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Social Services**

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Department of Education

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Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Department of Education

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: Kimberley Hammond

Appearing:

Department of Education

Hon. John Haggie, MHA, Minister
Dr. Greg O'Leary, Deputy Minister
Lisa Baker-Worthman, Assistant Deputy Minister, Early Learning
Robyn Hayes, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services
Scott Linehan, Assistant Deputy Minister, K-12 Education
Tanya Noseworthy, Assistant Deputy Minister, Post-Secondary
Tracy Stamp, Departmental Coordinator
Rob Feaver, Director, Student Financial Services
Nancy Hollett, Director of Communications
Angelica Hill, Executive Assistant

Also Present

Hon. Gerry Byrne, MHA, Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills
Hon. Siobhan Coady, MHA, Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board
Barry Petten, MHA
Loyola O'Driscoll, MHA
Craig Pardy, MHA
Annie McCarthy, Government Members' Caucus
Darrell Hynes, Official Opposition Caucus
Steven Kent, Third Party Caucus

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, Gerry Byrne, MHA for Corner Brook, substitutes for Paul Pike, MHA for Burin - Grand Bank.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Siobhan Coady, MHA for St. John's West, substitutes for Lucy Stoyles, MHA for Mount Pearl North.

The Committee met at 5:30 p.m. in the Assembly Chamber.

CHAIR (Gambin-Walsh): Okay, folks, we're going to call the meeting to order.

First, I'm just going to announce the substitutes for this evening. Minister Byrne will be here shortly. He will be substituting for MHA Pike. Minister Coady is here for MHA Stoyles and MHA Petten is here for MHA Dwyer, correct? Okay, that's the substitutes.

If some of the independents show up, usually the routine is at the end we give them 10 minutes, if the Committee is okay with that? Okay.

Also, Minister, there's water on both ends and, folks, I ask you to try not to change around the positioning of your chairs. If you've already done it, don't admit it, but try not to do it. Also when you're speaking, if your light doesn't come on, please just wave so they can see you.

We'll take a break if we're here an hour. If we're in an hour, we'll take a break then. So first, I will ask the Committee for adoption of the minutes for the date of May 1.

Can I ask for a mover for the May 1 minutes?

S. COADY: Moved.

CHAIR: Okay. Moved by Minister Coady.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

CHAIR: Minister, I'll get the Committee first to identify themselves and then come back and ask you to identify your team. Then when we call the subheads, you can speak and we'll carry on.

Okay, we'll start with the Committee.

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

B. PETTEN: Barry Petten, Conception Bay South.

D. HYNES: Darrell Hynes, Researcher in the Opposition Office.

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

S. KENT: Steven Kent, Special Assistant, Third Party Office.

S. REID: Scott Reid, MHA for St. George's - Humber.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Loyola O'Driscoll, Ferryland.

C. PARDY: Craig Pardy, historic District of Bonavista.

A. MCCARTHY: Annie McCarthy, Researcher, Government Members' Office.

CHAIR: I just want to note that MHA O'Driscoll and MHA Pardy are just sitting in as observers.

Minister.

J. HAGGIE: Yes, hi. John Haggie, MHA for the District of Gander, Minister of Education.

To my left, we'll go around.

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

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

T. NOSEWORTHY: Tanya Noseworthy, Assistant Deputy Minister, Post-Secondary Education.

R. FEAVER: Rob Feaver, Director of Student Financial Services.

T. STAMP: Tracy Stamp, Departmental Controller.

L. BAKER-WORTHMAN: Lisa Baker-Worthman, Assistant Deputy Minister, Early Learning.

S. LINEHAN: Scott Linehan, ADM, K-12 Education.

N. HOLLETT: Nancy Hollett, Director of Communications.

A. HILL: Angelica Hill, Executive Assistant to the minister.

CHAIR: Okay.

All right, Minister, we'll ask for the first subgroup first.

CLERK (Hammond): 1.1.01 to 1.2.01 inclusive, Executive Services.

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

Minister Haggie.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Chair.

Just by way of a few introductory remark, it's a pleasure to be here at my first Education Estimates and I think my eighth in total in various roles. It's been an exciting year for me, but the department is also having an exciting year. It's in a stage of transition at the moment. We have wound up or are winding up one Education Action Plan and working on another.

We have seen curriculum renewal in the K-to-6 area of the school system and we're now starting into curriculum renewal in junior high. That's where some of the real kind of intellectual challenges for our department lies. We'll work into senior high in sequence.

The department now has a responsibility for early learning and child care, and that too is in a state of expansion. Due to our agreement with the Canada-wide early learning with the federal government, we have had a significant financial boost and we're at a stage now where there's still significant change management and updating of some of our arrangements with child care providers. But a lot of the foundational work has been done. We have a new ADM now to help steer that on the way.

In terms of now with post-secondary education, we have opportunities with both high-learning centres, the CNA and with Memorial, to engage in renewal and a change in direction for some of CNA. Particularly with the advent of hydrogen technology, the greener technologies, and the announcement of a climate change centre, for want of a better word, at the moment.

In terms of MUN, as we've all discussed recently, MUN is in a period of transition, having experienced some significant challenges. We're working with them to help stabilize them, but they're doing some sterling work in the process of helping themselves and navigating themselves through these kind of choppy waters.

So from that point of view, there is a lot of meat, from a policy perspective, that can be discussed. Happy to talk about that if Members opposite wished to, and for the real granular details I may pass that over to some of the staff for some elaboration.

To pre-empt an almost inevitable question I get, yes, we will supply the binder and we'll

probably do it in an ecologically friendly way with some thumb drives. Happy to do that and you can read these exciting thumbs at your leisure later on.

So I think with that, Madam Chair, I'll take my seat as it were and let's get going.

CHAIR: Okay.

MHA Petten.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Chair, and that you, Minister.

You said it's your eighth Estimates; I'm not sure how many I have. I've had an awful lot of Estimates because people realize in the Opposition you sometimes carry two to three departments. This is my second this year, and I've had a lot anyway. I was there before in the previous role, as I said, in Estimates. It's an interesting time.

Minister, as I mentioned earlier this week, I got a lot of questions. I think I'm going to start off asking questions before I get to line by lines. We had agreed that that's not a problem.

I guess my first question – well, it is my first question; it's about the amalgamation of the English School District into the department. What's the latest with that process?

J. HAGGIE: We have some proposals to bring to government, Cabinet, in the very near future outlining some specific timelines. We have some draft legislation that we're going to discuss around dissolution of the school district and we're in a position actually where we can begin to move some of the functions of NLESD back into the department, within a matter of weeks.

There is a whole integration team, chaired, led by a kind of working group of deputy ministers beneath which there are a series of working groups looking at areas such as payroll, corporate services, curriculum,

academic and these kind of things. So the organizational pieces are there and really it's simply a question now of starting some of those moves and then for government to decide how it wishes to proceed in terms of amendments and legislation.

Things are happening, a lot of work has been laid as a foundational piece, and it is a bit like building a house. The foundation, until they start to appear out of the ground, nothing looks as though it is happening but, in actual fact, a lot of work has been done.

B. PETTEN: Do you think you will achieve the \$1.5-million to \$2-million savings that you had anticipated? Are you still expecting those savings?

J. HAGGIE: It is a little difficult at the moment to be certain about the fiscal elements around quantifying those savings. This is actually geared to streamline and to improve educational outcomes. One of the questions has always been what is it you're trying to do with this? We're trying to achieve better educational outcomes and we do that by streamlining and amalgamating, collaborating between the efforts of the department who do a lot of background, for example, curriculum and educational work with those curriculum and policy specialists in the district who are actually responsible for providing front-line support for teachers as they actually go about their daily business.

We want to remove any disconnects there. We need to align the effort towards achieving better marks on our national scores. The simplest way of expressing it from my point of view is I want a high school diploma from Newfoundland and Labrador to be the gold standard for Canada, quite frankly.

We have, with the amalgamation, an opportunity to produce first-class high school graduates for universities, ideally Memorial, but indeed any university in the

world. We think that this amalgamation will deliver on that.

B. PETTEN: Thank you.

Any idea how many jobs are going to be lost? Any projections or targets on that figure?

J. HAGGIE: This isn't about losing jobs. The people who are currently employed are employed because there are jobs to be done. Those jobs will still need to be done when the amalgamation has taken place.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

Teacher recruitment, Minister, classes doubled up and guidance and other specialties have been pulled away from their job to teach others. Any idea how wide spread this problem is? Because we hear it often, we hear it throughout the province and through Labrador. Do you have any idea how widespread this is?

J. HAGGIE: Our problem seems to be around substitute teachers more than permanent posts. Our permanent vacancy rate is in low single digits and my staff here can confirm it. But I think, for example, in Labrador it is one per cent.

The challenges around substitutes. We have, for example, again, Labrador are figures I have at the moment, 101 teaching positions and there are 13 substitutes geographically in that area available. That seems to be insufficient to cover teacher absences for various reasons. So we need to look at that.

In terms of recruitment and retention, we have an active discussion going with the NLTA at the senior level, myself and the president. We are in the process of co-creating a recruitment and retention plan. In actual fact, my belief is that the material they've supplied us and the feedback that we've given would enable that to be signed off on in short order. We've undertaken to

work with them to do this and I'm really looking forward to the results of that.

B. PETTEN: So when you say short order, are we talking a matter of days, weeks, months?

J. HAGGIE: Well, I meet them tomorrow and from my point of view there's a draft there. I had hoped to give it to them last week, but, in actual fact, I think there was an illness from the NLTA staff prevented them having that meeting. So, you know, that's the kind of time frame I'm looking for, for that recruitment and retention plan. There will obviously be implementation and the aim, really, is to get this out there so that we can work hard on next year's graduates for Memorial. We have already started recruiting teachers or will be on May 12 for the September school year.

So what we're looking at now, particularly, in my view, the real low-hanging fruit is the graduates of the Bachelor of Education program, for example, at Memorial University and they will be the class that starts in September.

B. PETTEN: Okay. Thanks

SmartFind, has that improved? Has that been improved since the onset of the multiple complaints?

J. HAGGIE: There were teething problems. We heard them. The NLTA brought them. We took them back to the district. The districts had actually had them themselves and they made adaptations to the software and the algorithms of the way it worked. I haven't had a comment, adversely, about SmartFind to me directly and certainly a lot came earlier, since, I would suggest, Christmas.

B. PETTEN: That's good. It seems to be quietened down but it was a big issue.

Teacher Allocation Review Committee report, what's the status of the implementation of that report?

J. HAGGIE: The report had 90 recommendations. One of them was to identify a lead person. There is tucked away in the Estimates there a funding for that individual and those resources. We have explained that we need to go through this in detail and discuss these areas with the NLTA, particularly around teaching.

The NLESD discussions around the administration are really part and parcel of the amalgamation process. Portions of the bits for government, we're certainly looking at, at the moment, but, again, that will move along. So we've not ignored it at all.

It's a complex document because it has homework, as it were; assignments for the Teachers' Association, for the school district, which within the next year or so will become the department, and the department itself.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

Minister, what specific changes have been made in light of the Churchill case when we deal with children with exceptionalities?

J. HAGGIE: There are several things on the go there specifically to relate to that case. The chief adjudicator did comment that by the time the issue had come before them, that individual's issues had been managed with the preferred solution, I think that was the individual's phrase. There was an acknowledgement by both the school district and the adjudicator that for two years or three, that had not been the situation.

As part of our examination of the school system, the disability and support services area of the department is undergoing a review and an overhaul. So that's very much issues that are top of mind. We have a trend where we're seeing more students as a proportion of the student population

identified as having exceptionalities. A part of that actually might be the implementation of responsive teaching and learning, which is now fully implemented, according to my understanding, up to Grade 6, where absent of diagnosis, needs can be identified by teaching staff and guidance counselors and appropriately trained individuals in the school system.

Very much in line with what Health had in mind with the Autism Action Plan, where absent to firm diagnosis, it was a functional kind of evaluation so that if a student was deemed to have issues and in need of support in a particular area, you didn't actually have to have a diagnosis to supply those supports. You supplied them and then the diagnosis of somebody else's issue and would form part of a bigger plan. So it speeds the process up. I think what that's done has actually increased the rate at which these diagnosis are made.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

What's the update on new schools that are listed in the budget and timeframes? Anything firm on that?

J. HAGGIE: That's a bit of a challenge for the department. We discussed that with TI. They hold the pen on that and they are responsible now because of changes in the machinery of government for the budget for infrastructure and for infrastructure building, basically.

The assessment of need still lies with the, kind of, home department. It still lies with us and one of the things we will be doing as we gather in the functions of the school district is to look at planned preventative maintenance and indeed facilities that may need replacing or indeed facilities that may need to be built, bearing in mind the demographic shifts we're seeing because if you look at the change in population between the census in 2011, 2016, 2021, you see there's a migration across the Island and across the province which is

changing the distribution of population both in terms of numbers and demographics.

