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

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Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation

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Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation

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: Mark Jerrett (A)

Appearing:

Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation

Hon. Fred Hutton, MHA, Minister

Julia Mullaley, Chief Executive Officer

Joe Mercer, Executive Director, Regional Operations and Engineering

Mike Tizzard, Executive Director, Financial and Corporate Services

Doug Jackman, Director, Finance

Melanie Thomas, Director, Community Partnerships and Homelessness

Marc Budgell, Director of Communications

Dana English, Executive Assistant

Also Present

Hon. Sarah Stoodley, MHA, Minister of Digital Government and Service NL

Hon. John Abbott, MHA, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure

Joedy Wall, MHA

Ashley Politi, Official Opposition Caucus

Scott Fleming, Third Party Caucus Office

Annie McCarthy, Government Members' Caucus

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Joedy Wall, MHA for Cape St. Francis, substitutes for Paul Dinn, MHA for Topsail - Paradise.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Sarah Stoodley, MHA for Mount Scio, substitutes for Scott Reid, MHA for St. George's - Humber.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, John Abbott, MHA for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, substitutes for Perry Trimper, MHA for Lake Melville.

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

CHAIR (Gambin-Walsh): Good morning, we're going to start now; it is 9:03.

Substituting today for MHA Trimper for Lake Melville, we have St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, substituting for St. George's - Humber, we have Mount Scio and substituting for Topsail - Paradise, we have Cape St. Francis.

So we'll probably break about 10 o'clock-ish. We'll see where we're to; probably about 10. We'll do a 10-minute break then. Just a few reminders, if your light doesn't come on, please just wave so that they can situate where you're sitting to, but please always wait for your red light to come on before you speak.

Often the minister's light and the person asking the questions, those lights usually stay on, so we're okay. But remember that they are on if you happen to be talking amongst yourselves. Say your name and your position every time your light comes on; so as your light remains on, Minister, you don't have to continuously say it, but the first time, please.

The water coolers are down here, and up here. Please don't adjust your chairs, and I always say if you have already, oops.

I'm going to ask the Committee Members and the substitutes first to introduce themselves, and then I'll move over here to the department. We're going to start right here, on my right.

A. POLITI: Ashley Politi, Official Opposition.

J. WALL: Joedy Wall, MHA, Cape St. Francis.

J. DINN: Jim Dinn, MHA for St. John's Centre.

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

A. MCCARTHY: Annie McCarthy, Researcher, Government Member's Office.

J. ABBOTT: John Abbott, St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

L. STOYLES: Lucy Stoyles, MHA for Mount Pearl North.

S. STOODLEY: Sarah Stoodley, MHA for Mount Scio.

CHAIR: Thank you.

And right here, on my left.

M. THOMAS: Melanie Thomas, Director of Community Partnerships and Homelessness, with the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

J. MULLALEY: Julia Mullaley, CEO of the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

F. HUTTON: Fred Hutton, MHA for Conception Bay East - Bell Island, Minister of Housing.

M. TIZZARD: Mike Tizzard, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services.

D. ENGLISH: Dana English, Executive Assistant to the minister.

M. BUDGELL: Marc Budgell, Director of Communications, Housing.

J. MERCER: Joe Mercer, Executive Director, Regional Operations and Engineering, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

D. JACKMAN: Doug Jackman, Director of Finance, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

CHAIR: Okay, thank you.

The Committee has a copy of the minutes from April 26. If there are not errors or omissions, I ask for a mover please?

The MHA for Mount Pearl North has moved the minutes.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

CHAIR: We'll now proceed with the Estimates review. I'm going to ask the Clerk to call the first subhead. When the Clerk calls the subhead, then we'll proceed to the minister and if the minister has any introductory remarks we'll start. Then we will proceed back here to the Member for Cape St. Francis to start the questioning.

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

CLERK (Jerrett): 1.1.01 to 1.1.02 inclusive, Housing.

CHAIR: 1.1.01 to 1.1.02 inclusive, Housing.

Minister Hutton.

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good morning, everybody. Thanks for coming this morning. We appreciate it. It's nice to have you all here. I'm going to take this opportunity to say a few words at the outset of this year's Estimates for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

As you know, I was named the Minister of Housing just a couple of months ago and I now have the pleasure of working with a very talented and dedicated team at Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. Some of those officials are here with me this morning. I've worked hard in the last couple of months to get myself up to speed on the various parts of this portfolio. It is a very large and complex portfolio.

With that being said, the group of officials who are here with me today are – and I say this with great confidence – the institutional knowledge of the corporation. I'm going to be relying on them for some of the answers on the in-depth questions as we proceed throughout this morning.

Today, I am pleased that we can come before this Committee to highlight record provincial investment in Housing, surpassing last year's record investment. As a government, we've put a heavy focus on health, the Health Accord and the social determinants of health. They're linked. We know that access to safe, adequate and affordable housing is one of the key determinants that impacts a person's overall well-being.

We recognize that there is a lot of work to do to address housing needs across our province and across our country, including here in Newfoundland and Labrador, and we're working hard to meet both the more immediate and the longer term needs.

The Estimates document for the Housing Corporation highlights a provincial investment of \$161.7 million, which leverages federal funding and supports the delivery of vital programs and services that

address a diverse range of housing needs throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

I know we're going to spend our time here this morning asking questions. You will ask questions about numerous specific topics, so I want to take this time to highlight a number of our key investments which were outlined recently in our budget.

Budget 2024 announced \$44 million in new funding to construct provincially owned, affordable homes and to repair existing ones. This includes more than \$36 million over four years to build 100 new provincially owned homes in Corner Brook, Central Newfoundland and in Labrador City, and an \$8-million increase to our repairs, maintenance and renovations budget in the current year. We've also committed \$12 million over four years to repair our homes in Nunatsiavut communities of Nain, Hopedale and Makkovik.

There's also \$34 million allotted to support those experiencing or at risk of homelessness or intimate partner violence through emergency shelters, transition homes and supportive living programs. This includes supporting the work of 10 transition houses throughout the province to provide safe accommodations and services to support women and their children fleeing intimate partner violence.

Within the next couple of months, we look forward to seeing the completion of both the seven unit, second-stage housing project for women and children in Labrador West and the Grace Sparkes House 20-bed shelter that will accommodate single women, women with children and transwomen that are in need of emergency accommodations.

There's over \$13 million in this year's budget for the transitional supportive living initiative here in St. John's, helping to fill a noted gap in the housing continuum here in the city; \$11.6 million of this funding is being provided to NL Housing, while another \$2 million falls under the Department of Health

and Community Services. We've recently announced a partnership with End Homelessness St. John's to operate this facility and we've had a first information session with the local community and other information sessions are planned in the future.

Working with our partners, we're looking forward to moving this important initiative forward. End Homelessness St. John's is implementing a phased intake process ensuring that we have adequate staffing to support individuals who access these accommodations and services.

We also continue to work closely with our community partners in other areas of the province, including those on the ground in Happy Valley-Goose Bay where work continues on a new integrated Health, Housing and Supportive Services hub with an estimated investment of over \$30 million.

Our Affordable Rental Housing Program continues to move forward with proponents receiving conditional approval to build over 900 new affordable rental units.

Obviously, in recent weeks, we've had discussions in this House about one such project that wasn't approved in the capital city, but I want to tell the House, as I've already stated, that people should understand that if this project isn't possible in its first desired location, we are willing to work with the partners and the proponents to make sure that we can try to make it work somewhere else. We will explore those other options.

This \$80-million investment will be used for housing projects. Our focus is on getting housing built throughout the entire province.

Our five-point plan continues to feature prominently in our budget investments. While funding for these five points are spread across a few different departments, funding under the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation includes \$4

million for the Secondary and Basement Suite Incentive Program and \$225,000 for the First-time Homebuyers Program. To date, nearly 100 families have been approved under the program with 20 of those families having secured new homes to live in.

Regular business funding: Cost-shared investments about \$67 million will support operations of our public rental housing portfolio as well as partner-managed and co-operative housing throughout the province, providing homes to over 13,000 low-income individuals and their families.

Over \$13 million will be invested in the Home Repair Programs to assist low-income homeowners in making repairs, modifying their homes to meet accessibility needs, for example, and improving energy efficiency, which is very important in this day. These programs, predominantly, serve seniors, allowing individuals to remain in their homes to age in place.

Budget 2024 also invests \$21.5 million to provide rental assistance in the private market, expanding access to affordable housing to individuals and families throughout the province. Collectively, these investments, designed to address housing and homelessness issues in our province, are critical to the social, financial and physical well-being of individuals, families and our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to highlight these important *Budget 2024* investments, Madam Chair. I now welcome an opportunity for either myself or members of the team to answer any questions you may have.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister Hutton.

The Member for Cape St. Francis.

J. WALL: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I have a couple of questions. First of all, a copy of your binder for today, can you please provide that?

F. HUTTON: Yes, no problem.

J. WALL: Thank you, Minister.

1.1.01, Grants and Subsidies, Minister, was over budget by \$409,500, can you please explain why and can we please have a list of who received all grants and subsidies?

J. MULLALEY: So are you looking at the change from the budget to the Estimates for the current year?

J. WALL: Yes, it's over by \$409,500. So I'm just wondering why it's over budget and can we receive a list of grants.

M. TIZZARD: Can you explain the \$409,500? I'm sorry, we're not seeing that variance because our budget is \$136 million. Last year's budget was fully spent from the revised budget to the original. There is no variance on our budget this year. There is a variance of an increase of \$68 million from last year's budget to this year's budget but that's the only variance on the Grants and Subsidies.

J. WALL: Okay, thank you.

1.1.02, \$16.5 million, can you just elaborate that, please, and a list of who received all the grants and subsidies?

J. MULLALEY: It would be similar. This would be moving from the budget last year, from \$8.4 million to the current budget of \$24.9 million. So, again, everything would be fully expended last year. This is the change from one year's budget to the other budget.

J. WALL: Thank you, Julia.

Minister, as you said earlier, we'll have many questions, no doubt, but, first of all, can you please explain what's the definition

of a housing unit, what the NLHC uses as the definition of a housing unit?

J. MULLALEY: So when we normally refer to a Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation unit, that would be one that is owned by Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

F. HUTTON: And we should mention that we have 5,579 units within the portfolio.

J. WALL: Thank you.

You mentioned in your opening statement, with respect to the budget leveraging federal funding, so can you provide in Estimates – or is there anything that’s not in Estimates, that’s federal funding that’s not listed here? Can you expand on that, please?

M. TIZZARD: So the overall budget for the Housing Corporation actually totals this year’s \$224 million. So that’s \$136 million from the province on the current grant. We’re estimating at just over \$62 million from the federal government this year through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. There is also \$22 million that the corporation receives in rental revenues from our tenants that is reinvested back into the housing stock. So that’s what makes up our overall budget of over \$220 million this year.

J. WALL: Thank you, Mike.

Can you please provide a breakdown of all the Grants and Subsidies that is paid to the Housing Corporation?

M. TIZZARD: Paid to or paid from?

J. WALL: Sorry, from.

M. TIZZARD: Yeah, we can provide that in a follow-up.

J. WALL: Thank you.

So, Minister, I ask, how many people are currently on the wait-list for housing from NLHC?

F. HUTTON: As of April 19, the most current numbers that we have, the wait-list is 2,807.

J. WALL: Okay, 2,807.

Thank you, Minister.

F. HUTTON: Correct.

J. WALL: Can you please tell us how long that the longest person has been on the wait-list waiting for housing?

F. HUTTON: I can’t tell you – I don’t know the exact – does anybody at this table? I don’t, but I think the average longest wait time that somebody can be on is roughly two years. It can go to that length.

Julia can add to that.

J. MULLALEY: Yeah, just as a follow-up, so it really does depend on individual circumstances. We do have a prioritized wait-list code. So those victims of violence, women and children fleeing violence are a number one code and then our second priority are those experiencing homelessness. Then there are a variety of other codes, including affordability.

Generally, if you’re prioritized in one those codes, the wait time can be a lot shorter, obviously. But it does depend on the individual. We placed, last year, over 1,000 people. With the wait-lists there, you can see, as the minister said, you can be on the wait-list up to two years for some.

J. WALL: Thank you, Julia.

How many people are currently waiting for an accessible housing unit?

J. MULLALEY: On the number on the accessible, there is a wait-list – there are 26

applications currently across the province for accessible units.

J. WALL: Okay, thank you.

Minister, how many of the 100 homes that are budgeted for this current year will be completed in 2024? Do you have any idea on that one?

F. HUTTON: Out of the 100 homes that were announced in the budget?

J. WALL: Yes.

F. HUTTON: For Central Newfoundland, the West Coast and Labrador West?

J. WALL: Yes. How many are going to be completed this year?

F. HUTTON: The work will begin on demolition on the West Coast. The 32 units that are there, that work will be happening within the next couple of weeks, the actual demolition of those, and the construction will begin. We're hoping to have them open next year or the early part of 2026, right?

J. MULLALEY: Over two years.

J. WALL: Over two years?

F. HUTTON: Yes.

And the RFP for the demolition is going out for the West Coast. The construction on the Labrador ones are going to begin this year as well and completed this year.

J. WALL: The demolition will –?

F. HUTTON: Well, the demolition has already occurred in Labrador on one site where there was a fire. So the construction can begin there right away versus, in Corner Brook, we have to actually tear down 32 units that are existing, and obviously that takes a little bit of time.

J. WALL: Understood, thank you.

Would you have the regional breakdown of accessible units in total for the province?

