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

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Department of Government Services

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Honourable Paul Lane, MHA

GOVERNMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE

Department of Government Services

Chair: Jeff Dwyer, MHA

Members: Riley Balsom, MHA
Jim McKenna, MHA
Mark Butt, MHA
Lucy Stoyles, MHA
Sheilagh O'Leary, MHA
Jamie Korab, MHA

Clerk of the Committee: Emily Gushue (A)

Appearing:

Department of Government Services

Hon. Mike Goosney, Minister
John Cowan, Deputy Minister
Gail Boland, Assistant Deputy Minister, Digital Government and Services
Loyola Power, Assistant Deputy Minister, Regulatory Affairs
Dennis Strickland, Assistant Deputy Minister, Labour
Tina Newhook, Director of Communications
Jennifer Torrville, Departmental Controller
Craig Drover, Executive Assistant
Nicolle Iovanov, Media Relations Manager

Also Present

Sarah Stoodley, MHA
Emma Kannenberg, Official Opposition Caucus
Meghan Parsons, Official Opposition Caucus
Scott Fleming, Third Party Caucus

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Sarah Stoodley, MHA for Mount Scio, substitutes for Lucy Stoyles, MHA for Mount Pearl North.

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

CHAIR (Dwyer): Order, please!

Good morning, everyone.

We will begin today with opening comments. These are just opening comments and reminders.

The substitutes for today, for Mount Pearl North, we have the Member for Mount Scio.

It is 9 o'clock; at 10:30 we will take a 10-minute break. That will be the midway point. Whether we're in the middle of a head of expenditure or not doesn't really matter.

Just a reminder for the Members and department officials, each time you are asked to speak, just wave your hand over your microphone, wait for the tally light – there will be a little red light come on in front of you – and just say your name and position each time you speak for transcription purposes. Do not make adjustments to the chairs, unless you're sitting in Jamie Korab's chair. I adjusted yours. The water coolers, there are two down here and two back here if you need water.

There are no unaffiliated members.

I now ask the Committee Members, substitutions and caucus employees to introduce themselves starting in the front row closest to the Chair.

S. STOODLEY: Sarah Stoodley, MHA for Mount Scio.

E. KANNENBERG: Emma Kannenberg, Researcher with the Official Opposition office.

J. KORAB: Jamie Korab, MHA, Waterford Valley.

M. PARSONS: Meghan Parsons, Opposition staffer.

S. O'LEARY: Sheilagh O'Leary, MHA for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. FLEMING: Scott Fleming, researcher, NDP caucus office.

J. MCKENNA: Jim McKenna, MHA for Fogo Island - Cape Freels.

M. BUTT: Mark Butt, MHA for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

R. BALSOM: Riley Balsom, MHA for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde.

CHAIR: Okay.

I now ask the departmental officials to introduce themselves, starting with the minister.

M. GOOSNEY: Minister Goosney, MHA, Humber - Gros Morne.

J. COWAN: John Cowan, Deputy Minister.

L. POWER: Loyola Power, Assistant Deputy Minister, Regulatory Affairs.

G. BOLAND: Gail Boland, Assistant Deputy Minister, Government Services.

N. IOVANOV: Nicolle Iovanov, Media Relations Manager.

T. NEWHOOK: Tina Newhook, Director of Communications.

J. TORRAVILLE: Jennifer Torraville, Departmental Controller.

D. STRICKLAND: Dennis Strickland, ADM of Labour.

C. DROVER: Craig Drover, Executive Assistant.

CHAIR: Before we start the Estimates review process, the Committee will now consider the minutes of the previous meeting.

If there are no errors or omissions, I ask for a mover for those minutes.

R. BALSOM: So moved.

CHAIR: The minutes are moved by the Member for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

CHAIR: We will now proceed with the Estimates review process. Once I ask the Clerk to call the first subhead grouping for this head of expenditure, I will proceed to recognize the minister, who will get 15 minutes for opening remarks. Then I will proceed to introduce the first responder and questioner from the Committee, who will get 15 minutes for questions in the first round. After the first round, questions will proceed in rounds of 10 minutes each, alternating between Members of the Committee.

I now ask the Clerk to call the first subhead.

CLERK (Gushue): 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 inclusive, Executive and Support Services.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 inclusive, Executive and Support Services, carry?

I now recognize the minister for opening remarks.

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

Hello everyone.

It's great to be here today with the members of my executive team to talk about the Department of Government Services and how we support the businesses and people of Newfoundland and Labrador. At the heart of what we do is service. Government Services should be easy to find, simple to use and clear to understand. Whether accessing a service or running a business, dealing with government should be straightforward and efficient.

Our staff in this department play a big role in that task. With the responsibility for more than 175 pieces of legislation, the department delivers essential services, such as permitting and licensing, that touch everyday life from public health and workplace safety to consumer and financial protection to environmental and road safety. Since October, I've seen first-hand the dedication and the very hard work and long hours of our more than 450 employees and offices throughout the province. Their work is essential and valued. I want to sincerely thank each and every one of you – and I mean that – for everything that you do every single day.

As the province's single window service delivery centre, Government Services is at the forefront of how government works. Our government has committed to reducing red tape and simplifying processes to make services easier, faster and more intuitive. That means cutting unnecessary steps, updating outdated rules, increasing online services, reducing repeat paperwork and providing clear step-by-step guidance. We welcome feedback on how services can be improved and what additional services and businesses people may like to see offered online.

Red tape reduction isn't just about rules; it's about making things easier for people and helping businesses grow. Clear standards,

responsive services and modern, robust legislation support a strong and competitive economy. Looking ahead, we're focused on making meaningful changes and improvements and taking real, practical steps to make Government Services easier to use, more efficient and more responsive for people and businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador.

With that, I look forward to walking through the Estimates with each of you today. Before passing it back to the Chair, I'd just like to thank former Members that sat in this Legislature and thank the former minister. Your names come up quite a bit in *Hansard*. I've been over this, and I look forward to similar questions and, as we evolve, new questions as well.

With that, Chair, I'll pass it back to you.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

Do I say my name and title again?

CHAIR: Yeah.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much, Minister.

So you mentioned online services. I was listening to the Estimates last night when one of the Members asked about additional online services that would be added, you talked about how you needed to renew your licence online, which is good.

But I'm just wondering now from a MyGovNL perspective and, in your opening, you talked about how you're trying to add more services online, so I'm wondering what is your road map for adding more services online and which services are you adding?

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

That's a great question. After the *Hansard* came out, I actually went and listened to it again myself. Some of the questions were clairvoyant, straightforward. When it comes to MyGovNL, I do believe it's an evolving service. As I said prior, I've sat here in the short term but watched this place for long term, and I've watched the list grow.

So as for specifics, I said yesterday that I'd be up for any recommendations that would be forthcoming that would help the public to be specific to name each and every one. There are some in other jurisdictions, but they lean more towards, it's fair to say, the health system, but that would be OCIO specific.

So, basically, to the Member for Mount Scio, the fairest answer is we're open for anything that we can have that can help with the public service. But as to a specific one that comes top of mind, I wouldn't have one to say. I'm open for suggestions.

Thank you.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

In terms of the line item for Minister's Office, we noticed that in the Estimates, you're budgeting \$208,000. That's higher than previously. But we know that, I believe, your EA is making more than the former EAs.

So I'm wondering if someone can talk us through how the Estimates, \$208,000 for Salaries under Minister's Office, is derived please?

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

The question specifically was pointed towards the EA's salary and why there would be an increase from previous EAs, correct?

S. STOODLEY: Can you provide a breakdown of the \$208,000 in the 2026-

2027 Estimates for 1.1.01, Minister's Office, Salaries, because it's less than before and we do note that one of the staff is making more than our staff. We're just wondering if someone could outline the breakdown of that number, please?

J. COWAN: The only thing I would note is, the total budget is \$214,100 for last year; it's \$208,900 for this year. It's a decrease of \$6,000, roughly.

In terms of the breakdown, we'll have to get that information for you. We'll get that and return with that information.

S. STOODLEY: Yes, if we could get that information that would be convenient please, as well as a copy of the minister's binder. If you have any extras with you, we'll take one on the way, or a stick or whatever the team has prepared.

Thank you.

For Executive Support, 1.2.01, I'm wondering if the department can tell us if anyone has been terminated without cause in the department this year?

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

The question at hand was anybody released due to – what was that again?

S. STOODLEY: If anyone has been terminated without cause.

M. GOOSNEY: No, Chair.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

On 1.2.01, Executive Support, there was an extra \$5,000 overspent on Purchased Services and \$5,000 overspent on Property, Furnishings and Equipment. I'm wondering if someone can explain that for us, please?

J. COWAN: In terms of Purchased Services, the increase is related to an increase in the Public Sector Service

Delivery Council annual contributions, and there were some moving services required to dispose of old furniture within the department.

Under Property, Furnishings and Equipment, the bulk of that \$5,000 relates to ergonomic furniture upgrades. I guess it's the staff who are coming into the department or people are getting older, those ergonomic desks.

S. STOODLEY: Okay. Thank you.

Well, that's good for me for this. We're going up to –

CHAIR: 1.2.03.

S. STOODLEY: 1.2.03, okay. That's it for me for those sections.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Good morning and thank you, Minister and all the staff, certainly looking forward to asking some questions here.

