



**PROVINCE OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

Second Session
Fiftieth General Assembly

**Proceedings of the Standing Committee on
Resources**

May 5, 2025 - Issue 25

Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Assembly
Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

RESOURCE COMMITTEE

Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills

Chair: Perry Trimper, MHA

Vice-Chair: Craig Pardy, MHA

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

Clerk of the Committee: Jennifer Peckham (A)

Appearing:

Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills

Hon. Sarah Stoodley, Minister

Sharlene Jones, Deputy Minister

Seamus Breen, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services and Policy

Katie Norman, Assistant Deputy Minister, Immigration and Population Growth

Mark Walsh, Departmental Controller

Jeremy Reynolds, Director of Communications

Matt Babb, Executive Assistant

Also Present

Hon. Bernard Davis, MHA, Minister

Hon. Pam Parsons, MHA, Minister

Lin Paddock, MHA

Jack Norman, Government Members' Caucus

Megan Winter, Official Opposition Caucus

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Lin Paddock, MHA for Baie Verte - Green Bay, substitutes for Pleaman Forsey, MHA for Exploits.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Pam Parsons, MHA for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, substitutes for Lucy Stoyles, MHA for Mount Pearl North.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Bernard Davis, MHA for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, substitutes for Sherry Gambin-Walsh, MHA for Placentia - St. Mary's.

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

CHAIR (Trimper): Good morning, I'd like to call this meeting to order.

We now have a quorum, so I'm going to propose that we start. I'm Perry Trimper, the MHA for Lake Melville, and I'll serve as your Chair this morning for these Estimates of the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

Some opening comments I'd like to pass along. First of all, for those from the department, perhaps they haven't been here at the several meetings of Estimates that we've had so far, we are broadcasted and I will do my best to introduce each of the speakers in turn. Sometimes the Broadcast folks will need you to wave to catch you, but they do have a seating chart. You're all seated as you're supposed to, so I thank you for that.

I'd ask you that at the start of a conversation to at least identify who you are and your position, if you like, and we can proceed, basically, for Hansard or the recording of these Estimates.

I ask that you do not adjust the chairs that you're sitting in. We have water coolers and this morning we also have ice in the jugs, so we're really well suited this morning.

We do not have any unaffiliated Members this morning, so I don't need to proceed with that. I would ask that, first of all, the Resource Committee Members, those that are here, would please identify themselves and I'll ask for the Member for Bonavista to please start.

Thank you.

C. PARDY: MHA Pardy from the District of Bonavista.

M. WINTER: Megan Winter, Research and Policy Analyst with the Office of the Official Opposition.

L. PADDOCK: MHA Lin Paddock, Baie Verte - Green Bay.

J. KORAB: MHA Jamie Korab, Waterford Valley.

B. DAVIS: MHA Bernard Davis for the beautiful District of Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, and historic district.

J. NORMAN: Jack Norman, Government Members' Office.

CHAIR: Thank you.

I am going to go back just a second to identify the substitutes that I have on my list this morning. As Mr. Paddock just indicated, he is substituting for Mr. Forsey from Exploits. Mr. Davis, you are replacing Ms. Gambin-Walsh from Placentia - St. Mary's and I'll wait for the other substitutions that at least I have on my list.

I know you guys have all been up late night studying the minutes from the previous meeting. I'd ask for someone to please move for the approval of these minutes from the previous Resource Committee.

Mr. Korab.

I don't require a seconder there, do I, for those minutes?

No? Thank you.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Those minutes are approved.

Thank you very much.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

CHAIR: We will proceed. As we proceed through the Estimates, we have subheadings that I will keep us on track with. The minister will have 15 minutes to open us up for some opening comments. The first responder, representing the Opposition Party, would also get 15 minutes. After that, it'll be 10-minute segments and we'll just go back and forth.

I don't expect that we're going to have a representative from the Third Party this morning, so we'll see. Maybe they show up, but there were some issues they advised us of, so this could be it. I'm looking for one more Member from the government side.

With that, I'll get started, and I'll ask the Clerk to call the first subheading.

CLERK (Peckham): 1.1.01 to 1.2.02 inclusive, Executive and Support Services.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 through to 1.2.02 inclusive carry?

I now turn to the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills for some opening comments.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

Do we need to introduce the team?

CHAIR: I apologize, yes. I would ask you to do that. You can start with yourself.

S. STOODLEY: Okay.

Sarah Stoodley, Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

S. JONES: Sharlene Jones, Deputy Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

K. NORMAN: Good morning.

Katie Norman, Assistant Deputy Minister, Immigration and Population Growth.

S. BREEN: Good morning.

Seamus Breen, Assistant Deputy Minister, Employment and Labour Market Development.

CHAIR: Mr. Babb.

M. BABB: Matt Babb, Executive Assistant to the Minister.

J. REYNOLDS: Jeremy Reynolds, Director of Communications, Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

M. WALSH: Mark Walsh, Departmental Controller.

CHAIR: Thank you.

So, Minister, I'll give you 15 minutes if you like for opening comments and however you want to start.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

I have the privilege of being Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills. I've learned an incredible amount about government and about immigration and about federal government agreements since joining this role. It's been a significant challenge. My last role was all legislation, pretty much; this is almost no legislation, but some still very important legislation. It's been a big learning curve, but excellent.

Obviously, there are three parts of the department, Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, in the title. So I'll tell you a bit about the department. We have over 300 employees spread across Newfoundland and Labrador, and I didn't know when I started, we also operate a network of 19 employment centres across the province.

So I've been sending people there; we've been trying to do a bit more communications and raise awareness of that. We have these 19 employment centres across the province where we have dedicated public servants who help people find jobs. They work with employers. They work with companies hiring apprentices. Anyone can go to these job centres, any time, it's walk-in. You can get help with résumés. You can get help finding a job. They can help you get funding, whether you're EI eligible or not EI eligible. We try and have programs for everyone.

Just a shout-out for anyone listening online and for the colleagues across the way, before I started in this role, I wasn't aware of our employment centre help that we offer across the province. I think that's a significant benefit for the people of the province.

Immigration is also a key important part of this department – something which I've also learned an incredible amount since being in this department. We have a very big team of dedicated immigration experts. In 2024, we welcomed a record of 1,510 newcomers as permanent residents. We've exceeded our 2026 target of 5,100 new permanent residents for a second consecutive year.

I guess, just for the record, I know everyone in this room probably understands this, but we have a declining birth rate. We're not having enough babies to keep our population going and so we need to sustain our population so that, in 20 to 30 years' time, they're people paying taxes, they're people working, they're nurses working in the hospital and there are personal care

attendants so that when we're all in the seniors' homes, people can help take care of us. If we don't bring in newcomers or have more babies, the economy won't work. The math won't work out. There won't be enough taxes to pay for all that. That's really a key part that I hadn't really fully understood before coming this department.

Bringing in newcomers, particularly economic immigrants, has proven very successful, and I know Minister Byrne led the Ukrainian efforts which we'll talk about as well. Seventy-nine per cent of our newcomers are economic immigrants. They help meet key labour market demand and those all come here with a job offer. I think that's a key thing. There are a lot of misconceptions around immigration and newcomers. There are different classes but when we talked about the numbers, the federal government cut our numbers. It was 3,050; our federal government cut it in half. We got an extra 1,000 a year. Those people are all people who come here with a job offer and their economic status is tied to that job.

So these people are working. They're personal care attendants. We've got doctors. We've got social workers. We've got nurses. We've got the CEO of Country Ribbon. We've got lots of different people in lots of different types of businesses all across the province. There are also a lot of food service attendants. I've heard stories from across the province of how their industries would not exist without the help of newcomers. I think that, in a way, newcomers are enabling rural Newfoundland to exist as it does today. I think that's a consideration that not everyone gets. I know that there is, hopefully, a small minority who have very strong negative opinions about newcomers, but we've been dealing with tackling that as well.

Newcomers choosing our province are providing essential services that we all rely on. In 2024, we supported 257 nurses, 433

personal care attendants, 65 early childhood educators, 111 social and community service workers and 154 skilled trades workers to make Newfoundland and Labrador their permanent home. I know we've nominated a doctor. Maybe they haven't come yet, but we'll get to that.

Since February 2022, over 4,400 Ukrainians have come to our province with 82 per cent of those still here working and raising their families. They've become kind of a key part of our life and culture. I'm also Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs. I know now we have almost as many Ukrainians as we do Francophones. I thought that's an interesting perspective. We have over 700 Ukrainian children enrolled in our K-to-12 system. I think that's a shout-out, as well. We help bring them in and we have experts who bring them in but it's really a whole of government approach to ensure that they have the supports they need.

Another key important part of our department is apprenticeship and skilled trades. We are helping to meet the demand for skilled workers by providing annual support to over 1,200 apprentices. We have a training budget that can help employers pay their wages while they're working. We can give them supports while they're learning. We have a \$5.5 million skills trade training budget to cover the tuition costs for this. We also have \$1.8 million to cover other expenses they need, so we can help apprentices with travel, accommodations and different things like that.

We oversee the red seal program and the testing program. Our pass rate is 4 per cent above the national average. In *Budget 2025*, we got rid of the fees for apprentices and trade qualifiers. The fees were not too high, but that was perceived as a potential barrier for people who are currently working in the field to kind of take the next step in terms of getting their qualifications so that they can earn more. So we got rid of all the fees for apprentices and trade qualifiers.

Then, one thing which is very impressive in my opinion, is our new youth summer apprenticeship program, and we fund that through Skills Canada. That provides Grade 10 and 11 students with exposure to careers in the skilled trades. We pay high school students to learn a trade. We had 41 participants in 2024, and we are hoping to have 80 high school students participate this year. We've had amazing testimonials from participants who really get a feel for, oh my God, I love welding or I hate welding, and that's fine too, or maybe, you know, I want to be a red seal chef. I never thought about chef and working in a kitchen as a trade, but that is a key trade. Car mechanics is another one. That's a trade as well. We have many trades and we can get into that if we need to.

As I mentioned, we have 19 employment centres throughout the province that help people advance their careers, funding programs, training options, résumé and interview tips, job search, employment planning and we also oversee the summer student program. I thank for the Members opposite for their recent contributions to that. That helps students across the province get work experience and it helps not-for-profits and companies get students into their companies as well.

We also keep an eye on things like unemployment and labour market participation, because we have the federal government labour market development fund that we can partner with organizations and companies to help change and fix and react to labour market challenges. Our provincial unemployment rate is the lowest it's been in nearly 50 years, so the participation rate for the ages of 25 to 54 is the highest it's been since data collection began in 1976, which is 87.8 per cent. We keep a key eye on that.

We work with community sector organizations and companies all across the province to react to changes, and now obviously the big change is the tariffs;

companies and organizations thinking about how it may or may not affect their operations and the labour market development fund is there that our team can work with those to, I guess, plan training or maybe business change or how do they react to the tariffs.

That's all for an introduction. I look forward to chatting more and answering all of your questions as we go through Estimates.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

I will identify that the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave is replacing the Member for Mount Pearl North.

Okay, the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: I was just wondering, Chair, do we call the subheading first?

CHAIR: No, it's been called.

C. PARDY: Oh, it's been called. Oh, what a poor start.

The minister had referenced that she has learned a tremendous amount since in her position with the department, but one thing that Estimates lends itself to is that it opens up the sharing within the whole Chamber here for us all, because if you're running the show, lots of times this is the opportunity to be able to engage and ask the questions that we're not familiar with. I'll try to be as brief as I can without too much of a preamble but there are a couple of headings that I want to be able to have a commentary on as we move further along.

We're going to look at the Salaries and, when we look at the variances in Salaries, the question would come to mind: What would be the total expenditure in the department from the negotiated salary requirements? Not look at each heading but

what would be the total for salary negotiated commitments.

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

S. JONES: So you're looking at the overall 2 per cent, you mean? What the impact would be on that?

C. PARDY: Yes.

You have 300 employees. I'm just wondering about overall your commitment to the 2 per cent commitment.

S. JONES: I'm going to turn that over to our departmental controller. Do you happen to have the 2 per cent calculation?

M. WALSH: Sorry, I don't have that here right now, but I can certainly provide it.

C. PARDY: Okay, good. Thank you. Just a couple of those before I get into some general questions.

Minister, We were looking at Salaries in 1.1.01, Minister's Office. It went over budget by a little over \$24,000.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

The salaries were a bit higher. We had an increase due to an administrative assistant that was hired to bridge a previous incumbent to retirement. Then when they retired, there was a payout of leave for the retiree.

I'll also mention, just to add on to your previous question about the salaries overall, obviously, with so many staff there is always people moving internally. I sign a lot of RSAs. People move from one job temporarily to another job and then there is like a chain of four to five jobs.

My team are telling me also that 2 per cent works out to \$527,350.

S. JONES: That's approximately.

S. STOODLEY: That would have been approximately the negotiated union increase and then any other change would be just ebbs and flows in hiring and vacancies while we're hiring.

I recently learned, from an immigration officer perspective, a lot of people come in through those roles and they're quite time consuming to hire – you have to do a lot of extra checks for immigration, for example, to be an immigration officer. It's not just an application. There is a higher degree of background checks that have to happen in order to an immigration officer.

