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HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

Wednesday

April 24, 2024
(Night Sitting)

The House resumed at 5:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 4.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Limitations Act, Bill 74, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act to Amend the Limitations Act, Bill 74, and that said bill be now read a first time.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety and Attorney General to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Limitations Act," carried. (Bill 74)

CLERK (Hawley George): A bill, An Act to Amend the Limitations Act. (Bill 74)

SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

J. HOGAN: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 74 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 5.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, that for the purpose of reviewing the Estimates of Executive Council in Committee of the Whole House, debate shall proceed in the same manner as adopted by Committees of the House reviewing Estimates; that is, in 10-minute question and answer periods.

SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 6.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, that notwithstanding Standing Order 63, this House shall not proceed with Private Members' Day on Wednesday, May 1, 2024, but shall instead meet at 2 p.m. on that day for Routine Proceedings and the conduct of Government Business and that, if not earlier

adjourned, the Speaker shall then adjourn the House at midnight.

SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 7.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, that under Standing Order 11(1) this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, April 29, 2024.

SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 8.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, that under Standing Order 11(1), this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 30, 2024.

SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 9.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, that under Standing Order 11(1), this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 2, 2024.

SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

SPEAKER: Motion 1 for debate, the subamendment.

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I had hoped to move on to a few other issues, but I'm going to spend some more time on housing and, in particular, some of the comments made by the Minister of

Housing lately with regard to living in tents is unsafe, while government and partners regularly offer options.

Now, the last time we had a debate around options and units – you might remember this from the fall and questioning as to what we were talking about, options and units, that was probably the last time I was speaking in the House for that session. So you'll understand if I question when I hear any minister – any minister – talk about options, because I'm looking for something concrete, and that people living in the Tent City have been offered options to live in either staffed shelters, private shelters and, where necessary, hotel rooms.

I know, in my office, we've actually tried to get people hotel rooms. That has never happened. I don't know when the last time that ever happened, unless of course we're talking about the Riverwalk. I can tell you that when we brought a particular case to the Minister of Housing, about a person who had been in the shelter system, was down at Tent City, was in crisis, and we needed to get that person out of there, the option that was presented to this person was, well, emergency shelters. Then there's the announcement that government is investing millions in transitional supportive living instead of meeting, I guess, people where they are, down there.

But let me talk about shelters. According to an ATIPP that we have from September 1, 2023, to February 1, 2024, there are 25,457 calls to the emergency shelter line – five months, 25,457 calls to the emergency shelter line. In total, the distinct people who are shelters from that same period was 1,017: 661 on the Avalon; 84 in Corner Brook; 102 in Gander; 25 in Grand Falls-Windsor; 112 in Happy Valley-Goose Bay; 12 in Marystown; and 21 in Stephenville – 1,017.

The number of existing shelter beds in the province is 317; 173 in Eastern; 126 in Central; seven in Western; and 11 in

Labrador. Now if we add the new comfort inn hotel to this, 142, that still brings it up to 459. So I'm trying to do the math here as to how the talk and hype around the hotel is going to solve the problem, because we've got a ways to go – we've got a ways to go.

I think, in many ways, while the comfort inn is a step, it is a very small step. I would suggest that when people from government or from the Department of Housing are down there offering options – staffed shelters, private shelters, hotel rooms – they're actually offering false hope – false hope, pure and simple. That's what it comes down to.

So then for the minister to turn around and call it a protest and walk it back today and say no, we weren't really talking about the people in the tents is absolutely wrong. Then I come to the fact: Transition to where? Because that's the whole purpose of this enterprise down there is to transition people, so that they can have stable housing. Where?

Because I can tell you, between me and my constituency assistant – and I will say she is doing the bulk of it – it has become an impossible task to find those places. So I don't know where these places are or where they're transitioning, but we can't find them. That is even with calling CSSD or Housing.

And then there is the whole issue of staffing – fantastic, wraparound services, having the services there; but unless the Minister of Housing has his own special supply of health professionals, we also know that we're having a hard time trying to staff our hospitals with medical professionals or to actually encourage people to stay.

When I get up and up and express my frustration, that's where this comes from. I spent the better part of my volunteer career actually helping people who are in homelessness, who are in poverty. We started our own small not-for-profit housing project. If there is anything political in this

discussion for me and I would say to the minister if there is anything political with some of the people down there who are protesting, it's about finding people decent housing. This just didn't happen. In September, October, it was already building up. This has been ongoing for a while.

So if anything, talk about the jewel in the Crown now, which seems to be the comfort inn, but also speak about the fact that there are still an awful lot of people who will not be able to avail of options and, more importantly, the options of staffed shelters.

I don't know how many times I've had to bring this up in the House before, a lot of people do not want to go to these staffed shelters for a lot of reasons. I've brought this up before. Offering them shelters where, in some cases, they've got out of it, is a slap in the face. Not only that, I've talked to a number of people who've tried to get in staffed shelters, only they need to have their three months of financials to show that they are deserving of going into the shelter. So they're down in Tent City and we're trying to help them get the paperwork so that they can get a foothold into a shelter.

So I think we need to look at numbers, too. I can't help but think, I implicitly trust End Homelessness, I really do. My fear is that with the lack of resources and that, I really fear that they are being set up for failure. I trust them implicitly, I know where their heart lies, but I can't help but think that they are being set up for failure.

So I will say this then, Housing is certainly, I would say, next to the health care crisis, certainly the lack of safe, affordable housing is the single most important challenge affecting the well-being of people of our province. It is affecting everyone. Seniors on fixed incomes, people on low incomes who are watching their rents increase, international students, our Ukrainians and other newcomers, they're suffering as a result of this government's failure to develop

a plan to address the crisis. It amazes me that as an MHA, even before I was an MHA, to see this crisis unfolding but those in power couldn't.

Now government talks, Speaker, about wraparound supports, and I'm never sure what this means exactly because I've written the Minister of Housing and the Minister of CSSD regarding a situation of a constituent of mine in my district. This person has written about a person who is a client of several departments here, who has created a significant amount of problems for the neighbour to the point where she's had to get a police escort to get into her own house. Now she sent pictures, she sent the complaints and the response has been, and I have the letters here to show: We appreciate your problem but this is the way it is. If you see any suspicious activities, please report it to the police. So that becomes the answer.

The question I have asked, even back in August when the Minister of CSSD came around with me at that time, I asked him and his staff: How do we provide supports for a person who has complex mental health, physical needs and make sure that they do not face eviction? How do we make sure that those who are living in the community, neighbours nearby, are able to enjoy the experience, the quiet enjoyment of their property and their home and feel safe and secure?

Because invariably the people who've come to me, and even this person in particular, is very sympathetic to that person, hold no ill-will towards that person, even though – and I can read examples here of the trauma that's been caused.

When I am thinking of wraparound services, I'm thinking of some place like Indwell where you do have independent living. The people have their own place in which to live, cook their meals, a locked door, but there are staff there 24-7. There's an opportunity there for that person to thrive.

Now, maybe, the comfort inn will do that but it still, in some ways, smacks of an institution because there's no cooking facilities in the rooms. I've been in that hotel. It's a nice place, dated, but I can't help but think government could have purchased that building outright, cheaper, and put more money towards the services there.

Nevertheless, the person I was talking about in my district, this person does have wraparound services but they involve, usually, let's say maybe a social worker visiting once a week or once a month. That's insufficient for this person, I would argue. It's not the only one.

I recently got another one, and I think this person has already made contact with several of the ministers as well. It's over on Froude Avenue. It's on Livingstone Street. Only last week, we had a police incident and I can tell you that the people in my district are getting tired of it. It seems to be total inaction or impotence on the part of government and then it comes down to, let's call the police. That cannot be the answer.

The first incident when I was elected was the stabbing on Bond Street. That was in Alison Coffin's district at the time. For me, it was some of the problems down on Allan Square and Balsam Street. It's been continuous, stabbings, shootings. We've had takeovers of houses by a criminal element. I can think of several right now where that's happening, and it's powerless to do anything. So the person who maybe a client of Eastern Health, of CSSD, is still left without the supports and taken advantage of.

We have here, it's interesting – and we're paying out a lot of good money for this – an ATIPP on two landlords – two landlords – in the metro area. Between the two of them, between 2020 and 2023 from Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services, \$723,000 to house people with complex needs – \$723,000. Now, I

understand – I could be wrong on this one – the budget is around \$1.8 million. From Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, the same two landlords, the same period – and this has to do with the rent supplements – the same two landlords received another \$256,602 – close to a million dollars.

I've been in some of these houses and I wouldn't put my worst enemy there. Actually, there are a few of them that still have boards up to the windows from August. I brought that to the attention then of CSSD. It is now April and the board is still there. I've been in that house. So pardon my frustration because most of it is trying to find decent places for people in which to live.

I don't know if any of you are Trekkies, but we've heard the Premier talk about the continuum of supports. I didn't know if I was in an episode of Star Trek and I didn't know which one was Q, because the Q Continuum, it's a fiction. I can't help but think when we hear them talk about the supports, it's a fiction.

There's a person at Tent City I met at a supportive housing – I'm trying not to identify the place – about four years ago, five years ago and that person had been incarcerated but you could see the difference already. A great person to talk to. I met that person a few years later in another support and the person was still thriving. That person is at Tent City and I would say, you can see the deterioration and part of it comes down to a lack of a stable home. The person has been forced into the shelter system; I know this person has been wondering the streets at times.

I can tell this person is not there out of protest, but I asked the question: If this person had been in a stable place, would this person be where they are right now? No. I'm thinking the lost potential of that individual because it's likely that this person is going to end up in the justice system again.

I have a number of things here, but I will say this, housing is not just a political topic for me. It is political in that if I can force change and get people out of tents, out of slum conditions and into something stable, that's what I'll do. I'll use whatever means at my disposal.

But I can tell you right now, it's been a source of frustration in terms of people who have fallen between the cracks – what a nice way to say that basically government has failed them.

Now we know that the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL has announced a hiring of a person to bring landlord-tenant cases to court. Great, but let's also take a look at measures that also put caps on rent increases. They can seek controls. The elimination of the three-month, no-fault eviction for large landlords in this case. The ones who give the three-month notice so that they can renovate the place and then charge higher.

Some of the people, by the way, that we're dealing with, were paying out almost \$3,000 a month in rent for the most difficult to house.

Now I will go back to that and say this, to me, if we're paying out \$2,500, \$3,000 a month for rent to house this person, that's the first signal that this person is in need of supports, more than what we can give. But right now, we're setting people up for failure.

Last night – I think it was last night, can't remember any more now – at the town hall, we heard very clearly from international students about the affordability of housing.

AN HON. MEMBER: Monday night.

J. DINN: Monday night, there you go, it's all collapsing on me – about the affordability of housing. I've had volunteers who've been working with our Ukrainian newcomers struggling to find them affordable places to live.

So I will tell you, and it's coming down to the last minute, I can talk about the barriers, but there are an awful lot of barriers that we set up, that government sets up, that makes it difficult for people to access the services they need. But I will tell you there might be a way in terms of a long-term solution, whether it's about establishing land trusts, setting up a provincial acquisition fund so non-profits can purchase land for more non-market community housing, to set limits on the number of how much housing property that large financial landlords can acquire and, if nothing else, setting up a rent bank so that people having trouble to meet the rent can get an interest-free loan.

With that, Speaker, if I get an opportunity to speak about more solutions, I will.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

It is an honour to speak in the budget debate, and this for people watching, just by way of background, in regard to the non-confidence subamendment that was introduced by the Official Opposition, the PC Official Opposition. I'm not going to read out the subamendment in its entirety, Speaker, but I do want to highlight some of the essential concerns and issues that we have highlighted in this subamendment.

Before I get into that, I just want to point out a couple of things about the role of the Official Opposition here in this Legislature and in this hon. House. The Opposition parties have a very important role and the Official Opposition, our primary responsibility is to hold government to account. It is to – as they say – keep their feet to the fire. Sometimes, as we see often, actually, that can be very challenging because we have to present to the government and to the public, things that are happening that we have to question and

we have to seek accountability from the government of the day.

So I think it's important. We often are criticized as Official Opposition Members for doing just that, that we criticize without offering, perhaps, constructive solutions or without offering alternatives. That's not a good thing, Speaker, because when the public lose confidence and lose faith in us and they believe this is all just about politics, no one is served well by that, especially not as politicians and as elected officials.

But I do want to try to explain and try to encourage people to really look at what we, as an Opposition, have to do here. Sometimes the questions that we have to ask in the House of Assembly are tough questions. They are questions that we would prefer not to ask because they are very difficult questions, which may make it very uncomfortable for the ministers of the day. But it's not personal and that's not what we're about.

I think when we realize the importance of the role that we play here in the Legislature as a part of our parliamentary democracy, that we have to hold our government to account, to question them on the policies of the day, to question them on decisions. That is only how we are going to progress and how our democracy will flourish.

So when I look at this amendment, there are a number of things here that we have to question the government on because they are issues that we hear, each one of us, from our constituents, and I'm sure that the Members opposite as well hear these same concerns. So I think it's important to look at, for example, some of the issues that I've highlighted in the subamendment go to things like whether the government has provided access to the people to primary care providers.

We've heard a lot. We've asked a lot of questions in Question Period, and we've made a lot of comments in debate. We also

present petitions representing the concerns that our constituents have because they cannot access primary health care providers, so that is something that we have to do.

Hopefully, through these questions, when the government is listening, then we will see improvements. Whether we are on the Opposition side as the PC Opposition or whether when their turn comes and they are in the Opposition, the same rules will apply. We will be asking questions, like what we mentioned in the subamendment, whether this government has retained health care professionals such as nurses and doctors. We ask those questions on a daily basis of our government, and we see failures, Speaker – we see failures.

We see the out-migration, if you will, of our nurses and doctors who are leaving the province, so we have to bring those facts forward. We have to present those so that the government will be able to listen and hopefully incorporate, in their policies, further measures.

We also look at the Poverty Reduction Plan. We have questioned that time and time again, and we would argue that they have failed. This government has failed in all its years in government, in this administration, have failed to really introduce a comprehensive Poverty Reduction Plan, like the one that was in place that they actually cancelled when they came into government.

We also ask questions – and this is in the subamendment. This addresses questions about serious mental health and addictions in our province. We can't deny that that exists. We can't pretend and paint this rosy picture. I mean, the people are smart. The people of this province can see through that and we're not serving them well or we're not serving anyone in that regard if we try to portray things in a way that's not accurate.

So we need to look at that, and the violence and crime in our communities – we hear it,

all of us here, of the increase in crime, the violence, the seriousness of crimes that are occurring. Whether it be intimate partner violence, whether it be home invasions, all of these things are happening in our communities and towns, Speaker. We can't pretend that that's not the case, and we have a responsibility as the Official Opposition to question and question hard and ask those tough, uncomfortable questions that need to be asked. Any government that is worth its weight has to be able to answer those questions and take those questions seriously.

We also, in the subamendment, look at whether we've provided proper resources to the police, and I've heard from police that that is not the case. There is definitely a lack of resources that prevent the police from being able to do the job that they need to do when it comes to enforcing the laws of the day.

We, of course, have heard about the efforts to rehabilitate inmates and the issues that are going on at Her Majesty's Penitentiary, at the HMP, and the problems there that, I would submit, we are not succeeding in that area at all. We've just heard today about the housing needs of our people and the questions that we have asked as the Official Opposition about the needs of our people in terms of housing and how they're not being met in our communities and in our towns today.

Also, whether women are being paid equitably for the work that they do. We look at the pay equity legislation, and I would submit to you that is a failure. That has not been a successful piece of legislation. It is not a piece of legislation that we can be proud of, that represents women in our province. I would submit that there has to be a hard, hard look at that to reform that law.

What about the Crown lands issue? We mentioned that in our subamendment, the failure to protect homeowners from court

action by Crown Lands to seize the homes they live in.