I'm going to begin with some general questions and then there will be something specific. I'll just dive right in.

Are there any legislative amendments in the works for self-regulating professions in the coming year? Are you currently in discussions or working with any particular groups right now?

L. POWER: Yes, we do. We're in ongoing discussions with all those self-regulatory groups. There are a couple like the chartered accountants, for example. We're doing some review there. The funeral home, embalmers group and others, pending what we decide are the priorities as we move forward for the rest of the year.

S. O'LEARY: Understood. Is that list available?

L. POWER: Yes, we can provide that list for you, no problem.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Will more speed cameras be installed this year?

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you for the question.

In the current contract that exists there is an allotment of 10. There are now seven that are online or I guess the best way to put it, that are active, and there are three in the works that are now placed that will be coming online shortly.

As I spoke about this before when I first came into this, the importance of traffic-calming solutions and the initiative of looking back and seeing all Members supported unanimously. As you would know from previous municipal experience as myself, I do expect, and I've heard already, of municipalities reaching out to see if it was plausible or possible to be put in their communities and municipalities. That's something for further discussions. Obviously, I want to get this program right first. I'm not here to make any kneejerk reactions to see how it all rolls out.

Obviously, people aren't excited about getting a ticket, but again back to the former administration and everyone who voted in favour of it, I think there is no secret that speeding kills and high-traffic collision, high speeds, we know the end result usually, and we're focused on making sure that we have safer communities and it starts with that.

But, right now, there are 10 in the current contract and, as of right now, there are no others.

Thank you.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

How many child care site inspectors are there currently, and are they able to inspect every facility in the province every year?

G. BOLAND: So child care centres are inspected by two groups of staff in our department: environmental health officers and, for public health reasons, currently, there are 36 positions of which there are seven vacant. They are under active recruitment.

Under a memorandum of understanding with the fire commissioner's office, I also have staff who inspect for fire and life safety.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, thank you.

What recourse does the department have to enforce compliance if a child care provider fails to rectify a violation order or a notice of corrective action?

G. BOLAND: The work that my staff do feeds into a decision around whether or not the licence to operate continues. That decision, ultimately, is not made by us. It is made by NL Health Services. So we would conduct those inspections. We would advise of the results of those inspections. Whether or not, for example, public health reasons, we would recommend the licence continue. Then it's ultimately NL Health Services who would make that decision.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

There was five extra cents per litre added to gas on the Island back in 2020 when the North Atlantic Refinery went into standby that March. Will your government work with the PUB to eliminate that?

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

Since coming into this role, and I guess prior, I've watched the decisions – a lot of decisions that were made in this House. I want to say that I can't make a solid

commitment. Everybody would like an obviously lower price at the pumps.

I do believe that – and correct me if I'm wrong, John, but that falls under – once they stop the refining and transition to using the plant in a different way, that was the subsidy that was brought in in negotiating, I'm thinking with former administration. But when it comes to making life more affordable for people, there's always something to look at. I'd entertain that, definitely.

I don't know the specifics on how you change that right now. I'd be the first to tell you, I've been divulged into a lot of things, but that's something I'd be up for discussion for sure.

J. COWAN: Just a bit on the minister's point. We are in regular discussions; we meet regularly with the PUB. The price of gas, you know, with the current market certainly is not pleasant for anyone, but we do have those discussions.

The PUB would tell us that it's based on the wholesale rate in New York, so the price is the price that the market dictates currently, but we certainly do have regular discussions with the PUB on their approach to petroleum pricing.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

So no commitment, but potential conversation? Okay, thank you.

Will your government review and update legislation surrounding the creation and administration of co-ops in the province – something I'm very passionate about? We would particularly be interested in any amendments that make it easier to form and sustain entities like that – co-operatives.

L. POWER: We are currently, through our Commercial Registrations, doing some review of legislation around corporations; co-ops would be one of the groups that we

would be welcome to have a discussion about.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, thank you.

Do you have an update on the stop arm camera pilot for school buses?

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

Currently, the pilot is still in effect. To the specifics, I know, assistant deputy minister, Gail, has a very close eye on it. It's highly impressive to see the work that has been done, but I'm going to pass it over for specifics to Gail.

G. BOLAND: The pilot launched at the beginning of the school year, and it ran until December. We had originally designed it so that tickets would be issued to any offenders; unfortunately, the Canada Post strike, we could not guarantee that the legislated timelines for sending out the tickets could be met, so there were no tickets issued.

It was a great learning experience. The cameras, the way that they work is the bus is to a complete stop and the arm comes out and the lights are flashing, that's when the device, located on the exterior part of the bus, will take a video image of any vehicles that are passing by.

It was a really good learning experience because it helped to identify that those very specific criteria need to be met before you can determine whether or not a violation occurred. For example, if the bus is still kind of rolling and the arm is out and the lights are on, that's not a violation because the bus hasn't come to a full stop.

We got a lot of, what I would call, false positives. Any parents in the room are probably quite familiar with the Kiss and Go; as a mother of two, going through the elementary line, the bus is here, and you're dropping your children off on the outside. The teacher is there directing traffic. The

bus cameras were actually picking up the parents who were dropping off their kids and moving along, which is not a true violation of what we're trying to capture.

So it was a great experience, yes.

S. O'LEARY: Just following up on that, of course, I need to give a shout-out to Jeannette Holman-Price, who, obviously, was a huge advocate about that. Certainly in my former municipal role, we heard from Jeannette on a regular basis to instate this, as she lost somebody as a result of this issue.

Will this pilot continue now that we've got through the bumps of the Canada Post strike and all the rest? I'm just wondering now if we're going to be able to get some real data?

G. BOLAND: Yes, as the minister had said, we continued with the pilot after the Easter break.

S. O'LEARY: Wonderful, thank you.

I do want to acknowledge Jeannette Holman-Price on the record as being an advocate. She has since passed but has been somebody who has been very passionate about this particular issue. I wanted to note that.

CHAIR: I'll remind the Member that her time has expired.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair calls on the Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: Just one question here to finish up section one for me.

On 1.2.02, explain why the salary is under by \$216,400, and the reason for the increase? I guess the Salaries revised was \$1.6 million and the Estimate was \$1.9 million.

J. COWAN: I can.

The decrease is due to short-term vacancies, which totalled \$216,400.

J. KORAB: I'll just follow up on that.

Under, again, 1.2.01, are you able to give the breakdown on any permanent, temporary or contractual and/or vacancies there?

If you don't have it in front of you, you can send it after. Judging by you going through papers, you have it.

J. COWAN: Yes, we'll get that information for you and the breakdown.

J. KORAB: That's good for me under section one.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Just one more question in this particular section for myself. Are you currently working on or involved in any way, shape or form with the policy regarding the use of AI across departments, especially with the use of promotional materials?

The use of AI often leads to job losses, as we've discussed, certainly, in our Estimates over and over again, for artists and others in creative industries. I'm just wondering if your department is working in any way, shape or form or collaborating?

Thank you.

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you for the question. Actually, I should start with that because it sounds like I'm thanking myself for the question.

Currently, as we discussed last night, that portfolio would be more blanketed under

OCIO. It does cover governance so anything or any part of the review we'll take in every department within government, and all of us that sit here as well, for recommendation that we use it right and we take a balanced approach towards how it advances.

S. O'LEARY: Okay. Thank you.

That's it for me.

CHAIR: Seeing no further questions, I now ask the Clerk to recall the subhead.

CLERK: 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 inclusive, Executive and Support Services.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 inclusive, Executive and Support Services, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 1.2.03 carried.

CHAIR: I now ask the Clerk to read the next subhead.

CLERK: 2.1.01 to 2.2.03 inclusive, Regulatory Affairs.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 to 2.2.03 inclusive, Regulatory Affairs, carry?

I now call on the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

There's a lot in this area. We already talked about gas prices, and the five cents from Come By Chance was removed – we can talk about that, just for the record.

I will note, on gas prices, when we formally introduced the Carbon Price Adjustment to meet the *Clean Fuel Regulations*, in my head and what we were saying to staff is that if the amount is over three cents – that was my personal opinion, obviously, like, this is out to lunch or this is okay. It started out around three cents, it's crept up, crept down, but I do note, I just checked yesterday, the Carbon Price Adjustment is over 10 cents a litre, which is wild.

So I'm just wondering what the department is doing about that with the Public Utilities Board? Is that acceptable? What's your plan; because, people in Newfoundland and Labrador are paying 10 cents a litre so that they can meet the federal government's *Clean Fuel Regulations*.

Just for the record, that extra 10 cents pays for all the fuel companies to meet the *Clean Fuel Regulations*, and they put that cost directly back on the consumers. So I'm just wondering what the department is doing about the 10 cents today that people are paying and the *Clean Fuel Regulations*, please and thank you?

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

Just for clarification, I'd like to pass back the comment or ask for clarification from the Member for Mount Scio who just had stated, in *Hansard*, that the five cents from Come By Chance was removed? That was your remarks?

S. STOODLEY: Yes.

M. GOOSNEY: Chair, I'm going to pass it over to the deputy minister for clarification.

J. COWAN: To be honest, I'd have to go back and confirm that five cents was removed. I do remember the discussion around the five cents.

