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

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Department of Justice and Public Safety

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Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Department of Justice and Public Safety

Chair: Sherry Gambin-Walsh, MHA

Vice-Chair: Chris Tibbs, MHA

Members: Perry Trimper, MHA
Lucy Stoyles, MHA
Scott Reid, MHA
James Dinn, MHA
Paul Dinn, MHA

Clerk of the Committee: Bobbi Russell (A)

Appearing:

Department of Justice and Public Safety

Hon. John Hogan, KC, MHA, Minister and Attorney General
Denis Mahoney, KC, Deputy Minister
Debbie Dunphy, Assistant Deputy Minister, Emergency Services
Mike Noseworthy, Assistant Deputy Minister, Courts and Corporate Services
Lorelei Roberts, Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Safety and Correctional Services
Denise Woodrow, Assistant Deputy Minister, Legal Services
Neil Croke, Director, Infrastructure and Radio Communications
Kellee Martin, Director, Policy and Strategic Planning
Sharleen Simmons, Director, Policing and Public Safety
Lisa Stead, Director, Public Prosecutions
Patti Hurley, Departmental Controller
Tom Hayward, Manager of Budgeting
Jeremy Reynolds, Director of Communications
Pat Roche, Chief of Police, Royal Newfoundland Constabulary
Andrew Green, Executive Director, Royal Newfoundland Constabulary
Shelley Organ, Chief Executive Officer, Supreme Court
Dan Chafe, Superintendent of Prisons
Derek Peddle, High Sheriff

Also Present

Hon. Andrew Parsons, MHA, Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology
Hon. Lisa Dempster, MHA, Minister of Labrador Affairs
Hon. Pam Parsons, MHA, Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality
Helen Conway Ottenheimer, MHA
Lela Evans, MHA
Dave Hamlyn, Government Members' Caucus
Scott Fleming, Third Party Caucus
Emma Kannenberg, Official Opposition Caucus

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Andrew Parsons, MHA for Burgeo - La Poile, substitutes for Perry Trimper, MHA for Lake Melville.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Lisa Dempster, MHA for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, substitutes for Lucy Stoyles, MHA for Mount Pearl North.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Pam Parsons, MHA for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, substitutes for Scott Reid, MHA for St. George's - Humber.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Helen Conway Ottenheimer, MHA for Harbour Main, substitutes for Paul Dinn, MHA for Topsail - Paradise.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Lela Evans, MHA for Torngat Mountains, substitutes for James Dinn, MHA for St. John's Centre.

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

CLERK (Russell): Good evening, I'd like to call the meeting to order.

This is a meeting of the Social Services Committee reviewing Justice and Public Safety. I'm Bobbi Russell and I'm the Clerk of this evening's Committee. I'm going to be presiding over the election of Chair.

So the first order of business is the election of Chair.

Are there any nominations from the floor?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

CLERK: They're not on the Committee. It has to be a Member of the Committee.

Okay, the nomination is that the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's serve as Chair.

Are there any further nominations from the floor?

So the motion is that the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's be elected as Chair.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CLERK: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

CHAIR (Gambin-Walsh): Okay, so the next order of business is the election of the Vice-Chair.

Are there any nominations from the floor for Vice-Chair?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Okay, so are there any further nominations for Vice-Chair?

Are there any further nominations for Vice-Chair?

Hearing no further nominations, the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans has been elected as Vice-Chair.

All right, we shall move on and we shall call the meeting to order.

So substituting for Lake Melville, we have Burgeo - La Poile, Minister Parsons; for Mount Pearl North, we have Minister Dempster from Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair; for St. George's - Humber, we will have Minister Pam Parsons from Harbour Grace - Port de Grave; for St. John's Centre we have MHA Lela Evans from Torngat Mountains; and for Topsail - Paradise, we have MHA Conway Ottenheimer from Harbour Main.

We usually take a break halfway through. It's 6:05 now and there are three hours allocated, so we'll see where we're to probably around 7:20, around there. You may have to remind me, but I will note it.

Also, each time you are asked to speak, if your light doesn't come on, I'll ask you to wave, and especially at the beginning, to wave. You need to say your name and your position each time, and that's for transcription purposes.

We're asked that you not make adjustments to the chair. If you already have – whoops. There are water coolers down here on the bottom and just up here, if you need some water.

Now I'm going to ask that the Committee Members and the substitutes and the caucus employees just identify themselves.

We're going to start here with MHA Tibbs.

C. TIBBS: MHA Chris Tibbs, MHA for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: MHA Helen Conway Ottenheimer, Harbour Main.

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

L. EVANS: MHA Evans, Torngat Mountains.

S. FLEMING: Scott Fleming, Researcher, Third Party Caucus Office.

A. PARSONS: Andrew Parsons, Burgeo - La Poile.

L. DEMPSTER: Lisa Dempster, Cartwright-L'Anse au Clair.

D. HAMLIN: Dave Hamlyn, Government Members' Office.

CHAIR: So now I ask that the departmental officials identify themselves. We'll start with the minister and then we'll come back to here.

J. HOGAN: Start down there.

CHAIR: Okay, we're going to start down on the end.

L. STEAD: Lisa Stead, Director of Public Prosecutions.

M. NOSEWORTHY: Michael Noseworthy, Assistant Deputy Minister, Courts and Corporate Services.

P. HURLEY: Patti Hurley, Departmental Controller.

J. HOGAN: John Hogan, Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

D. MAHONEY: Denis Mahoney, Deputy Minister, Justice and Public Safety.

L. ROBERTS: Lorelei Roberts, Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Safety and Correctional Services.

D. WOODROW: Denise Woodrow, Assistant Deputy Minister, Legal Services.

P. ROCHE: Patrick Roche, Chief of Police, Royal Newfoundland Constabulary.

A. GREEN: Andrew Green, Executive Director, Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, Support Services.

D. PEDDLE: Derek Peddle, High Sheriff.

S. SIMMONS: Sharleen Simmons, Director of Policing and Public Safety.

D. CHAFE: Dan Chafe, Superintendent of Prisons.

D. DUNPHY: Debbie Dunphy, Assistant Deputy Minister of Emergency Services.

S. ORGAN: Shelley Organ, Chief Executive Officer of the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal.

K. MARTIN: Kellee Martin, Director of Policy and Strategic Planning.

J. REYNOLDS: Jeremy Reynolds, Director of Communications.

T. HAYWARD: Thomas Hayward, Manager of Budgeting.

N. CROKE: Neil Croke, Director of Public Safety Infrastructure.

CHAIR: Okay, that's it.

Before we start with the Estimate process, the Committee has the minutes from the last meeting of May 3, 2023. I ask if there are any errors or omissions for those minutes?

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

A. PARSONS: So moved.

CHAIR: Minister Parsons.

A seconder?

We don't need a seconder. Okay we're good, moved by Minister Andrew Parsons.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

CHAIR: We will now proceed with the Estimates review process.

First, I want to recognize Minister Hogan. Minister Hogan, you will get 15 minutes for opening remarks and then I'll proceed to introduce the first questioner on this side who will get 15 minutes. After that, it is 10 minutes.

We don't have any independents here right now, but I just ask the Committee the process if an independent does come. There are two processes after being used: one is at the end of Estimates, they are allowed 10 minutes; or the other process is as we're going through, they're allowed questions. So it's totally up to the Committee what process we go with.

Does anyone have any comments or concerns? No choice? Will we leave it for 10 minutes at the end?

J. HOGAN: Sure.

CHAIR: Good. All right, so if an independent Member comes, we will allow them 10 minutes at the end to ask questions.

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

CLERK: 1.1.01 to 1.3.01 inclusive, Executive and Support Services.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 to 1.3.01 inclusive, Executive and Support Services, carry?

Minister Hogan.

J. HOGAN: First of all, thanks everyone for being here this evening. I guess we're the second department to get Estimates going, so it is nice to get the opportunity here this evening to talk about all the good things in the Department of Justice and Public Safety.

Of course, I want to thank all the members of the team that are here today and all the other members of the Department of Justice and Public Safety throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I don't know if this is my third or fourth round of Estimates now. I say it every year, but I truly believe that Justice and Public Safety has the best team in government. It is a heavy department. There is a lot going on. It is a very people based and front facing for all parts of the province and all parts of Justice and Public Safety.