We've been asking questions. Our Members in the House of Assembly in the Official Opposition have asked those tough, hard questions of the ministers responsible in those portfolios, and whether we're getting the answers that we need, when we listen to our constituents and the suffering that they're going through and the anguish in terms of trying to deal with the mess of the Crown Lands system that's in place in our province, it's just not good enough.

What about the taxes that we have? Speaker, I would submit to you that this Liberal government has failed to fight early or effectively enough against the Liberal government's carbon tax, and I'm going to just speak about that for a few moments as well when we look at the carbon tax.

That federal Liberal carbon tax, I would submit to you, imposed a punitive carbon tax that did not reduce emissions. But what did it do, Speaker? It raised the cost of everything, and especially for our people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yet, Speaker – and this has to be clear, and we can't try to pull the wool over the eyes of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, because they see through this. This provincial Liberal government supported this carbon tax. Despite their backpedalling, despite their futile attempts to distance and separate themselves from this federal Liberal tax, they did not distance and separate themselves. The people see through this, Speaker.

Yet, five years later, we look at the carbon tax and I would argue that it's a resounding failure. The carbon tax has punished Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. While failing to reduce emissions,

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are still struggling to pay this carbon tax.

What is it doing? It's still costing Newfoundland and Labrador families hundreds of dollars each year. It is a tax on the gas Newfoundlanders and Labradorians use to drive their children to school. It is a tax on groceries, the skyrocketing costs of groceries that they have to buy. It is a tax on small businesses that are trying so hard to operate in our province. It is a tax on essentially everything, Speaker.

Yet, the provincial Liberals are trying to distance themselves from this carbon tax. This Liberal government, Speaker – and it has to be stated; these are the facts. This is not politics; it's the facts. They were very slow to try to oppose this carbon tax. They actually spoke out in favour of it initially and they were, at the beginning, quite happy with the little carve-outs our province received.

So, Speaker, this carbon tax is not the answer. It's not the answer in this province and it punishes our people. Yet, this government has been very – well, I would say they have backpedalled and they flipfopped, and their position, people see this.

Speaker, when we look at rebranding, it's very interesting to look at that concept of rebranding. The federal Liberal Minister of Environment and Climate Change and the prime minister tried to rebrand the carbon tax, but guess what? That was a desperate attempt to save them, the federal government, from going down in the polls, but it didn't work because people see through this – people see through it.

The same thing can be said of the attempt by the provincial Liberals here to rebrand their colours, if you will, from red to white. Is it now white and grey? Those things, people see through that.

I would also argue when we look at some of the similarities in rebranding between the federal Liberals and the provincial Liberals, I'm just going to talk about the ArriveCan scandal, or as they call it, the so-called ArriveScam scandal. Basically, the Canadian Auditor General came in and looked at this project and really determined that it was the worst financial record keeping ever.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That was federal. So we might say, well, what has this got to do with here? Well, let's try to draw the comparison.

Let's look at the travel nurses, Speaker, let's look at that. When we see what happened with our sole-source contract with the group that was involved with the travel nurses, I'll just remind people of the ArriveCan scandal. This project started out initially to be \$80,000 and it turned out to be \$60 million. There were consultants involved, they were also a sole-source recipients of the ArriveCan contract. Guess how much they received, the sole-source recipient of the contract? Over a quarter of a billion dollars since 2015 in various government contracts. It began, interestingly, after the Trudeau Liberals were first elected.

Then we come to the travel nurses' situation that we have here. When I look at that, there are some interesting comparisons. We look at the fact that the travel nurses here, there was \$1.6 million that went to an agency for meal allowances that weren't paid out to the nurses. It appears that there may have been fraudulent activity, we argue, that needed to be investigated. When we look at the initial time that this scathing travel nurse contract was exposed by *The Globe and Mail*, back, I believe it was, five months into 2023, it was determined that they had spent a staggering \$35.6 million on travel nurses – \$35.6 million on travel nurses. That is provincial, Speaker. That is what I'm talking about now.

I'm looking at the fact that this was also a sole-source contract that was engaged in by the provincial Liberals with this sole-source consultant. The sole-source contract was directed by the Premier's office; it appears to have had no financial controls, it led to inflated costs within our health care system for travel nurses.

Speaker, we called on the government to have the AG look into it right away and they wouldn't do that, Speaker. Instead they said no, we'll have the Comptroller General look at it. Well, at least with the federal situation, Canada's AG got involved right away and found that it was a disaster in terms of financial recordkeeping. Well, I expect that's what we're going to find out here as well about the recordkeeping, if we ever get to hear the results of the AG within the next number of months. So I'm sure that will take a while.

But, Speaker, we look at this and you have to question the government. There are many, many similarities here that have to be recognized between this provincial Liberal government and the federal Liberal government.

On that note, Speaker, I do have many other things that I wish to speak about going forward. There are many issues in terms of my district that I'd like to continue to talk about. Cellphone service is a problem. As well, the roads, there are many roads in addition to Route 60 throughout my district, in North River, in Harbour Main, there are many areas of the district that need to have that addressed as far as the deplorable roads condition.

I will also talk about other issues that impact some of my portfolios with respect to persons with disabilities. I had the opportunity to meet with the executive director and the staff from the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of the Deaf, as well as the executive director of the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities, so there's much to say about that when I get

the opportunity to speak again in debate at another time.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers, we will now vote on the subamendment.

All those in favour of the subamendment?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

SPEAKER: The subamendment is defeated.

On motion, subamendment defeated.

SPEAKER: We now move into the amendment.

Any speakers to the amendment?

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have to bring up something here now, Mr. Speaker, and I was not going to bring this up, but I just received a message from an individual and it is very disturbing to me, if true. I don't know if it's true or not, but I'm going to ask the minister responsible for, I guess it's immigration, I think, is the minister, so I'm told.

So anyways, this lady says: Paul, I'm not sure if you're aware – it was in the news apparently and she did send me a link to the Morning Show with Krissy Holmes, it was on this morning. I tried to listen to it but I couldn't out there, and it is supposed to be on VOXM, maybe tomorrow, but the gist of it is, at least how she's interpreting in, come September 30, funding that supported

groups like Avalon Employment, Visions Employment and so on are going to get their funding cut on September 30.

Now that's what this lady is sending to me and she says: I know minister Burns is a big player in this. That was her words, not mine. Now, maybe she's mixing it up with – maybe she's talking about *The Simpsons*.

But, Mr. Speaker, as I said, this wasn't something I intended to bring up, but given the fact that it's my last opportunity, I have to do it now. I haven't had a chance to actually listen to what was said on the CBC Morning Show. She's telling me that the CEO of Avalon Employment is supposed to be going on VOXM tomorrow, I think, to talk about this.

I'm not sure what the plans are or what the cuts are, or if there are cuts, and I'm sure the minister can get up and tell me that I have nothing to worry about. This is all being misinterpreted and that's not going to happen. I hope to God that's what he's going to do.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that I have had – and I'm sure other Members have as well. I can't speak so much to Avalon Employment, Vera Perlin. I do know people there; I've had some conversations with them. But I can speak to Visions Employment because they're in Mount Pearl. There are a lot of residents from Mount Pearl and the surrounding area and a lot of them are the same people that would be involved with Mount Pearl Special Olympics, as an example.

You will see them working at Colemans, as an example. Colemans has been a great employer, Sobeys, and the City of Mount Pearl has partnered. There are a number of businesses in Mount Pearl and I'm sure outside of Mount Pearl – I know outside of Mount Pearl – that provide opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities.

It's kind of been a win-win situation because it's providing them an opportunity to work, and they want to work. In all cases, employers I have talked to said, the best employees they've had. They're reliable, they never call in sick, they're always at work on time, and whatever you get them to do, they do it and they're very rigid in making sure that everything is done exactly the way it should be done.

There are job coaches that would be hired by Visions, by Avalon Employment and so on. In some cases, they need a job coach to sort of tell them what to do and to assist. In other cases, they can work totally independently. It depends on the individual. But, at the end of the day, it is a very, very worthwhile program. Something that I've had many dealings with, Visions. As I say, Vera Perlin, Avalon Employment and others, they're doing human service and providing these individuals with the opportunity to be productive members of society, just like everybody else.

To hear that we are potentially going to be cutting funding to that, that is just astounding. It is astounding if it's true. It is astounding if that is true. I can tell you, this lady has indicated that if this happens, that they're going to be up on the steps of the Confederation Building and I can guarantee you one thing, buddy, this Member is going to be out there with them, if that's true. If that is true, that would be the most shameful thing that we could ever do, to destroy a program like that for people with intellectual disabilities to be able to work and be productive members of society.

If we're going to yank the rug out from under them, I would say absolutely shameful. Shameful if that's – I can't believe it. I'm flabbergasted to be honest with you that I received this. I never heard it. Maybe other Members heard something about it. I didn't hear it. But it's terrible.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) federal.

P. LANE: Now, my colleague over there says yes, b'y, it's just federal. If that's what it is, fine. I know the provincial government also provides funding and support for these programs. I know they do. They receive money from the provincial government. They do. So I hope that's not being cut. I hope maybe she's mixing it up and it is just federal. If it's federal well then, I'll be joining them out in front of Seamus O'Regan's office, if it's true, 100 per cent.

That is absolutely shameful. I can't believe it hasn't come up here, to be honest with you. Maybe I missed it; I can't believe it hasn't come up. That is absolutely disgusting, beyond disgusting, that anybody would be doing that.

I apologize to the Members opposite if it's not you and it has nothing to do with what you're doing and if this lady has it wrong, I'll let her know and I'll be joining her and others outside of Seamus O'Regan's office, not a problem. But I think this Legislature does need to step up and lobby our MPs if that's the case. Get on their case because they work for us, too. They should be advocating against this if it's happening. They should be advocating, and we should all be out on the steps. We should all be out protesting this if that's what's happening. Absolutely shameful.

Anyway, I digress. Mr. Speaker, I want to stick to this budget now, if that's the case. I know we stand in this House of Assembly all the time and we're asking for funding for different things and where the money is being spent and so on, and we know that things cost money, we get that, but I just want to go back because I haven't heard this raised in this session of the House. Maybe the Finance Minister may have raised it, I don't know, but I really haven't heard – I've heard Members more, myself included, critical of government programs and things that are happening, whatever, but I haven't heard any discussion around the actual overall budget itself from the point

of view of our fiscal position, from an actual fiscal position.

I know the Minister of Finance probably did but, beyond that, like we're talking about this program, that program, the health care issues and they're all important issues, but I just think it's important to bring it up and for us all to be mindful of the fact that, as much as it's important to ensure that we are providing the services that are needed and so on, it's also important to realize that we still have what many would consider a crippling debt for a province of our size. We do – we do.

Even if you look at our net debt here in this budget, last year we had a net debt of \$17,235,983,000, and this year we have a net debt of \$17,817,633,000. So that's an increase of almost \$600 million – \$590 million or whatever it is. Almost \$600 million more added on to our net debt. Of course, net debt is an interesting figure because that's not necessarily reflective of our actual real debt. I would suggest our actual debt is way, way more than that, when you factor in all the other things that we owe money on.

It's important to note that we borrowed \$3 billion – with a B – this year. We borrowed \$3 billion. We're not really talking about that fact that we borrowed \$3 billion. Some of that is obviously reflected in the net debt. Some of that, as I understand it, is because there were certain loans that came due or whatever, so we sort of borrowed from here at a lesser rate to pay this one off and pay less interest on that. That's part of it. But we also borrowed significant money, as I understand it – and the Finance Minister can stand up and correct me if I'm wrong again. That's not a problem. I hope I'm –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. LANE: Yes, like I was wrong on that one, apparently. I'm not afraid to admit I'm wrong, not at all. I've been wrong more than I'm right, some people might say, sometimes.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. LANE: Sometimes yes, you can put it in *Hansard*, because it is what it is, right? It is what it is.

But my understanding is that part of \$3 billion there's a billion or more that is not showing up in the net debt because it's money – when we heard about all this record investment in capital, some of that is, as I understand it, borrowed money. But because of the accounting system that we're using, that it's not going to show up here on the net debt. It's not going to show up and you don't have to put it in the books until you actually make the expenditure, as I understand it.

So if you put it in the roads, until the roads are done or whatever, that's when you apply it. It's not going to show up in these numbers. So even this net debt is not necessarily accurate. It might be accurate by some accounting rules, but it's not truly reflective of the money that we're continuing to borrow and, again, we just borrowed another \$3 billion – with a B.

I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, and I try to do it every year when we do talk about the budget, to at least bring that up because it has got to be in our minds. We can't continue to borrow and borrow and borrow and borrow forever. It just cannot continue in infinity, and while we have to provide services, we also have to be mindful of the debt that's racking up and the money that we're spending to service that debt.

We're spending, I think it's \$700-and-some-odd million I saw here, just in debt servicing cost this year. Almost \$800 million I do believe, and that's money that could be put into much-needed services if we didn't have to pay it on the debt. It is important that we be always mindful of where we're to from a fiscal point of view.

Now, with that said, I'm going to be a little bit optimistic because even though that

those numbers are bad, I believe we have opportunities to get them to go the other way. I really do – I really do. I think there is a lot of development on the horizon. I still have my concerns about the wind and some of the stuff, but there is opportunity there from a financial point of view, certainly to increase the tax base and all the spin-off and the taxes that will go into the coffers of the government.

We do have our offshore oil. That is continuing to do well, prices are good and that's bringing money into the coffers. Hopefully Bay du Nord works out. Fingers crossed, toes crossed, that Bay du Nord is going to work out.

Besides all of our other minerals, we got the critical minerals now, and as the world starts to go to electric cars and stuff like that, we have the minerals here in this province to be able to supply to the world, create employment and revenues to the province as well.

The other thing, which I believe – and the government is not going to tip its hand and say yay or nay or whatever. I've said in this House before and I'll say it again, I really, truly believe sooner rather than later, there's going to be a big announcement in this province. I really think that's going to happen and it's going to involve this government, or it might be this government, might be a new government, who knows, but it's going to involve the Newfoundland Government, if I can say that, it's going to involve the Province of Quebec and it's going to involve the feds. I really think the Churchill is coming way sooner than 2041. That's my prediction, way sooner than 2041. I really believe that is going to happen.

So, I think –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. LANE: Oh, I didn't say Labrador, did I? I'm sorry Newfoundland and Labrador. That was not intentional. I say to the Minister of

Labrador Affairs, that was not intentional and I am fully cognizant of the resources that come out of Labrador to provide all the province. So I would say to the minister, you're absolutely right, Newfoundland and Labrador and they're a very important part of our province and of our economy and they have great people, too.

But anyway, the bottom line is, I think that I do see a lot of opportunity on the horizon. I really think that even though we haven't been doing well this last number of years, we've been really challenged and the debt continues to grow – and that is a concern. It should be a concern for everybody in this House. It should be a concern for everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador, but at the end of the day, I think that there are lots of opportunities on the horizon and there is a way forward. I really believe there is a way forward. That's 100 per cent, I believe that.

AN HON. MEMBER: Balance the budget, too.

P. LANE: The minister is saying balanced budgets and yes, I hope we can get to the day that we're going to have balanced budgets and the balanced budget legislation is going to be in place and to continuously fund from our offshore – as the minister knows, I supported all those things. I supported all those things because I think they're important to the fiscal well-being of our province. I really do. So that's not sucking up to the minister or whatever, that's just how I feel.

I think that everyone in this House, I'm sure, regardless of our differences from an ideological point of view, everybody in this province wants everybody to do well. We're all getting to a stage – I know I'm getting to a stage – I have grandkids now. I have 3½ – well, 3¾ grandchildren. My new grandson should be arriving in another couple of months. I can't wait for that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: It's funny how it changes your perspective. Because when I think of things now, I think of them. Even though you'd think that when you have your own kids, you'd be thinking of your own kids, but it's different. I can tell you when you're a grandparent, it's different. More and more and more, everything that goes through my head, I'm thinking of them.