That hiring process takes longer than your average government hiring process. Those people who come into those roles, we have a big team in those roles, and they move up higher in our department. So we constantly have a turn of immigration officers, as an example, as they move within government.

Thank you.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Minister.

1.2.02, on the Salaries, we notice that there was some money unspent that was budgeted. Just wondering what positions were vacant here.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

We had a vacant special advisor position. For a while, we had an ADM vacancy. Our current deputy minister and our director of communications steps are lower than the steps of the previous people in those roles. Obviously, every year the public servants move up a step. We have a more youthful executive team, so the step is lower for that team – more energy and youthfulness.

C. PARDY: Thank you. That's good.

Some general questions, Minister, now, if I may, before we proceed. You recently announced an investment of \$1 million to support the creation of a new business

liaison office led by the Labrador North Chamber of Commerce. Can you point out where the money is for this office?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

That would have been from the Labour Market Development fund. In particular, I know, in Labrador, everyone is really eager for all the Churchill Falls work and I think there were some lessons learned in the past where the communities could have been more engaged and more ready – I can't speak to the full proposal off the top of my head, but just to kind of get them ready and make sure that they can best help the industry and best help the province.

Anyway, if anyone else wants to answer specifically what line item that would be coming from.

Okay, Sharlene.

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

S. JONES: Thank you.

Yes, that would be under 2.1.02, Labour Market Development Agreement, and it would show up under our Grants line because that's provided as a labour market partnership, so it'll show up in the Grants.

C. PARDY: So I'm assuming workforce development or supporting business growth, both would be the genesis of this monies?

S. STOODLEY: I'll give you my answer and then maybe the team can fill in any gaps. One of the things is that it is confusing where IET support ends and where support from our department starts.

C. PARDY: Yes.

S. STOODLEY: I know we do work together and a lot of proposals we see have elements of both. From the Labour Market Development fund, the way I find it helpful to think about it is that fund is from

everyone's EI payments. Everyone pays EI. So there's a big fund federally of all the EI money. The federal government, obviously, uses that to pay out EI, but they also then take a big portion of that and they give back to the provinces, and that's what the Labour Market Development fund is. It's the EI money.

So that is money, ultimately, to help get people back to work, to help create more roles for people. It's really about driving employment and training. We have a very formal agreement with the federal government that outlines exactly, but I would ask my team if they want to elaborate from what I've said, if anyone does.

Okay, Seamus.

CHAIR: Go ahead, Mr. Breen.

S. BREEN: I would just add, the minister is correct. That was \$1 million that was provided to the Labrador North Chamber of Commerce to support the creation of a new business liaison office. This new office is intended to advance workforce development and maximize local benefits from anticipated major projects in the region.

C. PARDY: So you would work in tandem with IET here, I think, is what you alluded to.

S. STOODLEY: Yes, I guess, in my experience here so far, we might get a proposal and the team might think okay, this part is us; this part is IET. So then we'll have a chat with IET. There's a lot of back and forth between us and IET in terms of what programs they might have to support a business. Then we do a lot of associations, like construction associations and Trades NL and not for profits as well. We prefer to fund an industry association, let's say, rather than a private company but we still do private companies.

C. PARDY: So you've conceived the office for a noble intent but is there a duration for this office that you have now in mind when

you launched it? A year, five years, 10 years –

S. STOODLEY: The Labrador –

C. PARDY: This office.

S. STOODLEY: Okay, I'm not sure – you might know, Chair, but it's okay. We can certainly find that out if Seamus doesn't have it.

S. BREEN: Yes, we can get back to you on that point.

C. PARDY: Okay, good.

Recently, Minister, you announced an investment of \$371,715 to support long-term sustainability in the St. John's Farmers' Market Co-operative. Can you point out where this money would be?

S. STOODLEY: That would be in the same place as the –

C. PARDY: Same place, the grant?

S. STOODLEY: Yeah.

C. PARDY: Okay.

S. STOODLEY: Anything from the Labour Market Development Agreement would come from that section.

C. PARDY: Did they complete an application, a proposal for that money?

S. STOODLEY: Yes. The Labour Market Development fund, sometimes it starts with a proposal, sometimes it starts with a conversation. A group will come in and say we have this really big problem. Then our team will work with them to craft, I guess, something that aligns with the Labour Market Development Agreement to help, if possible, with their employment or business need related to employment skills and training.

CHAIR: If I may intervene, I'd ask the Member for Bonavista, we're all friends here, but given you're sort of into the next subheading, to maybe just try to figure out where the money is coming from, but then any pursuit of what actually goes on in there would go into the next section.

C. PARDY: Yes.

CHAIR: Thank you.

C. PARDY: I'm filling in for the Member from Clarenville, and I'm sure that he has a very vibrant farmers' market there. Again, this would be an application base, that if somebody put a proposal and application in for the grant, then it would be under the department's consideration as to whether that grant or that proposal was accepted?

S. STOODLEY: Absolutely.

C. PARDY: Okay. good. Thank you.

On March 7, the provincial government implemented changes to the Job Vacancy Assessment and Atlantic Immigration Program designation processes. Just wondering if you can outline the changes that were made or what impact it's having, and if we wish for that section to come up, but at least –

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, that's an excellent question.

I'll give out my overview and then Katie can fill in any blanks. Previously, we had a system which was – I haven't thought about this. It hasn't been top of mind in the last week, apologies. Formerly, everyone could apply, and they were all in one big bucket, and then our IT system that kind of manages this was designed for that.

Last fall, the federal government started to give indications that the immigration system was going to change, their policy and our numbers were going to change. It used to be first in, first out in terms of if you apply,

and then we would approve it. We realized in the fall that we couldn't do that anymore – well, the team probably knew this a while ago but I guess for me it was in the fall. We had to be more strategic in terms of how we managed people's expectations, how we worked with employers, because it couldn't be one in and one out, first come, first serve. For example, we've strategically chosen health care workers.

In terms of people coming into Newfoundland and Labrador, last year we had 3,050 spaces; the federal government announced that was being cut in half. This is within two programs. So then they cut that in half and then of that we get an extra 1,000, but the nuance of that is we're only allowed to take 25 per cent of those from out of country. The other 75 per cent have to be from people who are already in the country. It adds another layer of complexity to our program. Then we also work with employers.

Like I said, all of those people have job offers when they come in. That means that we have employers who've essentially filled out and gone through some steps to get – okay, this is a job in a party sector that, as a government, we think is important, and then a candidate to match that job.

We do have candidates who have applied without a job and so we have to kind of match that. Sometimes there will be a person come to you and say: I want this person and I need them to come here. Then the team figures out: Is that in a key sector? Does NL Health Services want them as a social worker – yes, we do. So that process and optimizing that process required some IT changes, as well we're figuring out all the change in federal government rules, because that's tricky. They keep changing it and we find out the day of and – I won't go on too much about that, but I'm hopeful that it will get better and less volatile.

There is a different way of doing it, which we've now moved to, where it's kind of like

an initial – you say, hi, I'm interested. You fill out an initial application and then we invite them to fill out a more fulsome application if they're in a key sector or if there's an employer who looks for them. It saves time on their end. It's kind of like a two-step interview process, I would say.

Rather than doing the project and doing too much work right away, we just get the initial application. If they're matched with an employer or if they're in a key sector and our team think maybe they have a key trade that we need and we think that we could have space for them, they're invited to fill out a fulsome application – this is a two-step process – and then we'll move forward. We don't waste their time. If we definitely know we're not going to have space for them and they're not in a key sector, we're not going to waste days of their life putting together a complicated immigration package, because this is to apply to move to Newfoundland and Labrador so it's a bit more complicated.

That was a bit of rant but, Katie, I don't know if you want to fill in? Chair, is that okay?

CHAIR: Yes, certainly.

Katie Norman.

K. NORMAN: Thank you for the question.

There's been a lot of change happening in immigration in the last number of months so I can appreciate you asking the question. The thing I guess I would start off by saying is that immigration in Newfoundland and Labrador, up until very recently, the level of spaces allocated by the Government of Canada on an annual basis was either greater than or equivalent to the level of demand in the province.

When somebody applied we were generally able to support them, which means that regardless of the type of business or the type of job, if you were working 30 hours a week, if you were demonstrating attachment

to Newfoundland and Labrador, if you spoke the Government of Canada's level of required English, for example, and if you could demonstrate that you had sufficient financial means to live in Newfoundland and Labrador and establish a home, you would get a nomination.

We go through a process each summer where we identify how many spaces we think we're going need. Last year, we asked the Government of Canada for 4,000 spaces because we looked at what we were hearing from employers, we were looking at our inventory and we recognized that we were going to need to see an increase. That's speaking to some of the demographics that Minister Stoodley spoke to. As a result of that, we came to December 31 – Immigration runs on a calendar year – we had about 700 applications in our pool that we were unable to support. They may have met the criteria; they may have not but they were surplus applications which is something that had never happened before.

Then in early January, when we received word that our immigration capacity had been cut in half, so we went from 2,100 spaces under the Provincial Nominee Program and 950 spaces under the Atlantic Immigration Program and those were cut down to 1,050 spaces for Provincial Nominee and 475 for Atlantic Immigration Program, the decision was taken by the department to immediately pause the program, because if we had continued to process at the rate that we had been, we would have been closing the program very early in this current calendar year.

As a result of that, Minister Stoodley spoke to the expression of interest system. Many jurisdictions had already implemented something like this, but we recognize it's a significant change. It's a brief application with limited supporting documentation required that anyone can apply to. There's no fee. It can be completed in one sitting

and it basically says I'm interested in applying.

On a monthly basis we'll go through that and identify candidates who fit many key labour market priorities because the programs we run are labour market demand driven and everyone has to at least have a 30 hour a week job in order to qualify for those programs. We invited just over 250 people on April 8 and we're just preparing to do our second draw. Throughout the year there will be those draws.

That's the expression of interest applicant side, but you also asked about Job Vacancy Assessment, which is actually a kind of pre-approval to apply for immigration. When we looked at the number of spaces that had been approved under the Job Vacancy Assessment, and also under the Atlantic Immigration Program designation, they're what we call labour market tests. They determine that someone who is a local resident has not been passed over for that job. We ensure that the job has been posted for a set period of time. We do a check to make sure that the employer is in good standing with WorkplaceNL, with the Occupational Health and Safety, with the Province and Labour Relations to ensure there are no issues with Labour Standards, et cetera.

That's that pre-approval. When we went and looked at the number of pre-approved employers, there was a discrepancy between that; a much higher approval than what we had in the immigration space capacity. We were able to negotiate an increase – Minister Stoodley – of an additional 1,000 spaces under the Provincial Nominee Program, but we're still well short of the 4,000 that we needed to identify.

The main change for Job Vacancy Assessment is that the duration of validity of that Job Vacancy Assessment has gone from two-plus years to a year. Previously, we were pre-approving a set number of spaces. If you were looking, you're a food-

based business and you're saying I think I'm going to need five food counter attendants this year, we would pre-approve you for those five, which is basically an expectation that they are going to get a nomination was what was happening in the employer community.

Now what we're saying is, yes, we think you have a legitimate need for food counter attendants, but we're not pre-approving a set amount, because we just simply don't want to have people's expectations that we can't. That's, I guess, how I can kind of explain the broader picture to supplement what the minister offered.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Just a procedural question I'll ask of the Committee, does the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay intend on asking any questions, because otherwise I'll just let the clock run and we'll just renew every 10 minutes as we proceed.

Is that correct?

L. PADDOCK: Potentially.

CHAIR: Oh, potentially. Okay.

Seeing I have nobody from the Third Party, I'll just ask the Member for Bonavista to continue.

C. PARDY: Thank you for that detailed response. That was very informative.

The number of the total economic immigration spaces I think we're allocated is 2,500 or 2,525 is the total we had per year. How many of these now would be filled? The other question to that would be in what areas? I know the minister had said about they were pleased about those in health care and those would be within the poultry industry and as PCAs, but of this allotment that we've got now, the number that's filled, what would be the top occupations that they would be included in?

K. NORMAN: Thank you for the question.

We had obviously processed some files before we received a decision. My understanding is it's probably about 400-ish, but that's an estimate. We could certainly get you the exact number.

By occupation, the largest occupations would be in the health care sector, what I'd call social sector. So we do a lot of support for community support workers, personal care attendants, home support workers, that type of area. There have been other, more highly skilled kind of roles in technology, private business, that type of thing, but we could provide a report of the breakdown by NOC code, if that's helpful. I don't have that in front of me for this year.

C. PARDY: Chair, a lot of these may save time. We won't be redundant as we go into the next section, so I think it'll only expedite as we move along.

You had a specific policy or pathway for individuals to be employed in the film industry. Just wondering, it was an expressed need that was in the film industry for your recruitment which I think is one of the prerequisites for filling. I'm just wondering what was that need, and I know that health care was the one that was the dominant one that you had mentioned. Just if you can speak to that, please.

