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**Proceedings of the Standing Committee on
Resources**

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Department of Environment and Climate Change

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Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

RESOURCE COMMITTEE

Department of Environment and Climate Change

Chair: Perry Trimper, MHA

Vice-Chair: Craig Pardy, MHA

Members: Pleaman Forsey, MHA
Jordan Brown, MHA
Lucy Stoyles, MHA
Sherry Gambin-Walsh, MHA
Jamie Korab, MHA

Clerk of the Committee: Evan Beazley (A)

Appearing:

Department of Environment and Climate Change

Hon. Lisa Dempster, MHA, Minister
Valerie Snow, Deputy Minister
Fiona Ellis, Assistant Deputy Minister, Labour
Tara Kelly, Assistant Deputy Minister, Environment
Dr. Susan Squires, Assistant Deputy Minister, Climate Change
Jennifer Torrance, Departmental Controller
Victoria Barbour, Director of Communications
Randy Simms, Executive Assistant

Also Present

Hon. Paul Pike, MHA, Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development
Hon. Elvis Loveless, MHA, Minister of Digital Government and Service NL
Eileen Anderson, Government Members' Caucus
Ashley Politi, Official Opposition Caucus
Steven Kent, Third Party Caucus

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Paul Pike, MHA for Burin - Grand Bank, substitutes for Sherry Gambin-Walsh, MHA for Placentia - St. Mary's.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Elvis Loveless, MHA for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, substitutes for Lucy Stoyles, MHA for Mount Pearl North.

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

CHAIR (Trimper): Okay, here we go. Welcome to the budget Estimates for Department of Environment and Climate Change.

First of all, I am going to call the meeting to order and I'm going to reach out – I know we have a few colleagues that aren't here, but I am just checking, first of all, on the substitutions – and they're walking in behind me, I sense. One is here now.

Anyway, the substitutions for this evening are going to be this gentleman here for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune who is replacing the Member for Mount Pearl North. I have the Member for Bonavista. I have the Member for Exploits. I have the Member for Labrador West. I'm the Member for Lake Melville and we're still waiting on this gentleman here, the Member for Waterford Valley. That leaves one more. I'll recognize him – no, that's not him.

Okay – you are tardy. We have everyone present, and I have now the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

Thank you, everyone.

Next, just some housekeeping orders. Everybody, I think, has done this before. We have three hours set aside. At about an hour and a half, I propose we'll stop for that, kind of, break thing for 10 minutes. Does that sound all right? If anybody has to go sooner, just let me know.

Just some rules with Broadcast. We are live now. When you go to speak, if it's not sort of a regular exchange back and forth, usually between the minister or one of her officials and whoever is doing the questioning, we may have to do a little wave and the Broadcast will pick that up. I'll also direct Broadcast to who's going to speak. They can't always see the nuances in the room. I'll do that.

Always wait for the tally light to come on and then go ahead and say your name and position. If you're in a regular interaction back and forth, you don't need to repeat but maybe the start of each sequence. At least that would be helpful.

I ask you not to adjust the chairs. I'm not sure why. We have adjustable features on our chairs. We should take advantage of it. Anyway, water coolers in the corner of the Chamber.

We do not have any unaffiliated Members here this evening.

I will now turn to the Resource Committee to introduce themselves. I'll start with the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Craig Pardy, MHA for the District of Bonavista and filling in for MHA Evans.

A. POLITI: Ashley Politi, Opposition staff.

P. FORSEY: Pleaman Forsey, MHA, Exploits.

J. BROWN: Jordan Brown, MHA for Labrador West.

S. KENT: Steven Kent, Research Assistant for the Third Party Office.

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

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

P. PIKE: Paul Pike, MHA, Burin - Grand Bank.

CHAIR: And in the back.

E. ANDERSON: Eileen Anderson, GMO.

CHAIR: Thank you.

I now ask the minister and her team to introduce themselves.

T. KELLY: Tara Kelly, ADM for Environment Branch.

S. SQUIRES: Susan Squires, Assistant Deputy Minister for the Climate Change Branch.

L. DEMPSTER: Lisa Dempster, Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

V. SNOW: Valerie Snow, Deputy Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

J. TORRAVILLE: Jennifer Torraville, Departmental Controller.

F. ELLIS: Fiona Ellis, ADM of Labour.

R. SIMMS: Randy Simms, EA to the minister.

V. BARBOUR: Victoria Barbour, Director of Communications.

CHAIR: Right on, thank you everyone.

I'm sure you stayed up all night long reading the minutes from the previous meeting. I'm going to ask if there are any errors or omissions. We all studied that thoroughly, I'm sure.

I'll seek for someone to move that they are approved.

C. PARDY: So moved.

CHAIR: The Member for Bonavista; seconded by the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

The minutes are approved.

Thank you very much.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

CHAIR: Okay we are ready to go.

I'll ask my Clerk, comrade here, he will call each subhead and we'll commence.

CLERK (Beazley): For the Department of Environment and Climate Change, 1.1.01 to 1.2.01 inclusive, Executive and Support Services.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 through to 1.2.01 carry?

The hon. the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Would you like to say a few words?

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you very much, Chair.

Good evening, everyone.

I'll just make a few comments very, very briefly. I want to say welcome to Estimates. For anyone who don't know, I'm the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Minister Responsible for Labour, which includes Labour Relations and the Labour Standards Division. Also responsible for Labour Relations Board and Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Review Division, both of which are subject to the Estimates for this department.

The Environment Branch focuses on supporting environmental sustainability by protecting and managing water resources, preventing pollution and coordinating environmental estimates. The Climate Change Branch focuses on developing strategy, policy, research analysis and initiatives related to climate change, adaptation and mitigation, as well as protection of natural areas.

The Labour Relations Division serves those employees and employers within a unionized environment. They provide programming and support for collective agreements, dispute resolution, appointment of arbitrators and workplace training. The Labour Standards Division administers the province's *Labour Standards Act* and regulations, which mandates minimum terms and conditions of employment.

Continuing our commitment to address Environment and Climate Change, our commitment to safeguard our environment and our residents remains strong. I'll just reference half a dozen bullets from *Budget 2025*: \$40 million towards continuing the Oil to Electric Rebate Program, the Climate Change Challenge Fund and the Climate Change Adaptation initiatives; \$3.7 million for electric vehicle rebates and infrastructure; \$2 million to support provincial waste management; \$680,000 to enhance flood monitoring and alerting; \$508,000 for drinking water and improvements initiative; and \$100,000 for waste water monitoring.

The Climate Change Challenge Fund, that we announced in February, \$12 million, it just closed on the 11th, and we've had a fantastic uptake with more than 60 applications. We'll be going through those in the near future, but basically the Climate Change Challenge Fund aims to improve energy efficiency, create economic growth and effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

That process was open – many of you would be familiar – to the private sector, not-for-profit organizations, public sector bodies or boards, municipal governments and Indigenous governments to undertake greenhouse gas emission reduction projects in our province.

Three or four highlights from our 2024-'25 fiscal: In our Climate Change Action Plans, we have implemented all 45 actions in the 2019 to 2024 Climate Change Action Plan. Those were with a focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, stimulating clean innovation and growth and building resilience to climate change impacts.

Our greenhouse gas emissions are at our lowest levels since 1995. We are currently working on – well, they're completed now – two new Climate Change Action Plans for '25-'30 and, this year, we did two separate ones. One focused on mitigation and one on adaptation.

We have strengthened our job-protected leave. We amended the *Labour Standards Act* to increase unpaid job-protected leave for long-term illness, long-term injury or organ donation and updated leave provisions for reservists.

Workers now have access to up to 27 weeks per year of job-protected leave for long-term illness, long-term injury or organ donation, or 104 weeks if an illness or injury is the result of a criminal offence. The amendments also updated the province's reservists leave provisions to align with protections offered in other jurisdictions, providing reservists with greater access to training and development opportunities and employers with increased certainty of the duration of the leave.

Removal of sick note requirements: We amended the *Labour Standards Act*, removing the requirement for employees to provide employers with sick notes after three consecutive days of sick leave. The whole premise behind that was that we

wanted to ease the administrative burden for physicians and nurse practitioners, minimize unnecessary use of emergency departments, reduce financial strain on employees and help prevent the spread of infectious diseases to vulnerable populations. This amendment that we brought in – and I know that my colleagues here are familiar – aligns with five other jurisdictions that do not require sick notes.

Our Electric Vehicle Rebate Program, which encourages drivers to switch to an electric vehicle, has seen tremendous success. We have experienced more than 1,000 per cent growth and we are seeing two new vehicles on our roadways in our province every day. This success is certainly supported by a growing network of electric vehicle charging stations.

Two more quick points. I want to mention our Oil to Electric Rebate Program which encourages residents to switch from oil to electric heat. By making the switch, homeowners support a greener future for our province while reducing the cost of their energy bill. To date, a total of 5,026 homes or approximately 10 per cent of all fuel-heated homes in the province have availed of the rebates to upgrade their energy source.

I want to close by speaking for a moment about water and waste water management, which is something, if you represent rural, is near and dear to my heart. The Department of Environment and Climate Change continues to ensure Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have access to clean, safe water. In '23-'24, ECC provided additional funding for two new regional water and waste water operators to bring the complement to five. These regional operators work out of the regional services board in co-operation with our staff. As a result, capacity has been added to address municipal water and waste water issues in the Burin and the Western and Northern Peninsula regions.

These regional operators are in addition to the municipal operator training program that the department delivers which provides hands-on and classroom-style training to operators throughout the province. We've recently been provided a new mobile training unit, which will enable us to continue to deliver this fantastic service.

Recently, I had the opportunity to join water and waste water operators at a provincial workshop in Gander. There was about 300-plus people there and it really was a privilege for me to deliver certificates and awards to those folks around our province who are really down in the trenches doing important work. No one really notices the value of what they do until something goes wrong in the community and then everybody is looking for them.

My final note is it was also noted by the speakers at the workshop how unique our approach has been in this province in providing hands-on training with the use of regional staff and our mobile training unit.

So there are a lot of things happening in this somewhat large department I would say and I look forward to taking questions and engaging in some dialogue from my colleagues.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

I'll start now with the representative from the Official Opposition, 10 minutes, over to the Third Party, and we'll go back and forth.

Seeing nobody from the unaffiliated members, that's how we'll proceed until you guys have exhausted and the subheading is approved and we'll move on to the next one.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Chair.

I just want to clarify that I was asked going into Finance Estimates this morning if I could take the Estimates here tonight, because Ms. Evans is not feeling well. I knew that, looking at her yesterday, that she really wasn't feeling well, but obviously worse today. Her with her environmental science background and me without, but anyway I shall do the best I possibly could.

L. DEMPSTER: We can speak about the fishery, if you'd rather.

C. PARDY: I could.

Just on sections 1.1.01 and 1.2.01, before we get into the Environmental Management, and I'm going to go through a few line items there I'll ask shortly. But just following up on your preamble that you gave us an overview, Minister, \$40 million towards oil to electric, which is a phenomenal program, I know we had discussions in the House about entertaining bringing in not-for-profits that would be burning oil in our rural communities. I was hopeful that we may have seen that. I don't know if you have done some research on that and had costed it out or what would be the reason, if you did entertain it, that we don't have it?

CHAIR: Over to the minister.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

So in terms of eligibility for non-profit groups, private sector municipalities, Indigenous governments, the Climate Change Challenge Fund that we announced in February of \$12 million, those non-profit organizations were eligible to apply. There was a whole gamut of things that were eligible under that program in terms of how they could work towards making their facilities, establishments, buildings, whatever you want to call it, more energy efficient.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Good. Thank you very much.

On your second point you had mentioned, I think in the budget, \$4 million for the EV Rebate Program. I'm just wondering, hybrids are not part of that program.