I want them to be able to stay here and make a life and have a good life. I'm sure we all do. So it's not all doom and gloom. There are challenges, there's no doubt. We've got challenges coming out of our yin-yang when it comes to health care. I've said before that I do not envy the Minister of Health and what he has before him. He's got to be on the go 24-7 and his mind has got to be racing at all times. Because I know mine would be; I'd be drove right round the bend if it was me. So good on him for doing what he's doing. I know there are challenges.

We know there are challenges in education. They're not new challenges. Although violence in the classroom is becoming a real, real big issue. But resources are needed in the classroom. Those challenges can be dealt with. If we work together, those challenges can be dealt with. But at the end of the day, it requires money to do it, and we have to make sure that we are good stewards of the public purse.

That's why I brought forward the private Member's motion today on agencies, boards and commissions for that very reason, and I do want to thank everybody once again who supported that. Part of our problem has been, over the years, is not managing our money wisely. I think a lot of people would say that. We need to find every mechanism we can to try to make sure we take care of the pennies, and then the dollars will take care of themselves. Just like your mother told you when you were growing up.

SPEAKER: The hon. Member's time is expired.

P. LANE: Anyway, my time is up.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

It is certainly a great opportunity to get up and to represent the district again and bring some issues that are in my district and bring them forth. It is a job that we all try to do and do it respectfully. Sometimes we have to ask for stuff that we need in our district and certainly it comes through sometimes, not all the time, but there is good stuff that happens for sure. So I'm certainly going to try to touch on some of that.

But I will go back to where I left off yesterday. I got another email from another mayor today regarding the nurse practitioner that is in the area that is leaving. So here she said: Thanks for sharing your communication – Minister Osborne responded to the lady that sent it out. You have highlighted a dire situation here in the Ferryland region. I had a local resident express the same frustration to me just this weekend. With the aging population on the Southern Shore and the need to access timely medical services, reducing 1.5 nurse practitioners to one practitioner is trending in the wrong direction.

It is a big concern in the district. It is a big concern; it is an aging population. It's not something that we can have happen in the district. It's really not. We lost an ambulance two or three years ago and moved it down to Cape Broyle. Then they put a rapid response unit in to try to respond to those needs. There is still only one ambulance in

Trepassey. That's a big issue. People don't realize that it's two hours to the nearest hospital – two hours. You got to think about that and if the ambulance is gone – somebody has to put that in their mind and I'll touch another story in a second – it is two hours.

With the absence of a doctor – we lost a doctor two years ago. So if you're sitting over here on this side, it's like you're picking on the Ferryland District. We lost a doctor, we lost an ambulance, 2015 they cut a school. They're soon going to cut it off the Avalon Peninsula, by the sounds of it. It's ridiculous. It is ridiculous and the people in my district deserve to have doctors and nurse practitioners and ambulances the same as everywhere else.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: It is not acceptable.

And if you keep at it long enough, you let it go away, it will go away. Well, it's not going away. It will not go away while I'm here, I can tell you that. That's what we're put here to do. It just seems like it goes away; oh, that will fall away. Well, it's not going away. We still have the same issues. It's not acceptable to be taking a nurse practitioner out of that district with the aging demographics there, for sure – definitely not acceptable.

So that means there are two days in Ferryland, as I said the other day, there are two days in Trepassey and one day virtual. We got one gone. So who's going to fill it in? If there was any hope to reduce the wait times that everyone is currently experiencing, and even then, this is just a band-aid. That's not even a band-aid, that's taking off the band-aid and making it a sore. It's unbelievable that we're doing it. How can this government sit here and do that to the people in the Ferryland District? It is incredible. It is unbelievable. I don't want to be harping on it, but if you don't, how's it

going to get fixed? We have to represent the district.

We're talking about the ambulance issue. I read through it there earlier, yesterday. Along with getting an ambulance to get out there, they sit down sometimes five or six hours waiting to get in the hospital.

I had a call on Friday from a lady. A gentleman has stage four cancer. They called an ambulance for him and he had to wait outside until he got triaged in the hospital in the emergency room. This happens. This is real life. You know, she was understanding. I said, well, I can't really ask the minister. Like, I understand how it is. I can't ask the minister when he's not even triaged. But you're going to be sitting out in an ambulance, in a hallway or waiting to get triaged. Like, that's real-life stories. That's a real-life story and I'm sure everybody got those stories.

But let's see how we can get that fixed. I mean, let's get our heads together on it. Let's get this fixed. I know that you're building a spot or having a spot or renovating a spot down in the Costco area, down there on Stavanger Drive, no doubt about it. Hopefully that will help the emergency room entrances or people that are going in there that don't necessarily need to be in an emergency, but they have no family doctor so they have to get down there. Hopefully that gets up and running.

It just boils my blood to talk about, I've got to tell you. I'm going to move on to another topic. It just irritates me to no end.

I'll move on to another topic. This is Crown lands. This gentleman bought this land back in '57, now they're going to say well, they can go in and get it and buy it back at face value or whatever value they put on it. So this was his retirement package. He was going to sell this land. He's in his 70s. I'm not going to say any names. I always tell people I'll certainly speak about it. I'm not going to bring no names up.

But he bought this land, he paid for it, he never used it, he didn't need to. No different than anybody else having a piece of land. Now he wants to take it and sell it and retire and go out and move into a retirement home somewhere. It could be a condo, whatever he wants to do, that's his choice. But he can't sell it.

Now, he can buy it back at market value. It's 2½ to three acres of land. He can buy it back, each piece. These are two separate pieces here he got; he got them since last year, March 2023. He can buy them back at a fair market value of \$94,300 each piece – \$94,300 is what he can buy them back at a fair market value. His lawyer will tell him he's wasting his time going to court spending his money to try to get his own land that he paid for 30 or 40 years ago. It's incredible. Like, that's the kind of stuff that's real life.

So the gentleman, he's trying to move on and retire, he worked his whole life and he got two pieces of land that he wants to sell. There's somebody who wants to buy it. He's not going to get any money out of it. He's got to pay \$94,300. He might sell it for \$100,000. Now where's that going to get him? It's a couple hundred thousand dollars out of your own pocket that you're giving to the government because they say that they own the land.

It's time for us to get this straightened out. We're all in here representing our districts and there is no one on this side or that side can tell me you don't have a Crown land issue, because it's an issue right across the province.

You put forth legislation – we haven't brought it up yet. We're running out of time. We're not going to get it debated, so when is it going to come to the House? When are we going to try to get it settled? When are we going to try to help?

It doesn't make any sense. It makes no sense. We cannot get this to the floor so we

can get it debated and see what we can do to fix it, have some say in it. Maybe we got suggestions how it could happen. It doesn't ever happen. Here it is on the Order Paper; it came out just to keep us quiet. Well, they put it on the Order Paper three or four weeks ago, a month ago, two months ago; never a word discussed on it.

It might get called – might get called. So that's what we're waiting on now. That's the kind of government that we have. I guess we can say we never heard tell of this issue before. I'm here five years, we're dealing with Crown land. It really come to light in the last 2½ or three years.

P. FORSEY: Review in 2015.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Review in 2015 sitting on the shelf, that's right – review in 2015 sitting on the shelf.

It's time to bring that in here and to look at it; not have our heads down and not acknowledging it. We know that it's there. It's time for the minister to bring it back here so we can have a discussion on it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O' DRISCOLL: It's unbelievable.

I'll touch on the roads. The Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, I certainly spoke to him and we are hopefully going to get some pavement on Witless Bay Line. I'm certainly looking forward to it, and more than me in this House that's looking forward to it. We're certainly looking forward to it.

But there are lots of issues with road. I have a whole file full of petitions and most of them are on roads. Of course, some on ambulances, there are some on doctors and some on nurse practitioners. They're the issues that are in the district and there's stuff that you certainly can't say that we didn't bring it up or I didn't bring it up in here about the roads in my district for sure, and

every time you go somewhere, people bring it up.

I will say that I met the minister in December. I think we met in Tors Cove. We went up to the depot and they were excited about having him up there. They really were. To get the minister up there, I'll tell you they really enjoyed it and they respected him for showing up.

I called him and he said, yes, we'll go up and we did that, but there are a couple of things, Minister, since we went up there. We spoke once on Route 550. Like, some of these people in some of these depots – and I had some other emails and a couple of calls from people that work in depots across the Island. I know you listened because you paid attention and you answered the petitions and I do appreciate it.

But some of these people, if you speak to them outside your office, some of these people that are in these sites or in these depots, they can save you money. They know what they're doing out in the district. They can save you money, I guarantee you that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: I know you're aware of that. They know that there can be cost-saving measures in regard to having to – you know, the guy I'm dealing with, and you know it, he's looking for Route 550 and that would help him be able to put something on, to be able to do some brush cutting or some ditching and would make life easier for him and he can save money.

I had somebody call me from the other side of the Island, same thing. If they'd just listen to some of this stuff from the people that you – and your department, and your office workers, they've got to speak to these people because they can save you money, and that's what it's about. If this was private industry we'd be gone, shut down, but this is government.

We have to be able to listen to these people, to be able to do that, and you're well aware of that. We looked at a shed up there; it's been up there now two or three years, it's waiting on siding, it's waiting on electricity. They had the siding up there and they took it back out of the depot. That could be done. This is since December. Listen, you can give \$21 million to somebody down there; you can hire somebody to put siding on a building that would take about two to three days. It should have been done long ago. I don't know why it's not done.

It's not you there putting it on, but somebody in your department, get someone to put that on and get that done for them. It makes life easier for them for storing stuff, to be able to have a bit of heat in it. So it's important. They will save you money.

Driving through my district – and you know, you're driving it as well – I look at the road signs in some of these, in my areas. I think I heard, maybe it's the guy up the shore that said that, that they're putting some new road signs up because some of these are dilapidated. The wording is gone.

We're in the tourism industry, and you know, you drive around looking at some of these signs. I'm sure everybody can speak about it, driving in the highways and see these signs that are totally gone. The wording is gone off them, they're totally gone. There are some of the issues.

Winter maintenance – and I don't mean to be picking on the Minister for TI, but for sure it's something that we look at. Maybe we'll get him a bed and breakfast down in Petty Harbour and he can go down there and get the road paved down there as well. If we can move him down there for a few months so he can drive through Petty Harbour. That would be a good idea.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yeah, all your paving is done. We're going to move him around the district, put him in bed and breakfasts for three or four months at a time to get some of these roads done.

I touched on it the other day, and I will go back to it again, class size is a big issue in some of these schools – class size, big issue. Something that we should be looking at and make it better. Again, 30 and 32 people in the classroom, that's not acceptable. It's not acceptable in today's age.

We talk about stuff for schools and how to improve schools. We have a former president of NLTA, we have a former principal of a school, and I think there's a principal that's over there on that side as well, a former principal, yes. Who better to ask to figure some of these school issues out than the people that have already been in the system. Now, can I tell you about that? Absolutely not. I can tell you about the outside, but they know administratively what could help. There's no question about it, they can help. I know they can. I listen to the Member from Bonavista; if there's anyone more knowledgeable on schools, I haven't met him, not here.

They all have something to offer, but they're all not being asked is my point. In these offices, again, in the minister's office, these people have something to offer, I bet you it can save you money. I guarantee it can. I guarantee you they can save you money.

We'll touch on some positive things that are going on in the district because it's not all negative, I can tell you that. There's lots of positive stuff going on.

I spoke to a boat tour operator the other day. They're pretty well booked up for the summer in the Bay Bulls area. There are two boat tours there, so that's something that I know, just speaking to them in general on the side road, I said: How are you doing for the summer? How are you looking? He

said: B'y, we look like we're pretty good. Hopefully there'll be more than what we got booked, there'll be more people show up. So that's something very good.

Down in Petty Harbour, there's a zip line. There are all kinds of stores. There's an aquarium down there. There's Chafe's Landing. There are restaurants, ice cream shops and, as I said before in the petition when I was doing on the road in Petty Harbour, there's a lot of tourism that goes through that place that's not recorded in regard to how many people show up or sign a book. They drive, come into St. John's, they stay in hotel, they rent a car. They're going somewhere more rural. They come down through Petty Harbour. It looks the same as if you drive out around the bay, out where I'm to or further out across the Island, there's no difference. I mean, it's actually a fishing community, right there – beautiful spot. There's a lot of tourism that happens in that area.

I've heard a couple of Members driving to the restaurants up in the district, one in Mobile, another one in Witless Bay. You get to Ferryland, you've got a Lighthouse Picnic that a lot of people – and I don't know but one of the Members over across had said to me that she did the Lighthouse Picnic up in Ferryland and really enjoyed it.

So there's lots of stuff to do. There's an archaeological dig there as well. I don't know but you can go out and do a bit of digging yourself there, when you book it. I'm not sure if that's still on the go but they used to be able to do that. But that's something that goes on. You go further up, Mistaken Point where the fossils are. I stop by there pretty well every time I go up the shore, go to Trepassey. How many people have gone through? They give you a number that's been there. I don't have the exact number from last year so I'm not going to say it, but they did tell me at one point in time what it was, how many people have visited.

So it's a tourist attraction, UNESCO site, that's very important that a lot of people go to. In going there, as well, the restaurants in the area, in Trepassey and the hotel up there as well, they benefit from Mistaken Point. They're very busy in the summertime. When October, November comes they shut down for the year, but most times they're there, they say they had a busy summer the last couple of years and hopefully that continues. But that's a lot of good stuff that's going on.

I will say this as well, that the last couple of years, we've been working on the trail. I spoke to a couple of ministers. We've had some issues, and they caused them themselves, but the trail is open now. It's very well received in the area. There are a lot of bikes that have been travelling and Ski-doo's in the winter. As a matter of fact, we used it ourselves to go on a Ski-Doo run this year as far as Cape Broyle and we used a part of that trail. It's certainly going to be utilized and it's great to see.

I mean, we don't have the same opportunities they do in the Port Blandford area and other areas that can get on the railway track and drive right to Port aux Basques. We don't have that. We don't even have it to join to the Goulds. There is a railway track that did go through Bay Bulls and through every town along the Southern Shore. It's something that hopefully the government can see that's – I'm going to tell you, it brings a lot of economic value to the area. It really does, gas, restaurants. It really brings a lot of people to the area.

I'm running out of time. Sometimes we start here first, talking for 20 minutes and you say how am I going to speak for 20 minutes? You're rushing to get everything in now in 20 minutes. That's the chances that you get.

The volunteers in my district, a big, big, big shoutout to them. This is Volunteer Week.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: So a big shoutout to them. It goes from fire departments, you've got the Lions Clubs, you've got the Knights of Columbus, you've got Kinsmen, we've got recreation groups, you've got minor hockey. I always touch on minor hockey, as I enjoy the hockey myself and go up and see some of the minor hockey and play it myself.

But what minor hockey, softball and soccer groups bring to an area is unbelievable in economic activity. It's unbelievable. You've got hotel rooms and you've got restaurants that are on bust. That's just the way it is. If you're hosting a minor hockey tournament in any of these districts, you know that yourself, they bring a lot of economic activity. So even though it's something they pay dearly for, it really helps your communities when you're hosting a tournament. So, hopefully, all minor hockey organizations get out and be able to host a tournament because it really does help your towns. It really does. There's a big spinoff from it.

I would like to touch on – I'm going the other way now, I guess – we have two sites that are waste facilities that are right now closed when the temperature is minus seven or colder. That's a decision that somebody made in the Eastern Regional Service Board that it's closed. But I spoke to the minister, it's high time that we get these facilities up and running after September, October. In the summertime, we're going to be okay, it's opened because of temperatures, but when it gets colder in the year – I had a person call me yesterday. He went to the dump – I'm not allowed to say dump, sorry, waste facility. We all know what they're called. But you go to the waste facilities, they won't take cardboard.