S. STOODLEY: Sure, thank you. I'll give mine, and then hopefully Katie can fill in.

I think part of the challenge for the film and TV industry is that a lot of people have a lot of short contracts. We have a lot of graduate students. I heard from many graduate students; a bunch of them came in and met with me, pleading with me, not from here. They were newcomers who probably went to Memorial and graduated. They were here under a graduate work permit, and they were working in the film and television industry, but that nature of that is there's a lot of short contracts.

So previously, the requirements for our immigration programs were longer term. You needed steady employment. In my view, with the changes that we implemented – because we wanted these people. I met with a very successful film director who had a lot of short contracts, but because we didn't have a dedicated program for that type of industry with the short contracts, there was no way for her to be able to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador through our programs.

I'll ask Katie to fill in the detail, if you don't mind.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Katie Norman.

K. NORMAN: Thank you.

The thing I would offer about that one is the announcement around film employees was not intended to be like a high-volume announcement in terms of a significant number of people that were intended to come in. It was more to identify that there were a group of individuals working in the province in the film and television sector who, to the minister's point, were unable to meet the employment requirements of our standard Provincial Nominee Program Skilled Worker Category, which is 30 hours a week, a minimum of a one-year contract.

Oftentimes when you looked at their bank records, which you have to apply through immigration, people were applying. They were able to meet the requirements because they were receiving a higher wage, but there were periods of time of unemployment and so when we looked at it as a critical sector, we felt that when we did the analysis, they were able to economically establish.

CHAIR: The minister.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I guess, just to add, as a government, we've prioritized the film and television industry. We have excellent lucrative tax credits which have brought a lot of film industry work here in Newfoundland and Labrador. I think part of that work is having the people who are newcomers in that industry be able to stay here and work here; otherwise, they have to leave.

As Katie mentioned, I would guess the number is not that great but I think for those here it was important that we had a program where they could stay, because they are a very valuable part of the film and television industry.

Thank you.

C. PARDY: Thank you.

The question that was asked – I know you had mentioned and used the word, or was mentioned, the critical sector. If we have a reduced number and these were getting preferential treatment in the process, if indeed they are, would it be disadvantageous for other sectors because this one would be getting preferential treatment?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I think it's a bit of a balance, and I'm not involved in that balance that the team does but I would say as a high level our priorities would be health care, early childhood education and then residential construction. But, given the fact that especially with the federal government's change where only 25 per cent of our newcomers can come from out the country, 75 per cent of them we have to take from people already here. We don't think about the fact that there are a lot of people here who can't stay here for a long time. They can't stay here past their work permit.

Now we have to take 75 per cent of our numbers from people already here, already in Canada. I would envision that the film and

television workers currently here working are going to make up the 75 per cent. Where it's really like, I want to keep the 25 per cent for the doctors and the nurses and the social workers. Then if we have space left, personal care attendants and those community sector workers and then, maybe, we might get a few residential construction, some early childhood educators. Honestly, if we had to choose, we would not choose a film and television worker over a doctor or a social worker.

In the ebbs and flows of the year, these are key skilled people who – so the other element of immigration which I've learned is showing that you're committed to Newfoundland and Labrador. We don't want people to come to Newfoundland and Labrador through our programs and go to Ontario.

Sometimes people get upset by that, but I've been very impressed by how in-depth our team review applicants' connections to Newfoundland and Labrador because we want to have a good retention rate. We want people. We're investing in people. We want them to stay here and build a life here.

We had a group of individuals working in the film and television industry who had been here as students, now working six or seven years, living here. They have friends here and maybe not mortgages if they don't have the status, so allowing them a pathway to stay and contribute to our important economy. We're not recruiting film and television people from out of the country. That's more of like, I would say, a pathway for people already here.

C. PARDY: Okay. Thank you, Minister.

Committed to Newfoundland and Labrador, I think that is the right goal that we have. Do you have data of the retention rate, if we look at five-year intervals, say five years, 10 years?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I will add that Stats Canada has a very comprehensive reporting on retention. It's a bit overwhelming. It's broken down by one year, every year, five years and 10 years, every year increments. So for every year there's like three different metrics.

C. PARDY: Probably online?

S. STOODLEY: Oh, it is online. We have it. Katie, I don't know if you want –

K. NORMAN: Thank you.

From retention rates, the minister is exactly right. There are, depending on landing years, so they base it on the calendar year that you arrive, for Newfoundland and Labrador, and then it's also based on the category that you enter through. So whether you come as an economic immigrant, which would be our programs, if you're family reunification or if you're refugee class.

For Newfoundland and Labrador, the one-year retention rate of people who arrived in 2022 was overall 52.8 per cent, and that varied so as high as 78.6 per cent for family class, 54.5 per cent for economic class and refugee class, 35.7 per cent. There is variance there from year to year. If you look at the three-year retention rate for people who had arrived in 2019, it was 50.7 per cent and the five-year retention rate for people who arrived in 2017 was 45.6 per cent.

I think we recognize that there's a lot of work to do there, which is why focusing on what we call intent to reside or that attachment to Newfoundland and Labrador is really important.

C. PARDY: Good. Thank you.

CHAIR: I'll ask the Clerk to just reset the time for another 10 minutes, please.

Thank you. Go ahead.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Minister.

The family reunification would be the greatest, I guess, retention for us, obviously.

The department launched the program which got a lot of media attention with the investment into the UK soccer team. I think you stated it publicly that you were excited about the program and validated the investment into this. The only thing I would ask now would be, can it be validated with data? Can you validate that investment or would you say: listen, it didn't bear fruit as to what our expectations were?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

I would start by saying that the UK has been proven to be an excellent market for Newfoundland and Labrador.

When you think about the people coming from countries to work and live in Newfoundland and Labrador; especially, let's say, when you think about a health care perspective or a social worker. It's one thing for us to bring – sorry, I don't want to name any countries as an example, but you can imagine that someone coming from some countries, a lot of the norms are different. They might have the training but there might be nuances that provide a barrier. They could be cultural barriers. There could be a lot of barriers that mean that they're not as successful in roles as others from other countries.

We have found that newcomers from the UK to Newfoundland and Labrador are more successful in their careers in Newfoundland and Labrador and stay in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The other issue is, in the UK, they have changing immigration policies. Last year or the year before, so while I've been in this role or just before, they had a significant change in immigration policy because they left the European Union. They were looking at what the UK's immigration policies were going to be. They found they were too open. They wanted to close off from an

immigration perspective so there were tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of people in the UK who, we would be delighted to have here, but who no longer met the UK's criteria.

For example, the amount of money you need in your bank account to apply in the UK doubled, even for people in the UK. I think if you were moving to the UK or if you're in the UK applying for permit status, your children and family were no longer included. You could apply by yourself, but your family was not eligible. If you're a doctor with kids, bring your kids over to Newfoundland and Labrador, you know? There were a lot of people in the UK that legally had to leave the UK and a lot of them, we'd be happy to take in Newfoundland and Labrador. The UK was kind of a key market.

Now, the Barrow initiative is and was – because it still is, we are in year two now of our agreement – kind of more of an international marketing tactic to raise awareness, but I would say the UK is a key market and we've done job fairs. I attended one of the job fairs last year to get a sense of what are we buying? Is this a good use of taxpayers' money? I would say they are a good use of taxpayers' money.

The other element I'll mention is, when someone is deciding to move countries, it doesn't happen tomorrow. We had a team in the UK doing a job fair and it was overwhelming how many people were at the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services booth. Like, let's say the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services booth was there – I'm motioning at the Clerk's Table – and then we had a booth and we had that the YMCA were hiring early childhood educators and you could not get anywhere near. They couldn't hand out the stuff fast enough, the promotional materials. It was overwhelming how many people were trying to get at these tables.

Those people, let's say they're interested. Then they have to talk to an employer. They have to go through the interview process. Let's say they're offered a job. I mean, deciding to move countries is not an insignificant decision. It doesn't happen in 24 hours, right? They have to sell their apartment or get rid of their apartment, sell their furniture or maybe put it in storage. They have to book a plane ticket. They have to come here. That doesn't take three weeks. Sometimes that takes six months and sometimes it takes a year or it could even take longer.

The people that, let's say, were trying to come to Newfoundland and Labrador with jobs in the fall when I was at the job fair, it's unlikely they would have even arrived in that calendar year. They would be arriving now or in the coming months. It's more of a long-tail sales exercise: selling the province, moving countries. The fruits of that, I would say, are six to 12 months down the line.

In saying that, I will ask Katie because we do have all the stats of where people come from. I don't know, Katie, if you want to give an overview of the UK in response to the question.

Thank you.

K. NORMAN: Certainly, Minister, I'd be pleased to.

To minister's point, when the opportunity came forward to partner with Barrow AFC, one thing that we do each year is engage with occupational regulators in Newfoundland and Labrador to determine where people are being successful getting licensed in their field and, consistently across all regulators, United Kingdom was one of the top markets.

There are certain markets in countries, for example like South Korea, where there's a high number of early childhood educators come from there, but if we look at nurses or doctors, we don't see the same trends,

whereas UK often ranked within the top five. So we said there's a critical mass of a wide range of occupations we can pursue. Since the Barrow announcement, we have supported 18 people from the UK in the health care sector to come including a physician who's already here living, working and licensed in Newfoundland and Labrador. I can't think of, really, any other country that that would be able to happen that quickly.

To minister's point, we're still very much in the early days in terms of how long these types of initiatives take to bear full fruit but we have one physician, 12 personal care attendants, three nurses, a home support worker and a social worker. Just last week, there were two UK-based social workers that we had identified through our office who received job offers from NLHS. They were so impressed with the candidates they've asked our office to find 15 more.

This is the kind of thing that, in my experience four years in this job, I can tell you it takes a little bit of time. You don't often see the results within two, three, four or six months. It's 12, 18 or 24 months when you start to see that fruit coming to bear. These are sort of the early observations that we had hoped would come from this opportunity and the on-the-ground promotion in the UK which complements the partnership with Barrow.

CHAIR: The minister.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I'd just add, I was thinking about the job fair and the cost of our team to attend the three or four London job fairs. I worked out in my head that it was probably about \$200,000 for our team to attend and the cost of the booths and the shipping materials and all that. In my head I was thinking, okay, well if we get one doctor from the UK then I think that's worth it, right?

So we got a doctor and social workers and health care workers. I am very happy with our return on investment from our UK activities.

C. PARDY: As I am.

The question was, basically, if you referenced about going over to engage in a job fair at \$200,000 per job fair – you mentioned three in totality –

S. STOODLEY: That was for the total cost.

C. PARDY: For the total cost.

If you had said that you were going to utilize job fairs to go over for the recruitment, I don't think that would raise any attention of anyone. The recruitment is sound. The only thing that threw people for a loop was that we were going now to put a sponsorship on a soccer team.

When you say the job fairs recruited the doctors, the care attendants and the social workers, then I can understand that because that would be a logical pursuit, but we seem to go off that main, logical pursuit a little bit with the sponsorship of the soccer one.

The question would be, how many of the 18 that you had mentioned – and while I know it's early, it's a long-term vision that we're going to look at here, were any of these 18 that you can spearhead from the entry analysis that it was the soccer investment that got their attention? The job fair would be the logical one. Would the soccer investment?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I can't tell you how many people came exactly from the soccer sponsorship, but I will say it's not just, I guess, the sponsorship. Within Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, we have a marketing budget. That marketing budget is used to get people to think about moving to

Newfoundland and Labrador. It was 4 per cent of our total marketing budget at the time.

But, in my opinion, there was so much public relations that came out of that. I think that was an interesting – outside of the sponsorship. So if you have all the people watching the games, fine, then it's going to be in the FIFA game, Newfoundland and Labrador's logo is on the FIFA game when Barrow plays, if you play online FIFA football.

We had two BBC articles, *The Independent*, the UK article, national, Canadian and American news coverage. I did a thing with Northern BBC. He kept asking me about icebergs and bears. From a tourism perspective, everyone was interested in the story. I think the awareness and the value we got from that far, far exceeded the investment.

No, I'm not going to be rushing back to sponsor – if BBC asked me are you going to sponsor a Mexican soccer team because we're looking for residential construction workers in Mexico potentially, I don't think I'll be sponsoring a Mexican soccer team, but I think it was a marketing tactic that we tried – and they also played Chelsea. There were tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of eyeballs on that. I think, take the emotion out of it, if I had to guess, we got the most return on that in terms of awareness of Newfoundland and Labrador across the globe of anything we've done.

CHAIR: I'll ask the Clerk to reset the clock, please.

C. PARDY: Minister, the last point on that. I know awareness but it may be strategic to ask how they found out about Newfoundland and Labrador with anybody coming in. Like the 18, there would be a record of it, how did you find out? Was it a job fair? Was it the Barrow soccer team advertisement? At least that would give us an indication and some direction into the

future that we've got the data to be able to support it.

In the summary, if I hear you correctly, which you'll correct me if I'm off track is that the jury is still out on that investment and time will tell, because it takes time to see what fruits it will bear within four to 15 months.