J. MULLALEY: I don't have it here, but we certainly can get that information for you.

J. WALL: I'd appreciate that, Julia. Thank you.

Is there a specific amount budgeted for new accessible units? Do you have that? Is that a specific breakdown?

J. MULLALEY: What I can say is from an accessibility point of view, as we've been building, we've been very much focused on accessible units. For example, generally last year, we built 19 units and 18 of those were duplexes, so we would have done 50 per cent accessible.

We continue to look at that. In large projects, like a 40-unit building down in Pleasantville, we would certainly be budgeting at least the minimum of accessible requirements for that, which is usually more than one in 10.

J. WALL: Thank you, Julia.

F. HUTTON: I think, if I can add, it should also be noted that all our builds now are universal design. That's a given. Before we start construction of anything, they're all universal design.

J. WALL: Thank you, Minister.

Minister, do you have the regional breakdown for the housing units that are needed, single individuals versus family? Is that something that your department looks at with respect to the need across the province?

F. HUTTON: I can start out by just saying, and Julia can finish this, but the greatest need is definitely the single unit. When our homes were built, most of the complement of the 5,600 homes that we have within our portfolio, 40 to 60 years ago, the family unit

was quite different than it is today, what you would describe a family. Sometimes families look very different these days and they're much smaller, so the demand is definitely greater when it comes to the single unit, but I think if you want specific numbers Julia has those.

CHAIR: Julia Mullaley.

J. MULLALEY: So over 90 per cent of the demand is for one- and two-bedroom homes. For example, for a one-bedroom home, of the 2,807 on the wait-list, 2,101 are for one bedroom and 480 are for two bedrooms. So over 90 per cent are looking for one and two bedrooms.

J. WALL: Thank you.

Minister, how many people does the NLHC currently have living in hotels? I assume this would be what you consider to be short-term housing?

M. THOMAS: Currently, with respect to the shelter response, we have approximately 100 individuals residing within hotels.

J. WALL: Thank you, Melanie.

Minister, almost one year ago, government announced 850 new, affordable rental units. What is the update regionally on those 850?

CHAIR: Julia Mullaley.

J. MULLALEY: Those particular 850 units, that was for the Affordable Rental Housing Program. They are right across the province. I don't have a specific breakdown here. It would have been actually in the news release, but I can get you the full list of those as well.

They actually ended up to be over 900 units in the end. We invested additional money in that, so there was 922 units.

J. WALL: So that 850 is now 922?

J. MULLALEY: Yes, to over 900.

J. WALL: Thank you, Julia.

Minister, in 2023, the government, in conjunction with NL Housing, offered an affordable renting housing proposal call for the private sector funding project. This program was designed to assist in creating affordable, appropriate rental housing projects for the benefit of lower income households. Is this program still being offered in 2024?

J. MULLALEY: Again, I think you're referring to the Affordable Rental Housing Program, and that's the proposal call that would have went out last year and awarded over 91 projects for the over 900 units. That we're working concurrently with proponents now on moving forward with those proposals.

J. WALL: Okay.

What is considered low income?

J. MULLALEY: So, for that particular program, there are low income and it's different by private sector and also non-profit sector. Again, confirming that information, I think it's \$42,000 for the private sector and I'd have to reconfirm – unless someone here can recall – it's a little lower if it's a non-profit organization.

J. WALL: Thank you, Julia.

Minister, in the fall, an access to information request revealed approximately 200 Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units are unoccupied due to need for fixes and renovations. How many units are currently unoccupied needing those same renovations?

F. HUTTON: The current number of vacant units is 251. I can give you a little bit of breakdown if you want me to, if I can.

J. WALL: Please.

F. HUTTON: So 113 of those require minor to moderate repairs. It would take less than six months to get them up and running. Forty-six have been offered to wait-list occupants and those repairs are in process. Sixty require major repairs, somewhere in the range of three to 12 months. Thirty-two long term in Corner Brook are going to be demolished. Those are the ones, I mentioned, that's a couple of years by the time they're taken down and rebuilt.

J. WALL: Thank you, Minister.

The ones that are being condemned, is that the only ones in Corner Brook, or are there any others throughout the province?

F. HUTTON: Julia?

CHAIR: Joe Mercer.

J. MERCER: Yeah, the 32 in Corner Brook as we've already spoken about. There are also five units in the Burin area right now, some people want to try to fix them and other people are saying there's too much to be done there. So we're looking at potentially condemning those as well, to have them torn down with a plan hopefully to

J. WALL: Okay. Joe, you said in the Burin area?

J. MERCER: In Burin itself.

J. WALL: In Burin itself. All right

Thank you, Joe.

How many of these condemned units are going to be replaced within this budget? Is that in your numbers that you spoke of earlier?

CHAIR: Minister Hutton.

F. HUTTON: Thirty-two in Corner Brook, with an additional 18, because there are 50 going in Corner Brook.

J. WALL: Right.

F. HUTTON: But those 32 are the ones that are coming down.

J. WALL: Minister, before the Tent City was on the steps of Confederation Building, the government did promise a provincial housing strategy back to 2015 and most recently in 2019.

What is the update today on housing strategy as we face this crisis in our province?

F. HUTTON: Well, I think we've made it very clear through the affordable rental programs, through our five-point plan, that we're serious about wanting to address it on a number of levels. It's not just folks who are low income who are facing the housing shortage, it's other people in the province who are finding it hard to find a place to live if they are going into communities where there just aren't available rental options, or students.

So the idea, across the board, is to try to help people. In terms of the first-time home buyers, for example, a hundred people can move from the rental market into the ownership market. We've got 20 people who have already moved into their houses through that. So, as a result, that frees up the apartments they were living in, or whatever space they were occupying, prior to that.

So the plan is to address it on a province-wide basis for everyone, not just for low income, but obviously low income and other folks who find themselves either homeless or facing homelessness, to address that issue as well for low income.

J. WALL: Thank you, Minister.

I see my time has expired.

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

The Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

I just want to pick up with regards to a few opening comments by the minister. Thirteen million for transitional living, \$11 million for NLHC and \$2 million for the Department of Health, would you be able to give, I guess, some details about that, as to what that would look like?

F. HUTTON: Sure, what I'll do is I'll start and then maybe I'll let Mike go down through the lines of the budget.

The idea of the Transitional Supportive Living Initiative, which is at 106 Airport Road, the former hotel site, it was a part of our housing continuum and, you know, for anybody who is unfamiliar with that, it literally goes from homelessness or facing homelessness to having stable housing.

What was noted by our community partners is that we had a gap in transitional supportive living where a person would go from being housed somewhere to being actually in a stable environment. As I've said many times in the House before and outside in media interviews, it's not about finding housing for folks, it's also having that support. You can't just put somebody in a house who needs help beyond that and walk away.

The idea behind the transitional supportive initiative at 106 Airport Road is to provide those wraparound supports. We already have 5,579 NLHC units, but those folks predominantly don't have the wraparound supports with them. The people who would live in a Transitional Supportive Housing Initiative or facility would have those supports. They would have independence, meaning they'd have their own room that they can go in and close the door, lock the door; they've got their own washroom; they've got their own bed; they've got a TV in there, a table, a couple of chairs to sit

around in their own sort of like a small apartment, if you will.

When they open the door to come out, the services are there, be it for mental health, be it for addictions services, a sense of community, people are there to help in terms of medical needs; if somebody needs a dressing changed if they've been released from hospital after an operation, there are going to be medical staff on site. There will be security on site, 24-7, 365 days a year. That's the idea behind it. It was recognized by our community partners that that was a gap in our housing continuum which is why we are addressing it.

Now, in terms of the cost, there are NL Health Services budgeted in there for \$2 million and about \$11.6 million under the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing budget.

I'm going to let Mike detail some of those, if that's what you're looking for, specifically.

J. DINN: No, I just wanted to make sure that wasn't something different from the hotel, what is, basically, the hotel.

F. HUTTON: It is, Sir, yes.

J. DINN: Nothing new to me, I've been talking about this for years. It's nothing new.

The question is with regard to – and I've been in some like Indwell, in Hamilton, even here when it comes to the Ches Penney Centre of Hope, I would even say Stella's Circle, when we were looking at starting up our own housing projects. So when we say staff, there's office space there, how will that staffing be when you say 24-7? Will there be like 16 hours of professional services, maybe a nightshift of security? Will there be staff on call? Will there be peer counsellors and peer support, as in some of the other organizations that they have, because I don't see the peer support in this at all? I know that Indwell makes use of peer

support. I know the Hub over on Bell Island
–

F. HUTTON: Bell Island, yes.

J. DINN: – they have peer counsellors. So is there anything along those lines? Also, in certain of these organizations, in bringing people into it, they might actually pay the people for cleaning the rooms so they more or less have that – are these part of it, like when we talk about wraparound services?

F. HUTTON: I'm going to let Melanie take the lead on this in just a second, but I do want to talk to you.

Prior to signing the agreement with the former hotel owners, there was consultation done with our community partners in terms of, obviously, they identified the gap. So we wanted to know what we needed to do. Now, in fairness, I was not the minister at the time but I have been briefed on what was done prior to my arrival in terms of the consultations, talking to folks, not just here in this province and looking at the Centre of Hope, as you mentioned and other places here and what's offered, but also through our colleagues in Nova Scotia, consultation was done there.

This initiative, the community Transitional Supportive Living Initiative at 106 Airport Road, will be staffed 24-7. End Homelessness St. John's, we have contracted them to bring the staff in and they will actually work for End Homelessness, but Melanie can talk about the specifics of what will happen in terms of an operational basis, but it is 24-7 staffed for security and other staff who work at the hotel.

CHAIR: Melanie Thomas.

M. THOMAS: Just to elaborate a little bit further on the staffing model. As the minister said, it will include a 24-7 staffing complement which will consist of dedicated, trained, professional housing staff who have

experience and certainly passion, as it relates to delivering housing support services. This will work in tandem, as the minister indicated, with a security complement which will ensure safety for both residents as well as staff within the building.

Just to give a flavour of some of the staffing positions, we're looking at a site director position, as well as companion management positions, which will be available after hours, during regular business hours, as well as dedicated floor coordinators, who will be the primary contact within the various wings of the hotel for residents.

This will be a critical support and, again, working in tandem with the very successful peer-support model we've seen throughout the country. So very much taking individuals who have demonstrated lived experience, demonstrated respect and trust, working alongside those residents and providing them with the support that they need.

Again, based upon a very strong best practice model, this will work in tandem with the dedicated health supports, which will include nurse practitioners, social workers, behaviour management specialists and other personal care attendants, as appropriate.

J. DINN: Thank you.

So is there any consideration given to actually renovating these rooms so that they actually have their own kitchenette, similar to the Ches Penney – because basically, they're a hotel room right now. And there is, I would assume, a cafeteria, or the meals are brought to the room. But it still smacks of institutional.

I appreciate the fact that they can lock the door, but is there an attempt here so that the people can say, look, I'll cook my own meal, I have a refrigerator, I have a stove and I have those things that will truly allow

me to be independent. If I want to interact, I will.

So I'm just wondering what's the plan there, as well.

M. THOMAS: Just to clarify, again, the hotel is envisioned to be a very interim and temporary measure, but I think responding to some of those concerns and some of those realities, what we've envisioned with the operator, is a strong life skills program development component, acknowledging that many people struggle with some of the most basic life skills, be it budgeting, but even meal preparation.

I think looking into the long term, this site will have the supports and services to ready an individual for that next step of independence, which we would certainly hope would include the provision and the creation of meals and dietary balance.

J. DINN: When we were looking at a St. Vincent de Paul housing project, one of the things we visited is Stella's Circle, and we got to see some of the rooms there. The question I asked to one person, one room we went in – this person was very highly educated, and obviously probably had a skill set there that you would think independence.

The question I asked at that time: So this person is probably going to likely transition – no, unlikely. You're saying that they're going to transition, but are you prepared for the fact that some might be there for a lot longer, and that putting them out into the community – and I'm going to come to that later – they might never be ready for the community.

Some will, but they may always need that. So what the long-term plan for that?

CHAIR: Melanie Thomas.

M. THOMAS: If I might elaborate, just to clarify, I think, while temporary in nature, the

ultimate goal is to identify what is the appropriate and right next step for that individual as it relates to housing. For some, that may be in a more independent arrangement. That could be a social housing unit or that could be a rent supplement within the private market.

But, also, I think we acknowledge that due to the understanding and learnings, that staff will glean from this site, there may be more appropriate care options for an individual. That could include a personal care home for seniors, which we also anticipate being supported. Certainly, it will be a better understanding of what their care and support needs are.

I think the outcomes and the pathway will be very unique and different based upon the individual and what those needs are.

J. DINN: Again, I'm not thinking personal care home – I'm thinking even an indwell. They had this and it's fully staffed. Similar to the hotel that you're planning here, it's fully staffed, but there are people who are going to be here, they don't need to go into a personal care home, they will not do with a rent supplement or anything else outside, or the so-called wraparound services that we hear about, but they are there long term. They're in that kind of a setting.

So even if this is a transitional piece, is there not a plan then where you have an apartment setting that allows people their independence and supports as the next stage? I know that the Gathering Place, some of the rooms there will be for that. My point is, I think many of them will not be able to progress. They'll need that help. I'm just looking for what the plan is.

F. HUTTON: Are we out of time?

CHAIR: No, you can answer the question and then we can move on.

M. THOMAS: I can elaborate, certainly. I think it's certainly a very relevant question. I

think how, as the minister illuminated earlier, the housing continuum is such a big part of this. This initiative and this response is one point in the housing continuum.

