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**Proceedings of the Standing Committee on
Resources**

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Department of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development

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Honourable Paul Lane, MHA

RESOURCE COMMITTEE

Department of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development

Chair: Mark Butt, MHA

Members: Elvis Loveless, MHA
Riley Balsom, MHA
Fred Hutton, MHA
Keith Russell, MHA
Joseph Power, MHA
Sheilagh O'Leary, MHA

Clerk of the Committee: Kimberley Hammond (A)

Appearing:

Department of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development

Hon. Lin Paddock, Minister
Heather Tizzard, Deputy Minister
Dan Brake, ADM Industry and Economic Development Branch
Seamus Breen, ADM Employment and Labour Market Development Branch
Aisling Gogan, ADM Immigration
Julian Ludmer, ADM Business and Innovation Branch
Megan Nesbitt, ADM Corporate Services
Peter Andrews, Departmental Controller
Allison King, Director of Communications
Cayla McKenna, Executive Assistant to the Minister

Also Present

Michael King, MHA
Bernard Davis, MHA
David Hamlyn, Official Opposition Caucus
Meghan Parsons, Official Opposition Caucus
Steven Kent, Third Party

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Michael King, MHA for Burgeo - La Poile, substitutes for Fred Hutton, MHA for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Bernard Davis, MHA for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, substitutes for Elvis Loveless, MHA for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

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

CHAIR (Butt): Order, please!

Before we start, I'd like to announce some of the substitutions. Substituting for the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island is the Member for Burgeo - La Poile and substituting for the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune is the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

Roughly about an hour and a half – halfway through this proceeding – we'll stop for a 10-minute break. We'll play it by ear.

I ask that each time you're asked to speak, wave to identify yourself and wait for the tally light to come on before you speak. Say your name and position each time. Please do not make adjustments to chairs. Watercoolers are located in the four corners of the Chamber.

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

B. DAVIS: Bernard Davis, MHA for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

M. PARSONS: Meghan Parsons, Opposition staffer.

M. KING: Michael King, MHA for Burgeo - La Poile.

D. HAMLYN: Dave Hamlyn, Opposition staffer.

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

S. KENT: Steven Kent, Researcher for the Third Party.

J. POWER: Joe Power, MHA for Labrador West.

K. RUSSELL: Keith Russell, MHA for Lake Melville.

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

CHAIR: I now ask the department officials to introduce themselves starting with the minister.

L. PADDOCK: Lin Paddock, Minister of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development; Minister Responsible for Immigration; du plus, je suis responsable pour des affaires du Francophone; and I also have ministerial responsibility for Seamless, that's for military families.

H. TIZZARD: Heather Tizzard, Deputy Minister, Department of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development.

A. GOGAN: Aisling Gogan, Assistant Deputy Minister of Immigration and Workforce Development, Department of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development.

J. LUDMER: Julian Ludmer, Assistant Deputy Minister of Business and Innovation, Department of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development.

P. ANDREWS: Peter Andrews, Departmental Controller for Jobs, Growth and Rural Development.

D. BRAKE: Dan Brake, Assistant Deputy Minister for Industry and Economic Development with JGRD.

S. BREEN: Seamus Breen, Assistant Deputy Minister of Employment and Labour Market Development, JGRD.

M. NESBITT: Megan Nesbitt, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services.

C. MCKENNA: Cayla McKenna, Executive Assistant to Minister Paddock, Department of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

A. KING: Allison King, Director of Communications with Jobs, Growth and Rural Development.

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

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

J. POWER: So moved.

CHAIR: The minutes have been moved by the Member for Labrador West.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

CHAIR: Before we start the Estimates review process, I'll ask the Clerk to call this first subheading group for this head of expenditure. I will proceed to recognize the minister, who will get 15 minutes for opening remarks. Then I'll proceed to introduce the first responder/questioner from the Committee, who will get 15 minutes for questions in the first round. After the first round, questions will proceed in

rounds of 10 minutes each, alternating between Members of the Committee.

I now ask the Clerk to call the first subhead.

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

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 to 1.2.02 inclusive carry?

I now recognize the minister for his opening remarks.

L. PADDOCK: Thanks, Chair.

Having done Estimates last year on the other side, it is truly a privilege to be on this side as the Minister of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development. With my background as both an accountant and as a military officer, I truly believe in being accountable and transparent.

With that in mind, I'll outline how we will proceed this evening. I will do my best with every question and then, at times, given the level of experience that's here on the side of me and behind me, I will invite department officials to provide amplifying information as well.

Jobs, Growth and Rural Development, a new department that has been brought together and, with it, we've also had a number of executive transitions. A few years back, I was executive director for the Aerospace and Defence Industry Association and the key challenges that defence companies in the area highlighted to me at that time was the need for both capital and labour. This is really the genesis of the Department of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development, bringing together within government capital and labour.

With the reorganization within government and the evolving responsibilities, we have brought together business support, economic development, labour market and skills development, and immigration. This

realignment, I truly believe, strengthens government's, and our department's, ability to connect with workforce development, labour market planning and immigration with industry. We've had the chance over the last four months to engage with all the major industry associations in the province, along with a number of companies – actually, a lot of companies.

The structure where we are now, I believe allows us to better support employers, help businesses scale and ensure that labour supply aligns with regional and sector-specific needs, particularly in rural and resource-dependent areas. That's important, given what is on the horizon for both mining and with regard to energy, both renewable and non-renewable.

Ultimately, this alignment positions the department to take a more integrated, whole-of-government approach to economic growth and population sustainability.

Over the last six months, since I've assumed this role, I've really gained a great deal of appreciation for the team that I am here with tonight; their professionalism, their dedication and, truly, their experience and expertise in executing on a large number of files. The amount of paperwork in this department is significant when you look at economic development, labour development, immigration and the number of queries that we get pan-province.

So I look forward to specific questions, whether that be on the numbers themselves – I'm used to variance analysis, given my background – and/or some of the specific policy questions that you may have with regard to priorities of government and where we are going for some of the stuff that was highlighted either in the Speech from the Throne and/or the budget.

On that, Chair, I think that's enough from me. I look forward to starting the questions.

CHAIR: I now call on the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First off, I hope this battery holds up for the earpiece as obviously it doesn't work on this side.

I do want to thank the minister for being here and thank you to his very skilled staff. I've had the pleasure of working with many of you over the years and I look forward to going through as painless and as seamless as possible tonight.

I'll start off with some very easy ones first. Will we be provided with the binder for today's proceedings?

L. PADDOCK: You've got an option there, you can have either a hard copy and/or soft copy.

B. DAVIS: Perfect, either of those would be great. If you can give that to us, it doesn't necessarily need to be today, but in the next day or so would be great.

You talked about the former department of Jobs, Immigration, Growth and Skills, what structural changes were made to become the new department we have now? Is there anything you'd like to speak to?

I know you talked a little bit about that in your intro that the department now is Jobs, Growth and Rural Development, and I guess the two part for that, just to make it a little easier for you, is, if there were changes made, how many positions were transferred out of the department to another area and to which department were they transferred?

L. PADDOCK: To start, I'll give a quick overview and then I'll pass to my deputy with regard to detail.

Essentially, we brought what was the industry side of the former IET under the former government into what was

Immigration and Population Growth. The skills side of that went to Education. The reason that went to Education is to have that continuum from early childhood education, education and skills development.

As I indicated with our department, it's more of a focus on capital and labour. We had the innovation and economic development side, that you would be aware of, from IET. We got the immigration that was within the former department as long as that federal flow through of funding the labour market development side.

I'll pass to my deputy with regard to specific questions and, if need be, we can go to staff with regard to the numbers in and out.

H. TIZZARD: The Apprenticeship division moved out of what would have been the old department of IPGS and moved over to Education and Early Childhood Development. I think that was about 17-ish positions.

The two branches from the former department of Industry, Energy and Technology remained whole and came over to the department. The Business and Innovation and Industry and Economic Development Branches that existed in that old department came over in whole to this new department as well. About 100-ish positions in those two branches.

L. PADDOCK: We can get exact numbers for you if need be.

B. DAVIS: Yes, that would be perfect.

As sort of a follow-up to that, is the industry and innovation side still housed down on Elizabeth Avenue in the Natural Resources Building or Energy and Mines building, whatever it's called this week?

L. PADDOCK: Yes.

CHAIR: You just wave your hand.

L. PADDOCK: Okay, there we go. It works. Wax on, wax off. Okay.

Yes, so the industry economic development side still rests where they were formally located. There really has not been any major relocation of staff.

B. DAVIS: Okay.

Having sat over on the other side for a period of time, I'm going to try to stay within the sections that were called. I know when I was on the other side how much it would irritate me having to jump back and forth trying to find it for both the staff as well as the minister, so I'm going to try to stay within the sections. Even though I'm asking some policy-related questions, I'll try to stay within the section that the policy is related to. If I waver from that, it's not intentional; it's just by accident. I'm sure we'll figure our way through that.

How many new positions were added, and at what cost, with respect to the creation of the department? I know there were movement of current positions, but were there any new staff positions created?

L. PADDOCK: From my understanding, no, and you'll see that as we go through. There has been none; there has just been a reorganization of structure. There was no additional staff added, and that's right across the province because, understanding with Labour Market Development, we also have the 19 employment centres across the province as well. So there has been no staff added and no cuts, no reduction of any workforce.

B. DAVIS: Okay.

Well, that sort of takes care, Mr. Chair.

L. PADDOCK: I'm trying to anticipate your questions, so that's all good.

B. DAVIS: No, if you anticipate them, that's great. I'm going to try to knock them off, especially as we get further along.

You said there was no reduction of staff, so that means there were no terminations without cause or anything like that in the department?

L. PADDOCK: I'll defer to the deputy on that one.

H. TIZZARD: So there were two.

B. DAVIS: Two.

CHAIR: I just want to remind the Committee here to state your name before you speak.

Thank you.

B. DAVIS: What was the cost for the severance on those payouts? Do we have that or can we get that if it's possible?

H. TIZZARD: I don't have that information here, but we can certainly get that for you afterwards.

B. DAVIS: Thank you.

Can the minister provide the list of political staff, their titles, salaries and whether any of those positions are term or contract?

L. PADDOCK: There's only one political staff and that is the EA and, yes, that can be provided.

B. DAVIS: How many political staff have government-funded travel budgets or anything associated with that, other than what would normally be in the previous iterations of the EA's process? If they travel with the minister, that would come from the minister's travel budget, I would assume, just based on knowledge.

L. PADDOCK: Correct. With regard to political travel, it would be just the minister

and the EA, and that's travel if and when required.

B. DAVIS: Perfect and that would be great if you can provide that titles and salaries and stuff like that. You don't need to give that today but, in the future, would be great.

How many vacancies exist today across the department?

L. PADDOCK: I'll pass that to my deputy to highlight.

H. TIZZARD: One hundred and eighty-six vacancies. That was as of the end of the fiscal year.

L. PADDOCK: Let me just give a caveat to that. So it's a very large department. We do find – and you can get that from your colleagues, previously – especially on our employment centres, we experience a fair bit of turnover because it is viewed as entry-level positions. From there, they then seek to come across into other roles in government or into other roles within our department.

Some of the positions there are fluid, but we are running competitions on a continuous basis to fill.

B. DAVIS: What's the department's current attrition rate or attrition plan? Is there an attrition plan in place for the department?

H. TIZZARD: We didn't have any required attrition.

B. DAVIS: Can the minister provide the number of positions across the department that are considered full-time, part-time and contractual? You probably won't have it at your fingertips there.

L. PADDOCK: Yeah, I'll pass to the deputy.

H. TIZZARD: There are 406 employees: 351 are permanent; 30 are temporary; 25

contractual. Again, that was of the end of the fiscal year.

B. DAVIS: Can you say the last two again, sorry?

H. TIZZARD: Sure. Thirty were temporary and 25 contractual.

B. DAVIS: Is there any performance metrics that the department uses to evaluate the program effectiveness?

L. PADDOCK: I'm going to give a quick overview here and then I'll pass it to the deputy – I think this is an important question – and then maybe even some of the ADMs to give a quick highlight.

