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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit visitors.

Before we begin this afternoon, in the public gallery I would like to welcome guests joining us this afternoon for a Member's statement.

From the Clarendville High School Robotics Team, teachers Michael Spurrell and Allison Somers; students Mark Spurrell, Isaiah Dalton, Nicholas Reid, Natalie Poole, Rachel Walsh and Nathan Fillier.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Also, for statements, we have Makenna Kearley and her parents, Sherry and Tim.

Welcome this afternoon.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: We also have Mason Gill and his mother Lesleyanne here this afternoon for a Member's statement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Also, for a Member's statement, we have Brody Freeman and his family members Crystal, Daniel and Gavin, along with Michael Cooper from the Trinity East Church Lads Brigade.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Visiting us for a Ministerial Statement, from the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary: Chief Roche, Deputy Chief Legace and Deputy Chief McNeil along with, from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Assistant Commissioner Cahill and

Inspector Emberley and Staff Sergeant Christie.

Welcome this afternoon.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we'll hear statements by the hon. Members from Baie Verte - Green Bay, Terra Nova, Topsail - Paradise, Placentia West - Bellevue and Bonavista.

The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: Speaker, Springdale Air Cadet Squadron, 50th Anniversary.

This past Saturday, the 837 Northeast Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron based in Springdale, under the leadership of Captain Jonathan Edison, celebrated their golden anniversary."

For half a century, the 837 Air Cadet Squadron has been a polished example for all youth in the Green Bay area, inspiring cadets to become both model citizens and community leaders. This notable milestone in the squadron's history is a testament to the commitment of every cadet who has ever laced up their drill boots, and to every cadet instructor who has dedicated time to guide them. Together as a team, they have helped to truly make the Air Cadet Squadron a community success story.

From sponsors, to parents, to all those that have supported 837 Air Cadet Squadron in any manner over the past five decades, know that your efforts have helped to shape generations of leaders and has fostered enhanced community-mindedness.

During their Annual Ceremonial Review, held in conjunction with the 345 Dorset Sea Cadet Corps from Triton, spectators were notably impressed by their team drill, their

varied band routines and most notably their camaraderie.

I invite all MHAs to salute with me the Northeast Air Cadet Squadron on their golden milestone.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Two years ago, a team came together for their first time to compete in the Marine Institute's Model RC Boat Race. It was a learning experience marked by a few setbacks; however, they powered through to earn a third place.

Mark Spurrell, Isaiah Dalton, Nicholas Reid, Natalie Poole, Rachel Walsh, Nathan Fillier and their teachers Michael Spurrell and Allison Somers used this beginning and experience to ensure a determination to be better next year, which would be a pivotal decision.

In 2024, they claimed first place at the 2024 Eastern Canadian Underwater ROV Competition, earning them an opportunity to compete at the MATE World ROV Championships in Tennessee. This was a 40-team international event where they placed eighth. They received the prestigious Harry Bohm/Jill Zande Sharkpedo Award for innovation, design, creativity, engineering skill and ingenuity.

This year they won all three provincial events beginning with the Newfoundland Energy Challenge for Change, Engineering Competition, Lego League Land-Based Robotics competition and capped it off winning the 2025 Marine Institute RC Boat Race.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: They also successfully defended their title as the Eastern Canadian MATE ROV champions and will again attend the 2025 MATE ROV World Championships in Michigan.

Through resilience, teamwork and relentless drive to improve, their journey has been nothing short of inspirational.

Go Cougars!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Elks Club Avalon Spelling Bee recently took place with 20 entrants from 26 schools throughout the Avalon Peninsula. Competitors had to win spelling bees in their respective schools to advance to the competition. This year's spelling bee not only featured more schools than the previous years, but also more students up to Grade 8.

I'm proud to stand here and recognize Grade 3 student, Mason Gill of Octagon Pond Elementary, the youngest competitor who successfully took home the title of top provincial speller.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: Mason will now represent Newfoundland and Labrador at the Canada Super Spelling Bee in Ottawa this summer and will attend a three-day summer school on the campus of Algonquin College.

When asked how Mason became such a good speller, Mason explained it was from reading a lot of books. He particularly enjoys the works of Rick Riordan, best known for his series *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*.

Other individual grade winners were Aadeen Ashrafee, Megan Hamilton, Ibrahim Islam, Laaibah Muntaha and Ben Parsons.

Mr. Speaker, I ask hon. Members to help me congratulate Mason and all competitors on a job well done and wish them much continued success.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, today I rise in this hon. House to recognize a very young volunteer that is making a difference in our District of Placentia West - Bellevue, just by making it a better place. Makenna Kearley of Grand Le Pierre, who is joining us today, made it her mission to help others at the tender age of nine.

She began by picking up trash in her community. Next, she went door to door in several communities gathering donations for the Salvation Army Food Bank for Christmas. She collected a large number of goods and almost \$500, cash. Her next venture was the Million Reasons Run, completing 75 kilometres at the age of 10, and raising over \$800 for the Janeway.

She is an avid fundraiser at her school, and even a top contributor to the local Red Shoe Crew Run for Ronald McDonald House. Now 11, she completed another successful Easter food drive just recently for the Salvation Army and donated \$255.

One person can make a difference, and I hope Makenna's story will inspire others to act, no matter their age, as she has proven age is no barrier.

Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in acknowledging Miss Makenna Kearley of Grand Le Pierre for her generous

volunteerism and leadership at such a young age.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

On December the 18, 2024, at Government House, Your Honours Joan-Marie Aylward and Carl Thompson presented then five-5-year-old Brody Freeman of Champney's Arm the Gallant Conduct Medal. The standing ovation was reflective of this huge recognition. As the youngest member of one of the province's oldest organizations, the Church Lads Brigade, this medal is awarded to a member who, with presence of mind, makes a prompt and bold attempt to preserve the life of another.

On February the 26, 2024, Private Brody Freeman, while at Bonavista Ultramar, noticed a man fall to the ground. Brody immediately went over to provide aid in getting the man on his side – the recovery position – and staying with him. He may have helped save a life or, at minimum, avoid further injury.

As a member of the Trinity East-Port Rexton Church Lads Brigade #3805, Brody and his brigade has been taught first aid skills, and even at such a young age he was able to put his skill set into action. Brody and his mom remained until the paramedics arrived to assist this gentleman.

I ask the Members of the 50th House of Assembly to join me in celebrating the outstanding efforts of Private Brody Freeman for aiding a resident in distress.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I just want to say, I've been Speaker here for four years now and I think this is the first time all five of our Members' statements have been about our youth.

Congratulations, everyone.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: We definitely have a bright future ahead of us with people like you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Speaker.

As we acknowledge May 11 to 17 as National Police Week, I rise to recognize the brave members of our Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Professionals in our police agencies across this province, both uniformed and civilian, put an emphasis on working with communities and community organizations to best provide support to the people they serve.

Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador is fortunate to have two respected, highly trained, modern police forces which are well equipped to respond to any situation.

To better enhance the delivery of policing and public safety in our province, our government provides over \$180 million annually to the RNC and RCMP to support policing services and to meet the evolving needs of our diverse communities.

Speaker, I commend the continued collaboration between RNC and the RCMP as we work collectively to confront the increasing complexity of crime in our province.

I ask all Members to join me in applause to thank both the RNC and the RCMP for their

unwavering dedication to protecting the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

We're grateful for the opportunity to highlight National Police Week, which serves as a public awareness campaign of the importance of our police and the many sacrifices they make 24-7, 365.