I don't know if I say it enough, but I do want to thank everybody who puts in the hard work and effort on a daily basis and makes Justice and Public Safety in Newfoundland and Labrador work.

I just want to take a few minutes of my time here now before we get started to comment

a little. I guess some highlights of what's in the Estimates here that were going to review this evening. The 2024-2025 budget for the department is over \$338 million. Officials in the department have applied zero-based budgeting principles and also used historical spending to make forecasts in many areas.

As of March 11, 2024, total current position control numbers, PCNs, are 1,806; 1,357 are permanent; 344 are temporary; and 105 are contractual. The total number of retirements in 2023-24 was approximately 40.

There are trends in cost pressures across the department. They include, to no one's surprise, general cost increases for goods and services due to inflation; supporting employee well-being; and recently ratified collection agreements, which resulted in overages in salaries for groups such as RNC, RCMP, NAPE, as well as an increase to salary for Provincial Court judges.

Vacancies have increased travel costs in order to move staff around the province to fulfill operational requirements. We've responded with targeted recruitment efforts, including those aimed at correctional officers and lawyers specifically.

A successful corrections recruitment campaign last year resulted in over 50 new hires, with more cadets currently completing training. There's been an increased focus placed on attracting and retaining articling students and the solicitor pay scale was recently increased for the first time in decades. Both the RNC and the RCMP have ongoing recruitment campaigns as well.

One of the increases you'll see will be due to the Law Society increasing fees for members of \$300 per year, which leads to invariants in some Employee Benefits line items. There are currently 121 solicitor PCNs in the department, and this doesn't include JPS executive or Legal Aid.

Last year, there were 123 new claims filed against the provincial government; 38 of the new claims were for sexual abuse; 12 claims were settled for a total of \$4.3 million; and 10 of those were for sexual abuse for approximately \$3.8 million.

With regard to corrections and probation, government continues to work on replacing HMP; \$15 million over two years will go towards temporary infrastructure improvements that improve conditions. The measures include new programming spaces, improved video visitation and video court, improved security features, new secure outdoor recreation spaces and a new admissions building.

The budget also includes 22 new positions in corrections that will be located at HMP and other facilities in the province. The budget also includes 12 positions in adult probation and 3 positions for Victim Services. We've also ratified a new collective agreement with NAPE and provided initiatives to support retention of correctional officers. This included a one-time retention bonus of \$2,500 and twice the regular hourly rate of pay for officers that are required to work on their first regularly scheduled day of rest.

Additional staffing has been utilized to meet recommendations set out in the AG's report on Adult Custody and Community Corrections. Examples of programming at HMP include the New Day Program, Seeking Safety, and anger solutions.

In emergency services, the budget includes an additional \$7 million for recovery from tropical storms, including Hurricane Fiona. To date, over \$57 million has been spent to support recovery from Hurricane Fiona. There's continued support for fire services, including \$3.8 million for fire protection vehicles and equipment, as well as \$1 million to support NL Search and Rescue.

The budget includes an additional \$400,000 to support municipalities that respond to

emergencies outside their municipal boundaries. It also includes \$500,000 towards new call-aided dispatch and call-handling solutions for NL 911. Implementing this is another step towards realizing our Next Generation 911 in the province.

As for public safety, there are currently 20 policing and crime prevention agreements in place. Budget 2024-25 includes 10 additional RNC front-line officers, two staff for the Western region and two managerial positions based out of St. John's. Continued funding for the 10-person police oversight and crime prevention team, as well as the addition of the policing transformation work continues. These actions show there have been initiatives taken to transform the future of policing, so we are well-positioned to continue enhancing and ensuring public safety throughout the province.

The Interpersonal Violence Disclosure Protocol, which we know as Clare's Law, was proclaimed November of 2023. My notes say 18, but I believe now we've had 20 applications made so far under Clare's Law. The majority were deemed high risk, meaning the protocol is being used as intended, which is to increase safety for individuals at risk of violence from their partners.

Budget '24-'25 includes one new, full-time Provincial Court judge. It also included two court officer positions in the Supreme Court family expansion to Central Newfoundland. This will create a one-stop shop for the resolution of family law issues for people in Central Newfoundland.

Efforts continue on the AV modernization project for the courts. It is aimed at replacing the aging digital record system and installing video conferencing systems to improve virtual court capabilities. This project will go to tender in the first quarter of '24-'25, with plans to roll out in quarter two of '24-'25. We've also retained a digital transformation consultant in December 2023 who is assisting with this initiative.

The Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System is receiving an additional \$2.5 million to continue its work, which is currently scheduled to conclude in the fall of 2024. It is important to note the \$2.5 million is the prorated amount of what the inquiry has historically spent per year. We continue to work with the commissioners as they complete their work.

As of today, no requests for an additional extension have been received, but we know one is possible and we will continue to work with the inquiry to ensure they have the funding necessary to conclude their very important mandate.

The AG audit of Adult Custody and Community Corrections provided six recommendations, all of which are either completed or substantial work is moving towards completion. There was also an AG performance audit of the High Sheriff's office and work on recommendations is ongoing and will be completed within the next two years.

Audits for the fiscal years 2017-'18, '18-'19 and '19-'20 have now been completed. 2020-2021 audit is in progress and 2021-2022 has been submitted to the AG for audit. The audit for the year 2022-2023 will be submitted by May 2024.

There's ongoing work to fulfill recommendations, which includes completion of cross-jurisdictional and Government of Newfoundland and Labrador scan of policy and legislation, develop the updated financial policy and procedures manual and fill remaining vacancies within the Sheriff's Office.

I also refer to the independent review of the RNC, which we've referred to as the Harriet Lewis report, five of the nine recommendations have now been completed and work continues on the remaining recommendations. Some of those relate to the work of the Policing

Transformation Working Group and there may be an opportunity to align these efforts with the report in the future.

Thank you, Chair. I look forward to questions.

CHAIR: Okay.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: First of all, I'd like to say thank you to the minister for a copy of the binder. Already we can see that many of the questions that we were asking have been addressed, so I'm very pleased to see that.

I, too, want to thank the team at the Department of Justice and Public Safety for the expertise and the knowledge that they bring to this important Estimates process which is, we know, very important to the whole entire budget process.

This is my fifth, I believe, Estimates and I've always been very impressed by the quality of the knowledge that has been provided by the team at Justice and Public Safety.

So on that note, I do have few general introductory questions before I get into the headings.

With respect to the department's attrition plan, were positions removed last year through attrition and how many are planned for this year?

P. HURLEY: There were no positions eliminated through attrition this year. Our attrition plan has been completed for now and there are none anticipated for this year.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

How many vacancies are currently in the department, please?

P. HURLEY: There are currently 329 vacant positions.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Where is the department in examining the recommendation in First Light's police oversight report, in particular, those calling for the civilian oversight board?

J. HOGAN: I guess I'll say we continue to look at it, but it has certainly been put in with the police transformation team now.

Certainly, one of their mandates is to consult with all stakeholders in the province with regard to policing in this province. It's very clear. That's the name of the task force and the team is the police transformation team. I've had conversations with them specifically about the First Light report. I think the first thing I asked the transformation team to look at was the public complaints review process and whether an additional – not even additional but how public oversight should apply to that process. I anticipate continuing that discussion with them and having something to announce on that in the near future.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

Thank you, Minister.

The final question would be with respect to Bowes inquiry. Last year, 50 of the 65 recommendations were complete. Are there any updates on the other 51 to 65?

L. ROBERTS: So with regard to the Bowes report, there were 65 total recommendations in that report and, to date, there are 51 that have been completed; 14 recommendations are in progress or tied to the completion of the laboratory and the OCME space renovations that will be completed by health. So the design phase for that construction has been completed and it's expected that construction will take about three years to be done.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you very much.

Under heading 1.2.02, Administrative and Policy Support, Employee Benefits, they were over budget by \$767,000. What was that amount used for? What was that money used for?

D. MAHONEY: The principal amount there is related to the cost of Workers' Compensation premiums associated with claims in relation to employees of the department.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

Under Professional Services, last year, \$553,700 was used but only \$400,000 was spent. Could you explain this discrepancy?

D. MAHONEY: Initially, the \$500,000 that had been approved in the budget for a one-time expenditure for security related to the town of Happy Valley-Goose Bay –

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mm-hmm.

