and that will guide us into the future.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

Extra cleaning supplies and custodians, I mean, hopefully, we're in the downside of COVID, is that going to continue in September at the same levels or is there any adjustment plan for that or –?

**R. HAYES:** So that extra cleaning and custodian that was measured under the COVID contingency fund or from the federal restart funding that we received, that wasn't continued last year. We relied on our current student operations budget to fund our custodians.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

Minister, the CEO of the francophone school board, is there a planned replacement for that position or any progress in that process?

**T. OSBORNE:** In the francophone district, currently, they've got a temporary replacement they've taken from their existing staff – assigned somebody temporarily. The francophone district themselves will undertake a search for a permanent CEO and that has to be signed off by the department when they find a permanent replacement.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

On that same topic, the Comptroller General was doing an investigation into the school boards. So is that still continuing even in the absence of the former CEO?

**T. OSBORNE:** Yeah. I had checked last week, actually, on the status and I understand that the Comptroller General's report is nearing completion and as soon as we get a copy of that, Barry, I will furnish yourself and Jim with a copy of that as well. But I anticipate it, maybe even as early as next week.

Today is Friday so when we spoke to them last week they didn't give us an exact date on when we would have it but we were thinking we could even have it this week.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

**T. OSBORNE:** So I anticipate we'll probably have it next week.

Now, I don't want to put words on the Comptroller General's mouth because they didn't give us a specific date but I anticipate it any day.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

One more before time wraps up for me.

Air quality testing in the schools since we have the new air purifiers: Has there been any testing

done since these purifiers have been installed in schools?

**T. OSBORNE:** I don't know if there's been a standardized test. Robin or Greg?

**G. O'LEARY:** There's regular air testing, Barry, that goes on every year. We checked in with the person who's in charge of that at the district. So that has continued to this period.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay. So since the purifiers have been installed it's continued on?

**G. O'LEARY:** Yes.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

Madam Chair, I'll divert over.

**CHAIR:** The Member's time has expired.

MHA Dinn?

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

Thank you, folks, for coming to answer the questions in what is a lot more pleasant lighting than the House of Assembly when the lights are on.

I want to start off with – and I'll try not to repeat what my colleague said, he's asked a few questions that I was planning – recruitment and retention of teachers. I'm thinking certainly in the NLESD there is, if I understand, \$75,000 that's been allocated to recruiting teachers for the francophone school board. There's a think tank with nurses to recruit nurses. There's funding to increase student assistants and the new early childhood educators for the school system. But what is there in terms of an effort to recruit teachers for the general system for the English school system? Because if anything I've heard there is a shortage. You're well aware of the issue in Menihek in the high school there.

So I'm just wondering what are the plans to actually recruit teachers and bring them into the force.

**T. OSBORNE:** So I'll speak briefly, I know my deputy can probably add to that.

The francophone funding is an agreement with the federal government to recruit for francophone. I know that there's a shortage of teachers, not only in this province, nationally and globally there's a shortage of teachers. So while the francophone is a very specific search because they require French language first for their educators so it's more challenging for the francophone district in terms of recruitment than it would be for the English stream. The federal government in the English provinces has provided assistance in terms of recruitment.

We've been working with the dean in the Faculty of Education. In fact, discussions are ongoing with the dean in terms of recruitment efforts. I know that the English School District has carried out their own recruitment efforts, not only in terms of repatriation of Newfoundland and Labrador individuals who've moved away, but looking for other individuals.

Greg, did you want to –

**G. O'LEARY:** Yeah, just to give you a little bit of a breakdown, Mr. Dinn.

First of all, meetings were held with Memorial University right through the pandemic. As a result of that, they put on extra cohorts in their programs. So we should see the benefits of that this coming year. We'll have extra teachers graduating at this coming year.

We had a meeting with the NLTA on this matter, they made several suggestions, some of which we've already incorporated. There's been a meeting with the district administrators, already referred to. The English School District is doing many things to try to recruit teachers: CareerBeacon, fairs, all kinds of incentives in rural areas and things to that effect.

The timing is good on the question because there is a larger meeting today. What we've realized through all of those meetings is we need all four bodies to come together, which is the English School District, Memorial University, the NLTA and the Department of Education. That meetings is happening this afternoon at 1 o'clock.

In addition to all the things that we've already done, we're going to come together and come up with some long term – so as you know in



Menihek we've put some short-term solutions in place. We brought in some supports and things to that effect in the short term. We've increased the number of retired teachers who could substitute. We've brought in the emergency supply, all those things, but I think at this stage now we're looking for a long-term recruitment plan.

So in addition to the individual meetings with all those groups, the larger meeting today will happen and I'll be happy to report to you some of the things that come out of that.

**J. DINN:** Just in follow-up to that, I'm just wondering, in terms of the government employees, how many fractional units are there in the other divisions of government whether it's Transportation – so like you have a 0.25 or a 0.3 or a 0.15. I ask that because in teaching that's exactly what you're getting are the fractional units. So you're sometimes advertising for a fractional unit to go in a community, I'll say on the Burin Peninsula or the Northern Peninsula. The problem with that is you're hardly going to get a teacher to go up there to work at a 0.25 salary, no real guarantee of filling in.

So in terms of that is there any indication, let's say, to eliminate this whole fractional unit approach to teaching, because I think it impedes the recruitment?

The other part there, I don't think in any other department do you have fractional units. You don't have a 0.25 deputy minister, for example, or a 0.25 program specialist. You have full-time positions. Yet, in teaching you have that. So I'm just wondering what's the plan to address that.

**T. OSBORNE:** Well, that comes out of the Teacher Allocation Review and the teacher allocation process. We will be guided – that process is under way, as you know, and we anticipate receiving a report from them in the coming months and that allocation process. I won't presume what is going to come out of that, you know, but we will respect the process and the findings of the Teacher Allocation Review.

**J. DINN:** Okay.

So, right now, how many people are currently employed in your department as it stands right now? I guess where I am looking at: I know there is no anticipated job loses but do you anticipate them changing as the NLESD is integrated into the department?

**T. OSBORNE:** Where there is duplication of service, we will work to find, I guess, redeployment where there is duplication. But as I indicated to Barry in a question earlier, we have had some retirements and attrition at the NLESD. I know they're looking very carefully at recruitment for positions where there is attrition occurring to determine whether or not those positions will be necessary as the transition happens and they come into government.

**J. DINN:** Okay.

**T. OSBORNE:** But, you know, with 500 vacant positions throughout government, job loses will be at a very minimal, I would suspect. We've already indicated that there would be no mass layoffs so I would expect that the impact would be very, very minimal.

**J. DINN:** Okay.

This is just following up from last year, I think the comment was that as we get into – you mentioned, as we get into the transition process, we would have a better idea of what we're hoping to achieve. So I'm trying to get a better idea of what we're hoping to achieve in terms of finding the efficiencies.

Is it possible to have the figures for the number of teachers currently employed in the province with a breakdown as to the region? That is one. As well, I wonder how many deaf educators are there. I'm not talking about necessarily people versed in sign language but actual deaf educators, like we would have had in the school for the deaf, who are in the department and in the school system itself.

**T. OSBORNE:** We can work to get you those numbers. I don't think we have them here today.

**J. DINN:** Okay. That would be great.

In last year's Estimates, it was mentioned that there was a legislative review planned in the department. Has this gone ahead? That was in last year's Estimates.

**T. OSBORNE:** Robyn can answer that.

**R. HAYES:** So we did have money budgeted there under Professional Services for a legislative review. What we chose to do instead, we hired actually a manager of legislative review to work in the department. That would be the contractual position I mentioned earlier in the Policy Division. That person is looking at a number of pieces of legislation including our Schools Act and our *Teacher Training Act* currently.

**J. DINN:** Okay.

And how much progress, with regard to the integration of the NLESD into the department, you mentioned I think it was integration of the payroll system and the financial system. Is there any work that's left outstanding, that's still a piece to be done in this integration process? Any major challenges?

**T. OSBORNE:** There's a great deal of work to be done. We've reviewed the org plans for both the district and the department. I know that there are a number of discussions that have taken place. Some of the English School District, as it currently stands in terms of IT, is a better fit with OCIO, for example. Some in terms of teacher payroll would be a better fit with Finance. So we've looked at what is a best fit in terms of the delivery of education and what belongs in the department and what is a better fit in other areas. Building maintenance, for example, would be better dealt with by Transportation and Infrastructure.

So a great deal of work has already happened in terms of how the integration will happen and what fits with what. So the process is well under way and continues.

**J. DINN:** Okay, thank you.

**CHAIR:** The Member's time has expired.

Thank you, MHA Dinn.

MHA Petten.

**B. PETTEN:** Do you want to go and vote on this section? I'll start off in the new section, if you want to.

**CHAIR:** Mr. Dinn, do you have any more additional questions on this section?

**J. DINN:** With regard to –

**CHAIR:** MHA Dinn, so you're staying on this section 1.1?

**J. DINN:** Yes, I am.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

**B. PETTEN:** I can keep going, Chair. I could ask questions all day long, too.

**CHAIR:** So do you have questions on this section?

**B. PETTEN:** Yes, I have lots.

**CHAIR:** Okay we'll continue on with MHA Petten.

Keep going.

**B. PETTEN:** My glasses, I can't see nothing now.

Anyway –

**T. OSBORNE:** Well, Barry, the worst thing about trying to find your glasses is you can't see them.

**B. PETTEN:** I know. I'm getting worse every day, too.

I will continue on with my questions I guess because the section is pretty small, but in any event, the Green report recommendations, Minister, has there been an analysis done within the department on what your plan is with any of those, all or any of those?

**T. OSBORNE:** The Green report, the report on post-secondary review, we have obviously

analyzed all of the recommendations. I have indicated previously in the Legislature that those are recommendations. It is not direction. So the recommendations of any of those reviews help guide us in our decisions, obviously, but there are things that, you know, we look more closely at and there are items that we fully accepted and items that are not necessarily on the front burner and whether we get to those or not.

I think Mr. Dinn had asked a question previously in the Legislature about the principles, for example, out of the Green report. So that is something that we said wasn't on the front burner at that particular time. It is not on the front burner today, for example. So we do use those recommendations as a guide and we analyze the recommendations but not necessarily every recommendation is going to be implemented.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you.

Minister, what is the status of the curriculum update for K to 12, particularly when it applies to cultural sensitivity?

**T. OSBORNE:** So we have – and I will get Brad to speak to this a little further, but curriculum updates is an ongoing process within the department. It takes a great deal of time and effort to change curriculum but curriculum update is an ongoing process.

In terms of cultural sensitivities, there was one textbook where there was an issue identified. We've identified to educators teaching that particular piece of curriculum to not use that particular – I think it's two pages within that piece of curriculum. So they're not going to use that. We've given them guidance in terms of how to deal with that. That particular piece of curriculum is under review with the aim to replacement.

Brad did you want to speak a little bit to the ongoing process because I know in terms of cultural sensitivity whether it is our Indigenous communities, we've got an advisory committee to the department that includes the five Indigenous leaders. In terms of multicultural

issues, we've got a committee that is probably formed now.

Brad can give you an update on that? But certainly it's under way in terms of multicultural issues and so on. They will help guide the future curriculum certainly within the province.

Brad.

**B. CLARKE:** Yes, the minister is bang on with that. It normally takes about three years from beginning to fully –

**CHAIR:** Excuse me.

You can take off your mask to speak if you want to. You can take off your mask to speak.

**B. CLARKE:** Oh, okay.

Normal curriculum development process would take about three years. So we have about – a short time ago, about a year and a half, looked at our model of curriculum development so that cultural sensitivity and Indigenous history, culture and language are reflected on all of our curriculum K to 12 so that we have steps in the process now to ensure things like – that happened in the Social Studies program, hopefully, won't ever happen again.

We have several, as the minister points out, committees that are engaged in helping us determine that, where it best fits. Those committees have a very broad membership. Also, I guess, I'd like to point out that we've developed a framework document as well, that outlines the expectations from curriculum development on a go-forward basis and in our policies.

About a year ago, we started on a multi-stepped professional learning exercise for the staff within the Department of Education within programs and services to ensure that they have the very latest information and can apply that, the latest knowledge in our policy and curriculum development.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you.