The people of this province are proud to have two incredible police forces in our province. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, each, given their mandates, play a vital role in policing throughout our province.

At a time when violent crime is rising and the illicit drug trade is growing, residents are becoming uneasy. The work facing our police officers is increasingly demanding, yet despite the risk to their own lives, we can rest assured knowing that our police forces throughout Newfoundland and Labrador are serving us with courage, dedication and integrity.

We must do our very best to ensure that they are supported to the utmost degree.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

We would like to take this opportunity to recognize the valuable service of police officers in our communities and National Police Week. Increasingly, the situations that they deal with are becoming more complex and greater support is required to help them help our communities.

That's why we call on government to help with more training, meaningfully addressing the social determinants of health, making services more available and making sure that those who are vulnerable in our communities have the supports they need by increasing housing, affordability and increasing spending on mental health, and making mental health access easier to those in vulnerable communities.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you.

Speaker, the Newfoundland and Labrador lobster fishery is in a time of growth and potential, never seen before. From 2015 to 2024, lobster landings increased by 263 per cent, from 5.7 million pounds to 20.7 million pounds. The landed value of lobster increased substantially from \$30.7 million to \$136.6 million.

This government has invested over \$12 million towards live holding facilities, grading, processing and packaging systems. We invested \$2.3 million in a live holding and cold storage unit that is under construction at the Gander International Airport and will help access markets for live lobster in Europe and Asia.

Through *Budget 2025* our government is investing another \$5.75 million in new technology, processes, infrastructure and innovation throughout the fishing industry.

We are investing in industry-led projects that will advance the lobster industry and are supporting research and develop initiatives, new lobster harvesting and processing technology, traceability and eco-certification, training and other activities to drive the sector forward.

Speaker, the lobster fishery is the backbone of many Newfoundland and Labrador rural communities. We are proud to leverage opportunities to add value to our fishing resources, support the people of our province who rely on this industry and diversify our markets.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Speaker, I thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement

The Official Opposition welcomes any investment in our fishery. The investments in the lobster fishery were seen as positive by the lobster fishermen in our province. The lobster industry has been vital to rural Newfoundland and Labrador for a number of years. It has been a mainstay for many rural fishermen in their quest to maintain a livelihood for them and their families for years.

Questions come to mind: When will the facility at Gander International Airport be ready and have we secured the markets overseas to accept the delivery of our premium lobster products? What is the effect of the Chinese tariffs on our provincial revenue, the price impact as a result to our lobster harvesters? Additionally, will the mackerel fishery resume this year? Are we

ready for a potential increase in northern cod processing?

Speaker, the fishery is our largest renewal megaproject and can aid us more financially with the right policies and practices.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement.

During these uncertain economic times, fish harvesters and plant workers need to know that government has their back. We've heard little from this government about concrete measures to keep the work and the plants insulated from industries and from American and Chinese trade aggression.

We call upon this provincial government to reinsure workers in the fishery to explain how their industry will be protected in these uncertain times.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, today we learned that our province is expected to receive some \$520 million for a tobacco settlement over the next 30 years.

I ask the Premier: Did you know that this expected revenue of \$520 million related to this settlement – has it all been included in this year's budget?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker, for this important question.

Conditions have been met to recognize this revenue under the public sector accounting standards. We have certainty that we will be receiving this revenue, and that's why we have booked it, as per the public sector accounting standards.

I will remind the Member this is similar to what was done for the Atlantic Accord money back in 2019. You book it in the whole. You receive the revenue over the number of years. Of course, it's like any receivable for the provincial government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I had asked the Premier if he was aware of this, but the Minister of Finance said that they're booking it now. They feel confident that they're going to get this revenue. Others have suggested that the tobacco companies may not even be around in 20 years from now. What's really interesting is no other province in Canada – not one – has booked the entire revenue in one fiscal year except this province.

So I ask: Why?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

We based this information on the best information we have in Estimates. I will say

to the Member opposite that other provinces will do as they see fit with the revenue as required under this agreement. We have been given a reasonable assurance, I will say, it's reasonable for us to assume this revenue will come, like any revenue that will come, to the coffers of the provincial government. We will book this revenue as per the public sector accounting standards.

Other provinces will do that, as time evolves, but we feel that it's reasonable to assume that we're going to receive this revenue and that's why we're booking it in this year.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, the minister alluded to 2019 when they recorded a similar revenue from the Atlantic Accord all in one lump sum. I'll make that linkage in a second. Let me tell you what one expert said. These are the expert's word, not mine. Without being too cynical – and I'm quoting – there may be an election deadline at play. That was the opinion of this expert. 2019 also happened to be an election year, by the way.

So I ask the Premier: Without this revenue, what would the deficit have been?

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

S. COADY: Hard to make a corollary between the two, Speaker. It happens to be the year in which we believe we would be able to book this revenue based on the expertise and knowledge of accountants, of lawyers, of the legal community as to when we can reasonably expect this agreement to occur and, therefore, we have booked this revenue, Speaker.

The Auditor General will look in Public Accounts, as she does, to determine which year this money should be booked.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. COADY: I will say to the Members opposite, we believe the best advice that we were given, the best review that we were given is this revenue is reasonably to be assumed, and therefore we booked it. It is normal public accounting standards.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, we know from the Auditor General that she was not consulted before this revenue was booked at this time. We also know there was no mention of this revenue in the 82-page Budget Speech that the Minister of Finance presented.

But let me recap, again. We are the only province in Canada that is recording this revenue in this manner., all in this one fiscal year. So if you do the calculations, is our deficit not the \$372 million that the minister has talked about, but if this revenue wasn't recorded this way, our actual deficit would be \$892 million.

I ask the Premier: How can the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador trust this budget and trust your government?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. COADY: Revenue will be booked. It may be a matter of timing. We believe it will 2025-26, that's the expert advice that we have received. It was disclosed –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. COADY: Allow me to finish –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Minister of Finance has the floor.

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I will say that it was disclosed during the technical briefing. It was discussed because it is part of the statements and schedules booklet. We did discuss it during Estimates, Speaker. There's nothing to hide here. We are expecting revenue, and we have to book that revenue when it needs to be booked, Speaker. That is part of the public accounting standard, and that's what we're following.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, again, apparently, we're the only province in the entire country of Canada that has to book this revenue this way. Every other province doesn't see it that way. They're not doing it. And the only reason that we can see of booking the revenue this way is to reduce the actual deficit that this province is actually facing in this fiscal year.

Let me ask about the \$200 million that's currently budgeted for the tariffs. In Estimates, we learned, in fact, that this \$200 million is excluded from the deficit.

So I ask the Premier: Can you tell the people of the province why you're continuing to underestimate the deficit?

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

S. COADY: Allow me to correct the Member opposite. The rest of the provinces haven't determined how they will be recording it. They haven't determined how they will be recording this revenue. It is reasonable and we have decided, based on the best information that we have, and the public accounting standards. The Auditor General will weigh in in Public Accounts as to

whether or not it should be booked this year. But we have a receivable on the books.

Allow me to discuss the \$200 million. We did discuss this. We had an Interim Supply bill that went through this House. Lots of debate around the Interim Supply bill. The \$200 million in contingency is not booked, because we may not have to spend it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, let me quote again from the article on CBC, and this is about the tobacco industry. This expert says: "If there's any industry that's a very high-risk industry of not being around in 20 years, it would be, I think it's fair to say, this would be near the top of the list, if not at the top of the list."

