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Social Services**

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Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs  
Office of Public Engagement

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Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA

## **SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE**

Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs

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Chair: Glenn Littlejohn, MHA

Vice-Chair: Tony Cornect, MHA

Members:

Lisa Dempster, MHA

Gerry Rogers, MHA

Glen Little, MHA

Dale Kirby, MHA

Kevin Pollard, MHA

Clerk of the Committee: Kimberley Hammond

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Appearing:

### **Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs**

Hon. Steve Kent, MHA, Minister

Ken Carter, Director of Policy and Research

Hugh Donnan, Director of Communications

Sean Dutton, Deputy Minister Intergovernmental Affairs/CEO Fire and Emergency Services NL

Kevin Guest, Communications Manager

Robyn Hayes, Departmental Controller

Colleen Janes, Deputy Minister

Karen Legge, Assistant Deputy Minister, Municipal Support

Cluney Mercer, Assistant Deputy Minister, Municipal Engineering and Planning

Leigh-Anne O'Neill, Executive Assistant

Paul Scott, Assistant Deputy Minister

Heather Tizzard, Assistant Deputy Minister

### **Office of Public Engagement**

Rachelle Cochrane, Deputy Minister

Elizabeth Day, Executive Director

Bruce Gilbert, Assistant Deputy Minister

Wanda Trickett, Departmental Controller

### **Also Present**

Eddie Joyce, MHA

Christopher Mitchelmore, MHA

George Murphy, MHA

Graham Letto, Researcher, Official Opposition Office

Susan Williams, Researcher, NDP Office

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Eddie Joyce, MHA for Bay of Islands, substitutes for Dale Kirby, MHA for St. John's North for a portion of the meeting.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Christopher Mitchelmore, MHA for The Straits – White Bay North, substitutes for Lisa Dempster, MHA for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair for a portion of the meeting.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, George Murphy, MHA for St. John's East, substitutes for Gerry Rogers, MHA for St. John's Centre.

The Committee met at 9:10 a.m. in the Assembly Chamber.

**CHAIR (Littlejohn):** Good morning, everyone and welcome to the Social Services Committee of Estimates. This morning we are doing Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs along with the Office of Public Engagement.

Good morning, Minister, and to your staff a warm welcome.

The normal process is that we normally give you a few minutes for opening remarks and introduce your staff in a second, Sir. Before I start, maybe we will start with Mr. Joyce. We will introduce the members of the Committee this morning and then we will get started.

Eddie.

**MR. JOYCE:** Eddie Joyce, MHA for Bay of Islands.

**MR. LETTO:** Graham Letto, Researcher.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Christopher Mitchelmore, MHA for The Straits – White Bay North.

**CHAIR:** George.

**MR. MURPHY:** George Murphy, MHA for St. John's East.

**MS WILLIAMS:** Susan Williams, Researcher.

**CHAIR:** Mr. Little.

**MR. LITTLE:** Glen Little, MHA for Bonavista South.

**MR. CORNETT:** Tony Cornect, MHA for Port au Port.

**MR. POLLARD:** Kevin Pollard, MHA for the District of Baie Verte – Springdale.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Those are the members of our Committee. Minister, if you want to take a moment to introduce the members of your staff this morning.

**MR. KENT:** Sure. Good morning, Steve Kent, Minister.

I have a lot of people with me and I will allow them to introduce themselves starting with Sean to my right.

**MR. DUTTON:** Sean Dutton, I am the Deputy Minister for Intergovernmental Affairs and CEO for Fire and Emergency Services.

**MS JANES:** Colleen Janes, Deputy Minister for Municipal Affairs.

**MS COCHRANE:** Rachelle Cochrane, Deputy Minister for the Office of Public Engagement.

**MS DAY:** Elizabeth Day, Executive Director with the Office of Public Engagement.

**MR. SCOTT:** Paul Scott, Assistant Deputy Minister, Intergovernmental Affairs.

**MR. MERCER:** Cluney Mercer, Assistant Deputy Minister, Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

**MS LEGGE:** Karen Legge, Assistant Deputy Minister, Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

**MR. GILBERT:** Bruce Gilbert, ADM in the Office of Public Engagement.

**MR. DONNAN:** Hugh Donnan, Director of Communications, Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

**MR. GUEST:** Kevin Guest, Manager of Communications, Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs

**MS TIZZARD:** Heather Tizzard, Assistant Deputy Minister, Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

**MS HAYES:** Robyn Hayes, Departmental Controller, Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

**MR. CARTER:** Ken Carter, Director of Policy and Research, Office of Public Engagement.

**MS TRICKETT:** Wanda Trickett, Departmental Controller for the Office of Public Engagement.

**MS O'NEILL:** Leigh-Anne O'Neill, Executive Assistant.

**CHAIR:** Just to remind members, before you speak please state your name and your position. That way we will get it picked up on Hansard.

Minister, you have fifteen minutes for some opening remarks. If it is okay with you, and I think we have agreed that we will do the Office of Public Engagement first. Members of the Committee, you can find that in your Estimates booklet on page 2.12.

Minister.

**MR. KENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning. I am sorry we were a few minutes behind. I appreciate your patience and I hope everybody had a good Easter break. It is good to be back.

I will not take fifteen minutes because I am sure you have a lot of questions and there are a lot of issues for us to talk about. I do want to take maybe five to just make some opening remarks.

Mr. Chair, I am going to make opening remarks about all of the entities that I am responsible for so that we get that out of the way.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

**MR. KENT:** Then, we will get into the detail on the Office of Public Engagement.

Starting with Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, we deliver programs and services to enable people to enjoy healthy, safe, and sustainable communities that are supported by strong local governments. We support the financial stability and viability of municipalities and the efficient and effective delivery of municipal services. The department also assists municipalities in meeting their infrastructure needs and provides the financial and administrative tools to support sound municipal government.

Staff of the Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs provides support to the Premier and Cabinet in the conduct of intergovernmental affairs. This would include participation in key forums such as: the Council of the Federation and Council of Atlantic Premiers, bilateral meetings with other governments, and the negotiations of agreements.

In addition, our department routinely provides assistance and support to government departments in a negotiation and review of agreements to ensure there is consistency with the government's intergovernmental policies and priorities. Sixty-nine intergovernmental agreements were signed in 2013-2014.

Our advocacy efforts on behalf of the Province have recently included meetings with Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs federal Minister Denis Lebel, Public Safety Minister Steven Blaney, diplomats, and senior officials in the Department of National Defence. At a higher level, the department is also involved in a number of key horizontal initiatives including: the Provincial Solid Waste Management Strategy, the Arctic Opportunities Initiative, the Violence Prevention Initiative, and the Climate Change and Energy Efficiency initiative.

We continue to work with municipalities in this Province and key stakeholders including Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador and the Professional Municipal Administrators to build strong, vibrant and sustainable communities. We have listened and we are in

the process of a comprehensive review of the fiscal framework.

The department is working closely with MNL throughout the process, which we are working to conclude in time for Budget 2015. An important part of this review is holding consultations with various stakeholder groups and the general public to ensure that the views of municipalities, local service districts, residents of unincorporated areas, and all who utilize municipal services are considered.

To date, as part of Phase 1 of the consultation, sixteen consultation sessions involving over 470 registrants have taken place. We have included Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, Professional Municipal Administrators Association, members of the Rural Secretariat councils, and various local service districts. Phase 1 of the consultation concluded last week during the MNL Symposium in Gander. A discussion document, including a summary of what was heard in Phase 1, was presented and a good discussion ensued with our municipal partners regarding the key areas of importance to municipalities.

There have also been about eighty online surveys and numerous written responses received to date. In order to allow residents as much opportunity as possible to provide feedback, we have recently extended the deadline for written submissions and for participation in the survey as part of the fiscal framework consultation to June 30. It is important that we ensure all residents have the opportunity to take part in the review so that we can use their feedback to ensure we are building strong communities across Newfoundland and Labrador.

Phase 2 of the consultation is now underway. Over the coming months meetings will be held with targeted stakeholders involved in municipal service delivery such as, economic development, recreation, waste collection and disposal, environment, infrastructure, firefighting, bylaw enforcement, and land use planning.

The goal of this review is to identify options to change the way services are delivered, paid for, and shared to better position local governments in Newfoundland and Labrador. The

consultation Web page is available on our department's site. The page outlines the various ways interested parties can submit their feedback including completing the survey.

In addition, through this budget, we are delivering a number of important new programs which will directly benefit municipalities in this Province. As you know, we are allocating \$200 million to a three-year program for the period 2014 to 2015 to 2016 to 2017 for new municipal infrastructure projects. This funding will allow municipalities to secure, develop, and improve infrastructure for residents and support long-term growth and sustainability.

Approval letters have now been distributed to many of the municipalities across the Province including the twenty-two that receive multi-year capital works funding, along with some of the municipal capital works project approvals for the remaining eligible municipalities. This will better position our municipalities to get contracts awarded early so that they can take advantage of our relatively short construction season, which feels like it is getting shorter all the time. We look forward to participating with our municipalities to make announcements on these projects in the coming months.

I would like to speak for a moment about water quality. Clean and safe drinking water is a high priority for my department and its support of municipal infrastructure. In 2012-2013 \$31 million was invested in drinking water related projects, including new facilities and upgrading of water treatment infrastructure, distribution systems, and feasibility studies. As a result of a review of water quality issues, government has initiated the implementation, where appropriate, of advanced drinking water systems, or water kiosks. These units are now planned, under construction, or in operation in eighteen communities.

In the area of waste management, we continue to make significant progress. In May of 2007, the provincial government announced the implementation of a multi-year Provincial Solid Waste Management Strategy to ensure effective and efficient management of solid waste in Newfoundland and Labrador. To date, we have had a 60 per cent reduction in the number of disposal sites relative to 2002, and we are well

on our way to the 80 per cent dump closure goal of the strategy.

With the Central Region operational, 64 per cent of the Province's population is disposing of waste in a lined landfill. As of March 31, a total of \$147 million has been invested in the Provincial Solid Waste Management Strategy; \$84.5 million by the provincial government and \$62.5 million from federal gas tax funding.

In Labrador, we have worked with the Towns of Wabush and Lab City to close the local incinerator and establish a well-managed landfill for that area. We are working with local leaders throughout Labrador to find appropriate solutions to the unique challenges that we face in that region. We will continue to work with communities as we proceed towards full implementation of the strategy by 2020.

We have budgeted about a quarter of a million dollars in 2014-2015 towards planning and hosting of meetings of the Premiers and national Aboriginal organizational leaders, the Council of the Federation, and the Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers, all taking place in 2015.

I would like to talk about Fire and Emergency Services for a moment. We continue to invest in key programs in the area of Fire and Emergency Services to help bolster and support these important municipal responsibilities. Through this Budget, I am pleased to note that we have committed \$4.5 million for vehicles and over a half million dollars for fire protection equipment.

With over 270 fire departments in the Province, we are always challenged to ensure that we are providing the best services we can around the Province; however, recognizing these essential services are priority areas for the government, we continue to make significant progress. In partnership with the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Fire Services, we continue to support the important work undertaken by our community fire departments.

FES-NL is committed to continuing to provide an annual operating grant of \$41,000 to the association, in addition to our continued support of the Learn Not to Burn Initiative through a

\$60,000 grant. These funds are in addition to approximately \$175,000 annually paid out for workers' compensation premiums for volunteer firefighters and accidental death insurance premiums at a cost of \$20,000.

Furthermore, we also encourage collaboration and regionalization between fire departments to continue to improve the efficient and effective delivery of fire services in Newfoundland and Labrador. I am pleased to say that we have seen some really good examples of this in recent history including Trinity South Centre, Port au Port West, Port au Port East, Steady Brook-Little Rapids, with ongoing discussions underway in other regions as well.

Another good example of regionalization was some work recently undertaken on the South Coast to create a regional radio system for six communities: Channel-Port aux Basques, Isle aux Morts, Cape Ray, Margaree, Fox Roost, Burnt Island and Rose Blanche-Harbour Le Cou. This system, made possible through an investment of over \$40,000, will allow better co-ordination and sharing of services in the future for the mutual benefit to the residents in the area.

As you know, I am also responsible for the Office of Public Engagement. The office is collaborating directly with key partners, such as the community sector, youth serving agencies, rural communities, and various business and labour interests. Working together, OPE is helping stakeholders and residents build better partnerships, address challenges, and seize the incredible opportunities related to our shared social and economic prosperity.

We are committed to helping young people because we recognize that they are the leaders, mentors, and the volunteers of tomorrow. This year we will be providing supports for youth and youth serving agencies on a variety of topics including financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement. In total, the office will provide over \$3 million in 2014 to foster opportunities for young people.

I would like to speak very briefly before I finish about the Open Government Initiative. We are listening and we want to provide the people of the Province with new opportunities to have a

say in the shaping of policy and decision making in government. That is why we are implementing the Open Government Initiative. It is believed that together we can identify issues and solutions. We also recognize the need to tap into the insight and expertise for our people. The launch of this initiative is only the beginning.

Our commitment is to provide the public with as much information as possible, without having to request it through the formal channel of ATIPPA. We are always identifying new opportunities to increase access to information and we want to hear from people as to how we can improve this.

As announced last month, the establishment of an independent review committee to carry out the statutory review of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act will be conducted in an open, transparent and respectful manner, and will engage citizens and stakeholders in a meaningful way. We continue to make significant efforts to improve the lives of residents and we continue to foster vibrant communities.

I have only touched on a few initiatives that my department and other entities are working on. I certainly would like to now open up the floor to members opposite for any questions that they may have. As the Chair suggested, I would like to start with the Office of Public Engagement, if that is okay.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

Shall the Clerk call 2.8.01?

**CLERK (Ms Hammond):** Executive Council, 2.8.01.

**CHAIR:** Chris.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will start off with 2.8.01, Minister's Office. Under Salaries last year the budget was \$71,700. It was revised down to \$37,000. This year there is no money for Salaries. Can you explain that, Minister?

**MR. KENT:** Sure, thank you.

This reflects savings due to a Cabinet reorganization in October of 2013 which resulted in no Parliamentary Secretary or associated support staff. The Estimates reflect savings due to the removal of funding for the Minister's Office and funding was transferred to IBRD for the Parliamentary Secretary position. That is the reason for the change.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Okay.

I would just like to ask: In the Office of Public Engagement, how many employees are you responsible for?

**MR. KENT:** I want to give you an exact number, so bear with me one second.

There are twenty-nine permanent positions in the office.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Are all of those filled?

**MR. KENT:** Yes, they are all filled.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Okay.

Who lost their positions then? As of March 31, 2013 the Office of Public Engagement had thirty-three staff employed. Your telephone directory still lists thirty-three employees, so how many positions are basically vacant or who lost those positions?

**MR. KENT:** There are temporary positions as well, as is the case in any department. We created this new office over the last couple of years, as you know. We brought together five existing entities within government from various departments. Over the past year, we have worked to put a new organizational structure in place and that has resulted in different positions being created and being placed within different divisions, so there has been some reorganization. There were a couple of positions, I believe, that were eliminated as part of last year's Budget process. I can certainly get you more information on that if you wish.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Can we get a copy of your organizational charts since it is folded in a

lot of entities and how the Office of Public Engagement works?