Minister, I guess I'll move to the one nursing school: Has the department done any analysis on the cost benefits of this?

**T. OSBORNE:** It's currently under way. I know we've had discussions with Memorial University and they are certainly working towards that goal. I think, you know, there are not only delivery operational efficiencies but eventually fiscal efficiencies in terms of that. So that work is under way and Memorial are actively engaged in that process.

**B. PETTEN:** I suppose in the same theme, the one health faculty which was announced recently in the budget for MUN, where we –

**T. OSBORNE:** Yeah, both the nursing will eventually come under health. The health faculty will be under health the same as the medical school, but Memorial has a closer relationship with education, obviously, so the work has started. I know Memorial University, as far back as two years ago, had started talking about a health faculty, you know, a broad faculty, instead of just the Faculty of Medicine, a health faculty.

I understand that they had done a report to Memorial University on one health faculty and it wasn't a significant report, I think it was five or six pages, the Whiteside report I believe was the name of it was. Because I know your researchers are now saying let's put an ATIPP in for the Whiteside report.

**B. PETTEN:** Any day.

**T. OSBORNE:** So it is the Whiteside report for your researchers. It is about five or six pages, but it just indicates that it is a good idea to look towards a faculty of health as opposed to just a Faculty of Medicine. So, again, eventually that will have a closer relationship with the Department of Health, but it will be led by Memorial University, the same as the Faculty of Medicine.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you.

Minister, when can we expect to see MUN appearing before Public Accounts?

**T. OSBORNE:** I know that our Finance Minister is sitting directly behind you. So the question was when do we anticipate seeing MUN before –

**B. PETTEN:** Public Accounts.

**T. OSBORNE:** – Estimates Committees? I think that process is under way for agencies, boards and commissions. I don't want to speak for the Minister of Finance but it will probably be as early as next year.

**S. COADY:** It's with the House Leaders.

**T. OSBORNE:** Oh, so the House Leaders, okay.

**S. COADY:** So the House Leaders are trying to – that's what I understand – the House Leaders are going to figure out a process.

**T. OSBORNE:** Yeah, so the intention has been –

**S. COADY:** So House Leader, figure out a process with your other House Leaders.

**T. OSBORNE:** – announced; it will happen. I guess the decision is not mine to make, but the process has started.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you.

I guess my colleague will have to talk to me about that. He hasn't told me about that one yet, but that's fine.

What about the status of the new law school? Has there been any analysis done within the department on that? I know MUN seem eager on it, but from your department's perspective has there been any real analysis done other than the budgetary issues that come with it?

**T. OSBORNE:** I know the president of Memorial had talked about and looked at a law school for the province. I think government's position on it is very clear that we don't see the need for a law school in the province. We've articulated that publicly.

At some point, if MUN gets autonomy – part of the process with changes to the Memorial act is

ensuring that we have them on a solid footing, so when they eventually get autonomy, that will be a decision that would be made by them, but we want to make sure that there's checks and balances.

Currently, if they were to purchase real estate for a law school, government would have to sign off and agree to that. So we don't want to just simply create a situation where that government oversight is gone; yet, we're giving a great deal of provincial funding to Memorial University. So we want to make sure we get it right in terms of the MUN act.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The Member's time has expired.

Still with Executive Services, MHA Dinn.

**J. DINN:** Just following up on the integration of the school district into the department. It started off that you had targets, let's say attrition targets that you've met within the department. Here's my question: Not with attrition, do you have any targets, I guess, or projections as to what you see as savings, like to the budget line? Nothing to do necessarily with staff but just like in this integration are you anticipating savings and do you have that sort of projection of that?

**T. OSBORNE:** This year we anticipate the impact for this year's budget will be somewhere between \$1.5 million and \$2 million, as a result of the transition. The savings will grow over time as the transition is fully incorporated into government. So that process has started.

It's a complex organization. Just to give an example, the English School District uses PowerSchool, Google Classroom and Cayenta. Those are IT functions that are not necessarily used by government.

**J. DINN:** Right.

**T. OSBORNE:** So it is not as simple as saying we're going to integrate the IT section into government; boom, there it is, it's done. These processes take a great deal of analysis and whether the Cayenta system that's being used by the district is the best system or whether we can change PeopleSoft, for example, within

government to incorporate everything that Cayenta does. So there's still analysis on things like IT that need to take place.

**J. DINN:** And would it be possible to have a breakdown of where the anticipated savings are? You don't have to do that now, but like where do you anticipate these savings to come over the next few years, if that's possible. If that analysis has been done.

**T. OSBORNE:** So as I indicated, we know that it'll be \$1.5 million to \$2 million this year. But the savings will grow over time. So in terms of things like IT, the work on whether or not our school systems are better off with Google Classroom and the district is better off with Cayenta, those are things that will take a longer period of time.

So the total savings, it's hard to put a circle around the number and say those are the total savings. But we've already seen savings this year in the range of \$1.5 million to \$2 million in this year's budget based on the progress to date. So we do anticipate significantly higher savings. But we can't give you a specific number.

**J. DINN:** No, no, what I'm looking at is just over the next – I'm not looking for it now, but an itemized where do we see the savings, if there's a projection of where do we see where these savings could occur; not will occur, but could, where you're anticipating.

**T. OSBORNE:** Yeah.

**J. DINN:** With regards to the integration, I'll pass this on: school administrators want to know what the plans are for September. And they're trying to figure out – I'll give you an example. They're looking at as it affects the hiring process that principals are engaged in terms of they are part of the ones that will be doing the interviewing and so on and so forth. Usually that's in collaboration with either HR or people at the district.

So they're trying to find out basically what it will look like. Basically, they've said to me that we haven't been given any information as to who do we answer to now. Is it at the district? Is it at the department? Who do we go to in the hiring process? So is there any clarity for school

administrators? Because we're into May and it's getting up to one of the busiest times for schools and for administrators.

**T. OSBORNE:** I anticipate that the functions of administrators in schools leading into this September will look very much like they did last September and that is part of, you know, the transition. We want to do this in a way where we – I mean, we could potentially get much greater savings but it would have a huge disruption within the system. So we are doing this in as methodical a way that we can so that the system itself is not disrupted. So administrators' functions will be very much the same this September as they were last September. There won't be any disruption to that.

**J. DINN:** Right and they are just looking for: Who do we speak to now as this board? Who do we speak to when it comes to hiring? They're worried about their function but they're also concerned as to who offers the guidance now. Is it still the same people at the district or is it to do with – are they now going to people at the department for when it comes to the hiring process and how they go about the hiring? That's what they are looking for some clarity on that.

You may not have an answer for that now but just something that you need to be aware of. They are concerned as to what is the relationship with the district.

Is it possible to have – you won't have it now, I know, but the number of air quality tests that were conducted in the schools throughout the year, the actual number, and what schools they were conducted in? I know you said that there has been regular testing, but I wouldn't mind having that number as to where and when.

And also if I remember the specs for the air purifiers, there was a requirement for filter exchanges in that and cleaning of it, an update on that as to I guess if there's a budget for that and how many times that has been done now since the beginning of the school year for those air purifiers?

**T. OSBORNE:** We can endeavour to get that for you.

**J. DINN:** And how much money has been allocated this year for upgrades to the mechanical ventilation systems or HVAC systems in the school? What line would that fall under if it's there?

**T. OSBORNE:** Do you have that Robyn?

**R. HAYES:** So anything to do with the alterations and improvements and maintenance of the buildings, that would fall under Transportation and Infrastructure. It is not actually within the Department of Education's budget.

**J. DINN:** Okay.

Is there a plan to increase the number of ESL teachers, itinerants and specialists to help integrate children of refugee and immigrant families into the school system and other supports that they need to make sure that they have the supports they need in the school system?

**T. OSBORNE:** Yeah. We've had 30 additional units as a result of increased enrolment, and part of that were the Afghanistan refugees. We also had the equivalent, because they're spread out, of 30 other resources put into our school system to deal with increased enrolment. There's been, as a result of the Education Action Plan, I believe, 12, was it, English, second-language educators put into the system.

Much of what the process that we've undertaken in terms of the Afghanistan refugees will also apply to Ukrainian refugees. We are anticipating within the next week, somewhere between 150 and 200 Ukrainian – now I wouldn't call them refugees, because it's – but Ukrainian newcomers to the province. The individuals are a little different than the Afghanistan refugees in terms of the status of the newcomers when they arrive to Newfoundland and Labrador.

So once they arrive the process will start in terms of the learning system that's within the

English School District in terms of communication and working with the Association of New Canadians to determine the level of requirements that are needed. Some individuals may be very proficient in English and some may not.

So until the welcome process has taken place, the orientation process has taken place, an assessment of the needs of the individuals, it's difficult to say today, that process starts really once they land.

**J. DINN:** Just with regard to the changes in education, where does the Federation of School Councils stand in all this? Will they be dissolved or will they continue, because I'm hearing that the Federation of School Councils will be dissolved totally.

**T. OSBORNE:** No, we won't be dissolving the Federation of School Councils. I think the relationship between our school councils and government will be more formalized or more recognized than it is today.

**J. DINN:** So they'll carry on as –?

**T. OSBORNE:** Yes.

**J. DINN:** Okay, perfect, thank you.

That's it for me, for that section.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

MHA Dinn, we're going to move on to Corporate Services, is that okay?

**J. DINN:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** I ask the Clerk to recall the grouping, please.

**CLERK:** Executive Services, 1.1.01 and 1.2.01.

**CHAIR:** Shall Executive Services, 1.1.01 to 1.2.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 1.2.01 carried.

**CHAIR:** I ask the Clerk to call the next grouping.

**CLERK:** Corporate Services, 2.1.01 and 2.1.02.

**CHAIR:** Corporate Services, 2.1.01 to 2.1.02.

MHA Petten.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Chair.

Under 2.1.01, a few questions there.

Under Salaries, there's a small fluctuation. It was a little less last year. It's gone back up. Is there staff leaving or a shortage or – what is the reason for that?

**T. STAMP:** So in Salaries we had savings in '21-'22 and that was due to we didn't have any co-op students. Normally, we would have a commerce co-op student in the fall and winter semesters. Due to COVID-related challenges, we decided not to have that co-op student this year. Also, there was some vacant positions in other areas for various periods of time.

From budget to budget there was a slight decrease and that was due to new positions; we had some turnover and the new employees are at lower steps than the previous incumbents. So our budgets are now a bit lower to accommodate that lower step level.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

So that would affect Employee Benefits as well. I guess that drop of –

**T. STAMP:** The Employee Benefits?

**B. PETTEN:** Yeah.

**T. STAMP:** In Employee Benefits, that budget basically incorporates our workplace – the majority of that budget is for WorkplaceNL costs and that was a lot lower than we had budgeted.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

Property, Furnishings and Equipment, there was an additional \$130,000 spent or budgeted this year from last year – an increase.

**T. STAMP:** Our increase in that Property, Furnishings and Equipment budget is the budget for PF and E for the whole entire department. The increase is related to the federal Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement because we anticipate getting additional staff related to that agreement. There was funding put in there for the related furnishings and equipment that would be required for those employees.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay. Basically getting set up for them?

**T. STAMP:** Yes.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

2.1.02, the Grants and Subsidies, \$1.5 million: Can we get a breakdown of where this money goes or –?

**T. STAMP:** Yes. We have it now if you want it now or we can get it. The big part of that budget is the Murphy Centre, which is \$866,000. We have Cultural Connections, which is \$450,000. We also have the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training, which is \$119,000; the Council of Ministers of Education Canada at \$118,600; the Federation of School Councils at \$40,000; and Learning Disabilities Association at \$25,000.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay. Thank you very much.

I know it's only a small amount but I'm just curious: What's that Grants and Subsidies in section 2.1.01? It's only like \$35,000. What would that be?

**T. OSBORNE:** That is essentially for if a school is going on a sporting trip or if there's a need within a school. It's province wide. The school will advise the department – I can get you some further details on that, Barry.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay. I appreciate that.

So I'm just going back to some general questions. That was a short section.