B. PETTEN: I guess this is an opportune time – I suppose any time is an opportune time. You say about replacement of schools and probably future replacement repairs. I've got an issue that you'll hear more about in the coming days and it's Frank Roberts Junior High School. I mentioned it last year because we were lacking a cafeteria, but it's much worse than that now.

I'm repeatedly back and forth with your facilities manager, who's a great guy, Mr. Sinnott, but it's not acceptable. I've talked to educators in the field that don't go to that school and there are rodents. There are air quality issues. There are children being sent home, coming home. I've got parents pleading with me. I'm dealing with your facilities manager who gives me assurance that everything is fine. I've got a lot of respect for him, but I'm in a political juggernaut because I've got a lot of upset parents and they're sending me photos. The school is overcrowded. It was built for 400 children and I think we're around 700.

I had done a tour last year with your deputy and the former minister. It's not adequate. I mean, realistically, it's not. Schools have aged, but I don't know what needs to be done to repair it. But when you've got rats and mice on teachers' desks eating Clorox wipes and a multitude of many other issues between sanitation to air quality, you name it – I did write the department last year requesting Frank Roberts be considered for replacement and it magnifies it because you're not into a small population base. You're into one of the larger populations in the metro area, and that's one of the largest catchment areas.

I know Greg is nodding his head, but I think we've spoke about this before. It's a very large catchment area. The school is not made for the population. The classroom is designed for 20 students and you've got 30-some-odd in some of them. I mean, it's just

not an acceptable situation. I know it's a money pit but it's something that I really think while we're talking about school replacement, talking about issues, this is a very important issue and it's a budgetary issue. So I present it tonight, but it's an issue that won't go away. It's an issue that's got to be given a lot of attention. You can feel free to comment and we can go to the next question.

J. HAGGIE: Well, all I will say is duly noted. I need to get up to speed on that and would be happy to do so.

B. PETTEN: Yeah, I'm getting complaints – it's not from families; I'm getting complaints from teachers, from many people, many branches. It's not stopping, you know what I mean? It's something that I've tried to manage myself but I'm not doing a good job of it. We can talk further but I wanted to note it and while your officials are here as well. I know your deputy is well versed; we've talked about this school on numerous occasions last year.

J. HAGGIE: Okay, thank you.

B. PETTEN: No problem.

The Francophone school board, the investigation, is that complete or was the status? Is there any way to get a copy of that?

J. HAGGIE: The investigation – actually I met with the Francophone Tuesday, I think, and the FFTNL as representatives – the broader spectrum, FFTNL, look after early learning and also post graduate, whereas the CSFP do K to 12 for the Francophone.

The short answer is that investigation has been complete. They have taken issues with some of the findings. I think the comment I've got from them and the feeling I get personally, having spoken to them, is that this is a new era now at the CSFP. They have a new executive director. The board chair changed and the board has a

kind of refreshed and refreshing outlook. So they have wanted to engage us over the idea of a strategic plan going forward for education in general with the Francophone and I think that's something that they learned from and are moving on from.

CHAIR: Okay.

The Member's time has expired.

MHA Dinn.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Right now, how many people are currently employed in the department and how many positions are currently vacant? How will the employment numbers change with the integration of the NLESD into the department?

J. HAGGIE: Okay, I have that information and I just need to try and find it because it was under a tab. Oh yes, it's in the folder at the beginning. The current overall vacancy rate in the department is 20 per cent. The bulk of that lies in early learning and child care development, because those are positions that have been advertised but are not yet recruited simply because of timing. It's not that they're vacant for a long period; it's just we've been signing RSAs to spend the resources that the federal government have provided for us.

So if you take out early learning and child care development, the vacancy factor for the department is 17 per cent. My understanding, when we do the amalgamation, is that these numbers will rise considerably because the NLESD will then become members of the Department of Education.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Could we have the figures for the number of teachers currently employed in the province, with a breakdown of their region and a breakdown according to speciality and

grade? I'd certainly be interested in a breakdown according to the number of full-time – not full-time equivalent, but full-time versus those who are in fractional positions, whether that's 0.1, 0.25, half-time, whatever.

J. HAGGIE: That would be FTEs and positions?

J. DINN: Not full-time equivalents, I'm looking for how many teachers are full-time teaching to the full capacity and teachers who are maybe teaching in a three-quarter time unit, quarter time unit, 0.1, all these positions. I'd like a breakdown – fractional units is what I'd like and basically where they're located as well.

J. HAGGIE: We can certainly get that data for you.

Would you be interested in knowing how many of the fractional units, for example, in music are topped up to full-time with other duties as well?

J. DINN: Sure, you can do that, as long you're going to top up every other unit as well.

J. HAGGIE: I can give you the data.

J. DINN: Sure.

What measure has the department taken in the past year and plans to take this year in order to improve recruitment and retention of teachers?

J. HAGGIE: I think I may have addressed that partially with my comments to the other Member's question. We have engaged with the NLTA and asked them to help us co-create a recruitment and retention plan. They submitted some points to us. We have amalgamated that with our feedback and we're in a stage now where we can present that back to the NLTA for signoff or a bit of editing.

I have encouraged President Langdon, and he's very keen, on getting this out the door quickly. We would then, as I say, aim to have that in place to really enhance the recruitment efforts for the coming graduating class.

We have worked with the school district to begin earlier offers and posting for teacher positions. I think May 12 there will be another tranche of positions for September advertised.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Following up from that previous question, there are certain areas of the province where it seems to be extremely difficult to recruit and retain teachers. With this plan that you're co-developing, are there any region-specific plans or actions that will be undertaken or addressed in that plan?

J. HAGGIE: We already have enhancements and incentives in place for rural, remote, isolated schools, particularly in Labrador. We have had feedback from the NLTA about the appropriateness of these. We've identified between us, I think, and involving the school district, obviously, around 40 positions which are traditionally very difficult to fill. We have asked for some discussion with the NLTA to approach these slightly differently.

I'm being vague because the conditions around this are currently in the collective agreement and currently we are in negotiations. At least HRS is, and I don't want to be accused of trying to negotiate in public. But that is an active discussion between ourselves and the NLTA at the departmental level.

J. DINN: So you said you already have incentives in place. What would they be?

J. HAGGIE: Well, for example, in Labrador, a \$5,000 bonus, assistance with flights to get there and assistance with

accommodation in Labrador West, for example.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Given the well-documented shortage of substitute teachers in the province, along with a number of longer term unfilled vacancies, have there been savings in terms of teacher salaries and, if so, how much of these savings are being reinvested in any way to address recruitment and retention challenges?

J. HAGGIE: We've actually increased our budget for teacher salaries and that has been principally around substitute numbers because of increased demand. Since COVID, teachers are doing what we asked them to, which is if they feel ill or they are sick, to stay home and not, as in the past, as a lot of workers did in other disciplines and in other areas, go to work when they've got the sniffles. That has generated an increased demand for substitutes.

J. DINN: A lot of teachers, I would submit, Minister, actually do go to school for that reason, because they may not have a substitute and they're trying not to double up classes for their colleagues.

Given the current circumstances, is there a budget line or amount dedicated to supporting teacher recruitment, retention strategy? Is that anywhere in the budget lines here?

J. HAGGIE: Not to my knowledge because we have to actually agree to what we're going to do yet. This was a collaborative arrangement and I had hoped at one stage we might be able to include it in the budget process but for various reasons – no fault, but for various reasons that wasn't possible. So if we need new monies and can't identify countervailing in savings, we will go through the usual Treasury Board process.

J. DINN: So we could expect a budget line hopefully next year, next budget, right? Would that be fair to say?

J. HAGGIE: I don't know whether or not the departmental controller might be better able to answer that, whether or not we would have a distinct head of expenditure for recruitment but that may be a process issue rather than a financial one.

J. DINN: Is there anyone there to answer that?

J. HAGGIE: Do we put extra lines, heads of expenditure in the budget like that?

R. HAYES: So we would have to do that through the budget process. We would have to identify head of expenditure where we have the spend authority to do so. If one doesn't exist, there is a process that we would have to follow to put that in the Estimates of Education, but it would have to go through the budget process and all of the approval steps that would be involved.

J. DINN: It would be good to see that line, considering how important this is.

Has there been any consideration in the last year to adding more teacher assistants, psychologists, counsellors, or other support staff in the schools?

J. HAGGIE: Those are currently, some of them, still governed by the allocation formula. Others are actually challenged with recruitment. What we have is a situation where we do need to look, in the light of my comments about students with exceptionalities, to see if the student assistant budget, for example, is sufficient. We have added extra hours, at the request of – or rather, we have financed extra hours for the school district to add at the request of the school district, recognizing an increased need for student assistants, for example. But that's part of the review as well of our disability and student support services.

J. DINN: Thank you.

How many EAL instructors are there currently in the system and where in the province are they located and what is their student-to-teacher ratio? I guess in there, I'm assuming here, especially if they might involve travel of some of them, even thinking of itinerants, where they might have a caseload and then they might be travelling between several schools to do that.

J. HAGGIE: That's another breakdown we can certainly go back to the district with.

J. DINN: And maybe you can answer this then. With regard to the student teacher ratio, especially for any itinerants, is it simply a straight number or do you account for the fact the number of schools and the geographical distance that they might have to travel to get to those school in determining the caseload?

J. HAGGIE: I think that might be a question for Scott.

S. LINEHAN: So I would have to defer to NLESD staff, but I know that because of geographical challenges, for example, in Labrador and the West Coast, there's a sensitivity towards caseloads that are different than in the Avalon region because the travel restrictions are not quite as arduous for itinerants here in the Avalon region. Travelling from Corner Brook, say, to St. Anthony would pose a significant issue on caseloads. So the caseloads would be different based on geographical regions because of travel.

CHAIR: Okay.

The Member's time has expired.

MHA Petten.

B. PETTEN: Thank you.

To continue on, Minister, we were talking about the Francophone school board.

What's the latest on the Francophone school?

J. HAGGIE: The École Rocher-du-Nord, from my understanding, is that it is opened and functioning. There was a little bit of a delay at the beginning from supply chain issues around tiling as I recall. So it was 10 or 12 days late opening.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

Has the department done any air quality testing in schools since buying the air purifiers? Like basically are they working as intended? Has there been any analysis done on that?

J. HAGGIE: I'm aware that they were all checked and serviced before the beginning of the school year. As to whether any of them might have gone out of commission since and needed replacement, I wouldn't be able to tell you just off the cuff, but I can certainly go find out.

B. PETTEN: The air quality testing as well, is that a regular thing that's done within the schools or is it only done when you get a complaint?

J. HAGGIE: I would defer to the school district about that but we can certainly ask the question for you.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

Minister, as people in your department may know and you may know as well, one of my pet projects, but I can't let it go, is the 1.6 busing. Was there any actual cost analysis done on grades? As much as we debated it, I don't think we've ever gotten an actual analysis.

I know when my colleague, Mr. Warr, was the minister, we had a lot of conversation. But I never, ever did get a cost breakdown or analysis of what the actual cost was to provide busing for K-to-6 children that live within the 1.6 zone, which is what I've

always advocated for. Was there any cost analysis ever done within your department on that issue?

J. HAGGIE: I believe there was some studies done a long time ago but the cost of busing increased significantly during COVID. In actual fact, we and TI have begun to look at what those costs would be if we were to change the 1.6-kilometre rule.

B. PETTEN: So you are looking into that cost now?

J. HAGGIE: Yeah.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

Has there been any analysis done on the Greene report recommendations?

J. HAGGIE: In relation to education? Yes, and I'm not sure what you mean beyond that.

B. PETTEN: Well, the Greene report had a lot of recommendations based on education whereas a general question that applied to the department, have you done any analysis on the recommendations she had made for education or have you done nothing, I guess?

J. HAGGIE: I mean, we certainly looked at the report and staff looked at it and the issue of specifics would maybe provide a more detailed or a more open answer, but at the moment our focus is on the integration and streamlining the system in the way I've described. I think the issue of what Greene said specifically about any one issue would now be taken in the light of things such as the TARC Report or subsequent material.

B. PETTEN: What's the status with the curriculum update for K to 12 with cultural sensitivity and the Indigenous education piece?

J. HAGGIE: That was part of the Education Action Plan. My understanding is that there were 80-odd recommendations and all of them were either in place or nearly complete. So I couldn't give you a specific breakdown just off the cuff about which of those relate to the Indigenous piece, but certainly there has been active growth in that area and it was a significant part of the Education Action Plan. It's one of the things we're looking at in what we should do to replace the Education Action Plan.

If you have a specific question around the elements in the Indigenous piece, I'll do my best to find someone who can answer it for you.

B. PETTEN: Thank you.

Minister, have you done any analysis, I guess, on the moving to one nursing school, any cost analysis or benefits analysis on that plan?