S. STOODLEY: I can tell you all about it. Thank you.

For the record, long ago, Come By Chance stopped refining. They imported all the fuel. They added five cents a litre.

We, in this House, changed the law so that we could direct the PUB to do a gas price review, which they did over two or three years, which I've spoken in the House numerous times already in this sitting on. The five cents was removed; they've added increased price for the retail markup and the benchmark price, and they kept the wholesale markup the same and that five cents was gone. It's been gone for about a year and a half, I believe.

On the carbon price adjustment, New Brunswick, the Premier, said they were no longer charging the carbon price adjustment. I haven't been able to find anything about what has come of that. I believe it's removed in New Brunswick. In my opinion, this should be a priority of your department, to deal with the federal government on the Carbon Price Adjustment. The PUB should not be adding 10 cents a litre to the price of gas for the Carbon Price Adjustment.

So thank you very much.

My next question, in residential tenancies, the department previously added an additional full-time investigator to investigate landlord and tenant repeat infractions with the idea that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Department of Justice and Public Safety would be taking landlords to court, essentially to curb repeat illegal and malicious predatory behaviour by landlords.

I'm wondering if the department can provide an update on that activity, please?

M. GOOSNEY: Chair, just for clarification, I want to go back to state – because if the Member opposite feels that there's a removal process, that basically sounds to me like a phone call – I would have thought that it would have been brought up in this

House sooner than later, but I will look into pulling that lever if that's something that's as simple meeting with the PUB. I just want to clarify that.

I'll pass the question along to Loyola for the Tenancies Act.

L. POWER: To your question about the pilot program, that position still is existing. We're still working through the process, certainly in consultation with Justice, on any landlords that do meet the threshold. Again, as you're aware, there's another part of that particular role which has actually been heavily utilized for education purposes to help with those very difficult cases.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I know there are members of the public that I think are eagerly awaiting. I know the Department of Justice and Public Safety are very busy and they have a lot to do, and I know it's partially your department and partially Justice and Public Safety taking those issues to court. I guess just to plead on behalf of us and behalf of – I know members of the public who, from a consumer protection perspective, are needing and wanting that curb in the behaviour of predatory landlords in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I will ask as well, previously, the department was looking at various pilots using some local vendors and potentially some artificial intelligence to improve efficiency, I'm wondering if any of those pilots continued or if they have stopped, please?

L. POWER: The pilot hasn't started. There are still ongoing conversations with the vendors.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I was wondering in 2.1.01 or anywhere in this section, if the team are working with OCIO on IT improvements, any new

systems that the teams are implementing under this section?

L. POWER: Yeah, there's ongoing work with the OCIO to look at all systems including residential tenancies, lotteries, et cetera, to see if we can discover any efficiencies. Yes, they're ongoing.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

In terms of the pension benefits area, wondering if the department is planning any changes to pension legislation?

L. POWER: Yeah, we've had a number of stakeholders come in and have discussions about a number of areas in our pension legislation for potential amendments, so the analysis is currently ongoing.

S. STOODLEY: In terms of consumer protection complaints, wondering if you've seen any new trends or areas of increased complaint activity from the public?

L. POWER: I can get you the number of complaints we've had. There hasn't been any pattern at this point that were noted but happy to share the categories of complaints.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

2.1.03, Commercial Registrations and 2.2.01 Vital Statistics Registry, wondering if there are any plans of red tape reductions under these areas for businesses interacting with government?

L. POWER: Yes, we're certainly going through the exercise now in terms of looking at all our workflows to see any way we can increase efficiency.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

I note that in 2.1.03, Salaries were revised down from \$1.29 million to \$1.17 million. Wondering if the team can explain why the salary number is decreasing?

J. COWAN: Again, it is because of short-term vacancies. That's the only reason it's down.

S. STOODLEY: I notice that Purchased Services increased from \$854,000 to \$1.3 million. Wondering what the additional costs were, please.

L. POWER: That's the ongoing Unisys contract which we have for the managing of our properties, which is something that we share with other Atlantic provinces as well as the Territories and Nunavut. That's increases that have again been shared amongst all of us because of various merchant fees and things like that.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Has there been any further consideration under 2.1.01, Consumer and Financial Services, given to amending legislation to end no-fault evictions, especially in social housing?

L. POWER: Everything is on the table with regard to consideration such as you had just indicated. Again, we're looking across the country in terms of what other jurisdictions are doing and comparing it to where we are, then deciding where we're going to move forward, if amendments are necessary.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Has there been an increase in the staff and funding to the residential tenancies board in the last year and how many applications were received over the last year?

L. POWER: We have our same complement of staff and the number of applications is around 1,200, which is similar to where we were last year.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

What is the current wait time to have a hearing at the residential tenancies board? What is the current caseload waiting to be heard?

L. POWER: Our wait time, from start of application to completion for decision, is about 30 days. I can get you the number that are still in the queue. I can provide that to you; I don't have it right here.

S. O'LEARY: Wonderful. Thank you for that.

Has the department considered making it mandatory for landlords to go to mediation before allowing them to evict a tenant, legally?

L. POWER: It probably goes back to the earlier comment in terms of looking across the country. Currently, we don't make it mandatory to go to mediation. Mediation is a voluntary process, but again something to consider as we look to see if we need to make any further amendments.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

It certainly would be a worthy option as we're talking about mediation and restorative justice values and things like that. The more conversations and communication that we can have, certainly the better because, obviously, we know the pressures of the housing situation. Thank you for that consideration.

Under 2.2.01, Vital Statistics Registry, the department received work from Rothschild around 2022 regarding the value of and potential for selling the registries. Is this something your government is considering?

L. POWER: Not at this time.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Under 2.2.03, Collection Services: How many files have been resolved in the past year? How much money was collected by

the province last year in outstanding debts and how much remains to be recovered?

L. POWER: We collected about \$155 million last year and that's of \$350 million, not to confuse you. In terms of our number of files, I think it's 6,000. I can confirm that and share it with you, if you like.

S. O'LEARY: Yes, please.

Thank you very much. That's it for me, Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: Thank you.

MHA O'Leary asked a question, one that I was going to mention there about the wait time for landlord and tenant division, which is 30 days, so it's good to know that. I know it was reviewed a few years ago. Are there any plans on viewing the landlord tenancy act, coming up, do you know?

L. POWER: Certainly, it's an ongoing process and again as indicated to in the previous question, it is an ongoing piece. We're hearing a lot of calls from everybody, tenants, landlords, stakeholders. It's certainly in the forefront from our division's perspective.

J. KORAB: Before I make this comment, I want to be clear, we need to protect tenants, so we have to make sure there are safeguards in there that landlords have to follow, as again MHA O'Leary had mentioned, but in my former life as a realtor for 12 years, there are a lot of bad actors out there that are tenants.

What is the department doing with returns to the good landlords that are out there, upkeeping their property but are forced to have to go through processes where the tenants have clearly broke certain rules, guidelines under the Residential Tenancies Act? What is the department looking to do

now and going forward to protect the landlords that are abiding by the law and unfortunately getting stuck?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Services.

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

Since coming into this role and I, too, previously was a realtor and you get a much better insight. The asks to continuously review, consult, discuss, scan across jurisdictions, I say to the Member that been something that's been a high priority.

Again, it's complex. As you had said, there are some parts of the act that was a balance that should protect the landlords, vice versa, protect the tenant. Case by case, each one, some have similarities but there are a lot that are unique.

It's something that we've been discussing and that we'll continue to discuss. Finding a balance to how we can improve the act that serves in everybody's best interests is what we'll do and continue to do and look forward to see where we can go with it.

Thank you.

J. KORAB: I could go on way too long about that landlord tenancies, so we'll pick that up another time.

Has there been any analysis done on wildfire, flooding, storm risks that are affecting the insurance market in Newfoundland and Labrador?

L. POWER: We're part of a federal-provincial-territorial group that works for counterparts across the country to look at all of the natural disasters. Again, it is in the forefront, everything from hurricanes, floods, et cetera.

J. KORAB: Perfect.

Lottery licence program, one thing I've heard is it's difficult to navigate, difficulty to get answers and a lot of times, if it's your second or third time or groups coming back, certainly bigger groups, they know how to navigate; but for first-time user groups looking to get something whether it's a 50-50 or a Grand in your Hand, is there something the department can do to make that easier? Maybe use clearer language or maybe it's a starter kit or something, because that is something that I get constantly from residents, not just in my district, everywhere.

L. POWER: Yes, certainly, we recognize that we get a very high volume of calls related to lotteries. Absolutely, interested in hearing anything for improvement. We've actually even considered doing webinars with some folks, especially frequent users for charitable lotteries, again to try to get information out there. Because it's challenging sometimes to understand all the legislative language that's used. Again, we want to make it more efficient and effective as possible.

J. KORAB: I'm just going to jump ahead to 2.2.03, under Collection Services. Has the department brought in any more departments here? Under this heading, I should say.

L. POWER: It is ongoing. Various departments come to us, because again we are collector, not the driver department. So yes, there has been more. Again, as we move for integration, for example, of different groups coming into government and things like that, so yes.

J. KORAB: Okay, perfect.

Under 2.1.03, Commercial Registrations, were there vacancies within Commercial Registrations last year?

L. POWER: Yes, that particular group, there's a lot of movement within the group, so we do have vacancies from time to time.