**MR. KENT:** Absolutely. We have a new organizational chart that was recently finalized. I would be happy to provide you with a copy of that.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Okay, great. In looking at any of 2.8.01 in your first explanation, seeing that there are no funds, that is basically associated with all the cost of a Parliamentary Secretary?

**MR. KENT:** Yes. In each of those budget lines one, two, three and four there were funds transferred to the Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development to support the work of the Parliamentary Secretary that as of October 2013 was moved to that department.

When I was in the Parliamentary Secretary role it was under the Office of Public Engagement. When a new Parliamentary Secretary was appointed he was actually appointed to Innovation, Business and Rural Development.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Okay, thank you Minister.

Under 2.8.02 Executive Support, we see that last year's amount was \$385,600, but this year's salaries are \$417,000. Why the increase in salaries under Executive Support?

**MR. KENT:** There were some savings. In the revised numbers there were some savings that mainly resulted from delays in recruitment. In terms of the increase this year, that relates to salary increases which are standard throughout government, the 2 per cent increase as per contracts.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Right. Under that section under Purchased Services which is about \$54,000, what accounts for Purchased Services?

**MR. KENT:** Purchased Services in that budget line includes things like photocopier charges, printing costs, equipment rentals, office space, and expenses associated with meeting space. Those are the kinds of things that would be included in that budget line.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Okay. Moving on to 2.8.03, Public Engagement, this section I guess would include all of your entities like the Rural Secretariat?

**MR. KENT:** It would. It would include all of the Rural Secretariat regional planners, which is why this salary line is one of the more substantial ones in the Office of Public Engagement. It includes our ten regional planners that are throughout the Province working in every Rural Secretariat region.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** I notice that the Rural Secretariat annual reports and activity plans are not listed for 2012-2013 on your Web site. I am just wondering when we can anticipate those public documents be made available? Will we see a different role for a reporting mechanism with an Open Government Initiative?

**MR. KENT:** I am pretty sure those reports are completed.

**CHAIR:** Elizabeth.

**MR. KENT:** Wait for the light.

**CHAIR:** Elizabeth, please. Elizabeth Day. There you go Elizabeth.

**MS DAY:** The office was not required to complete those reports last year because of the reorganization. There will be an activity plan prepared this year for the new Office of Public Engagement, which will include all of the entities that were joined within Public Engagement last year.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** There is no accountability on the actual reporting as to what the Rural Secretariat did for 2012-2013?

**CHAIR:** Minister.

**MR. KENT:** No, that is certainly not the case. In fact, there is a lot of information available on the work of the various regional councils during that year. I will ask Bruce Gilbert to comment a little further on what information is presently readily available to reflect the work that was done in 2012-2013.



**CHAIR:** Bruce.

**MR. GILBERT:** Two things have happened. First of all, when the OPE was created we were still in a world of individual reporting. We had to create a new OPE reporting approach. The other thing that happened is that we sought and received permission to not have an activity report for every individual council of the Rural Secretariat so we could roll it into one.

My understanding is those documents are prepared. We will find them and get them to you.

**CHAIR:** Minister.

**MR. KENT:** I believe there are reports on that year. If they are not online, we will endeavour to get them online. They may not be the formal reports that had to be tabled in the House, but we have information that we can make available to you from each of the councils. That is not a problem.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Okay. I would also like to ask about the status of the Community Summit 2012 Report, which is basically the revised road map. Have the objectives been revised, and has it been distributed? I do not see anything publicly online?

**MR. KENT:** You do not see the original report online?

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** The original report is there, but it also talked that there would be a revised report determining if the objectives were met. There has been no update.

**MR. KENT:** We are about to release the report on the next summit. We have made great progress on the items that were identified in the previous summit. The work that we did in the recent summit really built on some of the strategic issues that were identified.

In terms of how we have structured OPE and how we have focussed our staff on different priorities, we have definitely taken into consideration the issues that were raised at previous community summits. The one that was recently held this year was the largest in our history. We also, for the first time, had four

locations in the Province participating simultaneously.

There is some information that will soon be available highlighting all that was accomplished at this year's summit. To answer your question, that really builds on the work that was done in 2012.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** The Voluntary and Non-Profit Secretariat held sixteen training sessions. Forty-one people were trained in 2012-2013; nineteen sessions, sixty-five individuals during 2011-2012. It noted that training sessions will continue throughout 2013-2014.

Can we have a list of what training sessions took place? We are seeing a delay in information being made publicly available. These things are available online, but we are not seeing anything for the past year that would be made publicly available.

What were the costs to deliver those sessions? What are your plans for the coming year of 2014-2015 for the Voluntary and Non-Profit Secretariat?

**MR. KENT:** We would be happy to provide information on whatever training has been completed over the past year. Please keep in mind that we have gone through a complete reorganization of the Office of Public Engagement so some of the work that may have been ongoing in the Voluntary and Non-Profit Secretariat, for instance, may take a different shape and a different focus in our new office.

With our first full year under our belt it really has been a year of transition. We recognize that training, as identified in the 2012 summit that you referenced, is a high priority for the sector. We also recognize that running small sessions for a very limited number of people is not necessarily the most effective way to reach the people in the sector and to meet the needs of various communities in the Province.

In working with SmartForce NL over the past year, we actually directed our training resources into creating several online modules that are now available for anybody who wishes to use

them through SmartForce NL. That is a positive step forward, I think.

We intend to evaluate how that is going, to see what the uptake has been and to consider – based on feedback from the summit, and based on feedback from community organizations throughout the Province we want to get a sense of what other training needs exist and what other modules we may want to create. We need to get a sense of whether that format is the right format, but I think it is a very positive step forward.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** I think having access to the equipment that is needed to connect for training, and if you have the telecommunications equipment, whether it is a projector and screen or using some basic software, it does not have to be teleconferencing or video conferencing, it can be Internet based, web based, where people could go into regional centres, whether it be a town hall or community centre and link up. That can link to a broader base of our public institutions so that people in rural areas of the Province can be connected, as well, at a fairly low cost.

I am just wondering: Is there any money in the budget where you could look at doing such an initiative?

**MR. KENT:** I would not say there is money in the budget specifically for that type of initiative that you described; however, the beauty of the online training that we have provided is that it is available to anybody with a computer anywhere.

The Rural Secretariat regional planners are our connection on the ground to the regions of the Province. There are certain resources available to them in the conducting of their work. When they go into a community to lead an engagement session or a public consultation or to do a workshop or a planning session with community organizations or different sectors of the community, there are resources available to them, like the resources that you describe.

We also want to eventually create an online resource to allow virtual communities to exist. We want to create a resource for the community sector that is a resource centre that is virtual, that allows, for instance, by various regions of the

Province, for community organizations to post volunteer opportunities, to have a discussion about issues that are of concern in their communities, to identify issues that require further dialogue in a community and to bring people together in a virtual way.

Geographically, we are a big Province. For that reason we need to use technology more and more to connect people, but that cannot and will not replace the need for engagement on the ground, and the role of our planners is vital in doing that work. To answer your question, there are resources available to them to do that work.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Right.

The Office of Public Engagement, will it proactively discuss and develop policy and decision-making advice it receives from these regional planners and Rural Secretariat councils? We have not seen proactive disclosure from the Rural Secretariat on the policy advice it is giving government.

**MR. KENT:** I believe those advice documents are available, and I am happy to make them available.

Are they online now? I will just ask Bruce to –

**CHAIR:** Bruce Gilbert.

**MR. GILBERT:** I think for the past three or four years they have either been online on our Web site or a list of them with a note saying they are available upon request, and various players have requested them.

I think, even prior to that, there may have even been an ATIPP request for them, which was deemed to be almost unnecessary since they were already there. I think we are working now to have them digitally put online for easier access.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** That is the point that I am making, is that the information is being – it appears that it should be readily available and that it is contained by government, because there is very little, newly, updated information made available through the Office of Public Engagement's Web site. It goes back to what you have said to a number of other questions

that I have asked. You have undergone reorganization but those documents should be publicly available. They are not publicly available right now, not all of them.

**CHAIR:** Minister.

**MR. KENT:** Any of the information that has been recently developed may not yet be on the Web site. Given the significant reorganization we have done in building a new department, a new entity of government, that has required us to do business differently.

We also recognize the need to proactively disclose more and more. In keeping with the open government initiative that we are actually championing through the Office of Public Engagement, I am happy to make that information available. I agree that more information should be online than ever before. Those policy advice documents that are created by regional councils, we are happy to proactively disclose them, to answer your question.

**CHAIR:** Chris, your time has expired. Are you close to – will I go on to George and come back to you?

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** I just have one other question there on the proactive disclosure piece.

**CHAIR:** Okay, go forward.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** We have seen that restaurant inspections have come online. You just talked about proactively disclosing information. Do you have any future plans to proactively disclose additional information?

**MR. KENT:** Absolutely. We are challenging government departments and agencies to disclose proactively more information than ever before. On several occasions I have reached out to my Cabinet colleagues, and the previous ministers did the same thing, to encourage departments to identify opportunities for proactive disclosure.

As part of the open government initiative through the open information pillar, proactive disclosure is a high priority. What we are going to attempt to figure out over the next six to nine

months is: What kind of information do people want to see available? What kind of information do people need from government departments and agencies, and in what format?

Then our role is to be the facilitator, to be the catalyst for change, and we will work with other government departments and agencies to help them prepare to disclose more information than ever before. It is a high priority for me, it is a high priority for government, and it is going to be a major focus in terms of the work we do through open government over the next number of months.

**CHAIR:** George.

**MR. MURPHY:** Thank you.

Good morning, Minister, and good morning to all your staff.

**MR. KENT:** Good morning.

**MR. MURPHY:** I know it is busy times for you with the transitioning and everything. I hope you all had a good Easter because I think you have a minister here who is going to make you work now. I wish you all the best with that, and thanks for being here this morning.

Mr. Minister, just a couple of line items first before we get into some of the policy questions around OPE. Where was I – I just lost my page.

**MR. KENT:** Well, thanks for the Easter greetings in the meantime. It is an astute observation. I have been challenging people to work pretty hard and they have risen to the challenge. We have gotten a lot of work done over the last six or seven months and there is certainly a lot to get done over the next year.

**MR. MURPHY:** I know they are going to be busy but we will keep your heels to the fire on it.

The first line item – so I do not backtrack a little bit here – 2.8.05, Access to Information and Protection of Privacy; a breakdown of your line here on Transportation and Communications, because you had budgeted \$12,000 last year, that amount has gone up to \$124,900. I would like to get a breakdown of exactly what was spent here on Transportation and Communications.

**MR. KENT:** Sure. That is a good question, and one that I anticipated, George.

First of all, the savings in the revised budget reflects savings due to reduced travel within the ATIPP Office; however, the significant increase in funding reflects one-time funding for the ATIPP review. There is also a very minor reduction due to costs related to the Spending Analysis Initiative. The bulk of that budget line – and there are several other places where the explanation for the increase is similar – is actually to support the work of the ATIPP review that just started.

Now, as I have said in the House and at various other points, we are going to provide whatever resources are required to the Committee to do their work, but we felt it would be prudent to have some budget allocation, some dollars set aside within the budget to address some of what that cost will be. If the number is less than what we have budgeted at the end of the day, great; if it is higher, then we will find the resources within our budget to meet the needs of that committee. We do not want resources to constrain the work of that review committee, because I think we all agree that it is a pretty important piece of work.

**MR. MURPHY:** Agreed.

Under Professional Services at the same time, there was nothing under budget for 2013-2014, the revised amount, of course, \$50,000, but now showing \$359,000.

**MR. KENT:** The revised amount allowed for a budget allocation in the previous fiscal year to support the start-up of that ATIPP review. The increase of \$359,000 is one-time funding for the ATIPPA review.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

Professional Services, I guess the same explanation for that as well?

**MR. KENT:** I am sorry; I thought we were talking about Professional Services.

**MR. MURPHY:** I am sorry, Purchased Services – my mistake – the next line down from it.

**MR. KENT:** Yes, it is an increase of \$12,000 related to one-time funding for the ATIPPA review. If you like, I can just summarize the lines that have an increase related to the ATIPPA review, if that would be helpful?

**MR. MURPHY:** Yes. Sure.

**MR. KENT:** Within Transportation and Communications it is a \$114,000 increase. Within Professional Services it is a \$359,000 increase. Within Purchased Services, the line you just asked about, it is a \$12,000 increase. In the Supplies line it is \$7,500, and in Property, Furnishings and Equipment it is \$7,500. The total is about \$500,000 that we have allocated within the budget; but, again, we do not know what the review will cost. We will provide whatever resources are required. If it is less than that, great, if it is more than that so be it. We will find the resources to support that work.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay. I imagine we can get a breakdown of that next year.

**MR. KENT:** I suspect there will be regular updates posted from the review process in terms of their expenditures. We certainly hope that the review committee will proactively disclose as much information as possible, and we will certainly encourage them to do so.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

When it comes to the requests for documents, I would like to just put in that anything that is requested for, that we also get a copy, too, at the same time.

**MR. KENT:** Sure, by all means, yes.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay, I appreciate that.

I will start off basically with some of the questions around different departments. I do not have too many. I want to start off with the Voluntary and Non-Profit Secretariat. Are there any new initiatives this year to support volunteer organizations that the department is planning?

**MR. KENT:** There are a number. Of course, there is the ongoing work, initiatives like the URock Awards. We just held another Community Summit. Basically, during this

upcoming fiscal year we plan to act upon the learnings and the findings that came out of the Community Summit so that the initiatives we undertake are responsive to the needs of the sector. We continue discussions with the sector on what their needs and priorities are.

We continue to invest in training initiatives, like the one I highlighted a little bit earlier. As well, we are doing some new work this year around social enterprise. It has been identified as a need in the sector. We have seen some innovation around the Province that even some members opposite would be familiar with in their own districts. We think it is a real opportunity for the sector and a real opportunity for government as well.

We have convened a working group and we intend to dedicate some resources to advancing Social Enterprise in the Province. That is one that jumps to mind as a new initiative. The others will really relate to some of the findings of the Community Summit. As I said, we are beginning work on the development of an online resource hub. That will have a regional dimension to it that will allow for online discussion and collaboration within the community sector as well.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

There was a question, too, at the same time. I think it was in 2010 at the minister's round table sessions that he was having. A lot of volunteer organizations talk about the high cost of liability insurance. I am just wondering if government has been tackling that particular question. There has been some difficulty for some volunteer organizations that came to that.

**MR. KENT:** I am not sure if that issue received much attention at the recent Community Summit. It is not an issue I have had an opportunity, as the new minister, to deal with. I have not heard representation from any community organizations during my time on that particular issue. If it is one that is of concern to the sector, it is one that we are happy, as an office, to work with them to explore. That may require collaboration with other government entities that would have more of a role in that issue; for instance, the department that regulates the insurance industry, Service NL, may have

more to say about that. That is quite often the case with OP. We are the brokers of relationships between various government entities in supporting all sectors but the community sector is one that has certainly been a focus for us.

**MR. MURPHY:** Yes. Another one that was highlighted in the minister's round table at that particular time was tax incentives for volunteer organizations. I am just wondering, since it was highlighted back then, if government has been looking at that and the things to it?

**MR. KENT:** There are no particular initiatives that we have undertaken, to my knowledge, related to that particular item.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

The Web site as well list some training opportunities, are they all fee based?