Minister, to your question when we were finishing up the last round there on the law school and the autonomy at MUN. So, I guess, and ironically we have probably been disagreeing but agreeing on this topic for quite some time in different forms, but it jumps out at me when MUN gets this autonomy, what prevents them, then, from massive expansions and law schools and everything, you know, skating loops – I won't go down the road of my list of stuff, I will spare you from that today, but you get where I am going.

So how did this not become a runaway train? It's finally given autonomy and I get that point but that's the fear because ultimately the students and our children and grandchildren will be the ones that will possibly have to bear the brunt if we are kind of giving that autonomy. So, I guess, to you on that one – (inaudible) agreement

**T. OSBORNE:** Absolutely. And that's why I say it's more important to get it right than to get it fast in terms of the MUN act. So we are looking at what should be in the new MUN act.

Part of what we will be looking at is accountability agreements, for example, and I know other universities who have greater autonomy than Memorial have accountability agreements with their governments and those accountability agreements would have to be met in order to ensure next year's funding, for example.

So those are the type of things we're looking at. What the final picture of that looks like will be debated on the floor of the Legislature. So it didn't happen this spring. We anticipated this



spring, but like I said it's more important we get it right and to protect – we have a significant investment of taxpayer money going into Memorial University so we have an obligation to ensure that we get it right.

**B. PETTEN:** Absolutely. Thanks for that.

So the footprint expansion freeze, is that still in place this year? Was that continued on?

**T. OSBORNE:** It is, yes.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

I guess we'll go to a topic that I've had a lot of debate, or not debate, actually, a lot of conversation with you and your officials in the last while. I know the issue but update the progress towards \$10-a-day daycare. How is that working out?

**T. OSBORNE:** Yeah, I get Mary to speak a little more, but it's well under way.

So \$10 a day will start in January. We know, and we knew upfront, going to \$25 a day, which saved families significant money out of pocket, and then going to \$15 a day and going to \$10 a day, the more affordable you make early learning, the more families who want early learning, because there are families who can afford \$15 a day that couldn't afford \$40. There will be families who can afford \$10 a day that couldn't afford \$15. So that's a family choice, but obviously when we get to \$10 a day compared to what it was two years ago, prior to going to \$25 a day, the demand for spaces.

So we're seeing that now where there's additional demand and people are saying that they're on a wait-list for early learning as a result of the affordability piece. It's more affordable, so there's more demand. So a month ago or thereabouts, we announced the steps that we're taking to make early learning more accessible. So between the College of the North Atlantic, Keyin College and Academy Canada, we have some 700 seats that are opening to train early learning educators. That will be a year in some cases, two years in others cases, in terms of the level and their ability to get into the workforce.

We've worked with the college. They've got the earn-while-you-learn program, so that we can actually have individuals working in the early learning setting while they're actually going to school. They'll spend a day in the centre, a day in the classroom, a day in the centre, a day in the classroom, that type of thing. I'm not necessarily saying that's the schedule, but half the time will be working in a centre, half in the classroom.

We are expanding the grants to home-based operations that can open immediately, from \$7,500 to \$15,000, to make it more attractive for somebody who wants to set up an early learning centre in their home to be able to do that. You don't need the same level of training that you do to work in an operation if you've got a home-based centre. That's a more immediate step.

We've provided funding to Family and Child Care Connections to promote that now. They're expanding into Central and into Labrador. They were in Eastern and Western regions of the province. They've got a focus to expand even further in those regions as well.

The grant for operations that opened, we've increased it from \$5,000 per new space to \$7,000 per new space created. There are several other increased bursaries and grants for students to go to school. We're working with IPGS now on other mechanisms to attract more students into the classrooms. For example, you may have seen on the evening news, or on the radio stations or even on Metrobus, advertising early learning as a career. Because with the additional spaces open for training, the additional grants and bursaries to make it more attractive for people to train, the wage grid will see wages increase to more accurately reflect the valuable work that is being done.

This will be a career where 10 years ago you may have had parents saying to their high school graduates there's no future in that career. Well, now there is. There's laddering. The pay is going to be more attractive; it will more accurately reflect the work.

We are hoping that all of these measures – they take time but this time next year we'll have more spaces than we have this time this year. This time in two years, we'll have more spaces and more ECEs.

Mary, did you want to add to that?

**M. GOSS-PROWSE:** You stole a lot of my thunder, I have to say.

We have received significant funding from the federal government to do a lot of expansion across all of the levels of ECE in the province. As the minister noted, affordability was one that we already had a vehicle by which we could make child care more affordable for the families that were accessing it. We did understand that it would mean there would be an uptake in what the need for child care would be in terms of the regulated sector. But we do have, as the minister noted, capacity money available to not-for-profit organizations and municipalities to start up new child care services. We have a significant number, over usual years, of those projects that are already in play and a number that are on the cusp of signing on. That's across the province.

ECE shortages are unfortunately a reality across Canada, not just here. There is a significant focus in the federal commitment around increasing the number of ECEs. As the minister noted, it's going to take a year or two to see those additional people in the field, because it takes a little time to do the program.

Similarly to the space creation, it's a bit different than opening a corner store. When you're opening a child care service, you have to meet various different pieces of infrastructure need in terms of hiring needs, in terms of all sorts of different areas where you have to meet requirements. So it's not as simple as saying we want 25 spaces, we're going to open a door and there they are. It involves multiple departments and several levels of inspection and assessment.

Again, we have a number of projects that are begun and one that's going to be opening shortly. They just finished their renovations. So we're very hopeful that this time next year we'll be in a much different place, and by '25-'26, we are hoping to have met our target for the federal government, which is an additional 6,000 spaces.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Member's time has expired.

MHA Dinn.

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

Under 2.1.01, Professional Services, it came in over budget last year. I don't know if that was answered or not. It was budgeted \$112,000 and jumped to \$156,700. What was the reason for that?

**T. STAMP:** We were over budget due to additional consulting requirements required for the NLESD integration and for the Teacher Allocation Review Committee.

**J. DINN:** Would you be able to break that down? So the consulting work for the integration, is there a report from that consultant or for that process?

**T. STAMP:** For a breakdown with regard to cost, for the integration we spent \$120,000; for the Teacher Allocation Review Committee, we spent \$36,675.

**J. DINN:** And to whom would that have been paid?

**T. STAMP:** We'll get that for you.

**J. DINN:** If they issued a report, would it be possible to have that report as well? Especially on the integration. I would be interested in that. I would assume that would also have some projections as to what savings and so on and so forth.

The Teacher Allocation, \$36,000: That was for extra administrative support or ...?

**T. STAMP:** That was paid for the members of the Teacher Allocation Review Committee that is currently ongoing.

**J. DINN:** Okay, perfect. Thank you for that.

With regard to the provincial revenue – by the way, we do have a commitment to get that report, just make sure, on the integration? We can have access to that, correct? That report?

I didn't hear a commitment one way or the other; otherwise, I guess we – I don't want to have to go through ATIPP but I would love to see the report.

**T. OSBORNE:** We will endeavour to see what can be released, Jim.

**J. DINN:** Okay, I appreciate that. Thank you very much.

Last year, we received less provincial revenue than was expected. I think it went from \$80,000 to \$50,000 and then it's back up to \$80,000. Any reason for that?

**T. STAMP:** That revenue budget is for, basically, repayments of prior year expenses, which can vary significantly from year over year. The budget is based on an overall average and sometimes it's higher or lower. Repayments of the prior years' expenses in '21-'22 was lower than we anticipated.

**J. DINN:** Perfect.

I'll just use the rest of my time to go back to a few points I didn't get to make in the general. With regard to early childhood educators that my colleague for CBS pointed out, I just want to bring it to your attention. I've been in contact with the minister and I appreciate your help and, certainly, Ms. Goss-Prowse as well. There's no easy answer to this. I understand that.

Just so you're aware, I've had calls from parents right now where they've sought an extra year of leave from their job because they cannot find child care and they're being told you either have to resign, we're not going to grant you the leave – these are teachers, too, by the way – or you're going to have to come back, one or the other. It's an untenable situation to put someone in and it's primarily affecting, in this case, women. That's what it's coming down to.

Certainly, I will do my best in trying to coordinate something because I know it's important. I'm sure we've all either been parents or we have friends and family who are parents. There's an urgency here and I have to emphasize that.

I'm assuming then – just a quick question – with regard to the allocation committee, are you waiting for the report or do they consult with or check in with the department or with you, Minister, every now and again to find out just how the progress is going? I'm just wondering is there ongoing consultation or is it we're going to wait for the report and see what comes out?

**T. OSBORNE:** So far I have not met with the committee. I am available should they choose they want to speak with me, but we don't oversee the work that they're doing. They are completely independent.

**J. DINN:** Okay.

With regard to vaccinations: How many school employees now, teachers and otherwise, are fully vaccinated against COVID? I guess I'm interested in teachers, how many people are unable to return to work because of their vaccination status?

**T. OSBORNE:** We can get the number of individuals that can't return. It's minimal, but we can get that from the NLESD. My understanding is we are well over 99 per cent of educators and staff that have been vaccinated. It's a very small number. I think it's probably like 30, maybe, educators and staff who haven't.

**J. DINN:** Okay.

**T. OSBORNE:** But it was a very small number.

**J. DINN:** That's in total. Okay, that's not bad.

Any update on the progress of the new francophone school? I think we had \$2.5 million for site development. I'm assuming though the new arrangement, it's going into the former School for the Deaf, so any update on how that's proceeding?

**T. OSBORNE:** It's proceeding quite well. We met with the francophone district this week. I know work is ongoing at that site to ensure that it's prepared and ready for them come September.

**J. DINN:** And any update on the Inuit Bachelor of Educating Program?

**T. OSBORNE:** Marc, did you have anything on that?

**M. BUDGELL:** No, I will get that information for you.

**J. DINN:** Thank you very much.

I have just one question – and this has been brought to my attention with regards to the allocation committee. There was a concern and I will say here, that the committee members really the lack of current teaching experience that many have been out of the system, it would be like – I would say I would have more current experience but I don't know if you would want me on the committee. I think you need some people who have been – even like your deputy minister who has been in the classroom recently. I think it's worthwhile to have people like that there. That's a concern that has been expressed. Not taking anything away from the professionalism, but I can tell you that the school system has changed in the time I was a teacher and I would say it has changed drastically since the time I left as well. But that's just a comment. I'm looking forward to that report and I'm hoping there will be further discussion on it.

One last question though with regards to the 35 schools that are now before the court, I think, when it comes to the possibility of – that they could be up for sale in the Mount Cashel sex abuse trial. Are there any contingency plans in place should it be decided that these schools must be – they are now on the block for part of this compensation? Is there any contingency plan by the department or the government to deal with this or to purchase them? I'm not asking for a comment on the case but like a contingency plan.

**T. OSBORNE:** So I respect your questions. As detailed as I can say but as brief as I should be because we have been advised by Justice and Public Safety that, you know, this is an ongoing case and anything can have an impact. So I would just say yes.

**J. DINN:** Okay. That's good.

I just want to make sure that we are not thrown into total chaos at the end of it.

Perfect. Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The Member's time has expired.

MHA Petten.

**B. PETTEN:** If we can move to section 3, I've got nothing further on this one. I'm good to move to the next section.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Are you okay with that, MHA Dinn? We move to the next section?

**J. DINN:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** All right. I ask the Clerk to recall the grouping.

**CLERK:** Corporate Services, 2.1.01 and 2.1.02.

**CHAIR:** Shall Corporate Services, 2.1.01 to 2.1.02 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.1.01 through 2.1.02 carried.

**CHAIR:** I ask the Clerk to call the next group.

**CLERK:** Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education and Early Childhood Development, 3.1.01 to 3.6.01 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education and Early Childhood Development, 3.1.01 to 3.6.01 inclusive.

MHA Petten.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Chair.

Under 3.1.01, under Grants and Subsidies, Regular Teachers we see a fluctuation last year. It went up to \$497 million, now we're back down to \$473 million. So I guess why the additional \$29 million last year and it's only an additional \$5 million this year?

**R. HAYES:** So the \$29.5 million is made up of salary increases through collective bargaining that were added into the budget this year. That was a significant portion there. Some of the COVID-related costs for the guidance and the admin, the additional resources that were added in as part of the federal funding, that accounted for April, May and June of the previous school year were also added into the budget during the fiscal year.