Individuals, as I said, following the three-year initiative, may reside in a social housing unit. They may also be better aligned with more stable, permanent housing. Under our Supportive Living Program, initiatives like Marguerite's Place, the Centre of Hope, the upcoming Gathering Place initiative again are all dedicated, permanent supportive housing options.

So, again, our goal and intent is to round out the housing continuum.

CHAIR: Thank you, Melanie.

The Member for Cape St. Francis.

J. WALL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, is the NLHC planning on buying any buildings throughout the province, like, for example, church facilities, vacant inns or other buildings to convert into housing units or shelters? Has that been given any consideration from your department?

F. HUTTON: Not at this point. But we are in discussions with municipalities who have ideas and with community sector groups who are looking at modeling after certain things that might be happening in St. John's. But at this point, I don't think that we're in the process of looking at buying anything.

But there are many groups across the province who are looking to some of the models from St. John's and wondering if it might be a fit for their community as well.

J. WALL: So those groups can reach out to your department?

F. HUTTON: Absolutely, yeah.

J. WALL: Okay.

F. HUTTON: They can reach out directly to me.

J. WALL: Thank you.

Minister, last year, there were seven new units in Gander for a price of \$1.5 million. What's the update on this project?

CHAIR: Julia Mullaley.

J. MULLALEY: The particular seven units in Central were all completed and opened last year.

J. WALL: Thank you, Julia.

Were they completed on budget?

J. MULLALEY: Yes, they were.

J. WALL: Thank you.

Minister, does your department have a regional breakdown of where Newfoundland and Labrador Housing is needed throughout the entire province? Do you have any stats on the numbers that are needed and, if so, could you please provide them?

J. MULLALEY: From the perspective of the wait-list, we have a breakdown for that number, so I certainly can provide those.

So, again, referencing the number earlier of the 2,807, from a wait-list perspective in the Avalon region, we have 1,580 on the wait-list; Marystown, we have 34; in Gander, we have 332; in Grand Falls, we have 321; Corner Brook is 294; Stephenville area is 152; and in Goose Bay area is 94.

J. WALL: Thank you. I appreciate that information.

Minister, is there specific funding that's allocated for housing specifically for seniors from your department?

CHAIR: Minister Hutton.

F. HUTTON: I think that the wait-list is predominantly for people who were over 55, is it, is the number?

J. MULLALEY: It is 19 per cent (inaudible).

F. HUTTON: Nineteen.

Yes, Julia can expand on that.

J. WALL: Please.

J. MULLALEY: So just from a seniors' perspective, I think the seniors access a significant number of our programs. There are a number in our current units as well, but particularly, our Provincial Home Repair Program that we referenced before is almost predominantly seniors' programs and particularly in rural areas.

As well, our Rental Housing Program, our benefits into the private market, over 50 per cent seniors in that as well, and others. Our Partner Managed Housing throughout our province, again, are predominantly seniors and we have a significant number of partners, over 1,100, are units there as well. So a lot of access to seniors to our programs, for sure.

J. WALL: Thank you, Julia.

I'm going to ask a similar question –

F. HUTTON: Can I –

J. WALL: Oh sorry, Minister.

F. HUTTON: I just wanted to correct one thing. I said 55, I meant 65.

J. WALL: Thank you.

I'll ask a similar question, but now I'm looking at students in our province. Do you have any numbers or specific funding allocated simply for students?

J. MULLALEY: No, we do not.

J. WALL: Can you, please, tell us how many housing units are currently being built across the province, that are currently being built?

F. HUTTON: I know that we just started down in Pleasantville to build an additional 32 there that I know of at this point. We're going to do the 32 in the Crestview area, which is Corner Brook and there are other.

Julia.

J. MULLALEY: Yes, we are currently building 16 units as well in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and they are well underway as well, currently.

If I may, I'm just thinking about the previous question about the students and I am reflecting now. There is a specific program in – we work with our community centres so there is an education incentive initiative that we provide scholarships for students that either reside in our units and/or any of our private-market rental units, as well, that we subsidize. So there are scholarships there for that purpose, so just clarifying that.

J. WALL: Thank you for that, Julia. I appreciate it.

Minister, is there funding for the Minister of Housing's office that's not included in this section, like would it still be under CSSD where it transitioned, any amount there?

J. MULLALEY: Currently, in the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing's budget, the minister's office is in Executive Council, but Newfoundland and Labrador Housing's budget would not have the minister's salary in that right now.

J. WALL: Thank you, Julia.

Minister, which government departments have funding that crosses over into this section of the budget? For example,

Transportation and Infrastructure, would that be then looking at the maintenance going forward for the comfort inn?

M. TIZZARD: Currently, all the funding for the comfort inn, for example, is with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. There is no Housing funding with Transportation and Infrastructure, right now.

J. WALL: Thank you, Mike.

Minister, given the large expenditure on Housing in this budget, is funding allocated to the Housing Corporation subject to any form of oversight by your department to ensure the effective usage? Not saying there's anything wrong, just looking forward to having some oversight there. Is that going on?

F. HUTTON: I think we're doing it now, aren't we?

J. WALL: To a point.

F. HUTTON: Yeah, to a point.

Well, obviously, there will be changes within Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. We've announced that we're going to be bringing it into core government. As Julia mentioned, the minister's office is currently with Cabinet Secretariat, and Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation is still there.

But Mike perhaps can expand on this as well.

M. TIZZARD: Just to add, it's part of our legislation from oversight. The Auditor General does our financial statement audit every year. We're part of regular Treasury Board meetings with Treasury Board.

As a corporation, I feel we're very connected to government oversight from Treasury Board, internal audit, Department of Finance, as well as Auditor General does

our financial statement audit every year. So there's a lot of oversight already, I think.

J. WALL: Thank you, Mike.

Minister, what process does non-government entities have to go through to be approved for funding from the department?

M. TIZZARD: Do you mean like a community partner?

J. WALL: Yes.

M. TIZZARD: So Newfoundland and Labrador Housing follows the same budget process as government departments would. So if a community organization, say, needs a funding increase or has a funding proposal, they would submit it as part of an annual budget process where we scrutinize it internally and then, if valid, would process approval through the minister and our board of directors to submit to the Department of Finance for consideration.

J. WALL: Okay, thank you.

Does the Housing Corporation follow, or will it going forward follow departmental directive in how to use funding allocated when it comes to overseeing the budget?

M. TIZZARD: Yes, and likely we do now. I'm not sure what directive you're referring to. But if you had specifics I'd probably be able to confirm.

J. WALL: No, just going forward with respect to the changes coming into the department. That's what I understand (inaudible).

M. TIZZARD: Yes.

J. WALL: Thank you.

Minister, how many people are currently being housed by government-funded

housing? How many people throughout the province?

CHAIR: Minister Hutton.

F. HUTTON: We have 5,579 Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation units. But do you mean as well funding that we provide to people like rent subsidies and the entire number of people?

J. WALL: Yes, yeah.

F. HUTTON: Julia?

J. MULLALEY: So in addition to our own units, the 5,579 the minister is referencing, we also have over 2,300 rental subsidies in the private market. We also have, again, in partner-managed housing, we have 1,000 units there as well with that group as well.

J. WALL: What was the last number? Sorry, Julia.

J. MULLALEY: Over 1,000 for partner-managed housing.

J. WALL: Thank you.

How many are currently waiting – I'm not sure if I asked this before or not or if it was mentioned – to move into housing units.

Do we have any number on how many is currently waiting?

J. MULLALEY: Our current waitlist is 2,807.

J. WALL: You did, 2,807.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

The Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

With regard to the affordable rental unit program, I think it's \$80 million for that. With

regard to approvals, I know it has reference to St. John's and rezoning, I also know that over a month ago in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, the council voted against rezoning as well.

So here is the question: Regardless of whether people should have consultation or not beforehand – and I heard the minister say well, we'll look for other places – I'm just looking at what steps then that the department and that he personally will take going forward to make sure that affordable housing projects for seniors and vulnerable populations are able to perceive because I would suggest it's not just St. John's and Portugal Cove-St. Philip's. It's probably going to be an issue elsewhere. So I'm just wondering, knowing this now, what's the plan going forward?

F. HUTTON: Sure.

So the plan is to work with those contractors or builders, people who come forward. Obviously, if you're going to build something that's going to cost several million dollars, it's not just as easy as, you know, going out to a hardware store and buying the equipment. You need to have a plan in place. You need to, first of all, if you need financing and we are providing incentives through some of these government programs, you need to make sure you can have the financing.

Here in the Legislature, as you know, we do not control the zoning in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, in St. John's or in any community across the province. It is up to the individual council. So if they can go to an area and say that they have conditional approval on funding or that they've qualified for one of the programs that we're offering, that's the next step that they have to take. If that community doesn't work with them in terms of approving the zoning, then we'll work with that proponent to put it somewhere else. That does not mean that they lose their conditional approval on funding or whatever benefit it is they want to avail of through

Newfoundland and Labrador Housing or government.

J. DINN: What I'm asking is, in terms of having those conversations, that dialogue with councils and bringing municipalities onside or having a dialogue at least –

F. HUTTON: Well, they are aware, obviously, that we've announced things like the five-point plan, but we can't go a community and say we don't know what contractors are going to come here to build anything, but if anybody does, just do it. I mean, that's unrealistic –

J. DINN: That's not what I was saying.

F. HUTTON: So I don't understand, sorry.

J. DINN: I'm saying it's one thing – it seems government's level operate in silos, so –

F. HUTTON: How so?

J. DINN: I can give plenty of examples here between the city and I might have one coming up, but I'm just saying, to me, it's a process. It's about getting onside as to maybe it comes with talking with council, what do we need to make this work here. It's not about directing them or anything else.

Going forward, as opposed to just simply saying we're going to work with a contractor, I am just wondering what plans are there to have, at least, a discussion, maybe engagement with them.

F. HUTTON: Sure.

So I've met with some mayors in communities. I've only been in this role for a short period of time, but obviously, municipalities across the province are aware of the programs that are being offered and anything that we would have put out, we would have put forward to them. We've chatted with folks at Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador. I don't think

that there is any community leader in this province who is not aware that there is a housing crunch and an availability issue, in many areas – not all. But it's not a secret.

So, again, the consultation, absolutely open to it. The municipalities are aware. I've spoken to mayors around the Avalon Peninsula, for the most part. I've done some in Central Newfoundland and on the West Coast. I've had chats with the mayor of Lab West about this and certain projects that are going on.

That consultation process is already taking place, and not one of those talks has taken place that it has come as a surprise to the municipalities that they need to work with us as well. It is hoped that the programs we're offering will help that process to create development within their communities.

J. DINN: Have they expressed concerns about the announcement or raised concerns about what –?

F. HUTTON: I mean, not really. None that come to mind. Obviously, everybody wants it done tomorrow, but that's not realistic. Anything they want to build – and that's from the contractor's perspective as well and the developers and builders. I mean if we have 90 people who are coming forward, 90 groups approved under one program, it's a complex process.

J. DINN: So under this program – correct me if I'm wrong – there would be a requirement on this purpose-built, affordable rental housing that they would have to maintain affordable rent for how long?

F. HUTTON: The length of time varies.

Julia, do you want to expand on that? It depends on what program they avail of and there is that 85 per cent versus what the market rate would be, but Julia can add some detail to that.

CHAIR: Julia Mullaley.

J. MULLALEY: The minimum for the private sector was 15 years, but we actually added into the program some incentives if you kept their rents longer. Many of the proponents actually did do that, so we've seen a number of the projects go to 20 years.

J. DINN: If there's government money and public funds being put into this, why wouldn't we make it as in some jurisdictions who are having the rents affordable in perpetuity, as opposed to putting a 15-year limit?

Again, I look at not-for-profits. It's basically in perpetuity. So why not have that, especially, if they're using public funding?

F. HUTTON: These are folks who are in the private sector who are doing this.

Post-COVID, obviously, the price of things has gone up. We all know that. Building materials are not exempt from that. Labour costs have increased. Everything has gone up. This is an incentive to get people to build stuff as quickly as possible.

And when it comes to a non-profit, you're talking about something completely different.

J. DINN: Oh, I realize. What I'm saying is it's in the private sector receiving public funding. If they weren't receiving public funding, no problem, have at it; but again, if it's public funding to the private sector, then it should be tied to it.

With regard to student housing, right now are there any discussions with Memorial – like, you look at the Core Science building. So there are vacant places there – to use vacant buildings that are part of the university, maybe to convert some of that to housing to accommodate the needs?

CHAIR: Julia Mullaley.

J. MULLALEY: No, there have been no particular discussions with Memorial at this

point in time. From a housing perspective, no one has approached or had those discussions.

I do know that some of the federal programs have now opened up their low financing programs to student housing. Also, I think there was an announcement here earlier the year around a model where you can have shared accommodations from the perspective of a homeowner interested in renting out rooms to students. There was a match and services provided from that, so I'm aware of that service as well.

J. DINN: No, I'm just thinking with the number of the building that are now transferred over, if they can be refurbished, there's an opportunity there on campus for housing.

With regard to modular homes, at least what I've seen, they're a lot faster to construct and certainly could provide a more rapid response. So any discussions with any companies making modular homes as to a way to quickly address the housing shortage here?

J. MULLALEY: There has been an extensive number of meetings with a variety of modular providers here, as well as elsewhere. I would add that with our Atlantic housing ministers, there is work under way as well to see how we can work together on modular housing. It's certainly one of the areas we are looking at.

J. DINN: Okay, thank you.

With regard to the Grace General Hospital site, what discussions are taking place there now as to using that for affordable housing or mixed-use housing? Maybe even, I'd also like to address, designating part of it as a land trust or a land-leased community so that organizations like the Co-operative Housing Association of Newfoundland and Labrador can avail of it. It's in the centre of the city, next to all sorts of services.