J. HAGGIE: There is work on that is ongoing at the moment. Some of it goes through the Department of Health.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

I guess another one is there any analysis on the one the Health faculty announced in the budget last year.

J. HAGGIE: The one health what sorry?

B. PETTEN: Faculty at MUN. The one –

J. HAGGIE: Yes, that has really rested with Health for the moment. I think it's been kind of superseded a little bit by the discussions on amalgamating the nursing school and how that would be done along with the expansion of the BN program. So I think, for the moment, it's been a bandwidth issue. MUN have had their challenges and so it hasn't really been top of mind, the amalgamation piece has with the nursing school first.

B. PETTEN: Okay. When will MUN be required to appear at Public Accounts? When is that plan? When is that going to be done?

J. HAGGIE: I have no recent information on that.

B. PETTEN: So you'd wait until the MUN Act is completed or the AG report or –

J. HAGGIE: I think there's a lot to be said for trying to get the AG report and to find out what monitoring and oversight that she might recommend in the light of her performance review. Indeed, that's really why we did the piecemeal, as somebody said earlier on today, with the membership with the Board of Regents, for example. We didn't want to leave that because we're not sure of the timeline of the AG's report.

B. PETTEN: But don't you think with the amount of money that's being, I suppose, provided and, in turn, spent, obviously with MUN that it would be a good exercise for all involved for them, someone representing them to answer some questions on airing Public Accounts like with the Public Accounts Committee, that's the serious role they play within our Legislature, obviously. Don't you think that would be the most beneficial place to have them now? Even with the AGM doing the ongoing work, there are still lots of questions that need to be asked and it's never too soon to do that.

J. HAGGIE: Yeah, I think it ties into the debate, partly, that was raised this morning. It's around the autonomy piece, the oversight piece and the transparency elements. MUN is an autonomous body; it is still a government reporting entity, otherwise this process wouldn't be possible. The question is what level of oversight is reasonable for a university because they do operate differently than a lot of other entities.

I don't personally have issues with the idea of significant financial and administrative

oversight of Memorial. The problem is that at some point that will stray and it may stray far enough that there is a legitimate case to be made that it is interfering with academic freedom.

I don't know where those lines lie and I think there is a considerable amount of work we need to do as part of the run up to the MUN rewrite in that area.

B. PETTEN: I don't disagree.

Minister, what is the status of the proposed new law school that has been talked about and discussed for the last number of years?

J. HAGGIE: I have not discussed the matter of a law school with anyone from Memorial since I took this portfolio.

B. PETTEN: Good job. I'm not saying I agree or disagree – good job.

Is the footprint expansion freeze still in place for MUN?

J. HAGGIE: Yes.

B. PETTEN: It is? Okay. Good.

Have you spoken to the Board of Regents on what process will be used to investigate the former president's issues? I mean, they're still there; she's not but the issues are still outstanding. Is there any plan in place to investigate that further or is the door closed on that?

J. HAGGIE: I have spoken to the chair of the Board of Regents, I have spoken to the chancellor and the interim president and they are trying to find the best way to deal with that. They've engaged people such as Murray Sinclair and they have their Indigenous VP. As yet, they have not come to any conclusion as to how best to do that.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

The process to recruit a new president, do you think national search firms are the best option?

J. HAGGIE: I think that we should use best practices in hiring a very key figure or, in MUN hiring, a very key figure. This is a decision of the Board of Regents. That is the power vested in them through the MUN Act as it stands at the moment. I have encouraged them to look closely, in light of the debate we've had here this morning or the comments this morning, but also look far and wide because you want the best person, not necessarily the nearest or not necessarily the cheapest or most expensive.

B. PETTEN: Fair enough.

I don't think we need to be spending the amount of money we have. I think we have lots of capable people in the province.

One question before I run out of time, I guess. The new film and television school, are there any updates on that?

J. HAGGIE: My understanding is that there's some final work being done on an auditorium, but there are students there and there are discussions about how we can partner with some well-established, well-known Mainland film schools to enhance the program that they offer there so the graduates can move on to programs elsewhere and sub-specialize.

B. PETTEN: Thank you.

CHAIR: Okay.

The Member's time has expired.

MHA Dinn.

J. DINN: Thank you.

How many translators are working in our schools?

J. HAGGIE: Any particular language?

J. DINN: Any language, I'm talking about any translators since we have quite a variety of newcomers who may not speak English as another language or even any other language for that matter.

J. HAGGIE: We'll go back to the school district and ask the question for you.

J. DINN: Good.

Would it be also possible to find out what they're being paid and who pays them?

J. HAGGIE: Certainly, within the realms of HR privacy, yes.

J. DINN: I'm not looking for who gets what. I'm just trying to find out are they making minimum wage, something more than that and who hires, where the funding comes from.

Thank you.

I think it's been noted already that there's roughly estimated, I think, \$1.5 million to \$2 million worth of savings for the integration of the NLESD into the department and was more about streamlining than anything else and – if I remember your comments accurately – to improve better educational outcomes.

I asked this when your predecessor announced this: What was the plan? What were you expecting to happen? Has there been any cost-benefit analysis as to this move?

J. HAGGIE: Not that I'm aware of.

J. DINN: Not that you're aware of.

Because I can say in 2013, when the administration at that time decided to amalgamate the four districts into one, it created a huge amount of chaos. I would argue that it didn't save much money nor

did it streamline the process in any way, shape or form, at least for that next few years.

Why not? If it hasn't been done, why not? Maybe someone else in the department would know if there was ever a cost-benefit analysis or any formal study of this and, if not, why not?

J. HAGGIE: Well, at the moment the decision has been made and it's not going to be reversed. So we live within the world we have. From the point of view of cost, this isn't about saving money. This is about getting better educational outcomes and I think I went into some detail with my previous answers on that.

J. DINN: Minister, that is what I would expect in a cost-benefit analysis in terms of not only the cost but what would be the benefit of doing so that there would be a report. Considering that this government, for sure, has done its best to make sure there's consultant report and everything, I would assume, for an integration of this magnitude, there would have been some cost-benefit analysis or some formal assessment of it. Bothersome if it's not. It truly is.

So \$1.2 million – the savings, have they been redeployed back into the system or will they be redeployed or are they going back in the general funds?

J. HAGGIE: We haven't identified any budget reductions or expenditure reductions yet in the process.

J. DINN: Okay.

When can we expect the merger to be completed? Will it be this September?

J. HAGGIE: The merger, the amalgamation, will take place over time. There will need to be some legislative changes to the Schools Act and whether that's done in stages and then whether it's left to a complete rewrite is

something of a process question. Simply, physically, to move the individuals concerned is a rather simplistic way of looking at it. We've got to amalgamate functions.

That, we don't have a time frame for. I would anticipate that we could have the bulk of it done, possibly, within this calendar year but if I give you a date, the one thing I would be sure about is it would be wrong.

J. DINN: Shouldn't the department have a time frame? I speak of this from a teacher's point of view where, invariably, your year is planned out in advance. You sit down and plan out when you cover the outcomes, how you're going to cover the outcomes and so on and so forth and when exams are going to be given.

So I'm just thinking here, like it seems to be a rather vague process. When can we expect legislative changes? Are there going to be any? It seems, right now it's pretty airy fairy, which is troubling for an education system.

I don't know, any thought when we can expect some legislation? In the fall?

J. HAGGIE: Well, I mean that is determined by Cabinet and the Government House Leader. I can't speak on their behalf. We have a plan. We have moved along that road with a plan and we are ready to actually physically move or structurally move functions from the school district into the department within the next couple of weeks. It won't be an all or none thing; it will be a process. At some point, the NLESD will be dissolved and you will need legislation to do that.

Whether or not you need the legislation to begin the process, I think the balance of opinion is that we don't.

J. DINN: There is a plan. Is it possible to have that plan, if it's written down?

J. HAGGIE: It has not yet been approved by Cabinet and government. So when it's approved, they will decide what's appropriate to release.

J. DINN: Moving along with a plan that hasn't been approved, okay.

As part of the merger of the NLESD into the department, will there be any office or branch of the public service that's dedicated specifically to the region of Labrador and the particular issues that their school system faces? In general, how does the department plan to address regional variations in service delivery?

J. HAGGIE: Once the department comes into government, how it is organized is a mechanism of government issue. I do not have control over that. That prerogative lies with the Premier and Executive Council.

J. DINN: Could we have an update on the work to create the provincial advisory council on education and what will its scope of work be and how will members be selected?

J. HAGGIE: The current update is that the regulations have been mostly drafted. They need some final revision and some discussion and then they should be ready for promulgation within the next couple of months. Then the committee can be constituted.

J. DINN: Is the department then working on some sort of strategy or plan to improve the quality of education in remote areas? You've heard my colleague speak to that, certainly, from Torngat Mountains. We know that there are problems in such basic issues as connectivity that hampers efforts to deliver quality education to students in places such as the North Coast of Labrador.

J. HAGGIE: The issue of quality is, in actual fact, one of the foremost issues in this whole exercise. Not to mention in a future iteration of the Education Action Plan. The

issues of connectivity are outside the department's direct control, but we have had significant success in improving connectivity for schools by working with OCIO and service providers on the North Coast.

There will always be a place for different forms of instruction. One of the things that came out of COVID, we started with what was described as a learning loss symposium and we changed the name on the second one because it was more accurate to describe it as a learning impact symposium. There are a body of students who flourished with online only education. These were students who in a classroom environment did not do well. The challenge we have is to find out that balance or that delivery mechanism that suits the student themselves. That is key whether it's in metro or whether it is in Makkovik.

I think the issues around choice of curriculum, electives, ability to do different credit courses is always going to be a challenge if they have to be delivered hands on and face to face simply because of our geography. You cannot have a full-blown physics lab in some of the small schools. There just isn't the ability to do that or the people to teach it directly. But you can achieve that through CDLI. CDLI, I think, is poised to become a real asset and a real area of expansion within the department.

J. DINN: I'm assuming the Federation of School Councils will be disbanded, as such, will cease to exist.

J. HAGGIE: We have been in active discussions with the Federation of School Councils and it is their view that however this shakes out, there should really be a single, unified cohesive representative group discussing education from their perspective.

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

MHA Petten.

B. PETTEN: Thank you.

Minister, the pre-kindergarten pilot project, could we get an update on that? How it's working out, I guess, the numbers, the uptake and effects on existing child care? That was on my to-do list actually, to ask for basically an update there a few months ago. It's, again, one of those things that's been sitting around. I was curious myself because I've had people approach me. So what's the latest with that? I do not know what effect it has on the child care. Is it a big uptake? I'm hearing mixed messages on the pre-K program.

J. HAGGIE: The pre-K program is coming out in phases. The bulk of it is being done by the Y. Their limit was originally supply chain in trying to get some of the facilities ready. My most recent discussions with their executive director when we opened the pre-K in Gander was that their challenge now was around getting hold of ECEs. We are and have been working on that. We have 245 graduates coming out of CNA this June, which is an increase from, I think, 90 or 45 three or four years ago. It's a huge, huge jump. Similarly, the private training institutes will be introducing their graduates between June and December in three tranches.

Since the wage grid was announced, CNA and the private training institutes have had to actually staff up to deal with the phone calls of people who want to apply. Our current aim is to go back with AECENL – the Association of Early Childhood Educators – to identify those people who have registration and recognition as early childhood educators who left the field – and we believe there may be as many as 600 of them – to see how many of them would like to come back because they would provide an immediate injection.

The demand for spaces exceeds the supply of spaces. Having said that, within the last four weeks across the province 200 extra spaces have been added.

B. PETTEN: In actual fact, I guess it's not helping our child care centres; it's just joining in the compounding of the empty spaces right across the board.

J. HAGGIE: The empty spaces, these spaces are staffed, the new ones. We talk about a space only if it has the staff to staff it. We have in mind a target of, I think, 5,900 by the end of the program. The challenge that we have is encouraging businesses to expand, encouraging not-for-profits to get into the field, but at the same time then being able to supply them with trained early childhood educators.

Those spaces that are there, we need to go back and look to make sure there aren't vacant spaces for reasons of structural issues with the program. The Operating Grant Program is currently under review and we think that will address operators' and licensees' concerns, as well as remove any kind of dead space, of which we believe there may be a little in some child care centres and take up the slack.

B. PETTEN: You spoke earlier, Minister, and I think Lisa would be in receipt of the letter, there were two letters that came out yesterday on my public comments on the 2017 policy change from Association of Early Childhood Educators received yesterday. Unfortunately, there was misinformation. I don't know if you're going to get a new letter again today, but that's not what we've advocated for. It was based on a VOCEM story that was inaccurate. So it was just unfortunate all around that this provincial organization never done their, I would say, due diligence, but I'll be friendly and I'll be kind. I know a lady quite well that's involved. I think it was a mistake.

So I go back to my original stance on the 2017 change when it deals with children with exceptionalities and inclusion workers. I mean, there's no one around can say that it's acceptable that children with autism are being sent home from daycares or turned

away from schools. That goes without saying. We both agree, I know that.