J. KORAB: Okay.

Can you provide an update on efforts to modernize the registry service and improve online access?

L. POWER: Again, we're in ongoing discussions with other provinces who use, I guess, a land-title system versus a deed system. That is ongoing.

J. KORAB: Any timeline – sorry, do I have to say my name every time?

CHAIR: No, I think, you're well within your 10 minutes.

J. KORAB: Thank you.

I guess any timeline on that, because I know it's continuous but it's something that I hear a lot as well.

L. POWER: Not specifically. Happy to update you periodically as we move along. It's a system component that needs to be dealt with and then there's a huge upgrade that will need to be done. So it's difficult to give a particular time, but that is the goal to move to that direction.

J. KORAB: This might not be the place to ask it, but I know with regard to deeds and title, it's my understanding you only had to register the deed or the title if you're under a mortgage. If you're paying cash, you didn't. This is obviously on smaller land deals. Are there any plans for the government to bring in I guess a mandatory Registry of Deeds title here?

L. POWER: That's been brought to our attention before and we are considering it, so, we'd able to provide an update as we move forward.

J. KORAB: I highly encourage you – highly – I'll say it three times. I highly encourage your department to look at that. With the way the legislation is for the – I can't remember the name of the act now. I've

been gone a year and a half; I forgot all about real estate.

Especially when you get in rural Newfoundland, trying to get affidavits signed and the dates for that and you're trying to find 70-, 80- or 90-year-old people to say Jim owned this land, et cetera. I won't go down the rabbit hole but, yes, I think that would really help now. It will certainly help down the road, 20, 30 or 40 years' time when people are trying to get that land.

I have two minutes; that's good for me for now. I'll pass it back over. I might have some questions on two after.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Seeing no further questions for this subhead, I now ask the Clerk to recall the subhead.

CLERK: 2.1.01 to 2.2.03 inclusive, Regulatory Affairs.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 to 2.2.03 inclusive, Regulatory Affairs, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.1.01 through 2.2.03 carried.

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

CLERK: 3.1.01 to 3.5.01 inclusive, Government and Services.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 to 3.5.01 inclusive, Government and Services, carry?

I recognize the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

This is a very big heading, so I might have to do a few rounds here. I wanted to give a special shout-out to the registrar and the deputy registrar of Motor Registration who do an exceptional job as public servants in Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as, I guess, to all the staff in this department.

In terms of Motor Registration, one of the current ministers, when they were in Opposition, lobbied very hard for mandatory vehicle inspections for vehicles older, I believe, than two years. I'm wondering if the department is planning on implementing mandatory vehicle inspections?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Services.

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

Back to, as I had stated, I read over *Hansard* and seen that question, there hasn't been, to my knowledge or brought forward, any noticeable trends in showing where mandatory inspections would ultimately change how Motor Registration has worked. It seems to be where they are currently, but, again, I'm always up for learning, being informed, looking at data, looking at other jurisdictional scans.

As the former minister would note, this is a broad department. It can be time consuming to look at all pieces of legislation. As we stated in the opening remarks, this department has some of the most legislation. Again, I'm always here to look at things for review, and that's where it sits right now.

Thank you.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

We've also heard, I guess, the Members of the government unhappy with the requirement for mandatory helmets on Side By Sides. I'm wondering if your department

is planning on removing that requirement from the *Highway Traffic Act* and Regulations.

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

There hasn't been any discussion. I've stated before, I think there's a relationship here that has grown over the past decade into where we are currently, one that has watched a lot of implementation. I know there was a lot of public push back and grumbling, but I do believe that people are compliant. I haven't heard anything.

That's within my purview. Each Member that sits here can have an opinion of each their own. In this case, it seems that the implementation was to make trailways safer for people using, ultimately, ATVs or UTVs or any which form of off-road vehicle. Right now, there are no discussions in my department.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

In terms of the speed camera tickets, I was minister over the summer and then there were court issues that happened when I was no longer in that role.

I can imagine the impacts of the challenges that the court system was facing on the rollout of the speed camera tickets, but I guess I'm wondering if the department could talk about how the court system challenges have impacted the execution of the Speed Camera Program?

M. GOOSNEY: Yes, and it was MHA Dinn – it was a quote of my father, actually – when he spoke about: If you're pointing one finger, you make sure to realize you have three pointing back. You want to find solutions to what you inherit and no matter if it's a municipal government or whichever level you inherit, the thing is there are no systems that are perfect.

There has been, to my knowledge and to input and being around the program itself,

some struggles, back to comments made earlier, where there was a stop just prior to the election with postage and then into courts.

I mean, there have been issues with the courts for quite some years now and this is part and parcel. If I'm correct – Gail, correct me if I'm wrong – there's up to a year. Obviously, we're seeing that delayed response to have tickets mailed out to those who will receive them for speeding. There are some ongoing discussions with my colleague in Justice.

We want to get this right. There will be glitches, there have been glitches prior to me getting here, but that's what I'm here for, to try to help to improve, to remove some of the glitches, but that's where it sits right now.

Thank you.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

Wondering if the department has made any decisions that you'd like to share with the House in terms of how many tickets to go out, for example? If I, let's say, was in charge of a department and we were sending out tickets, there's a limit to the number of tickets you can send out to someone, not legally, but if someone, let's say, incurred three tickets, but they haven't yet been sent out in the mail – it's the beginning of the program.

I'm wondering if the department made any decisions, for example, the number of tickets that were sent out before, they would be withheld or before they'd stop sending them out until they were sent in the mail, for example. If there was a delay in terms of when the ticket was incurred, when the infraction occurred and when the tickets were sent in the mail.

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

As stated, no program that I've seen has rolled out without hiccups or flaws. This is something, again, I'm seven months in, I have noted that there are some probably improvements to see that people aren't impacted, as they call the shock effect, but I've known of cases prior to that there was duplicates of tickets or double, more than one ticket going to the address of the offender, but I'm going to pass this over.

Do you want to speak a little more to it on what we're looking at?

G. BOLAND: Yes, we work very closely with the Department of Justice and Public Safety to ensure that we are in lockstep so that we don't overburden from a collection's perspective, as well as a court perspective.

My most recent update, I can advise that there has been 3,475 tickets mailed. We resumed mailing those tickets a couple of months ago. The focus has been looking at the backlog. We're still working through that backlog and, as the minister had said, under the *Highway Traffic Act*, we have up to one year to create the ticket. Once we actually create the ticket under the *Provincial Offences Act*, we have 30 days to send the ticket out.

That's why ticketing was paused during the Canada Post labour strike, because we could not guarantee those legislative timelines of 30 days could be met.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I'm wondering if there is an update on electronic ticketing, which I know was in the works last year?

G. BOLAND: E-ticketing would be something that would come through the Department of Justice and Public Safety in partnership with the RNC and the RCMP. We can't speak to that specifically.

I am happy to say that, over this past year, through MyGovNL, you can now pay your

tickets through that process, and it's a much easier process than previously.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

In terms of some of the line items, we see that the Grants and Subsidies decreased significantly in 3.1.01, Motor Registration Division. The Grants and Subsidies line decreased from \$54,000 to \$10,000, so I'm wondering what was reduced or eliminated through that line item?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Services.

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

The decrease is due to re-profiling of membership fees to Purchased Services.

S. STOODLEY: I'll probably just actually pick up at another – I got 32 seconds left.

CHAIR: You can fit a question in.

S. STOODLEY: Okay. I'll fit a question in.

CHAIR: We'll get you an answer.

S. STOODLEY: In terms of the Transportation and Communications budget, Motor Registration Division, it was \$1.087 million, then it went up to \$1.820 million and now it's increased to \$4.81 million. Can someone walk us through why the increase to that budget?

J. COWAN: The \$3.725-million increase reflects funds for the speed camera postage, which is \$3.71 million, and courier and freight charges, which is \$12,500.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Under 3.1.01, has there been any talk or examination option for updating the IT systems at Motor Registration Division?

CHAIR: Gail Boland.

G. BOLAND: Yes, actually. We have partnered with another province. We're going through a modernization project now.

S. O'LEARY: Wonderful.

G. BOLAND: Yes.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Under 3.2.01, Support Services, have you received any feedback about amendments to the *Public Safety Act* that allow the chief inspector of amusement rides and elevating devices to authorize private contractors and their mechanics to do the inspections, and has the measure eased backlogs in inspection work yet?

G. BOLAND: Happy to report that, yes, we've actually brought in new business to Newfoundland and Labrador.

Under the new regime that came into effect in January, the contractors, like TKE and Otis, have to be licensed by us and all of their mechanics who work for them have to be certified by us. Through that process, two new contractors have come into Newfoundland and Labrador and put up their shingle and are now starting to offer that service.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

This is under 3.2.01, Support Services. The Auditor General notes in her 2025 report on compliance with previous audit recommendations that the department still needs to establish processes to ensure effective monitoring of the Food Premises Inspection and Licensing Program, is that work completed?

CHAIR: Gail Boland.

G. BOLAND: Yes, all recommendations that were made by the Auditor General when she reviewed that program have been implemented in consultation and partnership with Health and Community Services.

S. O'LEARY: Wonderful. Thank you.

Under 3.3.01, Occupational Health and Safety Inspections, how many inspections were completed last year and how many investigations into workplaces were conducted last year?