S. STOODLEY: No, I would say it was a marketing tactic. We did job fairs. Our sponsorship with Barrow was much cheaper than buying a full-page ad in a local newspaper. This was a small part of a very broad marketing exercise to target Newfoundland and Labrador to a UK first and then an international audience. There's signage up in the UK around the games. It's one tactic to support bringing people from the UK to Newfoundland and Labrador.

C. PARDY: Okay, good. Thank you.

In *Budget 2024* we invested \$15 million to support newcomer resettlement throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Just wondering if that money has been spent in its totality and is there an indication of how many have stayed as a result of that investment? Maybe even to go a little further, to drill down, urban versus rural as far as where they settled.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

So I'll give my answer and then I'll pas it to Katie, again.

Absolutely, we do see a lot of our roles going outside the Avalon. We do have settlement grants. I believe we had \$4 million, recently, where we did give to organizations who applied for settlement services to help with retention. I see this as like a retention budget where we're helping organizations that help newcomers to help cover any gaps that they have in key services that they need.

In terms of the urban/rural, I can say that in 2024, we had 36 per cent of our Provincial Nomination Program individuals reside outside the Avalon and we have 43 per cent of our Atlantic Immigration Program, I guess the people who came here through that program, 43 per cent of them lived and worked outside the Avalon.

I think that those are very strong. Katie, I don't know if you want to add anything.

CHAIR: Katie Norman.

K. NORMAN: Certainly, thank you.

So the first part of the question was, has the money been fully expended? Yes, it has, in its totality. A large portion of that \$6.4 million went directly to Ukrainian resettlement services where we do know that the retention rate is 82 per cent.

We also know that within individuals who have been nominated for permanent residents who are Ukrainians, the retention rate is 99 per cent. It's unparalleled. I think to show clearly to the minister's point that when there are targeted investments in culturally appropriate settlement services, it does support retention. Those are obviously early numbers because many of those folks have only been nominated within the last year.

From an urban/rural split, just to complement what the minister said, last year we nominated people into 97 different communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. Yes, obviously, urban centres would have larger numbers but, in particular, just to give you some examples: Corner Brook, 257 people; Mount Pearl, 212; Gander, 120; Happy Valley-Goose Bay, 115; Paradise, 92; Conception Bay South, 82; Labrador City, 68; Clarenville, 56 people; and Deer Lake, 54 people. Those are, obviously, some of the larger communities in the province but within an overall grouping of 97 different communities

which, I think, shows the province-wide reach of the programming.

C. PARDY: The Ukrainian newcomers on the Bonavista Peninsula have integrated into the community extremely well. I think that is very noticeable in discussions with them and in their engagement in the community, so nothing but a success.

Last year in Estimates, then minister said, "We hired a noted, nationally known expert in evaluation of the apprenticeship programs, a firm that had done significant work in this area already and continues to be noted as a renowned expert. They're providing us with a review of some of the things about our apprenticeship program. This review is being completed using a diverse mixture of primary and secondary data collection methods including stakeholder consultations."

Can you give us an update on that? Are there some specific findings that came out of that review, and is it possible to see the final report?

S. STOODLEY: Oh, yes. Thank you very much. Yes, the report is public. When we did our apprenticeship campaign we also just added that to our website.

There was nothing controversial in it. It was a very helpful review. We are currently working through the recommendations. I would just highlight, for me, that I thought they were areas where we can do better, like employee engagement. There were areas that we were doing really well. In terms of Indigenous trades, we're doing really well.

I don't know if anyone from the team has anything else they wanted to add, but it is available online. Yeah, it's public.

S. BREEN: You're correct, MHA Pardy, that apprenticeship was completed this past year. It was publicly released in February 2025.

There were 31 recommendations in the report. The report identified positive things that are happening and occurring in the apprenticeship system, and it also identified some areas for improvement, as the minister mentioned. Some positive things that are happening in the system include, and this was identified by the external consultant, the province is providing substantial financial assistance in the sector. We are doing a good job in promoting underrepresented groups in the system, and there is certainly dedicated staff in the department and in the system working in this area.

In terms of improvement areas that were identified in the report, one area was industry engagement that needs some more focus as well as consistency of training across some of the institutions and entities that are involved in training apprentices, as well as some digitization of processes.

In terms of the status of the report that you asked about, I think at the moment, as of March 31, four recommendations are completed, 25 are in progress, nine not quite initiated and seven still require some collaboration and coordination with other departments, because not all of this rests within the jurisdiction of IPGS.

To illustrate some examples of work that's been completed already since the report has gone public, we've launched a successful media campaign, the Make It Excellent campaign. I'm not sure if you've seen that media campaign out there trying to raise awareness about the importance of the sector and trying to draw people in. We've also invested and have partnered with industry as part of an open house at our 19 regional employment centres across the province. I'm happy to report that about 100 employers participated in last week's event to try and assist high school students in finding jobs. We've also eliminated, as was announced in the budget, all fees for apprentices.

Thank you.

C. PARDY: I'd like to follow up on that a little more, but I'll wait until the subheading when that comes up a little further.

Last year, we mentioned the province was utilizing – even in previous years, not just last year – temporary accommodations for those coming into our province. What would be the number now that we would have in temporary accommodations in our province?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I did read, I think, our average number of nights in temporary accommodations previously – so when the Ukrainian issue happened or the global conflict, we did provide hotel supports for those Ukrainians. That is no longer a program that is provided. We do have some humanitarian migrants in temporary accommodations. I know overall our average nights of people in temporary accommodations is 54 nights.

Katie, I don't know if you wanted to elaborate?

CHAIR: Katie Norman.

K. NORMAN: What I would say about temporary accommodations right now is, to Minister Stoodley's point, Ukrainian temporary accommodations have concluded. There are no Ukrainians currently residing in hotels.

From a humanitarian migrant's perspective, the Government of Canada is covering 95 per cent of the cost of that. Throughout late March and early May, 54 humanitarian migrants have arrived. A handful of them have already moved into community. I don't have the exact number of how many, like, last night were in hotel, but it would be probably in the mid-40s that are currently in accommodation.

Actually, I just got a response from my director who said it's 30. There are 30 humanitarian migrants in hotel.

C. PARDY: Okay. Thank you very much.

We talked about the success in the integration of the Ukrainian nationals that came here. Before we would lose those that were looking to come to our province because they'd go off to a culture that would be elsewhere in Canada where there was a large number of similar nationals. We seem to have now that Ukrainian culture created in our province.

My question would be, how many Ukrainian newcomers did we have in the last year? I'm assuming if we have that culture – how many are coming?

K. NORMAN: In 2024-25, that fiscal year, we welcomed 647 Ukrainians.

C. PARDY: There were 647 in that calendar year?

K. NORMAN: Within that calendar year of the over 4,000. Yeah, so it's a smaller number than the few years past, which is in response to the geopolitical situation.

C. PARDY: Yes, right, but still significant.

K. NORMAN: Significant, yes.

C. PARDY: A significant number.

Just a couple of more before we conclude and move on with your permission, Mr. Chair.

With regard to the Job Creation program, it does some wonderful things in rural Newfoundland and in the District of Bonavista, indeed. Is it possible to get the breakdown of the number of people that availed of the JCP?

CHAIR: Seamus Breen.

S. BREEN: Sure.

In 2024-25, 723 individuals availed of the JCPs.

C. PARDY: Was it 800 last year? Now, I shouldn't even throw that out there.

S. BREEN: Yeah.

C. PARDY: It was? Okay.

S. BREEN: Last year it was 867 individuals.

C. PARDY: Oh, okay. Any reason for the decline here from one calendar year?

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

S. JONES: Thank you.

The budget remained the same, so it was just that the uptake of the program was less this year.

C. PARDY: Okay.

S. JONES: There was no change to the budget.

C. PARDY: Oh, sure. Yes.

The department has done an analysis on the obstacles that may be facing skilled trade workers from working in one province to the other province; different regulations like the fall arrest training by the province might be one that would come to the forefront of my mind.

I know we've done the harmonization but is there anything else that we're looking at to make sure that we eliminated the barriers? If that's the goal of the department.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

We have the *Fair Registration Practices Act* which was passed last year and is now in force, I believe – almost? The regulations?

S. JONES: Should be soon.

S. STOODLEY: Yes, soon in force. We also have coming in regulations so they should be in force shortly.

That provides regulators listed in the act with – they have to process applications within a certain time frame. There's a timeline. Applications within Canada have to be processed by a certain time than applications out of country. That is one thing we are working on. It is a balance between different industries. We can't say we should get rid of all the things for all areas. I've learned in discussions, particularly in response to the tariffs, that, in some instances, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians might not be better off and our province and our economy might not be better off in all instances with everything removed.

We also work with the regulators. I met with the nursing regulator, and they told me that they will turn around a nurse's application from another province in less than one business day. So we do work very closely with the regulators and I would say they do understand their role in making sure that getting here is not too onerous.

I don't know, team, if anyone else wanted to add to that?

CHAIR: Mr. Breen.

S. BREEN: The only thing I would add, the other significant initiative, the department is involved in is the Atlantic trades harmonization project, that has resulted in 23 high-volume trades. We are involved in that with our counterpart PTs in the Atlantic region and that's resulted in the harmonization, as I mentioned, of 23 high-volume trades and development of curriculum standards and logbooks for apprentices.

C. PARDY: In my eagerness to ask one more question before we get to that

subheading, we've harmonized the testing; I'm assuming that the logical answer would be we've harmonized the curriculum as well? That would be the same?

S. STOODLEY: From a trades perspective, there are Atlantic harmonization of trades. There are a certain number of trades where all provinces in Atlantic Canada have the same curriculum and the same testing. That is enforced now and we're always looking at how we can better expand that. We work with industry on that.

I don't know, Sharlene, if you want to add?

S. JONES: The one thing I will say is that, yes, we've harmonized the program deliverables and the outcomes and the program outlines; however, how each institution or instructor proceeds to teach that or what books they use, that is still up in their prerogative. They do have a set outline: these are the deliverables and the program outcomes that you need to achieve for the students.

C. PARDY: Delivery of the curriculum will always be a variable that we'll have trouble with, controlling any variation.

Section 1.2.02, before we move on from this section. In Salaries, of 1.2.02, this year the budget is planned to increase by \$1.75 million. I'm just wondering the positions to be added here?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

We have the 2 per cent increase for unionized and management staff – I also saw the amount – plus the government has a graduate recruitment program.

We have a graduate recruitment for the graduate recruitment program as part of IPGS, that is not part of our salary budget. So it's the 2 per cent plus the grad recruitment. Then we also had an IT manager, sorry. That was something I fought for; a new role to look at IPGS' use of

IT and work with OCIO from a leadership perspective. Those are the two new roles and the 2 per cent.

C. PARDY: Okay, Minister, would that be the first graduate that you've had as far as the graduate recruitment program, or you've had them for some number of years?

My question to that would be: What is the retention of these graduates; because I think they're selected to be amongst the tops in their class when they come to the public service, I'm just wondering about what the retention would be of these graduates in your department?

S. JONES: Thank you.

The retention of the graduate recruitment program would better be asked to the PSC, because they run it.

When we're given a graduate recruit, we get the graduate recruit for one to two years. Sometimes a graduate recruit does so much in one department and then moves on. We've had grad recruits in the past. We've had one previously. They actually manage to get a full-time job within the service. So the service, in its overall, is retaining that person and now we have a new person in this section that's just recently started.

Just speaking as a mentee of grad recruits from other – I've had two now and they're both still here. It seems like a lot are finding fulfillment by staying in the public service. I see a lot of them around, but the question on the actual retention rate probably should be asked to the PSC.

C. PARDY: Okay, thank you.

Grants and Subsidies under that same section, 1.2.02, just wondering where this money would go? It's about \$1.5 million.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

One of the things I've learned about this department is there is some core funding in this department for some organizations. This includes core funding for Stella's Circle because, as the departments change and transform and move, sometimes things get left behind – not left behind but sometimes things move along. When parts of this department were formerly with parts of CSSD, there was funding for Stella's Circle. As this department gives a lot of funding out – we are experts at giving funding – that is for some core funding for Stella's Circle. We also have some other funding for some community-based organizations that was formerly given out by CSSD.

CHAIR: I ask the Clerk to reset the clock, please.

C. PARDY: Is it possible to get a list of those, Minister?

S. STOODLEY: Yes.

C. PARDY: Yes, okay, thank you.

S. STOODLEY: That would be on the thing you're provided, yes.

C. PARDY: Okay, good. Thank you very much.

The last question in this section, the Revenue - Provincial, I'm just wondering how the revenue is received, what is collected, and what accounts for the less than \$75,000 that was anticipated? That would be in the revenue, the amount in 02 there.

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

S. JONES: Thank you.

The revenue there, that relates to miscellaneous repayments of prior year expenditures; basically, any overpayments. If there is any return from any of the community partners of any unspent funding, then that comes in from community groups,

clients and any labour market partnership. When we have an agreement if they don't spend all the money, that comes in. It fluctuates from each year, so \$200,000 is put in there. That was an average that was determined many years ago but this past year, only \$125,000 was returned.