Yes, for every program that is there, there are performance metrics. There is evaluation. In some cases, some of them are even subject to audit. That's like the Supported Employment went through a rigorous audit.

Deputy.

H. TIZZARD: We have a number of programs in the department and, as the minister referenced, they do have performance metrics. They all vary.

The bulk of the money, as you're probably aware, comes from the federal government and there are strict federal audit requirements and review requirements and reporting requirements that goes with those programs as well.

B. DAVIS: The total number of 406, that is inclusive of the 136 vacancies that you have too, so about 25 per cent-ish would be vacant at any given time, I guess, and you're in a constant recruitment as the minister said. That seems a little high, based on the size of the department of 406, but obviously it's restructuring that occurred.

The question on the 30 temporary and contractual ones, would any of them be

classified as like 13-weeker type contracts? I don't know if that's what they're referred to, but they're temporary in nature. What's the intent on trying to fill those on a more permanent basis? I know it takes time to get through the whole process.

H. TIZZARD: I don't have exact numbers on what would be the nature of those types of contracts. I'm sure some of them are, but as the minister referenced, we are actively, regularly recruiting for positions on a regular basis.

So the 406, plus the 136 vacancies is –

B. DAVIS: Oh, plus?

H. TIZZARD: Yes.

B. DAVIS: The 136 is in addition –

H. TIZZARD: Yes.

B. DAVIS: Okay, that's a bit better.

H. TIZZARD: So it's 500-plus employees.

B. DAVIS: Okay.

L. PADDOCK: So about 18 per cent.

B. DAVIS: Yes. It seemed a little high.

L. PADDOCK: Yes.

We went into the fall because when this government, as you know, you go caretaker mode, so we've been playing catch-up with a lot of hiring and competitions; because, in some cases, you have to run the competition. So you're playing catch-up over the last little while with regard to righting some of that staffing.

B. DAVIS: One quick one, Mr. Chair.

How has the departmental restructuring affected Corporate Services workloads?

L. PADDOCK: That is a very good question.

As a former controller, I'm always concerned about that, the workload on Corporate Services staff. So let me pass to my ADM for that to respond directly to it.

M. NESBITT: Thank you, Minister.

To elaborate on that, Corporate Services, the divisions and the branches within the Department of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development, for the most part, are as they were in the previous iteration of the department.

There was one position in the information management division of industry, energy and technology that had been moved over to Jobs, Growth and Rural Development to support the IM in the Corporate Services work as it relates to the CS3 and the Manifest Management System, in the two business branches. So it kind of went part and part with the move of those entire two branches out of that department.

My role is currently split between this department and the Department of Energy and Mines.

B. DAVIS: A little bit busy.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the minister.

L. PADDOCK: Thank you.

Let me say, as a former comptroller at a federal level, in a very busy time, you know, it's coming through the end of the fiscal year and then starting a new year. So finishing period 12, and then navigating period 13-14, before starting the new fiscal year, period 1. It's that overlap where you're ensuring invoices are paid and then setting things up again for the structure of your new year.

This is really the busy – and that's known. As long as you're prepared for this two- or 2½-month period, then the rest of the year, if you do the proper planning, it should be relatively okay. It's something for in-year

controllershship that you always have to have your hand on the tiller.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

It's my pleasure to be here at the Estimates and I want to say thank you, certainly to the minister, but all the supportive staff who I know are where the rubber hits the road. So I very much appreciate your input and the answers to the questions.

I don't have the experience of my colleague over here in terms of understanding what was before and what we have moved towards, Minister, if you would kindly just do a little refresher as to what the department looked like before, what it was called, what it represented and where we are right now, I would really appreciate that. That will set the stage for me and the questions that I'll ask going forward.

Thank you.

L. PADDOCK: I think Immigration, Population Growth and Skills was the previous one, and you'll see that when you go through *Hansard* with regard to some of the stuff in this department.

What stayed was the Immigration and Labour Market Development; what was moved out was the Skills. That went with Education so there is a continuum with Education, early childhood education and education, including post-secondary and skills. Then, as we pulled away from the former department of IET, we brought in the Business and Innovation and Economic Development directors.

S. O'LEARY: So, just to be clear, that last portfolio is embedded in your department now, is that correct?

L. PADDOCK: Again, as I highlighted, previously, we felt that IET was too large for

one minister to be able to move some of the projects that we needed to move forward.

Bringing the Industry and Economic Development over with our department provided a mechanism that a lot of industry associations are looking to use, so both capital and labour. The capital meaning some of the programs that we have for either business growth or business loans, rural economic development assistance, and then the labour being Immigration and some of the Workforce development programs that we have as well.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

When you say growth, we're talking population growth as well as economic growth? I'm just trying to be clear.

L. PADDOCK: Yes.

With regard to population growth, that was one of the focuses of our department that was highlighted in both the Speech from the Throne and the budget. We are in the process of setting up a team now that would be across department and across government, so there would be an opportunity for you to engage on that as well as we look to put a plan in place for that.

Our demographics here in the province are challenging, particularly in rural Newfoundland, and to stem the tide and looking out, we have to plan with regard to where we are from a demographic side.

S. O'LEARY: Okay.

So any questions around population growth in particular would be in this department, correct?

L. PADDOCK: Yes.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

L. PADDOCK: Well, potentially. I mean, it depends on the nature. It could be something that's related to Health or Housing.

That's what I'm saying, it is an integrated and complex public policy issue – population growth.

S. O'LEARY: Okay. I'll move on to some general questions now.

Is the department still using zero-based budgeting?

L. PADDOCK: My understanding across government, it is zero-based budgeting. We're even having that discussion with some of the associations and those that look to leverage government funding about how they plan as well.

S. O'LEARY: How many newcomers have arrived in the province over the last year? Out of the total number, would it be possible to breakdown how many of them were refugees, how many are economic immigrants, asylum seekers, et cetera, and some statistics on that?

Thank you.

L. PADDOCK: Yes.

Before I pass to my ADM for Immigration, we do keep detailed track of all newcomers that come into the province. We are also tracking and managing their files with regard to the two programs that we have, the Provincial Nominee Program and the Atlantic Immigration Program.

I'll now pass to my ADM for Immigration with regard to an actual breakdown of numbers.

A. GOGAN: There are two different provincial pathways for immigration, and the minister just mentioned those. We receive an allocation from the federal government and that's the number of people that we can

nominate through those two pathways. In 2025, our allocation was 2,924, in which that full allocation was used.

In addition, the province reached an agreement with the federal government around what are referred to as humanitarian migrants or asylum seekers, and that was basically to support humanitarian migrants from other parts of Canada to come here. There was an agreement made that 299 would be supported to come here over two years; 199 have come so far. We're actually ahead of schedule.

Those would be all the newcomers that the provincial government kind of has any say over. The rest all come through federal pathways. We certainly have some data on that but that would be federal responsibility.

We do look at the number of temporary residents, for example, in the province. That's information that we get from the federal government, and there are a bunch of different pathways for temporary residents to come here, and then there are also federal pathways for permanent residents to come here. It's fairly complicated; I know it sounds like a really simple question.

We can certainly get some of that. I don't walk around with all of those numbers in my head, but I will say, we have a very low percentage of temporary residents in our province. As you may be aware, nationally, there's a lot of concern over the increasing number of temporary residents in the province and the federal government has initiatives under way to reduce that percentage. Overall, in Canada, it's about 6.5 per cent and they want to reduce it to 5 per cent. We're only at about 2.3 per cent, I think, here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Temporary residents could be international students. They could be temporary foreign workers. They could be through different pathways. They could be people here on a one-year kind of student work visa.

There are quite a number of different pathways for temporary residents as well as a number of different federal pathways for permanent residency. We don't have any control over the temporary pathways here.

L. PADDOCK: I just want to add some overall arching context with regard to immigration.

Over the last 10 years, our population has increased by 25,000. The net immigration has been 28,000. Without immigration, we would be falling behind. Our government truly believes in immigration.

Then, with immigration, it's not just about recruiting them. It's about retaining them and setting the conditions for immigrant communities, newcomer communities to grow and foster. We're starting to see some of that percolate across the province. That's why I've been proactive in getting out across a number of the immigrant communities in the Northeast Avalon.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Burgeo - La Poile.

M. KING: Thank you, Chair.

I want to also thank the minister and his team for being here with us tonight in the Estimates process. As the minister indicated, earlier, I've spent some time at the former Department of Industry, Energy and Technology so, certainly, recognize some of the folks in the room. They did a lot of great work over the years. I know how important the economic development and innovation and business side is to the province, for sure, in attracting that investment and making sure that we see growth in our province from the economy sides. I certainly appreciate a lot of the work they do.

I only have a couple of quick questions before we finish this subhead off. Just one quick one, when you mentioned vacancies on the employment centre side, that would include economic development officers as well, correct?

L. PADDOCK: No, that's separate. Economic development officers are under our Regional Economic Development. The client services, the employment centres are under Labour Market.

M. KING: No, but just to be clear, they would be included in the vacancy numbers?

L. PADDOCK: Yes. Sorry.

M. KING: Perfect.

L. PADDOCK: Yes.

M. KING: Thank you, Minister.

Under 1.1.01, the Salaries, obviously, remains the same from the budgeted amount but can you tell me how many employees this represents and are they full-time, part-time or contractual?

L. PADDOCK: I'll pass that to my deputy.

H. TIZZARD: There are three employees in that section. It would be the minister, the executive assistant and the secretary to the minister.

M. KING: Those are all full-time positions, correct?

H. TIZZARD: Yes.

M. KING: Thank you.

Under 1.2.01, Salaries, there was an increase in the revised from the budgeted last year and it drops down again this year in the Estimates. Could you explain the increase last year?

L. PADDOCK: What was it 1.2 –?

M. KING: 1.2.01 under Salaries, Executive Support.

The amount that was overspent last year, can you explain that?

L. PADDOCK: That's not overspent; that's underspent.

M. KING: There was a budget for \$1.3 million, then it was revised to \$1.7 million.

L. PADDOCK: Okay, sorry.

Yes, that was an overlap in salaries for the ADM secretaries, due to retirement and training of a new person. We'll be back to, basically, status quo for this fiscal year.

M. KING: Perfect. Thank you, Minister.

Under 1.2.02, Corporate Services and Performance Improvement, under the Salaries there as well, \$1.8 million was budgeted last year, underspent to \$1.5 million and it's back up to \$1.8 million. Can you just explain that difference there, please?

L. PADDOCK: Yes, again, good question.

Again, from a variance analysis. We had partial year vacancy of a finance officer, manager of finance and operations, training officer, department program coordinator and clerk. Those positions have been filled, so we're back to what we plan as an original budget.

M. KING: Thank you, Minister.

Under the same subheading, under Grants and Subsidies, the amount obviously remains the same, but could you elaborate on the organization and groups that would receive that funding? And can you provide a list to us, please, Minister?

L. PADDOCK: Absolutely, we can provide a list. I mean, it'll be in the binder once you get it hard copy or soft.

That funding is going to Stella's Circle, and then there's a core funding grant from CSSD – what is now SSWB. In that is also the community-based organizations as well, and in the binder there's a breakdown of that. There were no reductions. It was basically a status quo to all the community-based organizations. We met a significant number of them. I think when a lot of them came in that's what they were worried about, their funding, so they were all relieved when there was no change to funding.

M. KING: Perfect, thank you.

That's all for me, Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: I just have one quick follow-up to subhead 1.2.01, Executive Support, and the increase from the budgeted number of \$1.3 million to \$1.763 million. That's just a little under \$400,000. You mentioned secretarial overlap or administrative support overlap; that's quite an overlap.

I'm just wondering if you wanted to clarify that a little bit more, Minister, because I think it's something to do with severance or payouts to people that were let go, potentially, those two individuals? I'm just guessing that.

L. PADDOCK: Yes.

B. DAVIS: I just wanted to give you an opportunity to clarify, because I don't think you (inaudible).

L. PADDOCK: Thank you.

I'm going to get my DM to provide an additional explanation.

H. TIZZARD: Yes.

In addition to the ADM secretaries, there was also an overlap in ADM of Corporate

Services while the department was in transition. We were carrying two salaries for ADMs for a while, and there was a large payout due to the retirement of an ADM as well.