So whether or not they'll be around to pay this money is very, very uncertain, yet we're playing Russian roulette with the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador by booking this revenue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: So let's turn around and talk about what the actual deficit is. The \$372 million, \$520 million of revenue recorded that we may or may not get, and \$200 million contingency fund. In my calculation that's over a billion dollars.

Why are we telling the people of the province that it's \$372 million?

SPEAKER: The Member's time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. COADY: It's unusual to have to remind the Leader of the Opposition that contingency is never booked. It's never booked, Speaker. So I'm a little bit perplexed as to why he's confused by this. That's the accounting standard.

To the point again about booking this revenue, we have received the assurance that we will be receiving this money. We have discussed this based on the best information that we have made available to us. We booked it using public accounting standards. The Auditor General will review this, as per Public Accounts, as to the timing of when to book it.

Speaker, it is not unlike any other receivable that this government has.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, maybe I'll just simplify this and ask the minister this question: If you did not book this revenue that you may get sometime in the future, would the actual deficit in this year's budget be well over \$800 million?

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

S. COADY: I'll also remind the Member opposite that the tobacco companies are legally obligated to pay this money –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. COADY: – legally obligated to pay this information.

Speaker, we base budget on the best information that we have available to us at the time of budget. Allow me to remind the Member opposite that a couple of years ago, we made an estimate on corporate

income tax and personal income tax and the amount of money we received was much higher than we estimated. That is the whole nature of Estimates.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. COADY: I will say to the Member opposite, we make decisions of how we spend the money based on the money that we anticipate receiving in revenues and, therefore, we make our budget based on that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I'm an accountant and, to me, the accounting actions of this Liberal government simply does not add up.

Nova Scotia has consulted the Auditor General on how they will account for the tobacco settlement.

Why didn't the Liberal minister opposite consult this province's Auditor General before tabling the budget?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. COADY: Thank you.

I note the Member opposite is an accountant, then he would have respect for the accountants within the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: So allow me to say this: It is not usual during the budgetary process to discuss with the Auditor General the Estimates. She does not audit the Estimates of the budgetary process. She does not do that.

She bases her review on the public statements and, therefore, she will review the accounting advice provided based on the audited Public Accounts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: Speaker, this is nothing against the staff within the Department of Finance.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: This is about the budget itself and how we are playing with numbers. So let me give a little accounting refresher. In accounting terms, manipulating the financial numbers is termed "cooking the books." Today, we learned that the Minister of Finance actually cooked the books.

So I ask the Premier: Will you fire the Minister of Finance?

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

S. COADY: That is atrocious to be honest with you, Speaker. That is insulting to all the accountants who have been involved with the preparation of this budget. We are obligated, in the Department of Finance –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

S. COADY: We are obligated, in the Department of Finance, to recognize revenues as we know that they will become available to us. We know that we have an agreement with the tobacco companies. We know that it will be worth \$500 million to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. It's contained within our Estimates book. We've discussed this during Estimates. We disclosed it during the technical briefing on budget day, Speaker.

I think the Member opposite is questioning the integrity of the accountants and of me of preparing this budget.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: Speaker, I am not questioning the integrity of the Department of Finance; I am questioning this Liberal government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: – and I'm questioning whether this is misinformed or misinforming.

Speaker, is it acceptable to book revenue you will not receive in this fiscal year in order to understate the deficit in an election year?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I will say –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Premier.

J. HOGAN: I've been listening for 15 minutes to the objective and truthful answers of the Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: – and I will stand by her side until the end of time for the work that she has done for this province since she's been Finance Minister.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: She didn't waste oil revenues; she created a Future Fund to preserve that money for the future of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, including my children and grandchildren.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: She didn't create a boondoggle that costs billions of dollars in Muskrat Falls, taking away revenue for education and for roads and for doctors and nurses.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: She created the best economy in this country, right here in this province. Compared to the rest of the country, the economic indicators in this province are going up while in the country they're going down.

Speaker, if anyone can appreciate how lucky we are to have her as a province, it's me.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, we have a role in Official Opposition to ask tough questions, and that's what my colleague from Baie Verte - Green Bay is doing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: We know the reason why government are doing it; it's an election year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: It's keeping the deficit down. It's an election year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I understand questions and comments get heated. I ask all Members, show each other respect and decorum in the House, please.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Again, we have that obligation we're going to carry on. We're not making any apologies for asking tough questions, but we expect proper answers, not rhetoric and not accolades. We want answers, Speaker.

Speaker, two years ago, the Liberal government promised the people of Conception Bay South an urgent care centre – still no action.

Minister, when can the people of CBS expect an urgent care centre to be open, or is this not important?

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

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

With reference to the last part of the Member opposite's question, I did retract the statement that I made yesterday where I made a mistake and said something wasn't important. However, I do recognize that the party opposite has made political grandeur out of that, and refused to post that I did, in fact, retract my statement. So I would remind them that there is a decorum that has to be conducted here as we operate as professionals and representatives of the people of the province.

To his question, the urgent care centres that are under way here in the province, those that have been announced, are currently being worked on. Recruitment and retention is one of the major issues that we identify as we're working on standing these centres up and making them operational, but we'll continue to build on the good work that's already been done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, 165,000 people without a family doctor, I guess that would be a good start.

Speaker, there was a ribbon-cutting yesterday to celebrate the second PET scanner for St. John's. Meanwhile, the residents in Corner Brook are still waiting on the one they were promised back in 2014 by a former premier.

I know this issue may not be important, Minister, but after more than a decade, when will the West Coast finally get this critical piece of diagnostic infrastructure?

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

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

Because I'm a professional and I have a job to do here that does not include stooping to disparaging levels, I will answer the question that has been presented.

When we talk about the PET scanners, there is a second PET scanner that has been announced here in St. John's, and it's a very important milestone as we look at accreditation across the province. With the addition of the second PET scanner here in St. John's, we do now have the capacity to produce our own radioisotopes, which allows us a more accurate and a more timely and efficient service to the rest of the province. It will allow us to source our isotopes to the PET scanner in Corner Brook.

So it was an integral part of an accreditation process that gives us a validity to maintain this service and practise here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, two PET scanners were announced in the press release of November 22, 2024. Just six months later, the new scanner in St. John's is operational. I understand isotopes. I've done some study in that, too, but there is still no reason why the health care in rural Newfoundland and Labrador continues to be treated like second-class citizens.

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

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

As a Member that represents a district that is, indeed, rural here in Newfoundland and Labrador, I have, numerous times, stated that it'll be a priority of mine to continue to provide appropriate and timely, effective

health care in rural communities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. HOWELL: So I would caution the Members opposite, when they come talking about rural health care, I have significant experience that I can speak upon and draw upon that will make this a very important issue here in the Department of Health.

But when we're talking about, again, the PET scanners, these are very specialized services. They are very difficult positions to recruit for because the people who are involved in this process are highly trained, but we are encouraged with the conversations that we've had with interested individuals as our recruitment and retention plan unfolds.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I mean, there's a brand new hospital built out there. This was promised years back. Now, all of a sudden, there's a new evolving thing. They've got to do recruitment and they've got to do all of this work. This is years and years in the making. It makes no sense. Under the third Liberal Premier now we're told Corner Brook's PET scanner is expected to be within two years.