So people that are on the other side, and I'll speak of the minister, they go to the waste facility, they don't take cardboard. I know we've got to recycle it, but they don't take it there. There's paper. There are so many things. I had a constituent call me yesterday and he had said that he went up to the

facility and came back with a half load. They wouldn't take half of it. Like, it's incredible.

That's the rules that they've got. You've got somebody there that is checking it. If you bring up a tire to the dump and the rim is on it, they won't take the tire and rim. You've got to go back and take the rim off the tire and take the tire in one section and the rim in the other section. That's the way they've got it done.

Now, I guess that's the way it got to be, but there are a lot of rules for people to be able to get rid – if it doesn't go in that facility, everybody in this room knows where it's going. In every community, they're taking them on a side road – not everybody, I shouldn't say everybody. That's wrong for me to say that. There are certain individuals will take that, when they've got in their vehicle, and it'll either end up in front of the gate when the facility is closed, or it's going to end up on a back road in a community, which is not acceptable. So we've got to make sure that we get these facilities open and done.

Again, I'm down to one minute. I will speak on the campers in on the Witless Bay Line. We know that it's called Featherbed in there, and there are campers –

AN HON. MEMBER: Featherbed.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Featherbed, it's called.

And there are campers in there that are left to rot and rust away. If you drive, it's absolutely horrendous. The government – I'm after going through two or three ministers. They go in and they said they would put a sign saying in 30 days, it has to be gone. That's not done. The campers are still in there. There's no one to take them.

I will speak to the minister – there are two ministers over there that helped us on Gully Pond Road two years ago, I think, when they went up and came up with a special assistance grant and gave us some money

to get rid of the campers that people left in there, that rotted away and rusted away. I bet you any money – and I have pictures on my phone – there are 50 or 60 vehicles in there that need to go.

Speaker, I'm out of time.

Thank you so much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers, we will now vote on the amendment.

All those on favour of the amendment?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against the amendment?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

SPEAKER: The amendment is defeated.

On motion, amendment defeated.

SPEAKER: We'll now move into the main motion.

Any speakers to the main motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Committee of Supply, Estimates of Executive Council and the Legislature.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Supply to consider the Estimates of Executive Council and the Legislature.

SPEAKER: Can we get a seconder for that, too?

K. HOWELL: Yes, seconded by Minister of Education.

SPEAKER: Okay, thank you.

It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Supply.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, the Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Gambin-Walsh): Order, please!

We are now considering the Estimates for the Legislature.

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

CLERK: For the Legislature, 1.1.01 to 8.1.01 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 to 8.1.01 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 8.1.01 carried.

CLERK: The total.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Legislature, total heads, carried.

CHAIR: We are now considering the Estimates for the Executive Council.

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

CLERK: For the Executive Council, 1.1.01, Government House.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01, Government House, carry?

The Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Under Salaries, last year's salaries went over budget by \$65,700. Can you explain why, please?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: I'm certainly happy to do so, but I'd like to also recognize our incredible public service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: We have a lot of public service joining us this evening as we go through the Executive Council and I want to say thank you, not only to them, who are working into the evening with us, but also to the – because I'm sure I'm going to get the question – 7,530 core public servants that work very, very hard on behalf of the province every single day and the tens of thousands more who are working in

hospitals and schools. So I just want to recognize them as we begin this evening.

I know this is under 1.1.01. The \$65,000 was basically the recognition bonus that had to be paid out. There was some backfilling. There's apparently one person who's off on some extended leave, so the backfilling of that essential position and a small amount of overtime.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: No more questions, Chair.

CHAIR: Seeing no further questions – the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Just a couple of general questions. I notice that the Minister of Housing is listed on the front page of the Executive Council. I'm wondering why. There don't seem to be any subheadings that apply to his mandate.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: I'm not sure where you're –

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

J. DINN: General questions. I'm just looking at the –

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Okay, sorry. You're asking the Minister of Housing?

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

J. DINN: No, I'm asking why is the Minister of Housing listed on the front page when there doesn't seem to be any subheadings that apply to his mandate.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Certainly, it's a new mandate and it is housed under – I'm just looking now – Executive Support, if I believe so. I've just got to find it for you. It's under Executive Council as his ministerial office comes under the Cabinet Secretariat. It's under Executive Council.

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

J. DINN: Thank you.

Then, if possible, what exactly is the Minister of Housing's mandate?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: As we move towards where the funding is, I'll be happy to give you more granular detail. Obviously, I'm not going to get into a full policy discussion, but his mandate is to ensure that we have adequate housing and appropriate housing in Newfoundland and Labrador. As you know, we've done an extensive amount of work, including, I think it's an additional – I think, if memory serves me, somewhere of \$260 million allocated this year for housing supports and services. That is what his mandate is.

There's a tremendous amount of efforts going into Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. So he covers the programs for the Housing. NLHC, as you know, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing will be coming under core government and his ministerial office, and all those expenditures will be in core government and you can get into the granular details on Housing. I understand we have Estimates in the next couple of days with the minister.

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

J. DINN: Is Newfoundland and Labrador Housing then going to be the department or

is that going to be in addition – will that be part of the department or is that staff going to be the department?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: I think that the work that will be continuing over the next six months to ensure that we have the ministry, as well as NLHC within government. So that's the work that will be done over the next six months to ensure that falls into place nicely.

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

J. DINN: Thank you.

That's it.

CHAIR: Shall we recall the first subhead?

I ask the Clerk to recall the first subhead.

CLERK: 1.1.01, Government House.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01, Government House carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subhead 1.1.01 carried.

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

CLERK: 2.1.01 to 2.2.01, Office of the Executive Council.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 to 2.2.01, Office of the Executive Council carry?

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Under Salaries, can you please provide a list of the positions included in the salary breakdown and how much is budgeted for each? We're not looking for the names, just the positions.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: There are 12 permanent, two temporary and two contractual under the salary estimate for the Premier's Office. If you want more granular detail as to positions, I'll have to get that from the Executive Council.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: (Inaudible) breakdown when you can provide it, yeah.

Under Purchased Services, can you please provide the House with a breakdown of all the invoices consolidated under Purchase Services that add up to the \$14,900 amount?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Certainly. Most of it is in copiers. So there are a number of copier rentals and usage fees, that's approximately \$12,000. Then there's the general purchased services like shredding, visual services, et cetera, that's \$1,700. Then there's some allowances for executive meetings and meals and food that you may have to bring in for those executive work-related functions. That's \$1,200, so not very much.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay.

Under 2.2.01, Executive Support, under Salaries, last year \$2,301,000 was budgeted; \$3,298,100 spent, giving an

overage of \$997,000. Can you please explain why? Were there any positions added that were not anticipated?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: That's under 2.2.01?

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Yeah.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: That is mostly in the transformation, the minister's office is in there as well and his executive assistant. That is Minister Bragg and, as you know, he was a minister without portfolio, so that's where his salary would have been.

There's the Health Transformation team, there are four including Dr. Pat Parfrey, who are working of course in the role of ensuring that we implement the Health Accord. Also under that is Dr. Rob Greenwood who would be the Rural and Regional Development team. So that's why it's over, but that's over every year and the money is then transferred from financial services and financial assistance and then moved into the department.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Under Transportation and Communications, can you give some clarity as to why there's an increase of \$61,500.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: That would be for the office of Housing, so the new Ministry of Housing. That would be because, of course, travel and office expenses would fall under there.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Professional Services last year, \$794,000 was spent. Money was not anticipated being spent at the time of the budget last year.

Can you please outline what this was for and do you have a breakdown?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: That is normally transferred for financial assistance.

I'm just going to read where my note is on that one. You're still in 2.2.01, right?

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: That's correct, yeah.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: I'm just going to ask my team to help me with that one just because I don't seem to have a note on it.

Someone is sending me something and I'll be happy to come back to that in a moment.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay, we'll go to the next question.

Under Purchased Services, can you provide a rationale as to why Purchased Services went over budget last year, and do you have a breakdown of how the \$140,000 was spent?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: It was actually over by \$43,600, and that was linked to Professional Services and sources and educational materials around awareness for the social determinants of health, the educational program around that, including Well-Being Week.

I'm going to go back, I just remembered the financial advisory services. That is the provincial asset review, I'll use a vernacular and say the Rothschild report. That's where additional monies from the Rothschild report, the review of the value of assets. We want to make sure we have the specialized global knowledge of the marketplace to ensure we value this correctly.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Has there been any reconsideration into the Rothschild report and releasing it?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: The only thing that we have right now under the Rothschild report, as you know, is that they're doing secondary work around the sale of oil and gas assets.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Is there no update on that?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: There is nothing new that I can report at this point in time.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay.

No more questions for me.

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

With regard to the Transportation and Communications, travelling for the new office of Housing. So what travelling was involved with that exactly?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: This is a new budget. As you can see under the '24-'25 budget, the budget has been increased. So it's not that it's been spent. It is approved to be spent and that's money for the minister and his department to be able to travel to federal-provincial-territorial meetings, meetings around the province or any other Housing meetings that are required.

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

J. DINN: Thank you.

With regard to the \$43,600 over budget in Purchased Services, again, that was for Well-Being Week and I think you said around awareness of social determinants of health.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Right.

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

J. DINN: What exactly with regard to Well-Being Week was that money being used for? Was that for promotional materials, events and what would have been the split for that or would that have been all –

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: That pretty much was all for the social determinants of health.

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

J. DINN: Okay.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: So any of the, you know, collateral materials, any of the information or advertising that was required and the promotion of the social determinants of health. That's all part – as we all know – of implementing the health accord.

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

J. DINN: That's it.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Okay.

Any further questions?

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: I'm looking for clarification on subhead – we just called 2.1.01 and 2.2. We didn't go to 2.3, correct?

CHAIR: No.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay, I'm good.

CHAIR: You're good?

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Yeah.

CHAIR: Okay.

I'll ask the Clerk to recall the subhead.

CLERK: 2.1.01 to 2.2.01, Office of the Executive Council.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 to 2.2.01, Office of the Executive Council, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.1.01 through 2.2.01 carried.

CHAIR: I'll ask the Clerk to call the next subhead.

CLERK: 2.3.01, Access to Information and Protection of Privacy.

CHAIR: 2.3.01, Access to Information and Protection of Privacy.

The Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Under Salaries, the budget for Salaries is set at \$2.3 million, but there was only \$631,000 spent. Can you please provide some context and was the funding transferred out to any other department or is it simply a delay in hiring?

CHAIR: The Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

The lower number there than what was anticipated was just due to a delay in transition of expenditures from within various departments who have ATIPP coordinators imbedded in the departments. We will move them over under the ATIPP heading hopefully this year. But obviously there was a bit of a delay in doing that last year, that's why the number is down.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: So how many ATIPP coordinators are now in the whole core of government and, of these, how many have been in the position less than two years?

CHAIR: The Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

J. HOGAN: I don't know the answer to how many are throughout government. I can tell you that right now under the Office of the Executive Council ATIPP there are seven positions that are filled. One would be the executive director, one would be a director and there are five ATIPP coordinators right now.

I'll give you a little bit more info on the positions. There are 23 total positions; 20 would be permanent and three would be temporary. Of those 23, seven are filled out, which I gave you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay.

Under Employee Benefits, Transportation and Communications and Supplies, the budgets for Employee Benefits, Transportation and Communications and Supplies all look to have considerable savings. Is that a result of the vacancies?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

J. HOGAN: No, that would be the same reason. It's that the employees haven't been hired under the ATIPP office directly.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay.

Under Purchased Services, can you please outline what the \$20,000 was spent on and what is planned for the total spending of the \$158,300.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

J. HOGAN: For Purchased Services, about \$2,500 would have been on things like photocopying, renting rooms, newspaper and advertising costs, media subscriptions and other services; \$32,400 for ATIPP training, including requirements as per ATIPP review report and includes meeting room rentals; and the additional money for this year, \$123,000, would be new funding for, obviously, an increase in employees and staff. It would mean an increase in spending for those things, particularly training.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay, no more questions.

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

With regard to Purchased Services, photocopying and ATIPP training, I'm just looking at the renting of the meeting rooms. I know there's meeting space here within the buildings. I'm just wondering would this be for conferences – I'm just trying to get an idea of what exactly that would be.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

J. HOGAN: The training might not necessarily take place in St. John's. The ATIPP coordinators could do training throughout the province.

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

J. DINN: Perfect, thank you.

That's it, I appreciate it.

CHAIR: Any additional questions?

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

CLERK: 2.3.01, Access to Information and Protection of Privacy.

CHAIR: Shall 2.3.01, Access to Information and Protection of Privacy, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subhead 2.3.01 carried.

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

CLERK: 2.4.01 to 2.4.02 inclusive.

CHAIR: 2.4.01 to 2.4.02 inclusive, Communications and Public Engagement.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Under Salaries, I'm just looking for a breakdown of the positions which have salary allocations there.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: There are 19 funded positions; nine permanent, seven temporary and three contractual. As you can see, we did have some savings in that salary line as they're re-evaluating and re-assessing the needs of the division. Communications is evolving and they're looking at what needs they'll have moving forward.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Under Professional Services, there was a savings of \$110,000 last year, but the budget for this year is maintained at \$288,500. Is there a reason, and can you identify what the \$178,500 was spent on last year?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you.

Happy to do so.

As you know, this is a catch-all, really – most is department-funded, so when you're doing different campaigns, they're usually department-funded, but sometimes they do run into what I'm going to call central funding pots.

So I'll tell you that for example, under Professional Services, that included activities such as marketing strategy for brand identity, brand signature design, corporate stationery package, some building signage, promotional and collateral packages, some materials. That's what's normally under the Professional Services line. But as you can see, sometimes it dips lower than what is required, but if there is a central campaign, that's where we need to get the money from.

We always allocate the same amount, just in case. The budget awareness campaign, for example, comes out of central pots because it's spread across all of government, but most are in the departments themselves.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Can you identify under Purchased Services what the \$226,300 was spent on?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Yes, budget investments, build awareness for the heat pump program, the Poverty Reduction Plan, the post-budget activities – that's also where the media monitoring is.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Can I get a list of all the media or communications campaigns that were carried out, how much they cost and what agencies or companies were contracted for each campaign?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: I'd have to ask for that information.

They'll get that information for you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay.

2.4.02, Public Engagement, under Salaries, last year there was \$183,900 unspent in salary budget. Can you please outline if positions were vacant or how long they were vacant for?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Certainly.

There was one position vacant, and it was vacant for quite some time. The rest is just turnover.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay.

Under Supplies, can you give me an idea of what supplies were purchased for the \$30,800?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Happy to do so.

That's miscellaneous office engagement and meeting supplies; general items based on the engagement planning sessions that are done. Because we have a director of online engagement, communicator and an ADM, based on increasing supply costs, there has been more paper. The digital platform software subscriptions for Webex and TurningPoint are all under Supplies.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: The budget for Purchased Services is planning to increase to \$46,900. This is a \$30,000 increase over the revised estimate from last year. Is there some information as to why?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Certainly.

That's mostly for engagement services. So the interpretation services, the accessibility requirements and audiovisual requirements, that's about half of it. The other half is engageNL.

So engageNL is an online software program you might be familiar with. It is an online engagement portal provided by a third party. So that portal, it has a lot of take up: 32,540 unique users are registered on engageNL. It is another way in which we can ask for information. It is a web-based tool to allow interaction and input from the public.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Does engageNL identify where the people are? The people who are utilizing it?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: I don't have that information, but I will certainly ask.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Do we have a way, I guess, to find out from a geographical standpoint, what parts of the Island it doesn't reach?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: I'll certainly ask for that breakdown. I don't have that breakdown at this point in time. But as you can appreciate, there is a trend of engaging in platforms. People really want to utilize – that's where people are migrating.