OFFICIAL: They are.

C. PARDY: They are? Good.

Can you also quantify with the numbers – I know you said there was 1,000 per cent uptick on electric vehicles, two new ones each day, but do you have some tangible data that I can have, or you can share? That's good news, by the way.

L. DEMPSTER: Lots of good news in happening in Environment and Climate Change.

Thank you for the questions. So the total number in rebates was \$1.6 million for 768 electric vehicle rebates. That was slightly higher than the 740 in '23-'24.

C. PARDY: So 740 in '23-'24?

L. DEMPSTER: Yes.

C. PARDY: And '24-'25 was 768?

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, and in --

CHAIR: Go ahead, Minister.

I'm just going to let you guys move back and forth.

C. PARDY: Yes.

I'm just wondering where we get the 1,000 per cent growth there. I don't know if I'm missing that or –

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: The 1,000 per cent growth comes from the first year of the program, which I'm going to turn over to my

colleague, Susan, who will have data year on year but when we're talking about the 1,000 per cent growth, it's over the life of the EV incentive program.

Susan, you probably have it.

CHAIR: Assistant deputy minister.

S. SQUIRES: Thank you.

Yes, 2018 was when we started to see the first EVs come into the province. Then shortly after that we had our first EV Rebate Program. So we're seeing more and more – we're anticipating another over 800 rebates this year, '25-'26, for the program as well.

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

I also want to add that in '25-'26, of the \$3.7 million for the electric vehicle rebates and charging stations, we are investing another \$1.9 million for the installation of ultra-fast chargers. The installation of 10 ultra-fast and two fast electric vehicle chargers, a project that we're working with electrical utilities on. We've had a long day already.

C. PARDY: So year over year from '23-'24 to '24-'25, we had 24 electric vehicles come on board. Am I right with the numbers – 740 in '23-'24, 768 in '24-'25?

CHAIR: Dr. Squires.

S. SQUIRES: In 2021-2022, we would have had 115. So where you're seeing 1,000 per cent growth is where we measure from the start, which we're saying 2018 which we saw our first few vehicles.

C. PARDY: Okay.

S. SQUIRES: By 2021, we had 115 and in 2022, we had 374 and now we're moving, you know, well north of 700 and this year we're hoping 800. So you are seeing a little bit of a levelling off in the last few years but

we're still seeing that upward trend of growth.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: That's good.

Just some line item now in the Minister's Office and the Executive Support. I'll ask about the variance in the Salaries and if it's just adjustments due to the collective agreement and there's not a large discrepancy, I'll move on throughout the Estimates. Just looking at the small variance there.

L. DEMPSTER: Are you in 1?

C. PARDY: Oh, sorry – 01, Salaries.

L. DEMPSTER: Yes.

C. PARDY: 1.1.01.01.

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, that would be the increase reflects the forecast of the salary increases which would have been across each department. You will see a little bit of a revised there in 2, and that's just lower minister car allowance.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Okay.

Can you explain the nature of the provincial revenue in 1.2.01.02, Revenue - Provincial.

L. DEMPSTER: Salary cost recovery from the MMSB's CEO fits in there. Because MMSB actually falls under us, as well, even though they have a fair bit of their own autonomy and their own mandate and things.

C. PARDY: Are you permitted to share a little bit more information on what salary cost recovery would be in that situation?

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: The cost recovery, that line item, refers to the salary of the CEO of MMSB. That's the cost recovery. There's only one item on there.

C. PARDY: Okay.

I just noticed when you had budgeted last year, so, really, you're about \$400,000 over from the budgeted amount.

Oh no, good. Rewind.

Thank you.

Environmental Management, 2.1.01.

CHAIR: We're not in that heading right there.

C. PARDY: Okay.

That's good for me.

CHAIR: That's good for you?

Okay, we'll go to the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

How many positions are currently in the department and how many vacancies are currently in the department?

L. DEMPSTER: Right now, we have 190 positions and 23 are vacant.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Minister.

Can we get an update on the Net-Zero Advisory Council and the work that is doing?

CHAIR: The hon. the minister.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

Sure. I'll start and then I'll look to my deputy who may want to fill in, but they've done a very heavy lift, some incredible work and, maybe January, I met with them as they were cluing up and we have a report. They brought forward a number of recommendations from their work and we're currently reviewing those recommendations right now. I don't know if I've missed anything there.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: That was my final question under this subhead.

CHAIR: That's it?

J. BROWN: Yes.

Thank you, Chair.

Shall 1.1.01 through to 1.2.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 1.2.01 carried.

CHAIR: Next subheading, please.

CLERK: 2.1.01 to 2.3.01 inclusive, Environment.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 through 2.3.01 carry?

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Chair.

I come from the Bonavista Peninsula where we don't have the regional waste. It hasn't arrived, even though we've had anticipation probably as long as four, five years ago that

it was coming each year. Is there any expectation on that or what would the delay be, knowing that many of those local dumpsites are beyond capacity?

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you.

I really appreciate your question, and we are not completely yet where we want to be obviously until we've addressed this right across the province, but I would be remiss sitting here surrounded by my hard-working team if I didn't say that good progress has been made in many areas in relation to the strategy.

As I was reading some of this the other night, and I'll just share it for the purpose of *Hansard*, 72 per cent of waste disposal sites have been closed since our Provincial Solid Waste Management Strategy was launched; 85 per cent of open burning and incineration activity have ceased; and 83 per cent of the provincial population have access to new waste management services, including waste diversion programs.

I don't know how detailed you want me to get. I'm just looking for your region here on my note. I'm not seeing it, but we're certainly looking and communicating with other regions that aren't there yet. I did want to say that 72 per cent of the waste disposal sites in the province have been closed. I don't know if you want to add to that or –

OFFICIAL: (Inaudible.)

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, and I want to say to the hon. Member across the way that in the budget that we just brought down we have another \$2 million for provincial waste management initiatives. That's one of the things that we recognized over the last few months, still getting calls from certain unaddressed areas and we did meet.

So that money was approved through the budgetary process to try and address some

of that. We continue to engage with municipalities and things like that.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Okay.

So there's no plans to remediate more waste sites in the province with this \$2 million?

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: We will certainly continue to work to address – and there's been many conversations and we continue to engage with municipalities, but one of the things we don't want to do is, in this era where we talk about every day here in this House the increase in the cost of living and things, we haven't wanted to take drastic measures to make it difficult for people as well.

Because we can go in and put those services in place, and historically how they've happened is then the residents share the burden of that. Like, for example, in the region I represent, we've done a study and we've found that one waste disposal site is the best option. It hasn't moved, even though government would pay for all of the needed infrastructure and things upfront. The continued operation would be borne by the residents, and it would be well over \$300 per household cost.

So we're just looking. We're not stopped. We're continuing to review this and to see what is the best way forward to address the other 28 per cent. I'm sure I missed something, so I'm going to look to my deputy. Do you want to add anything?

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: The only thing I would add is that the funding of these sorts of initiatives are very much demand driven, too. So we would rely on communities, regional service

boards as well, to be interested to come towards us with proposals.

I don't know, Tara, if you had anything you wanted to add to that in terms of specific regions.

T. KELLY: No, there are ongoing discussions, always, with the various regions and with the regions that are outside of the host region. So, for example, your Coast of Bays and Bonavista on the best way for them to bring forward, like the minister said, affordability is a big issue for people, so we're always looking at that. Then, of course, the regional service board, the governance model and the way that's set up also sits with Municipal Affairs, so we're in discussions with them as well as to how to move forward with this.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Before I move on, you referenced the affordability and \$300 per household. But if we were going to remediate a dumpsite, will it be cost incurred on those that operate that dumpsite, or are you just talking generally, overall?

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you.

So just for clarity, I wouldn't quote the \$300 per household anywhere because I was just giving an example of my own district in Southern Labrador, in Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair. And you have to factor in the distance that communities are apart and things like that, and the cost would have been relatively high. Cost per household for waste management initiatives, definitely I'm sure, would vary because of all those different factors.

C. PARDY: Good, thank you.

Do you have an average general cost for remediation of a particular dumpsite? I know there are a lot of variables, but just an average cost.

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: I don't think we have that information with us but we can certainly follow up with some examples of what remediation costs were for landfills that we're closed, if that would be helpful.

C. PARDY: Thank you very much.

I know in the past people threw around \$1 million to remediate a site and that didn't seem too outlandish knowing what work needed to be done.

Just wondering, at one point in time back some time ago, we talked about contaminated sites. There were at the time, I think, in the discussion, some contaminated sites remaining in the province. I think the title then might have been in the impacted sites liability assessment.

L. DEMPSTER: Are you referring to the military sites? Oh, impacted, yes, right. I went somewhere else.

The impacted liability sites assessment program, ECC maintains a registry of sites classified under the impacted sites and that program reports annually to the Office of the Comptroller General.

In 2010, the public service accounting board issued section PS3260 new standards for liability for contaminated sites. There's requirement now for compliance with the standards and that began back in 2014. I guess I'll just add that the PS3260 generally applies only to inactive sites that have environmental impacts and generally excludes building demolition and hazardous materials abatement.

I don't know what I've missed there. Don't want to give you too much information. We have a provincial registry of impacted sites and in order to be considered a liability under the PS3260 that I mentioned, there are five criteria that must be met: an environmental standard must exist; contamination must exceed the environmental standard; government must be responsible or accept responsibility for remediation; it must be expected that economic benefits will be given up; a reasonable estimate of the amount can be made.

The process for the '24-'25 has not yet been completed. Information is now being collected from departments before the deadline, which is the end of April, but \$148 million is the liability for the sites – last year, \$148 million.

C. PARDY: What would the number be of contaminated sites in the province for '23-'24?

L. DEMPSTER: Twenty.

C. PARDY: Twenty. Okay, good thing. All right, thank you.

Would the government have any plan or initiative for illegal dumping?

L. DEMPSTER: Yes. I did just have that right here.

V. SNOW: I can answer it.

L. DEMPSTER: Yeah, you can answer. That's fine.

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: Indiscriminate dumping, there is now a pilot programming being launched between MMSB and DGSNL that will pilot the purchase of surveillance equipment to be set up at certain pilot sites as a way of determining when indiscriminate dumping

has occurred, and then, see if that could be used as a basis for legal action.

This is a new initiative. It's just getting under way now. That is one area that is new, but we also did an ongoing partnership with Crime Stoppers over the years which provides a way for citizens to report when they see indiscriminate dumping. We provided funding directly to municipalities to address indiscriminate dumping. We've also, through MMSB, given out funding for individual cleanup projects. In 2022, for example, there was \$500,000 given out for some province-wide community cleanups.

We're also involved in extensive producer responsibility programs that deal with things like electronics, tires and large items that could be involved in indiscriminate dumping, but by having these Extended Producer Responsibility programs, that provides an avenue for waste diversion.

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you. I will just add to that.

When I see the Member sitting behind you there, when we talk about illegal dumping which is an issue right across the province, we kind of share some of that work with Digital Government.

In ECC, we have the responsibility for front-line field inspection, investigation and enforcement activities related to environmental protection, but the environmental protection officers sit in Digital Government. They respond to and investigate incidents of illegal dumping. Then the FFA enforcement officers have also been delegated authority under the EPA to enforce illegal dumping. We're trying to come at it from different angles.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

I'm sorry, your time is up, Sir.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

I know earlier, with my hon. colleague, you mentioned about the Provincial Solid Waste Management program, have any landfills been moved, I guess, into the provincial system in this past year?

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: You're asking if any sites have been closed within the past year?

J. BROWN: Yes.

L. DEMPSTER: No, not to my knowledge.

J. BROWN: No. Okay, perfect. Thank you.

Are there any plans or work being done within the department about processing organic waste and diverting that from landfill sites?