J. MULLALEY: So that is an area that, as the Member may know, we did look at from an early environmental assessment piece. I think, overall, it is government property and we continue as an area to look at for a variety of uses.

So we had some initial discussions awhile. I think that would be more of a government decision on where the land may best be used.

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

J. WALL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, I just want to quickly refer back to the 2,807 that was mentioned earlier, the number currently waiting. That's not applications. Like, one application could have five people on that. Is that the total number 2,807, or is that just applications?

J. MULLALEY: That's the number of applications.

J. WALL: Number of applications.

So do you have a number of individuals related to that 2,807 in applications?

J. MULLALEY: We could certainly get that information.

J. WALL: Thank you. I'd appreciate that, Julia.

Minister, I know that when people come to government departments and look at the red tape and what have you, I'm just wondering how many people are employed to help applicants and recipients navigate through the housing system? Do you have a number of the people who are employed to do that?

J. MULLALEY: There would be a variety of positions throughout the corporation, but two specifically. We do have two Canada

Housing Benefit navigators that really helps support navigating through that particular program.

J. WALL: Thank you.

Minister, do you have the average age of the public housing units in the province? I know we discussed about the ones being demolished. Do you have an average age of what they are in the province?

J. MULLALEY: (Inaudible) specific age.

J. WALL: All right, thank you.

Going back to the occupants, do you have a median age, an average age of the occupants who are applying? Is there a certain demographic? I know you said earlier, Minister, the percentage on the seniors, but do you have an average age of the occupants in public housing units?

J. MULLALEY: We do absolutely have that. I probably actually have it here, but I might have to look it up so I can give that to you after the break.

J. WALL: No problem. We can get that later, not a problem. Thank you.

Minister, do you have a dollar amount that's been allocated to repairs and infrastructure improvements with respect to housing? Do you have an exact figure with respect to what has been allocated for repairs and improvements?

F. HUTTON: Sure.

So to answer your question for the 2024-25 budget, it's \$28.5 million.

J. WALL: Thank you.

F. HUTTON: I can give you a breakdown if you want, MHA?

J. WALL: Yes, please.

F. HUTTON: Sure.

So \$14.4 million is going to be for the regular maintenance of over 4,000 of our units, of that stock we told you about, which was 5,700-and-some-odd; \$4.2 million for capital improvement projects and that's across the province, obviously; \$4.9 million for major repair of vacancies; and \$1 million for site works.

J. WALL: Thank you, Minister.

F. HUTTON: Okay.

J. WALL: Minister, how many staff does the NLHC currently employ?

F. HUTTON: All right, the total number of positions throughout Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation is 327. I can give you a provincial breakdown, if you'd like, where they are employed across the province.

J. WALL: Sure.

F. HUTTON: Sure.

So we've got 221 in Eastern Newfoundland, which would be St. John's and then seven in Marystown. For Central, in Gander, we have 10 and in Grand Falls-Windsor, we have 23. In Western Newfoundland, we've got two offices, 40 in Corner Brook and 12 in Stephenville. In our Labrador offices, in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, we have 10 and in Labrador City, we have four, which totals 327.

J. WALL: Thank you, Minister.

How many new hires are expected for this coming year, Minister?

F. HUTTON: Julia?

CHAIR: Julia Mullaley.

J. MULLALEY: I think at this current time we have 37 vacancies, so we would be

looking to some of those vacancies and some of those positions there.

I don't know if there's anything else, Mike, from the perspective of new hires?

M. TIZZARD: Mike Tizzard.

Just through natural recruitment as an example, last year we did 59 new hires. That's just natural turnover, retirements, people leaving for whatever reason. So we could reach that number again, it's –

J. WALL: Fluid.

M. TIZZARD: It's fluid, yeah, but recruitment goes as fast as we can when someone gives notice.

J. WALL: Understood.

I'll go back to Ms. Mullaley's comment of 37 vacancies. Those vacancies are particularly hard-to-fill positions, or is that just, again, part of natural turnover?

J. MULLALEY: Yes, absolutely, a number of them would be for natural turnover and under active recruitment as well, and then some are on short-term leave as well.

J. WALL: Understood.

Do you have a number on how many people have retired from the department this year, Minister?

F. HUTTON: Yeah, I do have them here. One management position and six bargaining unit.

J. WALL: Okay, thank you.

How many people in your department are part-time? You said about the vacancy positions, how many are part-time currently, Minister?

F. HUTTON: There are no part-times. We've got 281 permanent, two contractual and 44 are temporary.

J. WALL: Thank you.

Minister, I'm wondering with respect to shelters across the province: What portion of the budget is specifically allocated for shelters?

F. HUTTON: It's \$28.6 million dollars.

J. WALL: Specifically for shelters?

F. HUTTON: So \$17 million of that is for emergency shelters.

J. WALL: Okay.

F. HUTTON: And \$11.6 is for the Transitional Supportive Living Initiative that we have at 106 Airport Road.

J. WALL: Thank you.

Minister, the number of shelter beds currently in the province?

F. HUTTON: I'm going to turn this to Melanie, please.

M. THOMAS: It's a highly variable number, but in terms of a point and time, as of the end of March, we had 425 beds that were being utilized, but it's a highly variable number.

J. WALL: Understood. Okay, thank you, Melanie.

Do we have any idea on how many people are waiting on a shelter bed or does 425 – how many people over that amount?

M. THOMAS: We don't typically manage, like our rental housing stock, we don't manage a wait-list. We endeavour to find secure beds wherever they may be available in the province.

J. WALL: So just to be clear, there's no wait-list on those looking for shelter beds?

M. THOMAS: No.

J. WALL: Okay. Thank you, Melanie.

Minister, just wondering about the total cost of the contract with End Homelessness NL. Is there a breakdown of those funds allocated or is that in a different part of the budget? Do you have any idea on numbers of what that would cost, the total contract?

CHAIR: Mike Tizzard.

M. TIZZARD: The End Homelessness St. John's contract for 2024-25 is projected at \$3.6 million. That's an estimate right now based on what Dave provided us on the ramp-up of individuals staying at the hotel so it could fluctuate.

I could also give you a breakdown on what they have for salaries and other costs associated with their contract. I don't have that with me today, but totals projected right now is \$3.6 million. We can provide a further breakdown of salaries and other things that they have for their contract.

J. WALL: And that is for 106 Airport Road?

M. TIZZARD: Correct.

J. WALL: Thank you, Mike.

So with respect to 106 Airport Road, Minister, I'm sure you, yourself, but who else besides you worked to finalize the contract for 106 Airport Road?

CHAIR: Minister Hutton.

F. HUTTON: Do you mean the contract to take over the former hotel site or with End Homelessness St. John's?

J. WALL: No, with the former hotel site, Clayton Hospitality.

F. HUTTON: It was Julia Mullaley, the CEO of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation. The contract was done prior to my arrival in government. I was not elected at that point in time.

J. WALL: Okay.

Thank you, Minister.

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

J. WALL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

With regard to accessibility – and I'm looking here at housing clients who may be in St. John's Housing, for example. Who would be responsible for accessibility? I'm talking about a person who is a recent amputee and now, because of that, is confined downstairs away from washroom facilities, and so on and so forth. Really, a chairlift is needed.

This is where I'm talking about the silos. Trying to get an answer here has been challenging, so that this person is not left to do bathing out of the kitchen sink and so on and so forth. I'm just wondering, in situations like this, how do Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and St. John's Housing work together to resolve this?

Because the city is saying it wouldn't be their responsibility.

J. MULLALEY: So if you're referencing in specific to a Newfoundland and Labrador Housing unit?

J. DINN: No, this person is out getting income support and rental supplements, you name it. It's coming from the provincial government, but it's in St. John's Housing. This is the thing that stymies me. So I'm just trying to get an idea how to proceed.

F. HUTTON: All right, so you're talking about somebody who's not renting a Newfoundland and Labrador housing unit –

J. DINN: No.

F. HUTTON: – but they do get government support of some sort through CSSD?

J. DINN: Mm-hmm.

And I don't know if there's anything from Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, I think that might not be where it comes with it as well – I can get the details. But, in general, this is just a specific case that's emblematic in many ways. So what's the approach here?

F. HUTTON: So I guess we do have staff who could help, but if it's not our unit, my suggestion to you specific to that case, though, because it does concern me to hear that, is for maybe you and I to have a conversation afterwards and I can see what we can do specifically to help.

With regard to any of our own units, we do have a budget there. Because, as people go through their own lives and their situation may change in terms of their mobility or accessibility, we do have budgets within Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation that if somebody was in a two-bedroom unit, say, with a bathroom upstairs and then all of a sudden they can't get up, they would be accommodated in that way.

But specific to the case you're talking about, I'm not familiar with it, but I'm happy to help in whatever way I can.

J. DINN: No, but that's the kind of thing, what I'm talking about silos. So it –

F. HUTTON: But we do have a budget for people within our own Housing Corporation that would help people who are already there.

J. DINN: That's perfect and I understand if it was in a Newfoundland and Labrador Housing unit, it wouldn't be a problem but, I guess, the thing here is if it's not the responsibility of the city – and I understand where they're coming from, but this person doesn't have the funds to install that and it's impacting – that's where we've been –

CHAIR: Melanie Thomas.

M. THOMAS: Just to elaborate a little bit in terms of the supports that may exist for persons with disabilities, another critical program would be through the Department of Health and Community Services or NL Health Services in terms of the community support program. So an important resource and programming support can be available around accommodations.

J. DINN: I think we've gone to those. This is not the specific issue. but we have other issues similar to this.

So, with regard to that, is it possible to have an inventory of vacant government properties, office space, buildings that are probably not being used anymore throughout the province, maybe ones that could also be converted to housing?

CHAIR: Minister Hutton.

F. HUTTON: We don't have that with us at this point in time –

J. DINN: No problem.

F. HUTTON: – but I'm happy to see if we can get it through Transportation and Infrastructure.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Also with regard to the integration of the NLHC into the department, will the NLHC become the department or will that be a subsidiary of the department, such as it is with CSSD? Will Ms. Mullaley become the deputy minister? I'm just wondering what

the structure is, how this will look, because now it's brought into core government services so it's not really a Crown corporation anymore.

F. HUTTON: Right. So we're still working through those processes. We're having consultations and discussions about what it's going to look like, and we will continue to keep you and everyone else apprised of it as the changes come about.

J. DINN: Okay.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but as a Crown corporation, the NLHC did have the ability to take out loans of its own for that matter, if it wanted to, independent of the provincial budget. I see Julia nodding her head. You can still correct me if I'm wrong, but will that ability still be there or will you be constrained?

CHAIR: Julia Mullaley.

J. MULLALEY: I can only speak currently. As the minister said, things will continue to move forward. There's an ability to do loans but it's still subject to Lieutenant-Governor in Council authority currently as well.

J. DINN: But it wouldn't end up on the provincial books as such, would it?

J. MULLALEY: We are consolidated again with government's entities, so it would still all come into government's public statements as well.

J. DINN: Okay, thank you.

We talked about repairs, and I'd like to have, if it's possible, the number of Housing units currently under construction. The fixes, I think, are: 113 minor; 36 are repairs; 60 major repairs; 32 long term. Is it possible to have a breakdown of not only that, but I guess when they have started and when they're expected to be completed, a little bit more detail?

I say this because I drove by Livingstone Street this morning and there are two houses there that last year, when we walked through the community, had boards on the windows. They still have boards on the window. Actually, it has increased. There have been more there.

I'm just trying to get an idea of the length of time because if I understand it, the 60 major repairs could be a year and a half, 18 months or more. Then there are 32 long term, like Corner Brook, being demolished, so I'm just trying to get an idea when they're started, when they're slated to start and when they're slated to be finished, if possible.

J. MULLALEY: We would have to get that information (inaudible).

J. DINN: No problem. That would be great.

Has there been any thought to converting Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units that are on oil or what the plan is to convert to heat pumps or electric? I have gone to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing about oil supplements. People run out and I'm thinking, in some of the houses, the insulation probably is not that great. I don't know what the reason is, but they run out. At least with heat pumps, you know, you don't have to worry about the oil, you don't have worry about contamination and so on and so forth. Is there a plan for that?

J. MULLALEY: Yeah, we have looked at that. Over the last number of years, there has been a huge number of, I guess, oil and more efficient oil tanks. That was certainly at a point in time, so a lot of those units have actually been refurbished with more efficient oil, if there is oil there in that case and, of course, a lot of ours are electricity.

I would say also the other thing we have been doing in some of the seniors' buildings that we have is we were actually piloting that exact, as you're speaking about, and it

is something we're continuing to look at moving forward as well.

J. DINN: Okay.

I just know that we converted to a central heat pump but the savings have been astronomical in many ways, and the heat is just as good or better.

With regard to wraparound services – and I know we're talking about in the context of the Airport Inn hotel – I'm just wondering what they look like in the community. I've written letters on behalf of a constituent in my district in terms of an individual – we talk about the continuum of care. I can think of several examples you're probably going to get emails from, where the person next door is basically getting supports from maybe Eastern Health, from CSSD, maybe from Housing, yet they have terrorized the person next to them.

Now, the person next to them are very sympathetic to the individual. They're not necessarily looking to have them even evicted. But the question I've asked multiple times: How do you keep a person who obviously has complex needs, one which you already know they have complex needs, because you're paying about \$3,000 a month in rent for each of them, the people in this situation, and keep them safe so that they remain housed, and protect the individual next door?

Once-a-month visits or once-a-week visits is obviously not enough. I'm just trying to get an idea of once they're not in the community, where do we go so that we don't have this happening?