D. MAHONEY: – was identified there in the \$500,000 category. That amount was actually reprofiled later to be a grant, which is explained down under item 10. Therefore, the \$400,000 that's listed there as the revised number, that's the \$400,000 that we spent for the costs associated with the Review of the Statutory Offices completed by retired Justice Fowler.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

So with respect to the \$193,700, just clarify why the budget was reduced to that number?

J. HOGAN: It wasn't that it was reduced, it was that there was a \$500,000 eventual grant to the Town of Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Through meetings with them, there were requests for assistance with regard to public safety for homeless and transient

issues that the town was experiencing in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. So that was in budget 2023-2024 and it is not there in budget '24-'25.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay. Thank you.

Subheading 1.2.04 with respect to Administrative Support, Capital, under Operating Accounts, could you please explain why the budget is being increased to \$1,177,500, please?

J. HOGAN: The increase of \$700,000 would be \$200,000 for the OCME, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner software and \$500,000 which would be for NL911 call handling.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

I believe under this area is where we find the purchase of vehicles is allotted. Could you please tell me how many vehicles were planned for purchase and how many were actually purchased?

A. GREEN: So I couldn't really hear you, but I think you asked how many we plan to purchase. We plan to purchase seven vehicles in this fiscal year and we purchased eight vehicles last year.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay.

Could you explain the reason for this year's Estimate being reduced to \$477,500, please?

A. GREEN: So there was carryover money from the previous year for vehicles that didn't arrive due to delays in shipping. So that money was removed and then there was additional funding added for additional vehicles.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

I'm not sure if this question was addressed in the minister's introductory comments, so thank you for your patience if there is any repetition, but how large is the RNC fleet, currently?

A. GREEN: Pardon?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: How large is the RNC fleet currently?

A. GREEN: So we currently have, I think, 113 vehicles in our fleet.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

Under subheading 1.3.01, Fines Administration, under Federal - Revenue, why was the actual funding amount received so much lower than expected?

J. HOGAN: Third party tickets?

OFFICIAL: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Minister Hogan?

J. HOGAN: You do the federal, sorry.

CHAIR: Denis Mahoney.

D. MAHONEY: The change in Federal - Revenue is a result of vacancies that are related to bilingual positions that are under the federal *Contraventions Act* that we have.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

What is the total of outstanding fines owed to the province and please explain the strategy to collect them?

M. NOSEWORTHY: The total number of outstanding fines currently is \$50,325,100. The staff in the Fines Administration Division work hard to collect on that amount of money, including being available to enter into payment arrangements with anyone

who is available, as well as answer questions that members of the public may have.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: With respect to the outstanding fines – and you've indicated there are payment arrangements – is there an estimate, with respect to that over \$50 million, how many individuals we're talking about that have these outstanding fines?

M. NOSEWORTHY: I'm sorry, I don't have that information available right now.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay.

Would it be possible to obtain that information?

M. NOSEWORTHY: Yes, we can get that for you.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

Could you please provide any updates on the fine options program?

M. NOSEWORTHY: Yes, so we're currently drafting regulations and working on evaluating potential options for items to include in those regulations in order to give effect to a fine options program.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Do you have any timeline for that regulation?

CHAIR: Minister Hogan.

J. HOGAN: No, I don't think we can commit to a timeline right now, other than to say we're continuing to look at regulations and best ways to not only have regulations that attempt to make good on the \$50 million, but there's no point in doing it for individuals who either don't have that money or are never going to pay or other unforeseen circumstances where we're just spinning our wheels for no reason.

So it is taking a little bit of time to make sure we can come up with appropriate regulations and mechanisms to either collect the money or to find other opportunities for people to pay off that debt through mechanisms other than just dollars.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Minister.

That completes the questions I have for this heading.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

I just wanted to say a few words, too. Thank you all for coming out tonight, and I share Helen's respect for all the work that the department does. We, as MHAs, do ask questions and we come to Estimates looking at the budget for transparency and we do appreciate you here to provide answers, to sort of give us some information that we can use to look at the budget. So we really appreciate you coming out tonight. Like I said, I do share the respect that my colleague has for your department – our whole caucus does.

Just moving on now, there's been some duplication between my questions and Helen's and, of course, with the message that was provided to us at the beginning, the opening statement by Minister Hogan. So I'm just going to try and go through them so there is no duplication in my questions. But if I do, it's only because sometimes you're thinking and not following along and you may miss something and an answer has been provided, or my wording of questions is different from my colleagues, so I may miss something there.

But just moving on now, some general questions here are: What work has been accomplished in the past year on the

implementation of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people, the national action plan that was released in June 3, 2021?

M. NOSEWORTHY: One of our assistant deputy ministers sits on a reconciliation council for the Department of Justice and Public Safety. Since the initial meeting, the reconciliation council has been working to lead action regarding the recommendations.

The council's work focuses on the relationship building between GNL and Indigenous women. JPS, along with partners in the Office of Women and Gender Equality and the Office of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, participated virtually in the second federal-provincial-territorial Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women roundtable which was held on February 7 and 8 in 2024.

One of the topics of discussion was the Red Dress Alert, which is in early stages of development, but is intended to be a way to alert the public in the event of a missing and murdered Indigenous woman, girl or 2SLGBTQIA+ person. JPS is supporting the federal government and partners in this work.

Also in November of 2023, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador announced the creation of the Policing Transformation Working Group. The department is also working with federal partners to find ways to facilitate Gladue report writing services in Newfoundland and Labrador, and we are currently working with both the federal government and Indigenous partners on this.

L. EVANS: Thank you for your answer, and it's so important for Justice to be working with Women and Gender Equality, and also with the Indigenous Affairs office. Because it's only when you work together that you can actually, I guess, truly have impact on a lot of these findings and calls to action. So I do thank you for your answer.

Just moving on to the next general question now: The minister did speak about the police transformation team, but I was just looking for a direct answer to a question there. Is the department giving any consideration to the idea of creating a civilian oversight board for the police?

CHAIR: Minister Hogan.

J. HOGAN: Yes, the department is – I'm open to it. I've said that on a number of occasions. I'm open to whatever model is going to work best for Newfoundland and Labrador. And part of what the transformation team's mandate is to look at oversight models throughout the country, and to talk to individuals and groups here in the province that have an interest in public safety, that have an interest in policing, to see what they see as the best and most appropriate models for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I'm very proud that this transformation team exists. I've got to say, even in the last couple of weeks, I've seen comments from and opinion pieces from other ministers of public safety throughout the country. We're a little bit ahead of the game in recognizing that this transformation team is the appropriate way to look at delivering modern policing in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I've said this a thousand times publicly, we're very lucky to have two fantastic police forces in the RNC and the RCMP, and other provinces are struggling with what their policing looks like, in terms of who is even delivering the policing services. I think we know the answer to that here is we're very satisfied that the RCMP and the RNC will deliver it.

I will continue to look at how it's delivered, how it's best delivered, how to help those police forces deliver it, and what's the best way to provide oversight of those policing forces.

L. EVANS: Just to follow up with that, too, I know First Light has been very active in calling for civilian oversight, but has your department or the team reached out to other groups, not just Indigenous groups, but other groups that could provide insight on the consultations?

J. HOGAN: So my understanding is – just knowing now – that they met with First Light last week. I had discussions with the members of the transformation team a couple of weeks ago and we did talk about making sure that First Light was involved in, obviously, consultations going forward. I fully credit First Light, since day one, on producing their report and bringing forward the discussion about policing in the province and oversight in the province.

L. EVANS: My question was: Are you consulting with other groups and agencies in addition to First Light?

J. HOGAN: Was the question will they meet with other groups?

CHAIR: No, are you consulting with?

J. HOGAN: Yes, I just said that, we will consult with any and every group that has an interest in public safety and policing in this province. I've met with groups last week who you would not necessarily think policing is the top of their advocacy list, but having those conversations with these groups, it's clear that they have a role to play and opinions to add to the voice of what policing looks like in the province.

L. EVANS: Will the department be setting up any further restorative justice programs in the upcoming year?

J. HOGAN: There are no plans for the department to directly set up any restorative justice programs. We met with a group from Flat Bay several months ago, just provided them with some additional funding with regards to their restorative justice plans and programs.