**MR. KENT:** No. The training that is now available through SmartForce NL is free of charge.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

**MR. KENT:** It was a considerable investment for us. We worked with some other jurisdictions that had done some development of training online for the sector. A local company, Bluedrop, was actually engaged to help us update the material, complete that work and make it available free of charge to anybody who has Internet access and a computer.

**MR. MURPHY:** Yes. Is it a good update?

**MR. KENT:** Yes, I have been through the material myself. I think it is quality.

The challenge for us, honestly, is getting people to connect with it and use it, but that is true of lots of training opportunities. We could run courses galore. It does not mean people are necessarily going to show up and participate.

The beauty of having it available online is that people can access it free of charge anytime, anywhere, on their own schedule and on their own time. They can go in and complete a part of a module or a module and come back to it at

another point in time. It is very flexible, but we recognize that it is only one component. There are other things we need to do to support capacity building within the sector, and the Community Summit highlighted more of the things we need to do. There will be a report on that summit available very soon. I do not believe we have released it yet but it is coming very, very soon. It is almost finished.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

I am just wondering about any research and public engagement that the Rural Secretariat will be doing this year, if you can give us an update on where you are going to be going in the Rural Secretariat.

**MR. KENT:** We have a partnership that has been in place for a number of years with the Harris Centre at Memorial University to fund a number of community-based research projects. There was a significant event we were involved in executing over the past fiscal year that really highlighted a lot of the work that has been done in this area. We had the Community-University Expo in Corner Brook last June, sometime around then, and as Parliamentary Secretary at the time I had an opportunity to attend and we identified many more opportunities for the community sector and for government and the university to work together, particularly to advance community-based research.

We do have dollars allocated again this year to do further work in partnership with the Harris Centre, and that will lead to five projects. I will allow Bruce to expand a little bit. There are a number of projects that will be funded through a grant that we will provide.

**CHAIR:** Bruce.

**MR. GILBERT:** Yes, we provide a modest grant to the Harris Centre which we work with them to determine, identify a couple of grad students to do research that is in line with our lines of business. I guess the dominant piece of community-based research support in our shop is through the regional councils, the provincial council of the Rural Secretariat. Many of these advice documents that are developed by the councils and submitted to the various departments of the Government of

Newfoundland and Labrador are underpinned by some form of research, some form of public engagement and/or scholarly research, and it is flexible and it is responsive.

In other words, if a council in a region determines there is a youth homelessness issue or something to that effect, they will ask us, we will connect them. We will broker them through our contacts at the Harris Centre and Memorial, and the College of the North Atlantic, put together a team and they will basically swarm a research project on that issue so that their advice documents are stronger, tougher, and built on regional information that did not exist before.

All of that research is ongoing. In any given region throughout a year there could be a research project underway, but some regional councils do not have a research project in a given year as well. So the Harris Centre, this type of research with our councils, the VNP has research in the form of the census which the minister could perhaps talk about, and we are also, as an entity, involved in all kinds of more provincial-wide research projects that we get invited to participate in.

We have quite a body of research going on, but it is regional community-based research as we like to call it, not often high-level, scholarly, longitudinal research.

**CHAIR:** George, I am just trying to get an idea. Do I need to come back to you? Your time has expired, and I am going to go back to Chris.

**MR. MURPHY:** No, I am good for now because I was going to move on to a different one.

**CHAIR:** You were going to move on to a different topic? Okay.

Chris.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** I will try to get through this in the next allocation of time. I do not have a lot of other questions. I was going to ask the minister – I guess where I have successful social enterprises like SABRI and the Straits St. Barbe Chronic Care Corporation that have put millions of dollars into the local economy in my district – what you were going

to be doing to promote the return on social investment, but you have already discussed that.

Getting back to the budgetary line items under 2.8.03, Public Engagement, line 10, Grants and Subsidies, there is almost \$3.8 million. I am wondering if you could explain what would fall under these Grants and Subsidies and if you could either list them out or if we could have a list with the dollar figures.

**MR. KENT:** I am happy to provide more information. The bulk of the funds in our Grants and Subsidies line under 2.8.03.10 relates to two things primarily: the support for the Community Youth Network sites, which is over \$2.6 million; and our Grants to Youth Organizations program, which is about \$660,000 roughly. We also provide grants to Allied Youth and to the Community Sector Council. There is some additional grant funding for the volunteer and non-profit sector, as well as the funding that I just referenced related to Memorial University.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Okay.

Could we have a list of all public engagement sessions involving citizens and/or stakeholder group representatives conducted by your department, maybe broken down by Rural Secretariat region?

**MR. KENT:** Gladly. We can certainly give it to you by region. Quite often, regions will partner together in the execution of these sessions. Our planners will often move from region to region to assist in supporting various consultation sessions.

There has been an increased demand over the last couple of years for help from our department in helping other departments conduct public consultation and engagement sessions. The bulk of our work in this fiscal year is going to be focused on the Open Government Initiative, but that is not to say that we will not support other consultation processes that are ongoing. In other areas like the ambulance review and moose management, just to use two top-of-mind examples, we have played a key role in supporting the sessions that have taken place.

We have also just completed perhaps one of the largest engagement exercises since the inception of the Office of Public Engagement: the Municipal-Provincial Fiscal Framework Review in partnership with my other department.

The Office of Public Engagement played a key role in the first phase of consultations. Just this past weekend in Gander, we released the What We Heard document in partnership with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador and the Professional Municipal Administrators to talk about what we have learned from the consultation process to date.

We can certainly provide you with the list of sessions over the past year and we can certainly provide, to whatever extent we can, a breakdown by region.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Okay.

Are we able to get details on the expenses for training associated with the Rural Secretariat staff travel?

**MR. KENT:** Sure. I cannot see why not.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Okay.

I am just not seeing how this would be broken down. Would the majority of this travel, in the budget under Transportation and Communications for Public Engagement, be the Rural Secretariat travel? Does that include training where they would travel to either Gander or St. John's or wherever to do staff training?

**MR. KENT:** It is a big number because it supports the work of those ten planners. In terms of the revised budget, there was some savings as a result of efforts to reduce spending and travel to conferences and so on. Then there is a very slight decrease of \$600 due to a number of things. Increased meal allowance rates per the new Collective Agreement represented an increase, but then there was a decrease related to an out-year adjustment associated with the creation of the Office of Public Engagement. So, as a result of the office being created, there were a number of budget areas where things moved from one part of the department to

another. That is what the savings represent as the department was consolidated.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Okay.

Under 2.8.04, Policy, Planning and Research, I guess this is where the former Youth Advisory Committee would fit in. I am wondering what really happened to that committee and are you going to be re-establishing that committee?

**MR. KENT:** At the time when the Office of Public Engagement was created, the Newfoundland and Labrador Youth Advisory Council was already inactive. There were no budget dollars that transferred from Advanced Education and Skills to the Office of Public Engagement to support the work of that council which was no longer active; however, from a youth engagement standpoint, as I have referenced in response to some of your questions over the last month or so, it is my intention to re-establish an entity.

It will not look the same, necessarily, and I believe we need to make a concerted effort to engage young people of all ages. In my mind there are three segments of the youth population that we need to have a strategy around, and we are working on a proposal right now to launch something that will impact those three groups: school age youth, youth who are pursuing post-secondary studies, and youth who are entering the workforce and starting their families and are beyond post-secondary.

I do not believe that we can effectively have a youth body that connects with all three. I believe we need to have a targeted approach for those three segments of the youth population. I also believe that we need to have more young people engaged on our regional councils. So I am currently working on an initiative to do that as well. I would foresee, for instance, regardless of their ages and backgrounds, bringing together the youth from our Rural Secretariat Regional Councils on a regular basis to provide a provincial perspective as well; but we will be launching an initiative to reach out to those three segments of the youth population and ensure they are engaged in a way that makes sense.

I really believe that the Open Government Initiative is going to provide us with many

opportunities to connect with young people on the ground in different communities. Connecting with those three segments of the youth population is a high priority for me.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Well, that certainly sounds key to any type of Population Growth Strategy. I sat on a Regional Economic Development Board which the government basically axed, but on it we did have a youth representative who was there and that was really key. So it will be nice to see if the Rural Secretariat is also going to be having a youth voice there as part of their advice and policy planning sessions.

**MR. KENT:** We will endeavour to have more young people this year on our Rural Secretariat Regional Councils, but that is only one step. Engaging with those three segments of the population is something that is really important to me, and I intend to see it advance this year.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Is there any plan to move from appointments on the Rural Secretariat councils to an elected type of office looking for people who have that interest and broad range of scale? Is that something you would consider?

**MR. KENT:** I have not really contemplated making it an elective group, but I have contemplated how to make it more inclusive. Right now, I am interested in hearing from people in regions of the Province who might be interested in serving, and I will certainly address that more formally in the weeks ahead.

In terms of regional elected structures though, I think we need to be a little careful. We will be talking about regionalization quite a bit, wearing my other hat, through the fiscal framework process that we are going through and there may be a need for some kind of regional model or regional structure that could potentially involve an elected body or perhaps not. It is too early in the process to speculate on what may come out of that.

Specific to the Rural Secretariat Regional Councils, I would like to see more people engaged. I would like to see more people have actual opportunities to step forward and offer themselves to serve. That is something that over



the next couple of months I think you will see some progress on.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** I have some questions on the YouthNL.ca Web site. I would like to know what the cost of it was, what monthly hits it receives, and what youth actually had input in designing the Web site, who manages it, and when will dated information come down?

**MR. KENT:** That is a good list. We will compile some information on that and provide it to you. The Web site was constructed in-house. We did not engage external support in doing that. We had some support from the brand office. We had some support through staff at Innovation, Business and Rural Development, but it was an initiative that was driven by our Office of Public Engagement staff.

The cost was minimal. It is also hosted by OCIO, of course, so minimal cost. We have done some updates already. It is a fairly new initiative. We have not done enough yet to drive young people to the site. So as we launch the youth engagement initiatives that I was just talking about, and as we continue with the work we are doing through Getting the Message Out program, the GMO program, we have been promoting the new site but there is still certainly more work to do.

We can provide you with the information that you have requested.

**CHAIR:** Chris, are you just about done, or do I go back to George and come back to you?

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** I guess you can go back to George. I have about a half dozen more questions to ask on this section.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

I am going to ask in terms of time, and we have a large department here, Minister, and to our colleagues in committee, that our questions be – we are in Estimates, and some of this is straying into theory and philosophy and all the rest. I am going to ask that we stick to the Estimates piece, in the interest of time and what we need to get through this morning.

George, please.

**MR. MURPHY:** I just have one question before I pass it back to Chris.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

**MR. MURPHY:** It has to do with this department again and policy.

Just on the Strategic Partnership, Minister, when will the Strategic Partnership have a new chairperson? As far as I know, there is no chairperson there. What is their schedule for meetings? Have they been meeting regularly?

**MR. KENT:** The Strategic Partnership is going through significant change. There was a process going on throughout 2013 to evaluate the Strategic Partnership. There was some really good work done in collaboration with the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour and with the Newfoundland and Labrador Business Collation.

The Business Collation recently made a decision to discontinue its involvement with the Strategic Partnership. That has caused us to stop the work we were doing on the evaluation, which was just about complete, and look at how we are going to refocus our efforts around business labour engagement. I have had a number of positive discussions, personally, with the Federation of Labour and the Business Collation. Both organizations have made representation to me recently on a new path forward.

We still have a role within the Office of Public Engagement dedicated to business labour engagement. It is still going to be a focus for us, but exactly what shape it is going to take is going to be different than the Strategic Partnership that has existed since 2002. We were going through a renewal and change process anyway, but the recent decision of the Business Collation has caused us to go back to the drawing board a little bit. We have met with both. Dialogue is ongoing with both organizations, and we are looking for a new and innovative model around how we engage business and labour.

We are open to bilateral relationships, obviously, with the two sectors. Government will continue to engage with business, government will continue to engage with labour,

but we all agree there are times when there are issues of mutual concern where we really need that collaboration between the three sectors. So that is what we are working on right now.

**MR. MURPHY:** Is there any reason that business gave you for backing out?

**MR. KENT:** The Business Collation provided a letter that indicated a number of reasons for withdrawing from the partnership. I do not want to speak for them, but I will say they had concerns about what was being accomplished through the partnership. It had been around since 2002. I believe it has served us well. I believe it impacted government policy positively in a number of areas, but it is time for a new model.

Over the past year, we had already recognized that it was time for a new model. We were going through a pretty comprehensive review process that the Business Collation was actively engaged in with the Federation of Labour, and we identified a number of possibilities. Right now we are working through those possibilities.

Discussions are ongoing with both the Business Collation and the Federation of Labour. I am confident some new models will emerge that will keep both sectors very much engaged with us in some kind of partnership that will certainly look different than the original one but that was expected, given the review that was ongoing.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay. So no anticipated timelines on when the Strategic Partnership is going to be starting up again? Right now, things are stalled.

**MR. KENT:** It was anticipated that the Strategic Partnership would take on a new form. That is why the evaluation was going.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

**MR. KENT:** Dialogue between the sectors and government has not stopped at all. In fact, like I said, I have had meetings with both organizations. Our staff have had ongoing discussions with both organizations, and there are some proposals from both organizations that we are presently reviewing.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

I have nothing else.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, George.

Christopher.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** I just have a few questions.

Is it the Office of Public Engagement's responsibility to update the Strategic Partnership Newfoundland and Labrador Web site?

**MR. KENT:** Which Web site, sorry?

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** The Strategic Partnership NL.

**MR. KENT:** Will it be updated? Yes, because, again, it is going to take on a new form. We are committed to business labour engagement. We have not figured out exactly what that is going to look like yet. We are working in collaboration with both sectors to figure that out. Once that is concluded, certainly we will be updating the appropriate sites.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Yes, I am fine with that. It is just that the current Web site still lists upcoming events, 2013. That type of information needs to come down immediately.

**MR. KENT:** I do not disagree.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** I wanted to ask, how much is being budgeted for the Open Government Initiative, because I do not see it here in the Estimates? Is that under the salaries of Policy, Planning and Research or Professional Services? Can you give me a figure as to what it is costing to implement this service? We know the launch was a \$4,000-plus cost associated, but I do not have any other figures.

**MR. KENT:** The work that is envisioned as we build the action plan, which is our focus for the bulk of this fiscal year, does not really have considerable budget implications. All of that work is going to be driven by Office of Public Engagement staff. Our regional planners are going to play an active role. Some of the budget we were talking about a little earlier related to

their travel, and activity will certainly be focused on Open Government Initiative.

There is not a particular budget line related to the Open Government Initiative. There are not new dollars that were specifically required to be added to the budget to support that work, but what comes out of the action plan will have budget implications in 2015, because there will likely be new initiatives that will require a budget.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Can you give us a name or position of who is in charge of the Open Government Initiative?

**MR. KENT:** Well, ultimately, I am responsible for it. We have a new deputy minister who has just joined our office and it will be her top priority over the course of this fiscal year, but our senior people who are here are the people who are driving the work.