Speaker, why does it take just six months – that's the question, it's only six months to get the one in St. John's but it's going to take 13 years for the people of Corner Brook to get theirs. It's simply not right.

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

K. HOWELL: As I mentioned, the individuals who are responsible for operating the PET scanners are very highly

qualified, highly trained. So it takes a long time to get them prepared to be in operation. I don't think you can simply decide one day that you're going to operate a PET scanner and then have the staff to produce the results the next day.

I do recognize there has been a significant timeline that's been implemented for the Corner Brook hospital and we're continuing to work on recruitment and retention efforts. But, as I said, the scanner that had to be operationalized in St. John's was part of making sure that this system functioned as a whole, and it allowed us to receive accreditation that would give validity to this service and help attract more qualified professionals to be part of that service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Speaker, residents in Central Newfoundland are reeling from the news today that there will be no radiologist at the Central Newfoundland Regional hospital in Grand Falls-Windsor from May 12 to June 15, 2025.

Why are we leaving one of the biggest hospitals that is overrun in the province with no on-site radiologist for over a month?

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

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

We do recognize that there are HR challenges in some of these communities, and we are continuing to work with NLHS to find appropriate alternatives and ensure that staffing is available. I will give the Member opposite updates as soon as they are available to me.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Speaker, I've also been told interventional radiology services will cease at the hospital in Grand Falls-Windsor, one of the most overrun and crowded hospitals in this province; the staff are swamped.

Minister, what is plan B for patients in Central Newfoundland, along with the staff?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

As I mentioned, this is certainly a process that is unfolding as we work to shore up services in Central Newfoundland and Labrador. As soon as we have any information, I will bring that back to this House and certainly provide it to the Member opposite.

As always, there is a robust recruitment and retention plan that has been implemented by this government and supported by NLHS. We'll continue to work on that. We've offered numerous incentives, and oftentimes there are particular challenges in the category base of a hospital, which we will take a look at and see if certain incentives can apply in different areas.

That might be the measure that needs to be implemented in Central Newfoundland, but everything is open for discussion as we work to fill some of these difficult positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Speaker, whatever retention they're doing is not working and these services are spread so thin right now it's not even funny. This crippling infrastructure is

on its way out and we need to do more. Very limited coverage is provided from nearby Gander by a single radiologist, and they cannot work 24-7.

Minister, I ask again: What's the plan moving forward? Because whether it be our cancer clinic or whether it be our lab services, our services are being taken away from us. Leave our services alone like they have to be.

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

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

As I said in my previous answer, we are continuing to work on our recruitment and retention. I can't tell doctors where to stay or where not to go. They do have a significant amount of mobility and if they choose to stay or leave, it is a decision that is beyond my capacity.

We do have significant incentives that are in place, recognizing that these are very difficult positions to fill. They have been received very well, but we'll continue to build on that plan, knowing that there is still much work to be done.

We recognize that our recruitment and retention plan is working, but we know that we have to build on it to make it more robust. We will certainly continue to do that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

According to the Vital Signs report – and for those who are unaware of that, that's the reputable Harris Centre report from MUN – they stated that in 2023 there were more than 15,000 visits to food banks in this province.

Can the minister please update the House on food bank usage numbers in this province?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

A very important question. I know it's a theme that we've been hearing in the House of Assembly. So I thought I'd share some information from Statistics Canada that I know the Member opposite would be very, very interested in.

It is a market-basket measure, with 2018 being the base. Allow me to tell the Member opposite since 2015 all persons have declined – okay, that's all persons, persons in low income – from 13 per cent to 9.8 per cent.

So we're on a good track. It is unfortunate coming out of COVID there have been some difficulties, there's no doubt. There are people that are having affordability issues. That's why we put \$750 million back into people's pockets.

SPEAKER: The minister's time is expired.

S. COADY: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, today we're hearing reports that government is playing creative with accounting, putting money down that we don't have yet, money that's not even settled. We don't even know if we're going to fully get it in the 30-year span.

I ask the Premier: Why didn't he consult the AG before putting the money down, given

the numerous recommendations she's made about the accounting system?

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

S. COADY: Thank you.

I believe we've already reviewed this. But allow me to tell the Member opposite that the Auditor General doesn't usually audit or review the Estimates. She bases her information on the Public Accounts, and she will weigh in to how we've treated this particular revenue source.

Conditions have been met to be able to book this as revenue under public accounting standards. We have received what I'm going to call information and assurance of this revenue that will be held by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Allow me to explain to the Member opposite that it will be a receivable to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and tobacco companies are legally obligated to pay that revenue. So we were required by law to book that revenue.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, last year the former CEO of NLHS said that they estimated \$70 million would be spent on travel nurses over the next year. However, a recent ATIPP confirmed that travel nurse costs ballooned to double that, spending \$139 million in the past 12 months.

So I ask the Premier, who was the minister of Health at the time for most of that year, how are we allegedly hiring fewer nurses, yet we're spending double on this?

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

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

To the Member opposite's point, we have had to use travel nurses in some of our most difficult-to-fill areas. The Member opposite would know this because his area is one of those areas. We do not want to close hospitals or reduce services so reliance upon travel nurses is important, in some instances, to keep these facilities open.

However, we have decreased our overall reliance on travel nurses and we're continuing to recruit for nursing positions. We do have an overall decrease in the vacancy rate of nurses here in Newfoundland and Labrador, so our recruitment plan is working. We'll continue to work with our stakeholders and our partners at the RNU to build and bolster this plan, looking at efforts of retention and how we can better serve and suit the nurse –

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Speaker, it's clear the government's plan to reduce spending and dependence on travel nurses is failing. Government says they've cut their travel nursing by 40 per cent, yet we currently are pouring millions into private companies instead of investing the money back into public nurses.

I ask the Premier: Will you publicly announce a new plan, one that will actually work and shore up our public system?

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

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

There has been a health human resource plan discussion that's been happening in the department and with NLHS. I would let the Member opposite know to stay tuned, that there'll be information about that in the very near future.

But, as I've said before, our reliance on travel nurses has decreased, so I wouldn't want anybody to be misinformed in thinking that it's still at the same level that it was previously. We've done a great amount of work to reduce that reliance, but there will always be a small measure of travel nursing required as we don't want to close hospitals or reduce services.

So it's important to us that we still have high-quality care available to people in some of the most rural and remote parts of our province. On one hand, we do know that it's a difficult situation, but on the other hand we don't want to have to lose services as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I ask the minister: What is the timeline of construction and completion of the addiction treatment centre that was promised to Labrador over a year ago?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't have the timelines for that, but I will get that information and report back to the hon. Member.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

K. HOWELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, Standing Order 49.

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

K. HOWELL: In Question Period, the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay used language that was defamatory to the Minister of Finance and I do believe, in his conversation, he accused her of cooking the books, which would be criminal activity.

I do believe that it is unparliamentary for a Member to stand in this House and accuse the Minister of the Crown of that. So I ask that he unequivocally would retract that statement or therefore we'll have a further conversation.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Speaker, I think the recordings will show that the Member opposite was asking questions, he was using it as a terminology. He wasn't accusing anyone in particular. It was just a term used in the accounting world, that he felt that it was –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

It wasn't directed in that way. There was lots of commentary back and forth. If you listen to the recordings, you might have heard someone threatening to sue the Member opposite, one of my colleagues. So we can get both ways of this.