I'm not sure if the Member recalls, a few years ago we provided some funding for a group here at Memorial University to do some restorative justice research in the field of education. I thought when I became minister restorative justice was the term, I've since learned maybe the better term to use is a restorative approach because we shouldn't just be using restorative approach principles in the justice system. We could use them in the education system and we can use them in our daily lives. We can use them in our everyday lives here working for government.

I look forward to the receipt of that report in the near future.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Are there currently any outstanding recommendations from the Jesso report?

L. ROBERTS: All of the recommendations in the Jesso report are implemented that can be implemented without the build of the new facility. So out of 17 recommendations, 12 have been completed and five are not fully completed. The uncompleted ones are the new *Correctional Services Act*, new prison construction, dynamic security model, one-hour-minimum recreation and a mental health unit.

L. EVANS: And just one last one for general is: Could we have an update on the work of the Policing Transformation Working Group, what has been accomplished so far and what further actions are going to be taken in the upcoming year?

J. HOGAN: Yeah, I met with the Transformation Working Group last week or the week before – sorry, I can't remember the exact date – and I got an update from them.

The next stage for them is to come up with a detailed plan about consultations. How that's going to work and who should be consulted. As I said earlier in response to a

question, the first thing I asked them to look at, which they have consulted and they will continue to consult on before a final decision is made, is the Public Complaints Commission in the province related to the RNC and whether there are any ways to fine-tune it or overhaul it or make it better and more effective for police, for the RNC and for the public.

L. EVANS: I'm just getting to my line items now so looking at 1.2.01, Executive Support, Transportation and Communications.

J. HOGAN: Sherry, is she out of time?

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That's it for me.

CHAIR: Okay, the Member for Harbour Main is finished.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Sorry, sometimes I get thrown off because these –

J. HOGAN: Does she get a new 10 minutes? I don't know how it works.

CHAIR: Yes, she can keep going.

L. EVANS: Yeah, I get –

J. HOGAN: They didn't ask any questions though.

CHAIR: No, they don't have to.

J. HOGAN: Okay.

CHAIR: So you can continue.

L. EVANS: Yeah, I get my 10 minutes. I can keep going, as I said.

J. HOGAN: Yeah.

L. EVANS: Another thing, too, is –

J. HOGAN: She can just go 10, 10, 10, 10?

L. EVANS: Yeah.

CHAIR: Yeah.

J. HOGAN: It doesn't matter.

L. EVANS: The minister's mic is always on, just so that he knows. Anything that he says, even under his breath, is picked up in the mic.

So 1.2.01, Executive Support, I'm looking at the line Transportation and Communications: Why was spending overbudget last year?

D. MAHONEY: As a result of the number of federal/provincial/territorial meetings we have, plus other out-of-province meetings, including in-province work as well, the amount of travel has increased for the Department of Justice and Public Safety. Our minister has three federal ministers that he deals with, as a result, with the executive team that we have, that also involves us in several other meetings involving those national groups.

We also find that the cost of travel, both in-province as well as nationally, is increasingly expensive. So the overall cost of travel is getting much higher.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

Moving on to 1.2.02, Administrative and Policy Support: Could we have an update on how the department is implementing the recommendations made in the Auditor General's report into Adult Custody and Community Corrections?

I know you provided a brief update.

J. HOGAN: The AG audit of Adult Custody and Community Corrections, of the six recommendations, all are either completed or substantial work is moving towards completion.

L. EVANS: Staying in 1.2.02, could you provide an update on the Intimate Partner Violence Intervention Court?

J. HOGAN: The provincially funded Intimate Partner Violence Intervention Court operates now in St. John's, Stephenville and Grand Falls-Windsor. Participation in the court ranges between four to 12 months. During the 2023-2024 fiscal year, across all locations, a total of 34 individuals completed programming, with another 28 currently in program.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Staying in 1.2.02, given that the government will still accept individuals solely detained on immigration grounds until 2025, what's the department doing to ensure that the deplorable treatment of immigration detainees is improved, because we do hear stories that have come out on CBC about the conditions?

D. MAHONEY: We have notified Corrections Canada that we will, within the 12-month period, discontinue detaining any immigration detainees in the province. In the intervening period, although there has been a very low level of experience with that occurrence here in this province, it depends on where those individuals will be detained because we have a number of correctional facilities across the province with different conditions, different risk profiles as well. So decisions will be made about where those individuals will actually be detained and, again, recognizing their circumstances, the risk profile and the classification officer's assessment, that will determine the necessary conditions and needs of those

particular detainees in whatever facility they will be placed in the province.

J. HOGAN: Yeah, just to correct something the deputy minister said, is that we've notified Canadian Border Services Agency as opposed to Corrections Canada about our decision on detaining those individuals.

L. EVANS: That's a positive answer. I do appreciate that answer.

Has the department done any preparatory work to amend the *Limitations Act* to remove the statute of limitations in cases of child physical abuse?

I know it was asked in the House and the minister did refer to looking at it, but have you done any prep work?

D. WOODROW: I can confirm that there has been some prep work done looking at that issue.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

Would you be able to provide us with an update on the Mental Health Court and whether there are plans to expand it this year?

J. HOGAN: The provincially funded Mental Health Court continues to operate in St. John's. Participation ranges from three to six months. During the 2023-2024 fiscal year, 10 individuals completed programming and five are currently in programming.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Would you be able to give us an update on the work to expand the Drug Treatment Courts and are there any elements of it that you would like to see improved or receive greater investment?

M. NOSEWORTHY: Right now, the focus is on expanding the Drug Treatment Court to Central and Western regions of the Island.

We anticipate that this will be complete by the end of this year.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

The Guns and Gangs initiative, federally funded, are they having any measurable success in this province? Is there any significant differences between the old agreement and the new one that was signed last year?

J. HOGAN: The question was do we see any specific differences or – I'm not really sure what the question is.

L. EVANS: No, it is a federally funded program, so we're wondering do you see any measurable success here in the province? I know it is a federally funded program but

S. SIMMONS: Absolutely, I think the Guns and Gangs funding, historically, over the last five years, has been used to primarily support the RNC in enhancing their equipment and training. We're very much looking forward to the next five-year agreement where we see additional funding, which we will be looking to further support the RNC and examine some potential for crime-prevention initiatives.

L. EVANS: Thank you. It is a good answer.

I'm still under 1.2.02, just looking at Salaries. It looks like the Salaries spending was under budget this year. Can you explain that?

D. MAHONEY: For this past fiscal year, the lower budget amount is a result of vacancies that we had, both in our Finance and General Operations department, as well as in Policy and Strategic Planning. With the delayed expansion of the Drug Treatment Court, we also had some salaries there that were budgeted that were not expended through the course of this past year.

In the upcoming year, where we're budgeted to have an increase, that's where you will see that the salaries associated with the provincial transformation team, that has now been fully operationalized in the department as of this coming fiscal year, with all five members of the team now in place, they're salaries are now reflected in that budget item.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Just looking at Transportation and Communications, the budget is increasing: Can we just have a quick explanation for that?

D. MAHONEY: So the cost of the higher budgeted amount is a result of the planned travel associated with the police transformation teams' work, including things like consultations. It also involves travel associated with the expansion of the Drug Treatment Court, which my colleague has already explained, planned for Central and Western. There are also some additional communication costs associated with both of those initiatives that are included in that higher budgeted amount.

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

Any further questions here?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: No questions.

CHAIR: Okay, the hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: I just have a few more questions for this section here.

Under 1.3.01, Fines Administration: How many positions are currently vacant in the ticketing processing and collections and are any vacancies having a material impact on our ability to levy and collect fines?

M. NOSEWORTHY: There are currently two positions vacant in the Fines Administration.

L. EVANS: Okay.

Still under Fines Administration: Why was spending on Salaries over \$100,000 under budget?

M. NOSEWORTHY: This is due to vacancies in the division.

L. EVANS: Okay.

One last one under Transportation and Communications: Why was spending over budget?

M. NOSEWORTHY: This is due to planned upgrades to the phone system at Fines Admin., to make sure that it can work with other departmental governments such as motor vehicles.

L. EVANS: No, that's fine.

That's the end of it for this section.

CHAIR: Okay.

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

CLERK: 1.1.01 to 1.3.01 inclusive, Executive and Support Services.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 to 1.3.01 inclusive, Executive and Support Services, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 1.3.01 carried.