In terms of the public engagement work, Bruce Gilbert, our assistant deputy minister is heavily involved. In terms of the planning and the research and evaluation and policy work, Elizabeth Day and Ken Carter are heavily involved. So everybody in the office is involved, but certainly our senior leadership is very much focused on it as a number one priority.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Under 2.8.05, Access to Information and Protection of Privacy, you had talked about it in response to Mr. Murphy's questions, but I guess if we could get in more detail how much the Review Committee is being paid. Is it a lump sum for individual members?

**MR. KENT:** The contracts of the members of the Committee will be available online, if they are not already.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Okay.

**MR. KENT:** They are not there yet, but they will be made available so I have no problem making that information available to you.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Where will they be made available? When we talk about online, it is just very broad.

**MR. KENT:** My understanding is that the Review Committee intends to establish a site for the review. We do not direct that work. We are happy to provide whatever advice, but we cannot interfere with their conduct of business. My understanding is that they intend to make those contracts available. Committee members are paid, I believe in one case it is based on an hourly rate. That information will be made available in full detail.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** We have seen when we have filed requests as the Official Opposition for access to information exorbitant price quotes: \$1,600 for the tourism marketing dollars across departments. Why are we being charged such excessive and exorbitant fees?

**MR. KENT:** As we have discussed in Question Period – which is not always the best forum to get into detail when you have forty-five seconds to answer a question – it is very rare for fees to be charged for ATIPP requests. In the 2012-2013 fiscal year, there 285 general access requests; there were only twenty-three that involved fee estimates, which is less than 10 per cent. Of the twenty-three fee estimates, ten were paid. So, ten out of 285, it is a fairly insignificant number. Some requests are very broad and some requests are very complicated, and if there are hours or days or weeks of work required to compile information, then there is a cost associated with doing so, as you know.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** I just have one other question. If you will table the minutes of the Labour Market Committee and the Innovation Committee of the Strategic Partnership NL up to the date of when they were still active as listed, as part of the Web site, or if I could get copies of those.

**MR. KENT:** Minutes of the Strategic Partnership committees, I will –

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Yes, the Labour Market and the Innovation Committee.

**MR. KENT:** I will certainly look into that for you.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Beyond that I thank you, Minister, for your time in answering the questions under the Office of Public

Engagement. Certainly there will be lots more questions as we go on, but I do not want to take that time of Estimates to go through that. There are many other areas to dig in under Municipal Affairs and Intergovernmental Affairs.

**MR. KENT:** Thank you, Chris, and this is a new process for me, as you can appreciate, so I do not know if I am giving too much information or not enough, but I will endeavor to answer all the questions as best I can.

I have one clarification, Mr. Chair, which relates to the Rural Secretariat annual reports that Mr. Mitchelmore had asked about. They are online. They were only posted online early in March but for that year you talk about, there are reports available that are currently online.

I am glad I did not misspeak. I thought they were available. They are, in fact, available, but we can certainly endeavor to provide actual copies to you if you wish.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister, and I want to thank your staff for your open and frank discussion this morning. As we move forward, Minister, we have some housekeeping. I would suggest that after we call the clauses, we will take a four-minute recess for people to stretch their legs and do some things, and then we will come back and we will begin with Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

**MR. KENT:** I appreciate that, Mr. Chair, because I was beginning to think I was the only one other than yourself who does not get a bathroom break, but it appears that we do accommodate that so I appreciate that.

**CHAIR:** I think we will do that in the interest of all of us this morning.

I ask the Clerk to call the subheads, thank you.

**CLERK:** Executive Council 2.8.01 to 2.8.05 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 2.8.01 through 2.8.05 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.8.01 through 2.8.05 carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, Office of Public Engagement, total heads, carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall I report the Estimates of the Office of Public Engagement carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Office of Public Engagement carried without amendment.

**CHAIR:** We will recess for five minutes to give us all a little break as Mr. Joyce rejoins us, but we will reconvene at 10: 22 a.m.

Thank you.

### Recess

**CHAIR:** Good morning, everyone.

We will reconvene and I will ask the Clerk to call the first subhead, please.

**CLERK:** Subhead 1.1.01.

**CHAIR:** Shall 1.1.01 carry?

Mr. Joyce.

**MR. JOYCE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I understand people needed a break. We were all sitting here this morning, all morning, and sometimes we need a break.

**MR. KENT:** Was the break long enough for you?

**MR. JOYCE:** Mr. Chair, I say to the minister, it is always a break when I am listening to you. It is always good to listen to you, I have to say.

**MR. KENT:** I know you hang on my every word. At least during Question Period, I hang on your every word as well.

**MR. JOYCE:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

**MR. JOYCE:** Is this the way it is going to be, interruption on a regular basis – just curious?

**CHAIR:** No, it is yours.

**MR. JOYCE:** I will go through the line items after, but I will just try to save a bit of time and go through some questions that I have so you can show me in the line items where it is.

The Humber Valley land advisory committee: Can you show me how much money and where in the budget the money was spent last year? How much money was spent last year?

**MR. KENT:** In previous years, there were funds advanced to the Town of Pasadena, which was the sponsoring municipality. I am looking within our Urban and Rural Planning budget at the moment, and I do not know if there were any funds specifically for last year – there were none.

**MR. JOYCE:** Apparently this committee was up and active. There had to be funds committed to it. You had to pay the town; you had phone bills, light bills. In the House of Assembly, Minister, you mentioned that it was always active and up and running. I am sure there has to be funds for it, because I know in 2011 there was \$39,000 paid out to Don Downer. There were phone bills and there was rent. So you are telling me here today that last year there was no

money in the budget for this committee, which you told me in the House of Assembly is active?

**MR. KENT:** The committee was active and the funds that were previously advanced covered the related expenses for the previous fiscal year.

**MR. JOYCE:** Pardon me?

**MR. KENT:** The funds that were advanced previously –

**MR. JOYCE:** In 2011?

**MR. KENT:** – and I guess 2012 – I would have to check that – covered the expenses that were incurred over the past year.

**MR. JOYCE:** Okay. It has to be in the budget somewhere. Like if you carry funds forward –

**MR. KENT:** No, the funds had already been advanced, so the expense had been incurred. In that fiscal year the funds were provided to the Town of Pasadena. Once they are provided to the town, they would not show up in future budgets.

**MR. JOYCE:** Can you show me where you provided funds in 2012?

**MR. KENT:** I can provide you with a full breakdown, as I believe I have already done in the House, on everything that has been spent on that process.

**MR. JOYCE:** The breakdown you gave me, Minister, stopped in 2011, in 2012-2013, and I guess in this year – and I think it was in June or July of 2011 that the last funds were dispersed to the committee. Of course, when I was speaking to you and the people out in Corner Brook, I am sure there has to be money – if this committee is active, there has to be money in the budget. You just do not give money in 2011 and say its 2012, 2013, 2014 without having it accounted in the budget. Surely, you have to have it accounted in the budget.

**MR. KENT:** No. There have been no new budget items since 2011 as far as I know. We were doing the review of the submission of the authority and during that time the office continued to operate. The focus of that office

was on waste management, so expenses since that time were mostly associated with the roll out of a solid waste management strategy.

There has not been new expenses budgeted for that committee. During most of that time that has passed the committee was waiting on government to review its submission, which, as you are well aware, we have done.

**MR. JOYCE:** Can you tell me who was on the committee last year? Can you give me a breakdown on the committee members?

**MR. KENT:** I certainly can. I do not have that information with me but I can certainly provide it to you, yes.

**MR. JOYCE:** I am sure someone would have it there, the committee members, from last year?

**MR. KENT:** We will provide you with a list.

**MR. JOYCE:** You do not have a list? Okay.

There were no expenditures paid in 2011. Can you explain to me – and again, I will just save time instead of going through the budget on it – how you have rolled out the waste management for the land use advisory committee, which is two completely separate groups, two completely separate entities, the land use advisory committee are representatives from towns just to consider land use in the Humber Valley region, the waste management – and they are all different members by the way, very different members. How can you say that you rolled it out and you are using the waste management for the land use advisory committee?

**MR. KENT:** The office serves dual purposes. Given that at different points in time there is a different level of activity happening with each initiative, to save taxpayers' money, the office served both purposes, so it was a common administration.

**MR. JOYCE:** From your comments then, the people who were on the waste management committee, were they on the land use advisory committee?

**MR. KENT:** No, they are separate committees but a common office that was supporting their work – completely separate committees.

**MR. JOYCE:** Just to let you know, there has not been a committee established since 2011 – the land use advisory committee, there has not been a meeting –

**MR. KENT:** The committee has been waiting for us to review their submission. A response was provided to the committee in February, as you know.

**MR. JOYCE:** Okay.

This committee now is up and running, can you show me where in the budget, which budget item has the money put aside for the work for the committee this year, like Don Downer's salary expenses?

**MR. KENT:** The committee is still drawing out of the funds that were advanced previously. They have not spent all of those funds, so there has not been a request for additional funding at this point in time.

We hope that the work is just about complete. The committee is going to respond to our response and make adjustments to the draft plan. I hope that in the months ahead we will be able to move the process forward. I hope there will not be a whole lot more activity required to bring that to conclusion.

**MR. JOYCE:** I just have to get this straight because a lot of council members, a lot of people are asking me to bring this up. Are you telling me, Minister, that in 2011 they advanced money that this Land Use Advisory Committee – which there are no members of, no council members know who is on the committee, even Don Downer himself said we have to go now and reappoint. Are you telling me that in 2011 you gave them funds?

In 2011 the phones were cut, the rent was stopped being paid. This lady who worked with Don Downer was laid off or stopped being paid, the cellphone was stopped being paid, the Web site was stopped being used, and you are telling me they had funds sitting there and now they are drawing down on those funds?

**MR. KENT:** I am telling you the funds that were provided back then have not all been spent.

**MR. JOYCE:** Okay. Can you tell us how much is there that has not been spent?

**MR. KENT:** I do not know that exact number but I can get it for you.

**MR. JOYCE:** I am sure someone – this is getting a bit more serious here. Where in the budget are the funds?

**MR. KENT:** There are no additional funds in the budget at this point. There has not been any request for additional funds. There are still funds unspent that that group is using to complete the process.

**MR. JOYCE:** I can write the Town of Pasadena and ask the Town of Pasadena, how much funds do you have in this account, if they are doing the administration?

**MR. KENT:** You can write whoever you want, sure.

**MR. JOYCE:** Okay, so they do have funds. I just want to get this. The Town of Pasadena –

**MR. KENT:** The committee has not requested additional funds. Our understanding from the committee is that it still has funds unspent from the previous allotment.

**MR. JOYCE:** I just have to get it clear because I hate misunderstandings. The Town of Pasadena has funds that they have not used for three years for the Humber Valley Land Use Advisory Committee. Is that correct?

**MR. KENT:** That is correct.

**MR. JOYCE:** That is correct, okay. I will write them and ask them about funds and that.

I will just ask whoever: How can you put funds in the department, leave it there for three years, and not have it in the budget anywhere?

**MR. KENT:** It was an expenditure that was incurred in that fiscal year.

**MR. JOYCE:** Obviously it is not an expenditure because it is not spent.

**MR. KENT:** A cheque was cut. That constitutes an expense. Funds were spent.

**MR. JOYCE:** But if it is not used, don't you get the money back? Should government not get the money back?

**MR. KENT:** If the funds are unspent at the end of the day, then I would anticipate that the funds would be returned to government.

**MR. JOYCE:** Okay.

Can you tell me in the budget where Don Downer's salary is from the Land Use Advisory Committee, please?

**MR. KENT:** It was previously advanced. There are no new dollars allocated in this budget that we are reviewing in Estimates today.

**MR. JOYCE:** I hope I have this correct, that Pasadena has funds now to pay for the Land Use Advisory Committee that they had in their bank account for three years that they have not used.

**OFFICIAL:** (Inaudible).

**MR. JOYCE:** Okay.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

George.

**MR. MURPHY:** Thank you and good morning once again.

I just have a couple of general questions. We can get into that or else I can get into some line items. It is your choice here, Minister.

**CHAIR:** Wherever you want to go, George.

**MR. KENT:** Whatever you like.

**MR. MURPHY:** I appreciate that.

We will go to a couple of questions. I just wanted to get an update on municipal training, Grants and Subsidies. Can we have an update on what training has been done in the last year?

If I was to look at the Budget book, it would be line 2.1.01.

**CHAIR:** Line 2.1.01, George?

**MR. MURPHY:** Line 2.1.01, Regional Support.

I could probably tackle a couple of questions at the same time at the various sections.

**MR. KENT:** We provide funding annually to the Municipal Training and Development Corporation in partnership with the professional municipal administrators, which is the group that administers those dollars, primarily. There is an actual corporation, and also in partnership with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador. That corporation was incorporated in 2001. It is led by a board of directors that has representatives from MNL and PMA, also the Combined Councils of Labrador, and our department as well.

There is an annual allocation. Some of the things that have been funded recently included the new Municipal Councillor's Handbook, which was launched at the recent PMA conference and MNL symposium; a training series entitled, managing your municipality; training sessions on municipal topics such as cash handling, meeting procedures, elections, client services, and the development of programs in partnership with career colleges and Memorial University.

In terms of some of the expenditures, that would include some of them. Again, this is done in partnership with MNL, PMA, and the Combined Councils.

**MR. MURPHY:** Would you find the grant to the Combined Councils of Labrador in here, the \$100,000? Is this the section where I would find that?

**MR. KENT:** The annual funding for the council?

**MR. MURPHY:** Yes, I believe government throws –

**MR. KENT:** That is not under my department. No, it is through Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs.

**MR. MURPHY:** That would be through Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs that it is done, okay.

We can get into some of the line items here. In 2.1.01.01, Salaries \$1.572 million against \$1.394 million that was actually spent in 2013-2014, but you had budgeted \$1.512 million. Could we get a breakdown on that?

**MR. KENT:** The difference between budget and revised is an increase of \$118,300. That reflects payouts for the recently negotiated signing bonus for employees that totals \$31,400; a contractual position to help support the fiscal framework review; two short-term temporary staff to fill in for sick leave and a short-term requirement, and a very minor amount of overtime costs as well.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay. Was that a private company that ended up with the contract for the municipal review?

**MR. KENT:** No, it is a contractual position within the department. Somebody was employed on a temporary basis.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

The Transportation and Communications line here, it is only \$108,000 that was spent last year against \$124,900 that was budgeted.

**MR. KENT:** The decrease just represents lower than anticipated travel and communications costs. There is no particular reason for that \$16,900 decrease.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

Grants and Subsidies, that is for training there I guess in this line here, in line 10, overall grants and subsidies. There is a difference here of \$20,000.

**MR. KENT:** That is correct.

**MR. MURPHY:** The extra cost, what was that spent on last year?

**MR. KENT:** The increase between budget and revised reflects higher than anticipated grant requests for feasibility studies by communities



that were interested in exploring regional co-operation and potential amalgamations. While the budget remains the same, we are going to continue to support communities that are pursuing potential amalgamations or some form of regionalization. If there are additional dollars required beyond the \$119,500 that exists within that budget envelope, then we will find it through savings or we will find it in other line items to support that work.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

In line 02, in Revenue – Provincial, a \$9,000 dip in that particular number, I am just wondering why.

**MR. KENT:** It reflects lower than anticipated revenue from the Nunatsiavut Government for municipal engineering and project management services that are performed by our staff.