**B. PETTEN:** Yes, so I'm clear, the Employee Benefits, there was only a \$1.3-million increase.

**R. HAYES:** Yes, that's right. That would be a lower amount. That would also be related to the salary increases and the employee benefits associated with those additional positions that were added in. So it's a percentage of that increase.

**B. PETTEN:** Right. No, you'd think that would be more than \$1.3 million.

The provincial revenue piece there, that went to a million dollars. I'm going to try to answer my own question now. Is that to do with COVID funding as well or –?

**R. HAYES:** No, it is federal funding related to what we refer to as Jordan's Principle. So the federal government provides funding to the school district for resources that are there for Indigenous students, then the district then provides that funding back to the department as we pay for the teaching units. The revenue you see there in the revised is a timing issue related to the previous school year, which would have been the previous fiscal year, sorry.

**B. PETTEN:** Under 3.1.02, School Operations, Purchased Services, there's an additional expenditure last year of nearly \$600,000?

**R. HAYES:** That's related to our insurance premiums. It's an increase in our insurance premiums for the schools.

**B. PETTEN:** So it appears insurance premiums went up across the board, because I had Estimates last night and insurance premiums were the cause of a lot of extra expenses. I'll tell you like I told Minister Loveless, you need to start capping insurance. Among gas prices, insurance should go on the list, too. Minister Coady I should say that to.

Grants and Subsidies, why is there approximately \$26 million last year under Operating Grants?

**R. HAYES:** So that is made up of the following: about \$13.2 million was related to the Chromebook purchase. Some of those were delivered in this fiscal year, so we had the expense in this fiscal year; \$7.9 million are for those air purifiers the minister mentioned earlier. There's \$2.15 million related to salary increases. Those would be the collective bargaining salary increases. And a little over \$2 million is related to the April, May and June COVID funding – that part of the school year – that's related to the federal restart funding, for the additional resources we put in place.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

Student Assistants funding, that went up to \$26 million, nearly \$27 million; now we're back down to less than \$25 million. Have there been any reductions in student assistants or – why the reduction?

**R. HAYES:** So what happened in the fiscal year '21-'22, is there was a 27th pay period for teachers and student assistants, so you're seeing an increase there of funding to accommodate that. There were also salary increases related to collective bargaining with some retro amounts in there. That was also put in there. There was also, again, that COVID money that related to April, May and June, as well as additional student assistants' hours that we put in because of increased enrolment.

**B. PETTEN:** Perfect.

Transportation of School Children, it looks like the numbers have dropped back. Have there been enhancements of any – I’m thinking that budget should be increased more than anything else, but it seems to be pretty flattened, and it’s \$3 million less than what was spent last year, nearly probably \$4 million.

What’s the plan there? Are there enhancements removed or is there any explanation for that? That’s a bigger issue, too, of course.

**T. OSBORNE:** There is a little bit of a difference, but it relates to the federal funding for COVID, last year’s. So if you look at the budget last year versus the budget this year, we’re up from \$57 million to \$58 million.

**B. PETTEN:** There’s been a lot of talk, too – I talked to you about this – the age of school buses. There were new contracts. A lot of contractors actually had issues with some of the timelines with getting buses. I suppose this is more of a general question, but that issue is out there and, I mean, I think we spoke about a couple of examples of school bus operators were kind of finding a pinch. They had to get – the age of the school bus. We expanded it a little bit for the COVID years when the rush was on for extra busing, but then when things started settling back, when the contracts were changed, they had to get buses under a certain age, and they just weren’t available in some cases. People were struggling to get the buses. Is that an issue that the department has done anything with?

I know that most of the contracts the district probably has in place now, I believe they tried to align the expiry date of the contracts more across the board and fluctuation in expiry dates and what have you. But this issue with availability and the age of school buses is still an issue, I guess, it just dies down when contracts get in place and operators get moved. It will raise its head again, obviously, when the next renewal comes up.

I know it is a bigger issue, probably, than the department, but that is an issue. Is that something that any of your officials have looked into or probably addressing?

**T. OSBORNE:** It is. The issue has been lessened to a large degree by the fact that during the additional buses that were required for COVID, we increased the allowable age of the bus from 12 years, I believe it was, to 14.

Some of the buses that were parked because they reached 12 years old, some of the contractors were able to use them. And even the bus that was parked the year prior because it was 12 years old, we allowed buses up to 14 years of age. So that alleviated a lot of those pressures. As long as they were inspected and met safety requirements.

So there were additional buses purchased, but a large number of the buses that were used had an extended life period as well.

**B. PETTEN:** So is the age limit 14, or has it gone back to 12 now?

**T. OSBORNE:** It is now, yes.

**B. PETTEN:** It is gone back to 12?

**T. OSBORNE:** Yeah.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

The Revenue - Federal piece there, it looks like \$1.6 million came in last year and it’s not in the budget.

**R. HAYES:** So in January we received a letter from the federal government. They had a Safe Return to Class Fund established with regard to air purification systems. We were able to apply based on the funding we had spent on those air purification systems – the \$7.9 million – and we were able to recoup some of that back from the federal government.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay. Perfect. Thank you.

Under 3.1.04, under Supplies, there is an extra \$400,000 budgeted this year. Where is that going to, specifically?

**R. HAYES:** So that \$396,000 is additional resources, which are student laptops for our Technology Career Pathway program.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay, perfect.

3.2.01, under Salaries, I guess it is not a big amount but there is a decrease last year and it has gone back up again this year – well, it's up this year to probably about \$150,000. Again, was that a vacant position or ...?

**G. O'LEARY:** That was the addition of a position for the Technology Career Pathway. Also there was a 27 pay period for seconded teachers.

**B. PETTEN:** Is that a permanent position?

**G. O'LEARY:** Well, the intentionality would be for that program to continue.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

Transportation and Communications, last year was \$271,000 budgeted but only \$59,000 spent. So I guess my question would be, why are we budgeting \$130,000 this year? Is there anticipation to ...?

**G. O'LEARY:** That was just less travel due to COVID restrictions. We expect that to come back up somewhere near normal.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

**G. O'LEARY:** There are more options for virtual, too.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay, that answers another – I was going to add that in.

Professional Services, an extra \$110,000 spent last year. Now it is down to \$27,000 this year from –

**G. O'LEARY:** Those are pressures due to a digital curriculum platform project that we're involved with. I'll turn it over to Brad to speak a little bit more to that program.

**B. CLARKE:** This really connects well with what I mentioned the last time when we talked about the typical three-year window of

curriculum development. We have been exploring for quite some time to engage in technology to enhance our abilities and our abilities that have timely feedback within the curriculum so that these changes don't take so long, it is more multimedia, that the curriculum is expressed to teachers in a much more efficient way. Much more helpful rather than be limited by paper and pencil, and that project is about to get under way.

**CHAIR:** The Member's time has expired.

MHA Petten – MHA Dinn.

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

**CHAIR:** You are welcome.

**J. DINN:** It is a long day already.

**CHAIR:** It has been a long couple of weeks.

**J. DINN:** Were we supposed to break at 10:15?

**CHAIR:** We can, if –

**J. DINN:** No, I'm willing to go on, but I know that's what you had said before and I'll start –

**CHAIR:** Does everyone want a 10-minute break?

**T. OSBORNE:** I'm anxious to hear what Jim's questions are; I'm happy.

**J. DINN:** I'm good, too.

**T. OSBORNE:** I'm open, though, if people need a break.

**J. DINN:** Yeah, that's good. I'll start in after that. I'm anxious to just ask my questions, too.

**CHAIR:** Okay, we'll take a quick 10 minutes.

### Recess

**CHAIR:** Okay, are we ready to go again?

MHA Dinn.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

I'll forewarn you that any of these questions I'm asking will come up on a test later on. Usually that test is Question Period.

**T. OSBORNE:** Is it multiple choice?

**J. DINN:** You know what. We can do that. But that limits your ability to respond to me then.

Okay, a few questions. This is the area where I have a lot of questions that I do want answered.

I'll start with the Substitute Teachers spending in 3.1.01 for Professional Development; it came in under budget last year. I'm going to preface it with this as well: A few schools had said that one of the things that they had – their PL, PD substitute days, they had to roll them back or give them back to the district. They had to use them by March 3 or lose them, so they couldn't have any further PL or PD after that.

I'm just wondering is that just for savings? Was there a reason for that? I know you're not the district, but at the same time I'm assuming there's an integration here. In some schools that's like 60 days, works out to about \$18,000 in savings. I'm just wondering where that directive came from, because you can see here that the Substitute Teacher professional leave days have dropped, the budget there dropped significantly.

**T. OSBORNE:** That would have been a decision of the district. We didn't provide direction in the department on that, but I mean we can certainly ask the question for you.

**J. DINN:** I wouldn't mind finding out just because you can see here it's dropped – as to what was the rationale there, especially if the directive is going out to schools to turn these back.

With regard to the 1.6-kilometre busing policy, has there been any consideration given to revising that policy? I know there was something asked similar to that earlier from my colleague from CBS.

**T. OSBORNE:** Madam Chair, I think while we were gone on break, the Member for St. John's Centre must have taken a question off the desk.

No, at this stage, there's been no discussion on changing the 1.6. It stands as it is at the moment.

**J. DINN:** Has there been any talk or consideration to maybe pilot with Metrobus for busing of students within the city? I brought this up last year. Even like having a GPS system where the pickups could be in the city, especially where the pickups could be plotted in the bus, the bus takes it – the Metrobus itself.

Has there been any talk about that? Certainly, when I was going to school – and you're of my vintage – there were no yellow buses in the city as such; it was either walk or Metrobus. But I'm just wondering since we do have a public transit system, of using that, of maybe discussions with them as to how we can use them for student busing within the city.

**T. OSBORNE:** No, you're right. I remember getting dropped to school every morning and walking about three kilometres home every afternoon.

**J. DINN:** Oh, you were in the wealthy section. I walked both ways uphill.

**T. OSBORNE:** The concept of Metrobus in the city has been looked at and considered. At some point it may become a reality, Jim, I don't know, but I mean there are liability concerns. Once a student steps on the bus, from the moment they step on the bus to the moment they step off the bus to return home, they're sort of in the care and custody of the school district. That's not the same if they step on a Metrobus. There are some concerns and at which point are they picked up and dropped off.

It has been looked at. There probably would be savings. Whether or not the school community and parents would all be in favour, there's a lot to be considered.

**J. DINN:** Okay.

You could have it so that there's a school district employee on the bus who is there to supervise as such. That's easy enough. Anyway, at least I'm happy that there's some consideration of it and some discussion.



With regard to the SmartFind system that's being brought in as a way for getting substitutes, why was it brought in now and not wait until next year, once we sort of have a fresh year and hopefully COVID is less in place. I can tell you that the issue is causing a lot of consternation from administrators who can monitor the system. But this is a busy time of the year; we're still coming out of COVID. It's also disqualifying certain teachers that schools relied on. They can no longer call because they don't check all the boxes, but that schools could rely on.

They're also finding there's concern that teachers, if they're living next to the school and they turn down, let's say, two call-ins from schools that are an hour away, they're bumped off and that school next door that might need them can't call them in. It's creating those situations.

Also, for a teacher who is in for three days and then I can come in for a fourth day, but because of the SmartFind system, after three days they're bumped up to the full level of pay.

What we're finding is that teachers in this system, they aren't. They are actually losing pay, I guess, for lack of a better word. While it is up to the principal to go in and monitor that, that is adding – so I guess there are a lot of bugs to this that have to be worked out. It would have been better to wait until September to do this, or paused it right now even for that matter.

**G. O'LEARY:** Mr. Dinn, the reason it was brought in is to save time for administrators and, as I know you can appreciate, for principals and vice-principals who are making many calls in the morning. It was piloted on the Burin Peninsula and had great success.

I will agree that in terms of a teacher who goes to the same school multiple days, that is something that does need to be looked at in terms of just the efficiency of that and keeping the continuity of learning with children. But overall, it was brought in to ease pressure off administrators.