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

CLERK: 2.1.01 to 2.4.01 inclusive, Legal and Related Services.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 to 2.4.01 inclusive, Legal and Related Services carry?

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So under this subhead – and I’m also pleased to say that many of the questions that we had have been addressed in the binder, which is of course a testament to the excellence of the team working here, so I want to thank you for that.

Starting with 2.1.02, under Sheriff’s Office, how many vacancies are there currently in the Sheriff’s Office?

CHAIR: Lorelei Roberts.

L. ROBERTS: So there are two sections in the Sheriff’s Office. There are 11 positions that were vacant throughout the year under, I’ll say, the operations of the Sheriff’s Office, and most of those are being currently filled. As for deputy sheriffs for the court security piece, there were 15 positions that were vacant and 13 of them are in various stages of recruitment.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

Under 2.3.01, Legal Aid, how many lawyers are currently practising at Legal Aid, please?

D. WOODROW: There are currently 61 lawyers at Legal Aid.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

How many vacancies would you estimate?

D. WOODROW: There are six to eight vacancies under Legal Aid at the moment.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

Under 2.3.04, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, the binder that was provided indicated that it was in the plan to have additional staff hired for realignment and centralization of pathology services, so I have a question with respect to that realignment and centralization. What does that mean, if that could be clarified, and does it involve expanding the hours of operation?

CHAIR: Minister Hogan.

J. HOGAN: So the salary increase – I assume that’s what the references are to –

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mm-hmm.

J. HOGAN: – is to add a new pathologist and to add two autopsy assistants as well.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

So I assume, from that statement, there’s not anticipation of expanding the hours of operation. Correct?

Thank you.

2.3.05, Human Rights: I noted that Operating Accounts were over by \$78,300 but there is no increase in the upcoming budget. Could you please explain the overspend and why there is no change?

CHAIR: Mr. Noseworthy.

M. NOSEWORTHY: I apologize. I couldn’t hear the question. I heard you say Operating Accounts. I’m really sorry.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

The Operating Accounts were over by \$78,300 but there’s no increase in the upcoming budget. Could you please explain the overspend and why there is no change?

M. NOSEWORTHY: The overspend is largely related to our requirements for the Community Justice Connect initiative. That

is temporary funding, so that's the reason why it's not adjusted in the budget.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

Could you please explain the Community Justice Connect, the status of it right now, please?

M. NOSEWORTHY: The Community Justice Connect is a free service offered by the Human Rights Commission to anyone residing in Newfoundland and Labrador, regardless of their citizenship status, who identifies as Indigenous or racialized or religious minority and who are experiencing conflict.

It's a service offered through the Human Rights Commission. The Human Rights Commission can also refer matters to Community Justice Connect but only if both parties agree to participate. Community Justice Connect can also help organizations who may be dealing with conflict. They work together to design a conflict resolution process and they utilize principles or restorative justice, anti-racism and anti-oppression.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

So how many participants have been in this program in the last year, for example?

M. NOSEWORTHY: I don't have the numbers for just Community Justice Connect. I only have numbers for all of Human Rights Commission in total.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Would you be able to provide that information? Thank you.

That completes my questions for this subhead.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Okay.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Would we be able to get a brief update on the large class action suits that the parties are a party to?

CHAIR: Minister Hogan.

J. HOGAN: Oh, I'm sorry. Is there a specific class action lawsuit there's a reference to?

L. EVANS: Yes, tobacco.

J. HOGAN: Hmm?

L. EVANS: Sorry, tobacco.

J. HOGAN: Tobacco – I'm not going to answer that because I'm conflicted.

D. WOODROW: The tobacco litigation is still ongoing.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

Could we get an update on how discussions are progressing with the Innu Nation on rate mitigation?

CHAIR: Minister Hogan.

J. HOGAN: We've had discussions with them, and I think the next step right now is to – there've been discussions going back and forth for a long time trying to get dates, to be honest with you, about when we can all get in the room together and meet.

We had a facilitated discussion last summer with regard to making sure everybody understood everybody's perspective and points of view and legal opinions and positions related to Indigenous consultations on the issue of rate mitigation. I attended that personally, the deputy minister attended that as well, along with counsel for Innu Nation and members of Innu Nation attended as well – some by telephone.

The next step – and it was always the plan, was to first do that process so everybody understood where everybody came from, and the next part of the process was to have discussions with a mediator to try and come to a satisfactory conclusion on the rate mitigation issue. So we're working towards a mediation date the summer.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Looking at section 2.1.02, Sheriff's Office, has the accounting process been updated at the Sheriff's Office and has all the backlog work on auditing been completed?

CHAIR: Minister Hogan.

J. HOGAN: So there was an AG performance audit at the High Sheriff's office and we continue to work on those recommendations.

In terms of an update on the audits, I know a number of audits were outstanding historically. The audits for fiscal years 2017-2018, '18-'19, '19-'20 have been completed. Audit year 2020-2021 is in progress. And 2021-2022 has been submitted to the AG for audit. Audit year 2022-2023 will be submitted by May 2024. So we're getting very close to being caught up.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Section 2.1.03, Support Enforcement, I'm just looking at the spending on the Salaries. They were under budget. How many vacancies are there currently?

M. NOSEWORTHY: There are currently six vacancies in Support Enforcement.

L. EVANS: Is that why the spending on Salaries was under budget?

M. NOSEWORTHY: Yes, that's the reason.

L. EVANS: Yeah.

So we're assuming a lot of the information is in the binder so I'm basically skipping over those ones.

I'm looking at 2.3.01, under Legal Aid: Are there currently any plans in the works for cutting funding to Legal Aid, as recommended in the Greene report? As of now, the budget has been increased.

J. HOGAN: No, there are no plans to cut Legal Aid funding.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you for that answer.

I'm looking at 2.3.03, Other Inquiries: Could we have an update on the work of the Commission of Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System?

J. HOGAN: As I said, I wanted to make the point that the amount put here, \$2.5 million, is based on historical analysis of the last couple of years of the amount of money the Innu inquiry has required. There has been no formal request to extend the timeline for their mandate yet, but we do anticipate receiving it. I personally advised Commissioner Igloliorte about this money, and it wasn't that it was a hard and fast dollar figure, but when the time comes to talk about how much more time they need and what they need it for and what resources they need, we'll have that discussion at that point in time.

In terms of an update, it's an unfortunate update, hearings were supposed to take place this week – it's Monday today – and they had to be delayed. My understanding is that there were two deaths in the community, so they took the rightful decision to postpone the hearings right now.

L. EVANS: Thank you for that answer, Minister.

I know you did explain a little bit about keeping the money in for next year to

extend the inquiry if needed, so thank you for that answer.

I'm looking at 2.3.05, Human Rights: How many active complaints is the commission currently looking into and does this represent an increase or decrease over recent years?

M. NOSEWORTHY: There are currently 324 active complaints before the Human Rights Commission.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Actually, just going through, that's the end of my questions for this section.

CHAIR: Okay.

Minister Hogan.

J. HOGAN: Just before we leave the 2.3.05, Human Rights, Assistant Deputy Minister Mike Noseworthy spoke about Community Justice Connect and because MHA Evans did ask about restorative justice programs, that is a restorative justice program done under the initiative of Carey Majid, who is the Executive Director of the Human Rights Commission.

CHAIR: Do you have any further questions?

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

CLERK: 2.1.01 to 2.4.01 inclusive, Legal and Related Services.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 to 2.4.01 inclusive, Legal and Related Services, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.1.01 through 2.4.01 carried.

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

CLERK: 3.1.01 to 3.2.01 inclusive, Law Courts.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 to 3.2.01 inclusive, Law Courts, carry?

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

So this is a general question under the subhead first. In the budget announcement, there was mention of the \$15 million over two years for the HMP specifically on the open-air courts, video conferencing and new cameras. So that's going to be over 2 years. There was also mention of the videos. I'm curious as to how that's going to roll out, specifically the air courts. If you could elaborate on the open-air courts.

I know in addition there was mention of another initiative which was a part of the \$15 million as well, but I'm specifically interested in the open-air courts, video conferencing and new cameras. Are these security cameras? If you could just elaborate on these items, please.

J. HOGAN: We can answer this, but I think the Member for Harbour Main might be ahead a section. This section is 3, related to Law Courts, but I'll take direction from the Chair.

CHAIR: Is it within the Law Courts?