It was a heated debate. He was only making a point. It's not a direct indication that anyone has done anything criminal. It was a matter of the people of the province need to know the accuracy of our budget, and we don't feel the budget numbers are being properly exposed to the people of this province.

We feel that the deficit is a lot higher than what it is, and the Member opposite had a role to do it and that's what he brought up. It's not about criminal activity; it's about trying to seek the proper answers in this House of Assembly.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Jobs, Immigration and Growth.

G. BYRNE: Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, what I think, upon review, you will determine yourself, which has been the practice of this House and all Houses of Westminsterian democracy, that you cannot do indirectly what you cannot do directly. This was clearly a defamatory statement. It was clearly directed at the Finance Minister and it was clearly made with the intent to create the suspicion of criminality or some other form of malfeasance.

I remind the hon. Speaker you cannot do in our House indirectly what you cannot do directly. I ask you to be guided by these sage words.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I don't want to interfere with the debate going on here, but I was in this Legislature many times and I've heard many times the books are cooked. Are you cooking the books? There was never an issue because it is the common language that we use.

When I heard the minister say it's like the Atlantic Accord, and that's when the statement was made after, the Atlantic Accord was a \$2-billion cheque in your hand now, not 30 years down the road. So you put it in the books for now, not 30 years down the road. So just on this alone, I've been in this House –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Just speak to the point of order.

E. JOYCE: I am.

SPEAKER: No, speak to the point of order.

E. JOYCE: But the whole point of this here, are the books being cooked, I've heard this many times in the House. All of us who have been here for a while heard this many times. If you say that you committed a crime, that's different. If you said you stole money, that's different. But cooking the books or books has been cooked has been in this Question Period and in this debate on many occasions in this House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'm going to review *Hansard* and the video recording of it, and I'll report back to the House.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

In according with section 56 of the *Automobile Insurance Act*, I'm tabling the

Newfoundland and Labrador Board of Commissioners of Public Utilities Annual Report on Automobile Insurance for the period of April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Are there any further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper –

SPEAKER: No, notices of motions first.

L. DEMPSTER: Oh, sorry.

SPEAKER: I know we're eager to get started.

Any notices of motions?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Speaker, residents of the Exploits District and surrounding area are concerned with deteriorated cellphone service in the region, causing safety issues for emergency calls.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to secure a cellphone provider to increase the coverage of the cellphone use.

Speaker, I've heard this from many of my colleagues, about the cellphone service. Central area, Exploits, are no different. It seems like the further outward you go, the less service we have. Even on the Trans-Canada Highway in different areas, and even directly on the Trans-Canada Highway in the Central area, we're not getting service.

This leads to people in emergency situations in the middle of the night needing to use the cellphone service. They may have went off the road. Especially now with the 24-hour emergency service taken out of Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Care Centre, people have to travel longer distances. They can't use the cellphone on their travels and that sort of stuff.

So we need, certainly, some sort of provider or some sort of enhancement to the cellphone service in the Central area, and on the other parts of course, so that we can provide the safety and people can feel that they can use that service when needed and provide for the service that they will need.

Speaker, we ask the government to certainly take serious consideration to this issue.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

This petition is for timely and adequate access to health care for our Northern Labrador residents.

We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador who urge our leaders to ensure that Northern Labrador residents of Nain, Natuashish, Hopedale, Makkovik, Postville and Rigolet are provided with access to timely and adequate health care.

Frequently, patients are prevented from getting to their medical

appointments/treatment at outside provincial health authority hospitals because they can't get on the medical flight. There are not enough seats on the flight.

Patients who manage to get out to their medical appointments and medical treatment often face long delays trying to return home to the communities This creates mental, financial, family and work stresses, in addition to the physical burden of their illness.

Patients often can't get timely appointments to see a nurse at their community clinic. This is a critical delay for stroke, cardiac, cancer and other medical situations. We ask for a standard to be established for appointments, especially when dealing with fill-in nurses.

So, Speaker, I've presented this petition many times. As the MHA for Torngat Mountains, every week, I still get calls, especially on Thursday and Friday when patients are bumped off. They got their slip in and they should be flying home to their appointments.

Also, I'm still getting calls from patients on the North Coast who can't get out and their appointment is there, it's scheduled, it's arranged, they're supposed to be on the flight and they can't get out to their appointment. Their appointment could be for treatment. Their appointment could be for diagnosis. Their appointment could be a follow-up from surgery. It could be about physio. It could be many things, Speaker.

But, for me, what really bothers me is being prevented and the stress it causes, the financial stress, the mental stress. Also, I do mention in our clinics, sometimes the clinics are short-staffed. Speaker, I've had personal experience with this. I've had an uncle, where my relatives were called to the clinic and said, there's something wrong with Dad; he's falling around. There's something wrong with his leg, and the nurse

refused to see him. This went on for several days.

By the time he got sent out, it was a stroke and, Speaker, that changed his life. It changed the life of his family. Now they spend huge dollars, taking turns going out to Goose Bay. So first when he was in the hospital because he couldn't get into the home and now when he's in the home. Speaker, if that was my mom, my family would be doing the same thing, and it was the delay when they first reported it in getting care.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

The background to this petition is as follows:

St. Shotts Road on the Southern Avalon is in need of major repairs. These roads are in deplorable condition to the point where it's a safety issue. This road is relied on by residents and visitors on a daily basis. With a worldwide heritage UNESCO site in the area, there is an increased volume in traffic there.

Therefore, we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to upgrade this piece of infrastructure for the safety of residents and visitors to allow a safer commute on this roadway.

Speaker, I've done this petition many times over the last few years, and I would say it's probably the oldest paving infrastructure in the province. It's 40 years old and nothing has been done to it. The stretch goes from St. Shotts to Peter's River. You know, there are always highway crews out there putting cold patch on. I did say previously that I wonder how much money they spend on

cold patch over a year in that area, in the whole Trepassey, St. Shotts, Peter's River area.

It's, I'm going to say, a tourism area. In another month, that'll be wrapped up with tourists in the area. There will be whale watching over in St. Vincent's. The Irish Loop goes in a full circle, obviously. You have the World Heritage UNESCO site. When you're going driving the Irish Loop, you're going to go through Ferryland where the Interpretation Centre is there. You have the Colony of Avalon in the area as well. Big tourist attractions in the area.

I've certainly asked many ministers to look at this piece of infrastructure. When you drive over it – I get a lot of calls from people that have campers, as well, when they're towing and going around and stopping in certain areas on the Irish Loop. The Irish Loop will probably take you 3½, four hours when you do the full complete circle.

When you're going around, this part of the district, the roads are absolutely deplorable. You drive up there, and if you go up there – and the residents themselves, when they leave, they have a jack and a spare tire in their car for people that run into trouble that are on this road. They drive in the nighttime or in the evenings, when it's foggy, and you're on one side of the road – I showed pictures here yesterday to some of the MHAs on this side, and the road is really, really bad. Hopefully, the minister can look in his budget to be able to take care of this infrastructure.

I've been six years speaking about this road and the infrastructure up there, and with the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's, and she knows, we spoke about it many times, and in between both districts, between St. Shotts and Peter's River, borders on hers and on mine. It's something that we've been at for five or six years that I've been here trying to get this piece of infrastructure and pavement done.