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, and that's been a topic of conversation on a fairly regular basis in the last few months. It's a very, very costly venture, but it is certainly an active conversation and we're having it with MMSB.

I know the city right here in St. John's, they have an interest in that and we would like to move forward with that as well. We are just, again, trying to gather some more information and make sure that we know what we're dealing with when we move forward on that initiative.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Minister.

Of the \$500,000 announced for the Canada Games Sustainability Program, what exactly will be the Sustainability Program? What does that entail?

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: As you rightly note, that was money that was allocated for the upcoming Canada Games. There is a focus this year on trying to make the Games more sustainable.

In partnership with the Canada Games Committee, MMSB will be developing sustainability initiatives to roll out to reduce waste at the event. We can get you more information on what exactly is planned. I'm not sure how far along the specific initiatives are in terms of being laid out, but we can certainly liaise with MMSB to ask them what specifically is planned in terms of the sustainability piece for the games.

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: I would just add – you're so soft-spoken. Sometimes I have trouble hearing you. I should have my pod in.

I also want to add, for the record for those who come behind us, that we are leading the country with this initiative. We are aiming to have the first green Canada Games in the country. My colleague over there is nodding, Waterford Valley, he was there when we did that great announcement.

There is a whole list of initiatives that they are going to undertake that we can get for you, but little things like instead of tables full of – just think about it now, 5,000 athletes coming to the province – cartons of bottled water and things, there will be water coolers placed around in different corners and things like that. It's just not coming to me right now because the announcement was a few months ago, but we can certainly get that for you.

J. BROWN: Perfect. I appreciate that. Thank you, Minister.

The release of the dust monitoring study for Labrador West was in 2017, and there was supposed to be a follow-up study conducted but it hasn't been. When can we expect

movement on that follow-up dust study for Labrador West?

CHAIR: The hon. the minister.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you.

I know this has been really topical for you and I've seen it myself when I've been there. I understand your concern.

The IOC's OHS department sponsored a 2017 silica study, and that focused on mill workers. I think it's important to note that that was not an environmental or community study. IOC and Tacora which operate a total of five community air quality monitoring stations in the Labrador City-Wabush area, the stations are operated by an independent third party and data is regularly reviewed by IOC and Tacora environmental staff.

There are a number of measures that have been put in place. I'll just list four or five measures that have been put in place to manage the dust that IOC and Tacora would incur from their operations: Water trucks in operation on the roads in the mine and other accessible areas, extensive rehabilitation and revegetation programs to reduce dust left off from tailings and mine waste rock dumps and use of other dust suppressants in the areas that are not yet suitable for full revegetation. They maintain – and I'd be interested in hearing your feedback on this for sure, I say to the Member for Labrador West – a feedback line for community members to voice their concerns and highlight dust events.

They work with municipal governments in Lab West, as you may already be aware, and operational planning and activity are adjusted based on this continuous feedback and dialogue whenever possible to limit dust. Any regulatory exceedance in the air quality monitoring results do undergo a full investigation to determine weather conditions, activities on site and town and wind directions to try and identify source,

and mitigation initiatives are then implemented as needed.

We do continue to monitor the situation, but I have my whole team here so I'm interested in definitely hearing from you on if you've seen any improvements.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Minister.

First of all, there is no advertised feedback line for any dustings and for any of their mines. They do not publicly advertise any feedback. So either they're telling you this and it's not being done or they have it hidden away somewhere in the small print so people can't find it, but there is no feedback line. That was a surprise to me.

Two, the community was told that there would be a follow-up study after so many years and this is why we're asking again because it's never been carried out. This is why we ask again; this was promised to them, that there would be a follow-up after so many years of implementation and we're not seeing any improvement in the community with any of the stuff that you've listed there.

If anything, given that we've been in three years of drought, the dust has gotten a lot worse in the community. Anyway, we'll have, I guess, a side conversation about that later, but I do appreciate your time, Minister.

That would be my final question for this subhead.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Any further questions on this subheading from Bonavista?

C. PARDY: Yes, please.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Chair.

I appreciate the detailed response and the planning for the illegal dumping; that's good. Just a couple of quick follow-ups on that.

I'd like to know if possible what the pilot region would be or where the pilots would be? The other one would be, funding provided directly to municipalities and would that have been by application or those expressing concern? Surely, it wouldn't have gone out to every municipality.

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: I think the question about the region for the pilot project would be best directed to DGSNL, as they're in the driver seat on the pilot project with support from MMSB. It's an initiative of that department. So perhaps you can – that would be –

C. PARDY: Minister Elvis Loveless.

V. SNOW: That's right.

For the other question, I am not sure if we have the information with us. I believe Tara might though.

Tara?

CHAIR: Tara Kelly.

T. KELLY: I just wanted to point out that MMSB has a community waste diversion fund. So some of the funding for these clean-ups and various initiatives would come from that. I think you can apply to it.

C. PARDY: Okay. Thank you.

On the line items in 2.1.01, I just wanted to look at the variances in Professional Services, Purchased Services and, basically, just to inquire as to where the revenues are coming from and for what reason.

CHAIR: the minister.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

In eight and nine and 10, there's kind of a blend because it's federal-provincial and there was remediation funding that was not all expended I believe – yes, my deputy is nodding.

Sure, you can put some flesh on that.

V. SNOW: So the funding that appears there in both Professional and Purchased Services adds up to about \$4 million forecasted last year and \$4 million forecasted for the year to come. That is for the cleanup of military sites and, as the minister mentioned, the federal funding that we were expecting has not been received because we are still in negotiations on a cost-sharing agreement with them.

Since the original cost-sharing agreement was drafted, the project price has increased due to inflation. Also, through consultations with Indigenous groups, it's revealed that the scope is probably larger than we had thought. So before the remediation work proceeds, that cost-sharing agreement needs to be put in place. So the work that has taken place is work with consultants to scope the project, to carry out the consultation. So it's preparatory work as opposed to the actual remediation of the sites.

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

I do want to say to the Member that to date the province have spent over \$19 million on work related to the former military sites. It's very, very expensive; \$13 million to partially remediate Hopedale, just as an example, \$3 million to fully remediate the site in St. Anthony and \$3 million for assessment work at Northwest Point, Border Beacon and other places.

In terms of cost, just in Labrador we have eight former military sites that are deemed eligible. It's going to prove to be an

extremely costly venture, which is some of the reason why we're still in negotiation.

C. PARDY: Thank you very much.

I'll ask the perennial question of how many boil-water advisories that we have, and what progress we're making on that, Minister?

L. DEMPSTER: I believe that we have 178.

I will say that significant progress has been made with the province's drinking water safety. As of the 7th of April, there were 178 boil-water advisories and that impacts about 137 communities. The population impacted, if we wanted to look at it that way, about 48,000 people would be impacted. But 89 per cent of Newfoundland and Labradorians have a public water system right now in our province and we will continue to strive for the 11 per cent that don't.

As of April 8, there were 12 non-consumption advisories in place. There are about nine communities affected by those non-consumption advisories. I also want to add as well, one thing I'm learning as I move around the province is we have towns that are on boil-water advisories, not because they don't have the means –

C. PARDY: Oh, I know.

L. DEMPSTER: You know. They just haven't turned on the system, and then there's a cost that comes with that. I won't belabour that point.

C. PARDY: If you had a scattered graph of the locations of these boil-water advisories and the nine non-consumptives, are there some regions of the province that jump out at us if we plot that out? Are there some regions where there's a heavier concentration than others?

L. DEMPSTER: I think across the province it's fair to say that a lot of this stems from

smaller communities, Local Service Districts and those types.

C. PARDY: But all over the province?

L. DEMPSTER: Yes.

C. PARDY: No heavier concentration on the Northern Peninsula than what it would be in the Eastern region or Burin or – no.

L. DEMPSTER: I haven't seen it in any of the things, no.

C. PARDY: Okay.

If we had residents in a said community 15 to 18 families that were using a community well on their own and looking after the distribution from the well to their house and so on, is there any assistance for them that if they ran into some problems with that small or mini water system or distribution system?

There is no MCW, I know that. I just didn't know if there was anything that existed that would be able to assist these people with that.

L. DEMPSTER: Okay, so are you referencing people who would not necessarily be in a Local Service District? You're talking about just a cluster of folks living in some random piece of –?

C. PARDY: I should have mentioned that. The two communities I'm thinking of are unincorporated. I know that if they were in LSDs, then they probably could if they wish to make application for that, but in unincorporated areas, these two communities?

L. DEMPSTER: I have a number of those myself in my riding, in my constituency, but they have to be organized somewhat with some level of community governance and whatever to avail. I know you know that.

C. PARDY: Yes.

Looking at 2.2.01, Water Resources Management, Professional Services, I am wondering if you can shed some light on the variance there? 2.2.01, Water Resources Management.

L. DEMPSTER: 2.2.01, Purchased Services –

C. PARDY: They were probably 1.7 –

L. DEMPSTER: Yes. So that would be the flood risk mapping. You know, I can't even pick out my own printing. Still monitoring – I'm going to have to ask Valerie to speak to that.

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: The decrease that you see there in Professional Services, that is the end of a federal program on flood risk mapping that happened this year, the first phase of that. So that is our budget; it is a cost-sharing program with the federal and provincial government, so that funding is not reflected or not renewed for the 2025-2026 year.

We are still continuing to work with the federal government to see what sort of flood risk mapping monies are available, but the program itself, the federal hazard monitoring program, the first phase of that wrapped up this year, so there is a decrease in the provincial revenue as a result – provincial budgeting, as a result, I should say.

C. PARDY: Didn't we have flood risk mapping prior to that? We did have it on some scale, did we, but not –?

V. SNOW: We do, and we still do flood risk monitoring, but that was a particular discrete program that was \$1.6 million from the provincial government that is not there for this. So it's not that there's no flood risk mapping anymore, or that we didn't do it previously or we won't continue to do some flood risk mapping, but the matched funds for that particular federal program are not in the budget for next year.

C. PARDY: Okay.

Waste water testing: Are we only testing for COVID, or what else are we testing for in our waste water? With large municipalities, everyone is not having their waste water tested. If you can give me some ideas as to who and where.

L. DEMPSTER: I'm going to let the ADM for water take that.

T. KELLY: The waste water monitoring, there are 27 sewer-shed catchment areas from 22 communities. Right now, there's over 50 per cent of the total population in the province is being monitored in this fashion. It's a partnership with Health and Community Services to monitor the incidence of infectious disease, and the things that can be monitored are COVID, influenza, monkey pox, RSV, SARS, avian influenza, and I think there might be some discussion on whether measles can also be monitored in this fashion.

So it's still ongoing, this particular project.

CHAIR: Okay, thank you.

The time has expired for the Member for Bonavista.

Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

I have one more question there. Could we get an update on the environmental assessment process for onshore wind projects and also an update on that subsection itself, on the work that the environmental assessment division is doing right now?

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: I have it here. I have a lot of papers.

I could give you an overview as well that in the '24-'25 fiscal year – because this is a really busy part of the department and every week we sit down with the whole team and go through the EA that's on file, but in the '24-'25 fiscal year the division reviewed 450 project proposals and 82 of the 450 referrals required registration.

I just wanted to make that note, because there's a lot of work goes into that. There are two projects that are currently in the EPR process. When an application comes in, if we're not satisfied with where it is then we have an option to just go EPR, which is the shorter route, or punt it out for a full EIS, which could be two years, could be more.

Two projects currently in EPR is the Argentia Renewables Project and the Great Coastal Trail, which is Parson's Pond to Daniel's Harbour. Seven projects currently in the EIS process are Burin Peninsula Everwind Fuels, that's full EIS; Botwood and Area EVREC Green Energy Project, EIS; Strange Lake Rare Earth Mining; Joyce Lake Direct Shipping Iron Ore; Indian Head Hatchery Expansion; Kami Iron Ore; and the Lewisporte Biomedical Waste Incineration.