C. PARDY: Which can be determined to be a positive.

S. JONES: It is actually. The less the number the better because that means they're using the funding, yes.

C. PARDY: It seems a strange way to look revenue but really it's a positive.

S. JONES: I know, it's probably the only time we think of it that way.

C. PARDY: Mr. Chair, music to your ears that this Member is finished with this section. I missed the calling at the start so I'm assuming that we're going to move on to section 2.1.01 after this?

CHAIR: Thank you, I say to my colleague.

I'll ask the Clerk to recall the first subheadings.

CLERK: 1.1.01 to 1.2.02 inclusive, Executive and Support Services.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 to 1.2.02 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Thank you. That subheading is carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 1.2.02 carried.

CHAIR: Maybe just in the terms of functioning through our allocated three hours, we're approaching 10:30, the halfway

point, I'll perhaps ask the Clerk to recall, but if you like we could take a 10-minute break now.

Would you like to do that? Okay.

Let's call the heading and then we'll take a 10-minute break.

CLERK: 2.1.01 to 2.1.05 inclusive, Employment and Skills Development.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 through 2.1.05 carry?

I'll ask that we reconvene at 10:33.

Thank you.

Recess

CHAIR (Trimper): Thank you.

I now call this Estimates of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills. We've just introduced subheadings 2.1.01 through 2.1.05.

I'll turn to the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: I stated in my preamble that there would be a couple of subheadings that I'd like to just have a few words in advance of. The one I'd like to start with would be 2.1.04. That's the Employment Assistance Programs for Persons with Disabilities.

I can speak from the District of Bonavista, and I'm sure that can be extrapolated from Baie Verte - Green Bay to every district in the province, Mahatma Gandhi said, "The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members." This is a good program. I think it's a sound program.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

C. PARDY: I'll just use Darren. Darren has been working at an establishment in my district for 20-plus years. Prior to that he was on income support. He's been with that

employer for some time. It's a small business in rural Newfoundland that he operates.

Financially, any drop in the remuneration for Darren puts a strain on this local business. So 20 years he's been employed. For 20 years it has given meaning to his life. That's his reason for existence, his work, and the business owner is left with a decision as to whether the affordability of this small business in rural Newfoundland can maintain and continue on. The directive from the department has said now that you drop down and remunerate \$10 per hour. I think it's \$10 per hour currently, and I think for new employees it goes down to \$8 per hour.

Now, you can correct me on that, Minister, if that's wrong. At least I don't have to go with my narrative any further and talk about some others.

S. STOODLEY: I can give my example and I'll pass it over to Sheila.

C. PARDY: Yeah. It's been \$12 for the past two or three years, I know that, but now I think they've been informed that it's gone back to \$10.

S. STOODLEY: We have not – okay, sorry. I'll let Seamus.

S. BREEN: MHA Pardy, I'm interpreting that you're referring to the Supported Employment program with you commentary –

C. PARDY: That is correct.

S. BREEN: – but no, we are not the employer in these situations. The department has not mandated any wage decreases or anything of that nature. In fact, the budget has remained the same.

CHAIR: The minister wants to add something.

S. STOODLEY: Yeah, so the federal government envelope decreased. We maintained the budget consistently. I know that we had a lot of Supported Employment organizations asking for more money. We are saying your budget is staying the same. It's within those agencies of how they manage that budget within their organization.

I do want to correct, no one would be getting paid less than minimum wage. We provide a subsidy for the employee and we would not be dictating that that amount would be decreasing. They have to manage within their own envelope of funding. Unfortunately, that hasn't increased. I have committed to the Supported Employment agencies that we would not cut their budgets but that they would remain the same.

C. PARDY: The only thing I can report, Minister, is that we have many that would be in my district that are at the stage where they don't think that they can maintain that supportive working environment for these workers. That's where it is.

They – through whatever process, and it may not be directly from the department, and while you maintain your payment and your budget, what you've had, the reality on the ground is that Darren's business and place of work, for the past two or three years, was getting \$12. He's now been informed by the agency that's overseeing it, which I have no knowledge of in particular, that they will now be getting \$10.

If we look at that situation with Darren, that business owner is wondering about his affordability in keeping Darren on his employment, and what he would have if he added up his cost. According to his costs, what he was stating, was that he pays 1.4 per cent in EI and he'll pay CPP and it is a significant cost that he's got to put out and it seems to be getting more.

We've got not-for-profits in one historic community in my district where Kyle, since I think 2012, has been working. While the business owner in rural has got to maintain, the not-for-profit is very doubtful they can continue on with that drop in employment. It wasn't too long ago that there was a study done and I recall – and forgive me for not having the recall of who did the study – you'll probably be aware of it, that had stated that for every one dollar that was invested, it brought a three dollar return.

One thing is that they would miss their employment if they ceased to work. The other thing would be their health because, in many of these cases, it is the job of which is their reason to get out of their house, out of their bed and to go to work. We've got many people in the District of Bonavista, which I can speak for, very concerned about where we're going with the supportive working employment. The alternative would be, if they lose their work, there has to be an analysis done because then they fall back on income support, and then we look at what the cost would be to the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The humane thing, as Ghandi had said, is that we make sure we look after them because the program is a good program. Nobody would debate and, I would think, say contrary to that it's a great program. I've seen it, whether it was in the personal care home in Catalina, whether it was at the Red Circle in Bonavista, whether it was at the Trinity historic properties in Trinity. It has a whole lot of value and brings a lot to these individuals.

So even though you may not be directly involved with it, but if your funding is staying the same, we seem to have a situation where there is a shortfall out there where the viability of the programs serving these workers would be in jeopardy.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I will say, then I'll pass over to Seamus, we did a supportive employment review of this program. I think there's seven or eight or nine agencies that deliver this program across the province. In the review, we found that, let's say, not all were delivering the program as the spirit of the program intended. So we are currently working with all of the supportive employment agencies to bring everyone up to the desired program standard, be more explicit.

We're working with them on their expenses because, again, there are some organizations that had expenses that we – it's about how they prioritize. We want to see the people getting the money, absolutely. So our team are working with the supportive employment organizations on new contracts, I believe it will start August 1, bridging until then – or our current contracts are extended until then so that we make sure that all of the organizations are delivering the programs within the spirit of the program. We wouldn't see anyone lose employment or anything like that. Everyone will be grandfathered in.

That review has happened, and we are currently deep in the trenches, I would say, with these supportive employment organizations. Working through what the new contract looks like, how they're managing their expenses in terms of running the office and hiring job trainers and how they manage their expenses to deliver the program.

I don't know if anyone else had anything they want to add.

Thank you.

S. BREEN: Sure.

Just to reiterate your point, we agree. Investment in this area is important, and it does say a lot about your society, you know, how you treat your vulnerable sector for sure. We would agree with that.

The minister is correct, we did complete a supportive employment review. We did an RFP and Deloitte, an independent consultant, completed that review. Basically, we also had some consultation with 18 of the supportive employment agencies to go over the main review findings.

What we've done here, MHA Pardy, is we've extended every contract for 18 of those supported employment agencies until July 31. The review did find some challenges in the sector such as inconsistencies with agreements and unclear expectations amongst different players in the system and some duplication across agencies.

We are working with the agencies on that. So what we've asked them to do is, first of all, we've extended all of the contracts until July 31, 2025, and we're going through a retendering process now. We've asked them to submit new applications now that they know what the review findings were. Those new applications were due April 30. The department, now, is going through all of those applications and what we'll be doing now is we'll be entering into new contracts with these agencies effective August 1.

C. PARDY: So it's a restructuring of the program to make sure that efficiencies are attained. Would that be a fair assessment? We've got to work within what the budgeted amount would be now for the program which is the same as what we've had for the last couple of years, I would assume.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

Overall, the program budget from our department is the same. I would say we're clarifying some of the expectations that maybe were not in the contract, just to make sure that everything is being operated at the same level across all of supportive employment agencies. We note that there is room for efficiencies and so that is being worked on, on the ground, with the supportive employment organizations,

individually, with the aim of having appropriate valuable employment for as many people as possible across Newfoundland and Labrador.

I guess that's all I can say at the moment. We would not decrease the budget and we believe that the program can be delivered within that budget this year.

C. PARDY: So part of this review will be zeroing down on the ground level that would look at what the remuneration is going to be for the hirees, the businesses or the not for profits that would have them. That would be part of, I'm assuming, of the re-analysis of this program, operationally. Again, I'm assuming the Deloitte is not online. Did I miss that?

S. STOODLEY: Not yet, no.

C. PARDY: That's not online? No. So I'm assuming the only thing being we can look at a restructuring of the program, but it is going to be left for one of the employers that got a small business that they're now going to have to pay \$6 out, plus their CPP, plus the EI, 1.4 times, it is a significant demand on them.

As long as the restructuring looks at what that really at the ground level is for these small businesses in rural Newfoundland – and they vary, Minister, as we all know. That is my concern. I am truly concerned for those individuals that I see the merit that we just applaud the program. As long as this restructuring doesn't lose track and create more hardship for those that would be hiring those individuals.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you. I would agree with your feedback on that.

We don't dictate the amount paid. But I will say that there were areas where there was funding available that was not used or that was significantly underutilized. Part of this is we're trying to streamline and – there were pots of money that were not used in other

places that could be better reallocated to people, for example.

That's been the spirit of the review, and we believe we can successfully administer the program within the same budget under the new contracts.

C. PARDY: Okay, thank you.

That's a very sensitive one and an important one. I state that from my knowledge of the program, and I celebrate its success, I'm fearful of the outcome.

Just for the record, it concerns me and worries me to know that if this is what's happening now with the reduction, we're going to lose a lot of these employers. I would hope that the restructuring does show that we don't lose anybody in that transition.

S. STOODLEY: I've had a lot of supportive employment agencies reach out to me. We do have a team on the ground working with them very closely. I've heard from supportive employment agency boards as well. Please send any individual challenges to us. We can certainly work with them.

That's what we are doing through the new contracts starting August 1. There are opportunities for supportive employment agencies to combine. I believe there's one building where numerous supportive employment organizations all operate in the same building. They all have photocopiers and they all have, you know –

C. PARDY: Yes.

S. STOODLEY: I do want to reiterate, there were pots of money that were not being utilized that could be now better utilized for people.

I guess the alternative is that government hires the people. We're not doing that right now because the support employment agencies are the employers. We're not the employers. We don't tell them you have to

administer the program exactly in this way. We're just now making sure that the standards and all of our expectations are met in the contract. There are lots of organizations who are able to run the programs within the budgets that they have, so we believe that we can get there but I'd be happy to dive into any one in particular further.

C. PARDY: No, I don't disagree with anything you said. That's understandable. If you're going to look for efficiencies within the operation of this, and that's sound. Nobody would disagree with that. The only thing I would hope that I have achieved is the importance of what the outcome would be for the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador and probably most importantly, for those who have gainful employment in our districts throughout the province. I'm not sure how many hundreds there are but if it's 700 or 800 of them that is significant.

We never lose track, even though I know we talk about sometimes we don't have the connectivity, what the cost would be if we didn't have this. I don't know whether the report from Deloitte had mentioned: what the cost to the taxpayers would be if we didn't have this. I would assume that if the previous study that I cited was accurate with a \$3 return, then I would think that that would be in that report which would give the impetus and the importance that we have to make sure we maintain this.

Anyway, there's a sensitivity to make sure we don't lose our way and, in the interim, we don't lose the employment for these individuals. Thank you very much.

I'd like to move on now to 2.1.05, which is the other one that I wanted to speak to; that's on the Apprenticeship and Trades Certification.

I'm slightly familiar with the Ellis scale which talked about the Red Seal, and then you had some of those which are compulsory trades. Now, if we look at Newfoundland

and Labrador and the Red Seal, I think there two. There was the crane operator and there was the residential electrician under the Red Seal Program, if I'm not mistaken. I know there were others as well, some other crane operators that would be the case.

I wonder why we don't have more compulsory. When I say that to you, I'm looking at the automotive technician. We wonder about public safety, and I know the residential electrician, hey, that should be compulsory because we don't want any Joe going in there that's going to fool with the safety within the wiring of our house, but when we look at public safety on our roads, has there been contemplation within the department to look at this being a compulsory trade under the guise of public safety on our roads?

The other thing I throw out, Minister, would be, well, I recall several years ago, a friend went off the road around Rockcut, just up the Bellevue area – heavy rain and they went off the road. The tow truck operator who came to tow that car back on had said that was the eighth vehicle that they were out to retrieve from the roads. The tow truck operator also added that the vast majority had terrible tread wear on the tires, and he had said, little wonder.

I've often said to my children, if you can avoid driving on the Trans-Canada when it's wet and rainy, do that. Nighttime, moose, that means increase the probability that you're not going to be involved with something. When I look at those, a friend down the street can buy a car 15 years ago, no inspection necessary. Even to today, they drive where nobody is going to do an inspection on that vehicle to my understanding.

Tread wear and those servicing technicians that are not compulsory trades, so if I can throw that out to you that's – don't ask me to repeat it.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you. I'll answer a bit and then I'll pass it to the team.