**MR. MURPHY:** All right, great.

Subhead 2.1.02, Municipal Finance, in Professional Services there are \$15,000 anticipated this year. I would take it that your Salaries line, 01, is the 2 per cent?

**MR. KENT:** The increase in Salaries reflects the salary step increases plus the 2 per cent increase, yes.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay, all right.

**MR. KENT:** To your second question, the \$15,000 reflects a re-profiling of funds that were in Policy and Strategic Planning for ongoing work related to our new information management system, and now it has been moved over to allow for Professional Services in this area.

**MR. MURPHY:** I had a question on the municipal ticketing pilot program that was started too – I am not quite sure if this is the section that it would fall under; I figured I would ask it now. Is the pilot project still running?

**MR. KENT:** It is. There is a need to further advance this initiative. On a long list of priorities I have encouraged our staff to make this one a priority. I have met with some municipalities recently, including the Town of

Grand Falls-Windsor where the issue came up, and the town said: We have been waiting for quite a while. What is the next step? I have committed to advancing the work, and there will be more progress on the municipal ticketing project in the months ahead. I am certainly happy to provide more detail, if you wish.

**MR. MURPHY:** Yes, I am just wondering if there are any other towns that might have taken it upon themselves to get into the program.

**MR. KENT:** There are no new towns. In 2012, approval was granted for the expansion to the six largest towns, which would be Conception Bay South, Paradise, Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, and Labrador City. We still need to make some legislative amendments before towns have the full authority that they need, and there is some work we have to do at the provincial court. So, as the minister, who I guess is not that new any more, I have asked that that work be advanced. There will be progress in 2014.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay, so we are probably going to see some legislation brought into the House to that end?

**MR. KENT:** It will not be in spring session. It could be in fall, but it will not be this spring, given the legislative agenda.

**MR. MURPHY:** All right, so it looks like the pilot program is probably going to be made permanent, then, according to that?

**MR. KENT:** I would like to see it made permanent. I would like to see these large towns continue to have this authority. We need to make some adjustments with the court process. We need some support through the provincial court. We also need to make legislative amendments ourselves. I would love to see that done this fall, but there is still some work required to get us to that point.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

When it comes to Municipal Finance, I have a question around the taxation of unincorporated communities. What is the department doing towards some sort of a fair taxation system that

would be part of your municipal review, financing –

**MR. KENT:** That is exactly right; it is definitely a component of the fiscal framework review. We are encouraging residents of unincorporated areas to participate and to have their say, but I believe that the model that we have in place for local government in this Province is not a sustainable one. We have to make some changes.

It is not just about taxation; it is about how services are paid for and delivered and shared within regions and on the bigger scale. That is definitely a focus of the fiscal framework review.

**MR. MURPHY:** Agreed.

Subhead 2.2.01, Policy and Strategic Planning, there are a couple of line items here. Line 01 again, Salaries, \$121,400 in the difference. Has there been an end to the recruitment delay here because last year I noticed there were a couple of challenges as regards recruitment?

**MR. KENT:** I will speak to this particular line item, but to your recruitment question first, we are still have some challenges in terms of recruitment of professionals with certain disciplines or expertise. Recruiting engineers, recruiting planners, recruiting accountants in this labour market has proven to be a challenge for our government – certainly my department, but I would suspect in multiple departments.

That is an issue that we continue to struggle with. In terms of the increase here that you see, which is just over \$60,000, it reflects one additional position transferred in from the Human Resource Secretariat and then it is the required salary step increases and the 2 per cent increase.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

Under Transportation and Communications, if I could get a breakdown of what is happening here in this line item; \$8,000 was the revised number, again –

**MR. KENT:** The decrease simply relates to lower than anticipated travel costs and I think

the increase is \$100. It relates to the travel meal rate increase that was negotiated.

**CHAIR:** George, I am going to ask you to hold your thought and I am going to –

**MR. JOYCE:** Do you want to finish, George?

**MR. MURPHY:** (Inaudible) finish of 2.2.01.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

**MR. MURPHY:** I only have one or two questions on that. Under Professional Services there is only \$5,000 budget this year against \$30,000 revised for last year. Can I get a breakdown of what was actually spent here?

**MR. KENT:** That relates to your previous question. The decrease reflects the re-profiling to Municipal Finance Professional Services. That is what is going on there. This is really a right-sizing of the budget for policy and planning. The division just has not been using the full \$20,000.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay. The same thing, I guess, can be said for Purchased Services, the line just down below it. I had a question on that as well.

**MR. KENT:** Purchased Services, in terms of the decrease from budget to revised, it was just lower than anticipated rental, printing, and meeting room costs. There is a minor decrease of \$1,000 between last year's budget and this year's. It is just related to reductions in printing services.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

That is all the questions I had on the section.

**CHAIR:** Eddie.

**MR. JOYCE:** I am just going to ask some more questions to try to save a bit of time. I will go back on the land use and ask one or two more questions.

Can you tell me – and I am sure with the open accountability and with the accounting in the department – how much is left in that budget in

Pasadena, the Pasadena council? I am sure you get an update on how much is left.

**MR. KENT:** It is approximately \$60,000. I do not know the precise figure for you, but it is about \$60,000.

**MR. JOYCE:** There is \$60,000, and that is there for three years?

**MR. KENT:** Yes.

**MR. JOYCE:** Okay.

**MR. KENT:** To be quite candid, the review has taken longer than any of us would have hoped, but it was complex. There were multiple government departments that had to be consulted. There was a back and forth between departments on complex issues around land use, like forestry and agriculture and other nature resources issues, environmental issues. So, all of those things have to be considered. I am just glad the process is back on track and moving forward.

**MR. JOYCE:** I am just going on with what the people who I spoke with out there said. I do not think there was any problem with the procedure, but the time it took. As I mentioned earlier, there were no updates given to councils and all of that. It was not the point that it was in government and yes, we are going to review it, yes, it is coming out; but there was never any updates, and that is why people were so frustrated and all of a sudden its three years later.

**MR. KENT:** I think that is a valid criticism. All I can speak to is the work that I have done over the past seven months to advance the two regional planning processes that were not progressing real well, to be frank. One was the Humber Valley process, the other is the Northeast Avalon regional process. I can honestly say in this House and look in the mirror and say that I have done everything I can to get those processes back on track and moving forward.

**MR. JOYCE:** I agree with you; it is moving forward because I asked the questions in the House a while back and they said that they are working on it and it was put out; but the problem

with the people in Corner Brook is that people are wondering if the information is outdated now because a lot of the information was put in there three-and-a-half or four years ago. So it is not a criticism; it is just that it is a frustration that no one was ever kept up to speed that it is working through the system and it is going to be coming out eventually.

**MR. KENT:** Because this work looks so far into the future, I would not suggest that anything is really outdated. I mean, we will certainly be thorough in our review of the final plan to ensure that it is as current as it needs to be, but this is a plan that looks decades into the future in terms of land use in the region. I think we are okay.

I really appreciate the patience of communities on the West Coast as we have gone through the process, and I am happy that we are now making some progress.

**MR. JOYCE:** I was not being critical on that. I was just expressing their frustrations.

**MR. KENT:** Oh really? Oh, okay.

**MR. JOYCE:** I am very easy to get along with actually.

**MR. KENT:** I would never question that.

**MR. JOYCE:** No, but that is the point of it. When you get the frustrations from the town councils that spend so much time and energy into it and they are not regularly updated, even a yearly update to the town councils would have sufficed.

**MR. KENT:** I appreciate the frustration of towns and that is why I made it such a high priority to get it moving again.

**MR. JOYCE:** I will check with Pasadena to see what they are going to do with the \$60,000. I am amazed that it is kept in Pasadena's town council for three years. It is amazing.

Minister, you mentioned amalgamation – and I had it on my note here – did you have the meeting arranged yet for York Harbour-Lark Harbour for their...?

**MR. KENT:** I do not know that it is confirmed, but I am hoping to meet with those communities later this week.

**MR. JOYCE:** Friday I think they are going to be in Corner Brook.

**MR. KENT:** Yes, I am going to be in Corner Brook on Friday and I am hoping to have a discussion with those towns at that point in time. I want to help them move the process forward. We are not in the business of pushing communities to come together. We want to encourage regionalization and there are a lot of cases in this Province where an amalgamation might make sense, but we only support it and pursue it if the communities first tell us that they wish to, and that is the case here.

**MR. JOYCE:** They have all the work done.

**MR. KENT:** Yes, it is a good sense and I know you are supportive of that process and I want to thank you for that because it is –

**MR. JOYCE:** If there is anything I can do, if you want me to sit in on the meeting to help with the process because I did follow through at every meeting and I met with the town council a month ago and went through the list, what they should be looking for, so I would have no problem helping –

**MR. KENT:** Well, I am certainly enjoying our time together this morning, so we will see.

**MR. JOYCE:** Most people do, Mr. Minister. Hopefully that will be arranged the week.

The next thing I was going to ask is the vehicles, \$4.5 million for fire vehicles.

**MR. KENT:** Which line?

**MR. JOYCE:** Well, I did not go through the lines. You mentioned in your opening –

**MR. KENT:** Oh, the big budget, the \$4.5 million for fire trucks.

**MR. JOYCE:** Yes.

**MR. KENT:** What is your question?

**MR. JOYCE:** How are they being given out? Is there a priority list?

**MR. KENT:** We are trying to take a more strategic approach. Every community would love to have a new fire truck and we have about 270 fire departments, all of which have equipment and truck and training needs. Through Fire and Emergency Services, we are working to address those needs as best we can. This amount of \$4.5 million for vehicles is the biggest ever and I think it is going to allow us to meet a lot of needs.

We certainly are encouraging communities to work on a regional basis, so priority will certainly be given to regional initiatives. Our Fire and Emergency Services staff are doing a thorough assessment of the needs of the different fire departments, certainly taking a regional view. When it comes to giving out equipment, for instance, we have to consider the training of the different firefighters as well. It is no point to provide equipment that people are not trained to use. So training is an important component of the process as well.

I am going to be meeting with staff at some point this month to try to move that process forward. I am eager to get some approvals in that area as well; but my focus, honestly, has been on the municipal infrastructure because of the time sensitivity, because of my desire to try to take advantage of the construction season.

**MR. JOYCE:** Now that you brought that up, when will the announcements be made for different districts for capital works? I have seen some in the paper, some press releases, but –

**MR. KENT:** Yes, there have been a few announcements, but there have been a lot of approvals, and there are more to come. I am making an effort to certainly thoroughly review all the applications, and I think it is something like \$280 million of requests – no, it is a bigger number than that: \$360 million. We have had hundreds of millions of dollars of requests, and we cannot meet them all. We are trying to be fair to every region of the Province. Some communities have received approvals; some regions of the Province we are still working. So, I hope to get it all completed over the next couple of weeks for this year.

**MR. JOYCE:** How much is going to be spent this year?

**MR. KENT:** Sorry, I just want to make sure I give you an accurate number. For the large seven, their allocation for the next three years has been done. For the next largest fifteen, their allocation for the three years has been done. That totals \$100 million, and then we have more funds remaining for the rest of the municipalities. The full \$200 million is not going to be spent this year because that has to do us for three years, but there will well over \$100 million, certainly, spent – or allocated, I should say – this year.

**MR. JOYCE:** Okay. Thank you.

Just to let you know, York Harbour-Lark Harbour, with an amalgamation, they are going to be looking for a fire truck because they already share the services – the fire truck and fire services now, and their truck is about thirty years old.

**MR. KENT:** Well, I certainly look forward to my discussions with those communities, and I am sure the issue will come up, but no decisions have been made.

**MR. JOYCE:** No, but it is on their list, and with the amalgamation it is deserving.

**MR. KENT:** Yes.

**MR. JOYCE:** Another thing was brought up about Western Newfoundland, and you discussed it in the House, 911 call centres; has any decision been made yet where the sites are going to be established?

**MR. KENT:** One will be the St. John's Regional Fire Department. It is looking like the second site will be in Corner Brook.

**MR. JOYCE:** The rumor in Corner Brook is that there will be one in St. John's. I said no, they are definitely putting one in Corner Brook; that was the commitment. The rumor is that it may go to the fire department in Corner Brook which is not a bad decision, but seeing there was no decision made in Western Newfoundland, a lot of firefighters who go to some training here,

there is one in St. John's, and they assume it is all going to be in St. John's.

**MR. KENT:** No, certainly not. We need to have the redundancy. There has to be more than one regardless, so if for some reason the call centre went down in St. John's due to some disaster or whatever the case may be, there has to be a second site; but we also want to have a couple of answering points carrying the load. So the second point is likely to be in Corner Brook and the negotiations are going well as far as I know.

**MR. JOYCE:** With the fire department?

**MR. KENT:** Yes.

**MR. JOYCE:** Do not disclose it if you –

**MR. KENT:** I will ask Sean to provide a bit more detail, sorry.

**CHAIR:** Sean.

**MR. DUTTON:** The discussions are with the city and the fire department, and the fire department is part of the city. I think the arrangement, if one is agreed, would be with, as you say, the fire department, but it is subject to the agreement of both of those parties. We are not really in a position to make a definitive statement on that until those discussions are concluded.

**MR. JOYCE:** That is not a bad idea by the way because they have professional staff there, trained staff. The fear was that there was only one in St. John's. So I can say there are negotiations for one in Western Newfoundland, hopefully in Corner Brook somewhere soon.

**CHAIR:** Eddie, do you have a follow-up to that? If not your time –

**MR. JOYCE:** No, go ahead. I just wanted to get that clarified.

**CHAIR:** George.

**MR. MURPHY:** Thank you.

Minister, while we are on the topic of 911, if we can get into search and rescue. I have to say that

the increase in funds for the Search and Rescue Association is certainly welcome and overdue. I would like to see a little more dollars put into that in the future, considering the geography of the Province.

At the same time, my mind comes back to the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities NL. They had a project on the go for emergency planning for people with disabilities. I would like to know if you can comment on that to see how that project is going, if you can give us an update on that.

**MR. KENT:** They were involved in the conference that took place in Gander last week. I believe I saw some media coverage related to that as well. The conference that took place before the formal MNL symposium was certainly quite a success.

The funding you are referring to is actually provided by Advanced Education and Skills. I believe it is something like \$30,000. That project seems to be progressing well. Fire and Emergency Services will certainly support that work in whatever way we can, as we have been doing. I understand the discussions in Gander last week were quite positive.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay. Coming back over to some line items. That is all I had in that particular section for emergency services. I think Eddie asked most of the questions.

Subhead 2.3.01, Engineering Services, line 01 Salaries. There is a distinct difference here; \$623,500 was the revised figure and only budgeted for \$519,700 this year. I wonder if we can get a breakdown here.

**MR. KENT:** Yes, you sure can.

The decrease, which is \$96,800, reflects the elimination of one contractual position. Because of some staff turnover, there are some newer staff who are now at lower salary steps. This was partially offset by the 2 per cent salary increase that was recently negotiated.

It is important to note, that all positions for waste management were established as contractual positions to carry out the implementation of the strategy. We have a lot of

work to do, there is no doubt about it, but implementation is now 65 per cent completed. It was felt that there was a position within that entity, within that area that could oversee a couple of programs. There is a manager of waste management position who reports to the director of engineering and waste management. There was one contractual position that was eliminated, and that is really what you see going on here.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

Where they were dealing with waste management, it has not affected the strategy any?