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: As the minister mentioned, those are the projects that are in EA. There is one project, the World Energy project, was released from EA with 60 release conditions and other permitting conditions. That is the only project that's been through the EA process, and there's one other project ABO Wind, which, I think, is now Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners, that has not yet registered for EA. So it's not in the process, just the ones that are, are the ones the minister has described.

J. BROWN: Perfect, thank you.

That's my final question.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Chair.

2.3.01.02, Revenue - Provincial, if you can substantiate the amount of money that was allocated in this division. I know it was only a little over 50 per cent spent last year, but it seems like the same amount carried forward – the revenue from the provincial.

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: This one is due to the lower cost recovery revenue from the Grieg project. There were staff assigned to be involved in the EA for Grieg, so that's why this wasn't fully expended this year, but why you'll see the funding is anticipated to be the same again for next year.

C. PARDY: Okay.

If I can give you a hypothetical – not really hypothetical, I'm just going to say hypothetical. We have, through an EA, an RV park was going to be created. They put a structure on that RV park, which is adjacent to a community, and it's no longer a pursuit of the occupants with a dwelling on it, and I guess some transformation of the environment.

Where would the department stand and what would be requested of this particular project?

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: Sorry –

C. PARDY: I know Crown Lands would be a part of it. But I'm just wondering now, would the Environment or – would you be involved when we know that that is no longer a pursuit and, you know, what was done, I don't think there'd be remediation.

V. SNOW: I'm sorry, to clarify what you're saying that it's no longer in use or it's just a structure that's –

C. PARDY: Yeah.

V. SNOW: – just a structure that's been left behind.

C. PARDY: Left behind, and some clearing of land and is no longer a pursuit of the proponents.

V. SNOW: I think if the project itself had gone through the EA process and having a remediation strategy was part of that process, we would have recourse if they did not remediate the site and remove the structure. But if it had not gone through the EA process, say if it didn't trigger an EA through the EPA, then the department wouldn't have a means through the *Environmental Protection Act* to address the structure like that.

C. PARDY: I know it did go through the EA process. If it did, chances are there is a remediation clause in that would be fairly standard for those EA agreements?

V. SNOW: I'm not sure in this case. Tara, did you want to –?

CHAIR: Tara Kelly.

T. KELLY: I think it would depend on when that was. If this was several decades ago, it might not be something –

C. PARDY: Say within the last three years?

T. KELLY: It could possibly. We would have to look it up, though, I think, to figure out which one it was.

C. PARDY: Okay.

I know in the past we talked about – I think we shipped our tires – recycling – off the Island to Quebec. I think they may have

used them in cement or some kind of cement plant for creating energy.

Is there any plan that we would be recycling or utilizing the tires that would be on the Island going forward?

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you.

MMSB is the group that's responsible for the administration of the Used Tire Management Program, and just a couple of little stats on that that I have here: Every year MMSB's Used Tire Management Program keeps upwards of more than 500,000 tires out of landfills and, of course, the benefit of that too is extending the life of those landfills protecting our natural landscapes. Since 2002, more than 8.9 million tires have been diverted. The in-province recycling solution for used tires, that's just some of the benefits of that.

The used tire collection in this province is processed into tire derived aggregate, TDA, and that is done by Coastal Tire Recycling at a facility in CBS. Really, it's interesting that the shredding of those tires is used in a broad range of civil engineering applications, the majority of which occurs in the construction industry for projects such as road building and repair. I had this explained to me a few months ago and I thought it was completely fascinating the tires and what they're going back into: Transportation and Infrastructure, commercial and residential building and landfill design and construction.

I don't know if there's any move to expand on that.

C. PARDY: No, that's fine.

That's good. I wasn't aware of that.

L. DEMPSTER: Okay.

C. PARDY: I appreciate that.

Would there be an initiative for the recycling of glass? I know we are in into recycling, I think, in the community of which I live in out in rural Newfoundland, but the glass is just not part of it and it seems like it's a shame. I don't know if there is any initiative from MMSB or the department?

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: You're right. There has been discussion about glass and some barriers to having glass recycling, but MMSB continues to look at that as well through an Extended Producer Responsibility program. It is something that's still under investigation to see if there's a cost-effective way to do glass recycling in the province.

CHAIR: Tara Kelly.

T. KELLY: I just wanted to add that there is actually a private entity – I think they were talking about it on *Open Line* yesterday, in fact – that is setting up business to recycle glass. That's a business opportunity for a particular company.

C. PARDY: Okay. Good.

On wind development, is there a buffer between these wind turbines? There are none on the Bonavista Peninsula, but I know that I've had two or three constituents who came in my office and wished to discuss it with me. Is there a buffer zone, through legislation, these turbines have between each other and from dwellings?

CHAIR: The hon. the minister.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you.

We haven't imposed as a province, but we do have some proponents like, for example, World Energy that has been released, They implemented their own buffer which was a kilometre.

L. DEMPSTER: Yeah, but that wasn't the province implementing. They just were

comfortable doing that. There was, I guess, some concern and public commentary, and they thought, we'll go – I was going to say we'll go the extra mile, no pun intended – a kilometre.

C. PARDY: Yeah.

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, and my deputy's going to follow up.

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: Thank you.

When we were looking at environmental assessment for wind projects in jurisdictions that had long-standing wind projects, there seems to be a lot of variances in the way that they are handled in terms of buffer zones. Some jurisdictions set up a particular buffer zone like 500 metres or a kilometre or two times the height of the highest turbines, and others require a proponent to outline the proposed buffer based on international standards and their own assessment of the site that they're going to put the wind turbines on.

As the minister mentioned, we do not have a legislated metre or kilometre boundary. We are expecting the proponents to propose a boundary and for that boundary to be backed up by studies on shadow flicker, sound and disturbance to residents to show that the proposed boundary would not pose a threat, danger or inconvenience to residents. We're asking the proponents individually to propose them, and there has to be some logic to what they propose in terms of other jurisdictions and consistency there and they have to be backed up by studies.

That's part of the EA process that we would look at what they have proposed. If there are issues, then it will be up to the proponent to determine how they can move or locate individual turbines as needed to ensure that they won't have the impacts on the residents.

C. PARDY: Good.

May I just ask one follow-up on that? Let's just say, hypothetically, that there's a caribou migration, pretty significant one, through a proponent's proposal. That would be problematic for an EA, would it not, in the proposal?

V. SNOW: Well, certainly, for the wind projects that are in, they had been asked to identify species at risk that would be in the area, proposed mitigations, caribou are of concern, of course, and we have staff from FFA who are involved in designing the guidelines for the environmental assessment and also for evaluating the environmental impact statement that is eventually produced by the proponent.

So caribou and other species that might be impacted, there certainly have to be studies done to minimize and mitigate any impacts.

C. PARDY: Okay.

You had listed earlier some projects that were ongoing, some wind projects, I think the minister. Would that be in the binder that we may receive or a thumb drive or if we can get a copy of that?

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: Do you mean of the project proposals or just the list?

C. PARDY: Yes.

V. SNOW: The project proposals are all available on the website, and we can certainly direct you to them.

C. PARDY: Okay. No, that's good. We'll find them. Thank you very much.

I'm just going to check with my esteemed colleague from Exploits because he had a question earlier, just to see at to whether he does on this section before we move on.

CHAIR: The Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Okay.

Getting back to the waste management, what is government doing in regard to the wood projects that are in the waste management sites?

CHAIR: Tara Kelly.

T. KELLY: Just finding it.

There are dedicated C&D sites, that's construction and demolition sites, at the Western Regional landfill in Wild Cove, Norris Arm North in Central and Robin Hood Bay in St. John's. Only inert material is allowed at these sites as there are no liners and there's no leachate collection. So C&D materials that can be recycled are stored separately.

It's really the Regional Waste Management Authority's responsibility to ensure that the stockpiles of wood waste are managed appropriately, and then there are a number of pilot projects that are ongoing with various industries and businesses around to try to use wood waste in such a fashion to see if there's availability to make a product out of it. Some of those: there's a pilot project that's utilizing wood ash from Corner Brook Pulp and Paper as a soil amendment in Cormack, that's in conjunction with MUN Grenfell Campus; there is a pilot project that just got approved between the Canadian Forestry Service and Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, they're also using fly ash as a soil amendment for silviculture and that's being monitored by FFA; and then we have some other— again, a pilot project —

OFFICIAL: (Inaudible.)

T. KELLY: I'm sorry, that's related to fish waste. I'm sorry, that's not exactly the same thing. But generally, these sites are managed by the regional service board, the regional waste management authorities in the area.

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you.

I just want to add to that MMSB has a waste management trust fund, and then I sign off on those once they select them. We have a number of towns that recently received funding for support like a wood waste recycling project – three towns recently. There were more than three. Some were a single-use plastic waste reduction project or an indiscriminate dumping project. But there were three specific to wood waste recycling.

So communities can apply to MMSB through their waste management trust fund, and that's all posted online as well.

CHAIR: The Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Okay.

With regard to the wood products itself, right now it's still being stored at the waste management sites. Is that being buried or just stockpiled?

CHAIR: Tara Kelly.

T. KELLY: My understanding is that it's being buried where there's no end use. The regional site, I believe in Central, half of it has been buried, of the stockpile that was there, and the work is in progress to deal with the rest of it.

CHAIR: The Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: What precautions are being taken – like, we know that with climate changes, it's hotter, dryer temperatures, hotter, dryer climates. We know lightning can cause fires within the forest sector itself with the dry foliage. So wouldn't this cause more dry foliage within that component, and may be in danger of a lightning strike that could cause a fire? What has government put in place for protection of that?

T. KELLY: That's a good question. We can follow up to get more details on that. I remember when I was with Fire and Emergency Services that the fire commissioner had gone to the site and reviewed it to make sure that it was being stored properly. But if you want more details, I can certainly find out some more for you.

P. FORSEY: Yeah, I appreciate it. Thank you.

Getting back to the windmills, my colleague did ask a couple of questions on the windmills. I did hear you say that the companies are coming back with a 1,000-metre buffer with regard to between windmills. Some are coming back with 500. Where do you stop? What is it from windmill to windmill or from dwelling to the windmill, outside of communities? Do we have legislation? Are we putting in the legislation before this is done?

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: I'll just start and then I'll let my deputy fill in the details, but the projects that I've seen and have been close to, no two projects are the same. They're very, very different. I think where we are to date is that no one size fits all. The EA process is consistent in that all projects that come in go through the very robust, transparent process, but with the projects it could range from 50 turbines to 1,500 turbines.

So they've all been looked at in the lens of how they've come in, but I'll let you speak to the details.

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: I think that's exactly right. We are looking at each project, project-by-project basis through the EA process and are asking companies to explain their project design and justify and back those up with studies.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: The number of windmills would justify how many megawatts they'll be putting out or whatever energy they consume? Is that why you need more windmills in one site and less in another?

V. SNOW: More windmills would have increased capacity, yes.

P. FORSEY: But at some point, we would need legislation on what the boundary is with regard to distance between sites. Is there anything coming on that?

V. SNOW: I think, as the minister mentioned, we are not legislating at this time, the distance. We don't have that in place. When we looked at other jurisdictions, like Nova Scotia that has a bit more of a mature wind regime than we do, we followed their example with a case-by-case approach. So that's the approach that we have in place at the moment.

P. FORSEY: What have you found with regard to Nova Scotia or whatever jurisdiction you're using, are they less than 500 metres in Nova Scotia or are they around 1,000 metres from each windmill or from a dwelling, from communities or whatnot?