G. BOLAND: In 2025, the OHS officers completed 2,754 inspections. During last year, 35 charges were laid over a total of three different serious workplace incidences.

S. O'LEARY: Okay. Thank you.

How many inspectors are currently employed by the department?

G. BOLAND: We have 35 positions that are funded, six of which are currently vacant but are being actively recruited. I know offers have been made, reference checks have been made and I think there are a couple of people starting June 1. So we're very active in our recruitment.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

How many positions are currently in OHS? How many of those are vacant? Which positions seem to have the most vacancies?

G. BOLAND: In Occupational Health and Safety, we have a total of 52 positions, of which nine are vacant. That was as of March 31. We do see the majority of our turnover in our OHS Officers.

S. O'LEARY: In what, sorry?

G. BOLAND: OHS Officers.

S. O'LEARY: In the officers, okay. Thank you.

The Nurses' Union has been calling for an independent health sector safety council, rather than the one suggested by government, that would be embedded in NLHS. This council would only apply to NLHS employees and would, therefore, leave out many employed in other parts of the health care sector.

Would your government adopt this request?

G. BOLAND: That's an initiative that's primarily being led by WorkplaceNL, but, as a board member, I can advise that, yes, this work is ongoing. They've been consulting with NLHS and the various stakeholders, but this is something that would be addressed by WorkplaceNL.

S. O'LEARY: Okay. Thank you.

In regard to 3.5.01, Red Tape Reduction Office, how will this office engage with other departments and agencies to determine what is red tape and what isn't? Does this office have a strategy or a workplan that it's acting on?

J. COWAN: We have actually engaged departments. We do have a deputy ministers' steering committee. Right now it's Forestry, Agriculture and Lands; Municipal Affairs; Energy and Mines; Environment; and Intergovernmental Affairs.

We are meeting. We are identifying opportunities. We've asked the departments to identify opportunities. We have had discussions with other jurisdictions, especially Nova Scotia. We're looking at work that has been done in Alberta and Ontario.

So we are trying to find, I guess, meaningful opportunities. There was a discussion about a starter kit that we talked about for lottery. There are things that we can do to streamline, to improve, to make accessing government services easier, so we are actively working on that. There will be a work plan.

S. O'LEARY: Okay.

Could you provide the specific departments that are involved in that committee and that discussion?

J. COWAN: Absolutely, we'll get those departments for you. The list will grow as we move through and we identify opportunities but, yes, we'll get you that list.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

That's it for me, Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: Under 3.1.01, Purchased Services was underspent by \$1.16 million, but now will rise to \$5.92 million. Can you explain the reason for the underspend last year and why there's a major increase to the line this year?

G. BOLAND: I'm sorry, did you say 3.1.01?

J. KORAB: Yes, under Purchased Services.

G. BOLAND: Yes.

What you're seeing there, the increase from last year to this year, that's to do with speed cameras. The projected revised, so the difference from what was budgeted in '25-'26 versus what was revised, the \$1.16 million, that reflects, again, some accounting stuff that has to be done to accommodate for the speed camera budget primarily.

J. KORAB: Perfect. Thank you.

The speed camera is a good segue into my next question. I meant to say this at the start, I just want to echo what the MHA for Mount Scio said about the work they do at MRD. For the record, the characterization on the movie *Zootopia* was very unfair to the staff out there.

So you said 3,400 tickets have been mailed out; how many are outstanding right now? Do you know or are you able to say?

G. BOLAND: The last I checked, like I said, there were about 3,400, and a little over 800 of those have been paid.

J. KORAB: Okay.

I was wondering how many are outstanding. I thought you said 3,400 was how many were sent out?

G. BOLAND: Were sent out, and of the 3,400, 811 have been paid.

J. KORAB: Have been paid.

Sorry, what I mean by outstanding is how many tickets are left to go out – not outstanding, sorry.

G. BOLAND: Oh, apologies.

J. KORAB: No, I didn't phrase that correctly.

G. BOLAND: I wouldn't be able to provide that number off top of mind, because you'd have to understand how the process works in that they're taking images, then they're looking at those images, confirming whether or not a violation has occurred. They're reaching in then to information in the Motor Registration system to pair up the information to identify the registered owner.

It's not until that full process has occurred that I can confirm for you how many tickets. Like I said, we're focusing right now on the backlog and we're getting really close to finishing the backlog.

J. KORAB: That's good. I wholeheartedly agree with this from my seven years on city council, and I know MHA O'Leary would certainly agree what we heard in our time in municipal council. I know the minister would, as well, I'm sure, in his time.

I'm not going to ask how much revenue is collected and I know you've heard things about it's a cash grab, but are you able to quantify the amount of money we're taking in versus what we're spending for this program? It's not about the money. It's about public safety. Are you able to put some context around that; that it's not a cash grab. I am just trying to quantify that.

G. BOLAND: The budget for the program is \$7.7 million and you have to understand what that would include. So we pay a monthly lease fee for each camera. We pay a processing fee for each ticket that's created. Under the current legislation in the *Provincial Offences Act*, the tickets have to go out via registered mail. Our budget also includes traffic study equipment so that we can help identify the most appropriate location that would have the best value for the speed cameras.

I can tell you that we closely monitor the vehicles and their speeds and make adjustments, as required, so that it's not a cash grab. Yes, absolutely.

J. KORAB: I'm going to ask that question after.

We have seven of the 10 out. Are there any plans to move those around? How long are they looking to stay there? I know the one in my district on Waterford Bridge Road, for argument's sake, I've had a lot of emails on that. Some people are not very happy that they got a ticket from X amount of months ago.

I'm not going to get into the Waterford Bridge Road issue there, but are there any plans to move those seven around or how long are they planning on staying there?

I'm not advocating for it to be cleared, just curious.

G. BOLAND: Under our contract, we can move the cameras every six months. It comes with quite a hefty price tag. I will say

that and to be quite honest with you, my preference would be, let me get a bit of time under my belt before we start looking at moving those cameras around. Of course, we would need to do some more traffic studies and we would need to consult with the RNC, the RCMP and the municipalities to determine the best location for the cameras.

J. KORAB: Yes, and the note I had here, just as you were talking, St. John's had its dedicated traffic division managers and people assessing there, so I would just encourage your department to work with them. I know they have, when this was coming in. I think MHA Loveless was the minister at the time, and they had multiple conversations with the city.

One of the things that these speed cameras do, they're a deterrent. I mean, there's education for speeding, but it is a little concerning – I understand it's a new program and we're working through the kinks – up to one year to create the ticket and 30 days to send it out. That could be up to 13 months. Someone could, in theory, have got a ticket four months ago and they're not going to get a ticket for another seven months; meanwhile, they could be speeding – I'll use Waterford Bridge Road in my district – multiple times in a 30-kilometre zone by St. Mary's school.

More resources – what can we do? Whether it's traffic court, prosecutors or whatever we're doing, is there a way we can speed up that 13 months, and is the department looking to do that?

G. BOLAND: That time lag is just because of the buildup, the backlog that was created when we stopped sending out the tickets because of the Canada Post labour strike. I can tell you that in most jurisdictions tickets are going out within a month.

J. KORAB: Okay.

G. BOLAND: That would be my goal.

J. KORAB: I'm glad that's your goal.

Last question: I note you were saying you were tracking. Are we tracking this data on the regular to see if there's a decrease in time of tickets? It might be too early, but I'll just use Waterford Bridge Road again as an example, from six months ago to now, are we seeing a decrease or is it too early to tell yet in terms of tickets?

G. BOLAND: Yes, it's too early right now.

With any program, you're going to see things increase, increase, increase. Eventually, things will stabilize; you will then see a decrease. Believe it or not, people forget that the cameras are there, and then we'll see another spike go up again.

Right now, I can't offer you any trends. I'm still working through that backlog.

J. KORAB: No, I had a number of chats with the city staff at the time. Even the signs that tell you your speed work for X-amount of months, and then they had to move it around because then they become a static sign.

Lastly, on the number of tickets going out, when would you be able to release that? I know there is one resident in particular in my district, Mr. Mooney, who regularly asks me about how many tickets were issued, when they're being issued and all that.

I know there's some sensitivity around it and there are some RNC implications, but when will the department be able to, I guess, release some of that or put some of that data out there for public consumption?

G. BOLAND: Again, I just I'd like to get through the backlog and try and – quote, unquote – normalize the program but, most definitely, we've always said that we'd be open and transparent and release statistics about the speed cameras – absolutely.

J. KORAB: So it's coming once the backlog – okay.

My last question I guess I'll throw out for now, because I think the MHA for Mount Scio has some questions, the current Minister of Fisheries was a strong advocate of bringing back mandatory vehicle inspections, is that something the government is considering?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes Gail Boland.

G. BOLAND: As Minister Goosney had said earlier, right now there's no accident data that's demonstrating that there's a high correlation between accidents and the mechanical fitness of a vehicle. We're looking at what other jurisdictions are doing right across Canada.

Currently, right now, of course, our commercial vehicles have a very strict inspection requirement, and when it comes to passenger vehicles, the ones that we all drive, they are required to have an inspection when ownership is transferred.