**MR. KENT:** No, not at all. There is a manager of waste management position, there is a director of engineering and waste management, and, of course, we are all familiar with the work that is being done at a regional level. There is a lot of work to do, and it is a top priority for us. We still have a lot to get done over the next number of years before we get to full implementation, but I am pleased with the progress we are making.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

Coming down to Transportation and Communications, \$9,100 more than what was budgeted last year for this year.

**MR. KENT:** We really wanted to right size the travel and professional services budgets. We have traditionally spent more than what was budgeted, so we wanted to address that. You will see in related line items in other divisions that we have decreased it to reflect reality. So that is what we have done here. There is also the travel meal rate increase that was recently negotiated through the collective bargaining process.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

Under Professional Services here as well, something was not done in 2013-2014 and there is \$50,000 in the budget for this year. What are we anticipating here?

**MR. KENT:** I am sorry, you are talking...?

**MR. MURPHY:** Under Professional Services.

**MR. KENT:** Professional Services. The decrease represents lower than anticipated consulting costs related to waste management and engineering services, and there were some funds transferred to another area of the budget as well.

I am going to allow Colleen to elaborate on that a little bit.

**MR. MURPHY:** Yes, please.

**CHAIR:** Colleen.

**MS JANES:** In terms of the \$50,000 that is provided in the Estimates for the coming year, there is no specific project identified there that will draw from our Professional Services account but it is an allocation that we need to keep there for things that may arise throughout the year. Those will vary, and they tend to vary across all of our activities. Sometimes there are obvious things that we are planning for the coming year and sometimes it is an amount identified in the budget to allow for things that may arise.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay. Was that allocation the same allocation, for example, in 2013? There was no money spent there, so I am just wondering –

**MR. KENT:** No, it was allocated for waste management and engineering services consulting but there was no consulting services required that required us to avail of those funds.

**MR. MURPHY:** The money was not spent, so it is still the same dollar amount was it or –?

**MR. KENT:** It is a slightly lesser amount budgeted for this year, but there was some funding that was transferred to that Transportation and Communications line where we saw an increase. We took some of the savings, the money we were not spending in one line and moved it to an area where we were overspending our budget to try and make both lines more realistic, I guess.

**MR. MURPHY:** All right. Thank you very much.

Subhead 2.3.02, Industrial Water Services; first off, the provincial revenue, I noticed last year when I asked a question in Estimates, the \$714,300 was for OCI, an amount they had outstanding for industrial water. I noticed that the amount is down to \$340,700. I wonder if I can get a breakdown on what is happening here, and if that is due to OCI paying on its water bill?

**MR. KENT:** That revenue line actually reflects the users of – it is the revenue related to the users of all systems. The decrease reflects a rightsizing of the anticipated revenues from the six remaining operational industrial water systems. So, it does not really relate to the OCI issue that you are raising.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay. Last year it was.

I am just wondering, the six users then for industrial water, can we have a breakdown on who those people would be?

**MR. KENT:** You certainly can. I can provide you with the detail. We will provide that to you. OCI would be one of the users, but this revenue line includes all of the users for all of the systems is the point I was trying to make.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay. Thank you.

That same section, 2.3.02, line 01 Salaries, \$174,100 this year but last year the department had \$170,000 under the budget but only spent \$118,700. I wonder if I can get a breakdown here.

**MR. KENT:** Yes. The decrease from budget to revised reflects savings due to a vacant position and another position that was vacant for part of the year due to a retirement. These savings were partially offset by some retirement payouts, and payouts of the signing bonus. That is where we stand right now.

We are reviewing our industrial water system requirements to determine how positions should be filled or whether a position should be deployed to other areas with more pressing needs. That is the process we are going through right now.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

Under Purchased Services, \$570,000 was spent against the budgeted \$490,000, \$80,000 more. I am just wondering if I can get a breakdown here on what is happening and an explanation for this year, for 2014-2015.

**MR. KENT:** Yes. The increase last year reflected expenditures associated with a couple of emergency repairs. There were emergency repairs needed to the Trinity Bay North system and also the Ramea system. This was in addition to the routine maintenance that we would normally do. These were not anticipated, but of course the repairs had to be done.

**MR. MURPHY:** What were those repairs in general, were they bridge work, roadwork?

**MR. KENT:** I cannot speak to the detail of it specifically. I will ask Cluney to comment on specifically what the repairs were, but the repairs were to the water systems themselves.

**MR. MURPHY:** The water systems themselves.

**MR. KENT:** Would you like some more detail?

**MR. MURPHY:** Yes, a little bit.

**CHAIR:** Cluney.

**MR. MERCER:** With the Trinity Bay North system there was a lightning strike out there and there was a power surge so we had some electrical damage that had to be repaired as well as a pump that was damaged in the same lightning strike.

In the case of Ramea, they had a pipe failure and a pump failure near the end of the fiscal year, in March, that we had to deal with over a weekend.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay, that is good.

Under 2.3.02, I had only one question about that but you already explained that one, so we will move on to 2.3.03.

**CHAIR:** George, I am going to hold you there, seeing you are going to a new area.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

**CHAIR:** Eddie.

**MR. JOYCE:** I am just going to go again instead of item by item – Minister, in the House of Assembly you mentioned Western Regional Waste Management and that there would be a \$1.8 million savings annually to the Western Regional Waste Management by shipping the waste to Central.

**MR. KENT:** That is correct.

**MR. JOYCE:** Again, in the spirit of being nice and co-operative, I think you should read the report actually, the BAE-Newplan report, page 77. That is correct, but what you did not take into account was the cost of transporting the waste. When you take the cost of transporting the waste, it is equal.

Even your friend, Don Downer, last weekend stated that there are no savings if we do not move the waste to Norris Arm or keep it in Central – there are absolutely no savings. That is in the report and Don Downer said it publicly. I can give you the copies of *The Western Star*. That is what he is waiting on if there is a decision. That is just a point, because obviously there is a mixed message being sent out there.

Minister, I will give you a chance to respond.

**MR. KENT:** Thank you.

I have been consistent in my response and all I can tell you is that once that financial analysis was done, it was determined that a West Coast site operating its own landfill, recycling, compost facilities, all in, would cost the Western Region \$1.8 million more in operation and maintenance costs annually compared to trucking to the Central Newfoundland site, with those costs factored in.

**MR. JOYCE:** I want it done right, in how we do it. I suggest you get the officials to go to page 77 of the BAE-Newplan report and also contact Don Downer who publicly last week – when you answered that question in the House, and I was involved with this for years. On page 77 of the report: Trucking costs for one facility is \$405,000. That is \$1.8 million higher than two facilities. This is part of the report.

It is a wash, so this is why a lot of people are saying there is no annual savings to Western. A



lot of people were looking at the rates now. They are even saying some municipalities are being tripled and some businesses in Corner Brook are going up 300 per cent more by moving it out to Central, and there are some concerns.

My question to you is: Would you go back and revisit this? Because when the decision was made to drop the subsidy, it was done by an appointed committee. I think there was nine out of seventeen at the meeting where it was done, one or two were on teleconference at the time – there was no major input from all.

I do not think a lot of towns are so upset about moving it out to Central, but when you hear that it is going to be a savings, when in actual fact they are told it is not, and then the cost is going to go up by 200 per cent to 300 per cent, and businesses up to 300 per cent, they are saying why are we doing this. Can we look at an alternate way? So, is there any way to revisit this? Even if the decision is to move to Central, at least people would be more informed. Because people do not feel that they were given a proper hearing on this.

**MR. KENT:** Given the amount of public discussion, this is an issue over the last seven months that I have been looking closely at. I am still open to hearing from communities in the region, and also of course from the waste management board itself. At this point I remain confident that there will be a savings, and I believe the right decision was made. It makes economic sense, it makes environmental sense, and in each region of the Province we want to do what makes economic sense and what makes environmental sense. If we were not so confident, then we would absolutely revisit our plan.

**MR. JOYCE:** Okay.

I will just read this from page 77, Minister, and I will give you a copy, if you do not have one.

**MR. KENT:** Oh, I am sure we have it.

**MR. JOYCE:** Okay.

“The cost of operating two regional facilities (Western and Central), assuming that the

Western location is Pasadena, is approximately \$48,000 higher than operating one facility in Central”. That is right in the report. This is where the confusion has come in, Minister – and I am not being critical, but I just wanted to make sure that people are informed and we have the right decision.

When you are the minister stating that it is \$1.8 million, Don Downer is out saying no, it is not – and I will even give you the copy of *The Western Star*; I will get it from my office for you – saying it is a wash. There will not be any savings. There is going to be a loss of about twenty-eight, thirty jobs in Western Newfoundland, so it is up to which government where they want to go. There are no big savings, if they do not go. This is where the confusion is.

I know, Minister, you had no part of the decision, but the decision that was made was done without proper consultation with a lot of municipalities, I can assure you of that. When the board was appointed, it was all appointees and when they were appointed, they made the decision without – a lot of municipalities did not know that the board was going to agree to go to Central without a subsidy included, because that was one of the holdbacks. They said okay, we are going to drop it now, we are going to drop the subsidy, and I think that was done in June or July 2012. I am sure someone could correct me on that. That is when it was done.

I am asking you, because of all the confusion, would you somehow try to have public consultations or go out and get people – so it will not be like the waste management, that at least people are informed and if it is the right decision, it is the right decision but right now people are confused.

**MR. KENT:** The one point that I think I would agree with you on is that we need to do a better job of communicating around this issue. There is a lot of confusion, there are a lot of misconceptions, and we need to communicate better with the communities and the residents throughout the Province, but particularly on the West Coast where there has probably been more confusion than other regions.

I will certainly endeavour to do that. I do understand that point. As far as the decision goes, to go to move the waste from the West Coast to the Central Newfoundland facility, based on my review so far I remain confident that a good decision was made.

**MR. JOYCE:** So you still remain confident that there will be a \$1.8 million savings annually?

**MR. KENT:** Approximately, yes.

**MR. JOYCE:** Okay.

I think someone should review the report and after George goes, I will go up and get a copy of what Don Downer said and I will give it to you just so you can see the confusion. This is not critical; this is just making sure that it is done right.

Minister, another question, I am just going to change it. What is the status of the Harbour Grace arena?

**MR. KENT:** The project is moving along. I had discussions with the mayor and a member of council just last week. The mayor requested a meeting on Monday or Tuesday and we met before the week was over. There was an article I believe in *The Compass*, the local paper, over the past number of days outlining – I am sorry not last week.

**CHAIR:** Yes, Minister, last week.

**MR. KENT:** The article was last week? Yes, that is right; it was last week. It is all a blur.

Basically, we have been reviewing all of the financial data provided by the town to ensure that the town can afford not only to build the facility, but also to operate it.

At one point earlier this year, the town advised us that it wished to pursue a one-rink facility versus a two-rink facility. We have been looking at a couple of comparable facilities that have recently been built in the Province to look at their operating costs and the capital costs to see how it compares.

We have committed by the end of May to get back to the town and to arrange a meeting with

our officials to discuss next steps. The town officials who I met with were quite satisfied with that.

There had not been some movement by either party for some time, but now we have the information we need and we are completing the analysis. I have asked that the analysis be made a high priority. There are a lot of high priorities.

That work will be done in the next two to three weeks and then we hope to sit down with the town shortly after that. By early June we will be sitting down with the town to talk about next steps. I am hopeful that the analysis shows the town can afford the facility and we can move ahead.

There is no doubt that region needs a new arena – no doubt in my mind. The funds remain allocated. They are still set aside. They have not been repurposed or re-profiled and we are working through the process.

**MR. JOYCE:** Is there any timeline set for when the decision has to be made?

**MR. KENT:** No, other than the one that I have just described. I want to draw this process to a conclusion because it has been going on for a while. I want us, by the end of the month, to have that analysis complete so we can talk to the town.

If the analysis says the Town of Harbour Grace can afford this facility and it can afford to operate it long term, then we move ahead with the process. If it says otherwise then obviously we are going to have to have some serious discussions about how we proceed, but I hope that is not the case.

**CHAIR:** George.

**MR. MURPHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Section 2.3.03, Urban and Rural Planning, this year's budget shows \$624,600 in Salaries against last year's \$575,400 that was budgeted, a difference of \$67,600. Are we dealing with a new position here?

**MR. KENT:** The increase for this year does reflect anticipated recruitment activity plus the 2

per cent increase. There have been some vacancies in this area. We have some vacancies that we are working to fill right now.

As we have spent a good bit of time talking about this morning, there are some regional planning efforts that we have been trying to advance. There is a lot of work ongoing. This is an area that I have been focused on as a fairly new minister to try and streamline and improve our processes. What I have found is that we have struggled to retain enough qualified planners to get the work done. That increase does reflect anticipated recruitment activity this year.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay. If I can, while we are on the topic of regional plans, an update on the Northeast Avalon Regional Plan. What was the hold up here with the plan? That plan was supposed to be put together some time ago now?

**MR. KENT:** That probably requires a much longer discussion which I would happy to have with you. There are a lot of theories on why the process stalled, but fundamentally the communities did not reach consensus on the direction to move forward.

There was a draft report done by a consultant, and multiple communities at the table had major concerns about some of the conclusions that were articulated in that draft report. The process stalled and nothing happened, and then there was a municipal election.

When I became aware of that, coming into office, I consulted with communities in the region and found out that there was definitely a desire to move the process forward, but we could not just simply pick up where they left off. There was a need to restart the process.

The other thing that I observed about what went on over the few years that this process was ongoing was the level of commitment and involvement varied from community to community. I felt in order to make sure there was true buy in and full participation from the decision makers in the region, I wanted to talk to each of the mayors of the communities that were involved.

I assembled a committee, which I now Chair, of the fifteen mayors. That is the leadership group that is driving the process. We have engaged Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador to act as our consultant for the project. There will be a project management firm, and a planning firm engaged to carry out the work. There is a real spirit of co-operation that I am pleased to see.

The feedback I am getting from mayors is really positive. All fifteen seem supportive of the process. There is one mayor who has been sick and unable to participate himself, but even that community, I understand, is very much supportive of the work we are doing. The mayor of St. John's attended our last meeting and made a real positive contribution.

We are meeting regularly. It is back on track. It is a new process with a new approach.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay. Do you have any idea of, say, of when that plan is completed? Do you have a new deadline for that?

**MR. KENT:** It is going to take a couple of years. I would love to see it happen sooner, but realistically this is a two-year process.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

**MR. KENT:** We are really committed. The mayors are committed, and I am committed to moving it as fast as I can. As fast as we can, I should say.

**MR. MURPHY:** All right. Thank you for that.

Under Transportation and Communications in 2.3.03, there was \$23,600 budgeted for this year. There was \$35,000 budgeted for last year, and only \$18,100 was spent.

**MR. KENT:** Well, actually there was \$18,100 spent, and the actual revised budget was the \$35,000.

**MR. MURPHY:** Right, sorry.

**MR. KENT:** We are budgeting not quite that much for this year, but more than the original \$18,000. The increase reflects higher than anticipated travel and communications costs for

appeals board members. There are a higher number of appeals taking place.

Another observation I have made in the last number of months is that we need to make some improvements to that appeals process. That might require some legislative changes. That is something I am working on as well.