V. SNOW: I can get you their system, if you'd like to see sort of what they do. I don't want to speak out of turn on Nova Scotia's system, but they're taking the same approach that we are. So it doesn't specify 500 or it doesn't specify 1,000. It relies on reasonable boundary which has to be backed up by studies and would have to be in line with other acceptable standards. For example, if we had a project come in with a 50-metre boundary from a residence, that's well below what I think is acceptable in other jurisdictions for a windmill.

But if you like, we can get some more technical information on it; it's a very technical subject.

P. FORSEY: Yes, I wouldn't mind that as well because I am getting those questions; I'm not asking those questions for me. I am asking for me, I guess, yes, but I'm getting those questions from constituents. EVREC is right on my back door, it's in my district, and I'm getting those questions from my constituents. Their concern, basically, of how many windmills are going to be around, how they're going to be in the ground. How close to communities is another big one, of course, and that sort of thing.

So where is the legislation? What I'm trying to get at, will we have our own legislation or are we letting those companies tell us what we need, what we're doing?

CHAIR: The hon. the minister.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

So I want to go back to the EA process, because I was somewhat familiar, obviously, as a minister for a number of years, but having been over in the department since July, I have really seen first-hand every single week just how robust and transparent and consultative the EA process is.

When a project is registered for EA, there are more than 20 federal and provincial government entities that review the project, that provide scientific, technical and regulatory advice to me before we decide which way the project is going to go, whether we'll sign off, send it for an EPR, or to a full EIS.

Also, I mean I know and fully respect from MHA to MHA that you are looking for answers because you have constituents that are asking questions. I think one of the things that I've learned since I've been there is that the feedback from the public is also always very heavily considered in the decision of whether we decide we're going to sign off on it or we're going to put it out for a full EIS. If a person is not satisfied with a decision that's made by the minister,

whoever that happens to be, they have 60 days from the date of the decision to appeal that decision.

The projects that have come in, MHA Forsey, they've really, really varied in scope because one company may say we just want a little small number of megawatts and that's going to service the need that we have in mind, whatever their business plan is, and in another project maybe it's something that's huge, like the company down in MHA Pike's area. It was probably the largest – was it – 1,500 turbines?

Anyway, I just wanted to make that point.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Member's time has expired.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista, any further questions?

C. PARDY: If my hon. colleague needs a few more minutes, I would defer mine to –

CHAIR: Oh, we'll just go right back to him. That's fine.

C. PARDY: Yes.

CHAIR: Okay, the Member for Exploits, please.

P. FORSEY: Just a couple of more questions on that, I guess. The environment impact statement right now could take up to two years before it's approved, did I hear you say that?

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: Yes, an EIS can certainly take up to two years or longer depending on how long it takes the proponent to complete the requirements that are outlined in the guidelines.

P. FORSEY: Are there either one of those, like EverWind or EVREC, less than that to

be established now or to be ready to go with regard to the impact statement?

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

The Botwood and Area EVREC Green Energy Project was registered for an environmental assessment on October 7, in 2024. An environmental impact statement, it was determined it was required for that project. We issued the guidelines to EVREC April 12 of this year.

P. FORSEY: So after that – oh sorry.

L. DEMPSTER: I don't know what the number of conditions were to them, but usually it takes some time then for the proponent to work through to satisfy the requirements.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: From April 12 of this year, it could take upwards to two years.

L. DEMPSTER: It could, yeah.

P. FORSEY: It could be less but it could take up depending on what's in the stipulations, all right.

We're getting some calls about the service stations and older gas stations in the communities. Some of them has had leaks and caused environmental damage. A lot of this was left over from – let's face it, Irving were the first ones in there and they had old tanks down there years and years ago. Every community probably is into this situation.

How many contaminated soils do we have out there, because of those leftover gas stations and service stations, and who's responsible?

CHAIR: Tara Kelly.

T. KELLY: The way those type of things work is we have a management of impacted site process that's outlined in a guidance document for the management of impacted sites. It goes by the polluter pays principle.

In our legislation, we identify a person responsible, then they're sent a letter called the management of impacted sites letter. It means that they have to hire a site professional to complete an environmental site assessment Phase 1 and from there, depending on the results, they have to go through the rest of the process as outlined in the guidance document. At the end of the day, they would have done their remediation as per whatever their site professional recommends and they submit all the documentation to the province in which case we review it between ourselves and Service NL, depending on the type of site, and we issue a closure report.

That's normally how the process works. In historical cases, the EPA casts a very broad net on who's considered to be the person responsible. So you would go after the person who's currently owning it basically, go back from there and it becomes a civil matter between the previous owners.

P. FORSEY: Okay.

One more question, I think. The old Abitibi sites around the province, especially in Central, they're eyesores all over the place in the Central region. Is there any initiative to, especially on the old resource roads – and I know resource roads probably come under FFA. This is where a lot of this gets confusing a lot of times because DGSNL is involved, you fellows are involved and FFA is involved. There are some sites on those resource roads, probably off the road and not on the resource road, there are old tanks, there is old machinery, there are old buildings and everything.

It's just total eyesores. Is there any initiative to clean some of this stuff up?

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you.

You're right, it gets confusing. We're Environment but Minister Loveless, they have the protection officers.

We're talking about woods roads and wood and things left behind, mess left behind and eyesores. We operate under a polluter pays motto right now in government. When there's some kind of an environmental matter, it's brought to our attention and then it is Digital Government that would send folks out to look at it. If it's in exceedance of what would be acceptable environmental standards, whoever made the mess would pay.

In your case, you're going back a long way –

P. FORSEY: Yeah, it's not going to happen.

L. DEMPSTER: – and it is an FFA matter so I would say that we would have to take that away and get some information for you.

I don't know, did you want to add anything to that? No, okay.

CHAIR: The Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Yeah, if you could. I'll be satisfied with some sort of an answer from you. I'm going to ask the same questions when I get to FFA, to be honest with you.

L. DEMPSTER: Yeah, they might have the answer.

P. FORSEY: I'm going to ask the same question, but it's been lying there and, like you just mentioned, you know what I'm talking about. It's been lying there for years and it's still going to be lying there for years and probably change over more than one government from here until then.

But, you know, at some point – we're not just talking about wood products. We're talking about oil tanks, motors, cars, whatever and it's a state, it really is. Anyway, if there's some sort of collaboration between probably the three levels of government, maybe that can be done – something like that.

CHAIR: No further questions?

P. FORSEY: I'm good on this one.

CHAIR: No further questions from the Committee?

Shall 2.1.01 through 2.3.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.1.01 through 2.3.01 carried.

CHAIR: Before I ask the Clerk to call the next section, it's 7:25, I'm going to suggest we take about a 10-minute break – a little siesta?

So 7:35:57 we'll be back here. How about that?

Recess

CHAIR: Okay, I call us back to order.

I thank the Committee and department officials.

I now call on the Clerk to call the next subheading.

CLERK: 3.1.01 to 3.2.01 inclusive, Climate Change.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 through to 3.2.01 inclusive carry?

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Chair.

If my memory is correct, I think 36 per cent of the greenhouse gases were attributable to transportation. So we now just had the EV vehicles. Is it still 38 per cent or are we nominally less than that, or are we generally more? Where are we in relation to the percentage of greenhouse gases by transportation?

CHAIR: Susan Squires.

S. SQUIRES: Because our emissions as a total have decreased, when we look at percentages, that decrease has been in every per cent of the pie chart equally. So we've seen a decrease in some sectors like industry and fuel use in buildings, but because of that, transportation hasn't gone down in the same amount. For this 2023 data, which is our most recent data, transportation is now almost 43 per cent, but that's just because the others have gone down as the total of that 100 per cent.

To answer more specifically your question about EVs, it is helping, but that transportation allotment includes roads, air, marine, off-road, heavy diesel. So there's a whole component there of which the electric vehicles is still really looking only at the about 15, 16 per cent that has to do with passenger vehicles.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Okay, good.

Where would I find that? Where would I find the information? You mentioned the roads, air, marine, and our fishing industry, that would be on site or the department's site?

S. SQUIRES: Yeah, we publish a list, a spreadsheet that adds a new year of data every year and it's broken down into all the sectors, and that's a national inventory that we contribute to, but our data is available just for Newfoundland and Labrador in any sector you wish to see.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: If I may look at some of the line items that are here. In 3.1.01, if we can look at the variance there in the Grants and Subsidies. I know that will be fluid just by its title alone, but I didn't know if you can add a little bit of substance to it.

L. DEMPSTER: The forecasted budget for the electrical vehicle rebate and the electrical vehicle infrastructure program sits there and in the '24-'25, we revised, and it's higher due to an increase in the electrical vehicle program, and we talked about the numbers earlier at the beginning of the night.

C. PARDY: Okay.

Minister, the federal government came in with some money there, in '24-'25,

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, that's right. There was an increase, higher federal revenue for electrical vehicle infrastructure. There are the rebates and some of the ultra-fast charging stations and things like that I mentioned earlier would be covered there.

C. PARDY: Okay.

The 740-something electric vehicles last year, how many of those were hybrids?

Did I come close to that, 740?

CHAIR: Dr. Squires.

S. SQUIRES: There are 768 rebates issued in '24-'25; plug-in hybrids there were 361 and battery electric vehicles were 407.

C. PARDY: Okay. Nearly 50 per cent of them, hybrids.

In section 3.1.02, Federal-Provincial Programs, just looking at again, if you qualify the Grants and Subsidies.

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

In number six, the Grants and Subsidies, we see a decrease because the budget reflects funding for Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund 2 and Oil to Electric Incentive Program.

From what we've budgeted this year, the revised was lower and then forecasting ahead, we're looking at lower expenditures under Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund 2 and Oil to Electric Incentive Program and that was due to various delays. It's kind of a phased program and we had phase one, covered 2018 to 2024, and then there is a compliance audit that happens at the end of the program and, I guess, there are some delays to when we would get the federal money, right?

V. SNOW: Yeah.

L. DEMPSTER: Yeah.

Do you want to –?

V. SNOW: Sure.

CHAIR: Deputy minister.

V. SNOW: That's exactly right.

This is funding that rolls over year on year, the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund 1, and the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund 2 is the new tranche of that funding, as well as Oil to Electric Program.

So it's difficult to really estimate with complete accuracy the full budget ask,

because you'll see the revised is quite a bit lower. That was, as the minister said, due to the timing of the receipt of the federal money.

I'll just ask Susan if she had anything she wanted to add there?

CHAIR: Dr. Squires.

S. SQUIRES: Nothing to add only to say that Low Carbon Economy Fund 1 was similar and the money got juggled around from year to year, but the end of the year the \$90 million was spent and, certainly, the same thing will happen here.

This was the first year for the Oil to Electric Program and Low Carbon Economy money that went into the Oil to Electric Program. We were seeing what the uptake would be in that first year of that program, so we've budgeted it a little bit differently going forward, spreading out the money a bit more evenly over the last few years.

CHAIR: The Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Yeah.

Again, excuse me if I missed it but how much money have we spent in '24-'25 on the Oil to Electric Incentive Program?

L. DEMPSTER: It's kind of here in phases. The Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund, \$16.3 million; Oil to Heat Pump Affordability program, \$23.7 million; and – yeah, I kind of got it broken down here in different sections.

OFFICIAL: These are the figures for the last year.

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, okay.

I can give you an idea of the figures for last year. Leading into '24-'25, we projected \$81.9 million expenditure in grants. There were three things that were housed there: The Low Carbon Economy Fund, about \$7

million, that was in 2018 to 2024; for 2024 to 2027, about \$45 million. The Oil to Heat Pump Affordability program for 2024 to 2027, about \$30 million.