My concern with the 2017 policy is you have qualified inclusion workers out there, and I don't think anyone really gets a grasp of what our argument is. There are a lot of qualified inclusion workers out there that could easily go into a child care centre, on the interim, while we're into this situation. We're dealing with our health care; we're dealing with in our schools with the crisis we're facing.

On a very personal note, and you might wonder sometimes, I know people wonder sometimes why I'm so – I have a lot of passion for this exceptionalities, children with autism, what have you, but I spent 20 years in the mental health field. That's me really, I'm not a politician more than I am – that's my soft spot.

I could easily go into any child care centre in this province, I don't have my Level 1, but my record speaks for itself, anyone who knows me, I could easily go into any child care centre and provide topnotch care to any autistic child with autism or any exceptionality in this province. I've done it. But I'm not allowed to because of this 2017 policy.

I hope I explained it clearer because I know people are saying we're lobbying for people, unqualified individuals to enter these child care, shame on you; it's terrible. I'm very passionate about that issue and I'll remain that way because, I think, in the efforts today with so many staffing issues, unfortunately those people have less of a voice than everyone else. I have no problem being their voice because I think they fall through the cracks more so than that group of healthy, active children looking for the same attention.

Those people are always here. We're short in student systems, we're short on inclusion workers and it's unfortunate sometimes. I don't think it's intentional on anyone's part.

But if we don't speak up and advocate for them, well where do we go?

I don't back away from my stance on the 2017 policy and I'm not asking for it to be lifted forever, but I think it could easily be eased back to deal with the ongoing issue we have now and to make sure we don't read in the news next week that another child is sent home from daycare.

So I want to be on record, and I know Lisa is there and I want to make her aware, too, but I hate misinformation circulating and if anything I've done tonight, I said I had to get that out and here it is.

I don't know where we go from here, but I think that's a valid request. I know that you've basically said in Question Period that's not where you're willing to go, but I'd still like to hear a response on my view.

J. HAGGIE: Yeah.

I think my response comes with several threads in no particular order. One, I agree, discriminating against children with exceptionalities, whatever their diagnosis or not, is not acceptable. I can't condone it and will not. I think we may be differing on what level of qualification is qualified and appropriate.

The arrangement in 2017 was akin to a whole series of other changes based around quality. For example, in Health, it was around the pharmacy technician thing, which was brought in in 2014 or 2015 with the same aim in view. Individuals who were in that role in 2017 were given five years to upgrade and gain a Level 1. In actual fact, this whole criteria was that they register for a course. If they couldn't do the course or the course wasn't available, there were extensions. If there were other mitigating circumstances, there were extensions. Those people who didn't apply are on a clock. I think that's reasonable when you have issues of quality.

At some point, we have to professionalize the delivery of early learning and child care. We are not – and certainly not on my watch will we be – government-funded babysitting. So I do think that we do need to bear that in mind.

We were very generous with the criteria. The time clock has not yet expired and there are opportunities now aplenty because of the shift since 2017 to a lot of online studying for example. You can earn, do your job and learn, and then continue to work once the deadline expires.

But I agree, and I'll close on where I started, barring children, chucking them out because they have an exceptionality is not acceptable.

B. PETTEN: Well, I'll quickly say inclusion workers; you don't have to be an ECE to be a great inclusion worker. Inclusion workers work one on one; you can have all the training for an ECE, it doesn't make you an inclusion worker. There's a clear divide. Children with autism have a different need that an average child with no exceptionalities.

We'll agree to disagree. I'll stay strong on that issue because I do feel that we're agreeing on the same thing, but your variation of babysitting is not accurate because those children with exceptionalities need the proper care and unfortunately that ECE program does not deal with children with exceptionalities in the way it should be dealt with; they're not properly trained; they're not getting the right care. You don't have to be an ECE to be a good inclusion worker.

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

MHA Dinn.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

My colleague from Conception Bay South raised the issue of air quality and there was

some discussion with regards to the air purification systems that are there. I have a question now, especially, since the purchase of the schools that were under the control of the archdiocese have been finalized: What are the plans or what is the plan to update the ventilation systems, the HVAC systems in the schools and to install a retrofit at schools that currently do not have HVAC or proper ventilation systems? Especially in light of the fact that we're coming out of the pandemic, a lot of schools are overcrowded classrooms and I'll come to that in a minute, what are the plans now to modernize or update the schools or retrofit them? I've been asking this since the pandemic began. The portable air purifiers are, to me, a stopgap measure.

J. HAGGIE: That discussion is one that needs to take place between myself or our department and Transportation and Infrastructure. They hold the budget and the authority around significant repairs and renovations to existing buildings as well as new builds.

I think the air purification stopgaps, as you put it, that we have put in place has worked. Whether or not there is more to be done, I think, will require further assessment and what that should be will also require collaboration between myself and the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Has there been any assessment done with regard to schools and classrooms where basically the number of people in that classroom exceeds the fire load capacity? Trust me, I've done that. That's how I've managed to get classes down to a manageable size where the number of students and people in that classroom exceed the fire code.

So I am just wondering has there been any analysis done, because you have said there are class caps that are for instructional

purposes, which I would argue have nothing to do with, in many cases, the load capacity for fire safety?

J. HAGGIE: My understanding – and my staff will correct me if I misspeak – is that would be an issue for fire inspections. I don't know and maybe Scott can answer how regularly a school would be inspected by fire inspectors. Scott may not actually have the answer; it may lie with the school district. But that would be clearly a flag that should come to the department were a fire commissioner or a fire inspector to say this room is not safe from a fire perspective.

I have not heard of any such cases, but, Scott, do you have any editorial comments?

S. LINEHAN: In my discussions with the LSD facilities director, if there are any life and safety issues, they do have their inspectors routinely inspect their schools. If it was ever brought to their attention that there was a fire and safety issue then they would address it and remediate it immediately.

To my knowledge, it has not been brought to the district attention or our attention that there is a life and safety issue thereby requiring remediation; that has not been brought to our attention.

J. DINN: Fire inspectors will come into a classroom and they will identify whether you have too much paper or flammable material in the classroom; that's easy to see. They will not always check to see if the number of people in the classroom exceeds the capacity.

I'm wondering for that matter, on every classroom we have we put a capacity, as you see in a lot of public spaces, unless you actually take the time to measure it and figure out the load capacities, you have no way of knowing. That's my case here. In many cases, and I have had classes where they have been in excess of what is safe and it requires a complaint. My argument

here is that it shouldn't take someone having to go through that. They should be able to find out in the classroom where this is and judge it accordingly.

I would argue that it is an issue for the department and the district, just as much as bus safety and buses that are on the road that are probably unsafe. It is student safety; it is teacher safety; it is staff safety, period.

So I would certainly like to see something on each classroom posted: Here are the number of people who can occupy this particular room. Then we'll have a better idea when a fire inspector goes around, if indeed there is a life safety or fire safety hazard, but until we do that, we have no way of knowing if it is or not until something happens.

With regard to the new school in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, just curious, right now it's been announced, what are the plans to have this and when would this be built?

J. HAGGIE: That again is with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure. My understanding is they are at an RFP stage, which would include looking at the site as well as the design. I couldn't speak to whether or not that RFP is closed. Minister Loveless, his department, would be able to supply that information.

J. DINN: Right now, Prince of Wales Collegiate, if you look at the NLESD site, has a student enrolment of 624 students. If opening the new school – the one that wasn't called for – in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's goes ahead, how many of the students from that area, who currently go to PWC, would go to the new school?

J. HAGGIE: Again, that work is being done in terms of what the feeder structure for the new school would look like and also what the effect would be on PWC and the other schools because it's not just one school that would be affected. Assuming that we keep

PWC going up to Grade 12, then that would have a different effect than if a decision was made, for example, to cap it at nine.

J. DINN: I would argue this, in speaking to NLESD officials before it would theoretically half the population. Any analysis of what that would do to programming, the ability – and I will tell you right now, it will have an impact on programming, on what courses they are able to offer. If indeed you have, I would argue you would probably have at least one full-time school counsellor at PWC, if it's split, I'm assuming then that that counsellor is now split between two schools. Is there a plan to make sure that the staffing in each place is maintained and the programming is maintained?

These are questions, I would argue, Minister, that should have been done before an announcement was made, because they're going to have ramifications. So I'm just curious as to, again, a cost-benefit analysis even as to what the impact would be on programming. How are you going to maintain it? I'm mystified by it in many ways.

J. HAGGIE: Well, I can understand if you're operating in a situation where you have incomplete information. I think one of the challenges around the demographics is it is growing. By the time that school is ready, we don't necessarily yet have a clear handle on how much greater the high school population will be.

We've seen a drop in high school graduation in this province that could have been of the order of 10 per cent due to our demographics; however, now for the first time in 50 years, we've seen year-on-year increases year over year in school population.

So I think there has to be some flexibility in making those decisions because the situation that exists now will not be the same as the situation that exists when that school is opened. One of the challenges of

building the new school, or indeed any facility, is actually building it to the date it opens, not to the date it was planned.

J. DINN: Will there be then, right now, in calling for this school – I know that the NLESD at the time did not call for it and they've done the analysis in terms of where the schools need to go. Certainly that's always been the argument. Was there any analysis or is there any analysis that has been done to demonstrate the need for here – my colleague from Conception Bay South has certainly raised the issue of a need for a new school in Frank Roberts. If anything else, it's about the state of the situation of that school as a learning environment. But I'm just wondering, the analysis here, has there been any analysis to show that somehow maybe that PWC is on its way out, that the population in the Portugal Cove-St. Philip's area is growing, that we need to have a new school?

I know that when I met with the Francophone board they were looking for a new school out in Galway. They had plenty of research done to justify it. It was flawed, but it was still research. I'm just wondering, has there been anything done along those lines to warrant it?

J. HAGGIE: There is a shift in population and I think one of the challenges that we're seeing is that that shift fluctuates and it increases the rate. Certainly, at the moment, there is significant evidence that there are certain areas in the greater Avalon area that are booming and it is hard to keep abreast of some of those changes but we're kind of doing our best.

There is a need for new schools in various areas. One of our challenges is that as we bring in the school district, it will become clearer to us in the department how that analysis and what that analysis consists of, how it was done. Because there has been some concern that things have got missed. Without knowing how it's done in detail, rather than just simply saying we need a

new school here, it's a challenge sometimes to answer some of those questions. But certainly the population in this area is growing.

CHAIR: Okay, folks, we're going to take a 10-minute break.

Recess

CHAIR: Okay, folks, we're going to restart.

Just a reminder that we have four sections here and we're still in 1.1.01 to 1.2.01. So we're still in the first section.

MHA Petten.

B. PETTEN: Thank you.

Hopefully we'll get through the questions this round, Minister.

Retroactive payment for ECE staff, has that all been administered now?

J. HAGGIE: As far as I'm aware, yes.

B. PETTEN: Are they all getting paid at, I'll say, the appropriate level because there were some areas of concern with the various operators that the \$25 wage grid wasn't – they were above that grade. So has that all been worked out, those details, with the operators?

J. HAGGIE: My understanding is that the payments proceeded maybe one week late. But they're all made up and we're looking to make sure now, through the OGP changes and various other means, that everyone's getting what they're supposed to get. No one will get less than they got before if they're working under a different system.

B. PETTEN: Minister, why can a new home-based daycare get a grant to start but a for-profit can't?

J. HAGGIE: The federal money was very specific, targeted only to not-for-profits and for government-run facilities.

B. PETTEN: We have for-profits in the province now that would like to expand and deal with the shortage of child care spaces, but they're being hamstrung by this policy. Yet, we don't have nearly – in Newfoundland and Labrador we don't – enough not-for-profits, outside the Y and maybe a few others, to fill that void.

Saskatchewan, I'm thinking, got a one-off, or the federal government worked out a separate agreement to deal with the for-profits in Saskatchewan. Again, I stand to be corrected, but I know that there are some conversations and there were other provinces – Saskatchewan comes to mind, I think it is. They actually worked out a separate arrangement with Saskatchewan on that actual issue because they had a lot of for-profits as well.

Is that something that you have entertained or discussed? Because 70 per cent of our child care operations are for-profit and it's a huge investment on all those owners. I hear regularly from those operators. That issue is not being resolved, obviously. It stands out with the federal programming, which is designed for a not-for-profit.

Is that something you've given consideration to or debated?

J. HAGGIE: I think the number actually may be nearer 60 per cent or 61 per cent for –

B. PETTEN: Pardon me?

J. HAGGIE: – child care, but I wouldn't argue that. The concept is that there is a significant delivery of child care through private companies, private operators. The Operating Grant Program is under review. We are consulting with all child care licensees directly to make sure we get as broad a range of views as possible, doing it directly and through town halls. We'll take

those comments and those suggestions and we'll certainly look at them. That process is not complete and if that comes up through it, then we'll consider that too.