I guess, working backwards in your question and statement there, this is not in this department but with my Digital Government and Service NL hat on, all vehicles have to be inspected when they're sold.

C. PARDY: Yes. If you don't sell was my question. If you hang on and you have a vehicle for –

S. STOODLEY: Correct. I know some of your colleagues have brought up looking for yearly mandatory inspections for vehicles, this is again my former hat, Service NL. I'll just answer because I'm here and I know the answer.

I've had many meetings, hours of meetings, about that particular topic. When you look at the data on crash reports, vehicles in Newfoundland and Labrador in particular, when they have accidents it's not because of mechanical failure. We know that when you bring your vehicles in for servicing – sorry, I'm realizing I shouldn't talk about this too much because it's not even this department – dealers and mechanics do tell you what you need to do, and most people do that. If we had mandatory yearly inspections, the people who are already keeping their vehicles maintained would continue to keep their vehicles maintained.

There's a lot of illegal activity with people not registering their vehicle, driving unregistered, unlicensed and uninsured vehicles, those would be the same people who don't get the yearly inspections.

Anyway, I'm happy to have a conversation with you and the Service NL people are as well. I will say, we have harmonized from a trade perspective. There are more compulsory trades than that. I'll leave it to my team to explain but we have harmonization across the Atlantic provinces in terms of many areas. Every province is a little bit different but I will pass it maybe to

Sharlene. We could talk about the mechanic trade in particular or how that works.

S. JONES: Thank you.

Newfoundland and Labrador has five compulsory trades: the boom truck operator, construction electrician, residential electrician, mobile crane operator and the tower crane operator. That's our five. Initially, all trades are designated as voluntary and government designates a trade as compulsory when industry can demonstrate how doing so will meet the interests of the public, not just those of industry. So, in fact, we respond to the industry identifying trades that they feel should be compulsory. We regularly review applications and consult with industry stakeholders to ensure trades are meeting the necessary criteria.

What I can say in the last 3½ years since being in this department, no one's brought forward in particular the automotive technician, but the next time we're with our industry stakeholders, we will definitely just raise that with them on your behalf just to see if that's something of interest they want to discuss.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I will add, there are standards for that, on the flipside, from the inspection station perspective. If you're someone who Service NL has licensed to perform an inspection on a vehicle, they have standards that are required and there is a checklist that you have to meet of the vehicle regulations. There are two or three sets of regulations under the *Highway Traffic Act* that apply for the vehicle. The person performing that work has to meet the criteria for doing that work and, in order to inspect a vehicle, they have to go through the multiple checklist and they have to be authorized to do a vehicle inspection by Service NL.

It's not just on the trade side; I would say that the public safety there is on the fact that

Service NL designates them as yes, you have the training and expertise required and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador says that you can do an official inspection on a vehicle and that person is granted that inspection authority. It's like different sides of regulations.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Minister.

I understand that. My only thing was the public safety fact that somebody could hang on to a car for 20 years and they could be on the road travelling the Trans-Canada between Clarenville and St. John's, and that's my thing. It doesn't have to be yearly inspections, but I think the industry, when you get together and meet, maybe that's something that you look at and say well, after X number of years, like 10 or 12 years or after 400,000 kilometres, the vehicle may have to be inspected for road worthiness on our public highways.

S. STOODLEY: That's a Service NL thing.

C. PARDY: Yes, 100 per cent.

When it comes to the certification, whether it be plumbing or whatever, I know that it's nice to have somebody with a compulsory and with the training to know that, by golly, if someone is coming in to do the work at your place, then you know that you've got the credentials, and it makes a difference. I know that's not easy probably, but for consideration, that's just something I would bring up.

I'm assuming the federal grants were cut. They had the Apprenticeship Incentive Grant and you also had the Completion Grant. Are they still active? I think you had \$1,000 given to an apprentice every time they did their block. For four blocks, it could be \$4,000. Then if they completed their apprenticeship program, it was \$2,000 completion. It may not seem like a lot of money but –

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I'm not familiar with those bonuses, I guess, directly. We do pretty much fund – if you want to be an apprentice, we have very generous supports. Like, we'll give you living expenses, travel expenses, all that to pay the way.

I don't know if the team wants to add to that.

S. JONES: Sure, I can take that one.

Yes, you're correct. There were a couple of federal programs that concluded March 31 of this year. That included the Apprenticeship Incentive Grant, their Completion Grant and their Canada Apprenticeship Loan. I believe up to \$4,000 in interest-free loans. That one is maintaining but the other two grants have expired.

S. STOODLEY: They were federal?

S. JONES: There were all federal.

S. STOODLEY: Okay.

S. JONES: Yeah, we didn't administer those.

C. PARDY: In your analysis, would you think that that's going to negatively impact the apprenticeship program? I know that the interest-free loan, that's wonderful. There's a limit on that, it's up to \$4,000?

S. JONES: Yes, correct.

In one of the conversations that I had probably last September with a federal counterpart, one of the things they said is that they actually had low uptake on those grants. One of them, for example, is \$1,000. To fill it out or whatever, they found that they had low uptake. So they felt that there were going to be some changes being announced in the federal budget related to apprenticeship, which they have, last year.

However, the details of some of the new apprenticeship funding has not been

released to us. We don't know what that means for the apprentices or our clients. But they did say that they're doing some different programs with the feds. We're not privy to that information at this time.

C. PARDY: The uptake on the apprenticeship program, we're tracking the data on those people that are going to the program. Have we maintained consistency in that or are we ebbs and flows? Are we decreasing the number of apprentices that we see that are going back for their journeyman?

S. JONES: Seamus probably has the data – I believe the number of apprentices we currently have right now is 1,200. It does ebb and flow, and we're putting a lot of time and effort and work into trying to increase our numbers. But I will hand it over to Seamus to see how the trend has been going.

S. BREEN: Just as an example, apprentices in completed training sessions we've actually increased. So '23-'24, we had 665. In '24-'25 fiscal year, we've had 777.

C. PARDY: Just wondering, is there an area, a trade that jumps out at you there that would be more prevalent than others?

S. BREEN: I would say that mostly construction, electrician, automotive service technician, they're the highest volume trades right now as of March 31, 2025.

C. PARDY: Good, thank you very much.

If I can go back to the 2.1.02, the Labour Market Development Agreement. Under the Allowances and Assistance, is it possible to get an explanation of where this money goes? That's 09.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

That's money for skills development, the JCP programs, Self-Employment

Assistance programs and that would be our apprenticeships supports. So all of the money that we give to apprentices, educational assessments and some WorkplaceNL funding. That's like all of the JCPs. We have a Self-Employment Assistance Program, skills development and apprenticeship supports.

C. PARDY: Thank you.

So we went from a budget in 2024 in that program of close to \$62 million. Now we're down to \$55 million. Can you explain the reduction?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

Yes, the federal government cut or they did not continue an increase to our Labour Market Development and so that is applied in different buckets throughout our department. This would be one of the areas where, for our Labour Market Development Agreement from the federal government, it was cut for the upcoming budget.

C. PARDY: Okay.

The Grants and Subsidies – I'm assuming they're given out and that'll be in the package that we'll receive – the list of those.

S. STOODLEY: Yes.

C. PARDY: Can we get a couple of the higher ones?

S. STOODLEY: Yes, of course.

So just a high-level overview. That's Labour Market Partnerships. So that also pays for our Apprenticeship Wage Subsidy. We have a JobsNL Wage Subsidy. We provide employment assistance services. That also pays for JCPs from a project sponsor overhead perspective, research and innovation funding, employment enhancement, Labour Market Integration for Newcomers and then we also have an

agreement with College of the North Atlantic where we give them funding.

All of the breakdown of that will be provided, but that's where that money goes.

C. PARDY: Minister, an overview of the revenue there from the federal government?

S. STOODLEY: So that's the revenue from the federal government for the LMDA.

C. PARDY: Okay, thus the reduction we got here.

S. STOODLEY: Yes.

C. PARDY: Okay.

I'm going to defer to my colleague now from Baie Verte - Green Bay, from the fishing region of NAFO 3K.

L. PADDOCK: And a mining jurisdiction as well.

I've got, if I may, some general overview questions.

You've indicated five compulsory trades; are you doing any jurisdictional scans given both of the projects that are about to start, the demographics of where we are and the competition that we have across Canada? Are you doing any jurisdictional scans of what other provinces are considering for compulsory trades?

S. STOODLEY: I'll pass it over to the team but, I will say, all the provinces are competing for some of our trades people now, which is a challenge. I know with our new Churchill Falls MOU or MRU and the subsequent agreements, our Indigenous first, Labrador is second, Newfoundland and Labrador third and everywhere else in Canada fourth in terms of jobs. We do want to get as many apprenticeship and trades people into that realm as possible.

We use our immigration program within the same department in that lens as well. The Canadian Government led a delegation, which we participated, in Mexico looking for residential construction workers because the federal government found that there was a potential alignment there. So we participated in a national effort to look at construction workers in Mexico.

It is our role to look at it from a MOU perspective and then, with Finance, considering the future landscape of development projects across the province with the industry associations: Where are the labour market gaps? What do we need to do to fill those gaps across all of our programs including trades?

I will pass it over to anyone else who wants to elaborate. Seamus?

S. BREEN: Sure.

Just to reiterate what DM Jones had indicated earlier, we talk to industry around the compulsory trades in the province and when we're considering designating any other trades as compulsory.

So, yes, we do have a look at jurisdictional scans regularly. We're talking to industry and doing our own analysis and consulting with the board, so that's all taken into consideration.

L. PADDOCK: The next question is with regard to equivalencies. We're on the verge of a significant uptick in mining which is going to put a significant demand on varied mining labour. One of the things that a number of the mining companies require specifically is Grade 12, yet we have a class of miners working across Canada, rotational workers, who don't have Grade 12. They have Ontario Common Core, so over the course of their career they've done continuing education.

I would argue that Ontario Common Core should be considered for equivalency. Are

you looking at any equivalency on that note to really protect our local and encourage our local workforce to stay at home and work?

CHAIR: The minister.

S. STOODLEY: I guess before I hand it over, I'll just say that we would work with all the industry associations. For example if the mining industry thought that there was a gap or an area where we should fill that gap, we would engage with the industry association; and, honestly, the labour market development fund would fund an activity with that industry association to learn more about that or do that research or do that analysis. If that's a mining challenge then we could fund that research work with the mining association to get to that point where we know.

I don't know if that's specifically something that has been discussed, but we would almost take direction, certainly consultation, with all the industry associations in terms of gaps.

I'll just hand it over to the team. Sharlene?

S. JONES: In particular relation to your question around equivalencies, we do fund, in our department, ABE. That is one of the things we do, but we do that, of course, we take the direction from the Department of Education. We would actually have to work with the Department of Education on that. I wouldn't be in a situation right here to actually be able to comment on that unless I spoke with my colleagues there on the equivalencies.

L. PADDOCK: Okay.

Retention – over the last few years, we've had retention of roughly 50 per cent, as you've highlighted with statistics. I know from my background as a senior military officer, one of the things that we initiated, because we had significant gaps while I was in, was exit interviews.

Now I was wondering, with regard to tracking some of the ones that are coming in and leaving in a short period of time, are you looking at some sort of data from them as to why they're leaving?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you. I guess I'll start and then I'll pass it over to Katie.

From a retention perspective – we can certainly provide you – Stats Canada does a one-year, three-year and 10-year review of each different class. It's not 50; it would be – like, it's very specific for each thing and some it goes up in the 70s, it's very high for the Ukrainians. For the refugees, for example, it's much lower than that. I will say, because our numbers have been cut so much, we've been spending a lot more time ensuring that they have a Newfoundland and Labrador connection and they don't have a connection in Ontario, for example.

I've had a lot of complaints, which is not a bad thing. I've had a lot of complaints to me where someone says, well, I got denied because my husband is in Ontario. Well, maybe if your husband is in Ontario, we think you're probably just going to go through the process and then move to Ontario. We're not going to accept you. You should try in Ontario.

That is always a tricky balance when the employer is emailing me saying, I need this person. Tim Hortons in rural Newfoundland, the owner is emailing me saying, I need this person to stay here. We're saying, their husband works in Ontario, they're probably not going to stay here. We're going to say no.

I would say the team does a difficult job in balancing that, with keeping a Newfoundland and Labrador-first focus. The employers are screaming and then the people want the job so that is a delicate balance. Everyone who comes here from our economic immigration pathway is tied to

a job and they can only stay here while they have that job. So that's another nuance.

Katie, I don't know if you want to add?

K. NORMAN: Certainly.

We actually have a project underway right now with a Newfoundland and Labrador statistics agency to look at retention rates. We call it a settlement survey, but it's looking at integration; if people have left the province, why did they make that choice; if they've stayed, why did they make that choice? That data is really important to us in program delivery. I don't have the results of the most recent survey but that work is actively underway with our colleagues in the Department of Finance, yes

L. PADDOCK: Thank you for that.

I guess my final question comes back to, Minister, you highlighted with regard to filling at Tim Horton's in rural Newfoundland, the whole validation of labour market analysis. You highlighted, or the team did, about verifying if a job ad was posted, because I'm getting push back and I know a number of MHAs are getting push back from across the province with regard to people that want to work in some positions and they're being filled by folks that have done that labour market analysis and are bringing in temporary foreign workers.