CHAIR: Melanie Thomas.

M. THOMAS: Hi, happy to respond.

I think the responses are very different and customized based upon the individual. What I can share is it's increasingly a combination of community-based supports. So working

with trusted partners like Stella's Circle or Choices for Youth and their RallyForward program, their Soft Landing program. As well as organizations like the Status of Women of St. John's, as well as Homestead, which is a critical support agency for individuals who have migrated from shelter to more stable housing.

Increasingly, we find the supports are a combination of community-based organizations, as well as health supports and agencies. So that may include the Flexible Assertive Community Treatment program, or the ACT team as well. So it's really a plethora of community agencies, as well as health supports, depending on the specific needs of that individual.

J. DINN: My time is up. I'll come back to that when I start off.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

J. WALL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, I want to go back to where I ended off with respect to I understand Ms. Mullaley was finalizing a contract before you came into the department. I'm just wondering how the process started. Did someone reach out to your staff? Did your staff reach out to the owners of 106 Airport Road? Just wondering how this was initiated and started to move forward.

F. HUTTON: Sure. I will preface my answer with the fact that when this process started, I was not a Member of the House of Assembly or, obviously, a Minister of the Crown at that point in time, but was aware, because of my previous role, of issues related to housing and homelessness, specifically to St. John's, because it was highlighted by certain events that were going on here through media and through consultations with, what we call, our community partners like Thrive, like Stella's

Circle, like The Gathering Place, like End Homelessness St. John's.

The community partners highlighted for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation and for government and CSSD and the former minister, this gap in transitional supportive housing; and for me too, in a learning experience, of the housing continuum of starting on this side where you are literally without somewhere to live, into a shelter and then, between the shelter and having your apartment, if you will, or somewhere that is more permanent place, was this gap of transitional supportive housing.

As Melanie has alluded to today, the gap that they identified, and what I have tried to articulate, is that putting somebody on from the shelter stage, if you're there – and I'm not talking about everybody; each case is individual – into their own unit, there needs to be that period of time where help is provided as well, but that there still is some sort of sense of freedom that an individual would have.

It is like a hotel room, but it is their room. They get to go inside. They get to have their own bed. They get to have their own washroom facilities but they also, when they open that door, are not alone in the world. They have those supports available to them immediately, because those supports are not required between 9 and 5. They're required, in some cases, around the clock, or on a Sunday afternoon when – a lot of people still work Sundays now, but in terms of if it's a basic health care need or if you're dealing with some sort of mental health crisis or an addictions issue or just some sort of a health issue.

So that was identified as a need. Through End Homelessness St. John's, which is basically the lead for all these groups, our community partners, that was identified as something we needed now. It was asked to me a few weeks ago why we didn't build something similar to this. Well, it wouldn't be

available for about three or four years. We all know how long it takes to construct something like that.

This was readily available, this option, and we did look at others so people could move in. Obviously, from the beginning, End Homelessness St. John's and our community partners were in-step with us in knowing that they had identified this as a problem. We identified it as a need and agreed and decided to go forward.

In terms of what those wraparounds supports will look like in there, Melanie is better suited to talk about what positions would be there.

J. WALL: Minister, if I could just interject, maybe I'll word it in a different way.

I'm wondering, with respect to how the process started for 106 Airport Road, how was the site chosen? You said it was readily available, no doubt.

F. HUTTON: Sure, yeah.

J. WALL: You also said you looked at others.

F. HUTTON: Right.

J. WALL: So how was this particular site chosen to start this process?

F. HUTTON: Again, prior to my arrival, there was an analysis done of other potential sites around. This one fit the bill for being available and ready. It was chosen at that point.

J. WALL: Okay.

So that analysis, you can provide us with that?

F. HUTTON: I don't have it here, but yes.

J. WALL: No, understood.

F. HUTTON: But it was discussed.

J. WALL: Okay.

F. HUTTON: Other options were looked at.

J. WALL: All right, thank you.

I understand Ms. Mullaley was the one before you came there, but is Ms. Mullaley the individual who initiated the conversation with respect to 106 Airport Road for going forward with this process?

F. HUTTON: Julia.

CHAIR: Julia Mullaley.

J. MULLALEY: What I can say is this has been a discussion point we have seen across the country and indeed here in our province, an increased prevalence of homelessness, very much focused on trying to address that issue and support people. We had a number of conversations throughout the year. We did see hotels were being used and are being used more right across the country.

So we did reach out. We talked to a lot of colleagues. We reached out to our NL Health Services partners as well. A lot of discussion was happening throughout the year on options to look at that. While we look at the broad housing continuum and we focus investing in supported shelter options and new NLHC homes and everything, we knew, and again, talking to our partners, the key gap in the system was some sort of transitional supportive living initiative.

We looked to our partners across the country on this initiative, and particularly into Nova Scotia, which is closer to us. We were quite interested in those initiatives and had discussions there. So, based on all that, we had been talking around this particular issue. This particular hotel owner, I can say, and I know that's been out there that they approached us. We had previous partnerships through a number of hotels

here and we did use the service of that hotel previously. So then we did start those discussions.

So, from that perspective, that's where the discussion went. As the minister had talked about, a fulsome analysis was done and brought forward for an informed decision in that regard.

J. WALL: Okay.

The owners of 106 Airport Road reached out to the department with respect to this proposal. Thank you, Julia.

So with respect to other areas considered, Minister, you will give that with respect to your analysis, that will be provided later? Thank you, Minister.

Again, just going back to 106 Airport Road; I'm looking at the extra 24-hour security for the facility. How much extra, or in addition to the \$21-million lease, will the 24-hour security be at the location? I understand that's not part of the \$21 million; am I correct?

J. MULLALEY: It is. So, as part of the amounts the minister just spoke to, there is security in place right now, currently. We're estimating, for this year, up to \$1.2 million on that.

J. WALL: Thank you, Julia.

Minister, meals to be provided are also extra. So what is the extra cost with respect to meals that's going to be incurred at 106 Airport Road?

CHAIR: Minister Hutton.

F. HUTTON: The cost is up to \$1.4 million, and it's a phased-in approach, MHA, based on occupancy expected of a certain percentage of people through each quarter, as it's a phased-in approach through the hiring process. But it's estimated about \$1.4 million for the year.

J. WALL: For the year, and it's going to be done on a quarterly basis, when you're looking at the expected occupancy.

F. HUTTON: Correct.

Well, that's what they're forecasting it at, yes.

J. WALL: Okay, thank you.

Minister, back in January, it was said that the building would be staffed by employees of NL Health Services. Just wondering of the additional expense for those staff for the operational costs at the site.

F. HUTTON: It's just over \$2 million. It's the \$11.6 million from Housing and then \$2 million from NL Health Services, which is where we come in – I mean, I'm rounding it out to \$13.6 million but it's –

J. WALL: Yes, understood. Thank you, Minister.

The staffing from health professionals from NLHC is roughly \$2 million.

F. HUTTON: Correct.

J. WALL: Okay.

So when we're looking at the total cost for this facility to the taxpayers of the province, what is our total figure that we're looking at with respect to the \$21 million, the security, the meals, the health – what's the total number, Minister? Do we have a dollar figure on this?

M. TIZZARD: The '24-'25 cost is estimated at the \$13.6 million the minister has referenced.

J. WALL: Total?

M. TIZZARD: Yes, for '24-'25.

J. WALL: Okay. Thank you, Mike.

Minister, was there a cost-benefit analysis done on the facility that you could make available?

CHAIR: Julia Mullaley.

J. MULLALEY: Again, there was a fulsome analysis done to move forward for an informed decision of that.

J. WALL: And can that be made available, please?

J. MULLALEY: We can certainly look to see what can be available.

J. WALL: Thank you, Julia.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

We're going to take a 10-minute break now, but one other item, there is another Estimates scheduled here for 1 p.m., so this Estimates will end at 12:30 p.m., firmly.

Thank you.

F. HUTTON: Sorry, did you say 12:30 p.m.?

CHAIR: Yes, that's the latest it can go.

Recess

CHAIR: Okay, we are ready to start again, but I just want to reiterate the time. That has to do with the fact that there are still two Estimates left and there's only 75 hours in total. So, regarding when we have to end, we started at 9:03 a.m. and we had a 16-minute break –

J. DINN: The question is then, if we end at 12 p.m. and we haven't finished, is it possible then to come back and finish it at that point and reschedule the remainder?

CHAIR: You would have 15 minutes to come back and finish it.

J. DINN: So it's a hard cap at three hours.

CHAIR: It's three hours and 15 minutes, yes.

J. DINN: That's for any of them? There is really no leeway at all?

CHAIR: No, because there are three Estimates left, two more after this one, and the 75 hours will be capped out.

J. DINN: Yeah, thank you.

CHAIR: All right.

The Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

Back to wraparound supports – and here's where I'm going with this: Since I've been in this district, I can think of, it must be getting close to a dozer or more, examples of where people who are getting services or supports from multiple agencies, maybe CSSD, maybe Housing and maybe the Department of Health as well.

In some cases, the house is taken over by either a criminal element or someone else where the person becomes a bouncer and then proceeds to set up a drug operation. I can think of, over on Froude Avenue, which was a model in many ways, but I can tell you what I'm getting from neighbours there and even speaking to people at the community centre, it's gotten unsafe. I can think of, on Livingstone Street, multiple examples. They're not just in my district, but in the whole area.

So here's how the wraparound services look, because sometimes a landlord is getting a significant amount of rent, and usually the person – and this is from neighbours living next door – we hear the social worker come and knock on the door. We know the person is in there. They'll ask: Hey, are you there? Because they're supposed to check in. And then they'll go

away because they're not getting an answer. And to be honest with you, for some of them, if I were a lone social worker, I wouldn't go in there anyway, in some cases.

I hear the term wraparound services, as do many of the people, and this is the gist of many of the issues from people who are upset. They have no issue – they're not looking to have the person evicted, because the option is if you evict them, where do they go? So that's not an option, then they go somewhere else and then the cycle starts. Or them being told by ministers if you see anything suspicious, call the police. Police are called. Well, we can't do anything about it. Really, that person shouldn't be there to begin with.

This is where I'm going with wraparound supports. Eventually, these people, some of the people who may be at the hotel, are going to transition – maybe. But in the community, the kind of wraparound services they're getting are not the wraparound services that they're getting if they're in a place where – and that's always been my issue. Yet, it seems like the issue – one particular issue that's been going on for well over a year, where the person has kicked the window out of the building. The neighbour has had to get a police escort to get into her own home. Her partner won't visit because he's been threatened.

So I guess where I'm going, Melanie – and I understand the difficulty, and I'm not looking to be the law-and-order MHA and have people booted out and things like that. But I do see a problem here as to how do we support people. I think on Livingstone Street, when we did the tour, I pointed out to you the example, the one tenant there, who I met on a good day, and on another day when you're getting stuff thrown through the windows and terrorizing another family who are trying to get their lives back together. They're in recovery.

I guess that's what I'm looking at. What is the plan then to make sure that vulnerable people can stay housed, that they don't end up having their homes taken over by a criminal element and, at the same time, making sure that the people who rent to them or the people living next door are able to have that quiet enjoyment.

I don't expect an answer as such right now, but I would like to have a more fulsome conversation about that down the road. If you have some thoughts on it, great.

M. THOMAS: I'd just like to add a little bit of commentary to that, but if you'd like to go first.

F. HUTTON: No, I was just waiting for your light.

M. THOMAS: Oh, wonderful. Thank you.

The story that you've painted and the challenges that you've painted are certainly acknowledged and, I think, witnessed. I think it's very important that we paint the thread and the picture between the experience in some of these neighbourhoods and the potential and the opportunity at 106 Airport Road.

The opportunity and the potential of the hotel is to very much transform how we currently deliver supportive housing. We talk about some of the challenges with wraparound services. I believe, in your earlier commentary, you've referenced drop-in services, maybe multiple visits a week and maybe some being successful, some being unsuccessful.

The value and the tremendous opportunity of the hotel is having those supports and services embedded within the space so the individual can develop a trusting relationship. They can reach out to supports; supports can reach out to them. While it will not be the answer for everyone, as we've spoken to at a couple of moments

this morning, it will allow us to round out the housing continuum.

So working in tandem with our own social housing stock, with our rental subsidies, this and other supportive housing services will deliver a stronger service and we're going to learn a tremendous amount from this initiative.

J. DINN: In principle, I support the transitional housing. I wouldn't even call it transitional housing; I would call it supportive.

I guess my issue is to how we could have used that money in a different way – and I'll give an example – even in terms of we could have bought the building outright – and this is leading to a question – and then look at maybe renovating one for a more permanent basis. I think of Hoyles-Escasoni, for example.

Here's the question, then: What's the plan to make this permanent? Because it's a three-year temporary measure but, in that time, I would suggest that there are going to be people that might never be able to move out of that kind of an environment. So what's the plan beyond that?

I think, in three years, they will not be suitable candidates even to move into a house throughout the community. They may always have to be in a situation where there is that level of safety; they have the independence – to me, independence is big.

I'm just looking at what the plan is. Whether it's we have government properties, let's look at, rather than paying a lease, renovate them and put the staff there and, again, like the models they have at Indwell and others here.

I don't know if you've done that. I'm assuming you have talked to Stella's Circle and said give us the length of stay. How many people actually transition out? Because I have a funny feeling a lot don't.

M. THOMAS: Yeah, and just to acknowledge that the hotel, again cast as temporary, as an interim response based upon the provisions of the lease. I think it's very much our vision and our plan that it's going to be working and lining up, from a timeline perspective, with new builds and new initiatives that are coming online.