Now, we still have very robust participation levels across different engagements and consultations. We've had almost, I think it was about 7,000 people actually engage in the last year, in addition to the portal.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: I appreciate people's desire to engage, but I also understand their inability to engage in rural Newfoundland due to lack of Internet services.

Can you tell me what public engagement activities were held in the last fiscal year?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Certainly happy to do so.

There was the Teachers Think Tank; Budget 2024; the High School Assessment

and Evaluation Plan; the Climate Change; Pay Equity and Pay Transparency; Minimum Wage Review; Elections Act review; *Personal Health Information Act*; Early Learning Action Plan; literacy project; wildlife conservation regulations and fines; Intergenerational Program; Public Service Week questionnaire; the school configuration catchment area for PWC; Critical Minerals; accessibility training for ABCs; a new theatre engagement; disability plan training for ABCs; violence prevention virtual sessions. I think that's about it.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Is there any indication of how much feedback through engageNL was received online and how much was received in in-person sessions?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: The number of virtual-only sessions was 30. I think the other one was 48. The number of participants in virtual and in person and engageNL was 6,912.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay, I'm good.

CHAIR: Okay.

The Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

I won't be asking many questions because a lot of the ones were asked by my colleague, but I'm assuming the information that's been asked will be passed on to us as well, correct?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: I'll certainly make sure it is.

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

J. DINN: So just with regard to the Public Engagement, and I guess right here, what I'm looking for, too, is a breakdown of the engagement activities and the types. I think, Minister, you listed a number of activities. Would it be possible for each of those to break down in terms of virtual versus the types? I'm assuming there were maybe focus groups, maybe there were general meetings? Anything along those lines and the numbers involved. If it's possible, too, I'd like to have a breakdown, certainly for the virtual and otherwise just the geographical breakdown as well.

Thank you, that's it.

CHAIR: Any further questions?

The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: If I may just respond to that.

Thank you for that. We'll certainly provide what we have. There are a number of ways in which we engage, but we'll break it down as best as we can.

CHAIR: Okay.

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

CLERK: 2.4.01 to 2.4.02 inclusive, Communications and Public Engagement.

CHAIR: Shall 2.4.01 to 2.4.02 inclusive, Communications and Public Engagement, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.4.01 through 2.4.02 carried.

CHAIR: I'll ask the Clerk to call the next subhead.

CLERK: 2.5.01, Financial Administration.

CHAIR: 2.5.01, Financial Administration.

The Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Just looking for an outline of positions that are held under Salaries. Last year, there was a salary savings of \$115,000. Just curious if those positions were vacant and, if so, what positions and for how long?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Yes, thank you. I had the same question.

So there are 10 funded positions: six permanent and four temporary. This division provides the financial and operational supports and activities for Executive Council, the Department of Finance, the Department of Labrador Affairs and the Public Service Commission. This would be the person that would sit in, for example, and provide all the books and all the information that would come to you in the House of Assembly for Estimates. I thank her and her team for an outstanding job this year.

There are two analysts positions that are very, very hard to fill and have been vacant for quite some time. Now they're looking at how their going to restructure to find the right complement of staff in that division.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: I'm good.

CHAIR: Okay.

The Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: I have just a question with regards to permanent positions, temporary and contractual. I'm assuming temporary positions are maybe people who are on leave. Would that be it? I'm just trying to get an idea. Are they people who are on leave and they're people who are filling in? And then there's contractual.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

I'm asking the team for who's temporary and what the positions are. So as soon as I get that I'll report to you.

But I would assume that they're people that may only be required for a certain period of time. But I'll get the information and give it to you as quickly as I can from that division.

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

J. DINN: Right. Then contractual, I assume contractual are the same thing.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: There are no contractual in that division.

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

J. DINN: No, no, no, but in general.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Oh, in general.

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

J. DINN: In general.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Yeah.

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

J. DINN: Okay, thank you, that's it.

CHAIR: Okay, any further questions?

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

CLERK: 2.5.01, Financial Administration.

CHAIR: Shall 2.5.01, Financial Administration, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subhead 2.5.01 carried.

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

CLERK: 2.6.01, Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat.

CHAIR: 2.6.01, Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Just a general question first.

Just wondering if we could any kind of an update as to how many current intergovernmental or federal negotiations are ongoing?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you for the question.

It was enlightening when I asked the very same one.

In '23-'24, Intergovernmental Affairs supported the execution of 101 intergovernmental agreements signed by the provincial government departments and agencies with the federal government – amazing.

These include things like the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, the Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, Aging with Dignity agreement, the Commemorative Partnership Program, contribution agreement for the National War Memorial and on and on.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Do they include anything to do with the Atlantic Loop and is there any update that can be provided?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: I don't have information on whether or not if there would have been any intergovernmental agreement on the Atlantic Loop. It might be better to ask in the budget Estimates for IET, but I'll certainly ask the staff if there was any interaction in Intergovernmental Affairs on that.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: How about any energy talks with Quebec?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Energy talks with Quebec, again under IET and, of course, you know that there are discussions ongoing with Quebec. We have co-chairs Karl Smith and

Jennifer – what's Jennifer's last name?
Williams, sorry I lost my train of thought.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: I could have answered that one.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: I know. I know her quite well and it went off the top of my head.

I have nothing further on the Loop.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: How often does the Premier get updates on the Intergovernmental Affairs file?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: I would say, as the minister responsible, probably on a daily, if not multiple-times-a-week basis.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay.

Under 2.6.01, Transportation and Communications, last year T and C went over budget by \$30,000. Is there an explanation?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: There certainly is. Thank you very much.

That was reflected on the federal and intergovernmental missions, in particular, the World Hydrogen Conference.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Professional Services, can we get a detailed listing of what services were included?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: That is for international trade policy external advisory services, specific legal advice for trade agreements. They use outside counsel for that and, in particular, it's BLG, Borden Ladner Gervais law firm. It's a national firm and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has been using them for specific trade policy advice for decades.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay.

Under Purchased Services, can we get a detailed listing of what services were included there?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Certainly. By far, the majority of it is a Council of Atlantic Premiers Secretariat fees, which is \$230,000; the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers Secretariat fees of \$12,900; the Council of the Federation Secretariat fees, \$25,000; and then there's some shredding and storage and a copier.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Grants and Subsidies, I think this funding is for Canadian

Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat.
Is that correct?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Correct, there's \$35,000 and then there's Newfoundland's contribution to the Trade Secretariat of \$5,000.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay, I'm good.

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

CLERK: 2.6.01, Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat.

CHAIR: Shall 2.6.01, Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subhead 2.6.01 carried.

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

CLERK: 2.7.01 to 2.7.02 inclusive, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

CHAIR: 2.7.01 to 2.7.02 inclusive, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Last year in Estimates, there was a discussion around a statue to commemorate Indigenous history in this province. Is there any update on that?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

S. CROCKER: I think, in fairness to the staff working on the monuments and remembrances – obviously relatively small staff – the focus this year, quite frankly, has been on the national memorial and the Repatriation of the Unknown Soldier. So really, this year, the focus has been moved to that – not that other things are not on the agenda, but right now we're at a really aggressive pace to make sure that everything is in place for July 1.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Can we get an update on the status of the implementation on the Calls to Action for Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you.

Of the 94 Calls to Action, 33 were of the responsibility of the provincial government and work is happening across a number of departments. I do have multiple examples here. Do you want me to run through a half a dozen or do you want me to provide you with them after?

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: You can send them along to us after if you want.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, just high level for the record: Work is happening on Call 2 around Aboriginal children in care; Call 17, the reclaiming of names changed for folks who

were in the residential school system; Call 57, a training module to educate public servants on the history of Aboriginal people.

I'll give you this in the more fulsome – just hitting high level. Call 62, which is around the Indigenous Education Advisory Committee, they are doing a massive piece of work there. Call 80 was around the calls for a statutory holiday and, as you know, we now have September 30 set aside.

Call 88, really around the long-term Aboriginal athletic development and growth. We support the Aboriginal sport games, North American Indigenous Games, where we have athletes go.

I could go on, but we'll definitely give you this, because you're probably going to ask for the binder too, right?

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: We are.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: No problem.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Under 2.7.02, Salaries, last year there was a salary savings of \$88,100. Can we please outline what those positions were and if they were vacant and for how long?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: So there was an ADM position that was vacant in the department. Basically, what I can tell you is that we just continued to review the staffing needs within Indigenous Affairs.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay.

Transportation and Communications was over budget by \$25,000. Can we get some context?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, it basically reflects an overrun due to higher than anticipated travel costs. Really, it was connected with the apologies that were carried out last year, both in Nunatsiavut and Cartwright.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: It's a common thing for Transportation and Communications to be over budget. I'm just wondering, do carbon tax have any affect on that?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: I think your question needs to be directed maybe to the federal government. I don't get a rebate. I don't know. I haven't received one yet.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Under Purchased Services last year, it went over budget, spending a total of \$142,700. Can you provide a list of what was spent there?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: You're in 2.7.02 right now, yes?

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: 2.7.02, yeah.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: So the \$132,200 reflects an overrun, primarily due to the cost of the Beothuk statue. That is done now. Stay tuned, there will be an installation piece and a bit of a ceremony event around that.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Nice.

Grants and Subsidies, can you provide a breakdown of who received the grant money and what decision was made to spend more than budgeted?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: So the list of grants and subsidies, this administration, a number of years ago, started giving little chunks of core funding to the Friendship Centres. So the Labrador Friendship Centre, \$30,000; First Light St. John's Friendship, \$30,000; People of the Dawn Indigenous Friendship, \$30,000; Torngat Secretariat for joint fisheries and wildlife is just under \$248,000; and there is a grant there to NunatuKavut Community Council and it's \$44,478, and again, that was directly tied to the apologies that happened in September.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay, I'm good.

CHAIR: The Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Chair.

On 2.7.01, just looking at the line item there, Transportation and Communications. The revised value was \$25,800 under. Can we just get a breakdown of that?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: 2.7.01, under Salaries, reflects an overrun due to additional salaries during extended sick leave period.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Transportation and Communication, the revised value – budgeted was \$128,800 and the revised one was \$102,800?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: Basically, that reflects savings due to less than anticipated travel requirements.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

On 2.7.02, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, what work is being done to address the six priority areas that's identified in the ITK Suicide Prevention Strategy?

For listeners out there, I can actually outline the six priority areas. It's Social Equity, Cultural Continuity, nurture healthy Inuit children, ensure access to a continuum of mental wellness services for Inuit, heal unresolved trauma and grief, mobilize Inuit knowledge for resilience and suicide prevention.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: I did have that five minutes ago; bear with me.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Actually, if the minister wanted to send that over to us, we would gladly accept that.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: I'll find that as you continue to ask questions, but I did have that a moment ago.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: The reason why I was interested in that is that it has been mentioned quite a few times now that suicide is a serious problem for Indigenous groups, especially for the Innu and Inuit of Labrador. When you look at these priority areas, they all are contributors to suicide. So it's so important to actually have those areas actioned.

Moving to the next question. Could you provide us with an update on the expansion of training in the coming year to the public service to advance understanding of and respect for Indigenous people and culture?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: In response to Call 57, the training module that was launched, Indigenous Affairs worked very closely with all of the Indigenous governments and organizations and did a very fulsome job. It was just launched toward the end of the year, I believe.

We've had an excellent uptake across the civil service, and I think the latest number I have seen is 3,100 people have now taken the training.

Also, I just remembered what I wanted to add to that. We are currently working with Nunatsiavut Government as an additional module. The first one was sort of inclusive of all the groups, and now we're working on the next one.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Just looking on the mandates of this office to advance work on apologies to residential school survivors, I know you mentioned the apologies in Nunatsiavut and in Cartwright. I was just wondering, can you give us an update on the discussions with the Innu Nation on advancing the apology to them?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: So you're right, back in September and November I believe it was, there was an apology carried out residential school survivors, members of NunatuKavut in Cartwright, and there were apologies carried out over three days in all of the Nunatsiavut communities.

The Innu have shared this publicly that right now their focus is on the inquiry that's taking place on the treatment, experiences and outcomes of children in care. This is not where their interest lies right now. Their focus is there. Of course, this is all about when Indigenous peoples are ready for that apology, for survivors who have attended residential schools.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: MHA Evans, Torngat Mountains.

What work has this office done in the past year to advance Innu land claims agreements?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: So the Premier's actually on record publicly, certainly committed to expediting, to working with the Innu, fully committed to working with them to complete their land claim. There is a team in Indigenous Affairs that are very actively working with Innu Nation. It's a priority file. Meeting with them regularly to work toward the completion of a land claim.

I believe there was a commitment by the end of this calendar year. Just back to your earlier question – I did find my notes – on the suicide prevention, I just wanted to share this for the record. On June 22, the provincial government publicly launched *Our Path of Resilience: An Action Plan to Promote Life and Prevent Suicide in Newfoundland and Labrador*. This is a plan that was developed collaboratively with the Life Promotion Suicide working group whose members included community organizations, Indigenous partners, multiple government departments and people with lived experience.

There were extensive consultations that were carried out, a number of targeted in-person sessions and it is a five-year plan that outlines 12 action items. Many of these align with – and I won't go through – the ITK National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy pillars that you just outlined. That is sort of what's guiding us forward right now.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Last year's budget had provided money for the expansion of the regional early psychosis nurse program to Labrador. Has a nurse been hired and, if so, can you give us a brief description and an application of their job? Where are they based out of? Will they be travelling to communities such as Northern Labrador?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: That's definitely a Health-related question. I don't know if my colleague is prepared to answer the question.

T. OSBORNE: Sorry?

L. DEMPSTER: There's a question on psychosis and a nurse dedicated to Labrador. Has that been put in place yet? I didn't know the answer. We can try and get the information, or are you able to speak to that?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

T. OSBORNE: I think that's the issue that the MHA for Torngat raised earlier? Yes.

So I've been speaking with the COO there in Labrador. The health authority and staff at the health authority is aware of that. I'm awaiting feedback from them. I know that the COO and others in the health authority have been in communication with the MHA for Torngat as well. So I'm currently waiting for feedback from the health authority.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: I think the Minister of Health missed my question.

Last year's budget provided money for the expansion of the regional early psychosis nurse program to Labrador. I was

wondering if that nurse was hired. The budget was put in place last year.

In actual fact, the regional early psychosis nurse program was brought up in answers to my questions about suicide intervention programs that would help lower the high rate of suicide with Indigenous people. So that was used as an answer to me.

I was just wondering, has this regional early psychosis nurse program been put in place and, in actual fact, when the answer was given to my question about work and efforts to reduce the high rates of suicide amongst Indigenous people in Northern Labrador, I did say that a major contributor to the cause of suicide in Innu and Inuit wasn't necessarily related to psychosis.

I was just wondering if that nurse was hired out of last year's budget. If so, where are they stationed and what's their scope of work?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: The Member is not referring to the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner?

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: No.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: No, okay, because that was sort in play last year and I'm happy to say that is now in place in Labrador.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

T. OSBORNE: Again, I guess, in response to the previous question, I have asked for

an update from the health authority and I'm waiting on that response. Once I get that response, I will provide the details.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

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

Just moving to the next question now –

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova, no further questions?

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Could we have an update on the work funded in the past year through the Indigenous Violence Prevention Grants Program? Is the office able to see any real, positive results directly from this program as well and maybe provide some examples?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, this year, working closely with my colleague in Women and Gender Equality, we've actually increased funding supports to different partners and organizations and groups. I do have a list here. I might have overprepared, and that's why I'm struggling to find the pages, but just bear with me. I can certainly provide you a copy of the list of the groups that we are working with and that we are funding.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Actually, you could send that over to us with a breakdown of the cost per group or agency that you're funding.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: Yes.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

Is it my turn to ask the question or is she answering?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: No, go ahead. I was going to give you the list.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: So you'll just send that over to us?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: Yes.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Could we have an update on the work of the Commission of Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: Well, it's certainly progressing, but it's going to be, I think, a marathon. From time to time you'll see in media that the inquiry is paused due to passings or tragedies in communities.