**J. DINN:** I guess right now for some schools they just started up recently and, as they said, it

would probably work but it is just coming at the wrong time of the year for them. As long as we are looking at that there are bugs and these bugs can be worked out or these deficiencies – for lack of a better word – but I would agree with you. Yes, I understand the concept and it is supposed to work.

**G. O'LEARY:** Any new system will have a few bugs –

**J. DINN:** And I think that is just it. It would have been better in September and just something to keep in mind.

**G. O'LEARY:** But the pressure on COVID was so great now is why it was brought in now.

**J. DINN:** Yeah, exactly.

This has to do with the Chromebooks – and I think there is some mention of it here. I am looking under School Operations on the technology piece. So there has been an issue now that, basically, Chromebook devices in the schools have expired – that they are no longer supported by the network in the school and that they can no longer be used. So here is basically what this means. I will give you a couple of schools in the next year that they are going to have to retire and get rid of 100 Chromebooks or iPads or whatever it is that were using for the students that they have to replace.

For one school, you are looking at 82 – that results in a cost in over \$22,000 to replace them. I guess, where I am looking, what is the plan to help schools now that these devices are now gone, you can't use them anymore, they are no longer supported by the system – they still operate; they work perfectly fine. What is the plan then to help schools replace these? Because that is a significant chunk of change. In many cases, they raise this using their own fundraising efforts. I am just wondering what the plan is here to help school with that. Or if there is a (inaudible) so you can extend the life. The machines still work.

And then, I'll add to this one, another complication, you've just brought in and spent

\$20 million or \$30 million on Chromebooks for the school system for students. So that is going to be a problem that is coming your way; again, I am just wondering what the solution is or the replacement is.

**T. OSBORNE:** I mean if the devices are working and perfectly functional, I'd rather see that they were extended. It would be a better use of resources and more cost effective. That is something that we will certainly look at.

**J. DINN:** Okay. Just be aware that and I'll have a couple of follow-up questions; I'll wait until my next turn.

**CHAIR:** Okay. The Member's time has expired.

MHA Petten.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Chair.

I got a few more questions on this section. I'm going to flip to the Library Resources Board, 3.6.01. There is a \$317,000 increase in the Grants and Subsidies from last year's budgeted amount.

**R. HAYES:** So you're talking about from budget to budget, that increase, the \$317,000?

**B. PETTEN:** Yes.

**R. HAYES:** That relates to that negotiated salary increases per collective bargaining.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay, that is straightforward.

Early Learning and Child Development, 3.5.01. Salaries, \$6.5 million as oppose to \$4.9 million. What is this increase a result of?

**R. HAYES:** So at the beginning of the session I mentioned a number of new positions we had related to the Canada-Wide Early Learning Child Care Agreement and that is what accounts for that increase, those 22 additional positions we have added.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay, thanks.

Transportation and Communications was only \$125,000 last year, but we're back up to

\$432,000. I'm assuming the drop would have been a result of COVID, correct?

**R. HAYES:** Correct, yes.

**B. PETTEN:** So \$432,000 is still \$200,000 more than what was budgeted last year. I guess what I am asking is \$432,000, is that the historic kind of budget that has been in for Transportation and Communications there pre-COVID, I guess, is what I am asking, roughly.

**R. HAYES:** It would be largely related to that Canada-wide agreement and all the enhancements that there are under that and the additional staff that we have hired that will also be required to travel. As we grow spaces, additional travel that will be required. I would hand it off to Mary Goss-Prowse to see if there is anything she would like to add there with regard to that.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

**M. GOSS-PROWSE:** Yes, it would be related, predominantly – don't quote me – but I think it's about 18 of those positions are going to be at the regional level. They would be the people that would be going out to inspect child care to help people start child care. So they physically have to go and visit sites and in their monitoring role as inspectors as well they're constantly travelling. It was significantly reduced over the last couple of years because of COVID. We didn't visit centres during many of the restricted periods, because introducing another adult that isn't part of the cohort in the building wasn't – we did a lot more virtual visiting, et cetera.

But it's not ideal when you're talking about looking at licensing adherence. So you want to be able to get back out there again. So in anticipation of the additional staff, as well as the regular staff doing more travel this year.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay, thank you.

Professional Services was a \$3 million increase in 3.5.01.

**M. GOSS-PROWSE:** Again, that's also tied predominantly to the Canada-wide agreement. We have significant funding under the federal agreement to do work around areas where we

would need to hire a consultant to do some work for us, that kind of thing. So there is significant money there to do that.

**B. PETTEN:** So this big increase in federal revenue, \$85 million, is that that money? Is that what we're looking at? Okay.

Allowances and Assistance, to begin it was \$9 million less, but it's gone back up to \$27 million this year. So why those drops? I think it happened the year before as well.

**M. GOSS-PROWSE:** Again, it's a lot of this is related to the Canada-wide agreement, for the increases, for sure. I'm just going to check my notes here.

**B. PETTEN:** But it's a decrease, right?

**M. GOSS-PROWSE:** Well, what happened when we went from, say, the \$25 to \$15 and we're going to be going to \$10 in January – Allowances and Assistance covers our child care subsidy program. So while we may have more people applying for that program, the amount we're spending as government under that program is actually lowered, because we're paying the \$15-a-day or the \$25-a-day, as opposed to what we used to which was up to \$44 a day.

That one is actually a little lowered because of that expense, but if you look at the Grants and Subsidies, which is in the next line, there's a significant increase and that's because we're picking up a lot more operational costs for centres under the Operating Grant to lower those fees for parents. So between the two, one is going up significantly and the other one is going down a little bit.

Under Allowances and Assistance as well, we also have increases coming in the bursaries and grants in order to do the early childhood education program and with the additional seats we're anticipating that that budget will be up as well.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay, thank you.

I guess back to the curriculum review, it's a three-year process. When was the last one done

prior to that? The ongoing review now, so when would the last curriculum review happened?

**T. OSBORNE:** It's ongoing.

**B. PETTEN:** Right.

**T. OSBORNE:** Brad can speak to this, but every single year there's curriculum review taking place. We've got literally hundreds of textbooks throughout the province so you wouldn't leave them all – as Brad has said earlier, a single textbook can be up to three years to review and implement a new piece of curriculum. It's an ongoing process. They just kind of roll through the different curriculum.

Brad, did you want to add to that?

**B. CLARKE:** Yes, curriculum development in the province is cyclic. So very dynamic. As every year, every curriculum is what we call monitored and we get some very early statistics and feedback on the curriculum. That may trigger a full evaluation, which then may trigger the next steps of a renewal, those sorts of things. That's an ongoing thing that we do every year.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay, thank you.

I have a couple of minutes left and I'm probably going to take longer than that on this issue. But I guess early childhood I'm focused a lot on that one because I think that's a big issue out there I think throughout the province. I know it's in my district but it's right across the board. I've spoke to you, Minister, about this, this week past and probably will have further discussion.

I guess with all this funding and the new changes coming with the early childhood programs and subsidized and \$10-a-day daycare, which is all good, there's a problem with – I see a problem with the system that you have a couple of big operators, and one of them happens to be in my district actually, they're changing. It's more attractive to have the younger children in their daycares and they're cutting out the afterschool program. In essence, they're doing that, they're forcing parents in my district, and I have a growing district, obviously, they're going to private enterprise now who are not subsidized and they're doubling and tripling

their costs. One lady today said the burden is almost making her wonder is it worth working.

So from a business model, more power to the business owner if it's attractive to go to younger groups, I guess, why not. I don't like the way it's been dealt with and handled and communicated to the parents. I mean, it's business. My problem is we, as a province and the government department, are subsidizing them. You said earlier accountability agreements with the MUN act, and I highlighted it the minute you said it. I guess that's what I'm looking for.

You've heard me in this House many times: public money is public money. There needs to be a responsibility whether you work for the government, it's public money, you have a job to do. If you're getting public funds – and I know it's a lot of money because I've dealt with a lot of daycare operators in my district, and Mary would know. It's a substantial amount of money, I mean, without the Operating Grants those places would not be probably where they are today. But there's no accountability. I think that's a glaring – and it's not no one's fault, but it's an issue I think needs to be addressed because this is not going to go away.

So we have situations throughout the province where we have areas in rural and Labrador that are looking for child care spaces, people are wondering what to do. There's a lack of – and you have the growth areas in the metro region here where it's like a pot of gold to a lot of those places and they're picking and choosing how they're going to make the most money. At the end of the day, you know who suffers, but at the end it's public money.

So I guess there's probably a lot in that comment that I'm saying, but I think you all know where I'm – by the head nod I think you know where I'm going with it. So I think it's a big issue. It's probably a bigger issue than what we realize it is and it's growing. It's becoming a bigger issue.

It's something that we can debate probably a lot longer than today, but I think it's an issue that needs to be addressed and it's ongoing. I don't know if you have anything to share about that.

**T. OSBORNE:** Yeah, absolutely. I hear you. I mean, over the next six or 12 months the issue is

bigger than it will be 12 months from now or 24 months from now, as we get more and more operators and there's more choice for families in terms of where they can get early learning and child care for their children.

Right now, the demand far outweighs the supply, but that will turn as we get more operators open and more ECEs into the system. What's a bigger problem today will become a much less or lesser problem a year and two years and three years from now.

But one of the things – and Mary can expand on this – that we are looking at is as contracts are renewed, especially as we get into \$10 a day and the government subsidy is even higher, based on the family contribution of \$10 a day per child, is what is reflected in the contract to give some level of protection, I guess, if a family puts their child with an operation that they just don't – the business owner just doesn't change the focus of the age group that they're taking in and leaves the family left high and dry.

Like I said, two years, three years from now, when the supply is much greater than it is today, it will be less of an issue.

Mary, did you want to speak to that a little?

**M. GOSS-PROWSE:** Yes, I just wanted to clarify, it's not that there's no accountability. There is within the contract. They need to give us a set of audited statements at the end of the year. We need to see that they haven't charged parents for things they shouldn't. So we do have checks and balances in for what we're giving. What isn't there right now is a requirement, like the minister said, to not change their business plan during the year, let's say.

Where we are moving to \$10 a day and we are going to be instituting the wage grid that's being developed into the Operating Grant so that the wages within child care will be higher. Right now, we pay a significant supplement directly to ECEs and that will work its way into the Operating Grant program so that it becomes part of their wages, which will also be a benefit to those ECEs who are making \$17 or \$18 an hour now, they'll be making \$26, \$27, \$28 an hour when that's rolled into their wage.

But as with anything else, as those number go up, we are going to be making sure that there's significant changes in the policies around the Operating Grant and we're likely – that's part of when you mentioned about the professional services piece, that would be one of the contractors that we'd be looking at to try and take a look at that broader based funding, because now we will be funding a significant portion of those centres' revenues, whereas, a couple of years ago we were maybe at 40 or 50 per cent of their revenues. Now we're heading into that 70 per cent range.

It's absolutely on our radar, but with so many changes so quick in this past year, we felt it needed a bigger review and we also felt we need to go back to the stakeholders and talk to the organizations around child care, talk to ECEs, et cetera, and get a broader sense of the changes that need to be made.

So when we go to \$10 a day you will see a significant difference. But, right now, many of these are under current contracts and it would be a very difficult to go back and change them at this point.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you very much.

**CHAIR:** The Member's time has expired.

MHA Dinn.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

Just to pick up where I left off with regard to technology: Would it be possible, if you can, with the district to find out just how many devices are expiring. For schools, it's up to around 100, so I would like to get an idea and where we're going to go to resolve that problem. That also applies to SMART Boards that are going to have to be replaced as well.

Also, following up on that: infrastructure – and I'm talking about bandwidth in this case. As I understand, new schools are usually – when they're being built and the line coming in – at 250 megabytes per second download. Existing schools, from what I gather, a lot of them, you have 100 megabytes per second, so it's a lot slower coming in. That means that for students

and teachers in the school who might be using it, it will cap out; people will be booted off.

My question is, for the existing schools and where this kind of technology is so important now, so integrated into the learning, what is the plan or in the budget to upgrade the older schools up to the standard of the newer schools? Have there been any discussions around that?

**T. OSBORNE:** That's an excellent question. I know there are multiple departments involved in the solution, Education being one of them and the English and francophone districts. We also have other departments that are involved with increasing bandwidth throughout the province. Government has been actively looking at increasing bandwidth in areas where it needs to be increased. I think there's been some public announcements on that just recently.