J. HOGAN: Does that matter about me? Do we have our correction?

CLERK: (Inaudible) expenditures really.

J. HOGAN: Okay.

CLERK: Okay, yeah.

(Inaudible) heading, if you're okay with answering it, you can.

J. HOGAN: I'm totally fine, it doesn't matter. I'm going to answer it anyways.

L. ROBERTS: In terms of the programs that we're going to be implementing, you had mentioned about the video. So it's renovating space for video visitation and video court booths, in particular, to video court; it's also allowing updating the video surveillance system and other security systems within the facility; as well as it's constructing a structure inside the secure area to provide space for admissions, staff, change rooms and storage of inmate property upon intake; as well as new programming spaces for inmates; and two air courts to allow inmates controlled access to the outside from their living units.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

I was interested in seeing about the courts and how it related with respect to vis-à-vis the HMP.

Under 3.1.01, Supreme Court: Is there a backlog of cases waiting to be heard? If so, how is the backlog being addressed?

S. ORGAN: No, there currently is not a backlog of cases at the Supreme Court. There are some timelines where they may be in one court longer than the other court to have a case heard, but many variables affects that, but we don't consider us having a backlog of cases.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

What about the Jordan decision, are there currently any cases being challenged under Jordan?

S. ORGAN: I can answer for Supreme Court and tell you that there are no Jordan applications.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

Under 3.2.01, Provincial Court: Could you explain why Grants and Subsidies are expected to increase by \$2,000 this year?

M. NOSWEORTHY: The reason for this is on an adjustment for grants paid by the Provincial Court in relation to the Canadian Association of Judges.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

With respect to the Provincial Court judge, there is one new one that the minister indicated in his introductory comments. So when will that Provincial Court judge commence, or has that already started?

CHAIR: Minister Hogan.

J. HOGAN: So it will start as soon as the budget passes, but I have had discussions with the chief judge of the Provincial Court and he'll start working towards asking applicants to come forward to apply for that new position which is in St. John's.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

That, as well, completes my questions for this subhead.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains, do you have any questions for this section?

L. EVANS: Yes, I do. I've been able to eliminate quite a few due to duplicating.

Just looking at 3.2.01, Provincial Court: Is the new itinerant judge in place and has this new position helped decrease any backlogs?

CHAIR: Minister Hogan.

J. HOGAN: Yes, the new itinerant judge is in place. Conversations I've had with the chief judge about that has been very helpful to have that itinerant judge move to areas throughout the province where there might be an increased backload of cases.

L. EVANS: Still, under Provincial Court, last year there was mention of conversations being held about returning the Provincial Court to Sheshatshiu. Has there been any progress made there?

CHAIR: Minister Hogan.

J. HOGAN: So, again, conversations I've had with the chief judge of the Provincial Court on this issue is that there is money in this budget for a policy analyst to review, not only the appropriateness of a court in Sheshatshiu, what that court would look like, what facilities they would need, what support they would need other than a judge, obviously, but to really look at all the courts through the province to see where the allocations should be and where the courts should be throughout the province based on caseloads and population and numbers and judges and things like that.

So work is ongoing on that and the specific policy analyst in the budget this year to look at that.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Still under Provincial Court, why was spending on salaries higher than expected and why is the budget set to increase by nearly a million dollars this year?

CHAIR: Minister Hogan.

J. HOGAN: That's an increase for the annual salary for Provincial Court judges, which was recommended by an independent panel.

L. EVANS: Okay.

That's the end of my questions for this section.

CHAIR: Okay.

Further questions?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Under the Provincial Court, 3.2.01, with respect to a backlog of cases waiting to be heard, is there a backlog with the Provincial Court? We've heard that there isn't with the Supreme Court, but I'd like to know if there is with the Provincial Court.

And in addition to the hiring of a new Provincial Court judge, are there any other measures being considered to address the backlog?

CHAIR: Michael Noseworthy.

M. NOSEWORTHY: Much like my colleague from Supreme Court mentioned, there's no backlog currently in Provincial Court. However, I'd echo those comments that a wide variety of factors can determine when something like a next available date or a next available date for a trial versus an appearance may be available. That, of course, varies depending on the circumstance and the location.

In terms of measures, there's the new Provincial Court judge and then also the policy analyst position that the minister just mentioned for Provincial Court.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

That completes my questions for this heading.

CHAIR: Minister Hogan.

J. HOGAN: Just in terms of resources, it is a very big deal that we have two new Provincial Court judges. That doesn't happen every day. Those are permanent positions in the judicial system, in the Provincial Court system in this province

over the last few years that have been added.

We also, on top of that, have three per diem judges as well that work on a per diem basis, obviously, to help when the chief feels the need to rely on those individuals to help if there is potentially any backlog or extra caseloads in various judicial centres throughout the province.

So there are a lot of resources there and a lot of additional resources have been added over the last couple of years.

CHAIR: Okay.

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

CLERK: 3.1.01 to 3.2.01 inclusive, Law Courts.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 to 3.2.01 inclusive, Law Courts, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.1.01 through 3.2.01 carried.

CHAIR: We're going to take a 10-minute break now.

Recess

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

CLERK: 4.1.01 to 4.2.02 inclusive, Public Protection.

CHAIR: Shall 4.1.01 to 4.2.02 inclusive, Public Protection, carry?

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Under 4.1.01, Royal Newfoundland Constabulary: How many RNC officers are eligible for retirement and how many new recruits are available to replace them? I believe that the minister may have mentioned the recruits, but if you could clarify that, please.

A. GREEN: So we currently have 23 officers eligible to retire: six with greater than 25 years of service; 14 between 25 and 35; and three with greater than 35 years.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay. Thank you.

With respect to the recruits, can you provide us with any information there, please?

A. GREEN: We have 17 recruit-class constables right now who finished APA last year. They will graduate from recruit-class constable in September. We have 14 recruits currently in APA who will start their recruit-class constable in September of this year. We have 20 seats saved in APA for 2025.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay.

Of those 20 seats, would you expect to fill those 20 seats? Is that your goal?

A. GREEN: Yes, it is our expectation to fill all 20 seats. In addition, we are running an experienced officer campaign, so we've hired seven experienced officers in January of this year. We have three offers out to experienced officers and we had two inquiries from experienced officers looking to join our organization this week.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Good stuff. Thank you.

Under 4.1.02, Royal Canadian Mounted Police: Could you please explain the staff

complement behind the \$913,400 under Salaries.

S. SIMMONS: Under Salaries, that's to fund the internal Justice and Public Safety complement, so that's the 10-person policing and crime prevention team.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay.

That operates within the entire province, is that correct?

S. SIMMONS: They're all located within St. John's and Confederation Building.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay. Thank you.

Under 4.1.03, RNC Public Complaints Commission: How many complaints did the RNC Public Complaints Commission receive last year?

D. WOODROW: Sixty files last year.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay.

With respect to those complaints that were received, in terms of resolution, is it possible to give us an idea of the outcomes?

D. WOODROW: Of those complaints, 24 led to investigations. There were 13 that went to court or to hearings.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

So when you say court or hearings, can you specify exactly the difference between courts and hearings, please.

D. WOODROW: One of them is through the hearing process, through the adjudicators, and then if there is an appeal, it might go through to court for an appeal.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay. Thank you.

Could you please explain what the Professionals Services entail that cost \$361,300, more than what was budgeted?

D. WOODROW: This is due to Professional Services costs related to the ongoing hearings. So there were more hearings and appeals this year and those incur higher costs.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay. Thank you.

Under 4.2.01, Adult Corrections: What updates have there been on the bail supervision program since last year?

L. ROBERTS: In terms of bail supervision, it is anticipated there is work ongoing with the *Correctional Services Act* that will enable bail supervision. So that work is ongoing right now.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

With respect to the *Correctional Services Act*, can you tell us where that is in terms of its progress?

J. HOGAN: I'm looking for my Order Paper from today. I believe we've done first reading on the *Correctional Services Act*.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay. Thank you.

J. HOGAN: Sorry, the plan is to bring forward that to second reading, potentially, this sitting, but we'll have to wait and see, obviously, how much time we have for budget and other legislative priorities. But it is a top legislative priority for me.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That's great to hear, thank you.

Can you please provide an update on the progress of the replacement of HMP, with respect to the \$8 million outlined in the Budget Speech as well, how do you plan to use that money?