B. DAVIS: Okay, perfect.

Thank you. That's all.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

I'll continue with some general questions, because I don't have any specific ones in subhead one.

How many people in this province became permanent residents last year?

L. PADDOCK: Again, with regard to actual numbers, I'll pass to my ADM of Immigration.

A. GOGAN: So because you can become a permanent resident through federal pathways, as well as the two provincial pathways, I just want to be very clear that the numbers that we have relate to our provincial programs. We get information from the federal government on their pathways as well. We wouldn't tend to report on those because we don't really have any say or control over that.

When people come here through the provincial pathways, they're much more likely to stay here because, that is the other thing, once someone is a permanent resident, they can go anywhere they would like in Canada, just like any of us can. So that would be the 2,924 number that we supported in 2025.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Just to follow up on that, Ms. Gogan, you said that there was 100 that you wouldn't be tracking that would be under the federal

pathways that are left, I believe, if I understand that correctly – no.

A. GOGAN: No, so we also track the humanitarian migrants.

S. O'LEARY: Okay.

A. GOGAN: That's a separate agreement we have with the federal government that's different from things that we normally do because there was an influx of humanitarian migrants at the border, other provinces, that our border provinces, were feeling overwhelmed. So to kind of help with that, Newfoundland and Labrador agreed to take 290 humanitarian migrants. So far, we've had 199 come.

S. O'LEARY: Right. So that other 100 now, even though it's not within perhaps your purview, it would still be – statistically, we would know.

A. GOGAN: Exactly. We're working closely with the Association for New Canadians to resettle those individuals.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, wonderful. Thank you.

L. PADDOCK: I think it's important context to add. The federal processing time is challenged and we've had discussions with the minister because we believe, particularly given that the federal minister is from Nova Scotia, that there should be some favourable processing for the AIP, the Atlantic Immigration Program.

So that's what we are lobbying. We will continue to do that because, ultimately, we want them to become permanent residents and permanent residents that put a foothold here.

S. O'LEARY: Can we have a breakdown of the Job Creation Partnerships funding? How many people have availed of it in the last year?

L. PADDOCK: The JCP, again, is an extensive program. We can provide a list of the projects.

I'll pass you to my ADM of Labour just to give you, I guess, a snapshot of that program and how it's used. I know in my own district a number of communities use it to great effect.

I'll pass to ADM of Labour.

S. BREEN: To answer your question, there were 167 individuals supported through the JCP program in '25-'26.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

How many people will the Office of Indigenous and Northern Skilled Trades help in the coming year?

L. PADDOCK: Given that is a skilled trades question, I'll double-check here with staff, but I believe that should be over under EEC.

S. O'LEARY: EEC?

L. PADDOCK: Yeah, I believe that should be over under EEC because skilled trades has moved entirely to the Minister of Education.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, thank you.

L. PADDOCK: Now, I will highlight that under Labour Market Development, we do provide support under Labour Market Development to trades and skilled development; however, with regard to the specifics of that, you would want to engage with the Minister of Education.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Could we have an update on the Study and Stay NL Program? Is it bearing any fruit yet?

L. PADDOCK: Study and Stay?

S. O'LEARY: Study and Stay NL Program. Is that Education again?

L. PADDOCK: Given that our team is at a loss, I do believe that is under Education as well. But if not, like I said, we will double-check on our side just to confirm.

S. O'LEARY: Okay.

L. PADDOCK: But I'm fairly confident that is under Education as part of secondary education within the province.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

I appreciate that, and, yeah, because, of course, the intersection between Immigration and Education and, obviously, the change to the department, this is where we're going to be splitting some hairs. Thank you for your patience in all of this.

When can we expect to see the study by Trades NL on a Labour Market Impact Assessment?

L. PADDOCK: I guess we'll have to inquire of Trades NL. That is their project. Some of that they would share with us after. It's not something that we have specifically contracted with Trades NL – yeah, Trades NL, specifically.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, thank you.

L. PADDOCK: If you can't get it from Trades NL – I think we have a working relationship with Trades NL – we can inquire for you.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

I have one more general question and this one is based on personal experience. I was a former labour market facilitator for persons with intellectual disabilities and autism and on the autism spectrum.

Just wondering, my understanding, again, as a newcomer, was that this funding fell

under this previous portfolio so I'm just wondering what kind of intel can you provide in regard to any support for programming like that?

L. PADDOCK: Again, I'll pass to my ADM of Labour to give a quick snapshot on Supported Employment.

Your question is almost, I guess, in two parts, because when you mentioned autism, the Autism Society, they have received core funding from the Department of Health and Community Services.

I'll pass to my ADM for Labour just to give a quick overview of the program for Supported Employment.

S. BREEN: The minister is correct, the Supported Employment program, that is funded through federal Labour Market Development Agreement funding, as well as provincial monies. Funding is provided to 15 agencies that are located throughout the province to support persons with disabilities and their employment.

This past year, funding was increased to \$15.8 million to support the program. There have been absolutely no reductions in funding.

S. O'LEARY: Wonderful.

Thank you, I believe that's it for me for my general questions.

Thank you.

L. PADDOCK: You must be watching the hockey game tonight, too, are you? Sorry.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Just had a quick follow-up to a question that one of my colleagues just asked.

The JCP funding was it up or down? That's the initial question. Maybe the ADM can answer that like he just answered there.

Can we get a list of those successful proponents – and if it's not said in the future, I'll say it now. Any requests that any of us in the Opposition ask, if we share with the other, would be beneficial in case we don't get cross purposes here on anything. If we can get an answer to whether it's up or down, then we can probably vote on this section, I'm guessing, because I got no more questions on this section.

L. PADDOCK: I'll pass that to my ADM of Labour for that. You will find in your binder, when you get it, there's also a breakdown of some of the projects as well.

S. BREEN: Good question.

We had an \$8-million budget and it was funded through Labour Market Development Agreement for the JCP program. There was a little bit of a drop there by \$427,000. That was due to employers that had approved projects not moving forward with their projects.

B. DAVIS: Excellent. If we can get a list of that when it comes through – it may be in the binder.

L. PADDOCK: On the note that was raised by my ADM, I know from my own experience with my own communities out in Baie Verte - Green Bay, 38 communities, sometimes some of these projects will start and people were picked up for work elsewhere. In JCP, you're dealing with minimum wage. If they got a better deal, they will go to better deals.

That's why in some of that stuff, you're going to experience some gap.

B. DAVIS: That's a very low spill rate so –

L. PADDOCK: Yes.

B. DAVIS: – not worried about that at all.

CHAIR: Any further questions?

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

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

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 to 1.2.02 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 1.2.02 carried.

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

CLERK: 2.1.01 to 2.1.04 inclusive, Employment and Labour Market Development.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 to 2.1.04 inclusive carry?

I now call on the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you.

Minister, will you commit to a specific date for the release of the comprehensive provincial labour market strategy?

L. PADDOCK: Yes, the actual date for that, so that is still under development. With regard to the exact date of release, I'm not in a position to actually say at this time, but it is being worked on and it will be provided.

B. DAVIS: Thank you.

Who's leading the development of the labour market strategy? Which external stakeholders have been formally consulted so far?

L. PADDOCK: Yes, we have commenced engagement across, from Chambers of Commerce to a variety of associations. That will continue to be ongoing as schedule allows.

It's tough, as you know, when the House is open, but we will continue that so we can continue that broad-level development.

B. DAVIS: Will the labour market strategy include measurable targets for vacancy reduction, participation rates and out-migration, and if not, why not?

L. PADDOCK: Again, overall, that is still being worked on with regard to the specific parameters. A lot of what you know from a government side, yes, there are performance metrics that will need to be developed as a part of it.

B. DAVIS: Minister, is there a specific time frame on the parameter development and stuff?

I know there's going to be a release date. I knew when I asked that question that I wasn't going to get a drop-dead date or anything like that. I kind of knew that. I was just trying to get a feel for where we are with setting the riverbanks on it more than anything else. Are we close to setting the measurable targets on where we think we can go for this?

L. PADDOCK: Overall, as we are with a number of programs with a new government, we are – I guess, let me just frame it like this. As a ship trying to pull away from a wharf, we have both engines run on and now it's looking to chart that course to who we need to engage and how we define the province. How we define the province, that's one of the things that we're actually doing right now is mapping because

that map will provide context for some other programs as well.

So how do you define each of the regions in the province? We have 21 Chambers of Commerce. Those 21 Chambers of Commerce fit to what you need for some of the specific programs of government. That's being worked on now as to how we break out the province with regards to regions.

We all know, and I think from your time in government, as well, not every region is the same. Not every political district is the same. There are various drivers accelerating in some regions from mining and the likes. It's understanding where we are with specific regions and how we define it so that we can set the conditions for some of the growth programs within government.

B. DAVIS: The labour market strategy – I'm almost off that topic now just to give you a little reprieve from there. Will it align – and I'm sure the answer is going to be yes – with the PC platform commitments on major projects, rural revitalization and health care staffing?

I think this is a good time to ask this question. Having been a minister before and seeing the minister's mandate letters and how they're viewed within the department by the executive team, in the absence of an individual ministerial mandate letter, it's going to take the minister really pushing hard to try to get clarity for the executive team on the commitments that were within an election platform.

There is not as much depth or description in a platform, just by nature of a platform, whereas a minister's mandate letter generally would tend to have a little bit more, for lack of a better term, meat on the bone to allow you to work with. Because I know how much I used the minister's mandate letters before I worked with my executive team to make those accomplishments as the direction.

So it's more of, how's it going to feel within the department to try to meet those targets that you've set that are not necessarily highly specific yet.

L. PADDOCK: So there are a few things to unpack there. First, with regard to the mandate letter, I think the mandate letter correlates to where we are with the commitments within the blue book. That's pretty clear within the mandate letters. Then, as I highlighted with regard to the interconnection of some of the other programs, like some of what was highlighted in the Speech from the Throne and in the budget, referring back to the blue book, it's also that plan for rural economic development. That's why defining the regions are important and also with regard to population growth as well. Then on top of that, SSWB, who is the lead with regard to the poverty reduction strategy, which we will feed into as well.

B. DAVIS: Just a quick one while I got a little bit of time left there.

Has the department completed a labour demand forecast for the Bay du Nord project? If so, how many workers, by occupation and by year, are going to be required? Has there been work done on that?

L. PADDOCK: With regard to specific demands for Bay du Nord, that would be with Mines and Energy. Some of the forecast that you see with regard to jobs, that was done in developing that project with them. I will also highlight there has been some analysis on some of the other renewable projects. You would have known from your time in government, Equinox was tasked with a study of demands with regard to wind energy, hydrogen and labour demands, and specific skillsets.

B. DAVIS: Thank you.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

I basically have two questions in this section. How has the department adjusted to the funding cuts to the LMDA announced in 2024? Has funding been maintained to all the groups that were depending upon it or have they had to make cuts?

L. PADDOCK: I think you are referring to what played out in the news, potentially, last year, with some of the LMDA with regard to Supported Employment. Is that correct?

So as my ADM highlighted Supported Employment, the funding is actually higher this year. This is a commitment of our government, and I believe with whatever government has been there, over the last number of years, this is the most successful public policy program in our province, is Supported Employment.

I will pass to my ADM for Labour just to give an overview with regard to any specific amplifying details for that question.

S. BREEN: I agree it is a successful program, the Supported Employment program. I think you might be referring to the federal Labour Market Transfer Agreement funding reductions by the federal government. We saw a \$17-million reduction that came into effect in '24-'25. We haven't incurred any cuts on any of our organizations. What we did was we looked at five-year trends of all of our programs and looked at demand. We looked at our budgets. We rightsized them and we mitigated any impacts on any of the community organizations.

S. O'LEARY: Wonderful, thank you.

Could we have an update on the Green Economy Workforce Development project with econext?

L. PADDOCK: Essentially, that's under our community organizations so we provide funding to econext, I believe that is a

\$100,000 – I'll get my staff to confirm here shortly. We've had detailed discussions with econext and then we also collaborate with econext with regard to the Green Transition Fund and where we can potentially use that.

I'll get my ADM for Innovation just to give a quick overview of the Green Transition Fund.

OFFICIAL: That would be Dan.