Different circumstances outside of everyone's control happens and the inquiry gets paused for days or weeks and then it resumes again.

We've ensured that they have what they need, the resources, supports for people in community who are testifying and things like that.

I'm not aware that there are any issues or anything impeding progress, other than there progressing and people are coming out and attending and testifying. By all accounts, I believe that it's going the way it intended, it's just going to be a bit of a long process.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Yes, thank you.

No further questions.

CHAIR: No further questions.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: Just in answer to your first question around the grants, \$340,000 in Indigenous Violence Prevention Grants that were administered by Women and Gender Equality; and \$130,000 for non. But I have a whole breakdown that I'd be happy to share with you.

CHAIR: Okay, seeing no further questions, I ask the Clerk to recall the subhead.

CLERK: 2.7.01 to 2.7.02 inclusive, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

CHAIR: Shall 2.7.01 to 2.7.02 inclusive, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.7.01 through 2.7.02 carried.

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

CLERK: 2.8.01 to 2.8.03 inclusive, Women and Gender Equality.

CHAIR: 2.8.01 to 2.8.03 inclusive, Women and Gender Equality.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

I have a couple of general questions first for the minister.

Minister, can you please provide the gender-based analysis that was done on the budget?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the Member opposite.

All government departments and agencies of course are mandated to perform the GBA+ analysis on all work, which includes policies, programs, services, legislation and all budgets. Through collaboration with the Centre for Learning and Development and the Public Service Commission, GBA+ training certainly is available to all public service members through the PSAccess learning platform.

Since spring 2023, 25 training sessions have been held in person or virtual with the assistance from the Centre for Learning and Development; for the 2023 to 2024 fiscal year, 500 people were trained for a total of

1,250 since 2019; another five sessions are scheduled to begin later this month on April 25.

To get to your question about the budget, during Budget 2023-2024, over 186 budget submissions were reviewed by wage staff. I can't actually share any more detail on these as this effort is part of the Cabinet's budget decision-making process; 2023 to 2024, 385 cabinet papers were reviewed by wage staff; '23-'24, 210 annual reports were reviewed by wage staff.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

Does the department have any statistics on the instances of domestic violence or intimate partner violence in the province over the last year?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

Yes, between April 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024, the RNC Intimate Partner Violence Unit received 2,135 Intimate Partner Violence Unit requests for service. Operational patrol services responded to 1,532 domestic disturbance calls. Since the rollout of Clare's Law, the RNC has received 15 applications and seven requests for information from the RCMP.

The RNC Intimate Partner Violence Unit members have attended the following training courses, we can get into those: Major Crime Investigative Techniques; Violent Offenders Behaviours; Major Case Management: Team Commander course; Human Trafficking Investigator's Course; and various interview training in witness, suspect and child.

Also, according to the most recent RNC's 2022 *Juristat Report*, 235 females were victims of sexual assault compared to 61 males. This represents a decrease of 24 female victims or 9.27 per cent compared to 2021.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

So just for clarification, Minister, that was the 2021 RNC report, was it? This data is taken from 2021.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Yes, to 2022.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, so are there any other recent updates?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Yes, the most recent statistics from the RCMP indicate that in 2022, 246 police-reported occurrences met the criteria for intimate partner violence. While this represented a slight decrease in 5 per cent from the perspective year, RCMP reported intimate partner violence related occurrences in RCMP B Division have been trending upwards since the Intimate Partner Violence Unit began tracking statistics in 2019.

I can give a breakdown of regional occurrence: Eastern region, 1,029 occurrences; Western Region, 492 occurrences; and Labrador region, 725 occurrences. These figures do not include RNC jurisdictions, for example, St. John's metro, Corner Brook, Labrador, Wabush and Churchill Falls.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Minister.

So the most recent data that we have from either the RNC and the RCMP would be 2021-22 for the RNC and for the RCMP, it would be 2022. Is that correct?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: That's correct.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

Minister, unfortunately many victims of assault do not come forward, as you are aware, does your department have any data to indicate the actual numbers of unreported assaults, whether they be sexual or intimate partner violence?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: I don't see any stats here about unreported reports, but that's something that we can certainly follow up with, with the Intimate Partner Violence Unit of the RNC, as well as the RCMP.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Of course, that could be obtained if there were any victim surveys or, you know, measurements of that type.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Yeah, well that's something I can certainly look into with those.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

Another general question with respect to pay equity legislation. Could you please provide an update on the status of the pay equity legislation as well as pay transparency?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

As we know, our government has taken concrete steps to promote equitable pay practices and we've made large strides to advance these efforts. As we know, we've passed the *Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act*, appointed the pay equity officer; updated the job evaluation systems for core government to ensure that they are pay equitable, pay equity compliant; and work, of course, to develop regulations is ongoing.

As we've mentioned, of course, that's across multiple departments across government. A team of public servants are working to develop regulations. So there's nothing new to report on pay equity, ultimately.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

Do you have a timeline as to when the regulations will be completed?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: If I could, I guess, create a timeline or give a timeline, it would be probably before now, but no, I don't have an actual timeline. I do know that this work is

ongoing, and it ultimately takes time to get it right.

So no, there's nothing further to report on that.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: With respect to pay equity, the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour released an analysis of pay equity legislation and recommended substantive changes. Will your department be considering any of their recommendations or bringing them forward to the House of Assembly for debate?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Well, the thing is about this – and we are consulting with jurisdictions and having conversations all the time, whether it be FTP or simply phone call meetings with our colleagues from across the country to talk about how we can always advance or even improve or tweak, where need be, any kind of legislation.

I would say, obviously this is new legislation for the history of our province. The consultations, as you know, have taken place. I would like to think that it's certainly a living document and I look forward to it advancing, I guess, when that time comes.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: With respect to the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program, do you have a regional breakdown of how many sexual assault nurse examiners there are in the province? I think we just heard from the Minister of Labrador Affairs that there's now one in Labrador. I know as of last year there was one operating, I believe, in the emergency department in Eastern health, two in Western health.

So could you please provide a current update for us?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Yes, thank you, Chair.

The Office for Women and Gender Equality provides annual funding of \$225,000 to help offset the cost of the program within Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services and certainly we recognize the importance of the SANE Program to adults who been sexually assaulted, and it's an important component of our health care and the justice system.

Our government is working with NL Health Services to advance the implementation of the SANE Program throughout all parts of the province and NL Health Services hired a provincial SANE coordinator to improve access for patients who have experienced sexual assault, and this started January 7, 2024.

Continuing education and training to nurse examiners, the SANE coordinator is also responsible for providing training courses, mentorship and they will develop a provincial policy to oversee delivery of quality care at all health sites.

The provincial SANE coordinator provided SANE training to 11 nurses in Labrador-Grenfell Zone on October 16-19, 2023, and to nine nurses in Central Zone on February 12, 2024. There is currently a course planned for Eastern-Rural Zone on April 29, 2024, and work is in progress to plan a training session in Western Zone later in 2024.

There are currently 53 SANE-trained nurses and an additional four SANE-certified nurses in the province as of February 2024. So Eastern-Urban, four SANE-certified nurses, 26 SANE-trained nurses; Labrador-Grenfell, 11 SANE-trained nurses; Central

Zone, 11 SANE-trained nurses; and Western Zone, 5 SANE-trained nurses.

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

I'm just looking at section 2.8.01, Women and Gender Equality. Looking at the budget, how much is allotted for the SANE Program. I am just asking for the dollar value. Also, we were very happy to hear that the provincial coordinator position was filled for the SANE Program.

Could the minister point to the line item containing that position and the cost in our Estimates book?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

Again, what I can tell you about this, as we can appreciate, it is an annual budget of \$225,000 that comes from the Office of Women and Gender Equality that is actually transferred to the Department of Health and Community Services for that. That's really the only part that my department does play.

So other than what I read into the record, unless my colleague from Health has anything else to add about the actual position of the coordinator – I think that was your question.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Yes.

How much was allocated for the SANE Program? Like, the operational costs for the overall program.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: I just have what's in my budget for that. That's \$225,000 annually that comes from Women and Gender Equality.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Okay.

Just looking at the specific actions. What specific actions has your office taken this past year to advance this file of the SANE Program?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: I remember we talked about this and elaborated on this this time last year as well. We're here to support our colleagues and health, of course, and across government. But ultimately, the only role that my department plays with the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program is to ultimately support through budget. That is the amount of \$225,000.

But that's something that I can work with my colleague from Health to get the actual breakdown about the responsibilities of the coordinator. But I just did read that into the record, what I had. But that is the part that we do play with that.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: It's difficult. I'm just trying to formulate what I want to say to a question. The Status of Women in Corner Brook told us that they frequently have people come in that were told they couldn't get a kit done because there was no SANE nurse present.

So we were just wondering what resources in the SANE Program is focused on basic trauma enforced care training to all nurses

across the province to inform them that a test can be offered even without a SANE nurse present?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Okay, thank you, Chair.

In the Western Zone, you're referring to the Corner Brook Status of Women. In the Western Zone, there are five SANE-trained nurses. The provincial SANE coordinator is also in planning sessions for other health professionals who are not SANE trained but who may be providing care for patients who have been sexually assaulted.

Due to the need for a trauma-informed approach to care, it is not advised that SANE training be made mandatory for all nurses. Most health facilities have access to sexual assault examination kits that are obtained through the local police departments. Eastern-Urban uses a special kit for the SANE-trained nurse examiners that are onsite at St. Clare's.

Of course, government remains committed to working with our community partners, such as the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, to ensure that people are aware of the SANE Program and the services that will be provided to support them.

So standards of care for SANE is currently being developed based on guidelines from the International Association of Forensic Nurses to ensure evidence-informed approaches to provide services to an individual who has been sexually assaulted.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you for that answer.

There seems to be a lack of information out there for nurses when somebody presents, asking to have a kit done. They've been told

that they can't get a kit done because there's no SANE nurse and we have so few SANE nurses across the province. So maybe there should be some sort of an information program or education program out there.

Moving on to my next question: Is there a way to have SANE training offered to interested nursing students and have the cost covered? With the expansion of the nursing student seats across the province, this could be a good way to expand the program quickly.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

Yes, and I would say, again, that would probably be a question best suited to my colleagues in Education or Health and Community Services as we provide the \$225,000 annually. That is the role, of course, that my department plays.

I appreciate the Member's question but I think they're best suited to Health and/or Education for this specific question.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

The only reason why I was asking the question is because your department is there to advance issues relating to women: sexual assault, access to justice for sexual assault victims where most of them are women. It is a huge opportunity and a responsibility of your department to be advocating and making sure that the Education Department is aware of the needs of women and access to justice and the same thing for advancing and advocating for the needs of women within the health care services, especially for sexual assault victims.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: I appreciate that.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: So we do appreciate the mandate that your office has to play.

Just moving on, you were referring back to numbers, like 11 nurses got SANE training in Labrador and nine in Central. You also mentioned certified. So I was just wondering, would you be able to clarify for our Estimates questions here, what's the difference between the funding that goes to training for people who are now trained in the SANE program and people who are certified?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Again, these are questions that are better suited for Health, for trained nurses. I can't answer – I don't train nurses in my department. I mean that sincerely, I appreciate this is important and we know the Labrador statistics. Certainly, I do appreciate what you're saying and the concerns and questions you do have, but again I think they are best suited to Health for the training.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you for your answer and I will be directing them towards Health.

Last year in Estimates, the minister confirmed the salary of the coordinator position that was in place since 2021. Now we are notified that the position is filled in 2024. So we were just wondering what happened to the funds that were allocated for the program in 2021?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: I hate to sound like a broken record, Chair, but, again, I can't speak to the operation or the training of another department. I appreciate where you're coming from, but again I think Health can certainly best provide some clarification to you on that. I appreciate it, though.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Okay. So moving to questions that you may be able to answer. When can we expect consultations to take place regarding the expansion of the pay equity legislation to cover the private sector and not just the pay transparency part? Because when we were out participating in the consultations with the groups, it was just on pay transparency, so when are you looking at expanding those consultations to cover the private sector and not just the pay transparency part?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

Yes, that was indeed announced, as I said, a second part of future legislation. As we know, the consultations for the first part with regards to pay equity in the core government and agencies, and then pay transparency. As we know, those consultations have concluded, as well as the engageNL portions, and there is a team – I have to remind the hon. Member as well, that my office is just one part of this legislation. It's across government, for example, Environment and Climate Change also plays a role with the legislative authority to also bring this forward. There is a team of public servants that are working to inform regulations. So once we get any updates on that, then we can advance and progress further with our legislation on that. That's the update for that.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Okay.

The second part of that question: Are there any plans to engage in a new round of consultations with the public and the community sector regarding pay equity and pay transparency?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: That's something I think that's a given, that any new legislation, especially involving all stakeholders, because this legislation ultimately involves all the relevant stakeholders here in our province, and it's important to put forth the best legislation that's going to be beneficial to everyone, businesses, all stakeholders here in our province including individuals.

So, yes, I would think, when we do move forward, especially with the private sector pay equity, absolutely, there will be consultation going forward on any of that because it's paramount and it's needed.

CHAIR: The hon. Member's time is expired.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Under subhead 2.8.02, Women and Gender Equality, under Salaries, could you please explain the variance in the Salaries line item? Last year, there was \$1,050,900 budgeted; \$932,000 spent. This year it's increasing to \$1,407,000.

I'm wondering if you can outline if positions are being added and, if so, why?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Okay, and so this is 2.8.02?

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Correct, under Salaries.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Yeah, okay.

For 2023-24, there was \$118,900 in savings due to vacancies. One contract was not renewed, one staff member left and one person is currently on maternity leave.

For 2024-25, there is an increase of \$335,000 due to the administration of and mandatory reporting requirements for the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence; annual progress reporting with performance indicator reporting to the government of Canada; engagement and evaluation of stakeholder funding proposals; contract management and oversight. In 2023-24, approximately \$2.6 million was distributed to 31 organizations between December 2023 and March 2024. In 2024-25, \$3.6 million will be distributed.

Vacancies: There are currently two vacancies within the office. These vacancies include an analyst position as well as an administrative position and executive is currently reviewing the needs of the office, determining how best to proceed with filling the positions.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

Professional Services: Could you please give some information on this line item, including an outline of how the \$256,500 was spent and the reason for the increase of the budget to \$345,000?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

In Professional Services 2023-24, there was an \$11,500 overrun due to additional requirements for the Intimate Partner Violence Units in training and development for staff through First Light related to the reconciliation council work, that involved the purchase of two camera systems; and two camera systems purchased for the RCMP.

In 2024-25, there is an increase of \$100,000. This is through the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence and will be used to purchase provincial-level datasets throughout Statistics Canada, specifically the survey of safety in public and private spaces, and the Canadian Housing Survey, as an informed discussion with the NL Statistics Agency. Also, to begin work to operationalize a provincial knowledge mobilization hub to house provincial research and stats pertaining to gender-based violence.

Also in Purchased Services – I'll just continue on here – no, that was Professional Services.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That's right.

I'm going to ask you about the next line item, which is Purchased Services. If you could give us some information on that, that would be great. The outline of how the \$312,000 was spent and where did the savings come from of \$50,000.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

Okay, \$50,000 in savings in '23-'24 due to less than anticipated expenditures for events. For example, the third meeting with the Indigenous Women's Reconciliation Council was held virtually and not in person.

The Premier's roundtable, which we do annually, it did not happen this year just due to scheduling. That was a savings of \$25,000. In '24-'25, there is a slight decrease of \$500 to better align with operational requirements.