So, hopefully, the minister in his wisdom can see to add this to his road infrastructure for this year.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

The petition is the anti-temporary replacement worker legislation. The reasons for this petition:

Anti-temporary replacement worker laws has existed since 1978; in British Columbia, since 1993; and the federal government has recently introduced legislation at the end of 2023.

The temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community, the local economy and the well-being of residents.

Anti-temporary replacement worker legislation has been shown to reduce the length of divisiveness of labour disputes.

Since 2015, the right to strike has been clearly protected under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* because it helps stabilize the power and balance between the worker and the employer.

The use of temporary replacement workers undermines this right.

Therefore, we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout.

I won't belabour this too much, but I do want to bring this petition, especially now that we have a new minister responsible for Labour, to put out that this is something that the

workers of Labrador West and workers across this province have been calling on. We've had some very divisive strikes in the past that this was used in, most notably at D-J Composites in Gander and also the Vale strike which also ended up having an industrial inquiry into because of that labour dispute.

Now that we have a new Labour Minister, I wanted to petition that minister for this legislation to make sure that protect workers and their right to strike and by protecting that, we protect all rights of the worker in this province.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 6.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that for the purpose of reviewing the Estimates of the 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.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 2, Estimates of Executive Council, Estimates of the Legislature.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that this House do now resolve itself into Committee of the Whole on Supply to consider the Estimates of the Executive Council and Legislature.

SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into Committee of the Whole?

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 (Trimper): We are now reviewing the head of expenditure for the Legislature.

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

CLERK (Hawley George): For the Legislature, 1.1.01 to 8.1.01 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 through to 8.1.01 carry?

Are there any questions to this?

Seeing no further questions, shall 1.1.01 to 8.1.01 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: 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 will now proceed to the head of expenditure, Executive Council.

I'll ask the Clerk to introduce the first subheading.

CLERK: For the Executive Council, subhead 1.1.01.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 carry?

Any speakers to this?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subhead 1.1.01 carried.

CLERK: 2.1.01 to 2.8.03 inclusive, Office of the Executive Council.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 through to 2.8.03 carry?

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, under 2.2.01, Executive Council, last year under Salaries, \$2,580,600 was budgeted, \$3,953,700 spent, giving an overage of \$1,365,100. Could you please explain this? 2.2.01, Executive Support –

S. COADY: 2.2 –

L. PARROTT: Yes.

Were there any positions added that were not anticipated at the time of budget last year?

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

S. COADY: My apologies, I just needed to know which subhead.

So 2.2.01 is Executive Support. As you would have noticed last year, and I'm pleased to be, again, questioned by the Member for Terra Nova, that's where health transformation is located, that's where the royal economic development – and they're all funded through financial assistance. So the money flows from financial assistance in there.

Last year you would have noted, as well, it was up higher because of the royal economic development and the health transformation.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Do you have a breakdown on those two headings, what it was?

S. COADY: I can certainly get that for you. I don't have it. I don't have it broken down by sub-class, but I can find that out for you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay, thank you.

Under Professional Services, last year \$565,400 was spent. Money that was not anticipated being spent at the time of the budget last years. Can you please outline what this was for, and can we get a breakdown?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

I am just making sure I have the right information. So the budget for Professional Services provides a placeholder for any consultant or advisory services required. Included in that would be, for example, the Churchill Falls Memorandum of Understanding, any focus groups or any costs associated, even with Well-Being Week, that's where it's housed.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: So could we get a complete breakdown of all of that?

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

S. COADY: I will certainly ask for that breakdown.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay.

How many members of the health transformation team are included in that area?

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

S. COADY: Thank you.

I will get that information for you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Doctor Rob Greenwood is the deputy minister of rural and regional development. How many staff does he have in that department?

S. COADY: My understanding is there are three, but I will get the absolute breakdown for you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you.

What reports or actions has the department of rural and regional development generated?

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

Your lights are on, so you can proceed.

S. COADY: Thank you.

I tend to wait.

I think it would be best, if that's a policy question, that it will be posed to the minister responsible for Rural Economic Development, but I do know that Rob Greenwood, as you mentioned, who is the deputy minister of that department has been consulting with communities around the province. He's been working with municipalities and really setting out what, I think, is a very good rural economic development plan.

L. PARROTT: Can the Minister of Rural Economic Development reply to the question?

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

S. COADY: I'm sorry, she wasn't available at the moment. So we'll get some information for you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: How are you objectively determining the success of the Department of Rural Economic Development?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

I'm trying to get some of the details that you wanted the breakdown of.

In the Department of Treasury Board, there is a new Accountability Division and we're monitoring and questioning every expenditure of government. I think we'll have an opportunity later on in the Estimates, under Treasury Board, to talk further about this, but that is where the analysis is being done as to how moneys are being spent and whether that value for money.

So as we move forward with the Rural Economic Development division, they will be expected, of course, to, again, under the minister, present to Treasury Board how the money is being spent, what they're spending the money on and what are the results.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: I'll just go back to the previous two questions and, obviously, we're going to pass this today and I'm wondering if the minister could answer those questions. I'm more than willing to ask them, again, but I think they warrant an answer.

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

I understand the former minister is able to offer you further information.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: So the question was what reports and actions has the Department of Rural Economic Development generated?

CHAIR: The hon. the minister responsible for Rural Economic Development.

F. HUTTON: I'm sorry. Could I ask you to repeat it? There was some talking going on when you were trying to – I apologize.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: What reports and actions has the Department of Rural Economic Development generated?

CHAIR: The hon. the minister responsible for Rural Economic Development.

F. HUTTON: So for the record, just to make the House aware and the record aware, I am no longer the minister of Rural Economic Development but did spend from the end July until just a couple of days ago in that portfolio working very closely with the deputy minister, Rob Greenwood, and the work that he has been doing is really more indicative of what the provincial government and all ministers over here have been doing over the last several years, and even predating this government, is the rural view or lens on all monies that are spent, where investment goes.

I had a file on my desk of all the investments that had been made. I don't have those with me right now, but I can certainly provide them to you in terms of numbers that showed – I think it was in the magnitude of \$450 million in infrastructure

projects over the last two years to rural areas of the province.

Another – I may be corrected on this number – around again \$410 million or \$450 million, those numbers ring a bell in terms of roadwork that has been done. Obviously, the work that's been done with the twinning of the highway is part of an infrastructure plan to make rural Newfoundland and Labrador more accessible, and making sure that people, if they're going to set up businesses, they know they have a good way to get to and from and get their products to and from.

Obviously, our fishery, mining, as well our lumber industry. All sorts of different things related to products that are produced here or our natural resources.

Dr. Greenwood had gone around the province more extensively prior to my arrival in that department back in July, meeting with stakeholders. We had done the same thing on several occasions, going to some areas around the province to meet with folks to talk about what their needs are, but making sure that the lens is there. It was really across all departments, making sure that rural Newfoundland was a focus of any decisions that are being made so that moneys were equally distributed to different areas of this vast province.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: So you referenced you'd supply that information to us at a later date, I just want to clarify that that's the case.

CHAIR: The hon. the minister responsible for Rural Economic Development.

F. HUTTON: I've got my earpiece in there now, sorry.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: I said you referenced that you would supply us with the information.

CHAIR: The hon. the minister responsible for Rural Economic Development.

F. HUTTON: Basically, what it is, it's a number of news releases that have come out from all departments basically showing the investments that have been made in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: You mentioned the work that's ongoing with the twinning of the highways; can you elaborate on what work is ongoing?