L. PADDOCK: Okay, sorry.

D. BRAKE: The Green Transition Fund was set up to help organizations who are transitioning into the green economy. The program was set up with money from oil and gas. It was set up in 2023; it expires in 2033. It was \$6 million this year; it goes up to \$8 million.

I'll stop, yes.

S. O'LEARY: Could you go a little slower, just the details about how much money is being exchanged. Sorry, if you could.

Thank you.

D. BRAKE: Yes, sure. I got excited.

S. O'LEARY: Me too.

D. BRAKE: Yes, so the Green Transition Fund was set up through an agreement – bear with me a moment just so I get the numbers correct. It's a program that runs until 2033. When it was established, it was \$6 million a year, that was for up until 2025. In 2026, it increases to \$8 million; 2031 to \$9 million; and then for the last two years of the program, it increases to \$12 million. It's \$100 million over 12 years. It's set-up in three streams as well: Indigenous, rural and general.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

I appreciate that, and thanks for slowing it down.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the minister.

L. PADDOCK: I'll confirm that core funding to Equinox and we'll let you know. They are getting some core funding, like all the associations are from us.

S. O'LEARY: Okay.

L. PADDOCK: That has not changed. That was the big concern when they came in to sit with us.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, thank you.

I have one more question, actually, a line item. This is under 2.1.02, Professional Services: Can you explain the increase in this year's budget? It's a \$600,000 increase from last year's Estimate.

L. PADDOCK: Oh, yes. That's an increase of \$630,000. That's a new Workforce Tariff Response agreement that was signed in March 2026. That was added to the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Labour Market Development Agreement enabling federal and provincial governments to support workers with employment benefits and training in the steel and softwood sectors, as well as others directly or indirectly affected by tariffs and global market shifts. Like I said, that is anticipated debt for this fiscal year at \$630,100.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Burgeo - La Poile.

M. KING: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, just then, when my colleague asked about Bay du Nord, you mentioned Energy and Mines. I guess, from a labour perspective, they will be looking at it from the benefits agreement, looking at Newfoundlanders and Labradorians being hired.

When it comes to these projects, we've talked about the floating dry dock as well, and when we look at health care recruitment from a worker's perspective, from the labour side perspective, what work does your department do with other departments in looking at the numbers and looking at recruitment and looking at what the needs are for these big projects?

I know you mentioned Energy and Mines, obviously, from a Bay du Nord perspective, and I'm assuming you would say health care from a health care retention and recruitment side, so how does your department, from the labour perspective, overlap with those departments?

L. PADDOCK: I will start, and then I will pass it to my DM or maybe even one of the ADMs for some amplifying information.

Overall, we are connected with the other departments. We're tracking labour statistics, as you are probably aware and the MHA for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville is aware. There's a detailed tracking of labour statistics in the province and that's broken down by region.

With regard to the needs of specific projects, then it's looking at a project initiation, what is there from a benefits agreement and the need for labour, and then also if that is unionized or not. If it's unionized, we've had discussions with Trades NL with regard to their needs, and then we've also had discussions with some of the specific companies, like EVREC, with regard to, potentially, some of their future needs. It is, in a way, a cross-departmental analysis.

Then, with regard to specific needs of companies, like some of the mining companies, it is engaging with them in where they are going and then understanding specific pressures with regard to specific trades.

DM, do you have anything?

H. TIZZARD: I'm going to turn it over for further detail on the work being undertaken by Workforce Development to our ADM, but just briefly on the major project side, we provide general labour market information. Sometimes we'll do it as requested; sometimes we'll do it if there are impacts of closures of plants or that sort of thing, to provide some support to those workers where needed.

We also do some forecasting and working with other departments, such as Health, as you referenced, when we look at things, like immigration, for example, to try to figure what areas to target and that sort of thing.

With respect to major projects, often if you're looking at something like Bay du Nord, the department, with the extensive review that's undertaken for a project like that, will do their own labour market information gathering, sometimes working with the Department of Finance because they have that area as well and some of the economic impacts and indirect impacts and that sort of thing.

We certainly would provide information if requested, but, generally, I find major projects like that, the department will look at a number of other sources in informing that sort of work.

I'll turn it over to our ADM to provide further information on other things that we do provide information for.

A. GOGAN: Thanks.

Our Workforce Development Secretariat works really closely with all departments to provide labour market information. We have a job scraping tool that uses all kinds of different tools and information. We work really closely with our federal colleagues, and also with the Labour Market Information Council nationally, to look at demand across the country and, as the deputy minister just said, we support departments where they need our support. Often, they have other

information, so we work together to get as full a picture as we can.

On the immigration side, we also work really closely with departments to look at where gaps are that are not going to be able to be filled by the Canadian labour market. Right now, we're really focused on health care and education, and with those departments, to make sure that we're using the reduced allocation that we have from the federal government to bring people here to fill the gaps that really exist, and also to bring people here who are likely to stay here. So we work holistically with other departments to fill in the information that they need to do job vacancy assessments or whatever is requested of us.

M. KING: Perfect. Thank you so much for that information. It's very helpful.

Just to kind of elaborate on that a little bit more when we look at the floating dock and the shipbuilding commitments that are coming from the government, of course. I know we talked about the crossover from departments, but would your department look at those projects, look at that industry and size up the number of welders and pipefitters and engineers and other trades that would be required and look at a gap that exists or would that be left to the other department to come to you folks? How would that work?

L. PADDOCK: Let me just say, from our floating dry dock, a new industry and a significant opportunity for the province given that both the blue-water Navy is expanding their ships and the Coast Guard is expanding their vessels, and where the complete, I guess, amount of government vessels in Eastern Canada are now and are forecasted to be over the medium to long term. That's a part of the equation in looking at that floating dry dock.

Over the life of a capital Maritime asset, over a 30-year period, you're going to spend the same amount again in repair and

overhaul as you would in building it. So understanding where we are there with that need, that would be done in consultation with Energy and Mines, who has initial lead there. We would also engage Trades NL as a pipeline there, specifically with regard to a couple of the trades you highlighted, like welders and potentially steamfitters as well, and then it would be forecasting where we are with all of that, basically future need.

Trades NL, as of right now, are significantly underutilized within the province. It's not that their folks are not working; they're on tickets outside of the province. They do have significant capacity to ramp up here based on a future growth of major projects.

M. KING: Thank you, Minister.

To kind of expand on that further, I don't know if this would be more of an Education question or not, but when you look at the opportunities that could come with highlighting a new industry from training seats and apprenticeship expansions, has your department looked at the training opportunities or the apprenticeship opportunities, increasing seats or anything from your point of view from that side? I'm looking at would it be in the city or would it be located in other parts of the province, just to get your thoughts on that.

L. PADDOCK: There's some overlap here with Skills, so the Department of Education.

We have had discussions here with regard to some specific trades that we're going to need some investment on. That's based on conversations that we've had with, I think, most of the major mining companies. We've had discussions with Mining NL and Trades NL, their forecast, and then our team looking out at some of the investment opportunities and the workforce capabilities that we're going to need to execute upon that.

M. KING: I'm good, Chair.

Thank you.

CHAIR: You're good?

Any further questions?

J. POWER: I just have one.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Labrador West.

J. POWER: Just one question, Minister, and I know you probably weren't expecting one from us, but this is –

L. PADDOCK: No, I wasn't actually.

J. POWER: No, it's just regarding my own district now that we're here.

Everybody knows that mining companies and a lot of smaller companies in Labrador West can't expand or can't grow without the third power line coming in. I'm just wondering, has your department been in on those discussions on how we're going to be able to go about putting the third transmission line into Labrador West?

L. PADDOCK: No, that's under Energy and Mines.

We've had discussions with Mining NL with regard to potential labour needs; we've had discussions with mining companies with regard to labour, and then discussions with those options for workforce development, and another big one on our side is bringing along small- to medium-sized businesses in the province developing supplier development for some of those major projects as well.

J. POWER: Thank you. That's all.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Just maybe a minute or two, Minister, and then we should be able to finish this section, I hope.

The JobsNL participants, for the last fiscal year – I think the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi talked about that – I was just looking for if you can give us the details on those individuals – not the details on the individuals but to see if they've transitioned from participants into that to full-time employment. See if there are some benefits to that.

I don't necessarily need the answer to that today but if we can have that information, to see if we're just not subsidizing companies year over year over year and not seeing them hire the employees that we're trying to structure into full-time employment with respect to that.

Then it was a question – I think it's in the same division side – would be the JCPs, the applications, when they're due – I know there's a constant intake, I would think.

L. PADDOCK: Let me start with the latter and then go back, so two questions there. First of all with the JCP, they have until the end of June. The exact date I think it was, what, June 21?

OFFICIAL: Yes, some of them were.

L. PADDOCK: For this year, so 2026, and that is a rolling intake. That's being fair. That's where we are now with a number of programs, a rolling intake to be fair and equitable to folks out there. The first lot of JCPs have been approved and have gone out.

Back to the first question – I need you to trigger me again now on the first question.

B. DAVIS: It was on JobsNL.

L. PADDOCK: Oh yes, sorry. Thanks.

JobsNL –

B. DAVIS: I'm here to help.

L. PADDOCK: I'm going to pass to my ADM in a quick second, but I just want to highlight, and what I've noticed, is there is, again, quite a variance – and you may have noticed that yourself, during your time in government – across the province. Where we see areas now where there is a lot of economic stimulus, the JobsNL, it's a transition and some of them are coming back and then there is then some regions where it is a repeat use.

ADM?

S. BREEN: I believe the previous question had to do with JCPs, but if it was related to JobsNL, they are two different programs. The JobsNL is the wage subsidy program and so that is funded through the Labour Market Development Agreement. We have strict reporting requirements to the federal government.

I think you're requesting some data around sustainability of positions, so we can have a look at that and get back to you on that.

B. DAVIS: I knew they were two separate programs. I just figured they fell in your division to talk about, which would be perfect. That's great.

Can we get a list of those JCPs rather than ATIPP it, if you just want to give it to us after the Estimates process is finished?

L. PADDOCK: Which JCPs? This fiscal year or last fiscal year?

B. DAVIS: Well, you just talked about the ones that were just awarded.

L. PADDOCK: What we're doing is providing that to MHAs, so you been updated, so has the MHA for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi. As stuff comes in, we're updating MHAs as we sign off.

Yes, we'll provide those.

B. DAVIS: Perfect.

The last question that I have was line-by-line item. I hate to go back to another question that was asked before, but there's a difference of an increase in 2.1.02, Labour Market Development Agreement, in the Professional Services from \$481,000 to \$1.1 million. I think you addressed it. I heard tariffs and you mentioned softwood lumber. Did you mention fisheries, as well, with respect to that? Because I know that there's a fisheries program that was in this –

L. PADDOCK: No, this is separate. This is softwood lumber and steel.

B. DAVIS: So would the fisheries one be in another section somewhere along? Because it was in your shop before.

L. PADDOCK: I'll stand corrected. That was the previous tariff response.

B. DAVIS: It was on whelk and sea cucumber.

L. PADDOCK: Yes, that was the previous one, and that was partly because we had two things going on at once. If you remember last year, we had the US tariffs in the spring and then we had the Chinese tariffs on the fishery. That was impact on shrimp, whelk, sea cucumber, et cetera.

B. DAVIS: Just to be clear, this one deals with softwood lumber. Is the other program that was constituted, I'm going say, a year ago, to help navigate through the tariffs with China –

L. PADDOCK: And the US.

B. DAVIS: – and the US? Is that going to still be available this year again for, I think there was 12 or 14 companies that utilized it – I've had someone reach out. That's why I'm asking.

L. PADDOCK: If there's a specific company, we can look to address it. That program last year, like I said, because the Chinese tariffs after the towing of relations

between Canada and China have been notably reduced on some of our fishery products – like I said, if there's a specific company in need, then we can look to address.

I'll pass to the deputy if there's anything amplifying or she's aware, or any of my ADMs, but that's my understanding on the tariff side.

H. TIZZARD: I'm not sure exactly what program from last year that you're referring to, but if there's a specific company making a specific inquiry about something from previously, if you want to reach out and let us know we'll certainly follow up on that for you.