Property, Furnishings and Equipment, the overrun is a direct result of higher than anticipated ergonomic equipment requirements due to new hires.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

Grants and Subsidies: Last year's grants were budgeted at \$3.3 million, \$5.9 million was given out and this year \$6.5 million is budgeted. Could you please provide a list of who will receive this funding and basically explain the increase in the spending?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

In '23-'24, there was an increase due to receiving the \$2.6 million we secured out of the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, the bilateral agreement. There's a net increase in Grants and Subsidies reflected in '23-'24, and this was due to the bilateral agreement with the federal government which we saw \$280,000 allocated to crisis hotlines in '23-'24.

Related revenue in '24-'25, this reflects increased revenue due to the signing of the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, the bilateral agreement. In '23-'24, the federal government provided \$280,000 to crisis hotlines; another \$245,000 will be provided in '24-'25.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

So the Revenue - Federal, is the federal revenue here the revenue that offsets the increased spending in the grants above?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Yes.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

Subhead 2.8.03, with the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Under Grants and Subsidies, this year the budget is being increased to \$449,800. Where is the additional money going? Could you please provide a list of the groups that received this funding?

That's my final question there.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Yes, so the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Grants and Subsidies, the budget allocation for '24-'25 includes an increase of \$6,200 over the '23-'24 and this simply reflects an increase due to salary increases which was across government.

You also reference the Grants and Subsidies – and I have a list which we can certainly provide that for you. The Grants and Subsidies, the groups that have received that: violence prevention organizations here within the province; Women's Centres; End Sexual Violence NL; Multicultural Women's Organization of Newfoundland and Labrador; Safe Harbour Outreach program; Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network, also known as NAWN; Indigenous Violence Prevention

Grants Program; the Coalition Against the Sexual Exploitation of Youth; Provincial Indigenous Women's Gathering; and of course miscellaneous grants.

I certainly can provide you with that list in hand as well.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, and could you also provide the binder for –?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: I sure can.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

That completes my questions.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Okay.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: We're assuming we're going to be getting the binder?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Yes.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: A briefing note from 2021: Exercise caution regarding research on policy or legislation that could have significant legal or financial implications.

So we were wondering if you could explain what financial implications could arise to the provincial government from enacting such robust pay equity or transparency legislation that would cover the private sector.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

I guess all I can say to that, prior to my time – prior to all of our time, or most – probably with the exception of the Member for Shea Heights, or the Minister for Health – we weren't here. It goes back to, from what I understand, when then-Premier Williams wanted to bring in –

AN HON. MEMBER: You are not allowed to say that.

P. PARSONS: Well, the former Member, I'm not sure of the district name change. I can't really comment; that was before my time in this portfolio. All I can talk about of course is that we certainly have advanced this legislation, we've passed the act and we're certainly working to inform the regulations, ultimately.

So pay equity legislation for the public sector does exist now in our province and it's something that we're certainly going to work to advance in consultation with stakeholders. Again, it's across multiple departments in government. I know I'm committed to doing what I can as minister, I know the Premier is, and I think it's safe to say that government as a whole, we're committed to advancing this legislation.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Have there been any meetings of the pay equity committee in the last year?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Again, where things are right now, there is a team of public servants from multiple departments meeting to inform regulations and working on those regulations. That work is ongoing, and I have nothing further to update on that file.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: So are you saying the committee has met?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Well, I'm not sure it's an actual committee; there's a team of public servants with multiple departments that are

AN HON. MEMBER: Working group.

P. PARSONS: Yes, like a working group, my colleague said, that of course are working to inform regulations, currently and ongoing.

Believe you me, when there is an update, I'm sure my colleagues and I – especially those whose departments are involved in this work – will be certainly happy to provide those updates to the House and to the public of Newfoundland and Labrador.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you for that answer.

My next several questions go to housing, especially for providing shelter for women. How much of the announced \$700,000 from the federal government is going towards the expansion capacity at transition houses in the province?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: The transition houses would fall under the mandate of I think CSSD, or maybe with the movement with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing – unless my colleague can speak to that.

I don't have the mandate for transition houses. We work with them with regard to the domestic help line, but maybe that's something that could be better suited to the Minister of Housing or CSSD.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Your department is assisting Newfoundland and Labrador Housing in addressing the lack of available space, I assume, with the transition houses.

Could you actually just provide us with, I guess, an overview of your advocacy in trying to get these transition houses capacity expanded?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

Certainly, I can take this as a take-away with my staff who are certainly watching, my team, and that's something that we could probably report back to you in consultation with my colleagues in those departments.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

We'd appreciate that, and I certainly don't mind when you provide it to me if you also provide to my counterpart over there with the Official Opposition.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Absolutely.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Yes. I don't think she heard me.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: She did.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Has capacity at the crisis lines been increased as a result of that investment, of the \$700,000, and what happens when – anyway –

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

I think I get the gist of what you're asking with the crisis help lines. What I can say is funding of \$780,000 was secured through a three-year bilateral agreement with the Government of Canada. This happened in the summer of 2023 for crisis hotlines in the province.

In 2023-24, \$280,000; 2024-25, \$245,000; 2025-26, \$175,000. So in 2023-24, \$200,000 was provided to End Sexual Violence NL and this is a 24-hour, toll-free, province-wide support available to any person who is experiencing sexual assault and needs crisis support.

From April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024, the End Sexual Violence NL crisis hotline experienced 1,336 interactions with its line: 1,301 calls and 21 text conversations because as we know texting is an option for safety for those who may not have an opportunity to make that phone call if they don't have a safe window to do so. So there is the texting option that is available, and also 11 chat conversations.

The Domestic Violence Help Line is a separate service operated by the Transition House Association of Newfoundland and Labrador. This service detects the region from which a person is calling and routes them to the closest Transition House. The caller can then immediately speak with a trained professional who will assist them directly or connect them to the appropriate service or organization in the community, including women's centres, Violence Prevention NL organizations or medical and/or policy services.

In 2023-24, \$80,000 was provided to Transition Houses of Newfoundland and Labrador. My staff team reached out to THANL for '23-'24 statistics on the number of calls received, but we have not received that back. They do have a deadline, actually, of April 30 to report those statistics to my department and we'll be following up with them for sure.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Chair.

No further questions.

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

CLERK: 2.8.01 to 2.8.03 inclusive, Women and Gender Equality.

CHAIR: Shall 2.8.01 to 2.8.03 inclusive, Women and Gender Equality, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.8.01 through 2.8.03 carried.

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

CLERK: 3.1.01 to 3.1.06 inclusive, Treasury Board Secretariat.

CHAIR: 3.1.01 to 3.1.06 inclusive, Treasury Board Secretariat.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm looking for an update on positions filled in core government.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you.

Just before I get into that and I'd be happy to do that, the Treasury Board Secretariat has – allow me to just say what it does – 269 employees. It provides government-wide, financial management controllership, oversight to ensure the appropriate use of public funds and financial reporting. It is responsible for the human resource management functions across government with a specific focus on supporting the human resource needs of the public service.

It is also responsible for all the collective agreements and we've successfully signed, in the last 18 months, 29 collective agreements representing more than 35,000 public sector workers, including NAPE, CUPE and the Nurses' Union. We've had a clean audit on our Public Accounts, implementation of a significant upgrade to the government's payroll system and, of course, we have assisted in professional development.

We also created an accountability framework, which I think is very important. I mentioned earlier in debate, and it applies to all government departments, public bodies, community-based organizations. It

really is to strengthen oversight and provide strong linkages.

A really strong and good team within Treasury Board. I know that many of them are listening tonight and I wanted just to say I appreciate their big efforts and the efforts they make on behalf of the people of the province.

There are 7,529 public servants within core government. At current, there are 279 positions in the recruitment process. So that is slightly less, I think around what we had last year in terms of positions in the recruitment process.

So it depends on the department and when they go into the recruitment process under the Public Service Commission, but you'll see that the numbers of public servants are up for core government slightly from last year.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay.

The previous budget speech talked about the establishment of a House Committee to review financial statements, budgets, annual reports, Crown corporations, organizations. It hasn't been done yet.

Can you provide us with some context? Is it still a priority and when it's going to be done?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Certainly, I provided that context in earlier debate today. I talked about we've reviewed across Canada to see how they're managing Crown corporations. Some of them invite them in with the minister during a regular debate; some organizations, some governments across the country have special committees. We talked about committee structure today and

perhaps whether or not we need to change our committee structure. Some invite them in with the minister when they're going in for Estimates; some don't do anything of the same.

I also advise the Member opposite and Members of this House that we have that accountability framework. So we are working on that, as we have indicated in previous years.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Does government still have an attrition plan or is it wrapped up now?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: No, as I indicated last year, we no longer have an attrition plan. We have continued to move forward without one. Obviously, as you know, in society, we have an aging population and we have a number of people retiring. So that's giving us the availability of positions that are required, so we have 7,529 employees.

We are really focused on recruitment and retention. As I said earlier, we are in active recruitment. I don't think the Member opposite was there during earlier Estimates with the Public Service Commission, but we've actually ramped up a lot of activity around retention and recruitment.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay.

3.1.02, there was a savings of \$137,300 under Salaries. Were there positions vacant? If so, how long were they vacant and what impact did they have on operations?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: So there are 16 funded positions in that division of Executive Support. There are 14 permanent and two contractual. I can tell the Member that there has been some savings due to one vacant position and it is under recruitment and actively under recruitment, plus some turnover. So when we have turnover in one rather significant operational position, we're recruiting for it.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Under Revenue - Provincial, can you give an overview of where this revenue actually comes from?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: It's pension mail recoveries. So as we mail out, we recover from the pension plans the cost of that mailing.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay.

Just for clarification on subheadings, we're just doing 3.1.01 and 3.1.02?

CHAIR: 3.1.01 to 3.1.06.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Oh, okay.

3.1.03, salary savings of \$1.8 million, can you just shed some light on as to why? It seems pretty excessive.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Happy to do so.

If you looked at last year's Estimates book, it is continuing vacancies in that particular

division. But that is all the back-office functions, so we have a lot of turnovers. It's entry-level positions that come into government on telephone supports, things of that nature. So as people come into government, then they look around within government and some of them are promoted within government and move to other departments and whatnot.

But these are entry-level positions, and we have a lot of them. There are 241 permanent positions in that division, 30 temporary and 16 contractual, so a lot of movement. If you have anybody, we encourage people to apply for those positions on an ongoing basis.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Can you shed some light on the Revenue - Provincial? There's a bit of a variance there. Can you explain the variance year over year?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Yes, happy to do so.

Again, that's revenue that we recoup. So we're recouping costs from our pensioner payroll and teachers' payroll. So it's more recouping costs.

To be honest with you, we're actually – that is under number 13. Operational savings, we were able to save some money, so that's why it didn't show up. But we generally budget the same amount and where we can find savings, we do.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay.

Under 3.1.05, Grants and Subsidies, can you provide a breakdown of any money that was spent, including any that was

transferred out to other departments or ABCs? I guess I'm wondering for the total of the \$27.9 million spent, where it was spent and for what purpose?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: I'm happy to do so.

This is an appropriation for the promotion of, like, business opportunities and financial supports for departments and Crown agencies for initiatives consistent with our objectives. So we always allocate money under financial assistance that does go to various departments.

Allow me to give you, kind of, the highlighted version of what it is. MUN tuition relief: As you know, we provide a tuition relief. We provided a \$500 campus renewal fee removal, and that \$3.5 million would've come from financial assistance gone into education.

Strategic IT investments: As you know, we're renewing and improving our IT investments; \$5 million for that. We did some refurbishments for the Arts and Culture Centre; that's another \$1 million. There's our Equity Investment Program under PictureNL would come from financial assistance and go there; that was \$4.1 million. Emergency shelters, \$9.5 million.

So, again, money that's transferred from this centralized pot for financial assistance.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Under Grants and Subsidies, \$37 million budgeted for this year. Can you just give us an idea how you come to that number? How is that calculated?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Again, looking at past performance, past requirements, strategic initiatives, some reviews, some priorities that government has; money, for example, of street light cameras, money for the Cabinet Secretariat that we spoke about earlier and the Change Desk salaries, money for the debit and credit card fees that we're changing this year.

So those are the types of things that would come under that. We'll give you another list next year.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Under 3.1.06.08, Loans, Advances and Investments, can you provide some information on the \$10 million contained there?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Certainly.

That is support for industry. It is the Newfoundland and Labrador Dairy Co-operative, and that's money that we've transferred from there to loans so that they can have the financial assistance for their programs.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay.

Ten million dollars transferred out of Grants and Subsidies, what for?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: That is the \$10 million.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: That is the same, is it? Okay.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: That is to support the industry. So that's for obviously financial food security. So that's the Dairy Co-operative.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay.

Under revenue, can you just outline the revenue lines, where the revenue is expected to come from and anything that was collected last year?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: That is for Corner Brook Pulp and Paper. It's a placeholder. If you note, we have money there that we are to collect. On the principal, it's \$7.4 million. On the interest payments, it's \$2.3 million, so that's the \$9.726 million. We're yet to see if it will be collected.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: So will any of that be collected via the sale of electricity back into the grid?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Well, it will depend on if they start to pay back their loan.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay.

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

L. PARROTT: Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

Question there: Does the Treasury Board only conduct reviews of the JES as a result from individual requests from employees, or do they undertake reviews under certain circumstances outside of that?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you very much for the question.

May I answer one question from previous? Under 2.5.01, Financial Administration, I was asked about the temporary positions. There's are two budget analysts that are temporary and a clerk and an admin officer. They're backfilling as we recruit.

So back to your question on job evaluation. You know, job evaluation came into being for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador in 2014-2015. The system was robustly reviewed by both unions, as well as government in discussing with them how do we move forward on a Job Evaluation System. The Job Evaluation System really looks at skills, effort, responsibility and working conditions. So looking at those four criteria.

I can tell you that under Job Evaluation System, you can, if things change in our position – I'm assuming your position has been in place for quite some time. We received, I think, in last year about 72 from the Job Evaluation System. We completed 122 because there was some carry-over from the year before and there are still some outstanding. I think there are still about 100 plus that are still outstanding.

So you can either come forward as something changed in your position or you think it needs to be changed. The department, your human resources could

come forward in job evaluation and once it goes through the job evaluation process and is reviewed, if you're not satisfied with the outcome, there is an appeal process.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: So just for clarification, only an employee can make the request. So as the employer, you can't say oh, something's off here; we're going to evaluate this through JES. Only an employee can initiate a JES review.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: I'm just waiting to hear to make sure. It is something that I think as an employer, if you notice that there has been a change in the position, you can certainly move it forward. But if you're in a position that you feel your working conditions or your levels of responsibility have changed, it certainly would be incumbent upon you to come forward. It can be identified also by the employer.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Okay, perfect. Thank you so much.

Under 3.1.03, in the 2023-24 budget, this section here was estimated at \$18,778,900.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: I'm sorry, can you just tell me where?

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Oh, I'm sorry, 3.1.03.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Okay, certainly.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: The estimation that was in this budget here doesn't follow up in the current budget. There's a difference here. Was this section reprofiled between the two budgets?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: I'm not quite following you. So just give me where you're looking in the Estimates: 3.1.03, perfect. But what are you asking?

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: So last year's budget book does not match up with this year's budget book in that section.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Well, it says here – the last revised and stated are here.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Yes, but those numbers don't match from last year's budget book. I was wondering if this section was reprofiled.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: I'm waiting for a response from my team. I'm not quite sure. You're referring back to '22-'23.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: '23-'24, actually.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: In '23-'24, there is a projected revised budget of \$18,388,000, and the original budget was for \$19 million, and we're going to \$20 million, and that's mostly due to a change in salary.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Yeah, and it doesn't match with last year's book. So in your budget Estimates last year, it was \$18,778,000, but in the current budget book you have it down as \$18,929,000 so the two budgets are not matching up. I was wondering what happened in that section.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: I'm going to have to ask to take that aside because I'm not following that. I don't have previous budget books. So I'll get an answer for you and respond.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Okay perfect, thank you so much.