We know there is more work for those appeals boards to do. There was a need for more funds to cover travel and communications costs related to their work.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay. Just down below under Professional Services, \$137,000 under the revised number, \$37,000 was the actual that was budgeted. Can you tell me what the \$100,000 was for?

**MR. KENT:** I can. It does reflect a small amount for higher than anticipated fees for appeal board members and consultant costs. The big chunk of that \$100,000 increase is a one-time consultant cost of \$90,000 for work associated with the Labrador Inuit Settlement Area planning process.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

**MR. KENT:** That is another process that has been ongoing for some time and is now advancing, but it is a process that does require some further work this year for sure.

**MR. MURPHY:** Who was the consultant on that project?

**MR. KENT:** I will have to defer to Cluney on that.

**CHAIR:** Cluney.

**MR. MERCER:** It was Dillon Consulting out of Ontario.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay. All right, thank you for that.

There is just a small dollar difference in line 02, Revenue – Provincial, a \$2,500 revenue bump?

**MR. KENT:** Yes, it is revenues resulting from a greater number of appeals. There are fees that

people pay for appeals, and that number has gone up accordingly as well.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay. Thank you for that.

Line 3.1.01, Municipal Debt Servicing. I know some time ago there were some towns that were talking about renegotiating loans and that sort of thing. I wonder if you can give us an update on how some of these towns are doing.

Just to give one positive example, I think Bonavista was one that renegotiated and ended up with lower interest rates. I am wondering if you might have heard from other municipalities on that.

**MR. KENT:** This budget line does not actually relate to that, but I will speak to both. This relates to the debt we are servicing for our role in projects. Your question is related to communities and their current debt levels, how their –?

**MR. MURPHY:** Yes. Well, it was just a thought while I was looking at this line. Why, I do not know, I connected the two but anyway I did. I guess it is two questions in one.

In line 10 under Grants and Subsidies, you are showing a \$1.45 million difference here. I am wondering why, and then the second topic that came to mind was about municipalities and how they are dealing with their debt at the same time, with the debt servicing.

**MR. KENT:** Anecdotally, I would say that I have heard from a number of communities whose financial situation seems to be improving as a result of making their own plans to pay down debt, as a result of greater Municipal Operating Grants, as a result of improvements in infrastructure. So we have made progress.

In terms of Municipal Debt Servicing, many municipalities also borrowed from a corporation that is set up for their portion of cost-shared capital projects. Municipalities make payments directly to that corporation, and they are not reflected in this budget allocation. So that may be where some of the confusion comes from.

**MR. MURPHY:** No, it is not really confusion. It is more or less, I guess the whole question

about the Province collecting on debt and how municipalities have been dealing with it. I know some time ago some of the municipalities were dealing with, for example, higher interest rates from past loans and everything they might have had. It kind of related to it in one way, that still a municipality was dealing with debt the same as what government was. That is why I brought it up at that particular time.

Line 3.1.02, Municipal Debt Servicing - Principal, there is \$1.9 million less there. I am just wondering why, is it the same reason?

**MR. KENT:** The decrease between budgets reflects lower projected debt servicing expenses. That is due to declining debt balances, debt reduction, and no new debt.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay, it is the same thing there.

Municipal Operating Grants is self-explanatory, \$22 million this year. It is good to see. There should be a little bit more. I was just wondering if you might have wanted to make a comment here.

**MR. KENT:** The response from communities has been really positive. As a result of the new formula, most communities saw an increase. None saw a decrease. It is one of those things that have been really well-received by municipalities.

It demonstrates our commitment to addressing some legitimate concerns that municipalities have. They need predictable, sustainable revenue. This is one small part of that, but for a lot of small communities it is a really important part.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

Can you explain the formula that was used for that? Give us a break down on how that works a little bit.

**CHAIR:** Quick George, please.

**MR. MURPHY:** I know it is based on a number of occupied dwellings and there is, to all intents and purposes, a remoteness index. I wonder if you could explain that.

**MR. KENT:** I would be happy to provide you with detail on the new formula.

**MR. MURPHY:** Sure.

**MR. KENT:** Rather than take up valuable time here in discussion. We have a new formula that came into place January 1 of this year. It needed to be transparent, it needed to be equitable, and it needed to be sustainable. We have increased the amount of money available for MOGs.

We are also planning to proactively disclose the amounts of the MOGs that are being allocated. If you want some more information on how the formula works, I would be happy to connect you with one of my officials for an overview of that. That is not a problem at all.

**MR. MURPHY:** Please. That would be great, yes.

**CHAIR:** Eddie.

**MR. JOYCE:** Thank you.

Minister, I will just get back to the waste management. I just provided some officials with a copy of the reports and I showed the confusion. This is not critical, I just wanted to make sure people – are done right.

I will just read what Don Downer said in *The Western Star*, “Downer said it is disappointing to hear the debate continue about the decision to ship waste to central Newfoundland. He has been convinced, for a long time, that the costs associated with a western site and trucking waste to central are practically the same – as was determined by the consultant.” This is where the confusion is coming in. You are saying one thing, he is out saying another thing and the consultant is.

This is why I would ask, and I am not being critical because I would help out. Is there some way we can revisit this here, even if it is the right decision, so that everybody can say they had input? Right now the people out in Western Newfoundland have no problem with it if it goes to Central.

Why was the subsidy dropped? If there was going to be a \$1.8 million savings, why is the

head of waste management saying it is not? Why is the consultant – so this is where the confusion is coming in, Minister.

**MR. KENT:** I am certainly happy to review the comments that you are alluding to. I am happy to review the sections of the report that you are alluding to.

**MR. JOYCE:** Okay, perfect.

**MR. KENT:** I will endeavour to do that for sure.

**MR. JOYCE:** Okay, because it is a big issue out in Corner Brook. A lot of people are very concerned about it, especially the major increase.

**MR. KENT:** I suspect it is just a matter of clarifying some misunderstandings; but, regardless, I will certainly review the information that you are referring to.

**MR. JOYCE:** With all due respect, Minister, when it is in the consultant's report, either you paid the consultant and you should not have paid him, there is no misunderstanding because this is what everybody was – when the decision was made to have it out in Central or go to Western, all the discussion was it is no extra cost to the people of Western Newfoundland if we go out there or if we stay. We are losing thirty jobs. We are losing some opportunities for recycling and things like that.

There is no misunderstanding. I can assure you that was the discussion, that if you move out it is not going to cost you any extra, if you stay here it is not going to save any money. To be fair to you, you were not involved with it in the beginning of it.

Daniel's Harbour, there is work continuing up there in the flood area. Is there money still being allocated for water and sewer in that area?

**MR. KENT:** There is some work required in Daniel's Harbour in order to relocate the water line. We anticipate doing that work this year.

I can provide some more detail if you wish, but there is some capital works money being allocated this year to address that commitment,

based on the events that happened over the last number of months.

**MR. JOYCE:** Was any of this here part of a federal disaster relief program?

**MR. KENT:** No.

**MR. JOYCE:** Was there any federal money ever put into it up in Daniel's Harbour, that area?

**MR. KENT:** Federal money? No.

Cluney, do you want to expand?

**CHAIR:** Cluney.

**MR. MERCER:** No, there is certainly no federal money going in as a result of the upcoming water and sewer relocation.

Under the previous slide back in, I guess it was 2009 maybe, there was no federal money there as well. The Province went in and purchased, within an exclusion zone, a number of properties and those dwellings have been taken down now.

**MR. JOYCE:** Okay.

Where are you putting the water and sewer lines? I ask this question because it has been brought to my attention. Is it in the condemned area of Daniel's Harbour where the lines are running through?

**MR. KENT:** You can answer that as well.

**CHAIR:** Cluney.

**MR. MERCER:** Could you repeat that part of the question again?

**MR. JOYCE:** The location of the water lines is it in the condemned area or is it outside the condemned area? Because some people had a concern that it may be inside where the area is condemned, no houses, that the water and sewer lines are running by.

**MR. KENT:** That the lines are being moved to?

**MR. JOYCE:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Cluney.

**MR. MERCER:** The consultant looked at two possible locations and both of the locations were outside of the exclusion zone.

**MR. JOYCE:** So it is definitely outside? Okay. Because there is some confusion that it is inside. So I can definitely say it is not inside?

**MR. MERCER:** The drawing that I saw, both options that were identified were both outside of the exclusion zone. One was about twice the distance of the other one.

**MR. JOYCE:** So with the drawings, there should not even be any discussion that it is even close? Okay, perfect. Thank you for clarifying that.

Boil orders: How many are in effect now, Minister, in the Province?

**MR. KENT:** A list is published on the Department of Environment and Conservation Web site. I do not know if I have a current number with me, and I do not know if any of my officials have the current number with them as well. If they do, I would invite them to let me know.

The number fluctuates quite a bit. The majority of boil water advisories relate to small systems, communities with populations of less than 500, and there are various reasons why communities are on boil water advisories. I have a March number for you that I can give you.

**MR. JOYCE:** Okay, please.

**MR. KENT:** As of March, 2014, the last time I checked on the specific number, there were 216 boil water advisories in place. There are about 156 communities affected by these boil water advisories, serving a population of about 50,000 people. So that equals approximately 12.3 per cent of the service population.

**MR. JOYCE:** Is this number consistent with the years – I mean, there is a difficult situation. It is no good to say that it can be solved overnight; it is almost impossible. Is the number consistent, or is there any plan to get the boil orders reduced?

**MR. KENT:** There is. When I look across the country at other jurisdictions, the number is not unreasonably high; however, to me, personally I think it is high, and I want to see more communities have access to clean and safe drinking water. So I have been asking some questions around why these advisories are in place.

Sometimes it is for non-microbiological reasons. For instance, communities that do not have a proper disinfection system – they have a system, but it is turned off, or their system is broken down and they have not fixed it. In some cases, it is because of operational problems. In some cases, it is because of residual chlorine issues. About over 95 per cent of current boil water advisories are not because of the water itself – not because of the microbiological issues with the water supply.

So that tells me if the number is that high, then there is an opportunity for us to make a difference. There is an opportunity for us to reduce that number. What you will see in terms of the capital works announcements that will roll out this year, there will certainly be a focus on water and waste water, but I want to work closely with the Department of Environment and Conservation to reduce this number.

Sometimes it is about education, sometimes it is about maintenance; but to me if there are non-microbiological reasons, if it is about the systems themselves and how they are being operated, then the onus is on communities who are responsible for these systems, the onus is also on us to work with those communities to solve those problems. I want to reduce that number.

**MR. JOYCE:** That gets me to the municipal fiscal framework review. What is the status on that now? Because a lot of municipalities are saying they just do not have the funds to chlorinate and maintain the system.

**MR. KENT:** We hit a real key milestone this past weekend in Gander, and I know that a member of your caucus and one of your officials who I can see in front of me was often in the room when I was speaking in Gander. We have made some real progress. The key milestone we reached this weekend was delivering a report on

what we have heard so far through the consultations.

The first phase of consultation is done. Now we have to talk to people involved in the delivery of various municipal services, people involved in economic development and recreation and transportation and firefighting and land use planning. We also have the survey ongoing, as I said in my opening remarks, and we are going to continue to work closely with MNL and PMA to advance the work. So, we will be ready for Budget 2015.

**MR. JOYCE:** So it is a commitment that it will be done in 2015?

**MR. KENT:** Yes.

**MR. JOYCE:** Good commitment.

Will there be more public consultations once you get some kind of agreement made we will go out – once you sit down with the municipalities and you come up with an agreement, will you go out and say here is what we are looking at or will it just be done through MNL?

**MR. KENT:** Yes, there are several opportunities for feedback, and there will be more consultation. This is not just about coming to an agreement with MNL who is one important voice in the process but just one voice. We need to hear from everybody in the Province who receives municipal services. We need to hear from people in local service districts. I have personally written to the Chair of each local service district committee to invite them to be involved in the process.

We also want to hear from people in unincorporated areas because they certainly have an interest here too in terms of whatever we might decide. We want it to be a collaborative process and we want to make sure that everybody who receives municipal services and even those who do not receive municipal services have an opportunity to have some input.

**MR. JOYCE:** Okay, thank you.

I will pass it on to George.

**CHAIR:** George.

**MR. MURPHY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

While we are on the topic of unincorporated communities, before I go to some line items, I am dealing with some constituents now who are paying upwards of about \$180 or \$190 for waste disposal when they have cabins in these areas that are basically unused for most of the year, only used during the summer, but they are still being charged with the collection of this fee. I am just wondering: Is there any way around it that these cabin owners can get out of paying that? They are not permanent residents in some of these areas.

**MR. KENT:** The simple answer is no, but let me explain why. I will give you sort of a simple explanation for it. I own a cabin. In the community where my cabin is I pay a poll tax; I pay a tax. I may only get to my cabin a few times a year, and my wife would prefer that I get there a lot more than I do, but such is life. I still have to pay my poll tax. Even if I have not driven on the roads and benefited from the municipal services, I still own property in that community. Whether I avail of the service or not the service is available to me.

The same is true when it comes to waste management fees. If I own property in a given jurisdiction, then there are certain taxes and fees that apply. Regardless of whether I am there half of the time, all of the time, a quarter of the time, none of the time, there is still a cost for making those services available to me, whether I choose to use them or not.

I understand the argument. I have often talked with other cabin owners, even in my little area, and they said we pay these taxes and what do we really get for it. I understand the sentiment that is being expressed, but the principle is about fairness. It is about the services made available. Residents of various places in the community pay for fire services. Well, they do not only pay for those services when their house burns down; they pay for firefighting services on an ongoing basis because it is a service that is available to them on an ongoing basis, if you know what I mean.



**MR. MURPHY:** Yes, okay –

**MR. KENT:** I definitely understand the concern, and I have talked to a lot of cabin owners over the last seven months who own a secondary residence of some form.

**MR. MURPHY:** All right, okay. So government has no plans right now to address this. It is what it is, and they will move on –

**MR. KENT:** It is an issue that is being handled by the waste management boards, but I do support the position of the boards that if you own property in a given area and there is a service made available to you, then you have to pay your share. Everybody is paying in the range of \$200. Some are paying a little more, some are paying a little less, but we anticipated that everybody would be at that point. Based on the implementation to date, that is what people are paying. When I hear concern about fees going up to \$300 or \$400, I do not foresee that happening. Every experience so far has proven that the fees are somewhere in the range of \$180 to \$220 per household.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay. We can get hold of the waste management boards and ask them how they come about these policy decisions.

**MR. KENT:** Absolutely. I know that the waste management boards have been pretty forthcoming in responding to residents. I have referred numerous cabin owners I have heard from, I have put them in touch with, in our case, the Eastern Waste Management board for the constituents you and I represent. They quite often have cabins on the Eastern side of the Province.

The Eastern Waste Management board has been more than happy to answer their questions. That does not mean the residents always love the answer –

**MR. MURPHY:** May not like the answer, yes.

**MR. KENT:** – but they have been happy to have that discussion with anybody who wishes to have the discussion.

**MR. MURPHY:** All right, that is great. Thank you very much for that.

Section 3.1.04, under Special Assistance, Minister, I have a couple of questions. Under Grants and Subsidies, \$2.4 million is there for this year. There was only \$1.2 million spent for last year, against \$2.305 million. I wonder if we can get an explanation as regards to the dollar amounts here number one; but number two, in general, what is this fund for?