B. PETTEN: Minister, we've seen in places government seems to be encouraging some not-for-profit, municipal-led day cares opening up across from for-profit centres who are hamstrung again by this policy. That, to me, seems unfair. I don't know why, or the view is I know we're dealing with some vacant spaces but we have one group seems to be hamstrung and the other group are being – you want to flourish. That seems to be a fundamental problem I hear a lot about.

J. HAGGIE: Same answer, really, the federal money was specifically for not-for-profit and government-run. We're keen to maximize the number of spaces that we have in the province by whatever means we can afford. I think one of our initiatives, through some of my colleagues' departments, is to try and encourage not-for-profits into this sphere and not-for-profits who are already in this sphere to expand. In actual fact, we've had inquiries from for-profit child care licensees wishing to convert to not-for-profit status. We're helping them with accessing that pathway.

B. PETTEN: But what about the for-profits? I mean, that seems to be fine in theory. We've got some for-profits in this province that have got massive investments into their child cares and, right now, if you don't have a not-for-profit to purchase you, to buy you out, you're pretty well handcuffed to the business so you shut your doors or your business is rendered worthless if you can't find a not-for-profit to purchase it.

J. HAGGIE: I mean, there's a business model and then there's a not-for-profit and the government-run model. The federal government have made it quite plain where they want to put their money. We do have provincial dollars but that is subject, very much, to the fact we actually have to find

those dollars. The federal money is 100 per cent. It comes from the feds.

So that's where we focused our efforts at the moment. As I say, if in our consultations there is a new idea to come up to help existing operators expand in a significant way, we are certainly happy to look at it.

B. PETTEN: I have to say it doesn't sound very fair. I mean, they have wait-lists. They could expand to deal with the wait-list. I guess my argument is and I think it's a valid argument: I don't think there are enough not-for-profits in this province to deal with the required uptake. We're not set up that way.

That's why I referred to Saskatchewan. I'm sure there are other provinces across the country. We're not designed – that federal program is not really suited to us in its entirety. I guess my question is or my plea is I think that's something that you, as minister, and your government, along with the Premier, I think that should be something you should lobby for with the federal government because it's unfair. I can't describe it anymore.

We all, as MHAs, in our districts have these for-profit daycare operators. They're providing necessary and a quality service and right now, we're following the guidelines and were seeing the federal government's guidelines and I don't think it's fair. I really don't. I think that by accepting that we're turning our backs on our own Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who provide a great service because of a policy with the federal government that I respectfully, totally disagree that I think you can have both co-exist.

I don't think one should be short-changed because the policy doesn't include them. Yet, a not-for-profit is encouraged to flourish. I mean, what's the difference? They provide the same service; questionable maybe. For-profits probably provide a better service. I'm not saying they provide worse

but, to me, it just doesn't make sense; it doesn't equate. I think that's something that government should really take a serious look at because I really do believe these people are not getting treated fairly. When you deal with public money, it's everyone's money. I think we should all be treated the same.

These new spaces you want to create with these not-for-profits, is there any place or any plan or where they'll be created? We got these spaces out there, like I said, that for-profits could expand but they're not permitted. So what's the plan? These spaces are not going away anymore. They're going to grow, if anything. So is there any plan or something in the works to deal with that now?

J. HAGGIE: The not-for-profits who are providing the pre-K principally, and then the other who wishes to join in community-based daycares, they have an easy route to access information. We work very closely with the Y. We started with five demonstration sites, one in kind of each zone, each region of the province, and my understanding is the Y is looking at where they can add to those to a total of 35. There are areas of demand.

In terms of the specific locations, I think that again depends on viability and the like because it's very difficult, as you pointed out, to staff daycare centres in very small communities. There needs to be a critical mass of children and employees to work there. So the Y is looking at areas of demand and will place those across the province as they can.

B. PETTEN: But with the new influx of ECEs that's going to be coming out over the next year, two years, three years, from the college, they're going to have to go to work. They're hopefully going to fill these spaces. But where are they going to go to if for-profits can't expand. So you're talking pre-K, I'm talking about those also not in pre-K, those 5 and over. So where do those

spaces go? Where do those people go to work?

J. HAGGIE: What we're hearing at the moment is that ECEs are the issue. There are plenty of private operators who say they can't get staff. We're going to deal with this imbalance. In actual fact, I was criticized at one point for concentrating on creating ECEs without creating spaces first. In the not-too-distant future, we could find ourselves in a situation that you've described where there is a lag in getting the spaces ready to time that with the graduates.

We're trying to work with the industry and the sector as a whole. We have regular consultations with them to try and match new space creation physically and new licences with the arrival of new ECE graduates.

CHAIR: Okay.

The Member's time has expired.

MHA Dinn.

J. DINN: On section 1?

CHAIR: Yes.

J. DINN: No, we're done.

CHAIR: Finished.

Okay, MHA Petten.

B. PETTEN: Thank you.

Minister, potential impacts on the after school program. Facilities seem to be focusing on full-time spaces, and I brought this up last year, so it's not a new issue. It was discussed at great length last year with Mary Goss-Prowse. What I'm finding is, it's happening in my district, I'm sure I'm not the only district, it happened last year, the Kids Kampus locations in CBS, Paradise and maybe Mount Pearl, wherever they're

located to, they basically cancelled their after school program and concentrated on the toddler program. But, in turn, all those people looking for after school care were thrown out. Me and your deputy had many conversations on that one with LearnStar and what have you. They scrambled to get places that weren't subsidized. So that's continuing.

Recently now there's another daycare in my district that done the same thing, they sent letters out last week and parents are left in limbo. Now, I know they're private operations, but they're private sometimes and sometime when government wants control, but I'll leave that for another day. But it's an issue.

I don't know if it's a funding issue, I guess it's the way it's laid out, but by having those after school spaces, people moving on to have toddlers, you're creating these gaps in after school programming and there's no vacuum. There's nowhere to take up those spaces. So these parents are left in limbo. So much so, I had a parent that contacted another operator, a private operator, they tried to scramble this week to set-up an after school program at St. George's Elementary. Due to the spacing and the requirements of the gym and the regulations, washrooms being available and what have you, they couldn't do it.

So that's a big gap in the service. They have nowhere to turn. But it's all to do with the bigger, the model of the child care operation. If you're a for-profit, or any of them really, if it's more lucrative, you're running a business, why wouldn't you concrete on where you're making your most bang for your buck. But in the interim, you have people who are left out.

So this is not a new thing. Again, your deputy was well aware, we had a long conversation about this last year. Here we are a year later, and it's only this past week, it happened again.

Again, I know they're private but this issue will happen whether they're private or they're publicly ran, this is an issue. Again, it's to do with spaces, but it's to do with the way the system is set up. It's not going away. That compounds the bigger issue. I know it's the funding model. I mean, they'll get less for an after school child than they will for a toddler, I'm assuming, because they're after school.

But the space is required and I know that it was the conversation that you mentioned the Y. The Y was supposed to fill the gap for after school programming and they never did in CBS, at least to my knowledge they never. Private operations gobbled up a lot of the – or the parents gobbled up a lot of the spaces, I should say, with this LearnStar, but they weren't subsidized. They had to pay a lot of money to get that care, so now we're in a scramble and there's nowhere for them to turn now. That's an issue they're being faced with.

I don't know if you're familiar with what I'm talking about but it is an issue.

J. HAGGIE: I think you raise an interesting point addressed potentially in several ways. One is the ongoing discussions through the OGP around the funding. We know that there are some areas of child care which are way more lucrative under the current model than others and maybe we need to work to even that playing field out.

I think the other thing is LearnStar, with it not being licensed, is not eligible and that is very clear. We will provide all of these benefits to a licensed regulated child care operator. That is the benefit of the OGP; it guarantees \$10 for the clients and it guarantees ECEs of a certain level of training so that they are getting early learning and child care.

That is another avenue and we are encouraging – I think it is only six or so child care centres in the province now that aren't on the OGP so I would encourage them to

consider that. That will certainly bring the cost down.

I think as we address the funding model through revisions to the OGP in discussion with the licensees and as we get more early child care educators, that situation will start to balance out.

B. PETTEN: Let's hope.

How much student loans are in default?

J. HAGGIE: Sorry, I missed –

B. PETTEN: Student loans, how much are in default under student loans?

J. HAGGIE: I'm sorry, I missed the question.

B. PETTEN: Student loans, what's the value that are in default?

J. HAGGIE: One moment.

R. FEAVER: The total current in default is \$24,700,000.

B. PETTEN: How many people is that? How many people; do you have a number on how many that is?

R. FEAVER: I don't have a number that represents because it spans over 20 years.

B. PETTEN: Wow.

R. FEAVER: But I do have the number that defaulted this past year, which is a reduction over the previous year. It is 432 students defaulted this past year, down from 545 the year before.

B. PETTEN: Wow.

Do you need five courses to still be considered a full-time student?

R. FEAVER: Full-time status is determined by the educational institution. They make

the determination. Under the federal program, you need to be enrolled in 60 per cent of a full course load to be considered full-time. Under the provincial program, you need to be enrolled in 80 per cent of a full course load. There are exemptions for that. For example, students with disabilities could be enrolled in as little as 40 per cent of a full course load; single parents who are enrolled in at least three courses and one of them being a lab-involved course would get assistance.

We brought that policy in in 2002 under the Newfoundland program where you had to do 80 per cent of a full course load in order to qualify for the provincial program.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

What's the governments plan for tuitions? There's been a lot of talk about tuition in the last number of weeks. Outside the obvious, what we see happening, does the government have any thoughts on that, any plan? I know last week at the town hall I attended it was very much the topic that came up repeatedly. Is there any thought where government are with that or is that something you're waiting for the AG to finish their report, or is there just not an issue – is that something we're not considering?

J. HAGGIE: We've certainly, and the Premier, I think, has been out in the public talking about how they would consider any recommendations or suggestions from MUNSU for example about tuition and tuition freeze. I did speak with the president interim of the university and they acknowledged that in addition to tuition fees, there have been fees that have appeared over recent years and we have agreed to discuss some of those in the light of the recent comments by the students and the Premier. So there's a lot of exploration, shall we say, going on in that area at the moment.

B. PETTEN: This is one final question, Minister, then we can move on to the other sections.

The cooking program at the Burin Peninsula campus – this was brought to my attention actually from my colleague from Burin - Placentia West, MHA Dwyer. I can't remember all the districts.

J. HAGGIE: Placentia West - Bellevue.

B. PETTEN: Placentia West - Bellevue, there you go. See, it took a Member from the other side.

The cooking program at the Burin Peninsula campus is being discontinued at the end of this year, I think. He has gotten concerns in writing and from people involved. So is that still on or what's the rationale for that? Was there not enough enrolment? There is concern, so it's a question he wanted addressed.

J. HAGGIE: Well, the same thing happened to me in Gander, in actual fact, at the CNA College there. That was an enrolment issue. They require a critical number of students to actually put the course on. I don't have the granular details for you or the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue, but I can certainly look into it for you.

B. PETTEN: Yeah, I'd appreciate that.

J. HAGGIE: Okay.

B. PETTEN: Thank you.

CHAIR: Okay.

I ask the Clerk to recall the subhead grouping.

CLERK: 1.1.01 to 1.2.01 inclusive.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 1.2.01 carried.

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

CLERK: 2.1.01 to 2.1.02 inclusive, Corporate Services.

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

We'll start with MHA Dinn.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Under 2.1.01, is it possible to have an update on the review of the public exam policy? What considerations are you factoring in to your deliberations on this issue?

J. HAGGIE: Yes, we have engaged people with knowledge in this field to look at some work we did within the department. I have said that we're looking at a more comprehensive assessment for graduating students.

There are some factors to be weighed in. MUN and CNA, certainly the trade schools, need students to be prepared to cope with an exam environment in the more traditional sense perhaps that you and I might have experienced. They have no control over Transport Canada exams, for example, and it's a great disadvantage to not have that skill. Yet, everybody realizes from an educational perspective this not necessarily the best way of getting a holistic view of a student's ability and performance.

So we have committed to try and walk that line, and we're looking at having some recommendations back from the results of our outside consultations, as well as our

internal work, in time for the school year next year.

J. DINN: Thank you, Minister.

I would agree with you in terms of not the best way in how it works. It's interesting when we – and I taught in the environment where you had both reading and writing outcomes, visual. You had a number of outcomes and you more or less had to find different ways of evaluating other than a written component, which eventually what would happen in a public exam situation 50 per cent of the year would be written, for the most part. They did away with the listening part very early on, especially if that's the philosophy. We would experience that push and pull even within the public system as to what are we preparing them for. It's a whole other area, like how many pieces of writing do you need to do to assess the fact whether they can write or not.