It's also happened again in 3.1.04 as well, they're not matching up, the two budget books are not matching up.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: But it says here the reinstated and their projected revised are the same.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Yes, and it doesn't match up from last year's budget book.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: From 22-23?

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: '23-'24 doesn't match up with this one. We have it here; we can show her.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Okay, allow me to get an answer, because that doesn't make sense to me either.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Yeah.

Other than that, that is my final question on this section.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Okay, thank you.

CHAIR: I'll ask the Clerk to recall the subhead.

CLERK: 3.1.01 to 3.1.06 inclusive, Treasury Board Secretariat.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 to 3.1.06 inclusive, Treasury Board Secretariat, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.1.01 through 3.1.06 carried.

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

CLERK: 4.1.01 to 4.4.02 inclusive, Office of the Chief Information Officer.

CHAIR: 4.1.01 to 4.4.02 inclusive, Office of the Chief Information Officer.

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

J. WALL: Thank you, Chair.

You've got the best for last.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: I thought that would get a chuckle.

First of all, please provide the binder for OCIO.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I don't have another copy with me, but we'll get you one this week, yes.

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Minister.

How many computer assets are in use, and do you know the breakdown of desktop versus laptop throughout government?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

We have approximately 10,000 devices. We have approximately 60 per cent laptops, 40 per cent desktops and then we also have 2,500 mobile devices including phones and tablets.

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Minister.

Under 4.1.01, Planning and Transformation, under Salaries, last year there was a savings of \$618,400. Were the positions vacant? If so, please provide a list of which ones.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

So it takes a while to fill positions, and we often have positions where there isn't anyone that applies, for example. We can certainly provide you a list of what those would have been.

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Minister.

Under Professional Services, could you please outline what \$11,000 was spent on?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: So I guess two major things happened to OCIO – and we'll see these through the Estimates – over the past year. We did a bit of an organizational change, a reorg, where we moved things and responsibilities and systems from one ADM to another, so from one heading to another heading. We'll get to that.

Then the other thing, while I'm just talking about the overall change, this year, the government committed an extra \$11 million to OCIO and so you'll see that pop up. That was divided up equally between two of the headings. We'll get to that. But because of the reorganization and working with Treasury Board, we needed to essentially

redo everyone's job evaluation, like everyone's position descriptions.

So under Professional Services, the \$11,000, to kind of speed up the process, we used a consultant to help us essentially rewrite all the position descriptions for everyone in the reorganization. So that's what the \$11,000 was for.

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

J. WALL: Thank you.

Minister, under Purchased Services, \$87,200 was spent. Could you please outline?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Purchased Services, this covers the information management team, all the policy, the corporate operations and data and privacy. So this would have been general contracts. The number hasn't changed so just kind of overall – I'll provide you with a more detailed list. My team will give me more information in a minute.

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Minister.

Under 4.2.01, Design and Delivery, under Salaries, it was over budget of \$294,800. Can you please explain?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

Salaries, we were over budget. We had payouts for employees who were retiring and leaving. We had increased overtime and some standby pay. We also have retention payment for hard-to-fill positions. So we have a few database administrators

who are getting a \$10,000 retention payment, like a top-up, because they're hard-to-fill positions. That's why we had the increase and you'll see that it's increased again for the coming year.

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Minister.

Under Professional Services, can you please provide a list of the \$2.7 million, how it was spent on Professional Services last year and where the \$7.2 million is planning to be spent this year?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

4.2.01 is essentially our project delivery office. Management of all the applications, as well for the MyGovNL and everything that we need to essentially do all the projects across all of government. So we will certainly provide you – I have a two-page list of all the projects.

In addition to all the running of government stuff, all the MyGovNL stuff, everything from mainframe modernization. We're looking at new Internet, stuff we do for The Rooms, stuff we do for the RNC. I have two pages we'll certainly provide you. So that's where we spent the \$2.7 million.

The increase for the coming year is because we have an additional \$11 million this year. Again, none of the decisions of where the money goes, how it's allocated, it's a bit tenuous but – so they split the \$11 million, half of it is here, \$5.625 million and the other \$5.625 million went into 4.2.02 because we don't yet know the Capital-Current split of the \$11 million and how we're going to spend that specifically.

So we've put half in Current and half in Capital. This is half of the \$11 million and

this will probably move – because when we do up a software project, it's a mix of Current and Capital and sometimes it changes on a project-by-project basis because the Capital numbers kick in at a certain amount and use. So that's why it jumps from \$2.7 million to \$7.2 million.

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

J. WALL: Okay, thank you, Minister.

Thank God for *Hansard*, a lot of information there in that one.

Under Purchased Services, please explain the \$314,600 expenditure.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

Another change I'll mention is last year or in the 2023-2024 budget, OCIO got \$5 million extra from government but that was not in the Estimates at the beginning of the year. Whereas, this year, it's in the Estimates, the extra \$11 million is in here. Last year, when we started Estimates, the \$5 million was not in the numbers.

So the \$5 million was transferred into OCIO throughout the year. This is some of the extra money that was transferred in. We used some of that to engage with some managed security services for, like, a cybersecurity perspective. So \$250,000 of that is for some additional 365-days-a-year security reviews.

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

J. WALL: Thank you.

Under Property, Furnishings and Equipment, \$1.397 million expenditure. Can you please provide some information?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Yes, thank you very much.

Again, this is the \$5 million that came to OCIO throughout the year, which was not in the Estimates at the beginning of the year last year. We used some of that money because we needed to buy some new laptops and computers to replace hardware. Because we moved to Microsoft 365 with Windows 11, some of our desktops and laptops were not compatible with Windows 11 and Microsoft 365, so we used some of that money in this bucket to upgrade laptops and such that were too old for the modern software.

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

J. WALL: Thank you.

Under Revenue – Provincial, can you please outline how the revenue is generated?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

So I believe this is some bill-backs that we get. We do work for Legal Aid sometimes and they end up billing back, or the Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation. That's where the revenue comes from.

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

J. WALL: Thank you.

Under Salaries, there's a savings of \$250,000. Would that be from vacant positions?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Are you still on 4.2.01?

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

J. WALL: Correct.

Salaries, \$250,000 savings – sorry, 4.2.02. My apologies.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: No, it's okay.

4.2.02, so the Salaries line – just a second.

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

J. WALL: Two-hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar difference.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: I don't know why this is in the Salaries line, but my team is telling me that this is related to a piece of software for a project that was not required. We had budgeted for a certain project and \$250,000 worth of that was not needed. So that's why we didn't spend the \$250,000.

CHAIR: The hon. Member's time has expired.

J. WALL: Okay, thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

Chair, I was wondering if the minister can let us know of any projects or any initiatives regarding cybersecurity was carried out – new initiatives carried out in the previous or the upcoming year.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

So that's an excellent question. I guess almost everything or a lot of what we do has significant cybersecurity components. For example, over the last year, we've been upgrading to Microsoft 365. That is not specifically a cybersecurity project, but what that does is significantly enhances our cybersecurity.

We do have cybersecurity-specific things that we do, and the other thing I'll note is, for example, during the year, Education came into government. So one of the things, we had a specific team do a deep dive on Education. We worked with an outside vendor to say are there any gaps here, are there any risks, what do we need to cover right now, what do we need to do in the medium term and then what does that look like to roll the IT for education in as much as possible with the unionized environment.

Then, for example, they're starting that soon with Housing. So Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, they have their own IT teams. As they come into government, we're going to have to do the same thing with Housing because where are the risks, how and when and how did they integrate all their systems into core government.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Okay, I appreciate it. Thank you, Minister.

Can we also have a list of the initiatives that you just previously spoke about with my colleague there?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Yes.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: All right, perfect. Thank you.

How is work proceeding in the rollout of the personal health record and when can we expect this to be available to everyone in the province?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: If you go to MyGovNL right now, you log in and it will say Personal Health Record. You click on it; they send a code to your house. You put in the code and you can use it.

Last week, I was looking at all my blood test results for the last three years. It's been live for a month now. We're kind of doing a slow adoption. We have probably more than 10,000 people using it. We don't want 100,000 to try tomorrow, but I will commute to give it a go.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Okay, so it's a phased rollout that you are trying to explain?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: No, it is live for everyone. But we are not shouting it – it's a Health thing. I can tell you it's live.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Okay, perfect.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: It's live; it works. I used it. We have 10,000 plus people using it. Health

will be making an announcement at some point.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Okay, so there's not a massive rollout yet.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: No, it's rolled out. It's just we're not yelling it yet because we don't, you know –

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: No promotion yet. Okay, got it. I appreciate the minister's answer.

Can you provide an update regarding the update to the mainframe for the student loan systems, and can you provide any information on the upgrades to MCP and Motor Registration as well?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Certainly.

I spoke to this in the other Estimates for Service NL, but essentially there are three major systems: student loan, MCP and Motor Registration are on old mainframe systems. So the student loan is the smallest and so we're doing that one first. We're testing, I guess – we have a hypothesis of the best way to do that. We're kind of doing that with the student loan system.

I don't know when that's going to be completed and then they're going to decide was that the right approach, and then I'm guessing we're going to do MCP next and then Motor Registration last.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: That was the last of my questions.

Thank you so much, Minister.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, 4.2.02, 01, Salaries, I have to go back to it, because I didn't understand what you said last time. A \$250,000 savings in Salaries and you discussed some new equipment. Can you please explain that again?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: I agree with you, it's not logical to me that there are project costs in the Salaries line item. I'm told that there was a portion of a component, of a project, that was not required and that's why there was a savings. I'm told that this is an accounting thing.

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

J. WALL: So when you get some more information, Minister, we look forward to that, please.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: I'm embarrassed to say that I agree with you.

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

J. WALL: All right, as long as we're on the same page. Thank you, Minister.

Under Property, Furnishings and Equipment, 4.2.02, \$556,200 expenditure. Can you please provide some information?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Sorry, 4.2.02, what line item?

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

J. WALL: Property, Furnishings and Equipment: \$556,200.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Okay, thank you.

This is a capital line item for our projects. Going into the year, we don't necessarily know or haven't finalized which part of the projects will be capitalized and which part of the projects will not be capitalized. Again, those are accounting things.

So this money, as a part of projects, we had to replace some servers, add storage and do some changes to backup systems. So that's why this item is in this line item.

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Minister.

From the Service NL Estimates when I asked this question on behalf of my colleague from the District of Ferryland, the plate to person for vehicles, you said to bring it up here, so can you please update the House on where the department is with that?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Sure.

The reason why we don't have that now is because our whole Motor Registration system is designed around the vehicle. The vehicle is the object in the IT system. The whole thing is designed around the vehicle, which is why it's not plate to owner.

So when we get a new system, the new system will be plate to owner. So, like I said, we're doing the student loan system first, I don't know for sure, we'll probably do the MCP system and then we'll do Motor Registration.

I've been told by my team that the student aid system will be done by the end of this financial year and then I believe the discussions have already started in terms of what project to do next, but MCP and/or Motor Registration will be significant projects.

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Minister.

4.3.01, Infrastructure and Security, Current, under Salaries there is a savings of \$1.1 million. Can you please provide some context?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Sure, thank you.

So this is where I said we reorganized throughout the year and I'm told by my team that we have to provide the projected revised budget line in December, and so throughout the financial year, the teams and some of the roles moved around. So this decrease was because we had a few security roles that were not in this line item, but they were hired under the project line item.

I don't understand how this works on a day-to-day basis in terms of when someone is

hired, what line item they go in, in these categories.

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

J. WALL: Okay, I appreciate your honesty, Minister. It's hard to follow at times, no doubt.

Under Supplies, \$13 million, what sorts of supplies are purchased for \$13 million?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

So when we say supplies, these aren't like office supplies, these are IT. Now we're in the Infrastructure and Security section, so this does, essentially, all of the network: the Internet, all the security, all the infrastructure, all the servers, the data centre, the rack space and all the nuts and bolts and everything that's not a project almost.

So this \$13 million essentially would be all the software that runs government that's not a project. So when you do your ECM, when you do your expenses, like that project cost. All the project costs for every department across government would be in this \$13 million.

It went up because a lot of the software companies increased how much they were charging us; a lot of the software increases every year and so the increase was due to that.

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Minister.

4.3.02, Infrastructure and Security, Capital; Property, Furnishings and Equipment, \$558 million, can you please provide context as to what project or equipment this is for?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

So just to confirm, we're at 4.3.02, Infrastructure and Security, Capital?

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

J. WALL: Correct.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Yeah, so this is for firewall and some servers and storage. So, again, this would be kind of the same thing as the Infrastructure and Security, it's just these are the spends that fall into the Capital line item.

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

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

4.4.01, Cyber Security Office, this appears to be a new budget area. Minister, could you please provide some information, is government now prioritizing investing in cybersecurity?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Cybersecurity has always been important, so we restructured. We created a new office. We have an ADM dedicated now to cybersecurity. This is both internally, but it's also going to be externally facing some of our agencies, boards and commissions.

So this line item, the budget, the \$474,000, we're anticipating the ADM, a technical architect, two cybersecurity analysts and one kind of policy information protection consultant. So this team will, yes, look at

government. It will also look at and work with, for example, the Health Services, also MUN, also CNA, Housing, because there are a lot of agencies, boards and commissions and everyone's at risk of cyber issues, cyber attacks.

I think a lot of people assume – and they're not incorrect to assume that – that if something happens with one of these other organizations, it's government's responsibility or government's fault.

So we're trying to take more of a leadership role in making sure that particularly smaller agencies, boards and commissions don't have any major gaps. They have somewhere they can turn for advice because if you have one or two IT people, they're not cybersecurity experts. We're trying to provide advice and guidance and support, communication, coordination – we'll see how it goes – to smaller organizations.

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

J. WALL: Okay. Thank you, Minister.

Under Salaries, \$474,400, as you said, that position that you just described, can we get a list of those? I tried to copy them down, but can you provide the list as well?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: I'll just say it again. It's assistant deputy minister, a technical architect, two cybersecurity analysts and an information protection policy consultant.

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

J. WALL: Okay, thank you.

Under Professional Services, \$250,000, can you give us the breakdown of that?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Sure, thank you.

We anticipate needing to use third party security expert companies. So, for example, when Education came in, there's a third party security company who can come in and do a quick, little deep dive and show us where the red flags are, how are things, where should we focus our time and efforts. For example, when we bring in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, we're going to have to do kind of a swat look at Newfoundland and Labrador Housing's IT and say where's the risks, how's it all going and we're going to use a third party to help us with that.

Then there might be others. Maybe we'll do CNA. We haven't had those discussions with the other stakeholders yet, I don't think. But that's what we're budgeting to spend on that in the upcoming year.

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

J. WALL: Okay. Thank you, Minister.

Madam Chair, that's all the questions I have. On behalf of the Official Opposition, I'd like for the ministers to pass along to their staff on behalf of the Official Opposition: Thank you for all the work that you do in the various departments.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

CLERK: 4.1.01 to 4.4.02 inclusive, Office of the Chief Information Officer.

CHAIR: Shall 4.1.01 to 4.4.02 inclusive, Office of the Chief Information Officer, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 4.1.01 through 4.4.02 carried.

CLERK: The total, Executive Council.

CHAIR: Shall the total of the Executive Council carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Executive Council, total heads, carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the Estimates of the Legislature and Executive Council carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Legislature and Executive Council carried without amendment.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report having passed without amendment the

Estimates of the Legislature and Executive Council.

CHAIR: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, the Speaker returned to the Chair.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

The hon. the Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee.

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have passed without amendment –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: – the Estimates of the Legislature and the Executive Council.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and directed her to report that they have passed without amendment the Estimates of the Executive Council and Estimates of the Legislature.

When shall the report be received?

J. HOGAN: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, that this House do now adjourn.

SPEAKER: The motion is this House do now adjourn.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

I'll remind Members of the Social Services Committee that tomorrow morning at 9 in the Chamber, we'll be debating the Estimates of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, at 1:30 p.m.
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