**MR. KENT:** This fund is for items that arise throughout the year in all kinds of communities and all kinds of places in the Province that cannot be addressed by the municipality through their regular operating budgets, and have not been addressed through municipal capital works programs, but are deemed to be significant enough and special enough that they warrant consideration. Under the revised budget what we actually ended up spending last year was just over \$2.3 million.

We are budgeting for \$2.4 million this year, just to reflect the fact that there is such pressure on those funds. I am happy to give you some examples of the kinds of things that come out of that fund, if you like. Would you like that?

**MR. MURPHY:** Please.

**MR. KENT:** Just to give you an idea of the types of things; the Pigeon Cove story that was in the media a fair bit in recent months, the community that lost their water supply in the District of St. Barbe. There was a cost of \$113,000 out of Special Assistance to address that. Mr. Joyce mentioned Daniel's Harbour. There was a need this past year for fencing, security workers, caution signage, and street lighting.

There were some repairs in Coppermine Brook, and No. 4 Brook in the Bay of Islands in York Harbour, a \$28,000 grant. There are those types of issues that arise that we cannot just address, that communities are not able to address on their own, and they do not have a capital works grant for.

There are also some non-municipal grants that come out of that fund which I should mention as well, in the interest of transparency. For instance, we support a pilgrimage every year to Beaumont Hamel in partnership with the Royal Canadian Legion, the Newfoundland and

Labrador Command. The funding for that comes out of this fund as well. Our initiatives like Municipal Awareness Week and other special projects get funded through this fund.

The budget adjustment is really to reflect reality. It is a big number, but I would suggest to a lot of communities and to a lot of MHAs who represent those communities, it is an important number.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay, so basically some emergency funding there for times when it is needed.

**MR. KENT:** It is to deal with emergencies and other special circumstances that arise, yes.

**MR. MURPHY:** All right, perfect, thank you.

Subhead 3.1.05 under Community Enhancement, I suppose Special Assistance is kind of related to this anyway. I have a couple of questions here as regards to Professional Services.

**MR. KENT:** Yes.

**MR. MURPHY:** Seven thousand and five hundred dollars was the revised figure against \$25,000 that was budgeted. I wonder if we can get a breakdown there.

**MR. KENT:** Yes. There was just lower than anticipated contractual and consulting services throughout last year. The \$7,500 was used for contractual work related to data entry. I know as an urban MHA you would not be exposed to the CEEP, but it is one that definitely impacts every rural district of the Province in a major way.

There are certain periods of time during the year where the activity in our department ramps up to process the applications. Those funds allow us to hire some people very short term to do some of the data entry work and so on that is required.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay. Coming down to Grants and Subsidies in line 10, Estimates this year are showing \$5.715 million. The revised figure from last year was \$5.5 million against \$5.715 million. Can we get a list of the projects and the communities that might have been

involved in these projects under this particular line item, and why the difference?

**MR. KENT:** Yes, I would like to see us routinely make that information available. The reason for the difference, to answer your question, is just related to some anticipated delays in receiving final progress reports, processing final payments, and residual funding amounts that are unspent by project sponsors. There is sort of a flow. Sometimes projects do not get completed before year-end and then carry over from one fiscal year to the next. The intention is to always get the final reports in a given fiscal year.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay. Like I said, that is probably explaining why the \$215,000 was not distributed last year against the actual?

**MR. KENT:** Right, it just relates to timing of final reports and final payments, that is all.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay, great. Subhead 3.2.01, under Municipal Infrastructure, an increase of \$186,900, I am presuming for new positions here?

**MR. KENT:** There are some vacant positions, and we hope to recruit in this area.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

**MR. KENT:** As I mentioned earlier, we struggle to attract and retain people with certain professional designations in the area of finance, and specifically engineering and land use planning. We are making a concerted effort to fill the positions because we want to get the work done, and we are doing a record amount of infrastructure. That requires our staff to process those projects and to keep on top of it. There is a bigger volume of work going on in the department than ever before, so getting those positions filled is pretty important.

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay. Can I get an update at the same time on the provincial capital works programs for larger municipalities while we are here at this particular section?

**MR. KENT:** Sure. For the larger municipalities, the twenty-two of them that received multi-year funding, they have all

received their funding allocations for the next three years. The response that I have received from those communities has been very positive.

**CHAIR:** Okay, George, I am going to have to end you there.

Eddie.

**MR. JOYCE:** Yes.

I know the time is getting short and I may not get to finish it. In case I do not, I just wanted to say that the officials in Municipal Affairs do a great job, by the way. I know I deal with the bunch in Corner Brook, and I know in part of the Estimates here we are doing a lot of questioning, but do not leave it to anybody's mind that we do not have the confidence in Municipal Affairs, the employees, and the people around them. They do a lot of good service around, help out a lot of municipalities, and they are available on a regular basis.

I just want to have that on the record. I thank everybody, because when you are dealing with municipalities you are dealing with people's lives on a daily basis. I know it is hard, I know it is tough, but it is our role to ask these questions.

Thanks to all the people across who work with Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs. I know I deal with them and they do a great job across the Province.

**MR. KENT:** Thank you.

I agree with you and appreciate those sentiments, because there is a lot of good work being done.

**MR. JOYCE:** Yes.

Just on George's point, and then again the minister on that special grants, that \$3,000 where the early childhood education was flooded out, they are in the process of doing that work now. So there was that special grant to help out that where it was flooding. Thank you for that and that is what the program is for, and that is what it is designed for and it is great.

George mentioned also the community enhancement program.

**MR. KENT:** Yes.

**MR. JOYCE:** I can just say if you go down to Lark Harbour and see some of the work that they are doing, you go in Humber Arm South, you go in York Harbour, with the community enhancement program, they put on new shingles, siding, roof, the new hall, right through, for the whole fire department. It is amazing the work – it is a great program.

A lot of the people are wondering if it could come out earlier in the year. I understand why it cannot come out and I explained to them why it cannot come out, but leave no doubt that is a good program and they do get a lot of good work done, the community enhancement program.

**MR. KENT:** Absolutely.

**MR. JOYCE:** Minister, I am just going to ask a few more questions.

The Basic 911 service, will that be up and running by December?

**MR. KENT:** Yes, it will. We plan to be fully implemented by the end of 2014. So it may not be up and running by the first of December, but our officials tell me that we are on track to have Basic 911 service fully implemented by the end of the calendar year.

**MR. JOYCE:** Okay, perfect.

The emergency plans for municipalities, have they been completed, or how many have not...?

**MR. KENT:** The last time I checked something like 96 per cent of the Province's population lives in an area that is covered by an emergency plan.

**MR. JOYCE:** Yes.

**MR. KENT:** Sean, am I making that number up, or is that a correct number?

**CHAIR:** Sean.

**MR. DUTTON:** As of March 2014, 388 municipalities, or about 88 per cent, had either an approved plan or the local government had initiated the process. So that is 97 per cent of the population living in municipalities with plans in place.

**MR. JOYCE:** Okay.

Just another on the land use, but it is for the Northeast Avalon Region – is there money allocated for that this year?

**MR. KENT:** It is a similar story. The City of St. John's still has funds from the previous process that will be expended first. The fifteen communities in the Northeast Avalon have agreed that we will cost share the funding. It will be done a per capita basis, so any funds beyond that that are required to complete this process – and I suspect there will be additional funds required in this case. Humber Valley is different, but in this particular case, based on where we are in the process, we are not as far along. We have agreed to a cost-sharing arrangement where we will fund a portion, communities will fund a portion on a per-capita basis.

**MR. JOYCE:** Minister, we all know, federally, for the waste water – has anybody been allocated from the Province for the waste water?

**MR. KENT:** Has anybody been allocated projects?

**MR. JOYCE:** Anybody, yes.

**MR. KENT:** There will be waste water projects approved this year. It is a priority, and I think we can be doing more to advance the cause in the Province. The real challenge here with waste water is that the federal government has put new regulations in place, and they have not provided five cents to help us implement the regulations.

**MR. JOYCE:** I agree.

**MR. KENT:** I think there are things we can do to assist the communities; for instance, with monitoring their flows, doing some of the initial work that will make them compliant initially. So I am looking at a way now to help

communities with that. I think there are some good options being explored.

**MR. JOYCE:** Minister, on another note – and this is completely selfish – capital works for Bay of Islands because a few municipalities – like Humber Arm South are looking to finish off Frenchman's Cove, the water that was stopped three or four years ago, and sewer problems over in Irishtown and Summerside. You are going to be in a discussion with Lark Harbour. It is getting late in the year, and they are just wondering if an announcement will be coming soon or when –

**MR. KENT:** Announcements will be coming very soon. I am going to endeavour to finalize all of them by mid-May – which is ambitious, given this is May 5; that gives me ten days or so. My hope is to finalize for all districts, including the Bay of Islands, by mid-May. There may be a few exceptions just because additional information is required or there are some discussions ongoing, but I would suspect I will have 95 per cent of it done within the next ten days.

**MR. JOYCE:** Okay.

Have you made any decision on what the priorities would be this year? Like safe drinking water –

**MR. KENT:** Generally speaking – not talking about a specific district – but provincially my focus has certainly been on water and waste water projects. Making sure that communities have access to clean and safe drinking water, as you articulated earlier, is a high priority. So you will see a lot of water and waste water related work. That being said, there are some other infrastructure projects that need to be done as well. There are roads' needs, certainly, in lots of communities of the Province, there are other infrastructure needs, and we are working to address all of those. To me, water and waste water is a higher priority than some others.

**MR. JOYCE:** Okay.

The money allocated this year, besides the larger municipalities, how much is allocated for the smaller municipalities? You mentioned the seven largest, and the other thirteen.

**MR. KENT:** For the small communities, it is in excess of \$20 million.

**MR. JOYCE:** How many municipalities would it be?

**MR. KENT:** Roughly 250, just using round numbers. There are twenty-two that avail of multi-year funding, and the rest would avail of the funds that are allocated for small communities.

**MR. JOYCE:** So how much will we spend for the twenty-two larger this year, as compared to the 250 smaller ones?

**MR. KENT:** The larger communities – some of whom no longer receive Municipal Operating Grants, so they have received increases over time in infrastructure money to offset that. The twenty-two have already received their three-year allocation. So over the three years they are going to receive – this this is a round number because it is not precise, but it is roughly \$100 million. It might be \$101 million. Actually, I am sorry, I did not include all. There is the seven, plus there is the fifteen, so it is more like it \$140 million, roughly.

**MR. JOYCE:** So, there is \$20 million allocated for 250 smaller ones?

**MR. KENT:** Twenty, twenty, and twenty, for a total of \$60 million, roughly, over the three years.

**MR. JOYCE:** How much was spent last year?

**MR. KENT:** A comparable number. I can get those figures for you.

**MR. JOYCE:** Can you?

**MR. KENT:** Keep in mind that the number we actually spend is different than the money we actually commit. So we are going to announce, say, \$150 million worth of infrastructure money this year, but that work might be completed over the next two or three years. So, what money is committed versus what money is spent, it is sort of a flow through that happens over multiple fiscal years.

**MR. JOYCE:** How much was spent last year? Because what happens, it gets carried over, and then municipalities do not get any funding because the work was carried over and they have work to do the following year.

**MR. KENT:** Last year, the Grants line would encompass the infrastructure programs, and it was over \$107 million. This year we anticipate that number being in excess of \$115 million. So the expenditure is increasing – the money actually spent. There is a lot of money being committed this year, because it is the first year of the rollout of a new program.

**MR. JOYCE:** Yes.

Well, I can see it is 12:00 p.m. and we shut off at 12:00 p.m.

Minister, just on the last note, if you have the meeting with Lark Harbour-York Harbour, I am willing to help out, because I think it is great for both towns to amalgamate. They are all ready to move on with it, and I think it will be great for the area. So, if you have the meeting, I would love to be sitting in on the meeting.

**MR. KENT:** Well, you are more than welcome, in all seriousness.

**MR. JOYCE:** In closing, I just want to thank you and the officials for their forthright discussion here this morning. Thank you very much.

**MR. KENT:** Thank you, thank you all, and thanks to my officials as well for their support. A lot of work goes into the Budget process, especially when you have a new minister who is learning multiple departments. So, I want to thank them for all their efforts as well.

Thank you for your questions.

**CHAIR:** George, a closing remark?

**MR. MURPHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First off, I had lots of other line items and everything so I am just wondering, is this is the only allocation we are going to have from Municipal Affairs, or do we call another meeting

of Municipal Affairs so that we can finish this up at a later time?

**CHAIR:** I cannot answer that question. I can leave it open to the minister's schedule. The requirement is that you do three hours. There is no requirement beyond the three hours, but if the minister wishes to reschedule a time or do an individual meeting.

**MR. KENT:** I get the sense that the Official Opposition's questions have been answered.

George, I would be happy to have a meeting with you to answer any additional questions that you may have. As I hope you have seen this morning, I have no problem answering your questions, but rather than tie up the Estimates process, if you have some specific questions remaining perhaps we can arrange to get together and talk about it. I do not know if that is okay or not, but I assume it is.

**MR. MURPHY:** If we can, yes, because I do have some questions as regards to some of the line items under the budget.

**MR. KENT:** Yes. Well, why don't you and I get together and we will have a thorough discussion about whatever else you want to talk about?

**MR. MURPHY:** Okay.

**CHAIR:** Eddie.

**MR. JOYCE:** Minister, if you are meeting with Lark Harbour-York Harbour, if you arrange a meeting let me know, and Glen would know this, because Friday morning I have to go down and sign the three banners for the Grade 6 basketball team and we have to present the banners to the school. The girls would be disappointed if their coach was not there.

**MR. KENT:** We will let you know when the meeting is scheduled. I do not believe it is finalized but I am certainly hoping to fit it in on Friday.

**MR. JOYCE:** Perfect, thank you.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Based on the conversation, Minister, we are going to call all the subheads. George, you and the minister can get together at a time to ask the rest of your questions.

I want to thank you, Minister, and all your staff for the openness of the discussion this morning. I think it was very frank and very open. On behalf of all committee members this morning, I want to thank you and your staff for taking the time to do this today. The first day back and all, 9:00 o'clock in the morning, it is a tough gig.

**MR. KENT:** (Inaudible).

**CHAIR:** I am pretty sure you did not.

We will call the first subhead.

**CLERK:** Subhead 1.1.01.

**CHAIR:** Shall 1.1.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, subhead 1.1.01 carried.

**CLERK:** Subhead 1.1.02 to 5.1.06 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 1.1.02 to 5.1.06 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.02 through 5.1.06 inclusive carried.

**CLERK:** The total.

**CHAIR:** Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

On motion, Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, total heads, carried.

On motion, the Committee adjourned.

**CHAIR:** Shall I report the Estimates of the Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs carried without amendment.

**CHAIR:** Just some housekeeping before we go.

Can we have a motion to approve the minutes of the Social Services Committee dated April 8, 2014, for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation?

Can I have a mover, please?

Moved by Mr. Little, seconded by Mr. Pollard.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

**CHAIR:** I want to remind Committee members that the Social Services Committee does meet again tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. for the Department of Justice and Attorney General, and the Labour Relations Agency.

Can I have a motion to adjourn?

Moved by Mr. Pollard.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.