I wonder, too, in that discussion with post-secondary, and that's a broader discussion as to how it's not the school system that needs to change its ways, but maybe the post-secondary institution also needs to look at how it evaluates. Because you're going from a school system where up until – I've been out of it now for almost 10 years. It was basically you had this model, but they're going into a post-secondary institution which basically in many ways, I would argue, has not caught up.

In that discussion, I understand the comments, where you're going with the post-secondary institutions want students to be, but the two are not meshing in many ways in terms of the approaches, I'll just say that. But I understand the dialogue or the conversation that goes back and forth.

When will there be a process for stakeholder consultation as to the recommendations from the Teacher Allocation Review Committee as to when that will be implemented? What's the plan

and the timelines envisioned for meaningful consultation with stakeholders?

I think you mentioned, Minister, that you would be having those conversations, but I'm just wondering what the timeline and the plan is for that.

J. HAGGIE: The plan is to complete our internal analysis first and then to engage with the stakeholders through our regular channels, as it were, with NLTA, Federation of School Councils maybe, or PACE, if it's up and running by then – these kind of groups – to seek their views on that.

It does break down into discrete areas – and there's overlap between all of them – because TARC actually was fairly prescriptive; it said this is for collective bargaining to sort out, but this is what you need to do. Now, I can't say that because we're in collective bargaining. But the recommendations came from that group. They said to the department you need to do A, B and C and which order you do them may depend on what you do with these over here.

So I think that stakeholder consultation – and, again, particularly with the education world and the NLTA, things tend to go very quiet from the end of June to September, so that usually puts a hiatus on a lot of discussions there, but we can use that time to talk to the school district and other organizations as well, but we do need to complete our internal analysis first.

J. DINN: The regular channels you spoke of, how would that look? Is that like simply having that conversation or is it gathering people into a round table and let's have this thorough discussion or is it over several discussions?

J. HAGGIE: It's an interesting process. I think the first thing would be meeting with the NLTA that we have on a regular basis: Here's the bits from TARC, we need to discuss these. What would you like to do?

Do you want to do a member survey and send it back to us? Shall we have a round table or a symposium? Who else do you want at the table? Do you want to organize it? Do you want to co-host it? These kind of operational issues.

So I think it's a question of walking down that road. I don't want it to take too long, but, on the other hand, I don't want then to come back and be accused of abbreviating the process either.

J. DINN: Fair enough.

I think many people would say that the TARC also went well beyond what its mandate was, even after I've read it and the criticism of many, the teacher allocation, a lot of it had little to do with teacher allocation as such.

Last year, also with regard to the *Teacher Training Act*, the manager of legislative review in the department was looking at the *Teacher Training Act*. Again, the plans and timelines for consultation with education stakeholders and that?

J. HAGGIE: I wrote to the president of the NLTA, I couldn't tell you exactly what date it was, things blur a little bit but certainly within the last two or three weeks, with our views on where we could go with the teacher training and certification act and basically said: Which of these kind of things would you be interested in and how would you like to go about discussing it? Because I think this is a really an opportune moment to get to grips with that. That process has already started. How long it will take really depends. I mean, if the NLTA comes back and say well, we love this, let's go with it; that's a lot quicker than we don't like either and let's see.

J. DINN: Thank you.

What other legislation has the manager of legislative review looked at?

J. HAGGIE: Teacher training and certification act, the *Schools Act* in a rewrite, there's MUN and there's another one – help me out, guys. What's on the legislative review agenda? Have I got them all or is there one more? That was it.

J. DINN: Perfect.

J. HAGGIE: Okay.

J. DINN: And if I may, Chair, 2.1.02, go on to that?

Grants and Subsidies, this year's assessment has increased by \$812,000, almost \$813,000. Any explanation for that?

J. HAGGIE: The Grants and Subsidies under – what was that, 2.1.02? Sorry, I was looking at the wrong one.

2.1.02, yes, the increase is due to discretionary funding increase for community-based organizations. So there's a list in your binder you will find and it includes grants to the Murphy Centre; Cultural Connections; Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training, that's CAMET; CMEC, the Council of Ministers of Education; Federal of School Councils; Learning Disabilities; and discretionary community-based funding. So there is a breakdown in there for you of the \$812,000.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Chair, I'm finished but I can certainly come back with another question if my colleague needs more time. I'm finished with my questions on that section.

CHAIR: MHA Petten.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Chair.

Under Administrative Support; 2.1.01, Property, Furnishings and Equipment dropped from \$200,000 to \$120,000 and now it goes back up. What's the reason for this, Minister?

J. HAGGIE: We had a lot of purchases of Canada-wide early learning stuff, PPE for them. We've tried to buy for the entire cadre that we had hoped to recruit, and as you remember earlier on there's a bit of a vacancy rate there, but that's what that was about.

B. PETTEN: Okay. The Grants and Subsidies, can we get a list of those? It's a small amount but what are they?

J. HAGGIE: These are miscellaneous grants. I can certainly try and find you a list of those.

My recollection is these go to individual principals who might write in and ask for, you know, \$500 for school playground equipment, those kind of things. From memory, that's where they go.

It's an on demand and the letter comes from the principal directly to me.

B. PETTEN: Okay. The Revenue - Provincial line there, what's happening there, \$80,000 to \$15,000, back to \$80,000?

J. HAGGIE: Recoveries of overpayment on travel and miscellaneous revenue. That's what it says in here and prior expenses were lower than anticipated, which is why there was a decrease in '22-'23 revised over budget.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

That's all the questions I've got on those two areas, Chair.

CHAIR: Okay.

MHA Dinn, do you have any additional questions for this section?

J. DINN: I'm fine, thank you.

CHAIR: All right.

I'll ask the Clerk to recall the subhead grouping.

CLERK: 2.1.01 to 2.1.02 inclusive.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.1.01 through 2.1.02 carried.

CHAIR: I'll ask the Clerk to call the next subheading grouping.

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

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

We are at MHA Dinn, I believe.

J. DINN: Thank you.

My colleague from Conception Bay South brought up the 1.6-kilometre busing policy. I'm just wondering with regard to newcomers especially, I've spoken to teachers and they're finding that for a lot of newcomers there may not be adequate or they may not be on the municipal bus route, the Metrobus, and may not have vehicles. They are not at 1.6 but close enough that they don't qualify for school busing. For people who are just arriving in the country, dealing with the cultural difference, maybe just even being in school for the first time, you name it, it's proving to be a difficult situation.

Any discussions either with the Association for New Canadians or schools as to how to make this – certainly for people until they

get acclimatized to have that busing until they get a routine down path?

J. HAGGIE: Certainly, we've engaged in discussions with groups such as that. Sometimes they've been successful and sometimes they're still not quite where we'd like them to be or where the New Canadians feel they'd like them to be.

J. DINN: Okay.

But it is a challenge and we're talking about not necessarily high school but primary and elementary. So for some of the schools it is a significant challenge for people to just get to school.

What actions are being taken to address the outstanding recommendations from the AG's 2019 report that flagged issues regarding student transportation and when can we expect all of them to be implemented?

J. HAGGIE: The issue there around formal policies in the department will be rectified with the amalgamation. The school district has them, but they haven't been formalized. So that's really where the outstanding piece lies. I think, given the imminent change in reporting structure if nothing else for the school district, that will be an item that we'll be working on.

J. DINN: Are there any plans to retire Chromebooks after a certain period of use and then replace them with new devices? If so, what will be the annual cost of that? Maybe here we can look at, too, in terms of not just Chromebooks but even SMART Boards. I don't know what the SMART Board is now but certainly when I was teaching they were like \$5,000 a pop for each one. It is a significant cost. If you're in a school that has many classrooms, it's a significant challenge to replace them.

So I'm just looking here, not only Chromebooks, I'm asking for Chromebooks and technologies such as SMART Boards.

J. HAGGIE: At the moment, I'm not aware of how the school district approached the issue of evergreening of IT. It certainly is an issue and OCIO deal with that for government. Certainly, it's something we can discuss with them. A bit of a challenge with the Chromebooks because they were all bought at once so it would be nice if you could stage their replacement in tranches rather than do it, if that was deemed necessary by the IT experts.

At some point, they will outdate and we do have a small stock available for replacement for irretrievably damaged items. But that's a good question and it's something that we, in the department, will be able to get to grips with once we see the NLESD inside.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Are there plans to provide Chromebooks and similar technology more broadly, particularly to the K-to-6 students? I know there are policies in place there that students are not permitted to use their own devices for instructional purposes. Actually, that was an issue during the pandemic when teachers were trying to teach online or to use the technology in the class.

So you have a limited supply of Chromebooks in a school and often not enough to go around. It's a matter of equity. It's a matter of making instruction flow smoothly. So certainly there is a need to have – and any Chromebooks, I know that schools would be purchasing them out of their own, either their operational grant or they'd be fundraising for the most part.

Even with their own funding, they were told as to where they could and couldn't purchase. They'd still have to go through, I think, the procurement process. Even though they could probably get the Chromebooks cheaper through other sources. So there's a whole raft of, I guess, impediments and hurdles to primary system schools.

So I'm just wondering: What are the plans then to distribute similar technology to these K-to-6 schools and hopefully to eliminate a lot of the issues that are dogging them?

J. HAGGIE: It raises an interesting topic, one that we alluded to in a way earlier on when I was speaking about learning impact symposium and different styles of learning. The advice we have had in the department from curriculum specialists and childhood specialists is that certainly the younger grades are much better at absorbing information and facts and these kinds of things in a face-to-face environment; we saw that quite clearly with the impacts of COVID in the visual language arts, verbal language skills and this kind of thing.

So I think that has always been at the back of everyone's mind with the K-to-6 group. There is a place for online learning for children, particularly as they either meet certain subjects or grow older.

That is a good point and I think that would roll into the use of Chromebooks, for example, across the education system writ large. We do have some interest from the early learning and child care sector, for example, about IT in those areas, so I think we want to make sure, going forward, that K-to-6 group isn't left out but, again, there seems to be some division of opinion on how best to do that.

J. DINN: So, just to be clear, I'm not talking about necessarily online learning for K-to-6 but use of the technology in the classroom and all we have to do is look at my four-year-old granddaughter to see how quickly she absorbs information around technology. Already light-years ahead of me.

But I guess in this case, it comes down to making sure it is distributed and that there is an adequate supply, knowing the high school system tend to have a lot more of that at their disposal. I'm just looking at bringing that down to the K-to-6 system as

well and make that a little bit more accessible for those teachers and students.

Purchased Services: Last year's revised value was \$779,000. What was the reason for that?

J. HAGGIE: One moment, I'm just trying to find that. What head is that?

J. DINN: That's under 3.1.02, Purchased Services.

J. HAGGIE: Purchased Services, yes. And the question was around the rise in '22-'23?

There has been an increase of nearly \$800,000 on insurance premiums for school buildings.

J. DINN: Okay, thank you.

Under 3.2.01, Curriculum Development, now, I think, Minister, you've sort of touched a little bit on re-evaluating the existing educational curriculum for K-to-12, but are there measures in place to re-evaluate existing educational curriculum for K-to-12 students to ensure that they are culturally sensitive and do not perpetuate negative stereotypes for other groups? I think part of the discussion had to do with Indigenous education as well.

In addition, how are efforts coming along to roll out anti-racist curriculum for secondary school students?

J. HAGGIE: I have seen on websites in this province the anti-racist material that is available. In terms of how it's embedded into the curriculum, specifically in that age group, I would probably ask one of my recently not teachers – perhaps Scott – who would be able to answer that better than I.

S. LINEHAN: The Department of Education has worked with the five Indigenous groups and developed an IEAC – Indigenous Education Advisory Committee – and all five of our Indigenous partners in Education

review the curriculum. Going forward, all curriculum will have input from the Indigenous communities around our province.

As well, we have a multicultural framework devised within the Department of Education comprised of a very large group of people who, as well, will be looking at our curricula. Going forward what we're hoping to achieve, as we modernize education, is rather than having a static curricula portal, we want to have something that's more dynamic and engaging. That way, teachers can interact with the curricula in real time with multicultural learning with respect to Indigenous education.

J. DINN: Thank you.

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

MHA Petten.

B. PETTEN: Thank you.

Minister, under 3.1.01, Grants and Subsidies, you have Substitute Teachers, their leave. Why the extra \$5 million from last year?

J. HAGGIE: Well, the salary expenses for substitutes have been trending higher than previous years. There was a small amount of severance expensed and there was no associated budget with that. That accounts for the bulk of it. It's essentially down to an increased use of substitutes.

B. PETTEN: In 3.1.02, Student Assistants, it went up to \$27.9 million, but it's now back to \$25.9 million. Why the drop?

J. HAGGIE: Which portion was that?

B. PETTEN: Under Grants and Subsidies.

J. HAGGIE: Grants and Subsidies, sorry, I was on the wrong page there.

There was a significant increase related to school transportation expenses and negotiated salary increases and the increase in '22-'23 over the budget was also related to fuel costs and student assistant pressures.