So if you could take me through that process of the validation of the LMA?

CHAIR: Katie Norman.

K. NORMAN: Thank you.

The Labour Market Impact Assessment, the LMIA, that's the labour market testing, as you mentioned, for the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, that is a federal assessment. Those are Government of Canada officials that complete that, not provincial Immigration, Population Growth and Skills officials.

I wouldn't really be able to speak to the specifics of how they assess that. I will say there have been a number of recent policy changes made by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to reduce the validity periods for LMIAs and, therefore, the duration with which you can recruit internationally for temporary foreign workers.

I think in part, in response to some of the issues that you're noting, that you and your colleagues have heard, but I couldn't speak specifically to the LMIA and that assessment because that's a federal process.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Member's time is expired. Do you want to continue?

The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: Just a couple follow-ons from that, again, to understand process.

Given that is a federal process, do they have any engagement with you and specifically your employment centres across the province? Because ultimately, they're the boots on the ground; they're the front line with regard to understanding that local dynamic.

CHAIR: Katie Norman.

K. NORMAN: Thank you for the follow-up question.

No, there's no direct case management between Employment and Social Development Canada, who are the ones that do that assessment, and our employment centres on the ground.

However, my understanding is that they do look at job vacancy information based on the national job bank, which is the government job portal, which we encourage

employers to use, because that only improves the health of that data that they are assessing. Often if an employer comes to our employment centre, we will encourage them to use that, because that backend intelligence that comes from that system is part of what drives the LMIA decision-making.

L. PADDOCK: Okay.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Any further questions on this subheading?

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you.

Cognizant of the time now, so I'm just going to pick a few items.

Back in 2.1.01, Employment and Training Programs, I think the job fairs at the provincial employment centres are great to do that. The closest one in my district is outside of my district in Terra Nova, in Clarendville, but the only thing that concerns me with that is that I made an inquiry as to the last fair that occurred on April 30, just curious as to whether anybody from my district attended, and there was nobody from my district who attended that. All the high school students, nobody participated.

I just wonder when the employment centres, when they do this, do they reach out to the K to 12, the high schools in the various centres to communicate, or do they just do it via email through the public service network?

CHAIR: Mr. Breen.

S. BREEN: This is the first year that we've attempted to formally engage with our open house and our employment centres. So, yes, we've partnered with Education, with the school system, with Newfoundland and Labrador schools, and we've used social media as best as we can, trying to get the

message out that the open house, which is happening once every month, is occurring.

As I mentioned, we've had over 100 employers that participated from across the province in last week's open house, which was successful. We had a very good attendance right across the province. With the first time developing a program, are we running into some hiccups? Yes, we are. Would we like attendance to be a little bit better in some of those centres? Yes, but overall, we're very pleased with the progress that we've been making the first year in terms of this program.

C. PARDY: Do you have data on the attendance? What percentage of the high school populations have attended this? I know it's only in its inaugural year, but I'm assuming that we do have that data.

I would say now, from the District of Bonavista, there's been nobody attending. I know that would show up there as well, and I know, in future years, you may be able to brainstorm as to what we can do to get the linkage or to incentivize or to – I shouldn't say better inform – better impress upon the value that would be for students attending these job fairs. That might be the best way of putting it.

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

S. JONES: Thank you.

This has been three months in a row now we've done an open house for high school students, which is a new program, as Seamus alluded to, and we have taken attendance, but we haven't been recording from what school they're attending. So that is something from this conversation we'll definitely take away, but we had over 100 students the first time. We had close to 100 the last time and we had 1,000 students over our 19 offices show up on the 30th and over 200 parents.

We weren't necessarily recording the number of parents all along, so that's one we decided the last time to record. That's over 1,200 people showed up for that, as well as the 100 employers that showed up. Going forward, when we're taking attendance, we'll try to take it by school, but we don't have that.

C. PARDY: For the record, this Member celebrates the initiative. I think it's wonderful. My concern would be that is that nobody in my district is attending. I think they're missing out on it. I know that the fluidity of it to say well, why can't we move it to Bonavista for a time, that's more problematic because I know that you don't want to lose the attendees either that are going to be there participating with the greater distance that they would have to travel. And maybe, ironically, there are businesses within the fishery that are up participating in Clarenville with those that would be all around them not participating. But anyway, I just leave that with you in going forward.

We did have an office but the office closed. I spoke in the House several times, Minister. We had an employment office in Bonavista, AESL, then under that name back in '15-'16 that closed. At that point in time, it was serving the greatest number of residents on the Island but, on the cost efficiencies, it closed. I would think then when I look at this data that I just brought to you now, this may be as far as the fallout from that occurring.

The reason being at the time was cost efficiencies, even though we had space at the College of the North Atlantic, we had available space that could go rent-free that could have happened and then we had the workers that were working in that office migrate to Clarenville, only now to drive back and forth at least once every two weeks to serve the population which they had served initially. The rationale why it closed was presented to me in the House of Assembly was because it can now be done

electronically, a lot of the work, which I agree fully.

The only thing that I have trouble compartmentalizing in my mind is why it can't be done technologically from Bonavista where it was. Why you have to go an hour and a half away for it to occur there. That was one. That's just for the record.

CHAIR: The minister.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

I can certainly commit that we will consider how we can have a career fair for students in Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Minister. I can't ask for any more than that, just a consideration.

2.1.01, and again now looking at the time, the Allowances and Assistance there, can we get just an overview as to where that money goes? Allowances and Assistance in 2.1.01.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

We have pre-employment programs, short-term training programs. This is the Working Opportunities Program and Adult Basic Education placement support. We also have a tuition voucher program for high school students to provide tutoring services to students.

C. PARDY: How much would that be, Minister, Tutoring for Tuition within our school system?

S. STOODLEY: \$330,000.

C. PARDY: Okay, yeah.

Is this where the allocation for the summer students would come from as well?

S. JONES: Thank you.

Under the Grants line, there will be some money there for the summer student program, \$1.6 million, but there's also another \$1.6 million over in WDA, for a total of \$3.2 million for summer students.

C. PARDY: Has this amount been consistent for the past couple of years, this \$3.2 million?

S. JONES: It was \$3.1 million last year.

C. PARDY: Okay, so it was a slight increase?

S. JONES: Slight increase.

C. PARDY: Okay.

That's another thing I would hold in high value and I would think that, again just for the record, you don't always get it but very proficiently done this year. Thank you to your EA. I know in the communications were very professional, very thorough and couldn't ask for a better procedural launching of it. I think it went well.

I basically had those interested in my district for not-for-profits and I had the for-profits, and basically everything had to be a reduced schedule in order to serve the not-for-profits. I know people may have done it differently in different districts than I did. I wish that we had more, but I know that there's logistical stuff and there are demands everywhere, but I know that when you can put a student into one of those, whether it be the HVAC large company that would be in Lethbridge in my riding, they had some exposure to that, one can know where that can go once you give them the exposure of it.

It's the same thing as looking at the investment what we talked about before with those with the Supported Employment, same realm here. Once you give them exposure, sometimes that's all you need and then they've got their track that they're pursuing. That's good.

The revenue for the federal – the last question on this section – I’m wondering what this funding was for?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

That was another piece under the Workforce Development Agreement. That’s from the federal government.

C. PARDY: Okay.

There’s a slight reduction there. I guess that’s, again, a cut?

S. STOODLEY: Correct.

C. PARDY: Less funding received.

If we can go back to 2.1.05. It’s a little challenging, Mr. Chair, because usually you’d have a 10-minute break to be able to gather and make sure you’re stream.

CHAIR: You’re doing a good job.

C. PARDY: For those who may be organizationally challenged, this has been quite a memory.

If I look at the apprenticeship program, I had heard from apprentices who have trouble finding an apprenticeship position out there. Not from a lot, but I’ve heard from several that there wasn’t enough journeymen to supervise them. I’m just wondering what the example would be to provide more opportunities for them? I know it’s not always easy and it may be different for different trades, but I don’t know if somebody can speak to that?

S. JONES: Thank you.

The ratio of journeymen to apprentices is one to two; however, in some instances, depending on if you have an apprentice that is a Level 3 or Level 4, we have made exceptions so that journeyman can take on a third apprentice, especially in some of the rural areas where there are less

journeypersons available and a situation like that.

We don’t necessarily give an exception if they’re taking three first-year apprentices –

C. PARDY: No, I understand.

S. JONES: – because that’s a lot of demand on a journeyman, but there is an ability to get an exemption and just reach out to our office and we will work with that journeyman.

C. PARDY: Is there a number or a percentage, that would come off the top of your head, those that are seeking it can’t find placement?

S. JONES: Well, I can think of a few exceptions in the last year where we’ve done that extra one, but I’m not aware personally. I don’t know if Seamus has any other data but I’m not aware of any that have not been able to.

S. BREEN: No, I’m not aware of any either.

C. PARDY: So these would be the exception?

S. JONES: Correct.

C. PARDY: Generally, people will find a journeyman to work under and make it work?

S. JONES: Yes.

C. PARDY: Okay.

I’ve also heard from apprentices who failed the exam and kept going back. In my past life, I was a school administrator. I can relate to that, but I know that several had mentioned that. This is the harmonized exam and, I guess, you’ve got to be able to pass that harmonized exam, right?

OFFICIAL: Yes.

C. PARDY: Common curriculum and you got to be able to do it.

There are no roadblocks as such, it's just the exam that you've got to meet the capabilities. If someone has gone through a program, four blocks, and they find they can't exit, was there something missed in the earlier blocks for this person, to move them through that may have been said that, listen, you may not exit this program? When I say that now, it's just a serious conversation to say that you may not be able to exit this.

S. JONES: Well, I really hope there wasn't any; however, we have been looking at pass rates and there has been a couple of initiatives that we've taken on to try to increase the pass rates.

One of the newest ones that we've done is a virtual learning strategist. I think we kind of introduced that last year at Estimates. We were saying how we were in the process of hiring and this individual will work with the person, our apprentice, who is having some issues. Sometimes there is test anxiety, sometimes there's an undiagnosed learning disability and they will work with them to see what tools they need. Maybe they need to go outside and have somewhere quiet to write the test by themselves. Maybe they need some extra time.

We do have that person in place and working with our apprentices. It's a continuous intake and we're actually seeing a lot of really good results from that program. There are a lot that have either passed or increased their mark dramatically. I know that the division has done these e-toolkits that they put up online which people can go on. There are little videos that can help you with how to study and how to prepare. Some of it is on some specific areas of different exams, and we're also trying to do more. We're working with the employers about more hands-on training and making sure that the employer is

exposing the apprentices for the whole depth of what's required.

I'll hand it over to Seamus because he may have some more details than that, but our staff is working with anyone who is struggling to pass on trying to figure out what is the barrier.

S. BREEN: Right. I think the deputy provided some really good examples of what we're doing to help improve our pass rates and to assist people in training. The only thing I'll add is, traditionally, the lecture method of instruction, we're trying to assist and support our students, that might not be the best learning approach for them.

As the deputy mentioned, we have a virtual learning strategist that can provide some intervention and some additional support, and we have the videos and visual options as well. It's all meant to provide, I guess, a more enriching experience to learning for the individuals that are enrolled.

C. PARDY: Back in my day if we had a position that was open in our school, in a rural setting, we may have only 1/100ths of an interest in that position versus in a larger urban area. When we look at a lot of these rural sites that you're going to entice or look for instructors to deliver these programs, I'm sure it must be a little more complex on getting the numbers to be interested in rural sites versus the urban larger sites, i.e., St. John's. Would that be accurate?

S. JONES: That is correct, yes.

C. PARDY: When we look at the pass rates with instructors, what we have in different trades, let's say we go to the fourth block and the block exam on that fourth block but you've got to pass the block exams in order to get to the fourth block – true? If they've got four blocks, they've got to pass an exam in each of those blocks?

S. JONES: Correct.

C. PARDY: So let's just say block 1, do we have the data that would say, generally, the pass rate in those blocks, what it would be?

S. JONES: Yes.

C. PARDY: You celebrate, I think, 4 per cent higher than what the average – that's probably in the fourth block. Maybe the data that you had said in –

S. STOODLEY: The Red Seal.

C. PARDY: Okay.

S. STOODLEY: That's the Red Seal tests. The Red Seal test, it was 4 per cent higher.

S. JONES: Our provincial pass rate is 76 per cent on our level exams.

C. PARDY: Okay. From first to fourth.

S. JONES: Overall the average is, yes, 76 per cent. I don't have it broken down.

C. PARDY: I would assume the first block would be less than the fourth block, I would think.

S. BREEN: We had the provincial level exam pass rate which was 76 per cent. That's the only information I have on this exact level.