The federal government are involved with funding for schools in particular where, when the school was constructed, the requirements were considerably less than they are today. I know the English School District has been putting equipment within the schools to help increase the signal for devices that are being used and in communities. So the districts have been doing a good job with that when issues are identified, putting devices within the schools to increase the signal in the school.

Robyn, you probably have some idea of the funding that has been put into that but ...

**R. HAYES:** So that would be included in the School Operations budget, the operating grant that we do give to the school districts each year. The minister is correct, the district does provide those – I can't remember the name of the piece of equipment, but they do have devices in the schools that do increase the bandwidth. I really don't know the name of it.

**J. DINN:** No and I might have a name here. But I guess what I am going for, Minister, is that even within the city there are older schools and there are the newer ones that are built, which are going to be up to spec. But in some of the smaller schools, even here within the city, the

pipe coming in is too small; it's choking what they need in the schools. The technology has increased in school without the necessary infrastructure coming in. so that is something that has to be addressed for the older schools.

Just go back, one or two things here I wanted to follow up on. With the almost \$2.4 million in substitute teacher savings, where would that money have gone? Would that have just gone into paying off debt or would it have been redirected somewhere else? It was a budgeted amount for over \$5 million; there is only \$3.08 million. Is that just savings or is that paying – I'm just trying to get an idea of where that would go. Would that be redirected toward other programming?

**R. HAYES:** So that Substitute Teachers - Professional Development, would have just went into the regular substitute budget, which there was a significant increase in substitute time during the year.

**J. DINN:** Okay. So that's where it is.

I just wanted to also, with regard to the purchase order process – and I want to give you this as an example because this is widespread. You have to find some way to streamline this as you're bringing it to the department. Here is the situation: In this case, they are looking at bringing in the Aruba drops for the networking. I don't know if that's the one you're talking about there, Robyn, but it's the wireless network points needed for Chromebooks to be used.

In this school they put in a \$6,000 order before the fiscal year ended, but because of COVID it wasn't received in hand to be qualified – it was disqualified. So that \$6,000 from the previous fiscal year is lost because use it or lose it, that kind of approach.

When they went to apply for – it was going to cost \$12,000. Now, that \$12,000 is going to have to come out of their budget; they're going to have to figure that out from their own school supplies. So in many ways, whereas they were told, well, you can't have – COVID just delayed the process, no fault of the schools, but as a result of that they lost out on the funding.

The comment was made not by more than one school administrator: we're trying to get this stuff in. We're dealing with issues in the school and there's absolutely no leeway, it's just hard bureaucratic ends. Somewhere along the line it's disadvantaging schools. I know you don't have an answer to this but I would like this, if we're going to integrate this into the school system – and Mr. O'Leary, as an administrator, really knows what I'm talking about here. That's got to be addressed, as simple as that. There has to be some leeway given so schools are not disadvantaged and they don't have to come up with the funding themselves.

The other one has to do with the SmartFind and you need to be aware of this. The teacher who – I won't go into all the details; I'll make you aware of it after. It penalizes teachers in some ways. Again, there seems to be no willingness on the part of, in this case, the district, to make allowances, but I'll bring that up after this.

Moving on then, the AG's most recent annual report noted that the NLESD did not fully implement two recommendations made to it in 2018 regarding its management and procurement practices. What work has been done since the release of the report in January of this year to implement those recommendations?

**T. OSBORNE:** I know that based on the report – and COVID sounds like the excuse for everything, but I mean COVID did delay some of the progress that the NLESD was undertaking – there was much progress made in implementing the recommendations. But in speaking with Tony Stack and others at the district, I understand that progress is well under way. I do anticipate that the recommendations of the Auditor General's report, that further progress will be made and those recommendations will be fulfilled.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

Any update on the activities and work done by the Indigenous Education Advisory Committee?

**T. OSBORNE:** Brad?

**B. CLARKE:** They are still a very active group. Completed Indigenous local course policy. We have, I guess I'll call it, a final draft of the

Indigenous education framework document that's all been vetted through them. And we are now working on that curriculum input as part of the cycle, how we ensure that Indigenous culture, history and language are incorporated across kindergarten to Grade 12.

They actually have their next meeting very soon, but we hope to enter discussions whereby we can bring some hands-on, practical engagement from Indigenous communities and knowledge keepers into all the schools of the province.

**J. DINN:** Thank you very much.

With regard to French language programs, why do we only receive a fraction of the federal revenue we were expecting last year? That's 3.2.02.

**B. CLARKE:** Mr. Dinn, that's more of an administrative issue. We had a very long-standing employee whose job was the Federal-Provincial Official Languages Agreement administrator. And very unfortunately she fell ill for many months, tried to continue, sort of fell behind on the file a bit. We actioned a plan to sort of catch up because that, unfortunately, individual had to retire.

I'm happy to report that as of three days ago, we do have the necessary documents ready now. So we'll have that rectified very quickly and we have put into play sort of expanding the knowledge base of that process within the division so that hopefully that'll never happen again.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

**B. CLARKE:** I just would like to point out that of course – I didn't say this – we did secure every dime that we were eligible for. The federal agreement understood our circumstance and said we'll hold it until you get the reports in. So there's no net loss of any of it.

**J. DINN:** Good.

**CHAIR:** Okay. The Member's time has expired.

MHA Petten.

**B. PETTEN:** Are we done this section 3?

**CHAIR:** We're still in section 3.1.01.

**B. PETTEN:** Does Mr. Dinn have any more questions in that section or we can move to section 4?

**CHAIR:** Do you have any more questions?

**J. DINN:** I can quickly go through them.

**CHAIR:** He does.

**B. PETTEN:** Well, I'll ask some general.

**J. DINN:** Yeah, go for it.

**CHAIR:** Okay, MHA Petten.

**B. PETTEN:** I got one for that section. Just a final thing.

Mary, when you were just talking there – we were talking about cutting out the after school to go to the younger children. Some businesses are doing that. When the renewal comes – I think me and the minister spoke about this as well – there will be a minimum requirement so something like this doesn't happen, better protections. Is that what we're looking at when you sign new agreements? As you're going to funding up to 70 per cent I don't think it's unreasonable to look for something better – sureties and put people in the lurch they're put in now.

**T. OSBORNE:** You're correct. So we will be looking at some protection for families. If a family enrolls a student in a program that there's an acceptable level of notice, if a business is going to look to change the age groups that they bring in, that would give adequate time for a parent to be able to look for another service.

Again, I know the supply issues will resolve themselves over time and this will become less of a problem, but certainly it's something that's on our radar and we're looking at options as to what can be put into a contract when they're renewed based on both the fact that we're going to \$10 and the wage grid, and rolling the wage supplement into the operating grant program and so on. So there are a number of changes that are going to be taking place with the contract. So

it's a good time to look at what else we put in the contract.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay, thanks.

Minister, has there been any cost analysis done or benefit analysis on the new film and television school? Is it going to be cost neutral?

**T. OSBORNE:** The College of the North Atlantic, after the initial start-up funding, which was in this year's budget, they'll be able to operate the additional programming through the existing College of the North Atlantic funding. So they have that capacity and the ability – they are looking at programs throughout the province that are being offered to determine what the labour market demands are and what programs are best offered by the college. There are some programs that are best offered by the private colleges versus the College of the North Atlantic and there are instances where the College of the North Atlantic and the private colleges actually compete and neither of the classrooms are full.

But looking at the labour market demands, the film and television school, for the foreseeable future, we anticipate very strong enrolment. September is very close so I am not saying that the classes will be full in September, but I do anticipate next year that they will be once the word gets out.

There are memorandums of understanding with three other institutes now that offer similar programming where if somebody is going to the Toronto Film School, for example, they may be able to upgrade their training at ours and transfer credits or vice versa. So it is already well under way to being a very recognized campus across the country because of those MOUs.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you.

Minister, Teacher Allocation Review Committee, has there been any word on where they are in that process or any anticipated timeline completion?

**T. OSBORNE:** We do have an anticipated time. They have asked for an extension to July, is it?

**OFFICIAL:** Yes.

**T. OSBORNE:** Yeah, to July. But up to this stage, I haven't been interviewed or spoken with them, So I don't know where they are in the process.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

**T. OSBORNE:** I mean it is completely arm's length; I wouldn't be able to speak to that. They would probably take a question from you directly. I do know that a week or so ago they wrote asking for an extension to July.

**B. PETTEN:** Will that be made public or provided when you receive it and whatever?

**T. OSBORNE:** Yes.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

**G. O'LEARY:** I'll just add to that, MHA Petten, that they're meeting with department officials today. This is our time to go in for a meeting.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

**G. O'LEARY:** Right, so we're just like any other group. We go in to the meeting objectively and we don't know what they're going to ask or propose or whatever, but they're meeting with officials today.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay, thank you.

Prekindergarten pilot project, what is the latest with that?

**T. OSBORNE:** It is well under way. We do anticipate a number of locations throughout the province, both on the Island and in Labrador, come September. So work is moving as expeditiously as it can to ensure that the program is up and running for September.

I think, based on the fact that it is a pilot program, there is a great deal of effort in ensuring that we've got a good coverage of urban and rural throughout the province. The pilot program will then help guide the establishment of additional sites the following September.



**B. PETTEN:** Will that have any impact on the existing child care centres? There are 3,100 spaces so is it going to have any negative impact on any of those?

**T. OSBORNE:** We don't anticipate it would be significant and as we move to \$10 a day the demand for early learning and child care is going to be increased even again. So we don't anticipate that if there are children – the other aspect is the fact that this is pre-K, not all of the children will be coming from the existing operations of early learning and child care. If you have a four-year-old child and you say, you know I like the concept of pre-K, so you register for pre-K but your child has never been involved in early learning previously.

So for both of those reasons – the fact that the demand has increased now – we didn't see the demand pressures on early learning three years ago that we see today and they are going to be increased even further when we go to \$10 a day because it is more affordable. So we don't anticipate, you know, a significant impact on the existing operators.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

I guess to Early Childhood again, it seems to be my topic. Where are we getting the extra workers? I know there is extra funding that they're trying to increase the pay, increase the recruitment, but I guess my question is: What's the plan with the recruitment? As we know now the workforce is a challenge so where is the plan to get – we are looking at a big expansion so what is the plan in place to deal with the extra (inaudible)?

**T. OSBORNE:** So there are a number of things both in the short term and long term to increase the number of ECEs that are in the system. Long term are the 700 seats that we have through the College of the North Atlantic, Keyin and Academy Canada. So that's longer term. Obviously, those individuals need to train.

Shorter term we have the earn while you learn so that you can actually be in the classroom and in the workplace, you know, while doing your

course. We've got the home-based operations where we are looking to expand the home based which will provide additional spaces, but we have also got a database of people who trained and are qualified to be ECEs who have left the sector and sought employment elsewhere; whether it's in the service sector or fast food sector or other settings. But they left because the pay didn't reflect the work that they are doing.

Now that the level of pay is going to be more reflective of the work that they're doing, we are actively reaching out to try and re-recruit those individuals who have trained and are eligible to be ECEs to work as ECEs. We've got a pretty solid database of people that we are looking to reintegrate into the sector. Some will come; some may decide to stay where they've gone. So we've got that.

In terms of the pre-K, first priority as we indicated during our announcement will be for Level 3 or higher ECEs. Both the ECEs that are currently in the system and the ECEs that we're trying to attract back to the sector, but in areas where we cannot get an ECE that's Level 3 or higher, we are looking to retired primary educators for the pre-K sector as well.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Okay, thank you.

The Member's time has expired.

MHA Dinn.

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

Just with regard to child care, and I've mentioned this to you, Minister, as well, when we're looking at new schools, maybe there is a way of attaching child care centres to the school, so you have, I guess, a one-stop shop for everyone. But I think it's a model that's worth considering for parents especially having to drop them off. That's a model. I don't know if that's something that can be done to retrofit some schools as well, but it's an idea that I think is worth pursuing.

With regard to the pre-K, and just to follow up on what my colleague asked: Where is the space? We've identified, I guess, schools that have the space?