There was a \$6-million spike there; half of that was fuel; half of that was student assistants; \$1.65 million of the student assistants was recognition bonus and the rest was a salary increase.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

The Revenue - Federal there, that one-time payment of \$1.6 million. Can you explain that?

J. HAGGIE: The air purifiers during COVID. They paid for them. They regard COVID as over. They're not paying for them again.

B. PETTEN: For the air purifiers for schools?

Under 3.1.04.

J. HAGGIE: 04?

B. PETTEN: Yes, Supplies.

J. HAGGIE: Okay, hang on a second. I can't turn the page fast enough, Mr. Petten.

B. PETTEN: The drop from \$6.1 million to \$5.2 million.

J. HAGGIE: \$6.1 million to \$5.2 million, yes, that's purchase and distribution of textbooks and instructional manuals. There were laptops purchased through this for the new technology career Pathways in '22-'23 and these are not needed again this year because they carry on.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

Curriculum Development, 3.2.01, Professional Services, it went from \$27,000 to \$1.1 million.

J. HAGGIE: The creation of a digital teacher resource initiative was \$1.07 million and that's that.

B. PETTEN: 3.2.02, Language Programs, Grants and Subsidies, there appears to be an on budget increase from \$3.6 million to \$6.3 million.

J. HAGGIE: Yes, we got a bump from the Canada Heritage for French second language.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

The Revenue - Federal is going up and down. What's the reason for this?

J. HAGGIE: Canadian Heritage French second language and the approval of – it was essentially covered by additional funding under the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Agreement for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction with Canada Heritage. It's a mouthful, all these federal agencies.

B. PETTEN: I know, but that's good.

3.3.01, a small amount but I'm just curious. Professional Services, what's the nature of the new request of \$16,700?

J. HAGGIE: That was professional learning for teachers for supporting and implementation of a program for students with exceptionalities.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

3.3.02 under the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority, Grants and Subsidies.

J. HAGGIE: Yeah.

B. PETTEN: Just a question: Do we send the same number of students as in past years to this?

J. HAGGIE: Do we send the same number of students, did you say?

B. PETTEN: Yeah.

J. HAGGIE: I'm not sure.

G. O'LEARY: It depends on the year. It depends on the needs that are in the particular area. So we're part of APSEA. Nova Scotia takes advantage of it quite a bit more than we do. They have I think 80 teachers on the ground in Nova Scotia. We basically use it for teachers who need support with difficult situations that they might not have seen here. There's professional learning there and we have some students that are availing of the services that are going there.

It depends on the given year, so it's not the same amount every year. But that's the portion of funds that are due from the Newfoundland percentage.

B. PETTEN: Okay, thank you.

J. HAGGIE: Is that population base?

G. O'LEARY: Yeah.

J. HAGGIE: That's why it's constant.

B. PETTEN: It's based on our population per capita share.

3.4.01, Evaluation, Research and Certification, Transportation and Communications – I was giving you time to get to that page, Minister.

J. HAGGIE: Yeah, I've gotten there. I'm there.

B. PETTEN: Good.

Transportation and Communications increased there to \$106,500. Can you explain why?

J. HAGGIE: It's divisional travel and career services for the services. Some of that was related to public exams not happening.

There was a dip and then the divisional travel accounts were the rest.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

Professional Services went from \$359,000 to \$695,000.

J. HAGGIE: That increase is PowerSchool expenses.

B. PETTEN: PowerSchool? Which is?

J. HAGGIE: It's a software program. It's kind of like an educational record. It's a digital way of recording attendance and stuff.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

Purchased Services, \$46,000 to \$321,000?

J. HAGGIE: We're moving towards computer-based testing and that's some of the start-up costs.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

Allowances and Assistance, can you explain \$234,000 is spent.

J. HAGGIE: Secondary schools scholarships.

B. PETTEN: Secondary schools scholarships.

J. HAGGIE: Yes, it's another alliterative mouthful, secondary schools scholarships.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

3.5.01, Early Learning and Child Development, Salaries are increased to \$7.5 million.

J. HAGGIE: Yes.

B. PETTEN: Could you explain that?

J. HAGGIE: Yes, that's the influx of federal money to pay, Ms. Baker- Worthman's salary.

B. PETTEN: Good one. Good job.

Are you taking any applications?

That's your answer? It's not that much.

J. HAGGIE: No, I shouldn't be flippant but I'm a bit hypoglycemic, I think.

It's a salary for the director of childhood learning and development, regional managers, program development specialists, social workers, child care consultants and support staff hired under the expansion of the Early Learning and Child Care program. It's federal money.

B. PETTEN: The \$10-a-day child care?

J. HAGGIE: Yes.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

Professional Services, \$3.1 million, now it's down to \$171,000, why is the drop balance?

J. HAGGIE: Delays in implementation. There was an IT system and it's got delayed. I don't know whether that was supply chain or what, so that wasn't expensed in that year.

B. PETTEN: Purchased Services, it grew to \$275,000 from \$69,000.

J. HAGGIE: That is increased certification for early childhood educators.

B. PETTEN: Why does it always look back to that?

Allowances and Assistance, why is the budget \$11-million drop this year?

J. HAGGIE: It's reprofiling because we used to have a child supplement, which appeared under Allowances and

Assistance, it's now been moved to Grants and Subsidies.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

J. HAGGIE: It's because we don't pay the supplement; we pay the wage through the grant.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

Under Grants and Subsidies, \$122 million was budgeted but only \$82 million was spent and it's now increasing back up to \$127 million. So do you think you'll get this money out the door?

J. HAGGIE: Yes, I think some of that is a carry forward from this last year. I think we'll spend it this year because of the expansion.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

MHA Dinn.

J. DINN: Thank you.

3.2.01, Curriculum Development: In last year's Estimates, it was mentioned that our K-to-12 students rated very highly in content knowledge but need more practice with high-order thinking, critical thinking and the like. We talked a little bit about curriculum development. Is the department currently working on strategies to narrow that gap?

J. HAGGIE: Yes.

J. DINN: Care to elaborate?

J. HAGGIE: That's education speak, correct?

G. O'LEARY: Yeah, so you asked me that question last year, MHA Dinn. I think a lot of the work that's gone on with the integration this year, particularly the academic committee, as well as our junior high renewal committee, has been around

moving from an emphasis on content learning toward problem solving, critical thinking. I guess one of the points I'll make is that there's been a shift in assessment, nationally and internationally. We're looking for the different portion of a graduate right now. Instead of a student that knows a lot of content was once valued a lot, we're now looking for a student who can apply that content in different situations.

So there have been a number of initiatives. The district, as you would know, Mr. Dinn, has moved towards deep learning, which has quite a bit of work in that area as well. One of the things that I would say is we want to make sure that we retain our strong content knowledge that we're known for in Newfoundland and Labrador. We always rank in top provinces in the country when it comes to that. The mental math, we know the math, but we also want to make sure that we're bringing in a commensurable amount of application in the classroom, opportunity to work in teams. Think of Enactus Memorial, that kind of work, as opposed to just sitting in a desk by yourself.

So, yeah, there are initiatives within the department, but there's also a committee that's working and an integration that's working on that from both the district and the department. Because that's the only way we're really going to improve is taking the ideas from the department and the district and working together on where are the gaps, how can we get better, how can we get stronger. It's not pointing fingers at one or the other; it's not saying we're doing it all right or you're doing it all right, but it's how do we make that happen. So I think quite a bit has happened since last year on that front.

J. DINN: Thank you.

One comment, I used to hear from teachers and still do with regard to initiatives that come in and insufficient time to acclimatize or adapt or to get to know it before another new initiative is coming in. Then it's you're

recalculating or revising. It's just the opportunity, sometimes, teachers have in some new initiative to get comfortable with that and start being able to modify it to suit their purposes, but they're not often given that. That's a common complaint.

Certainly, I would support anything new with regard to critical thinking, but whatever we bring in it comes down to giving the professionals the opportunity to own that before we move on.

G. O'LEARY: Yeah, one of the things I think we need to keep in mind is that post-integration there's going to have to be quite a bit of work done in professional learning and team building around some of these initiatives. We're already looking at some of those ways that we can professionally develop teachers. Because some of the mistakes in the past – we tried to change public exams in 2000 and move from a content-based exam to a critical-thinking exam and teachers had no idea it was coming and kids, full classes left out questions and left out parts of exams. We don't want to be back in that – we're going to learn from those mistakes in the past.

J. DINN: Agreed.

3.5.01, Early Learning and Child Development: How is work progressing on the pre-kindergarten early learning program and how many facilities are currently opening and what are you learning from the project?

J. HAGGIE: Lisa, that sounds like one for you.

L. BAKER-WORTHMAN: We're tracking the number of spaces and we're learning from the pilot in terms of how long it actually takes to get off the ground. We have a lot of concerns that came forward around the actual timelines for those, so we've learned. We've also developed a lot of efficiencies and partnerships with our colleagues in Digital Government and Service NL, in

terms of approvals of spaces and really we're working towards a more efficient system to get everything moving quicker. Which we have in recent weeks, as you can see by the number of spaces we're getting going.

J. DINN: Thank you.

How many ECE students are currently availing of the Needs-Based Incentive Grant?

L. BAKER-WORTHMAN: I don't have that information right here, but I can get that for you.

J. DINN: Thank you. That would be perfect.

L. BAKER-WORTHMAN: Okay.

J. DINN: How many ECE students are there currently and how many of the ECE professionals do we need in order to meet demand?

L. BAKER-WORTHMAN: I'm not sure if Tanya would have the numbers – okay, so I can get you those numbers.

J. DINN: Thank you. That would be perfect.

What is the current demand for child care spaces like? I know we hear it anecdotally, certainly from the calls we get at the office, in the media and so on and so forth. I'm just looking for are we tracking that or is the department tracking that? Are there more shortages in some regions rather than others and what's the plan to address these gaps? I think the last one we sort of talked about.

L. BAKER-WORTHMAN: Yeah, we are starting to track that. We actually are going out now to get specific data based on municipality to be able to determine exactly how many people are seeking child care and can't find them. Then actually, as part of the IT system that the minister referenced earlier, we're exploring a parent portal for

that, to be able to determine how many people are actually waiting for a child care space versus how many spaces are available.

J. DINN: Perfect, thank you.

How many child care site inspectors are there currently?

L. BAKER-WORTHMAN: That would be Digital Government and Service NL. I can get you that information as well.

J. DINN: Perfect.

So the next few questions, related to that, how many inspections are conducted and what percentage? It would all be part of Digital Government, I take it?

L. BAKER-WORTHMAN: Yes.

J. DINN: Okay.

One comment, in development of schools or construction of schools, especially primary and elementary schools, is there any consideration given to either attaching pre-school or early child care centres to the school, being part of that overall system so you go from a pre-school right up to – and then it's the one-stop shop for parents who come by. And, more importantly, then they're also included with the resources in the school and you name it.

J. HAGGIE: That's happening.

J. DINN: Good idea. I think I like that. Not that you needed my approval for it or anything, but I think it's a good idea.

I'm done on section 3.

CHAIR: All right.

MHA Petten.

B. PETTEN: I have a couple of more left, not too many.

Minister, you said earlier there are 200 spaces created in the past few weeks. I guess, two simple questions: Where are they and what are the projections? That's from earlier conversations.

J. HAGGIE: Lisa, do you know the locations for those 200?

L. BAKER-WORTHMAN: I don't have all the locations, but I can certainly get that for you, yes.

B. PETTEN: Okay, I appreciate that.

L. BAKER-WORTHMAN: The projections, we're working on that actually at this very moment in terms of getting a projection based on where we are versus where we're going to be within the next three, six and nine months.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

Still under 3.5.01, Revenue - Federal, can you explain that, Minister, what's happening here?

J. HAGGIE: 3.5.01, Revenue - Federal, that is the Canada-wide early learning grant. It fluctuates from year to year and there was a carry forward from '22-'23, as well. So it's not a constant amount each year.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

3.6.01, Provincial Information and Library Resources Board: Is there any plan to action the review that was done that called for significant investments?

J. HAGGIE: I've had a couple of meetings with Mr. Hunt, I think, and the Library boards. Certainly, from my point of view, I would love to be in a position to put some more money in there. I've gone to Treasury Board and you know the process. It's a prioritization exercise.

We have opportunities under early learning and child care to look at boosting their

resources for the preschool group, which are independent of provincial revenue. But, certainly, I have had interesting discussions with them about their delivery model. They have been very innovative in terms of being able to have books delivered to you, essentially, if you don't have a library that's stocking them locally and these kind of things.

I would love to be in a position to provide them with a little bit more, but I have to make my case along with all the other nice to haves as well.

B. PETTEN: Minister, on that note and on that topic, my last question for this section, the new library that was opened, myself and you attended the opening several weeks ago, they're claiming it's a funding shortfall for the operation of that library. Based on the size of the library, there are a lot of other libraries throughout the province getting a higher operating grant than what this new library is getting. I can't remember the exact numbers, but it's notable and substantial based on the size and the number of people that the library is basically designed to provide service for.