C. PARDY: Okay.

CHAIR: The minister.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

I do say we do get all of the numbers for each block, for each trade, we have a team that reviews it. I've been very impressed with the in-depth investigations that can happen. I get people say well, this question on this test was wrong and then a whole team will go and investigate and remedy. A lot of those tests are the same test across Atlantic Canada, so it's all reviewed at a very minute detail. There's an

apprenticeship review board, I believe, that is industry, our department, and they oversee all of that as well. It's not just government; industry is involved in that as well.

C. PARDY: Someone told me one time – I know I was asked about the instructor developing the exam. I said, instructors do not develop the exam. It's the tradespeople of which the exam would be –

S. STOODLEY: Yes.

C. PARDY: I'm not sure if my colleague has any more questions in this section? If not, Mr. Chair, I thank you for your patience.

CHAIR: Thank you.

We'll ask the Clerk to recall this section.

CLERK: 2.1.01 to 2.1.05 inclusive, Employment and Skills Development.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 through 2.1.05 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Against?

It's carried.

On motion, subheads 2.1.01 through 2.1.05 carried.

CHAIR: Now call the next section, please.

CLERK: 3.1.01, Regional Service Delivery.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 carry?

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Chair.

This is a section here where we assist the apprentices through in their journey or we – no? Where we give them some

remuneration or we help them out on their services?

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

S. JONES: Client Services is actually our 19 regional offices. That's all our employment centres.

C. PARDY: Okay.

S. JONES: So while in five of those offices we do have apprenticeship officers there and any client at all coming into those offices will get service, it's not mainly for apprenticeship; it's for all clients and any Newfoundlander or Labradorian who needs assistance.

C. PARDY: It may give me a little bit of leverage, a little bit of free play, might bounce back in the previous section, just a little tad. The remuneration that we provide those apprentices, I think it's up \$194 max per week, for a place to rent. Would that be correct for the apprentices?

Then we provide transportation as well. I think a little stipend of 20 cents per kilometre to and from the block exam. My question would be, if that's accurate, how long has that been the amount that we would be paying the apprentices?

S. STOODLEY: Sorry?

C. PARDY: How many years?

CHAIR: The minister.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I don't have that information. The team will let you know. Since I've been minister, I have not had one complaint about not being remunerated enough. I do want to say, in the apprenticeship review that we commissioned, one of the highlights was how generously we are with the apprentices.

I'll pass it over if anyone else has any – I don't know how much they pay per mileage.

C. PARDY: Minister, just for clarification. I've heard nobody question or complain. That's just for my learning and clarification as to what it would be.

S. STOODLEY: Sure.

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

S. JONES: I don't have that information either in front of me. To reiterate the minister, we haven't had any complaints. But we did work with all of the apprentices. We want to ensure that there's no financial barriers. We do make sure that we cover – while they're doing their block training, they're drawing EI but we will help with transportation. We will help with daycare costs if that's an issue.

We have been pretty flexible with our funding to ensure there are no barriers and there's been nothing in the last two to three years that I'm aware of anyone either being turned down or having any issue with the amount of funding and having any issue with the amount of funding received.

C. PARDY: Minister, it is not a critique. I was just asking because chances are if there's any apprentice in the lower part of the peninsula where I have, and I would think in the Chair's district, then the travel to and from where that is going to be significant. You leave Bonavista and you're going into the campus in St. John's in order to do your schooling and it is a significant expense. I just ask as to the assistance we've got –

S. STOODLEY: We can certainly provide you with a breakdown. I haven't looked at any detail because it hasn't come up as an issue, so that tells me that people aren't feeling hard done by but we'll certainly give you a full overview.

C. PARDY: Or we may not be aware of the ones that it is a financial struggle that they decide not to participate.

You mentioned the child care. Do we have those results, or can we get that later as well? How would you help somebody with a young child or what the remuneration or the assistance would be? What amount?

CHAIR: The deputy minister.

S. JONES: That's usually done on an individual basis, because, of course, the Department of Education has a bunch of subsidies that are available for daycare.

We will first work with the apprentice to see if they can avail of those. Otherwise, we'll look at what their options are for daycare and work with them at that point to ensure that they have coverage so they can go to school.

C. PARDY: Okay, good. Thank you.

In Salaries, in 3.1.01, there were salary savings of over half a million last year. I'm just wondering what positions were vacant there and for how long?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

We did have some short-term vacancies and delays in recruiting. We do have 19 employment centres and so there's a lot of staff at those centres. We didn't get rid of any positions. That's just the delays in recruiting. We had a new director of regional services start since I've been here. I know they are kind of ramping up now.

C. PARDY: The savings in Transportation and Communications of \$60,000, nothing wrong with less travel but just wondering; that's a significant amount.

S. STOODLEY: Yes, thank you.

We didn't have a regional director in place. They didn't do as much travel as that

person usually did. We also had fewer staff doing fewer site visits and we didn't have, overall, I guess, as much travel cost.

C. PARDY: Okay.

That will conclude that section.

CHAIR: Okay. Thank you.

I ask the Clerk to recall.

CLERK: 3.1.01, Regional Service Delivery.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Thank you very much. It's carried.

On motion, subhead 3.1.01, Regional Service Delivery, carried.

CHAIR: Final section.

CLERK: 4.1.01 to 4.1.02 inclusive, Immigration and Workforce Development.

CHAIR: Shall 4.1.01 through to 4.1.02 carry?

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Chair.

Last year, there was salary savings of \$888,000. Again, I'm just wondering what positions were vacant there and for how long?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

This is short-term vacancies and delays in recruitment. I spoke about this earlier; we have a big team of immigration officers. That recruitment process takes a long time and there's extra information provided, extra

higher level checks that have to be provided to be an immigration officer, so that takes longer than the average. We try and get ahead of it, but we're not always able to get ahead of the longer recruitment process.

C. PARDY: What's the sustainability of these people that would be in the immigration offices? How long do we generally keep them for, 30 years?

CHAIR: Katie Norman.

K. NORMAN: Thank you.

Do you mean in terms of the length of time someone tends to stay in that position?

C. PARDY: Yes, that they've served in that position.

K. NORMAN: It varies. There has been a significant expansion in capacity within the Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism if you look back over the last three or four budget cycles.

As a result of that, we've had a large number of new recruits. More than 40 people have come into that position over the last number of years. In some cases, people have quickly been promoted. They've moved on to team lead or management positions within the Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism. In other cases, they were internationally credentialed individuals who ended up finding something aligned with that work elsewhere in the public service.

I mean, I would think that unionized positions have three years of salary increase built into that, that shows the framework works for that. I think the expectation, if you were able to retain somebody for between three and five years in that role, that would be what would be considered successful. If I'm answering your question.

C. PARDY: Yes, you are.

K. NORMAN: Okay.

C. PARDY: Three to five years.

Professional Services: Despite the savings of \$50,000 last year, that's in 4.1.01, the budget is being increased to \$1 million and, for that, I'm sure there's a reason.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

In the line, Professional Services, that went up, we're doing an audit of the provincial nomination program, as required under our federal agreements. Under the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Immigration Agreement, we have to commission an audit. We're paying for that audit, and then we also have some IT costs that we're covering.

C. PARDY: What is the frequency or time frame of these audits? I mean is it biannually? How often does the audit of the provincial nomination program have to be? How many years?

S. JONES: The last audit was completed in 2018.

C. PARDY: Oh, okay.

S. JONES: So they're periodically.

C. PARDY: There's no time frame set for that review? Is it mandated? Not in legislation?

S. JONES: Yes, there are provisions within the Immigration Agreement. I believe it's every five years.

The reason why this one is occurring in this current year is we wanted to ensure that the new expression of interest and job vacancy assessment system and some of the changes were reflected. So we're actually auditing the current status as opposed to a program that really has changed fundamentally.

C. PARDY: Okay, thank you very much.

Grants and Subsidies – which we'll get a list of that – the \$16 million, who would be the beneficiary of the largest amount of that?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

Part of our getting an additional 1,000 spaces from the federal government was agreeing to accept so many humanitarian migrants. We issued a call for proposals for RFPs for our settlement partners to help the humanitarian migrants. This includes money from the federal government under the Interim Housing Assistance Program for humanitarian migrants. This is where, the 50-something humanitarian migrants, the federal government is paying 95 per cent of them to stay in hotels currently.

The ANC is our partner. That funding would be going to the ANC as per our agreement under the federal Interim Housing Assistance Program. Then we also have our settlement funding and settlement grants for helping to improve retention.

C. PARDY: Minister, you may have stated before, and it's shameful that I don't recall, but you've mentioned about the retention rate, I think that may have been the lowest?

S. STOODLEY: We can certainly provide you – there is a granular table. I can pick a retention rate from 70-something, 80-something, 90-something or I can pick something from 30 or 50.

C. PARDY: Okay, yeah.

S. STOODLEY: There's 10-year, five-year, three-year, one-year. Then the refugees have one retention rate, the Ukrainians have another one and the economic migrants have another one.

C. PARDY: That's all online?

S. STOODLEY: Yes, Statistics Canada has it done in a very comprehensive

spreadsheet of one-, three-, five- and 10-year retention rates across all these classes.

If you're talking about a refugee who came here from Syria, those retention rates are pretty low, but our Ukrainian retention rate is significantly higher.

Then one-year, three-year or five-year, things have changed provincially and federally in terms of we're trying a lot harder to make sure that we retain them. The retention numbers are going in the right direction, but it's difficult to say this one thing is our retention. You have to say three-year, five-year, one-year and it's all very complicated.

C. PARDY: Yeah.

4.1.02, in the Salaries, there was a savings of about \$100,000 there. Was this for a specific position?

S. STOODLEY: No. That would be the same as the others. It's just delays in recruitment and vacancies.

C. PARDY: I guess since, probably, Confederation, we may have seen a movement from probably rural to urban areas. Does the department track population movement from rural to urban in our province?

S. STOODLEY: I will say that we are focused on labour market trends. So like EI, unemployment rates, those types of things. We do look at flow of newcomers to urban versus rural. I know the EI rates are impacted on where people are working across the province, and the EI rates differ based on different unemployment rates in different areas of the province, but I'll ask to the team if they want to add anything else.

K. NORMAN: We work in close collaboration with the Economics and Statistics Branch in the Department of Finance around labour market flows. Our

responsibilities tend to focus on interprovincial migration, whether Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are leaving the province, going elsewhere in the country. Whereas initiatives like Community Accounts and some of those pieces would be led the by Department of Finance that look at more of intra-provincial migration and initiatives.

So that would be probably a question better placed with Department of Finance.

C. PARDY: Okay, thank you.

So if I had to ask the question, would you have a policy that would be focused in your interprovincial migration that would look at the sustainability of rural Newfoundland? Would there be a policy that jumps out in your department that would be one that you can look at to say it's a policy that may be used to maintain population in rural Newfoundland?

CHAIR: The minister.

S. STOODLEY: I will say that our department works closely with Rob Greenwood. I know he's been looking at this in depth under Minister Hutton and the focus on rural development. I would say we look at it from an immigration perspective. We would certainly favour newcomers going to rural Newfoundland and Labrador, where possible. I know, for example, nursing, we work with NLHS significantly to make sure that we bring in nurses for rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

C. PARDY: Mr. Chair, that will conclude this section.

CHAIR: No further questions?

I'll ask the Clerk to recall the final section.

CLERK: 4.1.01 to 4.1.02 inclusive, Immigration and Workforce Development.

CHAIR: Shall 4.1.01 through to 4.1.02 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Motion is carried.

On motion, subheads 4.1.01 through 4.1.02 carried.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

The total is carried.

On motion, Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, total heads, carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills carried without amendment.

CHAIR: I guess I would now turn to the minister to see if she has any further comments regarding –

S. STOODLEY: No, just thank you very much, everyone. I appreciate the team being here and thank you for all the hard work that you and your teams do during the year. Thank you for the questions; it was lovely opportunity to have an excellent chat with you this morning about the important work that our public servants do. Happy to chat any time.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Bonavista, closing thoughts.

C. PARDY: Yes, if I may speak for my colleague from Baie Verte - Green Bay, we

thank you for your indulgence in our questions here this morning. I think most people out in rural Newfoundland in my district would look at it and say they're no sure about the high-flying nature of our public servants that we have working in our various departments. I will say that's true for a lot of departments. Only when you really get to be face to face and sit here in Estimates with questions and queries and understanding policies, understanding directions, do you really get to know that we are in good hands.

Paths are not always set for us. I mean, sometimes we have to meander, we've got to learn from what we do and then we self-correct and we do all that. But I know that I often reassure people in my district to say we're in good hands. We've got some very powerful people that run each department that would be within government.

I do thank you for us neophytes sometimes that sit across from you and ask these questions, but we do learn as far as every time we do get a chance to engage with you.

Mr. Chair, thank you very much for a tremendous job.

CHAIR: Thank you.

I'd like to thank everyone for a very informative, final Estimates meeting of the Resource Committee. With that, I'll ask for a mover for adjournment.

AN HON. MEMBER: So moved.

CHAIR: So moved.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Thank you very much.

The next meeting will be at the Call of the Chair. Have a good day.

Thank you.

On motion, the Committee adjourned sine die.