CHAIR: The hon. the minister responsible for Rural Economic Development.

F. HUTTON: I don't know if the current Minister of Transportation wants to jump in on that. I can certainly speak to what I knew leading up to last Friday.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

E. LOVELESS: Yeah, sorry, I can't be of a lot of help at this point. As you know, there's brush cutting on the go, which is the first requirement for any highway development. So that's ongoing now but I don't have timelines. I'll certainly report back to you in terms of if we have timelines in terms of roads being rerouted or whatever the case may be, bridges taken up or whatever the case may be.

So once I have that information, I'll be happy to report back to you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: So the minister just elaborated the brush clearing, but I'm a little shocked to find out that the brush clearing

that's ongoing right now is in conjunction with any twinning of the highway. If there's no survey work done and ponds are in the way, which would cost more – I mean, there's an elaborate amount of work that would have to happen and if we're doing that brush cutting for the twinning of the highway right now, I don't know – we're going to dig it all up anyhow. I mean, that would not be work that's carried out prior to the twinning of the highway from an engineering standpoint.

E. LOVELESS: (Inaudible.)

L. PARROTT: Okay. That's not the question. The question was what has been carried out – he mentioned the twinning of the highway. So you specifically referred to the brush cutting which would not be required to add an additional lane of a highway without any survey work or any of the things associated with the construction of a highway from a civil standpoint.

E. LOVELESS: You got to put a surveyor in to clear a bunch of brush.

CHAIR: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: Anyhow, I'm just asking a question. It doesn't seem right to me.

E. LOVELESS: Well, the surveyors are out there, right? Just drive the highway.

CHAIR: Trying to get some order here.

The Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

I'm going to have to ask to recess the House for 10 minutes because we do have a minister that has been requested outside, urgently. So I wouldn't normally do this but just going to recess the House for 10 minutes and will convene at 3 p.m.

CHAIR: Do we have to rise the Committee?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: I move that the Committee rise and report some progress on the Estimates of Executive Council and Estimates of the Legislature, and that is seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader.

CHAIR: It is moved that this Committee rise and report progress and asked leave to sit again.

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.

Recess

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Are the House Leaders ready?

The Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank my colleagues across the way for that brief recess.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 2, Estimates of Executive Council and the Legislature.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that this House do now resolve itself into Committee of the Whole in Supply to consider the Estimates of the Executive Council and Legislature.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into Committee of 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 (Trimper): Order, please!

We are following Motion 2 in Committee of the Whole on Supply, reviewing the Estimates of Executive Council.

CLERK: 2.1.01 to 2.8.03 inclusive, Office of the Executive Council.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 through to 2.8.03 carry?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much and I appreciate my colleagues taking that brief recess.

I will respond to the Member for Terra Nova who asked for some details on the salary Estimates. I do have those for him now.

We have four individuals that have been involved in the health transformation, including a deputy minister. Their total has been \$552,903 for salaries and they are now moved within the Department of Health. So you may see a change as we move forward.

For rural development, I understand that we have – I have to just keep going back and forth; we were having some technical difficulties. I think there is the deputy minister, plus an assistant and two policy analysts. For the Rural Economic Development division it's \$334,700. Then there are some change team individuals as well. That is \$306,700 in total salaries.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: I'll go back now to the Department of Rural Economic Development, and I guess the question was how are you objectively determining the success of the department? The previous minister suggested that he would supply us with some press releases.

But I guess what the question is there must be more details than press releases. Press releases get written for a reason by information that creates that. So that's the information I'm looking for.

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

S. COADY: Certainly, I will ask officials to provide you with that under the accountability and transformation framework.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay.

I also note the fact that the Rural Economic Development doesn't have its own set of finances. I would think that it is a true department, and it should kind of have infrastructure, similar to Labrador Affairs, I would think.

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

S. COADY: I think you read the new minister's mind, because we're now working on pulling the pieces of out of the Cabinet Secretariat and looking to consolidate that. That was the request, actually, to me from the new minister, is to consolidate that revenues into one location so the full breadth of that department can be viewed.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: So I'll skip over a couple of subheadings there and go directly to 2.4.01, Communications Branch.

Just looking for an explanation why the Purchased Services went over budget by \$125,000.

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

S. COADY: As you know, we move monies into there when we have extra programs that we need to do. Buy Newfoundland and Labrador was one of them. So we had a buy on Buy Newfoundland and Labrador. The fishery enhancements that were made in that division, that was where the communications came from was from there. Some post-budget advertising, so when we go out to communicate to the people of the province, that's where the money comes from, media buys, displays, as well as on the Churchill Falls Memorandum.

I know you're going to ask me about how much did we spend on the Churchill Falls Memorandum so I'll tell you I think it was \$99,581. That's what I have written down.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: I guess the minister has the same talent that I do in mind-reading.

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

S. COADY: I just know your level of detail.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Could we get a detailed list of all of the expenditures under that heading and exactly what they were?

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

S. COADY: I'll certainly request that of officials.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Okay.

So what we'd want to know is what the cost was, what agencies or companies were contracted for each campaign and for the MOU, for Buy NL, all of that stuff, please.

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

S. COADY: I will also say there are – I don't think you want this level of detail but that's where the media buys are; that's where the little displays that we might – so I will suggest that you want them for campaigns.

L. PARROTT: Yes.

S. COADY: Details for campaigns. Okay, perfect.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: So you indicated that there was \$99,000 spent on the promotion of the Churchill Falls MOU. Just out of curiosity, when was that money allotted? Was it before or after the announcement?

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

S. COADY: I would have to get that detail for you and I don't know if that's the entirety but that's the amount from this particular budget that I recorded. I think you have already asked or have asked for some details on the Churchill Falls and when that occurred, so I will get you those details.

CHAIR: The hon. The Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: And, if possible, we'd like the total amount, for sure.

Under 2.4.02, Public Engagement, 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: Sorry, you're fast.

I'll read the list into the record, but I'll also give you the list. There were various projects, so pre-budget, of course, being one of them, pre-budget 2025, questions on tobacco and vaping; Active Living Action Plan; Mental Health and Addictions All-Party Committee; the minimum wage review; the continuum of decision-making; the mechanics' lien legislative review – I'm just reading from the list.

Digital technology project; the public service week questionnaire; the review of traditional Chinese medicine; the review of the *Arts Council Act*; high school assessments and evaluations plan; Prince of Wales school system reconfiguration, they did some public engagement on that; the Happy Valley-Goose Bay housing and homelessness hub; status of women council act legislative review; ATIPP; continuum of decision-making for CSSD; health transformation; Network of Disability Organizations, labour union facilitation project; renewal of intermediate program of

studies; transparency and accountability legislative review; fall fisheries forum; the future of the fisheries. Those are just some of the ones that are – so I will ask for them to provide you with that list.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Just out of curiosity, and I don't know if it belongs in here or who covers it and you may say that it has nothing to do with any of this, the cost of security at the National War Memorial in St. John's, does that come under this, or where does it come from and, if so, what was the total cost for the year?

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

S. COADY: Allow me to ask where exactly it is in the Estimates, under what category or heading?

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: I don't know, that's why I'm asking.

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

S. COADY: I don't know. So allow me to ask, and I'll ask.

It comes from Transportation and Infrastructure.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: That's fine.