We know the Gathering Place has a supportive transitional housing project that will provide in excess of 50 new options for individuals within the former Mercy Convent. That will be coming onstream in the fall. That may be a tangible option for someone who, perhaps, the hotel is not the appropriate fit in the moment.

Also seeing the Centre of Hope, 20 units that are available, operated through the Ches Penney Centre of Hope. These are all investments that I think are going to – the individual ultimately, the goal is to increase our investment in the supportive housing options around the province, and this initiative will allow us the time to get those projects online.

J. DINN: Perfect. And that's the key to the struggle I've been facing. I just think as a permanent solution as temporary.

How many staff are currently involved in inspections of units, both in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing-owned and those rented by NLHC clients? How many staff do we have go around to inspect these? And is it complaints-driven, or do you drop in and see?

CHAIR: Joe Mercer.

J. MERCER: So just to make sure I understand your question: How many staff are inspecting units?

J. DINN: How many actually go around – inspectors you have – and make sure that the landlord, that the standards are kept up and so on and so forth? Not necessarily to check up on the individual, but to find out

that the property standards and that are maintained.

J. MERCER: The properties – so within our own housing stock, I don't have the actual number of staff in front of me now, but it's part of the role of a couple of different staff, like our housing officers, our engineering technicians, so they do that, to complete cyclical inspections and that – am I answering your question? Is that what you mean?

J. DINN: Yeah, and I'm just wondering if it's complaints-driven, does it rely on the tenant to complain?

J. MERCER: No. Complaints-driven, yes, obviously if somebody calls with a concern or complaint, that's investigated and inspected right away, but there's also a scheduled inspection that we do, both annual, bi-annual and some are semi-annual.

So we have scheduled inspections but, as well, we do listen to and look into any complaints that we receive as well.

J. DINN: I'm going to stop my questions there and I'll pick up in the next one.

CHAIR: Okay.

The Member for Cape St. Francis.

J. WALL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, I'm going to go back briefly to the analysis that was done, when Ms. Mullaley spoke about that earlier.

First of all, when the owners of 106 Airport Road reached out, was that in a call or an email to your department to offer that site for what you guys had proposed? How did that initiate?

CHAIR: Julia Mullaley.

J. MULLALEY: Sorry, I just didn't get the front end of the question.

J. WALL: Oh, sorry.

Did they reach out by a phone call to your department, by an email? How did they reach out to you, to the department of Housing, with respect to this proposal?

J. MULLALEY: Yeah, it would have been through an initial phone call.

J. WALL: Through a phone call, okay.

Minister, I'm just wondering, with respect to the analysis that you guys had done, other hotels and cities such as the Holiday Inn are being used over the last number of years. Was that part of the analysis as well?

CHAIR: Minister Hutton.

F. HUTTON: I'd have to check to see which hotels, which facilities were looked at. But in the conversations that took place prior to my arrival, it was looked at as all options that would, sort of, fit a bill, that would provide certain criteria, as put to us through End Homelessness St. John's and what would fit the bill for a transitional supportive housing unit. Something that was ready to go, if you will, because as I've said, to build something would take several years.

J. WALL: Yeah, understood.

F. HUTTON: Versus something that's readily available, where the construction is already done and the building is there. In many cases in this, what we completed, the furniture is even in the room.

J. WALL: Understood.

F. HUTTON: I mean, obviously, some of it has changed since the transition.

J. WALL: We look forward to that analysis being provided, Minister. I do appreciate it.

So with respect to the need here, I'm just wondering why an RFP wasn't put out to start the process. Can you comment on that, please?

CHAIR: Julia Mullaley.

J. MULLALEY: From the perspective is we were working with colleagues, and we understood the urgency of the situation and the matter, and we were engaged with CSSD and we were also engaged with NL Health Services, trying to move forward in that regard.

Again, there was an analysis in that move forward for a particular space, which is under the *Public Procurement Act*, and that's the way from the process perspective.

J. WALL: Thank you, Julia.

Minister, when did the change occur from the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing staff to End Homelessness St. John's staff? When did that occur?

F. HUTTON: Sorry, can you explain that a bit for me, please?

J. WALL: When did the End Homelessness St. John's take on that initiative with respect to 106 Airport Road?

CHAIR: Julia Mullaley.

J. MULLALEY: As the contract was moving forward with the hotel, we engaged End Homelessness St. John's, particularly more from the perspective, as we were moving forward, and a best practice model on how to develop this. We've engaged End Homelessness St. John's from initiation of the contract, I guess, with the hotel operator and they've been helping to support us since that day. So we've been working with them and also engagement of our community partners as well.

That work has been ongoing the last number of months and the formal contract

signing with End Homelessness St. John's, as you know, was just more recent, but we've been working together since then for a number of months, and they've been supporting us in our process to make sure that we're using best practices. We've been talking to colleagues, again, particularly from Nova Scotia, on lessons learned and other things.

So we've been spending a lot of time from that aspect to get ready to move forward and they're preparing for staffing now.

J. WALL: Okay, thank you.

You've just mentioned other community partners; can you give us a list of what other community partners are involved here at 106 Airport Road, please?

J. MULLALEY: Yes.

Well, from the perspective of the main operator, it's End Homelessness St. John's, but when I reference other community partners, what I mean there is the engagement of them and the input of the community partners on the Community Advisory Board of End Homelessness St. John's, as well, have been inputting into the process along the way.

J. WALL: Okay, thank you.

Minister, there's a built-in annual escalation clause tied to the CPI. I'm just wondering is that paid monthly, quarterly, yearly? Is it paid upfront? How is that going to work from your current budget?

M. TIZZARD: The CPI is paid monthly. We get a monthly invoice right now for the lease. It's actually in the lease to say it's negotiated each year, but it would be to the maximum CPI. It may be less than CPI, dependent on the discussions we have with the hotel operator, but it would be continued monthly.

J. WALL: Thank you, Mike.

Minister, who is responsible for hiring the staff, for example the medical professionals that are needed for the wraparound services that you have spoke about so many times? Who will oversee the hiring of that staff? You mentioned about 100 staff – I stand to be corrected – so does it include that as well?

M. THOMAS: So NL Health Services will be directly overseeing the staffing complement and have commenced recruitment efforts to that end.

I believe the earlier reference, 100 staff, would be exclusive to the staffing complement to support the housing function. The Health Services are supplemental to that.

J. WALL: Supplemented to the 100.

M. THOMAS: Yes.

J. WALL: Thank you, Melanie.

Minister, as you said in the House earlier this week, with respect renovations, some rooms are changing – for example, something you would see in a doctor's office. So do you have a total on what the cost renovations is going to be for that?

M. TIZZARD: We haven't received the total costs yet, but we would be able to provide that once the invoices are received.

J. WALL: Thank you, Mike.

Minister, again, you referenced 130-140 rooms. Can you give us a breakdown on this number is going to be used for A and this number is going to be used for B? Do you have a breakdown of those rooms for 106 Airport?

F. HUTTON: I do. It is just going to take me a minute to pull it up.

J. WALL: That's okay.

F. HUTTON: Melanie actually has it in the top of her head.

M. THOMAS: It has been noted that the hotel has approximately 140 units, rooms available. The current plan, again as Julia has referenced, we have worked very closely with End Homelessness St. John's in terms of how those rooms will be allocated.

It is estimated around 20 will be allocated for staffing, security and/or storage functions for different services that may be needed on site. That could also extend to include programming. So we talk about inviting community partners to operate within the space. So, again, that 20 or so units would be reserved for that.

We have a number reserved for specific health services as well, so that could extend up to 20 rooms. The remaining 100 are reserved for dedicated rental housing response.

J. WALL: Thank you, Melanie.

Minister, do you have a target date of when it will be fully equipped and fully staffed? Do you have a target date?

M. THOMAS: The anticipated plan with End Homelessness St. John's, from a phased staffing and occupancy plan, is that in the coming 12 months it will be fully occupied and staffed.

J. WALL: Thank you, Melanie.

Minister, there has been a lot of chatter about determining the criteria for who is going to stay at this facility. I can only assume that this process is before End Homelessness St. John's became involved in it. So can you discuss the criteria on who is going to fit for one of these 100 rooms, please?

M. THOMAS: Just happy to elaborate. Again, working very closely with our

community partners, many have come to us over the last number of months, I think, really speaking to the need for enhanced, supportive housing options. So very much working with those entities to identify individuals who, first and foremost, from an eligibility perspective, are currently experiencing homelessness.

So that could be individuals currently residing in shelter options. That could be individuals that have been identified at the encampment. We are working with our community partners to advance applications for individuals, with priority being certainly for individuals who are experiencing homelessness, as well as those who may have particular health services that could be best served and met within the space.

J. WALL: And with respect to health services, can you elaborate on that, please, as to what that would entail?

M. THOMAS: Sure. I think a very wide umbrella in terms of very basic, rudimentary personal care needs that an individual may have. Be it dressing changes, management of diabetes and medications of that sort. But also extending to include social supports, as well as mental health and addictions counselling and other relevant supports.

J. WALL: That will take in the geographical area as well, not just here in the city – if you're looking at 100 rooms and you only have, for example, 50 people looking for it locally, then you'll go outside the geographical area?

M. THOMAS: Certainly. We feel very confident, though, that there is a very active population here that we can support.

J. WALL: Thank you, Melanie, and Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Okay, the Member's time is expired.

The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

With regard to Airport Road, what's the purpose of having them sign leases?

M. THOMAS: I'm sorry, I didn't hear the last part.

J. DINN: I'm just wondering if it's a temporary solution, what's the purpose of having them sign leases? Because they're there for help. I'm just trying to get an idea as to –

M. THOMAS: I think the leasing option is very much the need and what we've heard from our community partners is the importance of this space being demonstrably different from a shelter response. So providing individuals with the security of a stable lease and the tenure of a lease is critically important to advance their experience along the housing continuum. But also to provide them with a positive tenancy, which will allow them, we hope, to positively move to alternate accommodations in the future.

J. DINN: So what will this mean then for the residents of the Tent City encampment outside of the Colonial Building? Where are they on this in terms of getting a place at the comfort inn?

M. THOMAS: Very much working with the outreach team, through End Homelessness St. John's, as well as a number of the community entities in the downtown core, individuals at the encampment, should they wish to be – and again, I think personal choice is at the heart of project as well. So should they wish to be situated and have a rental agreement at 106 Airport Road, they could certainly work with those community agencies to advance an intake.

J. DINN: With regard to personal choice, there have been people – even I've spoke to them – at Tent City who were offered accommodations by Housing and promised that they would be taken to the Riverwalk,

only to be taken somewhere else and they ended up back there. They came back on their own. No one brought them back there. I think one place was up on Wadland Crescent and so on and so forth.

So I'm just wondering here, in terms of offering the people at the encampment, the discussion as to what they need, because it seems that there are offers made but I don't know if they've actually been consulted or what are their needs.

M. THOMAS: I would suggest that the work and the effort to engage and support individuals at the encampment has been ongoing for a number of months. I think entities like End Homelessness St. John's, Thrive, Stella's Circle and the Gathering Place have all had various housing support workers visit individuals at the encampment to understand what their needs are. I think, as Julia spoke to, that has been critical into shaping this response. But I think it's important to acknowledge, like any housing solution, it may not be the solution for everyone.

J. DINN: Some were directed to go to Tent City by some of those community organizations because there was no place for them. Okay, I'm just looking at how we're going to solve the problem here with this.

So back to the inspections – and you're going to get me the number of how many people actually do the inspections, and it's complaint-driven. Is there any consideration to having a robust schedule, making sure that everyone who has – maybe not even NLHC housing; I would assume you have a handle on that. But anyone who is getting a rent supplement, so on and so forth, to have regular inspections, monthly, whatever else. For this reason, if it's complaint-driven, many of the people come to me, they're afraid to make a complaint because they're afraid that they'll be evicted – three-month eviction and so on and so forth.

So ACORN Canada, that's one of its recommendations, to have an inspection system funded by the landlords – large landlords in this case – of maybe \$1 a unit that pays for the staff to do it. I'm just wondering, any consideration to having something where it's more proactive than responsive?

CHAIR: Minister Hutton.

F. HUTTON: If I could just jump in, I don't think what Mr. Mercer said was that it is solely complaint-driven.

J. DINN: I know.

F. HUTTON: There is reaction to complaints, obviously, and that's done immediately, and he can speak further to this, annual or, in other cases, quarterly inspections that are done. That's already being done, but I can let Joe expand on it.

J. MERCER: Yes, like the minister said, so within our own NLHC units, we do have a robust schedule and a regular schedule that we follow but we also respond to if there are any concerns or complaints brought to us. So I just wanted to clear that for you.

J. DINN: Perfect.

J. MERCER: It sounds like you might be talking about units that are not Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units.

J. DINN: And that's another matter right there; we can talk about those, but I'm assuming people will bring complaints but they're probably not as worried about you kicking them out as they would be private landlords.

So do you inspect private landlords, people who are housing your clientele, the people you serve?

CHAIR: Julia Mullaley.

J. MULLALEY: So with respect to our Canada Housing Benefits and the ones that we assist in the private market, there are always inspections done of the units before we actually move forward with our rental subsidy. I would say respecting the Residential Tenancies Act itself, that is an area, certainly, where we work with tenants throughout the province in ensuring they understand their rights under the act in moving forward in that regard.

J. DINN: Okay.

Is there any, like, inspections so that problems will become available – and I think of one, on one street, Prince of Wales Street, where it's been boarded up for coming up to a year now. At that time there was someone getting help, a client, I don't know if it was Eastern Health or Housing at the time. So I'm just wondering, not at just the beginning but throughout to make sure that the standards are maintained, or is it just the beginning of the rental?