C. PARDY: For 2024 to 2027?

L. DEMPSTER: Yeah, for Oil to Heat Pump Affordability, about \$30 million.

C. PARDY: Okay, yeah. Good.

The revenue there from the federal government, again that's separate from the Grants and Subsidies is it not? Is that earmarked?

V. SNOW: Sorry, that's the –?

C. PARDY: That's just the revenue from the federal government there?

CHAIR: Deputy minister.

V. SNOW: Yeah, sorry. That is federal funding through the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund.

C. PARDY: That's it there?

V. SNOW: Yes.

C. PARDY: Okay, good. Thank you.

In the *Climate Change Action Plan*, did we not anticipate some carbon-capture initiatives? Has any of that materialized or are we working towards some of those initiatives?

CHAIR: Susan Squires.

S. SQUIRES: Yes. Certainly, we recognize that carbon capture is a component of how we collectively achieve net-zero 2050.

We have issued a carbon-capture award. There was \$6 million issued as an award, probably a year and a half ago now, for two streams of work focused on carbon capture, in particular in the offshore. We're doing that

joint effort with IET. They have announced one successful applicant out of that funding, so one project up and going. That's one example.

We're also doing other things like we're certainly working with Forestry and where carbon capture might be stored there. One of our Climate Change Challenge Fund projects for the first phase of a low-carbon economy was a carbon sequestration program with tree planting.

There are a number of initiatives, and we are also concluding this study this year. We'll look at carbon offset potential in the province from a number of different sectors, whether it's Forestry or carbon capture.

C. PARDY: Good.

CHAIR: The Member's time is expired.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

I know the minister touched on it there in her opening remarks but are we on track to reach the 30 per cent reduction in greenhouse gases by 2030?

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: Very much so. I did mention that we have the lowest greenhouse gas emissions since 1995.

I think it bears some sharing here some of the unique features that are in our system here in Newfoundland and Labrador. MHA Pardy was asking about some percentages earlier. Large industry, mining, manufacturing, oil and gas extraction accounted for 29 per cent of total provincial greenhouse gas emissions in 2023 but, since 2019, the *Management of Greenhouse Gas Act* has required large industry to meet increasing annual greenhouse gas reduction targets, and the

targets by industry have been met or exceeded each year from 2019 to 2023.

For example, in 2023, 15 facilities were regulated and had a total compliance limit of 3.2 million tonnes; however, the collectively emitted was only 3 million tonnes. So then we implemented a credit market system to allow facilities that do not meet the reduction target to comply and the carbon price for the credit market increases on an annual basis to 2030.

NL Hydro – I do want to mention them because, certainly, they're our utility across Labrador – produces credits linked to Holyrood generating station that are used to pay down the debt associated with Muskrat Falls. NL Hydro sells these credits to other industrial players, and to date they have received more than \$55 million to pay down debt, which I thought was interesting.

I think an important point for me to make here as well would be that if we were to abolish – because sometimes I get asked this – industrial carbon pricing today, then the federal's backstop would come in and would be imposed. A long way of telling you, yes, we're meeting, exceeding and comfortable that we're on track.

J. BROWN: Perfect. Thank you, Minister.

That actually leads perfectly to my next question on the performance credits. You said that Hydro was one thing, are there any other industries right now that have purchased or looked for these credits in the past year? How much money was raised on top of what you mentioned for NL Hydro?

L. DEMPSTER: I'll let my scientist to my right give the numbers, but certainly industry is compliant.

CHAIR: Susan Squires.

S. SQUIRES: Sure.

We do publish a report annually that is on the website. For example, in 2023 we would have regulated 15 facilities that we deem to be large industry that play in that credit market and, as the minister has said, they overachieved their target. We would have issued 648,000 credits; they would have turned in another 160,000 credits and then you also have details there on how many credits are still in the system. They sell those credits. If you and I were both regulated, I could sell my credits to you at an amount we agreed upon.

We don't have information into that private sale; we have information into what Hydro sells their credits for because they're a public entity. We have information on if a company has to buy credits from the minister, and that's a credit of last resort in the legislation. It goes into our Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund and then that money is issued back to greenhouse gas reduction projects. The fund, as of 2023, had just a little less than \$600,000 in credit sales, but that public report is available on our website.

J. BROWN: Perfect, thank you so much.

Right now, how many people have been served by the oil to electric heat program in this past year? Are you keeping track of how many households that probably still have oil or will be qualified? But, first of all, I just wanted to know, how many people availed of the program in the past fiscal year?

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you.

I have the numbers here.

In '24-'25, we had 2,538 rebates and in '25-'26, we have allocated for 2,600 rebates. I don't have the number of households. Was that 5,026, going from memory? I think I'm close.

CHAIR: Susan Squires.

S. SQUIRES: Certainly, we have done over 5,000 households. Our estimate at the beginning of this was somewhere around maybe 40,000 households in Newfoundland and Labrador which had an oil tank linked to them. We, under this program, hope to have 10,000 total because this program goes for another few years of households done.

J. BROWN: Perfect, thank you so much.

How many individuals have availed of the Home Energy Savings Program in the past year?

CHAIR: Susan Squires.

S. SQUIRES: That program was part of the first phase of low carbon economy, and that's ended. We haven't done any this year because that ended the previous year.

J. BROWN: Okay, thank you so much.

Did we fully implement the 45 actions from the 2019-24 Climate Change Action Plan? When will we see a new plan?

CHAIR: Go ahead, Minister.

L. DEMPSTER: They've all been met and we have just finalized the Climate Change Adaptation Plan and the Climate Change Mitigation Plan, and that will soon be posted online. The work is done.

J. BROWN: Perfect, thank you so much.

That was my final question for this section.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: What's our target for 2050, as far as our carbon capture or our -?

L. DEMPSTER: Net zero.

C. PARDY: Net zero by 2050?

L. DEMPSTER: Yes.

C. PARDY: Are we optimistic we're going to achieve that by 2050?

L. DEMPSTER: Yes.

C. PARDY: So we're on track for 2030, we know that now. By 2050?

L. DEMPSTER: Yes.

C. PARDY: Greenhouse gasses, how much do we emit? It used to be 11 tons.

CHAIR: 11 million tons.

C. PARDY: 11 million tons, yes, and 35 billion for the world.

CHAIR: Dr. Squires.

S. SQUIRES: Thanks.

We were at about 10 million to 11 million tons for a long time in Newfoundland and Labrador. We're down now to 7.9 million tons. As the minister said, we met our 2020 target and our 2030 target is 7.2 million tons. So we are on track to meet that. Canada's emissions are about 700 million tons, so we're about 1.5 per cent of Canada's emissions.

C. PARDY: If I may ask, how are we in relation to other provinces in our reduction? Surely, that's plotted as well, maybe on the website that I haven't seen.

CHAIR: Susan Squires.

S. SQUIRES: So we are actually doing well. We have reduced our emissions quite a bit. There are some – New Brunswick, for example, got off coal and that dropped their emissions quite a bit. They're more in the 30 per cent reduce range.

C. PARDY: Oh, okay.

S. SQUIRES: Some provinces and territories have increased in the last few years. In comparison to others, we are certainly running in line with others who are leading the way in decreasing emissions.

C. PARDY: And we weren't burning coal.

L. DEMPSTER: (Inaudible) we're not really comparing apples to apples.

C. PARDY: No, understandable. I missed that fact, too. But I knew that they were burning.

I had a conversation in the Forestry, with some Forestry officials and harvesters. We talked about carbon capture, and he made it clear that when they harvested lumber, they don't lose as far as the carbon from the tree because it goes into building materials, safely stored in the building materials. But if you had a forest and it was dead and decaying and the trees were fell, all that carbon is released into the air.

Now, I'm assuming that is correct. If that's correct, I've often thought about that for many decades, my family and I would walk the trails in Terra Nova National Park, and now that my children are adults, we thought, one Christmas, a couple of Christmases ago, we would go out and walk the trail, which we did, but it was gruesome because it seemed like it was a dead zone. Everything was dead and fallen in a lot of those trails, especially from Newman Sound, we'll say, down to the wharf, which most people may have walked in their lifetime.

I thought about that one when we look at the forest management plan. If that is the case in the carbon capture and the forest management plan that we've got, then one would think that we might need to rethink some of our practices within our province, especially if we're going to achieve by 2050, what we have as our target.

S. SQUIRES: Yes, this is a big aspect of climate change accounting data. I'll give you an example. If we had accounted for forestry and carbon sinks we have, not just in forestry but in wetlands and things like that, in 2022, our emissions would have been 6.5 million tons instead of 8.1 million tons. They are negative emissions is what you're talking about.

C. PARDY: Yes.

S. SQUIRES: Carbon locked into forests and other things are negative emissions.

We haven't, as Canada, counted those in our regular emissions because we're still really working on how that accounting would work. You're correct. When trees are growing, they're capturing carbon. When they're decaying, they're releasing carbon. So there are winners and losers in that depending on the age of your forests and all of those things.

That is an accounting framework where we actively participate in and we put data into so we are aware of that. The net-zero concept, we all recognize that getting your emissions down to zero is unlikely but you would start accounting for some of these things if you have emissions being collected naturally in some ways you might be able to get it down – you have a net of negative 1 million tons but it's still releasing 1 million tons for example.

Certainly, a big part of our conversations.

C. PARDY: Mr. Trimper is in on this topic because I know that he's got a great interest and background.

CHAIR: I'm staying as the Chair.

C. PARDY: I guess I would look at that we're going to see some of this, probably thinking of what we just discussed there in the forest management plan, conceivably as far as harvesting. Would that not fly contradictory to WERAC that would want to

look at large parcels of land and leave it and never touch it? That may be – if it's not a wetland and it's forestry, then that would be counterproductive to our efforts, would it not?

OFFICIAL: (Inaudible.)

C. PARDY: My hon. Member can bring that up on Thursday morning.

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, I have every confidence.

C. PARDY: He is making the notes there now as we speak. If he had a pen, he would make those notes as we speak.

A couple of line items in 3.2.01. Again, I ask the same question. I'm just looking at if you can qualify the federal and provincial revenue in this section?

L. DEMPSTER: Is there a certain bullet area that you're referring to MHA Pardy?

C. PARDY: Looking at the Revenue. The federal and provincial revenue in that section, 3.2.01.

L. DEMPSTER: Okay, down in 10, I'm not sure where you're looking, but we have higher revenue budget from Mistaken Point. Is that the part you're looking at? We have a couple of grants that are tucked in there.

C. PARDY: I wasn't asking about the grants. I just looked at the revenues that were just down below that. We had some federal which seems to be consistent at \$175,000, and then we have provincial revenue.

L. DEMPSTER: The federal revenue would be for protected areas.

C. PARDY: What are some of those protected areas? Name two or three of the protected areas.

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: They're not for maintaining specific protected areas, they're for staff to assist with supporting WERAC in looking at protected areas and the protected areas work in the province.

It's not, say, protecting a specific area. It's staff funding to continue the work on the protected areas strategy.

C. PARDY: Okay. Good.

My last question in that section: have you been privy or part of any agreement with the federal government for any marine protected areas off our shores?

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: It's been a little bit of a hot topic if you follow media and things like that.

We did enter into an agreement with the feds and looking at certain areas that we would protect, but not at a cost to aquaculture or anything like that. We don't want to do anything to impede industry so we entered into an agreement. We have the option to pull out of that agreement if the feds continue down a road that we're not comfortable with or that would negatively impact parts of the province.

One of the areas being looked at is out in the Port aux Basque area. Initially it was a bigger chunk of the map, I'll say, and recently that was reduced in size a little bit. We have an advisory committee set up and there has been extensive consultations. This is an important matter for the MHA sitting behind you, because he has a lot of aquaculture industry down in his district.