B. DAVIS: You sparked the question by talking about tariffs, so that's the reason why I asked.

L. PADDOCK: There was a program in the fall – I know you did reach out to the department last December on that; I remember the email coming into my EA. That program was over with last fiscal year. This is new fiscal year allocation.

We took in a number. Those were a detailed review on all of those companies because they had to justify and we did fund a number of tariff support in the area.

CHAIR: Any further questions?

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

CLERK: 2.1.01 to 2.1.04 inclusive, Employment and Labour Market Development.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 to 2.1.04 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

On motion, subheads 2.1.01 through 2.1.04 carried.

CHAIR: Seeing that we're about halfway through, we'll take a 10-minute recess and we'll reconvene here at 7:12 p.m.

Recess

CHAIR: Order, please!

I now ask the Clerk to call the next subhead.

CLERK: 3.1.01, Regional Service Delivery.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 carry?

I now call on the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Can you please provide me with a detailed breakdown of all the functions currently performed by the regional offices, including whether Income Support related duties still remain the staff's responsibility within your department?

I know it's not Income Support responsible, but are staff still having to do some of that at the regional offices?

L. PADDOCK: I'll pass to my ADM for Labour who has the employment centres.

S. BREEN: As the minister mentioned, we have 19 employment centres located throughout the province – Labrador and around Newfoundland. These employment centres basically link job seekers and employers. They provide career and employment support to help the needs of the general public and help address labour market challenges.

B. DAVIS: I understand some of these regional offices are co-located with other departments. Have you seen any issues with respect to that, whether it be Income Support or what used to be CSSD?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the minister.

L. PADDOCK: I'll just give a quick overview.

Again, it depends on where we are across the province. There is benefit in co-location. I think that's a benefit, like where we are here in government and ease of access to other departmental folks.

I'll pass to my ADM for Labour with regard to the specific centres.

S. BREEN: As the minister mentioned, some of our offices are co-located with Income Support and some of them aren't.

A number of years ago, we did have a serious incident at one of our offices at Regatta Plaza, which you probably all remember. Since then, we've taken steps to try and improve safety and occupational health and wellness for our staff and to support our clients. But at this point, no identified issues with any of the co-location.

B. DAVIS: You almost pre-answered a question for me, which was really good. We were going to ask what specific upgrades have been made at facilities based on the shooting on Elizabeth Avenue. It was obviously close to a lot of us that were in the House at the time. It's challenging. We want to make sure that all the employees feel safe, not only feel safe, but are safe.

So what things are put in place like panic buttons, security cameras, things like that; are all your offices outfitted with that, right now?

L. PADDOCK: Yes, so there was a complete formal review done of that centre

with regard to addressing those requirements.

Again, I'll pass it to my ADM if he wants to provide any additional amplifying with regard to that specific place.

S. BREEN: So following that incident, we looked into the design and layout of all of the offices across the province. On a go-forward basis, what we're doing is, as we enter into new leases, we have developed a new office layout plan for each employment centre, that includes things like Lexan glass and certain layouts in the office that keep employees and clients safe.

We've also done a number of things with every office to date, including installation of door chimes and we provided additional training to staff, so we've already undertaken a significant amount of measures. Then as leases expire, we're implementing other measures as well.

B. DAVIS: Thanks for that answer.

Can you describe a little bit about the regional offices and the accessibility challenges that you may be having? I know you talked about as leases renew, we try to satisfy those concerns. I know that's challenging in downtown St. John's, so I can only imagine how challenging it is to some other parts of the province.

So how are we doing with the accessibility standards and ensuring that our regional offices are accessible to all individuals, regardless of their situation?

L. PADDOCK: I'll just give a quick overview first. I know from the ones that I've visited, I've visited a couple outside of the Avalon and one in my own district. The one in my own district, there's ramp access. Location needs to be visible within the community so you want it in a prominent location, given the level of service being provided.

We are also, I guess, being proactive with all the companies that we are engaging to ensure that they are leveraging our employment centres with regard to their job requirements. It's that issue with regard to matching both clients with those that are looking to hire.

With regard to across the province and the 19, again, I'll come back to my ADM.

S. BREEN: I've been to almost all the employment centres around the province and, to the best of my knowledge, they are all accessible and up to standards. I'm not aware of any issues, but if you are aware of any, please pass them along.

Thanks.

B. DAVIS: How many of the offices use adaptive technology such as screen readers, assisted listening devices or accessibility digital kiosks?

L. PADDOCK: Before I defer to my ADM, I will say there are companies here in the province that are providing that technology. It is something that I've looked to connect local companies with Veterans Affairs, to ensure that those products are made available.

Again, ADM.

S. BREEN: I'll have to get back to you on that question.

B. DAVIS: Thank you.

I know we're all trying to do as best we can, but it's nice to know where we have a gap so we can try to fill them if we have. That's great that you can provide that to us, would be excellent.

I know regional staff conduct outreach to high-needs populations, such as the Gathering Place shelters, Indigenous communities and the like in remote areas. What measures have we put in place to

ensure that that's still occurring in the safest manner possible for all involved?

I know from time to time there could be issues with anything. I'm not saying there are any; I just want to make sure that we're looking into those things, that's all.

L. PADDOCK: There is a need for outreach and the promotion of the full range of employment services. I noticed that from the employment centre, like I said, in my own district in encouraging them with regard to engagement across 38 communities.

With regard, again, amplifying details, I'll pass to my ADM.

S. BREEN: We certainly do outreach. We collaborate with our community partners, the community organizations around the province and, through those partners, we're able to get a longer reach into those who are furthest away from the labour market.

We refer to those mostly as non-EI eligible clients. We also fund many community organizations to help us reach those particular vulnerable individuals to support them on their journey for work.

L. PADDOCK: Just to conclude here, as I highlighted previously, the other thing that we are doing with regard to that matching capability is we are encouraging companies to use the employment services so that they register their jobs on our job bank.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

I only have one question in this section, which is under Client Services, and it's basically the Salaries. Last year's revised amount was \$1.1 million under the budget and can you explain the variance?

L. PADDOCK: That decrease reflects short-term vacancies and delays during the

recruitment process for various positions such as career development specialist, client service officers, clerks and clerk typists.

Keep in mind, you know, the government went into caretaker mode during the election. That impacted some of the hiring. I know after I was appointed minister, within a week after, there was a stack of approvals on my computer to approve.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

That's it for that section.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Burgeo - La Poile.

M. KING: Thank you, Chair.

Just a couple of quick questions from me, especially looking at it from rural communities. Rural access is certainly important.

Which services previously delivered in person are now available online? What percentage of clients are using the digital services?

L. PADDOCK: Good question.

I'll defer, again, to my ADM on that.

S. BREEN: So all of our services are available online, and those include everything.

While career counselling is best done in person, that can be provided online if that's requested, but all of services are provided in person. If we have a client that requests to do something online, we can accommodate.

All of our services that are offered in person include things like career counselling, résumé development, job matching, skills assessment, providing access to labour market information and providing information on the many employment and

training programs and services that our department funds.

M. KING: Thank you.

Did I hear you say correctly, all of your services are available in person?

S. BREEN: That's correct.

M. KING: Okay, perfect.

I think that's it for me. Yes.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Just one last question for this section.

Has the department conducted user experience testing with respect to clients that have low literacy or disabilities? Has there been any user experience testing?

L. PADDOCK: Again, I'll defer to my ADM.

S. BREEN: I'll have to check with our staff on that. As far as I know, we carry out ongoing client satisfaction, but in terms of a particular, discrete recent survey, I'd have to get back to you on that.

B. DAVIS: No problem.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the minister.

L. PADDOCK: I just want to add, we also have the various Supported Employment organizations, and they provide assistance on that side as well. It's to bring folks along from some of that supported employment to full-time employment. A lot of them under Supported Employment, initially it's with a job coach and then hopefully being able to bring them into the workforce on their own full-time.

CHAIR: Are there any further questions?

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

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.'

Motion carried.

On motion, subhead 3.1.01 carried.

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

CLERK: 4.1.01 to 4.1.02 inclusive, Immigration.

CHAIR: Shall 4.1.01 to 4.1.02 inclusive carry?

I now call on the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Which Immigration functions, if any, have been contracted to private immigration consultants, law firms or third party service providers? What is the total value of any contract, if there is any?

L. PADDOCK: From a government side, with regard to our processing, whether it be PNP or AIP, as I previously explained, there is none. There are private operators operating, but they are looking and working with companies on their own.

I'll pass it to my ADM of Immigration just to give amplifying detail.

A. GOGAN: Yes, our own staff deliver all of our services, and there's no charge. We like to emphasize that to people.

Thank you.

B. DAVIS: Thank you. That was music to my ears. I was hoping that was going to be the answer.

I know that when I was the minister of Immigration, there were lots of individuals that would avail of some of those services and, probably to their own detriment in many cases, paid a lot of money for services that they could have had free right from your department.

What safeguards are in place for private, for-profit immigration firms so that they do not take advantage of individuals and/or businesses that are trying to make home here in this province?

L. PADDOCK: I think a very timely question, given where we are in relation to the other provinces with regard to immigration policy. That is why we're in the process of doing consultation across the province on that.

With regard to that project and plan to update our, might as well say, benign immigration policy, I'll pass to my ADM of Immigration.

A. GOGAN: As I think you're aware, there is federal legislation in this area but, as the minister just highlighted, we are concerned that there may be gaps here in the province, particularly when we look at other jurisdictions and what they have in place. We are just getting ready to launch a consultation process to assess what the gaps are and then how to best fill those gaps.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the minister.

L. PADDOCK: I'll give you a teaser that on that. Our plan is to develop that legislation and, hopefully, get it into the fall sitting of the House, but it is a priority for our government, given where we are with immigration. The timeline, yes, is somewhat

ambitious but that is our hope, to have it for the fall so that we can debate some of that legislation on immigration, and given your previous background, I look forward to your questions on it.

B. DAVIS: What's the annual turnover rate in the Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism with respect to staff and if there is a higher turnover – and I know it's some entry-level positions, of course, so there is movement always in those type things – what, if any, exit interview themes are there because I know it's not easy work for sure?

L. PADDOCK: Let me just give a quick overview here, again, before I pass to my ADM of Immigration.

I think our Office of Immigration is starting to reflect the mosaic of newcomers that are now residing in our province.

I'll pass to my ADM of Immigration.

A. GOGAN: I don't have specific data on the turnover, but I will say there's not a lot of turnover. We have very committed staff, very engaged who believe strongly in their work and, as the minister said, who reflect the diversity of our province and the growing diversity of our province.

B. DAVIS: Which sectors are currently receiving the highest number of immigration recruits and how does that align with the province's labour market shortages that we talk about all the time?

L. PADDOCK: We track that and then, like I said, recruiting is based on need.

I'll pass to my ADM of Immigration. Like I said, the current priority area, of course, is health care.

A. GOGAN: We can provide you with specific numbers –

B. DAVIS: Perfect.

A. GOGAN: – but health care, particularly personal care attendants, are at the top of the list, along with some other health care professions. We also are seeing increased recruitment in early childhood education and some other high-demand areas. Those would be the top two, but we can provide you with a full list.

B. DAVIS: As I said, you've got highly skilled staff over there.

That was my next question: How many issued were there for health care, skilled trades, early childhood educators? If you can get us that, that will alleviate some of the questions that are coming.

Okay, I'll let the minister go; I think he had something to add.

L. PADDOCK: Again, just quickly, that is fully tracked within the department.

B. DAVIS: Yes. So those are the priority ones. What sectors are being deprioritized?

I know that's normally a question you get, but we talk about the priority sectors, which ones are not the ones that are a priority to this department now based on where we are from a labour market development perspective?

L. PADDOCK: I guess we'll have to go back and look at the analysis over a two-to-three-year period and see what has shifted down in priority, but it is fully tracked.

I'm not sure if my ADM of Immigration has anything further to add.

A. GOGAN: I'll just say that we're really focusing on immigration to rural areas. Some of it is sector driven and then some of it is the reality of different parts of our province. I'd be hesitant to say a certain sector or occupation because it would really depend where in the province.

As federal allocations have been reduced, we are really trying to make sure that we're using those allocations to fill the greatest labour market demand and also to recruit people who are likely to stay here.