**T. OSBORNE:** We have. In consultation with our school districts, both the English and the francophone, we've identified – for the pilot program, this will be entirely within schools that have the primary setting.

**J. DINN:** Right.

**T. OSBORNE:** On the previous topic that you raised, you're absolutely correct. The three new schools we're looking at and remodeling an existing as well, but for the three new schools, we will be looking at not only pre-K but other early learning. Because if we can have children within the school setting from the time they start early learning to the time they go to kindergarten, the children are better served and it's more convenient for parents as well. So that is absolutely something that's part of our plan as we move forward, just as it is for pre-K.

So the pilot program, we've identified a number of schools throughout the province that have space available to allow the pre-K for the pilot program. We've also identified a number of schools beyond the pilot program because the pilot program, you don't want to jump too quickly and too deep into the deep end, so to speak. So the pilot program will help ensure that the program is as we want it to be and adjustments can be made then as we expand it the following year, if need be.

We've identified schools that are capable, have the space available for the pilot program, as well as for following years and we'll be working with those schools. Some schools may involve some retrofits in order to incorporate the pre-K; some are easier. So the schools that are easier to get into are the ones that we'll look at for the pilot program as well.

But we have identified schools and we're working with school districts and with the Division of Early Learning now to ensure that the areas that are identified, we also identify the ECEs to work in those sectors. And in the very, very near future we will be making available to

the public the list of the sites selected for the pre-K pilot program so that parents can register.

**J. DINN:** What's the cap on the pre-K? Is it going to be the same as kindergarten, 20?

**T. OSBORNE:** That will be announced, I think, as part of the announcement when we roll out the pre-K program, the pilot program, in its entirety. That will be coming very, very soon.

**J. DINN:** Okay, thank you.

Are there any people over there who were primary educators? Okay, I have a reason why I'm asking that. I just want to give you some numbers and why I ask the class size.

Grade 2: 28, one school; Grade 4: two Grade 4 classes, 30 kids in each class; Grade 5 class, 30 young people in each class. I taught high school and I taught high school with 30 kids. I can tell you, academically, no problem, but it will be a very brave individual to go into a primary grade of 30 individuals of Grade 2, 3, 4, I don't care what. That has to be addressed. If we're going to have these little kids who are going from pre-K to kindergarten where they have 20 in a class and then up to Grade 1, and then the cap is 25, it is unfair.

So, Minister, I can't urge you enough that has to be addressed. I don't know what this Committee is going to come back with but, to me, I taught high school my entire career in junior high, but 30 primary kids is a challenge for a teacher but, more importantly, it is a challenge for the students.

With regard to French immersion, what is the status of that? Because it seems to be under attack or the schools seem to be under threat of losing it. I know the most recent one was out in the Crescent Collegiate in Blaketown. Where does the department stand on French immersion, whether it is early French immersion or late French immersion? Is there a desire to keep it or is there a desire to see it end and let the francophone school take care of the francophone or French education?

**T. OSBORNE:** No, I mean, there is certainly a desire to keep the French immersion. The francophone school simply doesn't have the

locations throughout the province to be able to take students who wish to do French. Much of it does rely on the English stream with the French immersion. There is a desire to keep it in cases where enrolment doesn't warrant it are the cases that we hear about. If you've got two or three students enrolled for French immersion, it is difficult to justify putting a teaching unit in place for a cohort of three students.

So we have been working with schools in those cases to combine grades where the parents are open and amenable to looking at combining grades so that we are able to keep French immersion in that school. But we also work with communities to try and encourage increased enrolment in the French immersion stream. It is challenging because it largely depends on the desire of the community, the parents and the students in that community to enrol in French immersion. It is purely a factor of enrolment.

**J. DINN:** Is there a plan to promote it? I mean to recruit because speaking as an anglophone, myself, and whose limit was: Tu connais Marcel Martin? Oui, nous sommes de bons copains – that was the extent of my high school education in French, but it has value. Is there any plan, I guess, or strategy in the department to recruit or to encourage people to – it improves your job opportunities as well.

**T. OSBORNE:** Absolutely. I think not only are students well served by having the French. My French is very limited as well. We could get into the battle of who knows less in terms of French, but I've got a repertoire of about three or four sentences that I remember from French in school. I wish I knew more.

Promoting is something that we absolutely need to look at, because not only are the students well served, I think the province is well served.

**J. DINN:** Okay.

That's it for me, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Okay, thank you.

I ask the Clerk to recall the grouping.

**CLERK:** Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education and Early Childhood Development, 3.1.01 through 3.6.01 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education and Early Childhood Development, 3.1.01 to 3.6.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.1.01 through 3.6.01 carried.

**CHAIR:** I ask the Clerk to call the next grouping.

**CLERK:** Post-Secondary Education, 4.1.01 through 4.4.02 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Post-Secondary Education, 4.1.01 to 4.4.02.

MHA Petten.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Chair.

It's been a long week, hasn't it?

Under 4.2.01, MUN's Operations, a couple of questions there. The Regular Operating Grant is up approximately \$14 million in the revised last year. It's dropped back, but it's still an increase of \$8 million.

**R. HAYES:** The increase during '21-'22 relates again to collective bargaining negotiated salary increases, as well as early severance payouts.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay.

The Tuition Offset has dropped \$8 million; is that as a result of the declining year-over-year amount for the tuition reduction?

**T. OSBORNE:** So the Tuition Offset is just over \$13 million a year over five years. The agreement with Memorial was \$6 million of that is forgivable this year, one-time only. It was actually just over \$7 million this year in terms of a reduction for the Tuition Offset.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay, thank you.

Under 4.2.02, Loans, Advances and Investments, again that was budgeted at \$10 million last year and now we're down to \$3.5 million. That is a \$7 million reduction basically.

**R. HAYES:** That \$10.5 million budget related to the Holyrood Marine Base. During the year, they were able to complete a portion of the work, about 70 per cent of it, and the \$3.5 million is a carry forward from the work that didn't get done in '21-'22.

**B. PETTEN:** That's a beautiful building.

Under MUN maintenance, I'm assuming Grants and Subsidies would be for towards MUN for the maintenance. Am I correct?

**T. OSBORNE:** I didn't hear you.

**B. PETTEN:** I'm in section 4.2.02.

**T. OSBORNE:** What was your question again, Barry, sorry?

**B. PETTEN:** It's not really clear. I'm in 4.2.02. I guess what I'm looking at is MUN's expected maintenance. As we know, maintenance at MUN, their infrastructure repairs or whatever – is that in that section? Maybe it's not in that section. Maybe I might be mistaking my question, but I'm wondering about the deferred maintenance costs at MUN.

**T. OSBORNE:** So I mean, it would be. There's not a carved out amount for maintenance. MUN determine –

**B. PETTEN:** An envelope.

**T. OSBORNE:** Part of the reason for the footprint freeze at the moment is we want to ensure that MUN is able to manage and maintain the infrastructure they have before we continue on with expansion of footprint.

There is a deferred maintenance at Memorial. That's obviously a concern not only for Memorial but for government as well. So those are some of the discussions we're having with Memorial as we proceed to moving in to the upgrades or changes to the MUN act.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay, thank you.

Under 4.3.01, CNA's Tuition Offset Grant for \$14.9 million never changed even though tuition is increasing.

**T. OSBORNE:** Yeah. So we didn't see the change through the college that we did through Memorial. I mean, Memorial came to us early last year and had indicated that they were moving forward with the doubling of tuitions. When they had indicated that to government, we looked at the Tuition Offset Grant and said, well, you know, the reason for the Tuition Offset Grant to Memorial was simply to freeze tuitions so that was the reason we made the decision to eliminate that over five years, but we didn't see the corresponding changes at the college.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay, thank you.

Minister, in 4.4.01, Grants and Subsidies, there was \$9.2 million budgeted last year, \$6.3 million spent, but we're back up to \$7.4 million. So what's the rationale for that?

**R. FEAVER:** MHA Petten, that's the result of federal increase in their funding. So that funding was increased last year as a result of COVID, maintained this year and will be maintained again next year. So because of the stacking model of the program, no student was less off. They got, actually, probably even more grant through the federal program, just resulting in less expenditure for us.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay. Thanks for that.

On that same topic, I guess, student loans, so what are we looking at in default with student loans? Is there a dollar value, a number of individuals affected? Do you have that actual list? Do you have an idea or that number?

**R. FEAVER:** The default rate rises and falls over each year. If I go back five years, we've seen it at 5 per cent, 6 per cent. Last year, or as of March 31, it sat about 7 per cent. It's about \$1.2 million defaulted on this past year based on the opening balance for the account back last April. So that number varies again from one year to the next.

Overall, the value of the defaulted loans has decreased because the value of the portfolio has decreased, so we're seeing a smaller number of that. I don't have the exact numbers; I can get you that. It's probably here in my notes here, but I'll get you that. But that would be the value of that.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you.

Minister, probably more of a general question because I'm coming to the close of my commentary. Basically, I suppose what it is, is a report from the board, what are the school priorities for the province? I know that's a broad question, I suppose, short, medium and long term. Where do we go to from here is the thing, because there are a lot of changes in your department, as we know, with the school districts and the francophone school boards and the early child educator and daycare issues and what have you. What are we looking at, I suppose? Really, I suppose I'm looking more short term than anything, in the immediate future.

**T. OSBORNE:** In terms of (inaudible)?

**B. PETTEN:** Yeah, I suppose just in general what can we envision? Because there are a lot of things happening, we've talked about most all the prekindergarten. Yeah, so what can we expect, I guess?

**T. OSBORNE:** Well, I mean, outside of the changes to the MUN act, as you know we have the changes in terms of pre-K, which is a significant shift for the province. That was negotiated with the federal government as part of the early learning program and quite delighted because as part of the early learning program the feds pay for pre-K in the province, versus the province having to pay for junior kindergarten.

In terms of the early learning itself, as you know, moving to \$25 and then \$15 and then \$10 a day is a significant shift in that regard as well.

The transfer of the English School District into the department is a process. We've already seen some progress on it. It will be a couple of years before we see full integration of the district in. I mean, part of that when you look at procurement it's easier to transfer that in than it is IT. IT is

more complicated because there are licensing agreements and different IT suites and so on. But you will see over the next 12 months significant progress in terms of the transition.

Some of that will be longer term. The more complicated, as I said, the IT is a little more complicated than teacher payroll or procurement. But the shift from the district to the department in terms of responsibility will happen. Some of the other pieces will be a little slower to happen.

We are in a transition, and I'll ask the deputy to speak a little more to this, not too much more but a little more. We are in a transition as well. I mean, obviously, our budget for Education over the last decade or so has doubled. We're still one of the lowest in terms of PISA ratings across the country, for example.

If you compare our students to students in Ontario or in Alberta or in BC, the content knowledge is just as strong or stronger in this province than it is in other provinces. But the critical thinking component is something that we need to integrate more into our schools and that's something that we've been putting a great deal of thought into and the process is starting.

Over the next couple of years – and part of the reason for bringing the English School District is not just operational efficiencies and fiscal efficiencies, it is so that we have one unified group of people looking to transform and transition the delivery of education, allowing educators to become education creators as opposed to just education deliverers. They deliver the content, which is what they've been asked to do and they do an excellent job at it, but they need to create that critical thinking and the higher order thinking.

Greg, did you want to speak a little to that?

**G. O'LEARY:** I think the minister has done a great job in outlining, I'll just say a couple of really quick things. One of the goals of sort of the next five years, if you were to pan out a little bit, would be around the improvement of educational outcomes in the K-to-12 system.

Our students, as the minister has said, often rank number one in the country in terms of content

knowledge. Mental math, they know the math, but we probably don't spend enough time – and this is not at the feet of the district or the department, this is something that everyone needs to work to together – we probably don't spend enough time on the application of high-order thinking, working in teams, working on real world problems, things to that effect. Developing competencies in students.

We have the most educated teacher workforce in the country. That's just a fact in terms of master's degrees and qualifications and everything else, but we focus a lot on content. So we're really going to try to focus on a model that we don't want to throw out the baby with the bathwater, we want to keep that strong content background that we have in Newfoundland and Labrador. But we want to spend more time on the application of that content, problem-imposed curriculum and aligning our pedagogy, our curriculum and our assessment with some of those international trends around higher-order thinking, and that's the way the world is moving. That's the way hiring is moving. That's the global workforce that we have now.