I know they met with you, during the budgetary process they came in and presented their case, but unfortunately there was no funding announced. You visited, it's a beautiful spot, it's a new-age library; there's still a bit of the old, but there's a lot of new in it.

What's the plan going forward with a situation like that? Because I know the libraries board have approached – I've spoken to them and I know obviously they've approached you. What's the plan on a go-forward basis? It's not sustainable based on the funding model they have right now.

J. HAGGIE: When they were looking to open it they came to us with a funding request for extra funding to cover the new staff that they would need. There was a

figure. My understanding was at that time they got what they asked for and that the new staff have been hired. I don't know if the situation is actually any different than that now or whether this is a new ask, but certainly we can go back and discuss with them at our next meeting.

B. PETTEN: Yeah, absolutely, because it came up after the budgetary process. I've had a couple of conversations, maybe we may be talking about two different things, but –

J. HAGGIE: We may, but we can clarify it when I talk to the library board next time.

B. PETTEN: Absolutely.

CHAIR: Okay.

B. PETTEN: That's good for that section.

CHAIR: MHA Dinn, are you finished this section?

J. DINN: Yes.

CHAIR: All right, I'll ask the Clerk to recall the subhead grouping.

CLERK: 3.1.01 to 3.6.01 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 to 3.6.01 inclusive, Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education and Early Childhood Development, 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'll ask the Clerk to call the next subhead grouping.

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

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

MHA Dinn.

J. DINN: Are there any plans to expand the foundational literacy program at The Gathering Place to other organizations?

J. HAGGIE: I would defer that to Tanya, I think.

T. NOSEWORTHY: So there's a pilot in place right now and we are waiting for the results of the pilot to make a determination on it being expanded to further sites. The information and the requirement for the information has been provided to The Gathering Place and the group that are offering that pilot. So as soon as we get the information, they are interested in sharing it at other sites.

J. DINN: Any preliminary results so far or feedback?

T. NOSEWORTHY: None that I have here in my hand but I can check for you.

J. DINN: Okay. It's no problem, just sort of even anecdotally.

T. NOSEWORTHY: So they do provide an update report at periods during the year. They don't fit fiscal years so I'll just check to see if anything is in.

J. DINN: Okay, appreciate it.

Grants and Subsidies, last year's revised value was \$600,000 under budget. This year's Estimate has increased by \$1,842,000. The reason for that?

J. HAGGIE: The increase is – is this the ESDC thing?

OFFICIAL: Yes.

J. HAGGIE: It is, yes. We had \$1.9 million from ESDC for adult learner exploration

programs. So it goes to industry partners who will develop training career opportunities, site visits and such for people to enter the workforce.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Under Revenue - Federal, what's the source of the – I think you just said that the \$1.9 million?

J. HAGGIE: Yes, that's the ESDC.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Under 4.2.01, Operations at MUN, this year's Estimate has increased by \$9 million.

J. HAGGIE: Yes, the Grants and Subsidies decreased is Tuition Offset Grant reduction, attrition reduction and then they're offset by \$7.6 million going in for salary increases for NAPE, CUPE and non-bargaining staff and \$2.2 million, nearly, for the nurse practitioner program because the number of seats is being doubled. That's the increase there. There's a change, rather.

J. DINN: Thank you.

The Tuition Offset Grant has been decreased by over \$19 million, almost \$20 million?

J. HAGGIE: Yes, you will find some of that will appear under student supports.

J. DINN: That's going into the loan –

J. HAGGIE: Yeah, that goes into the student assistance program, financial services.

J. DINN: Perfect.

With regard to the operations at MUN, out of curiosity, after I retired and before I got involved with provincial politics, the discussion around the flood plain, mitigation measures on the Parkway there. There was some concern at the time of the new

building, before it was opened, the new core science building, that maybe it wasn't protected. I forget who the lady was in charge of it, she had to really go back and make sure that with the building of new mental health facility, that their facility wasn't going to be flooded out.

Are the measures in place here now, the berm, and mitigation measures sufficient as to protect for any future flooding that might occur? You can see they've got it built up along the Prince Philip Parkway, but I'm just wondering is there sufficient measures in place to make sure that the new facility is not part of a flooding problem?

J. HAGGIE: Certainly as far as the new adult mental health and addictions hospital is concerned, from my previous portfolio, I can tell you that extensive work went into the work around that berm and that berm is what was needed and recommended by the engineers there.

With regard to the flood risk to the core science building, I was aware there was an issue brought up at one stage. It has not been brought back to me, but certainly in the light of your comments we can go to Memorial and ask for clarification.

J. DINN: Appreciate that.

4.2.02, Physical Plan and Equipment, MUN Capital, are there any planned renovations or upgrades to the physical plant and equipment for this year?

J. HAGGIE: There is money to change out the boilers. I'm not aware specifically of other projects that fall under that heading.

J. DINN: With regard to the list of deferred maintenance at MUN, is it possible to have a list of the deferred maintenance that is at Memorial at this point in time?

J. HAGGIE: We'll certainly ask for it.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Loans, Advances and Investments, no money was budgeted for this year, any reason for that?

J. HAGGIE: One moment, 4.2.02. I have a sneaky feeling I know the answer to this, but Tanya will.

T. NOSEWORTHY: Sorry, I missed the question; I was writing a note.

J. HAGGIE: Robyn has got it.

R. HAYES: The money that was budgeted there was for the Holyrood Marine Base. That project has completed and the funding is no longer required in loans for this fiscal year.

J. DINN: Thank you very much.

H. HAGGIE: See, I would have been right.

J. DINN: Grants and Subsidies: Last year's revised value was a little over \$4 million under budget. This year's Estimate has increased by almost \$4.5 million.

J. HAGGIE: The cash flow for the Canada Games project to upgrade the Aquarena.

J. DINN: Okay.

In 4.4.01, how many students are currently receiving financial assistance? You may have mentioned that in answer to something else but I am just curious; how many are receiving financial assistance?

J. HAGGIE: Rob, would you like?

R. FEAVER: Sure, I can do that. I'll get to my right tab now, Mr. Dinn.

Overall for this year's year-to-date numbers, Mr. Dinn, because the program year under the student financial assistance runs from August 1 to July 31. So for last year, we had 6,891; year to date this year we're at 7,059, so 2.4 per cent increase.

J. DINN: Wow, thank you.

For Grants and Subsidies, this year's Estimates has increased by I think that's \$4,329,000 and the reason for that?

J. HAGGIE: Sorry, we are on 4.4.01; is that correct?

J. DINN: We are indeed.

J. HAGGIE: Grants and Subsidies.

Yes, and your question relates to ...?

J. DINN: To the increase to Grants and Subsidies by almost –

J. HAGGIE: Yeah, that's additional funding for the enhanced student aid program.

J. DINN: Okay.

J. HAGGIE: Yeah, that accounts for that.

J. DINN: Finally, for me anyway, 4.4.02, Administration. I know we have a number of people defaulted but how many people are currently repaying student loans who haven't defaulted?

J. HAGGIE: Sorry, how many are retained through what?

J. DINN: How many people are currently repaying the student loans? I guess they haven't defaulted.

J. HAGGIE: Okay.

Rob.

R. FEAVER: The current number, as of March 31, 2023, is 17,808. They have an average loan balance of \$11,823. That's as of a month ago. There is \$10,920 in federal loans and \$903 in provincial loans.

J. DINN: Okay.

Again, just to make sure, that doesn't include those who defaulted but these are people that are still actively paying back the loan?

R. FEAVER: Yeah, there's over \$33 million currently in what we call Class A and Class B. So Class A are for the students who are currently enrolled in school and Class B are for those who are in repayment. So the 17,808 are for those who are currently in repayment.

J. DINN: Okay.

R. FEAVER: We get that report annually, based on the fiscal year. So we get that one March 31 from our service provider. So that's just a month old.

J. DINN: What's the average loan that students when they finish their post-secondary, at least let's say a bachelors, that level, what's the average loan that most students come out with?

R. FEAVER: It's a difficult question to answer because you're looking at running the gamut – a program can be used as low as 12 weeks in duration and qualify for federal and provincial assistance and it can run right into a Ph.D. So you're looking less at a specific cohort. I can look at different data for different years and see what's happening by program type, but we fund students who go to institutions outside of the province, around the world. So it's really a difficult question.

Other than the numbers, I can tell you that as of March 31, on that 17,808, that will be all students, all borrowing, all programs, all the time that are still in good standing. So that's where I get that average number. So if you picture the bell curve, you're going to have people on the low end, people on the high end, but that average is just over – and that number is down over the last three years as well, so we have \$11,823.

J. DINN: Okay, thank you.

CHAIR: All right.

MHA Petten.

B. PETTEN: We're almost there.

4.1.02, the Atlantic Veterinary College – easy questions anyway. How many seats do we have there right now, Minister?

J. HAGGIE: Three.

B. PETTEN: Three seats? Okay.

Is that meeting the demand? Is there demand; is there request for more seats?

J. HAGGIE: Good question. Who knows the veterinary market? Tanya.

T. NOSEWORTHY: The contract that's been in place with the Atlantic Veterinary College has been in place for 10 years. So there was actually a survey that was just completed about a week ago to reassess need in the Atlantic provinces.

It was done by an Atlantic group. So we're getting new data presented now on what the demand is and then the option will come back in the renegotiation of a new contract as to whether or not the government needs to increase the seats or would like to and the cost that would be associated with that.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

So is there a return of service provision in that?

T. NOSEWORTHY: No, there is not.

B. PETTEN: Okay, thank you.

4.3.01, CNA, the Regular Operating Grant, there's an extra \$2.6 million this year. Could you explain what that amount is for, Minister?

J. HAGGIE: Grants and Subsidies, it's related to salary increases for NAPE staff.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

Why does the Tuition Offset Grant stay the same at \$14.9 million when tuition is going up?

J. HAGGIE: Good question.

T. NOSEWORTHY: It's actually a good question. I'm not sure of the answer but I'll look into it for you.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

4.3.02, Physical Plant and Equipment, what's CNA's total value of required repairs by campus?

J. HAGGIE: We don't have that to hand, but we can get it for you.

B. PETTEN: Second best to the actual answer – next best thing.

Another question, I guess, general, I mean, it jumps out at you. How can 17 campuses be maintained with a million dollars in the budget? You have a million dollars allotted.

J. HAGGIE: Sorry, which line are we looking at?

B. PETTEN: 4.3.02.

J. HAGGIE: I don't have any comment on there. It's a standard amount that results from a White Paper that was done on repairs and renos and such some years ago.

B. PETTEN: It just seems a small amount of money for all these campuses when you're looking at capital construction, alterations for the facilities. It's a pretty small amount for that many campuses.

J. HAGGIE: I don't recall CNA coming with a specific ask for any major projects or life safety things, certainly, and they would if they had them.

B. PETTEN: You would think even just the day-to-day stuff, but anyway that's fair enough.

We're almost down there, Minister.

4.4.02, under Administration, Loans, Advances and Investments shows an increase to \$10.1 million from \$9 million and it's increasing to \$14.1 million. What's the reason for this?

J. HAGGIE: That I suspect is some of the reprofiled money.

Rob?

R. FEAVER: It's a demand-based program so just demand increase this year over last year by that amount.

B. PETTEN: Okay.

That does it for me on that, Chair.

CHAIR: Okay.

MHA Dinn, you're finished?

All right, I will ask the Clerk to recall the subhead grouping.

CLERK: 4.1.01 to 4.4.02 inclusive.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, subheads 4.1.01 through 4.4.02 carried.

CLERK: The Total.

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: All right.

Minister, do you have any final words?

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much for an interesting evening. We will work on the information that we said we'd get to you. As I say, the copies of the binder will be available in a tree-friendly format.

CHAIR: MHA Petten, do you have final comments?

B. PETTEN: I just want to quickly thank you, Minister, and your staff. As always, I realize what goes into this. I'm familiar from being on the other side.

Thank you for your time and for your answers. I'll say this, it's on the record but it could be off the record. We were wondering how many questions you would defer seeing you haven't been in the department that long, and you've done quite well. So I'll even give you a compliment tonight.

J. HOGAN: So does that mean I passed my end-of-year exam?

B. PETTEN: You passed the test, yeah.

J. HAGGIE: Well, if I have, it's down to this crowd because behind every successful minister is an astonishing group of executives.

B. PETTEN: That's really well put, good job.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: MHA Dinn.

J. DINN: Thank you, Minister. Thank you to the staff. I will certainly echo Mr. Petten's comments, not only did you answer them, but you were brief as well.

CHAIR: The next meeting shall be at the call of the Chair.

I would call for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

S. REID: So moved.

CHAIR: Meeting adjourned by MHA Reid.

Thank you very much.

On motion, Committee adjourned sine die.