I think what's prioritized in the St. John's CMA would be different, or what is deprioritized, it might actually make sense to talk about that in the St. John's CMA. I'm not sure it would make sense to talk about it any more generally than that because we're really trying to listen to rural employers and make sure that we're filling the labour market needs in rural areas.

L. PADDOCK: Just an additional amplification on that.

One of the things that's being prioritized at a federal level that we are benefitting from is an increased focus on French immigration. That will help us with some of the ECEs that we need in the area for our Francophone schools and also with health care and providing support to Saint-Pierre and Miquelon.

B. DAVIS: Minister, which countries are being targeted for active immigration and recruitment missions in 2026-2027 and what are the criteria that are being used to select those particular countries?

L. PADDOCK: I'll pass that to my ADM of Immigration.

A. GOGAN: Just to follow up on the minister's point on Francophone immigration because there's a separate federal allocation for Francophone newcomers and because this is a very specific demand for bilingualism in a number of occupations, Tunisia is one country that staff have been very successful in recruiting from. Ghana is another one, particularly around early childhood education and some of the other education. There has been a fair amount of recruitment. Nurses from India, as I'm sure you're aware.

So really it depends on specifically what occupations are in demand at the moment and where we know there are people who are qualified who have the language skills, as well as training that's comparable and who are going to be able to settle here and want to stay here.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the minister.

L. PADDOCK: Just a quick overview or amplifying on what my ADM of Immigration highlighted.

Keep in mind, as we recruit internationally, we also have to factor in, an additional burden here with regards to language training and/or skills development certification with regard to coming into specific employment options.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

I have a number of questions under this category so I'll try to be fairly quick with it.

How many newcomers are currently staying in hotel rooms in the province? What is the average wait time upon arrival to securing a place to live? The final one in that question, what portion of newcomers spend more than 50 days in temporary accommodations? So some specific asks there.

L. PADDOCK: I will pass to my ADM of Immigration because we do track all of that. Again, it depends on the nature of how someone comes in. If they're coming in, like I said, on the refugee stream, it will be a humanitarian stream and it would be potentially the hotel. So you're looking at ones coming in from Syria, from Ukraine, and potentially others that the Government of Canada decides. If it's a PNP or AIP, they're not coming in to a hotel.

I'll pass to my ADM of Immigration.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, thank you.

A. GOGAN: I'm happy to say we don't have anybody in a hotel since April 1, who is under a provincial program. Again, I need to be really clear on that, because the federal government does support some government-assisted refugees in hotels. We don't have a clear window into that. We do know there's some federally assisted, government-assisted refugees who are in hotels but there's no one coming through a provincial program, including the humanitarian migrants who are in a hotel right now.

We partnered with the Association for New Canadians and they acquired accommodations as a transitional housing approach. They have 10 units that can house up to 39 people upon arrival. So we're not having to use hotels anymore.

S. O'LEARY: Good news, thank you.

Can you provide an update on the work completed by the Ministerial Committee on Anti-Racism, Minister?

L. PADDOCK: I believe that was the previous government that undertook that, so we would not have that, but I can look within the department if there's anything there and then we can look to provide it.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, that would be appreciated. Thank you.

How many projects were funded through the Labour Market Settlement and Integration Program for newcomers and what was the total amount awarded?

L. PADDOCK: Again, all of that is tracked. I'll pass to my ADM for Immigration. I'm not sure if it's in the book. Some of it was but, if not, we can provide a listing.

A. GOGAN: So the Newfoundland and Labrador Settlement and Integration Program, the total budget for 2025-2026

was just over \$11 million. It was \$11,263,133.78. All of this information is in the binder. That money is a mix of provincial funding and some Labour Market Development funding.

S. O'LEARY: We'll receive that in the binder, that's fine. Thank you.

How many people settled in the province last year under the International Entrepreneur program?

L. PADDOCK: I'll just double-check with my ADM in Immigration. I do not recall any and that is something that we are very careful in exercising on, given the challenges that have been reported in another Atlantic province.

I'll pass to my ADM of Immigration.

A. GOGAN: I'll double-check on the number because I'm not sure I agree. I will say many newcomers to come here and start their own businesses and are entrepreneurs often have paid employment while they're starting their business as well.

I wouldn't want to leave the impression that we don't have entrepreneurial newcomers because I think we all can think of many examples. We will get you information specifically on that program.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, thank you.

Regarding the Expression of Interest Model for the NLPNP and AIP, how many applications were received? How did those going through the applications rank them?

I'll leave it with that, first, before I go into the second question.

L. PADDOCK: Again, with regard to that process, that is fully tracked. I'll pass to my ADM of Immigration with regard to specific numbers but just to reassure for all, that is fully tracked.

A. GOGAN: Thank you.

Our Expression of Interest Model is working really, really well to help us prioritize based on labour market need, and also to really start retention work prior to people coming, again to make sure that we're supporting people who are likely to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'm just looking for the specific number, and I can't put my hands on the number. I can tell you already this year we have about 2,000 expressions of interest already for 2026-27, so it's a process that's really working well for us, and we think it's also working well for newcomers.

We can get you the specific information for 2025 as well. One thing about immigration data is it is tracked by calendar year rather than fiscal year, which is a little bit confusing for a discussion like this that's so focused on the Estimates. But that's the way the federal government tracks immigration data.

S. O'LEARY: Okay.

What weights were attached to which factors? Like, connection to the province or alignment with labour market practices in that regard.

I can wait and get that information as well, if you so choose.

L. PADDOCK: We'll pass that as part of the – yeah.

S. O'LEARY: Okay.

Of course, all these questions are surrounding obviously – I love the conversation about obviously we're attracting. Retention obviously is one of the most important things, once we get them here. That also feeds back into the anti-racism framework as well because we do have a lot of work to do to continue to ensure that people are welcomed in our province, newcomers in particular.

Can you provide a breakdown of retention rates of international students and out-of-province domestic Canadian students that have attended our post-secondary institutions by landing year?

L. PADDOCK: I'll pass to my ADM of Immigration.

A. GOGAN: So it's a little bit complicated because the post-graduate work program is a federal stream that people come under and certainly, again, we get data from the federal government but it's separate. Other people may also come here and study and end up staying through a provincial stream.

So it's a little bit complicated. But we can certainly ask staff to put together some information to kind of give a picture of that.

S. O'LEARY: Yeah, it's a good way for us to track. I understand the complexity when you're dealing with multiple streams here but obviously trying to get a handle on what the trend is. Thank you.

My final question in this particular section is – I have 22 seconds: What trades and professions are you focusing on, in particular, when looking for people to settle in the province? I think you already addressed some of that with health care, personal care, ECE. Are they bearing fruit, those efforts?

L. PADDOCK: Again, all of that is tracked and highlighted as ADM of Immigration highlighted. It's also tracked with regard to regional disposition in the province.

ADM of Immigration, in case you want to add.

A. GOGAN: We've had really good success in supporting health sector workers through our provincial pathways as well as early childhood educators. It depends what time period, I have a number here since 2020, which is going back a long way, 2,280 health care sector workers have been

supported through provincial pathways and of those 465 were supported in 2025, just as one example. But we do really look, particularly if we're having specific recruitment efforts and we're focusing more and more in virtual recruitment. We're seeing really good success.

Sometimes the big numbers are impressive, but sometimes shortages of large animal veterinarians, for example, we can recruit two, that's a huge success as well.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, thank you.

Thank you, Minister.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Burgeo - La Poile.

M. KING: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I'm just following up with a question from my colleague for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi when she talked about the Committee on Anti-Racism. I'm assuming that would have dissolved because that was something from the previous government, but are you willing to re-establish that Committee? It was a multi-department Committee, obviously. I think it did a lot of important work in the province.

L. PADDOCK: That is something that we have not yet looked at, but I will take that and reflect on it, I guess, across government.

I will say this, that's something, as a former military officer, where tolerance was bred into us in travelling the world, my focus with my department is making outreach to all the immigrant community.

I was at an event with my ADM of Immigration with the Indian community and it was the first time that they ever had a minister at it, that was at their Baisakhi New Year event. I believe that is part of the way that we show that our province is a welcoming province.

I have no tolerance for hatred and bigotry.

The other mechanism that we are leveraging is some of our multicultural grants to reinforce the positive image on immigration across the province and in some of the particular pockets of newcomer communities that are being developed. For example, in my own district in Springdale, there was just an evening dinner with a local Indian chef and they ended up having a waiting list for people to attend.

It is about reinforcing the positive, not dwelling on the negative. The negative has to be dealt with, and I know that from my own background, but we will get there by reinforcing the positive and success stories, like in the community of Brighton, where the entire community in Brighton came out to welcome a newcomer family from Morocco.

M. KING: Minister, I certainly appreciate your comments there, but we know that bigotry and hate still exists out there and addressing that head on is certainly important from a government's perspective, as well. I do appreciate your reflecting on that Committee and the work that they did and seeing how that looks going forward.

Just a couple of more questions here on this subhead.

How many immigration recruitment missions are planned? What is the budget for each and what outcomes are expected from those?

L. PADDOCK: Before I pass to my ADM of Immigration, that's one of the things that we have looked to do is to rein in some of the travel budget costs compared to the previous government and to leverage where we can expression of interest – other means to accomplish the goal.

ADM of Immigration.

A. GOGAN: We're having great success with our vFairs platform. We're doing a lot of

virtual fairs and staff are also out meeting with employers. They're at three different events, I think, today with different employers, including Municipalities NL today alone. So they're really busy doing events.

We don't have any travel planned at this moment in time. That's something, as the minister said, we're really looking at to see where we need to supplement virtual approaches, perhaps for specific occupations, perhaps on the Francophone side, but right now our focus is on virtual recruitment fairs and we are having really good success from those.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the minister.

L. PADDOCK: The other thing I will highlight is any time that we have any one from our government on the road, particularly our department, whether it's innovation, business development and the like, they are an ambassador for the province and a means of telling the story for immigration. We are reinforcing that across our department.

M. KING: Thank you for that, really appreciate that answer.

From a rural perspective, of course, as a rural MHA, it's very important to me, and it was good to hear you talk about focusing on the labour drive for rural areas, in addition to job creation and helping them find employment.

What supports exist specifically for the rural newcomers for retention when it comes to housing, transportation, community integration and spousal employment? How does your department play a role in that?

L. PADDOCK: I'll pass to my ADM Immigration and then I'll provide some concluding comments.

A. GOGAN: Our Newfoundland and Labrador immigrant settlement program

funds projects throughout the province. The list of all of those will be in your binder when you get a copy. We work with the Association for New Canadians, as well as the Francophone settlement agency, as well as many different partners across the province. Our own staff are also there. We support many different organizations, some maybe specific to a certain cultural group, but those projects that I referenced that the MHA for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi asked about, all of those are to support retention.

Also, as I mentioned, we view retention as starting as part of recruitment. When we're recruiting people, we're looking for people who want to live in rural areas, who are looking for that kind of lifestyle. We do find that many times people from rural areas want to live in a rural area, other times people have experienced a real lack of safety and really value what rural Newfoundland and Labrador has to offer.

That's some of what our staff are assessing in deciding whether to nominate somebody through the Expression of Interest process.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the minister.

L. PADDOCK: Just quickly, MHA King, so the other thing here is the employers. The employers have a role. That's some of the things that I've discussed, particularly with the employers in my district that are starting to use immigration to fill labour needs, is you need to also help newcomers with regard to settling, housing and in their newcomer community.

So we've seen some successive pockets across the province. Some of the Ukrainian, some of the Filipino, where they are developing communities. I know out my way, the Indian and Filipinos are on fire brigades. So that means they have integrated into the community.

M. KING: I will say, from my community as well, I look at the Port aux Basques, the Filipino community is certainly growing there

and integrating the community well, and they seem to enjoy it and enjoy the community and what rural Newfoundland has to offer. So I'm glad to hear you're providing those supports as well.

Just one final question for under this section, a line-by-line item in 4.1.01, under Grants and Subsidies, we're seeing a drop there in the Estimates of just a little over \$6 million. Can you explain that drop please, and if any organizations are losing funding or just explain?