Those of us who really do believe in climate change, we understand that we need to protect some areas to continue to support that, but we also want to make sure we find the balance. We need economic development in the province. There is a lot of work happening around that and we're really trying to prioritize consultation,

because sometimes somebody can say something and it's a complete mistruth and then it goes and people get concerned about exactly how much is going to be protected and things like that.

C. PARDY: Thank you for that.

Can you provide me a timeline when you entered into that agreement with the federal government?

L. DEMPSTER: In 2023.

C. PARDY: Okay.

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West, no further questions.

Exploits. No.

You can continue, Sir. The Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: I will yield my time on this.

CHAIR: Seeing no further questions, shall 3.1.01 through to 3.2.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.1.01 through 3.2.01 carried.

CHAIR: I now ask the Clerk to call the next section, please.

CLERK: 4.1.01 to 4.1.03 inclusive, Labour.

CHAIR: Shall 4.1.01 to 4.1.03, Labour, carry?

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Under 4.1.02, I'm just looking at the variance in the Professional Services. You seem to have \$77,400, and I think you spent \$30,000 in '24-'25.

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: That was as a result of lower panel fees. If they only meet twice or whatever, there are savings that result from that. It's demand driven.

C. PARDY: The Grants and Subsidies, I know they weren't budgeted for last year but they did occur?

L. DEMPSTER: Yeah.

Under Grants and Subsidies you will see a \$35,000 increase, and it was actually when I was relatively new, it went over back in maybe September. The Association of Seafood Producers and the FFAW had made a request to have the cost covered for an end-of-season audit of final sales of the species of the crab. That was \$35,000 that we had given them to do that.

C. PARDY: Are there any collective agreements that are due to expire within government this fiscal year?

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: That would be a question best answered by Treasury Board Secretariat.

C. PARDY: Okay. Thursday night.

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, holy Thursday ask the holy questions.

C. PARDY: Yeah.

You provide the conciliation support services and, last year, it was reported that you had a 95 per cent success rate. I guess that's pretty well the same for '24-'25?

L. DEMPSTER: I don't have it right in front of me, but I think it's relatively high.

We had 37 conciliation requests, 53 conciliation settlements, appointment of arbitral requests was 21, preventative mediation requests were 99 and the first collective agreement mediator, two. It's always good when you can say the number of strikes; looking back over the last fiscal it was zero.

C. PARDY: Awesome.

When the department looks at the minimum wage, and I know that we've had the increases that were forecast and stated publicly what we would have, do you have a policy or some future prediction to look at? Is it based on the consumer price index? What do you look at when you establish the minimum wage?

L. DEMPSTER: Every year, we are legislated to conduct a review of the province's current minimum wage, as well as the adjustment process. So you would have seen that April 1, we moved up to \$16 an hour. The minimum wage review from 2024 is ongoing, and as a part of that review the provincial government have launched public engagement seeking input from stakeholders, from members of the public.

Any time we get into – and I think my colleague from Lab West sometimes tires of my response, because it's true across many things in labour. When we're doing a minimum wage increase, we always have to strike the balance between if you're the person that's receiving the minimum wage increase, there's tremendous benefit, but it also comes as a cost, in particular to small- and medium-sized businesses and things like that. So we open it up for public engagement, for people to have input, and that's done every two years. I don't know if I've missed anything there.

I will say that on April 1, the minimum wage increase in NL, when we went to \$16 an hour, we are now the highest in Atlantic Canada.

C. PARDY: Is there a working group that will look at this for you, for the department, or is it in-house?

L. DEMPSTER: It's always in-house.

C. PARDY: Always in-house, okay.

Looking at the Standing Fish Price-Setting Panel, are there a number of species that are already negotiated at this stage now?

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, for this year. So we have 13 species under the Fish Price-Setting Panel, and all but one seems to go successful every year. This year, I think we're batting 100 per cent here.

C. PARDY: Yeah. And that one is done.

L. DEMPSTER: What went to the panel this year is crab, lobster, and shrimp is going to the panel tomorrow.

C. PARDY: Okay.

Are these generally around the same time of the year, that these negotiations pretty well –?

L. DEMPSTER: Yes.

C. PARDY: Good.

4.1.03, I just have a question. I know that it's the same amount, almost like it's a placeholder for the revenue in 4.1.03, Labour Standards.

L. DEMPSTER: So the Labour Standards revenue achieved through a clearance fee, these can relate to both private and business transactions in law firms, which require verification that there is nothing to impede the current transaction from proceeding.

The certificates confirm that there is no liability, for example, involving parties to the transaction arising from the actions, investigations of the Labour Standards Division.

C. PARDY: Okay.

5.1.01 –

CHAIR: That's a different heading.

C. PARDY: Oh, okay.

That would conclude our questions, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

How many new unions or bargaining units have been certified in the past year and how many first collective agreements have been successfully negotiated in the past year?

L. DEMPSTER: Twenty-eight.

J. BROWN: Twenty-eight new unions or 28 first –

L. DEMPSTER: Twenty-eight first collective agreements.

J. BROWN: How many new unions or bargaining units were certified this past year?

L. DEMPSTER: Don't have that number here, how many new were certified.

In our Labour Division, I will say that we had a long-standing ADM who just retired. This is Fiona, who's doing a great job in getting up to snuff but if there's anything here we don't have, we will get that information for you.

J. BROWN: Perfect, I appreciate that.

Thank you, Minister.

How many strikes or lockouts were in the province in the past year?

L. DEMPSTER: None.

J. BROWN: None, perfect.

Have there been any consideration for any changes to the union certification process within the department this past year?

L. DEMPSTER: No. I do appreciate your concern, and I anticipated the question. It's something that we're always looking at but there's no thought to moving forward with that right at this time.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Minister.

Given that Ottawa has moved to anti-scab legislation, has the department been speaking with Ottawa on where is the difference between the provincial and the federal laws now?

L. DEMPSTER: A couple of things I'll say on the anti-replacement is no different than what you would have heard me say in the House in Question Period, but that the issue is very complex. It's another one of those scenarios where we have Labour and employers holding very different views. We always try to ensure, as a government, that we maintain an appropriate balance between the rights of workers, the needs of employers. As you would know, currently the legislation only exists in Quebec and British Columbia and that is in a limited capacity.

We've certainly been keeping a close eye. We have regular conversations in the boardrooms or in our briefings on that piece. We know that in a very limited capacity, yes, there are federally regulated workplaces.

So we're looking at the other couple of jurisdictions, BC and Quebec, to see what their growing pains are. What are their

learnings? Is there anything that we could take away and proceed with here? That's kind of where it is right now.

J. BROWN: Perfect. Thank you, Minister.

I know with speaking with the Federation of Labour, they've been asking and mentioned to us that there's a need for modernization and overhaul of the labour relations bit in this province and labour standards. Is there any work being done inside the department to work on modernizing *Labour Relations Act* and *Labour Standards Act*?

L. DEMPSTER: We do know that there's been some concern at Labour Relations, and we've had meetings recently. We did have some vacancies for a little while that might have been adding to some of the concerns.

Right now, we have no vacancies – zero. We have an individual in there – I forget his title, a consultant I guess – who's doing some work with the board, giving the board necessary training and things like that, all with a view to get us to a better place.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Minister.

How far are we from implementation of the pay equity and transparency regulations?

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: Thank you.

The piece that our department is involved in is the pay transparency piece. Pay equity is with TBS as that's for public service workers.

The department has been engaged with other parts of government over the last few months and with British Columbia, which is the other provincial jurisdiction that has these sorts of regulations in place, with the aim of figuring out what are the timelines, costs associated with the regulations and trying to figure out with British Columbia

lessons learned in terms of how to roll it out effectively.

Our plan for the next coming months is to develop a framework based on those consultations and then we will engage with further stakeholder discussions with, for example, the Federation of Labour once we have a framework in place that we can get their comments on.

We've completed one round of consultations, but that was quite general. What we heard there was there was a lot of questions unanswered and divergent views. So we're hoping by having something more concrete to go with based on the second round of discussions, we can have more meaningful framework to move forward with.

J. BROWN: Thank you so much, Deputy Minister.

RNU have been calling for an independent health sector safety council and not one that is directly embedded within NLHS. Has your department looked at anything inside the department on if this was a feasible thing or have you not had any discussion on that?

L. DEMPSTER: I'm going to let Fiona take that.

CHAIR: Fiona Ellis.

F. ELLIS: That is an initiative that came about through the WorkplaceNL review. WorkplaceNL is working with NLHS and they will be leading that project.

J. BROWN: Perfect. Thank you for that update.

Has there ever been any further consideration for bringing in paid sick leave for all employees of this province? If so, have you been looking at any hurdles, an implementation or anything like this? Has there been any discussion about working towards paid leave for, like, all people of the province we could say?

L. DEMPSTER: There's no immediate plan but it's certainly something that we're looking at and reviewing.

J. BROWN: Perfect. Thank you, Minister.

Has there been any movement on a complete review of the *Labour Standards Act* in modernizing that in the coming years?

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, I think it's fair to say that all of our legislation – I mean, the *Labour Standards Act*, we made multiple amendments to that even in the past year been before the House a couple of times last fall.

Labour Standards is something that's very close to me while I'm there. I've had folks into the office to meet with them, sometimes unions reach out to me if they're not happy and so I would say, yes, we're always reviewing to see how we can make changes. If there is something we need to do legislatively, we'll do that.

J. BROWN: Yes.

Given the rise of, I guess, gig work or app-based work, Uber, Skip the Dishes and those kinds of things, has there been any work inside the department to keep an eye on some of those companies, as they do have a history of, I guess, not the greatest labour practices or standards and trying to find loopholes for that? Has there been any work inside your department on that type of work and how to make sure it's protected under the *Labour Standards*?

CHAIR: Fiona Ellis.

F. ELLIS: Under the *Labour Standards Act*, I think it's a bit more complicated at some points where gig workers are independent contractors for the most part. They don't always fall under the *Labour Standards Act*. That is under review but there is nothing ongoing at the moment.

J. BROWN: Perfect. That's my final question for the section.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: I don't believe there are any further questions.

Shall 4.1.01 through to 4.1.03 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 4.1.01 through 4.1.03 carried.

CHAIR: The next section.

CLERK: 5.1.01, Labour Relations Board.

CHAIR: Shall 5.1.01 carry?

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Chair.

Who makes up the Labour Relations Board?

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: Yeah, we can certainly provide a copy to you, MHA Pardy, but we have a chairperson and we have four vice-chairs. We have, then, four regular and a number of alternates, and those folks are from around the province.

We stagger the board for continuity. We have different expiry dates for those that serve right now. Like, I'm looking at the chair with an expiry date into 2027, and the vice-chair, and then we have three other vice-chairs that don't expire until 2028.

C. PARDY: Okay.

Are they appointed from in-house or IAC?

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, they go through an Independent Appointments Commission process.

C. PARDY: Okay, yeah. Good.

Professional Services in 5.1.01, I just look at the variance there from what was budgeted. It was \$72,700, and it was \$34,000 more at the end of the year.

L. DEMPSTER: Yeah, so that would have been a result of higher legal fees and board member remuneration due to increased activity. Probably a good thing to say that the board is meeting more frequently, more hearings. I think it's positive overall.

C. PARDY: How many mediators does the department have?

I know they're very strategic. I know that. I often know that the Labour Relations Board would employ a mediator.

CHAIR: Fiona Ellis.

F. ELLIS: Under the Labour Relations Board, they have three labour relations board officers and one deputy CEO who's the senior labour relations officer that assists.

They will at first attempt to try to resolve any issues that come in. If they're unable to, then it gets put forward to the board, who the minister has just explained the compliment of the board.

C. PARDY: Okay, I'm sorry. Did you say four of those would have mediator training?

F. ELLIS: Sorry, I misspoke. There are two labour relations officers and one deputy CEO who is a senior officer.

C. PARDY: Okay.

So for the mediation, there would be two of them? Two or three?