J. MULLALEY: I think in the private rental units, specifically, those are ones we inspect before we provide assistance but then, again, there is the Residential Tenancies Act and rights of residents under that act. So we work with clients, if they are clients of ours, to ensure they understand their rights under the act and to refer them to that process.

J. DINN: Okay.

That's where I'm saying – I think rather than put the onus on them because they are vulnerable, they're afraid, I'm just looking for a program where it's the Housing Corporation that we're going to make sure. So we're taking it out of your control and we're not going to put you in a position where the landlord can say, out you go.

How many social workers are employed by the NLHC?

J. MULLALEY: There are 13.

J. DINN: Thirteen. Any vacancies in that?

J. MULLALEY: Nothing that I'm aware of right now.

J. DINN: Perfect.

Where are they mostly located?

J. MULLALEY: The bulk of them would be in the Avalon region.

J. DINN: What services are they equipped to provide?

M. THOMAS: They would provide a range of services to our tenants throughout the province, including assistance with respect to navigating health and social services, supports and liaison function with the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development as well.

J. DINN: Perfect.

Right now, I think, in a previous answer, you talked that there's a wait-list of 2,807 for providing housing to the NLHC. So last year, if we go back – I just talked to our researcher here – it was around 2,500 last year at this time, the number on the wait-list, so it's grown.

Where are these people? I mean, that's a significant increase. What's going on? More people being evicted? More people coming in? I'm just trying to get an idea of what's going on here. It's not going down.

J. MULLALEY: Again, I would say that it is the experience across the country, when we look at cost of living and other issues, the demands on social programs right across the country, we see that and we see that in our programs as well.

One thing I would say is that the significant growth and about two-thirds of our wait-list is in the affordability category. So those are individuals and families that would be residing somewhere now but are having

affordability challenges, and that's the biggest category certainly we see a growth in.

So the programs like the Canada Housing Benefit are really timely responses to that so individuals can stay in place, but it's an assistance with affordability measures.

J. DINN: So if they're on a wait-list, are they housed now?

J. MULLALEY: Yes, if they're in affordability category, they would be residing somewhere for sure. But they're challenged with affordability, so cost of living, rental increases and so on.

So that's where we see a very large growth on our wait-list. Again, the programs like the Canada Housing Benefit and being able to provide that additional rental assistance is certainly a response to that.

J. DINN: Okay, thank you.

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

J. WALL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, I'd like to ask is End Homelessness St. John's receiving a budget from NLHC to work within, to carry out the work at 106 Airport Road?

M. TIZZARD: Yes, the contract for '24-'25 is what I referenced earlier, \$3.6 million.

J. WALL: That is the amount?

M. TIZZARD: Yes.

J. WALL: Okay, thank you.

I want to go back to an earlier question with respect to shelter beds. So earlier it was said that there was no wait-list for shelter beds. I'm just wondering, is that for all shelters? And I ask because I know that the

Iris Kirby receives provincial funding, and it has been reported in the media that they've had to unfortunately turn people away.

Is it for all shelter beds across the province that are not being monitored, even though some are provincially funded? That's the point I'm trying to make.

CHAIR: Melanie Thomas.

M. THOMAS: Thank you.

So the earlier 425 that was referenced is specifically emergency shelter beds. The women's transition houses, of which there are 10 provincially, operate about 127 beds. That is separate and in addition to the noted 425 emergency shelter beds.

What I would clarify with respect to the turn-away notion, it's a complicated measure. There are a lot of variables that are included with that, and it can also include turn-aways due to individuals, or women in particular not fitting the organizations mandate.

So it may be a woman who is presenting, perhaps under the influence. It's a very challenging reality to navigate within that space. When we hear references to turn aways, it's not simply a measure of bed capacity. It's sometimes not alignment with the mandate of the organization.

J. WALL: Understood. Thank you.

And just for clarification, those beds are not monitored either –

M. THOMAS: Oh no, we certainly monitor those –

J. WALL: You do those?

M. THOMAS: – biweekly shelter roll calls from the women's shelters, yes.

J. WALL: And are those reports available?

M. THOMAS: Yes.

J. WALL: Okay, thank you.

So would you have a number of the total number of shelter beds that are available regionally throughout the province? Is there a breakdown on regional and are they all used on a regular basis? Are they maxed out?

M. THOMAS: I don't have the breakdown available. We can certainly provide that to you. I would say we have very high utilization is how I would cast it in terms of the shelter beds.

J. WALL: Okay, thank you.

Minister, I wonder if you can explain the process of what your department does daily in regard to providing services at Tent City. I heard you speak earlier this week. You've been there several times. Your staff are there on a regular basis, and we thank your staff for being there on a regular basis.

Just wondering what you can provide with respect to the process of what's done on a regular basis for those at Tent City.

M. THOMAS: We work very closely with End Homelessness St. John's, who I referenced earlier, who has a dedicated outreach team, which works throughout the city in terms of servicing a range of shelters, as well as those who may be rough sleeping.

So in terms of the support that the corporation provides, it's working in tandem with End Homelessness St. John's, as well as the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, really in the interest of ensuring that individuals are receiving any appropriate benefits or entitlements that they should be accessing, be it income support, be in health benefits and drug cards and things of that nature.

Also, working very, very closely with the NL Health Services and their Harm Reduction Team, which is an interdisciplinary team

that works across the shelter system to very much meet the health needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. So our team would also be liaising with those, when they visit the site, to ascertain what the most immediate support needs are, but also perhaps options with respect to shelter placement and/or other housing options.

So the staff and the team that visit the site would be liaising with our team at our offices to ensure that individuals have active housing applications, but also where there is a desire and a willingness to accept shelter placement, our team would be identifying appropriate options for consideration.

J. WALL: Thank you, Melanie.

Minister, this past week, there was an unfortunate incident of a fire at the location at Tent City. Does your department or any other departments, for example, Transportation or Justice and Public Safety, offer guidance or advice to those at Tent City with respect to trying to be safe while they're there? Can you elaborate on that, please?

F. HUTTON: I think that it goes without saying that having an open flame in a tent is not a safe option. The area across the street here from the Confederation Building or the area down by the Colonial Building were never intended to be an area where anyone could live in any capacity.

The services that would be provided in one of the options that we would present, as Melanie has outlined, on a regular basis to folks who are down there – it's not habitable, there's no plumbing down there and there's no electricity down there. It's just not safe.

We have expressed that to folks who are there on a regular basis and understand that the challenges they are facing are complex. That is why our team, with Melanie and others through NL Health

Services and our community partners are there on a daily basis, imploring them to take advantage of the other options that are available.

J. WALL: Thank you, Minister.

Minister, I'm going to ask about the Terms of Reference. Have the Terms of Reference changed for the homelessness task force or is that still current?

F. HUTTON: Still current.

J. WALL: Thank you.

F. HUTTON: But the task force itself is more of a broader range of housing in the province versus just specifically to the issue with the encampment – broader range as we move forward.

J. WALL: How so?

F. HUTTON: Just in terms of housing in general and keeping that conversation going with issues like related to what MHA Dinn had brought up earlier, in terms of consultation with partners in this region, municipalities, the mayor is part of it and others.

J. WALL: Okay, thank you.

F. HUTTON: The discussions are not limited to just the encampment.

J. WALL: Understood. Thank you, Minister.

A couple of more questions. I want to just ask about the funding the department provides to private development projects. Do you have any follow-up or does your department track funding that's provided to private development projects to ensure that they still remain affordable for the people of the province? How does that work with respect to funding provided?

F. HUTTON: Mike can answer that.

M. TIZZARD: So part of the contract of an affordable housing program, there's a yearly review where there are receipts provided of rent, to make sure they're affordable and make sure everything else that was agreed to in the contract is being adhered to. If someone has agreed to 15 years of affordability, we'll have a 15-year check-in period each year, where invoices are provided that we can verify the rent provided is affordable.

J. WALL: And that's done on an annual basis?

M. TIZZARD: Annually, yes.

J. WALL: Thank you, for that.

Minister, I'm just wondering if you can provide an update with respect to the conversation the Premier had with the federal housing advocate, Johannes Lampe. How does your department plan to respond specifically to that report with respect to the Nunatsiavut in Labrador?

F. HUTTON: I can't speak specifically to the conversation that the Premier had with him; I was not there, but we are planning to meet with President Lampe who has been recently re-elected. We had actually planned to go to Nain at the end of March, as the previous minister had agreed. Unfortunately, they went into an election period, our House of Assembly was open as well and our schedules just could not coordinate, but we have been in touch with President Lampe's officials to discuss a date and we're hoping that – I can't pin it down to a specific date, but sometime in early June that we will be travelling to Nain, to the Nunatsiavut communities to discuss that further with him.

J. WALL: Okay, so early June to discuss that.

F. HUTTON: That is the hope.

J. WALL: That is the hope.

F. HUTTON: Julia can expand on that as well, MHA, if you're –

J. WALL: Thank you.

J. MULLALEY: Yeah, I did want to add that one of the things that certainly we've committed to is working with the senior officials from their housing commission as well. So we are establishing a working group and we've had some really great relationships together and to work together on identifying the issues there and to address them. So the working group will be a very important forum moving forward.

J. WALL: That's good to know.

Any of the findings reflected in this current budget, Minister?

J. MULLALEY: From the perspective, yes, we're committed. There is \$3 million over the next four years, so \$12 million to very much focus on repairs to our homes in the Nunatsiavut communities.

J. WALL: Yes, and you did refer to the \$3 million earlier in discussion. Thank you for that.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Okay.

The Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

With regard to the wait-lists for housing and the 2,807, is it possible to have a breakdown as well by region, the age of tenants and family size of who are the ones waiting? I think most of them you said might be for singles. And if it's possible, not only singles but if it's singles, the division between male and female. And only because most of the people I see seem to be male – the ones who have the most difficulty and are most likely out begging and so on and so forth.

With regard to the total amount that the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation has spent in the past year on emergency shelters, since last year.

M. TIZZARD: So the '23-'24 total was just over \$18 million.

J. DINN: Okay.

And that's just for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing; that doesn't include anything for NL Health or anything like that, in addition to. Okay.

So with regard to the emergency shelter line, there is not wait-list – correct – is what you said? Do they keep track of the number of people they turn away?

M. THOMAS: I think certainly not an active tracking of folks that turn away, and I think, to clarify, we wouldn't actively be declining or turning anyone away. Our staff, our team, which also includes a number of social workers, work very closely with individuals who are calling the line, and with maybe their community advocates and community supports to identify appropriate shelter options or accommodations for individuals.

There may be instances where an individual has been challenged to be accommodated by a certain shelter provider, and perhaps that relationship has broken down. An individual would then call our line to secure a transfer to an alternate shelter operation.

J. DINN: Okay.

I've called personally for people, as has my constituency assistant, and let's say we're looking for space. The answer: We don't have any space. So my response then would be: Basically this person has to sleep on the street tonight? No, that's not what we're saying. And that's fair enough.

But really, that's a turn away to me. Because there's nothing available; there are no shelters available at all and there's

nothing. That might be something, whether we call it the turn away or whether we say how many times we've had to say no, there's nothing available, even if we want to call it that, to keep track of it.

M. THOMAS: If I might clarify and add a little bit further information to the conversation. In the fall, we actually introduced a number of options appreciating the demand that we're experiencing in our province, but also the demand nationally in terms of the demand for emergency shelter.

We actually created not only new shelter options but also a warming centre option for individuals, to really respond to that growing capacity challenge. So that's been introduced since, I believe, October of 2023.

J. DINN: So the shelters that were in the news back in the fall, the conditions inside those, do you know if those shelters are still in operation and still being used?

M. THOMAS: It really varies, depending upon the particular location, but our team, obviously working with the community as well as the City of St. John's, conducts inspections of our shelters on a quarterly basis. Also, supplemental to that, we would be conducting inspections on a complaint basis.

So our staff would be following up, monitoring those particular instances and working with the operator to identify any deficiencies and a plan to address any noted deficiencies.

J. DINN: So are there any shelters that were, let's say, being used back in September, before all this began, that are no longer being used because they're not up to snuff?

M. THOMAS: I would say there are a number that are likely not used in the frequency that they have been used historically, because we have created new

staffed shelter options, which is always the preferred placement option.

J. DINN: Good enough. I just want to try to make sure that they're kept up to standards.

A recent ATIPP noted that the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation shelter standards report was currently incomplete and would not be ready until June. So the question is: When did we start doing the standards and why is it taking so long, considering the housing crisis we have been in?

M. THOMAS: We have engaged an outside party, OrgCode, to conduct and initiate the review. They, over the last number of months, have conducted extensive consultations with our community partners, including an established steering committee comprised of both community agencies as well as shelter operators.

I would consider the exercise to be very comprehensive and very fulsome, and also a number of focus groups at various points between the summer and the fall with individuals with lived experience who currently reside in shelters. Our goal here is to very much build upon the expertise of OrgCode, having done previous shelter standards frameworks, to build upon that but to customize it to the local experience to make sure that it's responsive to the needs.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Will that draft, that I think is set for June 3, around there, be the final draft, or will it be similar to the Health Accord where there will be a here's what we heard and, before it's finalized, going back to the public and have a look at it, is this what we want?

M. THOMAS: Yeah, we would consider it to be a finalized document upon receipt from the consultant, but I think it's important as well that it exist as a living document. So if there are changes that are needed,

modernization that's needed, we would certainly be pursuing that as well.