L. PADDOCK: That decrease reflects one-time federal funding, so settlement and integration support for humanitarian crisis, and that ended in March 2026.

M. KING: Okay, perfect.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: I'll follow up very quickly to that one, Minister. Which organization would have been providing that service that is not providing it now, and how did they take the federal – I know it's not our money; it's federal cut – how did they take the cut and is it going to affect their services that they provide?

L. PADDOCK: I know some of it went to ANC. I'm not sure how much. I'll pass it to my ADM of Immigration.

A. GOGAN: That money was provided over two years and it was primarily used for capital costs and temporary accommodations. Actually, we're in a great position where that's what was used to create those 10 units that now exist for transitional housing. So there isn't a loss here. This is a real gain for the Association of New Canadians. It's actually a good news story, even though it doesn't look that way.

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

CLERK: 4.1.01 to 4.1.02 inclusive, Immigration.

CHAIR: Shall 4.1.01 to 4.1.02 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 4.1.01 through 4.1.02 carried.

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

CLERK: 5.1.01 to 5.3.01 inclusive, Business and Innovation.

CHAIR: Shall 5.1.01 to 5.3.01 inclusive carry?

I now call on the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: I had a couple of questions here about trade shows, but I'm not going to ask them because I think the minister was very clear in previous questions about trade shows. From a growth and investment perspective, I know the department has done some good work in those areas and I know the valuation on rate of return from those relatively small investments would be positive. I'm not going to ask those questions, based on the answers previous.

Has the province participated in any Team Canada Trade Missions over the last 12 months and if not, why not? Because it seems to be a very big thing that the federal government is doing. I think there's opportunity for us to piggyback on what they're doing.

L. PADDOCK: I did have three years sales and doing international sales, so quite

conversant on the need for engaging in trade events. It depends on the number of companies that have been expressing an interest in a specific – if it's a Canada Mission.

With regard to specific details of that question, I'll pass to my ADM.

J. LUDMER: Yes, we have participated in Team Canada Missions. I would have to get you the exact names, which I can do. We also participated in missions organized under the Atlantic Trade Investment and Growth Agreement, which is a pan-Atlantic agreement the four provinces participate in with ACOA.

To give you an example, in the fall, Newfoundland and Labrador organized a mission under ATIGA that went to Japan and South Korea. We led and organized that mission, so we are very active in this area.

B. DAVIS: Thank you for that.

I see the benefits in that quite heavily. I'm glad the minister identified his international background in that as seeing a benefit, too. I do think that for the relatively small investment – I know it doesn't look that way on the financial statements because it's hard to see. You may not see the benefits in your department directly, but the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador see the benefits directly which, in turn, is the reason why the province is leading in GDP growth across the country is because of some of the work that's been done in this department and the good work that's been done in this department over the last decade or more.

How many Chinese companies, Minister, have invested in Newfoundland and Labrador as a result of the engagement in the last three years with respect to not just the federal government, but also in the province here?

L. PADDOCK: I figured you would know the answer 2½ years previous to that but with regard to the actual three years, I'll pass again to my ADM.

J. LUDMER: I'm not aware of any Chinese companies that have invested in the province in the last three years, but I will double-check that and we will get back to you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the minister.

L. PADDOCK: I just want to reiterate and highlight, we are following what is happening in PEI with regard to a passive immigrant investment scheme, to ensure that we do not put our province at risk at any such maneuver as was done with the previous administration.

B. DAVIS: I think that's what I was trying to get at, with the questions, to make sure that we don't have a play-for-play kind of thing going on here. We were very clear that we didn't want to do that and I'm hopeful and thankful that the minister was very clear on that not happening. There are ways to immigrate to this country and in Newfoundland, in particular, but paying for our gold card is not something that, I think, we're interested in doing.

Thank you, Minister.

How much of the department's 2026-2027 Grants and Subsidies are explicitly airmarked for oil and gas supply chain companies, transitioning into renewable energy and if there are any, can you table a list of those funded firms?

L. PADDOCK: I will pass that to my ADM.

ADM Brake.

D. BRAKE: I've got the number of approvals for the previous year, which there were 17 companies. A lot of our approvals are multi-year so the exact number of companies that are being funded right now,

I can get back to you with that. I don't have the exact number.

B. DAVIS: You can just table it to us.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the minister.

L. PADDOCK: You will get a breakdown within that Grants and Subsidies, just the general overview – I mean, there are going to be some, depending on how the year plays out, but there is a breakdown there on the contributions over the next year – the plan. Some stuff will evolve as the year evolves.

B. DAVIS: Thank you for agreeing to give us that. Obviously, if we had the booklet, we'd probably have saved ourselves 20 or 30 or 40 questions now. But I think all of us would agree with that.

L. PADDOCK: You know the game.

B. DAVIS: I know that, too. But thank you for agreeing to give us that information on all the grants and subsidies through all the department. It would be great to get that list.

How many products supported through the department's R & D funding successfully moved from research and development into commercial sales this past year?

I don't expect you to know that number right offhand. I'd just like to hear the positive side of things.

L. PADDOCK: Good question. So that comes back to TRL. We do have a program error in the province. I think we are set up with our ecosystem better than most to take companies from Memorial, from research, out to the Genesis Centre, then out with our business support programs before they scale.

We'll get you a specific answer to that, and I'll pass to my ADM for amplifying detail.

J. LUDMER: So as the minister said, we don't have an immediate answer to that question, but what I can share is that in the last year, by looking at our R & D supports, on commercial R & D, we approved 19 projects for \$6.39 million, those projects leveraged an additional \$13.98 million in partner support; non-commercial R & D, we approved 38 projects for \$7.89 million in funding and those projects leveraged an additional \$19.14 million in partner support.

B. DAVIS: If we can have a list, that would be great because that was really fast, but very positive.

That's all the questions I have. If Michael wants to take the last minute and a half maybe.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Burgeo - La Poile.

M. KING: Thank you, Chair.

I just have a quick question. As the minister would know, this side of the Estimates feels right at home now.

You did mention trade shows. I just want to clarify, you, as the minister, are not planning to attend any trade shows or conferences this year from a business development kind of side?

L. PADDOCK: I will look to jump into a trades show wherever I can, given my background. Unfortunately, the House schedule is constraining that. I would have loved to have been in Ottawa for CANSEC to have been able to help a number of our companies. That's at the end of May; the House is still open.

Now, we do have a number of trade shows that are happening here in St. John's so that makes it easier and then there will probably be a couple this fall that I might be able to jump in on.

So, yes, I am planning to travel. I understand the trade show game and in leveraging all the assets around it, like global fairs and the like. Ultimately, it's about helping our companies and putting the best foot forward for our companies in growing and scaling here.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister.

What are some of the key industries that the government is looking to nurture and support in this province in the coming years?

L. PADDOCK: Right now, it's understanding where we are from a geopolitical side, so we have some huge opportunity across defence, multi-use technology that also highlights and delves into our ocean tech, tech with large – our traditional industry, I believe the conditions are right for growth in mining and the fishery, the return of the Northern cod. So it's understanding where things are happening from a geopolitical side and the opportunities that provides to some of our companies here.

If it's a larger company – we've been out at some of the local trade events – then it's helping some of our suppliers to be brought along both nationally and internationally. That was what I posed to Equinox Gold, because they have operations in five countries, is to be able to bring – what do they need – a Newfoundland company along nationally and internationally? We can then, potentially, look to help that company, whether it's a certification, to be able to be brought along.

S. O'LEARY: Just continuing on that, thank you for that list. I'm sure there are others, but renewable resources and industry, I'm not really hearing much there, other than

fishery, which, of course, we're trying to get back on track.

L. PADDOCK: Yes, fishery is renewable, so is forestry and so is some of the opportunity on hydrogen. There are projects that are developing.

As I said previously, the government has engaged Equinox for a study on that. We've had discussions with two of the companies that are progressing along with their renewable energy projects, that's Braya, North Atlantic and with EVREC, in discussions with regard to their timelines and their potential needs.

So, yes, all sectors, and then with both of them, the opportunity – and that's what we discussed when we had them in – is the opportunity for supplier companies to support them both here and internationally.

S. O'LEARY: Following up on that question, did Braya ever repay the loan that was granted in 2021? How much money have they spent from the one issued back in September?

L. PADDOCK: I'll pass to my ADM to answer that question with regard to the Braya loan.

J. LUDMER: Our department did not issue the 2021 loan. That was issued I believe under the former IET, but we would have to check on that and get back to you but it did not originate in this department.

The loan that was issued last year did originate in this department. That was a \$25-million loan. Braya has commenced interest only repayment on that loan. They've paid about \$600,000 back so far. They will begin principal payments in December 2027. The total period for repayment of the loan is five years –

S. O'LEARY: Five years.

J. LUDMER: – plus interest that is being charged on the loan as well.

S. O'LEARY: Wonderful, thank you for that info.

Thank you, Chair.

L. PADDOCK: I'm sorry, I think it's important just to highlight as well, Braya has also met all of their payments with regard to land lease with regard to wind, hydrogen development.

S. O'LEARY: 5.1.02, Investment Attraction Fund, Capital: Why has the budget for the fund dropped so substantially this year?

L. PADDOCK: I'll pass to my ADM.

J. LUDMER: This fund normally has an allocation of \$8 million per year. Last year, we had some one-time additional funds that were allocated; \$25 million that was provided for the Braya loan is reflected in that \$43 million figure, plus an additional \$10 million that was provided to support the province's commitment to another venture capital fund under Pelorus VC.

So there was \$35 million in additional dollars that were provided to the IAF last year. Now, in the coming year, we're only returning to the normal \$8-million allocation that we've had in years past.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

This is under 5.3.01, Innovation and Business Investment. Are there any plans to use more of the IBIC funds to continue with new rounds of Rental Housing Development Loan Program?

L. PADDOCK: Again, I'll pass to ADM of Innovation on that.

J. LUDMER: The Rental Housing Development Loan Program was supported by funds provided by the Department of Finance. These are not funds that originally

came from Innovation and Business Investment Corporation but the program was implemented under the corporation so the funding was placed there – the original \$50 million. We were told in 2025, I believe, that that program would not be recapitalized.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the minister.

L. PADDOCK: You will note in the budget this year, there's additional money in housing under SSWB, Minister Wall.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you for that.

That's it for my section.

CHAIR: No further questions?

See no further questions for this subhead, I now ask the Clerk to recall the subhead.

CLERK: 5.1.01 to 5.3.01 inclusive, Business and Innovation.

CHAIR: Shall 5.1.01 to 5.3.01 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, subheads 5.1.01 through 5.3.01 carried.

CHAIR: Before we get to the last subhead, I just want to make an announcement that due to time constraints on the 75 hours allocated for the business of Supply, we will be calling a stop at 8:40 and an absolute hard stop at 8:45.

I now ask the Clerk to call the next subhead.

CLERK: 6.1.01 to 6.4.01 inclusive, Industry and Economic Development.

CHAIR: Shall 6.1.01 to 6.4.01 inclusive carry?

I now call on the Member for Burgeo - La Poile.

M. KING: Thank you, Chair.

Under this subhead, as the minister would know, there's a lot of funding opportunities for organizations and communities to access. Can you confirm if any of that funding opportunity is open now, like application process or would that follow the budgetary process?

L. PADDOCK: Again, before I punt back to my ADM of Regional Economic Development, it is again ongoing file development. All the EDOs are continuing to work pan-province in their regions with regard to files in their region.

D. BRAKE: Exactly right, we have 18 offices across the province. It is continuous intake from different regions across the province; 43 staff delivering different programs across Newfoundland and Labrador.

M. KING: I guess the list would be included in the documents you're providing, correct?

D. BRAKE: Yes.

M. KING: Okay, perfect.

Are there any vacancies in economic development officer positions right now across the province?

L. PADDOCK: I'll pass to my DM, I don't believe – it's in and out, if there is a vacancy we would look to immediately fill it, but I'll pass to the DM.

H. TIZZARD: Actually, I'm going to defer to the ADM, whichever one applies. I would imagine there are some vacancies but I don't know if Dan or Megan have the exact number.

D. BRAKE: I'm fairly new. When I started two months ago, there were two. One of those has since been filled. I believe there may still be one, but we can get back in touch with you.