J. KORAB: Perfect.

Last question just to finish the MRD, and only because it's one that my neighbour asked me two days ago, when you purchase a home, you pay the tax once. Then, when it gets sold subsequent times, you don't pay the tax again. His question was: I'm buying a used vehicle. I'm the third owner. Why am I paying the Blue Book tax on it again?

I know the answer, but has the government looked at not charging tax on a vehicle the third, fourth, fifth or sixth time it has been sold?

G. BOLAND: From the Motor Registration perspective, we collect the tax on behalf of the Department of Finance. The extent of our involvement in that is we look at how much you paid for the vehicle, we look at the Blue Book value and, if there's a

difference, the taxes are reduced and you have to sign an affidavit. That's the extent of our involvement.

J. KORAB: Okay.

I've got you. That's fair.

CHAIR: When we use these 10 minutes, we'll go into our break, because that will take us right to 10:30.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

Sticking with speed cameras for a minute, we know that, in other jurisdictions, approximately 10 per cent of people appeal their speeding tickets. With the Traffic Court delays and issues, do people who get a ticket still have the ability to appeal tickets? What kind of appeal numbers have you seen if they are able to appeal their tickets?

G. BOLAND: Yes, they still have the option to contest their ticket, and people can contest their tickets in multiple ways. They can log into our vendor's secure web portal and contest their ticket. They can go in person at a court to contest their ticket. They can do it via mail.

What we are seeing right now based on the numbers that have gone out, we are below industry standard experience.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

If I got a speeding ticket today, am I able to go in person to Traffic Court to appeal the ticket this week?

G. BOLAND: Yes, as far as I know.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

School bus inspections, a very important part of Motor Registration's work and the highway enforcement officers' work, I'm

wondering if the department can confirm whether or not things are up to date, how many school bus inspections the teams perform and how that's all going, please?

G. BOLAND: With our school buses, they're inspected at a minimum of three times per year. So they're inspected twice in an official inspection station that's authorized by the Registrar of Motor Vehicles; our highway enforcement officers inspect all school buses at the beginning of each year; and then, in January, February, March or April months, depending on the weather, our highway enforcement officers will inspect a minimum of 30 per cent of each carrier's buses.

Twice a year we will publish the results of those inspections, the highway enforcement inspections. The last report was in November, at which time there were 1,111 registered school buses and that was a 92 per cent pass rate at that time. Highway enforcement officers are currently completing their second round of inspections and the results of those inspections typically go up later in the spring or early summer.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

Occupational Health and Safety Inspections, 3.3.01, I'm wondering what the Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Council work is undertaking at the moment? Have they made any recommendations to the department in terms of areas of occupational health and safety to make legislative or regulatory changes around, please?

G. BOLAND: The Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Council have been engaged. We are seeing, on a national level, some movement around harmonization of standards. There's a pan-Canadian harmonization agreement that is administered through the Canadian Association of Administrators of Labour

Legislation, CAALL and CAALL OSH is the subcommittee.

When that group makes a recommendation at the national level, then we are engaging with our advisory council on how that could be implemented here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I want to go to the 3.5.01, Red Tape Reduction Office, please.

I know that there were business navigators previously in IET, so I'm assuming that those roles have moved now to this department. I'm wondering if you can confirm what has happened there, because this is a new subheading, and where the team came from and, I guess, how many roles are on the team, please?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes John Cowan.

J. COWAN: Those positions did come from Jobs, Growth and Rural Development. That was the group that had business navigators. There's a director, a manager and the three business navigators that have now joined the department. The funding for that was transferred from that department to our department. It's not new funding.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

You said there's a director, manager and three – so there are five staff?

J. COWAN: Correct.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

Wondering if the hours of the business navigators or the staff have changed? What are the hours of that office?

J. COWAN: The hours have not changed; they work normal hours.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

I'm wondering if the department can talk about any meetings that you've had with the CFIB?

I know that they did not give this government a rating this year – the first time ever that I can find that they did not give a government a red tape rating. I'm wondering how your discussions with them are going?

I know the government mandate says they want to get to an A, based on the previous criteria for the CFIB Red Tape Report Card, I don't know how that's possible, but I'm wondering how the department is doing with getting on track to getting an A with the CFIB report card?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Services.

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

Coming into this office, as anyone would know – I think both Members have sat in this portfolio – you get to meet with a lot of stakeholders. I've, personally, met with the gentleman in charge. When I look around the room, I picture a former city councillor – I forgot that the Member opposite was a councillor as well.

It's a discussion that went well. I didn't sit and ask for an A or B, A-plus or an F or choose to get into, again, pointing fingers to whichever, but there are current discussions, previous discussions and I look forward to future discussions to see how we can achieve that A, as noted.

Thank you, Chair.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

In terms of red tape activity, you've moved the five staff from the Department of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development, which were previously, I understand, in IET and now they're in this office; and there's a deputy minister committee with four deputy ministers, I believe we heard. I'm wondering

if the department can talk through any other red tape reduction activities ongoing.

J. COWAN: I think, at this point, we are having active discussions with other departments; we are working to identify opportunities to reduce red tape. I don't know if we have anything to share at this point, but we are actively working. We are developing a work plan, and we certainly hope to have initiatives announced in the coming future.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

A minute left before our break, let's go back to 3.2.01 and 3.2.02, please, Support Services and Regional Services.

In Support Services, 3.2.01, we note the Salaries were revised downward from \$2.58 million to \$2.41 million. I'm wondering why there was an underspend and why there is now an increase of over \$100,000 this year, please?

J. COWAN: The decrease is due to temporary vacancies in hard-to-fill positions, such as boil and pressure vessel inspectors and elevating device inspectors. Those positions are under active recruitment, constantly.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

Purchased Services has increased from \$47,000 to \$90,000. I'm wondering why they went up, please.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Services.

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

The increase is due to higher fees for secured cash collection and additional training that was required for mechanical refrigeration code.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

My last question in this, I know the Moneris contract the government has – I'm not sure if it's with Moneris. It might have changed in the last year. I am wondering how that contract is going. I am wondering if the amount that government is paying for those credit card services is on budget and where we'd see those in the line items, please.

J. TORRAVILLE: That contract has changed from Moneris. It is now with TD. The fees are relatively the same, the fee per charge. It's based on multiple cards and what type of card, the cardholder. There are a lot of fees involved. The fees increase for government, I guess, as revenue changes because it's a percentage of whatever you collect in revenue. So the more revenue or less revenue, that changes the variance in the total amount of fees.

CHAIR: We have met the time for break and knowing that there are some subsequent questions to this subhead, we will call a break and return here at 10:41 a.m.

Recess

CHAIR (Dwyer): Order, please!

We are now continuing with the head of expenditure for the Department of Government Services. We are currently in 3.1.01 to 3.5.01 inclusive, Government Services.

The hon. Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: Thank you.

Under 3.3.01, I just have a few here. Were there vacancies within Occupational Health and Safety Inspections last year?

G. BOLAND: Yes.

J. KORAB: Could you provide a breakdown on where those vacancies were located, please?

G. BOLAND: Sure.

We have, like I said earlier, a total of 35 funded positions, six of which are vacant. We have 18 positions here on the Avalon and six of those are vacant. That's where all of our vacancies currently exist. We are actively recruiting. As I had said earlier, offers have been made. I think a couple of people are starting June 1. References are being checked.

J. KORAB: Thank you.

With those vacancies, has there been any delays in inspection services due to these shortages?

G. BOLAND: In 2025, we did 2,754 inspections compared to the previous year, which was 3,646.

J. KORAB: So, likely.

Okay. You just answered that next question. They're good.

Is the department currently experiencing staffing shortages on the inspection capacity? I guess, while there are six vacancies right now, are we seeing a backlog or is there a delay in getting those inspections done?

G. BOLAND: We're doing the best that we can with the staff that we have to fulfill all inspection requirements.

J. KORAB: Okay. No, I appreciate that.

This is the last question for this one. Has the department identified industries or sectors with increasing workplace safety concerns?

G. BOLAND: The construction sector continues to be a very high-risk sector for us, as does mining.

J. KORAB: Okay, perfect.

That's it for me, Chair, for section three.

CHAIR: Seeing no further questions for this subhead, I now ask the Clerk to recall the subhead.

CLERK: 3.1.01 to 3.5.01 inclusive, Government and Services.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 to 3.5.01 inclusive, Government and Services, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.1.01 through 3.5.01 carried.

CHAIR: Before I get the Clerk to name the next subhead, I just want everybody in the Committee today to know that our hard stop is going to be at 12:15, as calculated by our efficient Clerk. So that will be a hard stop at 12:15, okay?

I'll ask the Clerk to call the next subhead.

CLERK: 4.1.01 to 4.2.01 inclusive, Labour.

CHAIR: Shall 4.1.01 to 4.2.01 inclusive, Labour, carry?

I now call on the Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: Under 4.1.02, Standing Fish Price Setting Panel, has the department undertaken any review of the fish price-setting process?

CHAIR: John Cowan.

J. COWAN: We've been working, obviously, this season with the Fish Price Setting Panel, Atlantic seafood producers and the FFAW. We've had discussions leading up to

the season but we're not currently undertaking any review. I'm sure we'll have discussions about ASP and FFAW in the fall, and we'll see where those discussions go.

J. KORAB: So there are no changes in terms of the process this year – same process as the previous?

J. COWAN: We did bring in one change where we allowed the price to be considered. It was based on a formula. So we did bring in a slight change where it could be a formula and/or a price.