J. DINN: So there are no plans, as such, to do, like, okay, here's the report; we want some feedback on it from groups.

M. THOMAS: So I would say from a drafting perspective, that piece of work has been ongoing. So we've engaged both, as I've mentioned, the steering committee, as well as NL Health Services in the review of the document to ensure it is as strong and comprehensive as it can be.

J. DINN: Okay.

With regard to the emergency shelters for those fleeing domestic violence and abuse, I think it was said that there is a percentage turned away because the person doesn't meet the profile of the organization. So is it possible to have a breakdown as to maybe how many people are turned away for that reason versus how many are turned away, simply because they do not have space in that time?

M. THOMAS: We would certainly reach out to the transition houses on that. I would caution that perhaps not all are capturing that particular data point.

J. DINN: No, and most of the times I have had, it's about people – they just don't have the space, and that's the issue. Okay.

M. THOMAS: Also, just to add, I think the experience in the urban centres is very different from our rural and regional transition houses, but appreciating St. John's is –

J. DINN: How so?

M. THOMAS: In terms of demand and utilization of beds, we certainly acknowledge that St. John's, as a capital city, has a high demand for any shelter and emergency response.

J. DINN: It's just about keeping people safe from my point of view in this.

Is there anything Newfoundland and Labrador Housing can do to eliminate the practice of no-fault evictions in its own units – the three-month eviction in its own units?

CHAIR: Julia Mullaley.

J. MULLALEY: From our perspective, we have worked very hard. You know, eviction prevention is very, very key in all of our minds, so that would be a very more rare circumstance on that perspective.

OFFICIAL: (Inaudible.)

J. MULLALEY: Yeah, we have less. Even last year, it was less; it was, like, 0.4 per cent of all of our units. So it's a little less than half a per cent. In all of those circumstances, we worked very much with the tenant to try to prevent any evictions as well.

It's really a last resort, and sometimes those are processes that we work through and then we are able to continue successful tenancies with them, but it's less than half a per cent. When we think of that, we worked very, very hard at eviction prevention, so it's almost like a no-fault in that regard.

J. DINN: Julia, I have no problem saying that we worked with you very hard and we've actually done that. I'm just thinking from a perspective of leadership setting an example, but that's fair enough.

I will say this: You're not prolific with it, that's for sure.

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

The Member for Cape St. Francis.

J. WALL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, before the 106 Airport Road opens, of course, you're at the tent

encampment and your staff are there daily offering them choices for somewhere to go. That's my understanding.

F. HUTTON: That's correct.

J. WALL: Okay, thank you.

It's also my understanding that yesterday four people were offered places for the night. Four people left the encampment and one came back about two hours later. Where he was offered, it wasn't conducive and wasn't a fit place to stay for whatever reason, so he's back at the tent encampment.

What are the options that you're providing to the individuals that are there? Is it a hotel room? Is it in a home in a private dwelling? Can you just elaborate on what options you do provide on a regular basis? Because for someone to be offered to move from a tent to a private dwelling, I'm not sure what the supports are, but he's back at the tent encampment now, unfortunately. So can you just please expand on that?

M. THOMAS: I think very much, as you've spoken to, the range of options are very diverse. It can range certainly on one end from a congregate setting through to a single bedroom in a shared space with a shared common area, shared kitchen and things of that nature. Where available, it may also extend to include rooms that have a dedicated singular washroom and things of that nature.

It really does ebb and flow, I will say, depending upon capacity and what's available.

J. WALL: Okay.

Do you keep track of those that take the opportunity to move from the tent encampment to a location if they do come back again? Do you look at those numbers as well? Because if someone does move from the tent encampment to a place and

moves back to the tent encampment again, to me it says something. Do you keep track of those numbers as well as to why?

M. THOMAS: We certainly do. I think we reflect on that data and that information when we have it available to us. Again, I say the individual circumstances vary widely. Sometimes it's the presentation and design of the shelter, which may not be conducive, but sometimes it's the individual and their past experience and their comfort level in particular environments.

But also, the proximity to others and relationships with others can also create real challenges within our community. So I think, suffice to say, it's an incredibly complex dynamic that we see within the shelter system.

J. WALL: Understood.

Minister, we've heard you speak numerous times with respect to the necessity of wraparound services, and we all agree with that. Before and, of course, prior to Airport Road being opened, so wherever they're moving now currently, are wraparound services provided to those individuals when they move from Tent City to location A, B or C? Can you just give us a breakdown on what wraparound services are provided that particular individual?

M. THOMAS: Certainly. And again, it would vary, depending upon the individual. As I said earlier, our priority and our focus from a facilitation and investment perspective over the last number of years has to prioritize the creation of staffed supported shelters.

But we realize that when we make those offers, which we do have available on a nightly basis, staffed supported shelters, depending on the individual, that may not be the experience that they want. So we work to identify alternates to that, which sometimes are unstaffed, which do present challenges, we would acknowledge.

Sometimes we see more ready breakdowns in those environments as well.

J. WALL: Okay. Thank you, Melanie.

That's everything I have right now, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Okay.

The Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

Is it possible to provide us with a list of companies that do subcontract or maintenance work for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation?

F. HUTTON: Yeah.

J. DINN: Perfect.

Would the minister update us, either here or in a list, on interest in provincial lands that were earmarked for the development of the affordable rental housing?

F. HUTTON: We can.

J. DINN: Perfect.

Have there been any additional resources added to the emergency shelter line in the past year? And, following up to the other one, what happens when someone receives a busy signal or an answering machine?

M. THOMAS: Very happy to share that there have been increased resources allocated to our department specifically. That's included, I believe, an additional four emergency housing officers since the fall of last year, as well as three additional social workers.

With respect to the instance, the phone system that we have in place with respect to our line, when an individual calls the emergency shelter line, they're first and foremost directed to a staffed line, which in

a typical day would have approximately five or six staff dedicated to that response.

As the call moves through the line, if all phone lines are engaged, the line is then directed to a backup call service managed by Telelink, which would be monitoring and actively engaging in terms of the receipt of messages and calls for shelter or other requests, be it food vouchers, transfers. That information is then remitted to NL Housing, and we would be triaging and prioritizing responses to any messages left.

J. DINN: Okay.

So, in some ways, there is a little bit of a wait-list, I guess, for lack of a better word. I'm assuming that the people, who are your staff who are answering, are trained. But with Telelink, it could be anyone. Do they have training in dealing with people who may be going through a crisis at that moment? I speak from my own experience of dealing with people in crisis. They're not angry at you; you just happen to be the person that picks up the phone at that point in time.

So any training offered to them? Because we do hear stories where that person was really rude now and they were visibly upset. I'm just wondering if there's training for the people on the other line.

M. THOMAS: Telelink has a number of contracts and services across government and across various sectors. So their staff are certainly trained with respect to responding to a wide range of scenarios, both emergency as well as call back-up functions.

In addition, we work very closely with the Telelink management in terms of the crafting of a script. So various scenarios in terms of when you encounter A or when you encounter B, this is the appropriate response and this is the appropriate action to be taken. We work very closely with that team on that work.

J. DINN: Perfect, that's good.

Is there any consideration being given on how to phase out bedsitting rooms and maybe, again, bachelor apartments and so on and so forth? Now, I know we might never get rid of the emergency shelters, but we can reduce them. So is there an overall plan to phase out bedsitting rooms, and landlords who might buy a house and rent out each room separately?

M. THOMAS: I think I would say, through our discussions with community agencies over the last number of years, what we've heard repeated advocacy for is a diversity of options along the housing continuum. The need, in some cases, for bedsitters, in terms of individuals who prefer and want smaller, more modest accommodations that can be managed and not have the challenges associated with guest management – and we all know the challenges that that can present.

Also, to highlight as well, the important work of the HomeConnect program under End Homelessness St. John's, which is very much a supported arrangement for bedsitters. So something we would certainly be actively promoting and encouraging within our community.

J. DINN: Okay.

Has there been any consideration given to setting up and establishing a provincial rent bank? They do have it in some provinces. A person who is experiencing – maybe they're transitioning from employment to EI, they're sick, they don't have sick leave and they don't have the money. This is hugely, Minister, through a not-for-profit organization, but it's maybe a provincial fund so that a person can have an interest-free loan to take care of rent for a month, or whatever the gap is, so that they don't end up homeless. Has there been any talk with your counterparts across the country about this idea maybe here in Newfoundland or Labrador?

M. THOMAS: I would say I think the Supported Referrals program is probably one of the more stronger alignments with such initiative, which really assists individuals and provides funding to assist with either moving out of shelter or to maintain housing stability so that we can maintain rentals that are currently existing and successful.

J. DINN: So if a person is experiencing – let's say they just lost their job and they may not have savings. It is a loan, a grant? It's tied up here, I find, with a lot of our – there is so much paperwork and bureaucratic obstacles.

J. MULLALEY: Yeah, very much operationalized as a grant to the individual and very much a national and international best practice in terms of maintaining housing and an effective tool for shelter diversion.

So to maintain housing where possible rather than have admission into emergency shelters.

F. HUTTON: Can I add something to that?

J. DINN: Yeah.

F. HUTTON: This year, we also added the \$250,000 for eviction prevention. If somebody stumbles on hard times, as just something that comes out of the blue, that was part of something additional that was added, in addition to our emergency responses.

These are private homeowners, as well, I'm talking about. It's not people who necessarily rent or live in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units. In my own constituency, and in others we've dealt with in the recent months, people have something happen to their house and, with this new program, the eviction prevention, understanding that people are facing additional costs as a result of the cost of living.

J. DINN: No, that makes sense. It's about keeping people housed.

F. HUTTON: Sure, and that's the idea behind that as well.

J. DINN: So they don't end up and be the one that's calling my office.

F. HUTTON: Exactly.

J. DINN: Okay.

With regard to this, one last thing then, provincial acquisition fund for not-for-profits to help acquire land and buildings so that they have that ability. Many groups have the ability to repair and things, or have the ability to build, but they may not have to ability to acquire properties.

Is there anything in consideration of setting up some sort of a fund that would allow them to access? I'm thinking of the Co-operative Housing.

J. MULLALEY: Certainly, we look across to some of the programs that are out there now and continue to explore those particular programs. I think one of the things we've really talked to community groups about in the more recent past is the barrier to developing projects as well. You know, for costs, whether it's the architect to help design and cost, or whether it's identifying land and looking at environmental site assessments or different avenues like that, I think that's a cost that often can't be borne by our community organizations.

One of the things you would have seen the minister put out this week was a community growth fund, from that perspective. It was \$1.5 million announced this week, and that's really to help work with our community partners to actually start developing projects to bring forward that we can work with them and work with our federal counterparts, municipal counterparts and other counterparts as well to advance projects in that regard.

J. DINN: Okay.

Government has stated that it is in support of transferring its control over housing to NG completely; is there a rough timeline that has been agreed for doing so and what steps need to be completed before that happens?

J. MULLALEY: I think, as part of the working group, that's going to be established with our partners in the NG. We'll be looking at all that and looking at our units. We've started that work actually a while ago where we did some joint inspection work on properties in the North, and that will need to continue to expand.

So understanding that, with any transfer, we want to make sure that these properties are very much in good order as well and investing in those properties is really important. We're going to continue to work through that working group to move that forward.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Last question: When do we expect this housing and service hub in Happy Valley-Goose Bay to be fully operational?

J. MULLALEY: We're continuing to work through that process now. We did hire a prime consultant last year. So that's active work that's under way. Extensive consultations with our partners on the ground in Happy Valley-Goose Bay in recent months. So we're actually moving forward the design and the costing on that particular project and going to public information sessions in the very near term to move forward and advance that project.

J. DINN: Okay, thank you.

CHAIR: Okay.

Does the Member for Cape St. Francis have any additional questions?

J. WALL: No, Chair.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Okay, I ask the Clerk to recall the subhead.

CLERK: 1.1.01 to 1.2.02 inclusive, Housing.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 to 1.2.02 inclusive, Housing, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 1.2.02 carried.

CHAIR: I ask the Clerk to call the total.

CLERK: The total.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, total heads, carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the Estimates of the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation carried?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation carried without amendment.

CHAIR: Does the minister have any final additional comments before we close?

F. HUTTON: Sure, thank you, Madam Chair.

I just want to thank the Members opposite for your insightful questions today. As we mentioned throughout today's proceedings, we're happy to get back to you with any information that you asked for that we didn't have readily available.

I also want to thank the team here – this is only a small portion of the people who work hard each and every day with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. I've had the opportunity to meet with many of the staff here in our St. John's office. I've been into our Gander office and I've been at our Corner Brook office. And I can tell you, to a person, everybody who is there has the same goal in mind: to keep people housed, safely and adequately.

That's the goal we have here as well on a daily basis. It's something that I take very seriously, and I want to, once again, thank the Members opposite for your questions today and your time.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister Hutton.

The Member for Cape St. Francis.

J. WALL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, on behalf His Majesty's Official Opposition, I'd like to thank all of your staff for coming here today and providing answers. And, please, take back to your staff, a thank you from us as well for the work that they do on an ongoing basis. It's appreciated.

J. DINN: I want to express my thanks not only for the questions asked here that you've answered, but I know housing is an issue right across the province, but I tell you in St. John's Centre it seems to be the epicentre at some days. I know you must be tired of getting calls from either me or Elizabeth, but you've been invaluable in getting the things done. So I appreciate that very much.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The date and time for the next meeting of the Social Services Committee will at the call of the Chair.

I ask for a mover for adjournment, please.

J. WALL: So moved.

CHAIR: Moved by the Member for Cape St. Francis.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Thank you.

On motion, the Committee adjourned sine die.