M. KING: If I had to guess, that probably is Labrador, maybe?

D. BRAKE: No.

M. KING: Oh, good news for Labrador. I know that one has always been a challenge, that's why I said it. No, good news.

Okay, thank you for that.

There was a commitment made in the blue book, which is the mandate now for the Rural Secretariat and I just am curious if there's been any steps to establish the Rural Secretariat within Executive Council and, if so, is the timeline for becoming fully operational – what's the timeline for that?

L. PADDOCK: Again, as I highlighted with that, with regard to rural economic development, the first step is defining the regions, and that is what we are undertaking now and mapping pan-province. The next step after that will be consultations right across the province. That will start over the summer.

M. KING: A part of that consultation process, do you have a layout of what that office would look like? What are you discussing in the consultation process for people to understand what this office would look like, or the Secretariat would look like?

L. PADDOCK: So that would be consultations with MNL, consultations with communities, consultations with Chambers of Commerce. It's understanding, like I said before, each region is different.

But I will pass to my deputy in case she has anything amplifying to add to it.

H. TIZZARD: So a lot of the research on that work will be undertaken as we do consultations around the rural revitalization strategy.

M. KING: Okay, perfect. Thank you.

I'd now like to talk a bit about cellular coverage, especially rural Newfoundland and Labrador. If anybody travels across the province as much as I do these days, having a phone call is quite the challenge. So I know there was some commitment of funds in the budget, but can you elaborate on the progress that has been made for expanding cell coverage across the province, Minister?

L. PADDOCK: Yeah, thanks for the question. I was waiting to have that as a petition actually in the House.

M. KING: In due course.

L. PADDOCK: Let me say this, I, like you, as a frequent traveller on our highway, understand the issue all too well. Our government is fully committed to closing the gap and being aggressive with it. Closing that gap has to be based on data. We have a company that was contracted to basically map the province with regard to the roads, both TCH and secondary, so that we can understand where we need to put towers.

We've also reached out to the federal government, the minister of ACOA, the minister of Rural Economic Development, because some of this, the feds have to be there as a partner as well.

So, suffice to say, we will be making announcements on towers over in the coming months. The gap has to be closed. Primarily, you go outside the overpass, it is a public safety issue. In addition to being a tourism and a daily commute requirement for a number of our people. But public safety, number one.

M. KING: Totally appreciate that comment as well. I totally understand that coming from a rural community with no cellphone access, to be quite frank.

I know one of the other obstacles with improving cellular service is the companies itself. They have to make a business case a lot of times for putting these towers up.

What kind of conversations have you had so far since you became minister with the Bell Aliants of the world?

L. PADDOCK: We've had engagement with Bell, Rogers and East Link. We will continue to have engagement with them as well as with the federal government, because what I said to the federal minister of Rural Development yesterday, we can look at these as individual projects, like a tower, but, ultimately, it's about closing the gap.

M. KING: I appreciate that. Having conversations with the federal government, has there been any formal requests from a rural connectivity funding perspective?

L. PADDOCK: Again, very timely, MHA King, because we just got a letter back from the federal government, we will be going back to them within the next month with a plan that they can support us on some of the cell towers. We'll see what we get back from them, because that has been an issue, I think, from the previous administration, as to how much they would actually help. There is some potential money there, so we'll see, but I'm hopeful, like I said, that we'll be able to get a number of towers built this year.

We will – even if we have to do it ourselves – put some, but if we can get the three primary providers to ante up as well as the feds, then we'll do a lot more. Primary focus on what we're going to do is closing that gap on the TCH.

M. KING: I'll come back to a comment you just made, but while I have a little bit of time

left here, I know there was a pilot project done on Wi-Fi hotspots, especially in my district on the Route 480, the Burgeo Highway, which I will say was extremely successful. I know the challenges of establishing that pilot with getting a community to come on board.

Are there any conversations of expanding that pilot across the province with the challenges of expanding cell coverage?

L. PADDOCK: I'm going to pass to my DM. I'll say yes and she'll give some additional detail.

H. TIZZARD: We have been looking at other options to expand that pilot. As you mentioned before, we did try to do some outreach with communities to get them to take on some of the ownership of some of these hotspots, because you really need someone to take ownership of the maintenance and taking care of that as you. We didn't get a lot of uptake, really, from communities for those, so we're looking at alternative approaches now to doing something like that. So maybe looking at areas like depots that already have power, already have Wi-Fi, already have connectivity to them as potential options for something like Wi-Fi hotspots there. So we are continuing to look at that.

M. KING: Just in my last seconds here, your comment about government potentially even taking on building towers themselves, would that money come out of the money that was committed in the budget this year, or what would that look like?

L. PADDOCK: When I say we would take it on, we would then look to RFPs to get one of the three providers to do it. In some cases, we know we've got to sweeten the pot to get it done. But the gap, MHA King, as you know, has to be closed.

M. KING: Absolutely.

Thank you, Chair.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Two more questions from me. Regional Economic and Business Development: Could you provide an update on the uptake and effectiveness of the Restaurant Loan Guarantee Program?

L. PADDOCK: I will pass to my ADM of Innovation.

Before I do, let me just say, we met with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. We highlighted that program because that program was unique, and I give credit to the previous administration for that. The challenge there with a lot of the restaurants is what they are owing to CRA, a lot of that debt developed during the pandemic.

ADM.

J. LUDMER: We received 21 applications under the program. We issued 11 prequalification letters to indicate that the province was willing to guarantee a loan in cases in which the business was able to obtain financing from their financial institution. We have not had any of those businesses successfully obtain a loan from any of their financial institutions.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the minister.

L. PADDOCK: I've engaged a number of the banks and a number of the banks have said that they will not touch the hospitality sector, unfortunately. So that is why, again, we push back with CFIB so that CFIB can lobby the federal government with regard to having a protracted repayment of that CRA debt that was accumulated mostly during the pandemic.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

This is my last question and this is under the Green Transition Fund. There hasn't been much uptake on this fund. Are you looking at effective ways, Minister, of getting more money out the door and investing in promising initiatives?

L. PADDOCK: Again, I'll pass to my ADM with regards to some specific details. Let me just say, when this started, initially there was set parameters with regard to intake. We now have a rolling intake so that is helping to get more files in. We've reached out to a number of the associations to also promote that. As I'm meeting the associations, we're highlighting that and, particularly, Equinix and CME. So we do expect that to come up.

The money is not lost; the money then is just deferred to the following year.

ADM.

D. BRAKE: Initially the uptake was slow – just the number of applications and getting through them – however, in terms of the funds for last year, remember we received \$6 million last year, approved projects totalled \$7.8 million and leveraged over \$47 million, almost \$48 million, so definitely catching up. With the continuous intake, we now have a steady flow of projects.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the minister.

L. PADDOCK: Just a quick update. When we say leveraging, that would be ACOA, federal money or our other investors.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you.

I've just got a couple of questions. Time is going to get the better of me on this one, I think.

I dream of a world in which the minister lives that he can build a tower in a year. Having

been on this side of the House, he knows that's challenging now because he's in that chair and heavy is the head that wears the crown, I guess, right? It's challenging. They hold all the cards and you're trying to poke and prod them to put up towers where we need them. There's no doubt we need them and there's no doubt there was a huge investment from this department from multiple ministers before. I hope that you have great success with that.

One of my colleagues asked about the Green Transition Fund. I've seen that the reduction from \$14 million, which was what we budgeted last – and when I say we, collective we – \$14.2 million, spent \$4.7 million and we've budgeted, now, \$7.7million in the Green Transition.

What are we doing to align with your priorities to ensure that we can – I've heard continuous intake, which is one thing – utilize that money for renewable energy projects to get the greatest benefit from an economic development standpoint?

What are we doing to try to prioritize to get that money out the door, in a meaningful way? Because, obviously, there are some issues there in getting that out the door – and I'll take some blame for that as well.

L. PADDOCK: I'll pass to my DM on that one and then I'll have some final remarks on it.

H. TIZZARD: Just a little bit of background about this fund to explain some of the trickle of the money. When we first launched this fund, I think it was just a year or so ago, we did an open call at first and got a large, large number of applications. Some of them were half complete. Some of them were three-quarters complete. Some of them were fully complete but needed some more work.

So our folks took a lot of time to weed through the ones that, number one, didn't really qualify for this fund and then spent a

lot of time with proponents to get those applications into really fund-ready programs.

That took a lot of time. For the first year, year and a half of this fund, nothing really went out through the door because all the work was being spent doing that. Then we did another call after that and had sort of the same experience.

Now that we have a continuous call – and our users are getting a little more savvy with respect to this fund too, because it's not brand new anymore – we expect that the funding will start to flow more quickly.

Right now, what you see here with respect to what was spent, we expect to spend a little more next year and then we expect to spend more, obviously, as the years go out. As the minister mentioned before, to be clear too, that money is not lost; it's just carried forward in future years. So it may not be reflected here in '26-'27, it's probably because it's being carried forward in '27-'28, '28-'29.

So I just wanted to give that kind of context.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the minister.

L. PADDOCK: Just quickly, because recognizing time, during my time with Virtual Marine, I did all the government grants and then if you're successful, you let one of the other companies know. I do expect, because of that, there's going to be a greater uptake of applications.

B. DAVIS: Any thought on the department using the Green Transition Fund for relating programs like coastal erosion, flooding, wildfires, infrastructure resilience and how many of those projects have been funded thus far? I know it's semi-available to do that kind of stuff, if we can see how many have been funded so far, or potentially could be funded.

L. PADDOCK: In the budget, we do have specific government funding related to erosion and the mapping. Some of that, almost like in a way, disaster response, you're going to look at, potentially if that occurs, federal disaster response. Then, you know, leveraging federal with some of those specific climate-related needs.

Here we are focused more from a business side with the Green Transition Fund and in some specific government opportunities with some of our fleets.

I'll turn to the ADM, if he has anything to add.

D. BRAKE: Bearing in mind some of these are multi-year projects, so they're ongoing. There's been a couple of projects that broadened the scope a little bit. For instance, northern communities getting off diesel and transitioning to microgrid technologies.

But it's been focused on helping companies develop greener technologies and transitioning to different energy types.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the minister.

L. PADDOCK: My final point with that with regard to the GTF, Green Transition Fund, is that that fund and your investment also adds to show some economic return. That's why some of the other stuff wasn't.

B. DAVIS: I just want to take this opportunity to say thank you to the minister and the staff. I have no more questions. I don't know if my colleagues do down the way, but I do want to say thank you. It's been very informative.

Thank you to the minister for taking the time. But even more importantly than the minister taking the time, I want to say thank you to the staff. They put in the significant amount of work. I know what it takes to prep a minister, and I just want to say thank you

for doing such a great job on that and the great work you do each and every day.

Thank you.

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

S. O'LEARY: Yes, thank you, Chair.

I'll just reiterate my colleague's message here. Especially for a new MHA, we've got the advantage of a seasoned veteran over here, and certainly a very competent crew of people, staff who are informing whoever is at the table, and that would be me as a newcomer.

So it's a great learning curve for me, and we appreciate your time and energy.

Thank you.

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

CLERK: 6.1.01 to 6.4.01 inclusive, Industry and Economic Development.

CHAIR: Shall 6.1.01 to 6.4.01 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, subheads 6.1.01 through 6.4.01 carried.

CLERK: The total.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, Department of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development, total heads, carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the Estimates of the Department of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Department of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development carried without amendment.

CHAIR: I thank the minister and department officials and the Committee for attendance. The next meeting will take place on Thursday, May 7, at 6 p.m. to consider the Estimates for the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change.

I'll ask for a mover for adjournment.

L. PADDOCK: Could I have a quick couple of seconds, first?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the minister.

L. PADDOCK: Just quickly, and I know it was raised here with regard to a couple of specific companies, so if you have specific questions, feel free to reach out. The MHA for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, given where you were with the city, probably it wouldn't be bad even just to come and have a chat with our Office of Immigration. I don't recommend it until the House closes because we are, as you are, crazy busy until then but since you're here in the city, I will extend that invite to our team.

CHAIR: Moved by the Member for
Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Go Habs Go!

On motion, the Committee adjourned.