F. ELLIS: I guess I just want to clarify in terms of Labour Relations Division versus Labour Relations Board.

Under the Labour Relations Board, we have labour relations board officers. If there are any complaints that are submitted through to the Labour Relations Board for an investigation, such as duty of fair representation or certification counts and things like that, that goes to the board officers.

C. PARDY: Yeah.

F. ELLIS: Where conciliation or mediation might fall with the Labour Relations Agency itself.

C. PARDY: Yes.

F. ELLIS: So the staff is different in both sections.

C. PARDY: Yes, my apologies on that.

Do you know how many we would have in the Labour Relations Agency?

F. ELLIS: Yes, I do know that. That's why I just wanted to clarify which it was that you were looking for.

C. PARDY: Yeah. No, I'm glad you did.

Thank you.

F. ELLIS: Under the Labour Relations Agency, we do have four industrial relations specialists. One of those specifically works with the fish pricing panel.

C. PARDY: So the mediators are involved in industry grievances as well?

F. ELLIS: Yes.

C. PARDY: So that would be the four. They would be utilized.

F. ELLIS: Yes.

C. PARDY: I think in last year's Estimates, they mentioned a success rate of 80 per cent, I guess in settling the disagreements between management and the unionized employee?

That was last year's Estimates, I'm not sure what it would be for the past year.

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: I think that figure is consistent year on year. We didn't have any strikes last year, but we can certainly get you the exact number for the year.

Yes, generally it does have a high rate of success.

C. PARDY: Good. Thank you.

That's all the questions for that section.

CHAIR: The Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

What is the average time for a case to go to get a decision through the Labour Relations Board at this current time?

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: I think that this question came up in Estimates last year as well. We did find it a hard question to answer just due to the different nature of the many different cases that go to the board.

We can certainly get you some statistics on timing of processes but an actual average wouldn't maybe provide you with the information, but we can certainly follow-up.

J. BROWN: No, I appreciate that. I'd really like that information, thank you.

How many conciliation, mediation and arbitration processes were undertaken in this past year?

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you.

The number of applications received would have been 63; the number of applications in progress, 60; the number of applications complete 57; and the number of hearings was nine.

J. BROWN: Perfect, thank you so much, Minister.

I know you mentioned it there but how many current positions are vacant at this time with the Labour Relations?

L. DEMPSTER: None.

J. BROWN: None? So all positions are filled at this current time?

L. DEMPSTER: Yes.

J. BROWN: Perfect. That's my final question for this section.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Further questions?

Shall 5.1.01, Labour Relations Board, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subhead 5.1.01 carried.

CHAIR: Final section, please, from the Clerk.

CLERK: 6.1.01, Workers' Compensation Independent Review Board.

CHAIR: Shall 6.1.01 carry?

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Chair.

The line item in that section, the provincial revenue, you had \$1.6 million budgeted last year and the revised was about \$1.38 million, and then you have a little more budgeted for '25-'26.

CHAIR: The controller.

J. TORRAVILLE: This is 100 per cent funded and offset by WorkplaceNL. It matches the expenditures of net zero. That would be the difference in the revenue and why it's down the \$220,000. They spent less so the recovery is less.

C. PARDY: Okay, good, makes sense.

The recent statutory review, it had 48 recommendations. I think in the Estimates last year it was 30 out of 48 were complete. Do we have 48 now completed?

L. DEMPSTER: Close, but no cigar.

C. PARDY: Okay, but close.

L. DEMPSTER: We have, of the 48 recommendations, 44 completed, four ongoing, one led by WorkplaceNL and three led by or currently within the provincial government.

You'll take 90 per cent, will you?

C. PARDY: Oh yeah. That's good.

How many applications for compensation were received by WorkplaceNL for benefits due to a workplace injury last year?

L. DEMPSTER: Receiving short-term benefits in the last fiscal would be 3,587,

and then I have a whole list of new accepted claims paid out to different industry classes that make up that 3,587.

I don't know if that answers your question.

C. PARDY: Yeah.

Minister, is it possible to get that list? Can that be released? There are no names attached to it but just the data.

L. DEMPSTER: No names attached. Yes, I don't see no issue with that.

C. PARDY: Good. Thank you.

Of those, what percentage would have been denied or would have had coverage denied?

L. DEMPSTER: I don't know if I have that here.

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: Sorry, we don't have that with us today but we can follow-up the information.

C. PARDY: Okay.

Of all the workplace compensation claims that were put forth in the totality of the last fiscal, how many would have been denied?

L. DEMPSTER: I would have to endeavour to get that information for you.

C. PARDY: Would you know the number of appeals there would have been in '24-'25?

L. DEMPSTER: I do have some stats here.

The annual active case load at workers' comp consisted of 505 cases in total: 279 cases closed, 232 decisions from those 279, 14 were dismissed or rejected – no merit or whatever – and there were 33 of those 279 that were withdrawn and those are situations where the matter is resolved prior to the hearing.

We've had 295 new applications submitted, 200 hearings held and, right now, the latest I've gotten as of up to the end of March, there was only 25 outstanding decisions and 84 cases waiting to be scheduled or rescheduled.

C. PARDY: Okay, so when we mentioned the 232 decisions, that wouldn't necessarily be decisions in the favour of the worker? It was just decisions made on those cases, or it would be in favour of the worker?

CHAIR: Deputy minister.

V. SNOW: Just for a point of clarification, where I think that we're providing you with some information about – because the section that we're on, 6.1.01, is about the Workers' Compensation Independent Review Board.

So just to clarify, I completely understand you're looking for the WorkplaceNL information, so perhaps we can follow-up with that afterwards. The information that was provided is on the Compensation Independent Review Board.

C. PARDY: Understandable.

Thank you very much.

L. DEMPSTER: I'll just it with that because that's the section (inaudible).

V. SNOW: Yeah.

C. PARDY: Yes.

So can I ask how many cases were referred to the Independent Review Board, or may I ask?

V. SNOW: Yeah, that's right.

Out of the active caseload for '24-'25, I'm not sure how many were referred during that time, but there were 505 active cases.

C. PARDY: Okay, those are the numbers for the Independent Review Board, that you just –?

V. SNOW: Exactly.

C. PARDY: Okay.

So forgive me now if I'm missing it again, but when you say that there are 232 decisions, what does that mean of the 505?

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: That means of the cases that were referred to the Workers' Compensation Independent Review Board, 279 of those cases were closed.

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: Then I provided, 279 closed, 232 had a final decision, 14 dismissed or rejected and 33 were withdrawn.

C. PARDY: Okay.

Is there an approximate wait time for going through the referral to the Independent Review Board?

L. DEMPSTER: They do a number of hearings per month. The monthly average is 17.

I was going to mention to you earlier, just for info purposes, that the Independent Review Board is a panel of four full-time review commissioners and one chief review commissioner. When we look back through the number of cases when we were preparing to come here, the average was 56 days after the hearing.

C. PARDY: Okay.

Those are all the questions, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

I know that you mentioned about the recommendations from the Statutory Review, are one of the recommendations that have been implemented or near implementation the expanded workers representation on WorkplaceNL? Has that one been completed or near completion?

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: I believe we looked at that last year, but I'll have to check on the status –

J. BROWN: That that one has been completed?

V. SNOW: Yeah. I will have to verify and get back to you.

J. BROWN: Perfect, appreciate that. Thank you so much.

Right now, I guess, are there any cases or anything – like, you just gave the breakdown of cases and everything like that for there, but they're not experiencing any backlog or anything like that? As the cases are brought to be reviewed, there is no extended wait or anything like that, you were saying about 50-something days average, correct?

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

V. SNOW: The legislated timeline that they have to be completed is 60 days. We are getting them done in time.

I'm just trying to see if we have anything about any – we have 25 outstanding decisions of the ones that were submitted from last year.

J. BROWN: Perfect, thank you so much.

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

I think it might also be noteworthy to mention that the 232 decisions in our fiscal '24-'25 represented the highest number in six years and 8 per cent higher than the previous year. So they're doing a lot of work there. They're pretty busy.

J. BROWN: Good to hear. Thank you, Minister.

Has any progress been made on setting up the occupational health clinic which was a recommendation of Health Accord?

L. DEMPSTER: We had some discussion on that, and the information that has come to me is that it's not feasible for WorkplaceNL to fund intake or occupational health clinics given our vast geography and limited medical resources.

Right now what's happening is, WorkplaceNL is working with NL Health Services to align with the collaborative clinics model being rolled out across the province to integrate occupational health concepts into already existing teams.

This approach leverages existing resources to fulfill recommendation 14.1 of the *2019 Statutory Review of the Newfoundland and Labrador's Workers' Compensation System*. That was, "A study be conducted as to the feasibility of implementing a comprehensive and multi-faceted occupational clinic to deal with occupational diseases and other occupational injuries, in particular musculoskeletal injuries."

J. BROWN: Perfect, thank you, Minister.

Can we expect any further changes in the coming year on how medical reporting is done on industrial disease claims?

CHAIR: The minister.

L. DEMPSTER: Because Workplace kind of operates a little bit separate from us, and

they do come in and report to me on a regular basis, et cetera, I'll have to walk that one away and come back to you. I don't want to even hazard to answer.

J. BROWN: No worries.

I guess I'll ask tonight about it, but I'm not sure if this will be deferred to be brought back later, are we able to get a breakdown of the number of people receiving workers' compensation, not by name or anything but by industry?

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, we have that.

J. BROWN: Perfect, if I could get a copy of that it would be great.

L. DEMPSTER: Yes.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Minister.

That was my final question.

CHAIR: No further questions, I'll ask the Committee shall 6.1.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

It's carried.

On motion, subhead 6.1.01 carried.

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

CLERK: The total.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Total is carried.

On motion, Department of Environment and Climate Change, total heads, carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the Estimates of the Department of Environment and Climate Change carried?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

It's carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Department of Environment and Climate Change carried without amendment.

CHAIR: I'd like to thank the minister and department officials. I don't know if you had any final remarks before we sign off.

Go ahead, Minister.

L. DEMPSTER: I'll just take two minutes.

I just want to really thank both of my colleagues – three, there was a third. The tone of the questioning was really respectful all evening; I appreciate that and I'm sure my staff does as well. I'd be remiss if I didn't thank the staff, they do incredible work in the Department of Environment and Climate Change and Labour.

Chair, it must have been difficult for you to sit through Climate Change questions as a scientist. I could see that you wanted to answer some, but thank you, too. You did a great job as Chair.

Have a good rest of the evening everyone, stay safe.

CHAIR: The Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Yes, I just want to be on the record to thank the public service officials that consistently show their expertise and skill set.

I think before coming into the House in 2019, as a member of the general public, sometimes you don't know who we have working behind the scenes and in the various departments. We only see it at Estimates and, when we do come to Estimates, we realize that we're in good hands. I do thank you for spending your time with us. Thank you for indulging us and even me, as far as I'm no environmental scientist and only on a fill-in basis, and for the few curveballs that I threw you tonight but you were most respectful.

So thank you very much.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

I want to thank the minister and her staff for this evening. It's always a pleasure. It's always great to see you all again every year, and I want to thank you for that.

Thank you, Chair, and I thank the Clerk and the Broadcast team for this evening.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you all.

I'm going to stay to my job as Chair, but it is great to get this catch-up on such great progress in the province.

The next meeting of the Resources Committee will be Thursday, the 17th day of April at 9 a.m. to consider the Estimates of the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

With that, I'll ask somebody to move for adjournment.

E. LOVELESS: So moved.

CHAIR: The Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, with great enthusiasm, thank you.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Thank you all, very much. Have a good evening.

On motion, the Committee adjourned.