J. HOGAN: So this is more of a question for – the details more for Transportation and Infrastructure, but, obviously, the Department of Justice and Public Safety has a pretty vested interest in the process that TI is working through.

There has been an RFQ process; they've been through the RFQ process. One bidder has come forward and that bidder has satisfied the requirements to continue to work with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure now on the bidding process.

So getting very close to finalizing that next stage to ensure that there is a bidder who is going to be able to satisfactorily start construction on HMP.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

The final question is in regard to the electronic monitoring pilot program. I understand last year, I believe, there were 33 units in use in the province. Could you please provide an update how many units there are now and how many are being used, please?

L ROBERTS: There are actually 60 units that we have contracted for. Right now, as of March 14, we had 30 offenders on electronic monitoring.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

That concludes my questions for this section.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Chair.

Under 4.1.01, my first question under that subsection is: What kind of training do officers receive through the Guns and Gangs program?

S. SIMMONS: Previous training that we funded for the RNC included critical incident response, training related to outlaw motorcycle gangs and tactical team training.

L. EVANS: Thank you for that answer.

Moving on to 4.1.02, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, have you been making any progress into getting patrols into rural and northern communities? In the last Estimates, I spoke about the specific need for the isolated, rural and remote community of Postville that's not connected to other communities who do have RCMP officers stationed in these communities.

But there's no connection by road, so they have to rely on patrols coming over on snowmobile and none of the RCMP officers were trained to actually be able to operate a boat. I was just wondering, are you making any progress into actually getting active patrols into these rural, isolated communities, especially the ones that are totally isolated?

S. SIMMONS: We work regularly with the RCMP to monitor patrols to the community of Postville, which occur through the detachment of Makkovik. We have definitely highlighted that this is an important piece of work for the RCMP, and so we do communicate with them regularly about that.

We have also provided, in this budget, additional funding for community safety officers within that region. So that's to support Makkovik and some other communities, and we hope that that initiative will support public safety in that region.

L. EVANS: Okay.

The reason is – just looking at the budget for this year – one of six communities in my district has no police presence at all. Over the last year, there have been months pass when no police presence has come into that community.

I was just wondering, what is the budget for servicing isolated and remote communities, or is the community of Postville the only one in the entire province that doesn't have any police presence at all, sometimes for entire months?

S. SIMMONS: We definitely work closely with the RCMP, as I said, to ensure that there is appropriate service delivery for rural and isolated communities, and the minister has flagged that as a priority for the RCMP.

The budget itself is not broken down specifically by rural region versus urban regions. However, again, we have flagged that as a priority for the RCMP.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Moving on to 4.1.04, Serious Incident Response Team, how many cases is SIRT currently investigating?

CHAIR: Denise Woodrow.

D. WOODROW: SIRT currently has 40 cases.

L. EVANS: Thank you for your answer.

I'm failing to identify myself, Chair. I apologize for that.

CHAIR: Your light is on, so we might be okay.

L. EVANS: Keeping with 4.1.04, SIRT, just looking at the spending for Professional Services. That was under budget. Can we just get a brief explanation for that?

D. WOODROW: That's due to less external legal costs of ongoing investigations. So depending on what the investigation might need, the level of legal services required can vary.

L. EVANS: Okay. Thank you for that answer.

4.2.01, Adult Corrections: How many classification officer and community officer positions are currently vacant?

CHAIR: Lorelei Roberts.

L. ROBERTS: So we have had 27 correctional officer vacancies but, in that time, we've actually had 50 new recruits into more training than the minister had mentioned in his opening.

L. EVANS: Thank you for that answer.

Staying with Adult Corrections, is there any change in the amount of money that the provincial government receives from the federal government for housing federal prisoners in our facilities?

L. ROBERTS: So there is no change in the amount of per inmate, per day – it's \$378.09 per inmate, per day, which was the same it was in 2022-23. The cost is recalculated yearly based on expenses. So there are currently ongoing talks now with Correctional Services Canada for this particular fiscal year.

L. EVANS: Thank you for that answer.

Still with Adult Corrections, how many federal prisoners are we currently housing and what portion of the inmate population does that represent, and is that figure an increase or a decrease over the last year?

L. ROBERTS: In terms of the federal inmates, while I don't have the exact number – and my colleague Dan Chafe may be able to provide that answer – I do know that we have a higher intake of provincial inmates. We have a full house at this particular point in time. We have to make room for the provincial inmates by federal inmates going outside, so we have had a reduction in the number of federal inmates.

D. CHAFE: Under the exchange of services agreement with the federal government, we do have an ability for population

management. Our population has increased to the point where we usually have 60 federal inmates at any given time across the province, but we've actually dropped down to about 30 currently, which will impact some of our federal revenue.

At one point, we were so full that we actually had to send just about all the federal inmates away just to protect the safety of the provincial prisoners.

L. EVANS: Thank you for that answer.

Would you provide the number of inmates currently in each facility and what is the maximum capacity of these facilities?

L. ROBERTS: The HMP has a capacity of 180; we have about 178, give or take any given day because the number changes.

In Corner Brook Lockup, we can house 15 males, two females and we have approximately nine individuals there. Correctional Centre for Women, we have housed 30 in total, 26 general population and four are always kept for mental health purposes or disciplinary. Right now, we have 25.

Bishop's Falls Correctional Centre, we can hold a maximum of 26 individuals, and we're full there. West Coast Correctional Centre, we can house 62. We're down one cell but once that cell is fixed, we can house 64 maximum, and we are holding 60 there.

Labrador Correctional Centre, we are currently housing 33, but the pre-expansion capacity is 61. With the expansion scheduled to be completed in the fall, we'll have a total of 96-bunk capacity. That's 110 with all cells at double bunk. So we'll have an additional 18 female cells and we'll be able to hold 36 female inmates there in addition to what we have.

L. EVANS: Okay.

L. ROBERTS: Sorry, St. John's Lockup, we have 21 male and five female capacity and we have 16 there.

L. EVANS: Yeah, I had a question there I was going to ask on the *Correctional Services Act*, when was it coming into force. I was a bit confused by the minister's answer.

Just looking at the *Correctional Services Act*, you listed it as being read into the Order Paper today. But just going back, Estimates for last year talked about a timeline for it being proclaimed. So I thought the *Correctional Services Act* we had passed in 2019 but it wasn't proclaimed.

Is there something that I'm missing?

CHAIR: Minister Hogan.

J. HOGAN: I think it was even in existence before 2019. I think – I stand to be corrected on this – that there were amendments made to the act in 2019, before I was here as a Member. The act has still hasn't been proclaimed and it is on the Order Paper, as the Member pointed out and as I responded earlier. The reason it's on the Order Paper again is, after looking at it before we finally proclaimed it, it needs to be updated yet again. So there will be revisions and amendments to that act and that's why it's on the Order Paper right now.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you, Minister, for the clarification on that.

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

Any additional questions?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: No.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Chair.

So my next question is relating to the *Correctional Services Act*. So it's being updated again now. We were just wondering were there any problems with the development and implementation of the regulations?

CHAIR: Minister Hogan.

J. HOGAN: The question was were there any problems with the implementation of regulations?

L. EVANS: Yeah.

J. HOGAN: The act isn't in force yet, so the regulations aren't in force yet either. We are updating the act, which will come then to the House, those amendments. Then once those amendments, hopefully, when they pass the House, the act can then be proclaimed in force, along with the accompanying regulations.

L. EVANS: I'd like to thank the minister for clarifying that because it was a bit confusing on our end.

Moving on to 4.2.02, Youth Secure Custody: Why was spending on the Salaries over budget?

We did check the binder, because we're trying to avoid asking questions that there are clear answers to. We did see that it was listed in the binder there, the increase in temporary and casual staffing. So we were wondering is that because you can't fill permanent positions, or you're not actually recruiting for permanent positions?

CHAIR: Minister Hogan.

J. HOGAN: So the facility is working or has been working at maximum capacity, which is not always the case. The reason it was operating at maximum capacity was due to no-contact orders for the individuals that were staying there. That would have been related to an incident that certainly was in

the news with regard to an issue that happened with students from PWC.

L. EVANS: I'd like to thank the minister for clarifying that for us, it's just where we didn't have clarification in the binder, we figured it would be a good opportunity to ask the question in case there was additional information being required.