There's expertise in this area, the district, there's expertise at the department, but it's about taking a concerted effort and focusing it – as the minister said, we've almost doubled the Education budget since 2003 and we haven't had a substantial improvement in those outcomes. So I think we have a good plan. It's going to take everybody pulling together. As part of this, not, again, to lay it on the feet of anyone, but that's going to be the focus over the next while. I'm really glad you asked that question. I appreciate it.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The Member's time has expired.

MHA Dinn.

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

I'm going to start with PISA. I think we have to be cautious about when we're measuring ourselves against PISA which is a test produced by an economic organization, which is not about education. I fully agree that when it comes to the

assessment, I think we have good people in the department, in the district, in the school system. As to what it is we want to accomplish and what are the standards and we measure that, I think it serves a purpose to look at comparison but it shouldn't be the only factor in judging who we are in the success of the education system. All you have to do is look at the awards, Minister, that you've been passing out with regard to the short film awards and so on and so forth. We're doing well.

So I have problems with using PISA and other international standards. We are concerned about our own here. Mental math, I'll tell you something else, I've heard more than one complaint about the math program. Kids don't know how to do math in multiplication. I'm of the opinion if God wanted me to learn multiplication, he wouldn't have invented the calculator, but I will tell you that what I've heard – we focus on a lot of teachers tell you children are tuning in. The program does work.

Half the time, though, instead of throwing it out, there's this political movement and pressure – and I'm not talking about at this level, in this society. It does work; we just need to give it a chance to work at times. The math program does work. Maybe not for me, but I do remember flashcards and multiplication tables and they never served me in any way, shape or form, but I think the newer math, the way they're doing it, the children are picking it up and it's a success. In other words, tweak it is all I'm saying on that.

Critical thinking, yes, I think more than ever, if you seen anything in the last two years, critical thinking is a must especially with social media. It has to be because, otherwise, the society is becoming polarized and that's the outcome. Anyway, I will get off of my soapbox right now.

Just with regard to 4.2.01, Operations – I might jump around a little bit. Physical Plant and Equipment of MUN – to your satisfaction, are all of the flood mitigation measures adequate now with regard to that Core Science building? Because there was some concern that where the mental health facility was the water levels could actually flow into the new building. Has that been, as far as you understand, totally mitigated and addressed or any potential there?

**T. OSBORNE:** I think that's probably more of a question for Transportation and Infrastructure. We haven't been involved in those discussions. So we trust the engineers over there and, hopefully, what they are doing will work.

**J. DINN:** Okay. It is a beautiful building, by the way, from what I have seen on the outside. It is very striking. What are the plans then in terms of the Chemistry-Physics Building and the Science Building? Are they going to be renovated, demolished, repurposed? Any idea what is going to happen there?

**T. OSBORNE:** I understand, in discussions with Memorial, they are looking at what that building will be required for. The new Core Science building is primarily lab space and so on. They don't have the lecture halls in the new Core Science building. So there is still a need for lecture space. My understanding is the Chemistry building may be repurposed and more lecture space as required.

**J. DINN:** Okay, that is excellent. It needed a bit of TLC, but I would hate to see it demolished.

Under 4.1.01, Literacy and Institutional Services, are there any plans to expand the foundational literary program at the Gathering Place to other organizations? Last year it was mentioned that there were a number of successes associated with this initiative.

**T. OSBORNE:** There is. I know we have been working with the Gathering Place. That is an initiative that the department had undertaken with the Gathering Place to bring the folks at the Murphy Centre, who are very good at delivering some of these programs to the Gathering Place, understanding that the clients at the Gathering Place wouldn't necessarily go and knock on the door of the Murphy Centre and say they need help. But bringing the help to the Gathering Place has proven to be very successful.

So it is a model that not only are we looking at it at the Gathering Place but in other locations. It has proven to be very successful. Money well invested. You don't always get those who need the numeracy and literacy knocking on the door

of those who supply it, but if those who supply it bring it to those who need it, sometimes it works really well.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

With the anticipated tuition hike at MUN, is government planning to allocate more funding to the needs-based grants program to help students to cover the increased cost?

**T. OSBORNE:** We've done that. Rob, did you want to speak to that?

**R. FEAVER:** Sure.

Just too, if I can, if I can take some liberties, MHA Petten, back to your question on – it's 566 students defaulted on their loans; \$1.2 million is accurate and that number is similar to other years; no up and down, almost a steady amount.

Back to your question on that one, the grant, if you look in the Grants and Subsidies going from \$9.275 million down to \$6.3 million is a result of the increase in the federal program. Without the tuition relief grant, we would expect to see the same thing happen in '22-'23, but the new tuition relief grant will bring that value up. The expected expenditure for next year is budgeting at about \$2.1 million to fund that new tuition relief grant.

**J. DINN:** While the plan is to cut MUN's operating grant while allowing the university to raise tuition, will these measures result in a net increase in income for Memorial, or will their income remain about the same? As a context, there are many departments in the university that are woefully underfunded as it is, and the net neutral change to their funding sources will not help these departments, so instead this would just move, pass the burden of maintaining the status quo to the students.

**T. OSBORNE:** I understand MUN is looking at their ability to raise funds. There are some in the university that reach out very solidly to their alumni and are very successful. I understand MUN is looking at that. In terms of the tuition offset versus the tuition increases, it will take somewhere between four and five years for

MUN's tuition increases to fully replace the offset that's being taken out over five years.

The decrease in tuition freeze funding is designed to allow MUN to – with what they've explained to us, their increase in tuition, when we went to decrease the tuition freeze, we looked at what their increase in tuition would be and the length of time. So they shouldn't be adversely impacted by the tuition

In discussion with the president of Memorial, they are looking at other initiatives as well to become more competitive with some of the other post-secondary institutions across the country in terms of outreach and other revenue.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

4.3.02, College of the North Atlantic: Are there any planned renovations or upgrades to the physical plant and equipment for this year or the foreseeable future?

**T. OSBORNE:** I'm sorry. Could you repeat that?

**J. DINN:** Sure thing. Are there any planned renovations or upgrades to the physical plant and the equipment for this year and for the foreseeable future?

**T. OSBORNE:** The plant, you mean the –

**J. DINN:** The physical plant of the building at the College of the North Atlantic itself.

**T. OSBORNE:** Oh sorry. To the College of the North Atlantic, I will have to get that information from you. I will seek that out from Liz Kidd.

**J. DINN:** Okay, thank you.

How many students are currently receiving financial assistance under 4.4.01, Administration, Student Financial Services?

**R. FEAVER:** We report those numbers, MHA Dinn, based on program years. So we are currently in the middle of a program year that

doesn't end until July 31. So for last year, we were a little over 6,800 students receiving student aid last year.

**J. DINN:** And only roughly you're looking at about 556 students who default?

**R. FEAVER:** Five hundred and sixty six students who defaulted. Now that number I do get on a fiscal year basis so that is as of March 31, just this past couple of months ago.

**J. DINN:** And that's consistent.

**R. FEAVER:** If I look at the last five years that would be right around the average for the last five years.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Okay. The Member's time has expired.

MHA Petten.

**B. PETTEN:** In the spirit of time. It's Friday and it's lunchtime, I have one question.

**T. OSBORNE:** What's for lunch?

**B. PETTEN:** Yeah.

Minister, I missed to ask this earlier, it I would have been done otherwise. Leary's Brook Junior High, the Grade 7s, I am told there are 36 children in the French immersion class. That is a high number, obviously, and especially with the extra requirements of the learning with French immersion. So, obviously, it's not – I don't think it's satisfactory, but do you have any advice or any comments or explanations?

**G. O'LEARY:** First of all, once it exceeds the hard cap, MHA Petten, that class is split, right. So I'd have to look into that situation because that, to me, is over hard cap right now.

**T. OSBORNE:** Hard cap, I believe, is 34. So if it is 36 – it is 34, I believe, the hard cap.



**B. PETTEN:** This is for September now, right. We're looking at for this coming September, that's the number we've been told.

**T. OSBORNE:** Yeah, Barry, if the number stays at 36, it'll obviously have to be two classes. If it drops to 34 it's one, because that's the hard cap, or lower. But if it stays above 34, it would have to be split into two classes.

**B. PETTEN:** Okay. That's fair enough. That was basically the crux of my concern.

**G. O'LEARY:** And that just goes back to the comments earlier about the French immersion. The French immersion program, we talked about how you're going to promote it and all that. The French immersion program is absolutely thriving here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**B. PETTEN:** It is, yeah.

**G. O'LEARY:** It's totally thriving. So I think it promotes itself. The issue is not around promoting it; the issue is around having enough resources –

**B. PETTEN:** Managing it.

**G. O'LEARY:** – around it.

**T. OSBORNE:** Most of the schools have a healthy French immersion population, but we do have schools where enrolment is low and it's in those areas that maybe we need some promotion of the benefits of French immersion. But there are only a handful of schools where the enrolment is low and struggling. Most of the schools, the enrolment is satisfactory.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you very much.

On that note, I want to thank each and every one of you for the time and answering our questions. (Inaudible) to you, Minister, I appreciate it and to our Chair and the Clerk.

On that note, thanks.

**CHAIR:** MHA Dinn.

**J. DINN:** I'll just finish off with this. There are a few other technical questions, but I can leave those.

You talked about outcomes and content. I think if we want to start looking at improving outcomes, 34, 36 in a class is not going to do it. What you'll end up focusing on is the content. But I know that in a large class, the whole idea of encouraging critical thinking becomes a severe challenge. So to me, whether it's French immersion or the English stream, you've got to bring it down so that the teacher and the people who are in the classroom, the TLAs and/or the students have that ability to work with more individual attention.

I can tell you that in a large class you are not getting that individualized instruction. Especially if the class has challenging needs and they have other academic challenges, that I promise you. No matter how good the teacher is or the people in there, you need to bring them down.

I will say here, thank you again for the work you do and for answering the questions because you really have no preparation as to what we might ask. I thank you for promising to get back the information to us, especially that report on the integration of the NLESD and the Department of Education, now that I know there is a consultant's report, I can hardly wait. It's going to be some wonderful reading over the next few weeks.

**G. O'LEARY:** Just really quickly a couple of things there. You mentioned the teacher, we talked about the number of students in the class, that's important, too, but the teacher, all the research shows is this is the number one detriment.

Going back to your comment about PISA, it's not about scores for us, that's not what's going to drive the way we do our work for the next five years, but what PISA does focus on is critical thinking and high-order thinking. What we're interested in – and I think you'll appreciate this MHA Dinn – is engagement. We're interested in student engagement.

I think right now in our province our student engagement is down. I think that's something that the district would say to you, too, through their surveys as well. So when your critical thinking gets up and your high-order thinking gets up, your student engagement gets up,

students want to be in school. They're more interested in being in school. The work that we do with the teachers around the pedagogy, not just the content but the application of it, that's a really big part of it.

**J. DINN:** More engaged students with smaller classes, I'm just saying.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Okay, thank you.

I ask the Clerk to recall the grouping.

**CLERK:** Post-Secondary Education, 4.1.01 to 4.4.02 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall Post-Secondary Education, 4.1.01 to 4.4.02 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Carried.

On motion, subheads 4.1.01 through 4.4.02 carried.

**CHAIR:** I ask the Clerk to call the total.

**CLERK:** The totals.

**CHAIR:** Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Carried.

On motion, Department of Education, total heads, carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall I report the Estimates of the Department of Education carried?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Department of Education carried without amendment.

**CHAIR:** Okay, this brings us to the end. I don't know if the minister has anything additional to say?

**T. OSBORNE:** I just wanted to thank everybody for the questions and suggestions. We had some suggestions this morning that we'll certainly follow through on, but I wanted to thank the Committee and, in particular, the staff for coming and sitting in this place of great debate.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

The next meeting will be at the call of the Chair.

Can I ask for a mover for the motion to adjourn the meeting?

**L. STOYLES:** So moved.

**CHAIR:** The meeting has been adjourned by the MHA for Mount Pearl North.

Thank you.

On motion, the Committee adjourned sine die.