J. KORAB: Are you able to confirm who's on the panel right now?

J. COWAN: In terms of the Fish Price-Setting Panel, I know it's Sheilagh O'Leary, John Whelan, Earle McCurdy – do you have that?

D. STRICKLAND: Sheilagh Murphy is the Chair.

J. KORAB: Sheilagh Murphy, yes.

I'm like, you're on that panel now?

D. STRICKLAND: Sheilagh M. Murphy.

S. O'LEARY: Mr. Chair, please don't volunteer me for anything else at this stage in the game.

J. KORAB: Yes.

Sorry, could you start with the other Sheilagh again? Thank you.

D. STRICKLAND: That is Sheilagh M. Murphy as the chair; the alternate chairs are Ron McCabe and John Whelan; alternate member representing FFAW is Will Reid; the member representing ASP is Brian Vallis; and alternate member representing ASP is Art Dodd.

J. KORAB: Thank you for that.

Minister, when both parties are not at the table in terms of setting the price, which we know happened this year, does that affect this process?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Services.

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

Coming into this role, it was a full learning curve on the fish price setting, working with and watching the history in the province – which you would know, sometimes it doesn't always work. It leads to dispute. I am proud to say, and I am proud of my staff and my colleague, as the Fisheries Minister, that we put in a lot of hours. There were a lot of phone calls and a lot of conversations with all parties.

It was a great learning curve, but I've said to both the ASP and FFAW chair, and also the president of FFAW and their board, that we are here to work together to see the industry flourish.

In closing to this question, there is something that I had wanted to meet on when we talked about workplace health and safety, and that's an industry that we often sometimes don't see what goes into it. I would just like to applaud each harvester and everybody who works in the plants that keep our heritage, our history and our culture rich in our province. I wish them well.

Great question. Thank you.

J. KORAB: Just a follow-up there, ASP has said they're open to changes in terms of the Price-Setting Panel and, as we know, FFAW had their challenges with it as well, so what changes does the minister see coming to help improve this process, or is the process, right now, not broken and sufficient?

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

No, I'd like to think, and as all Members who sit here, we are here to try to see ways forward that work better for everybody. Again, as mentioned, meeting with each stakeholder and I look forward to meeting earlier this year, obviously, with the election last year and just jumping right into the reins of it all, I look forward. There are still open communications. It's fair to say that we're here to work together and that's what we'll continue to do.

Thank you.

J. KORAB: Thank you.

Under 4.1.03, Labour Standards, Salaries were budgeted at \$682,000 but the revised spend came in at \$573,000, so there's an underspend of about \$100,000. I was wondering what the reason for the under spend is?

CHAIR: John Cowan.

J. COWAN: The decrease is due to a short-term temporary vacancy in the program and policy development specialist position and a clerk stenographer III position, and some to do with staff as well who had lower steps when they came in. That was a reduction of \$109,000.

J. KORAB: Well, that answers my second question; you gave the position. Thank you.

Has the department seen an increase in labour standards complaints over the last year?

D. STRICKLAND: The requests for service for '25-'26 were 4,083; the prior year it was 4,938. So, yes, there has been a decrease.

J. KORAB: Are there staffing pressures affecting complaint investigation timelines?

D. STRICKLAND: Their current active caseload is close to 30 files, which is normal for this group historically.

J. KORAB: Okay, good.

What is the current timeline for resolving labour standard complaints? I know it varies, but –

D. STRICKLAND: I don't have that currently. I know that, compared to historical, it doesn't appear to be that much different.

J. KORAB: Okay, perfect.

That's good for me right now.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Under 4.1.01, Labour Relations, how many new unions or bargaining units have been certified in the previous year, and how many first collective agreements have been successfully negotiated?

D. STRICKLAND: Certification of bargaining units falls under the Labour Relations Board. In '25-'26, there were 82 files considered by the board and 28 of those were with regard to representation votes.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

What were the total number of strikes and lockouts in this province in the previous year, and do they represent an increase or decrease from last year?

D. STRICKLAND: In '25-'26 there was one strike, in '24-'25 there were zero and in '23-'24 there were two.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Have any changes been considered to the union certification process? Is your government committed to reinstating card certification?

D. STRICKLAND: We've had discussions with our stakeholders and we're hoping to hear their thoughts on potential changes to legislation.

We have to keep in mind that we do have to balance the interests of both our employer and employee stakeholders. We'll continue to listen to what our stakeholders have to say about it.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Will the department consider tabling anti-scab legislation in the House, especially now that there is federal legislation on the issue?

D. STRICKLAND: That's another issue that we've been discussing with our stakeholders. We are, again, open to discussing changes to legislation with our stakeholders and will continue to have those conversations.

S. O'LEARY: Wonderful, because that would be a good conversation and something we'd love to support.

Thank you.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour has been calling for an expansive modernization and overhaul of the labour relations legislation in this province. Is this something that the department has been working on?

D. STRICKLAND: When it comes to review of legislation, we're constantly reviewing what's ongoing in other jurisdictions in potential changes to legislation.

Our most recent amendments were in 2024 with regard to long-term illness and organ donation leave. We made some changes to reservist leave. We made some changes to the provision of sick notes. We're constantly looking for improvements to current legislation on behalf of the employees and employers in the workplaces.

S. O'LEARY: Okay. Thank you.

Under 4.1.03, Labour Standards, how far away is the implementation of the Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Regulations?

I'd certainly like to put a little asterisk to the gender pay equity issue. I know that, again, learning in my new role as a new MHA, of course, gender equity is embedded, but we're still not there yet is what I'm kind of getting at. The overall question is about how far we are from the pay equity and transparency regulations.

D. STRICKLAND: We're continuing to work with Women and Gender Equality; they're the lead for the *Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act*.

We had commenced consultations in the summer with the new government and there was a commitment to review the *Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act*. We'll work with WGE as needed as things develop from that review.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

To follow up on that, it's their lead that brings you to the table in that discussion, is that correct?

D. STRICKLAND: Yes.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, thank you. I just wanted to be sure who's sat at the helm.

Has any further consideration been given to bringing in paid sick leave for all employees in this province? If so, what hurdles do you see in going from design to implementation of such a decision?

D. STRICKLAND: There have been discussions with other jurisdictions with regard to their experiences with paid sick leave. We'll be continuing to monitor implementation in those jurisdictions. We are willing to have those conversations with our stakeholders.

Currently, we offer seven days of unpaid sick days, which is similar to other jurisdictions in the country, and we'll continue to review improvements.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Is there any review of the *Labour Standards Act* planned for the coming year?

D. STRICKLAND: Within the coming year, we will be conducting a review of the minimum wage regulations and legislation. That review is due to commence at the end of this year. It's every two years that we have to do that review, and that would be our next significant review of that legislation.

S. O'LEARY: Wonderful.

So the follow-up question that I had, certainly, was about any meaningful increases to the minimum wage in the coming year; so, obviously, that would be a part of that review process. Is that correct?

D. STRICKLAND: Correct.

S. O'LEARY: Okay. Thank you.

Under 4.2.01, Labour Relations Board, how many positions are there currently and how many of those are vacant?

D. STRICKLAND: Currently we are fully staffed.

In terms of the administrative side, there's a CEO, a deputy CEO, two Labour Relations Board officers and two administrative positions. There is also the adjudicative side, which is the board members, and all of the board members are currently in place.

S. O'LEARY: Wonderful. Thank you.

What is the average time for a case to get to a decision of the Labour Relations Board?

D. STRICKLAND: I don't currently have that figure for you but would be happy to provide it.

S. O'LEARY: I'd appreciate that, thank you.

How many conciliation, mediation and arbitration processes were undertaken in the previous year?

D. STRICKLAND: In '25-'26, there were 27 new conciliation requests and 13 carried forward from the previous year, for a total of 40. Twenty-nine of those are settled.

S. O'LEARY: I'm sorry, how many settled?

D. STRICKLAND: Twenty-nine.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

That's it for me, Chair.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

If we could start with Labour Relations, I'm wondering if the department could provide an overview of what upcoming union negotiations you're getting ready for. Maybe I've misunderstood that; this is not an area of expertise of mine. Does Labour Relations do all of the union negotiations?

D. STRICKLAND: We do the negotiations for those that we're requested to participate.

S. STOODLEY: Okay.

CHAIR: Dennis, I'll just ask that when you're about to give an answer, you just wave you hand.

D. STRICKLAND: Okay.

CHAIR: It'll put your tally light on a little bit quicker is all.

S. STOODLEY: Okay, thank you. That was very helpful.

If we go to 4.1.02, the Standing Fish Price Setting Panel, we see Professional Services was budgeted at \$77,000, but revised spending came in at \$47,000. I'm just wondering if you could provide an overview of what types of professional services this panel undertakes and, I guess, why the underspend in this area.

D. STRICKLAND: Just give me one second, please.

J. COWAN: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes John Cowan.

J. COWAN: It says the decrease reflects lower panel member fees.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

So the panel members pay fees to the Fish Price Setting Panel?

D. STRICKLAND: The fees are in relation to a reimbursement for panel member attendance at hearings.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

I'm wondering if you can give an update on how other species are progressing through the panel and what other species are going through the panel and how those are progressing, please.