Moving over to 5.1.01, Fire Services.

CHAIR: We're not there yet.

L. EVANS: I'm finished with this section.

CHAIR: Okay.

So seeing no further questions, I ask the Clerk to recall the subhead.

CLERK: 4.1.01 to 4.2.02 inclusive, Public Protection.

CHAIR: Shall 4.1.01 to 4.2.02 inclusive, Public Protection, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 4.1.01 through 4.2.02 carried.

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

CLERK: 5.1.01 to 5.1.05 inclusive, Fire and Emergency Services.

CHAIR: Shall 5.1.01 to 5.1.05 inclusive, Fire and Emergency Services, carry?

The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Chair.

I just have a couple questions, Minister, and we're going to skip right to 5.1.04, Fire Protection Vehicles and Equipment.

Is there a list of who received funding last year, and could we get that, please?

CHAIR: Minister Hogan.

J. HOGAN: Is there a list is a good question. We can generate a list. I will say that Assistant Deputy Minister Dunphy is going to know what I'm talking about here, I'm always asking her about how much funding is available and it's a bit tricky because we're always trying to figure out how much was spent in terms of when an approval was granted.

So, for example, if an approval was granted this year, the money might not come out of the budget until 2025 or 2026. We can put together a list of approval letters that were sent out for you in '23-'24, but I think it's fair to say, whether that was an allocation of the '23-'24 budget is a different question.

D. DUNPHY: Correct.

C. TIBBS: Yeah, gotcha. That's fine.

Were there any fire trucks purchased for last year and if so, how many?

CHAIR: Minister Hogan.

J. HOGAN: Again, there were certainly approvals sent out for fire trucks and that will be included in the list of what were approved in '23-'24, but it doesn't necessarily mean that the municipality or the community went ahead and purchased it in '23-'24.

C. TIBBS: The next question I have, and I'm sure it'll be underneath the same heading there, is how many requests were received for funding last year? I'm sure we could put that within the –

J. HOGAN: We should have that now.

D. DUNPHY: We received 52 applications valued at over \$17 million for trucks in '23-'24 and another 93 applications of over \$3 million for equipment.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Ms. Dunphy.

Minister, I have one more question left and that's 5.1.05, NL 911 services, and before I go on with my question, I met you here last year and we talked about the cascade system for Grand Falls-Windsor Fire Department for their breathing apparatuses. I just wanted to say thank you for making that happen last year. It means a lot to the community and the firefighters.

But it has to do with 911 in Salaries: Could you please outline how many staff are contained in this line item?

D. DUNPHY: The 911 division currently has a staff of six. We also have approval this year for one additional position to assist with the RFP process for the new call-handling solution and computer-aided dispatch.

C. TIBBS: Perfect. Thank you.

That's all my questions, but I would like to put on record, I want to thank Chief Vince MacKenzie and the 911 staff that has brought the system to where it is today.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Chair.

I'm looking at section 5.1.01: How much was paid out in the past year to volunteer firefighters in workers' compensation and how many claims does that represent? Also, what type of injuries are the individuals receiving these payments for?

D. DUNPHY: For workers' compensation for firefighters, we pay out approximately \$180,000 a year. I would have to get the information regarding what that covers but, unlike provincial government, where it's actual costs, I think that is the same rate annually to cover all volunteer fire departments across the province.

L. EVANS: Okay.

Section 5.1.02, just moving on, Emergency Services. Could you provide us with an update on how work is progressing on the province-wide radio system?

N. CROKE: The Avalon Peninsula has been completed as of the end of March in 2023. The remainder of the province, including Labrador, will be completed on June 1, 2024. Then we'll start bringing the user groups onto the system.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you very much for that answer and for all the work that's being done on updating the system.

Still in the Emergency Services, last year in Estimates we did talk a bit about the need for a Labrador centre and that did come out of the inquiry – I still refer to it as the Burton Winters inquiry, which is not accurate. But there was an ask come out of the inquiry for a Labrador centre.

There are a few things mentioned now when we looked at the stakeholder meetings at the provincial level, as well as the search and rescue conference. Would we be able to get an update on any work that's been completed on that front, in terms of work towards a Labrador centre for search and rescue?

D. DUNPHY: So we did increase the number of ground search and rescue teams in Labrador up to 13. We continue to work with our colleagues in Labrador Affairs, as well as our federal colleagues, on various initiatives to assist with search and rescue in Labrador.

As you're aware, the main focus for the provincial government, of course, is ground search and rescue. The federal is responsible for the marine and aeronautical. But we do have a group that have met with federal ministers. The minister of Emergency Preparedness was here in September when we held the national SARscene conference and officials and, I believe, the minister met with him at that time as well.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you for your answer.

I will add, too, any work being done to improve search and rescue, any work in training teams, improving equipment, allocating resources, is very valuable improvement. We do appreciate everything that's being done and all the work that's coming out of the inquiry and the work being done to, sort of, improve search and rescue all across the province.

Even though sometimes my questions are about the inquiry, it's important to keep on that train and we do appreciate all the work that's being done on that front. So thank you.

Just moving on to 5.1.03, Disaster Assistance, how much more money has been paid out for claims arising out of Hurricane Larry and Fiona, as well as the Southwest Coast rainstorm of 2021?

D. DUNPHY: So in '23-'24, the last fiscal year, we did not pay out any claims for the Southwest Coast rainstorm. Related to Hurricane Larry, there were municipal payments of almost \$6.5 million paid out and for the Eastern blizzard, from 2020, there was also just over \$700,000 paid to municipalities.

In terms of Hurricane Fiona, claims to individuals are approximately \$46 million. We've had municipal payments of almost \$4 million and to date, Ms. Evans, we've spent

just about \$58 million on Hurricane Fiona in total.

L. EVANS: Thank you for your answer.

I'm moving now to 5.1.04, Fire Protection Vehicles and Equipment, I know my colleague asked a couple of questions around the equipment and fire trucks. What kinds of equipment has been purchased, other than vehicles? What additional equipment?

D. DUNPHY: Mostly it's things like bunker gear and SCBAs and the cylinders and the masks that go with that. We did also have an air compressor and nozzles, hoses, boots, but mainly bunker gear and SCBAs are probably the most common.

L. EVANS: Okay.

Moving on to 5.1.05: Has there been any movement over the past year on the Next Generation 911?

D. DUNPHY: We have received approval and we have money in the budget this year to go to RFP. It's not the Next Generation but it is the step towards it. It is for the improved call handling solution and computer-aided dispatch. Once we get that and the proof of concept of the 911 in rural areas where there are currently challenges with civic addressing, that will help solve that matter, which will move us to the next step towards Next Generation 911.

L. EVANS: Okay. Thank you.

I was a bit worried that answer had already been given and I just may have missed it.

So I think that this is the end of my questions.

CHAIR: Okay.

Do we have any further questions? No.

Seeing no further questions –

J. HOGAN: Sherry, Sherry, Sherry.

CHAIR: Sorry, Minister Hogan.

J. HOGAN: A couple quick notes before we finish because I think this is the end of it.

There was a grant at the end of last fiscal year for \$15,000 to Newfoundland and Labrador fire services to provide that funding so that they could do some training with regard to mental health, specifically in Labrador. So I just wanted to make note of that as well.

And just so we could get one of the other questions that we were unable to answer earlier answered now with regard to Community Justice Connect, there are 10 active cases as of today.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Okay.

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

CLERK: 5.1.01 to 5.1.05 inclusive, Fire and Emergency Services.

CHAIR: Shall 5.1.01 to 5.1.05 inclusive, Fire and Emergency Services, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 5.1.01 through 5.1.05 carried.

CLERK: The Total.

CHAIR: Shall the Total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Department of Justice and Public Safety, total heads, carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the Estimates of the Department of Justice and Public Safety carried?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Department of Justice and Public Safety carried without amendment.

CHAIR: I just want to thank the minister and the departmental officials and the Committee for your attendance this evening.

The date of the next meeting is Thursday, April 18, at 9 a.m. to consider the Estimates of Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

I'll ask for a mover to adjournment.

L. DEMPSTER: So moved.

CHAIR: Moved by Minister Dempster; seconded by Minister Pam Parsons.

This meeting is adjourned.

Thank you.

On motion, the Committee adjourned.