D. STRICKLAND: The scheduled negotiations for this year are posted and publicly available. Currently, they've gone through spring shrimp, cod, lobster, crab and turbot. The remaining schedule for the additional species are posted. There are 14 species that will be involved in collective bargaining for.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

Earlier in the Estimates, it was mentioned that there was a change to allow the price to be considered. Was that a change for all species?

D. STRICKLAND: That change was with respect to crab.

S. STOODLEY: Okay, thank you very much.

In terms of this panel and the legislation that they operate within, it says here the *Fishing Industry Collective Bargaining Act*. Is that the only act and regulations that the Fish Price Setting Panel works within?

D. STRICKLAND: That is correct.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

I'm going to move to – this might be still in Labour Standards. In terms of complaints or arbitrations, mediations that the Labour Standards Division gets involved in, I'm wondering if you're seeing any trends or changes in issues that are arising in the labour landscape in Newfoundland and Labrador.

D. STRICKLAND: In terms of Labour Standards, the types of complaints or inquiries that are received, they are tracked. I don't have the breakdown with me now, but I can provide it. Typically, if there's new legislation, that tends to generate more interest from employees. Within the past year, there was more interest in the long-term illness organ donation leave.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

In terms of staffing pressures and the timeliness of labour dispute resolutions, I'm wondering if you have information on the timeline of working with the department in terms of getting a resolution and getting any arbitration or mediation and if you're able to fulfill the demands of the public within a reasonable time frame.

D. STRICKLAND: In terms of the Labour Relations Division, they had one vacancy. I think that was your question. The Labour Relations Division did have one vacancy of a conciliation officer. That position has been filled but it hasn't impacted their ability to service the files that have been received.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

That concludes my questions for this section.

CHAIR: Seeing no further questions for this subhead, I now ask the Clerk to recall the subhead.

CLERK: 4.1.01 to 4.2.01 inclusive, Labour.

CHAIR: Shall 4.1.01 to 4.2.01 inclusive, Labour, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion is carried.

On motion, subheads 4.1.01 to 4.2.01 carried.

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

CLERK: 5.1.01, Workers' Compensation Independent Review Board.

CHAIR: Shall 5.1.01, Workers' Compensation Independent Review Board, carry?

I call on the hon. Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

Wondering if the department are working on any changes to the legislation currently in terms of the Workers' Compensation Independent Review Board.

D. STRICKLAND: Under the legislation, there's a requirement to conduct a review of the workers' compensation act every five years. This year, we'll be conducting a review of the workers' compensation system and that would include the Workers' Compensation Independent Review Board.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I heard this second-hand, but I understand the Board of Trade made a submission that MHAs should not be allowed to represent constituents for independent reviews of workplace compensation external appeals. Wondering if you can speak to that, if that would be in a work plan or if the government intends to make that change.

D. STRICKLAND: I'm not familiar with that issue. I'm happy to check in with my colleagues to see what that issue actually is.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

We notice that Transportation and Communications was budgeted at \$62,000 but revised spending came in at \$25,000. Just wondering why those were lower and why there's no change in the 2026-2027 Estimate amount.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Services.

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

The decrease reflects a lower requirement of travel and telecommunication expenses.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

Professional Services were budgeted at \$75,000 and we noticed that spending was only \$5,000, which is fine. I'm wondering if you can give an outline of what usually goes into Professional Services that the Workers' Compensation Independent Review Board would incur under this line item. Was there anything that did not proceed as planned?

D. STRICKLAND: The lower amount that you're seeing for this year is due to lower legal fees as a result of timing of the legal fees.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

I'm wondering if you could give us information on, I guess, the wait time, the volume for external appeals and how that has changed. With what the wait time is, is the board able to meet the needs of workers?

D. STRICKLAND: Their decisions are legislatively required to be issued 60 days after a hearing. They've reduced the time to get to a hearing out to 53 days. Generally, eight months from application to a hearing.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

Do they have any vacancies currently, and, I guess, are they being posted or is the team working on resolving those?

D. STRICKLAND: They had vacancies in administrative positions; a lot of those were filled in the fall of last year. Currently, they have a vacancy for a full-time review commissioner, and they're actively engaged in a recruitment process for that position.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

I understand that there was an occupational health and safety clinic that was a recommendation of the Health Accord. I think that might have already been asked; I think the answer was that's WorkplaceNL, but I want to ask to just make sure. Is that something that would fall under this Review Board?

CHAIR: Gail Boland.

G. BOLAND: The occupational health and safety clinics was a recommendation out of the Accord, as well as the 2019 Statutory Review, where they had requested a feasibility study.

That is under the mandate of WorkplaceNL. From what I understand, WorkplaceNL has been engaged with NLH Services and are looking at their current family care model approach to meet that OHS clinic need.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

I don't have any further questions. I do just want to have a statement. I don't know this for certain, but I do understand that the Board of Trade made a submission to – I don't know who that might have been, whether it was the board, whether it was the review or whether it was the department, that MHAs should not be able to represent injured workers for external appeals. I just want to say definitively that I very, very strongly disagree with that.

I fundamentally believe that we represent constituents and workers. It would be a significant disadvantage to injured workers in Newfoundland and Labrador if their MHAs could not duly represent them as part of this quasi judicial board. I just want to be very clear about that.

I guess, if that comes across anyone's desk for review or consideration, I just want everyone to know how I personally feel about that and there has been very little I will do to stop that change from happening. That is a very important part of my job as an MHA, representing injured workers at appeal, and I strongly believe that would be a wrong change to make. I'm confident to say that if that legislative change is brought forward, we would filibuster it.

Anyway, I just wanted to put that on the record.

Thank you very much.

Those are all of my questions.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

I, too, would like to concur with my colleague, the MHA for Mount Scio, that if indeed this is a discussion that is happening, that really does veer away from the exact role that we, as elected Members, have and the rights of the Member of the House of Assembly to act upon their constituents. I completely concur. Thank you, MHA Stoodley.

On the tail end here now, 5.1.01, Workers' Compensation Independent Review Board, have you considered expanding worker representation in WorkplaceNL?

D. STRICKLAND: We are about to commence a review of the workers' compensation system. I would anticipate that would be one of the topics of consideration for the committee.

S. O'LEARY: Wonderful, because under the adage about nothing about us, without us, it certainly would be very fitting for sure. Thank you.

Will your government commit to raising the income replacement rate from 85 per cent to 90 per cent?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Services.

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

Just for clarification, to both MHAs' comments about previous, I serve under fact and not second-hand or third-hand news. The fact is that nothing has come across my desk on such an ask. If it did, it would be open and transparent, obviously. But I just want to set that record straight.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

M. GOOSNEY: As for your other question, that's part of the review. That's something we're looking into. We've had many discussions and I look forward to having further discussions to see where we're going to go with that.

Thank you, Chair.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

This will be my final question, Chair. Would we be able to get a breakdown of the number of people receiving workers' compensation by industry?

D. STRICKLAND: I may stand corrected, but I think there might be a breakdown in the most recent annual report for WorkplaceNL. I know that they are on a calendar year for their annual report. I suspect that it is going to be in that report, but if not, I will certainly reach out and try to get that information for you.

S. O'LEARY: Wonderful, thank you.

Thank you, Chair. In my final comments, I want to just say thank you. That was my final question. Thank you for the exchange. It really is an educational process for us all.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

I did have one other question. I do want to say thank you to everyone for answering the questions. We were trying to budget our time to make sure that we had enough time to get to everything. So we seem to be a bit ahead of schedule but that's okay.

I did remember a question of another heading. I would appreciate the department's consideration, but I was wondering what the progress is on the building accessibility regulations and if we expect those to be published in the Gazette anytime soon.

CHAIR: That question can be answered with leave because we have finished that subhead. But you can answer anyway.

G. BOLAND: In consultation with our Buildings Accessibility Advisory Board, we did a line-by-line review of the regulations. We've been working with Legislative Counsel to draft some new regulations, and in 2021, this government signed an agreement with all other provinces and territories whereby we agreed to adopt the National Building Code as well as other construction codes.

The new version of the National Building Code came out in December 2025, so a review of that and comparison to our new regulations also had to be completed to inform the drafted regulations. So that's a work in progress.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

CHAIR: That's good?

Seeing no further questions, I'll ask the Clerk to recall the subhead.

CLERK: 5.1.01, Workers' Compensation Independent Review Board.

CHAIR: Shall 5.1.01, Workers' Compensation Independent Review Board, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

On motion, subhead 5.1.01 carried.

CHAIR: All of the subheads have been called, I'll now ask the Clerk to call the total.

CLERK: Total, Department of Government Services.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

On motion, Department of Government Services, total heads, carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the Estimates of the Department of Government Services carried?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Department Government Services carried without amendment.

CHAIR: I just want to thank the minister, departmental officials and the Committee for your attendance. This was a really great exchange, actually. Very fulsome answers and very good questions, I'll be honest. It's a very important department for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, so I appreciate the exchange this morning.

The next meeting for this Committee is Friday, May 22, at 9 a.m. to consider the Estimates of the Department of Finance, the Public Service Commission and the Consolidated Fund Services.

I ask for a mover for adjournment.

J. MCKENNA: So moved.

CHAIR: So moved by the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, the Committee adjourned.