Can you give me an overview of how many projects EngageNL sought feedback on last year? How much feedback was received online and how much was received in the in-person sessions?

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

S. COADY: Certainly.

We're receiving more and more engagement through the EngageNL. It's a web-based tool to allow interaction and input from the public, and the trend really is changing to engage in these platforms. We're seeing more and more people wanting to communicate that way. So we're seeing, actually, movement sometime – even if you look under Supplies, that little bit of change in Supplies, you'll see a slight decrease this year, is only because we moved that budget to Purchased Services to allot for more money for that online service activity.

So you're seeing more and more but just to give you an example. The pre-budget 2025, there were 868 participants. I just going to pick a few of them and when you receive the list – tobacco and vaping had 476; the Active Living Action Plan, 444; the Mental Health and Addictions All Party Committee, 453; the minimum wage review, 372; and then you have some smaller ones. For example, we had in Happy Valley-Goose Bay housing and homelessness hub, because it was a very specific, 174.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: My time is running out, so just so one quick last question.

Does EngageNL have the ability to see where these submissions are coming from? I ask the question because in my district I have multiple communities that actually don't have access to Internet or Wi-Fi services, and it leads to the fact that there are communities that are entirely left out of this process. I'm just wondering if we have a way to address that, because it seems that people are being left behind because of this process.

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

The portal actually saw 61,217 visits during the period of April '24 to March of '25. So the most active month was June of 2024, with over 22,600 visits on the EngageNL site. Of course, this is a vendor site. Thornley Fallis Communications is a well-known web portal and it provides online engagement to a number of vendors. We actually buy it from them, but I will ask to see if we can see it on a geographical basis. I'll ask that question.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

The Member's time is expired.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

Under this subhead, I only have three questions, all under subhead 2.8.02.

Has there been an increase in the funding for Women's Centres across the province under this subhead?

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

S. COADY: I'm sorry, you said 2.8.02?

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: That's correct, Minister.

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

S. COADY: Okay. That's not in mine. It's Women and Gender Equality and the minister is here. So I'll turn to her.

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: So what was the question?

CHAIR: The hon. The Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Will there be an increase to the core funding for Women's Centres across the province?

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: That would be a budget decision. I will find the answer out from the department.

CHAIR: The hon. The Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Minister.

I guess it's a two-part question. The Government of Nova Scotia has declared intimate partner violence an epidemic and I was wondering, under this year, will this province be doing a similar thing? They declared it as an epidemic to help, I guess, with funding and help with getting resources out. I was wondering if this will be action for this budgetary year for this department.

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: So the short answer is there is work being done on it, yes, and will continue to be done. There's a significant amount of consultation being done with the groups and organizations. It is one of the items that is listed.

CHAIR: The hon. The Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Perfect. That's my final question for this subhead.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll go back to 2.6.01, Intergovernmental Affairs.

Last year's Salaries were overbudget by \$96,700. Can you explain why?

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

S. COADY: Certainly, it's leave for a departing employee. So as they left their employment, obviously, you have payouts that need to be made.

May I answer your previous question about geographic location for EngageNL? Unfortunately, they don't collect for privacy reasons. I had hoped they'd give broad, geographic regions but they don't collect it.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: There should be something to reconsider tracking on a broader scale for sure.

S. COADY: Yes.

L. PARROTT: Under Purchased Services, 2.6.01, can you provide a detailed listing of what services are included here? We went overbudget by \$416,800, with a planned increase this year of \$1.5 million – \$1.48 million, to be exact. I'd like an explanation around both of those numbers.

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

Well, allow me to say that this reflects a cost associated with the Boston office. As you know, the direction has been given to open an office in Boston. This is strategic to raise the profile of Newfoundland and Labrador

internationally. Obviously, Boston is a hotbed for seafood, technology, biotech, for energy, using those examples.

So we will have one Newfoundland and Labrador representative in Boston and two support people. We're sharing services with the office of the Boston Consulate. As you know, I know from your background in the oil and gas sector, many of the provinces – most of the provinces actually – have representatives throughout the United States and around the world.

This money is for staffing; it's for location services; it's for supplies; it's for IT; it's for travel. So that's \$1.2 million.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Can you provide a complete breakdown of how you came to that \$1.2 million? It just seems excessive for one full-time staffer with two assistants in an office being shared.

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

S. COADY: I certainly can. I'll ask the deputy minister to provide that.

It's operated under a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Canada. We had to set up the office, so there are extraneous expenses due to the set-up of the office, but, as I said, this is for three staff, location services, supplies, IT, travel, but I'll certainly ask them to provide you that detailed list.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: So just to clarify, I assume that the extraneous expenses are the \$416,800 for set-up, and that the \$1.48 million is what I'm asking the difference to be. So we went over budget by \$416,800 last year –

S. COADY: The \$416,000 was the cost associated with that Boston office, and now you're getting into the actual costs.

L. PARROTT: Yes, and the \$1.2 million that's budgeted, that's what I'd like to understand.

S. COADY: And I've asked for you to get a detailed breakdown of that.

L. PARROTT: Perfect, thank you.

And the last question I have under this heading, for me, but my counterpart might have a couple, it's 2.5.01, Minister. Can you please outline the positions which are held in this line item? Last year there was a salary savings of \$146,900, and I guess the question really is, were positions vacant, and if so, which positions and for how long?

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

S. COADY: Certainly. We do have vacancies in that area. Two organizational budget analysts, and they're looking, really, at a full re-org. That's why we have a drop balance there, it's because they're looking at a full re-org.

They're generally hard-to-fill positions, so they're looking at how that we could reorganize the way that the financial administration is provided for all of Cabinet Secretariat – you have to remember that it's all the Cabinet Secretariat. There are 10 funded positions, six permanent, four temporary, and now we're looking to reorganize to better offer the services required.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, under Intergovernmental Affairs – and I just have a couple of general questions, as opposed to specific questions

about the numbers, I suppose. I just want to go to the Boston office, \$1.2 million. I'd just like to understand, given the fact that we are in a trade war with the United States, we have a president of the United States who has clearly attacked Canada economically and we've been encouraging people to boycott travel to the United States, to boycott American goods, we're looking for new trading partners around the world and so on – given the fact we've never had a Boston office in our history, that I'm aware of, until now, why would we think it would be a good idea to spend \$1.2 million this year, plus whatever the set-up was previous to that, on an office in Boston to try to deal with someone who doesn't even want to talk to us?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

A very interesting question, to be honest. Because we are concerned about the United States. As you know, we've taken a lot of steps to disengage in some ways from our extensive trading partnership with the United States.

But you have to remember, about 95 per cent of our seafood, our crab goes into the United States. So we want to be able to ensure that we have a relationship, because it is very vitally important to the fisheries. I would suggest if you spoke to the fishers in the province, they still will need to sell product into the United States. It will take a period of time for us to find other markets.

So really, we need someone to advocate for our industries in the United States. Especially when you're in tumultuous times. That's when you really need someone there to showcase what Newfoundland and Labrador has to offer and to ensure that we are in the best position to take the opportunity that presents itself in the United States.

So we're seeing most other, I think almost all, jurisdictions across this country have multiple offices around the United States and indeed around the world. Boston was chosen specifically because it is a hotbed for the fisheries, for the technology industry, for the biotech industry, even for our oil industry.

While we're still looking for other markets, we're also trying to ensure that we have someone that's advocating on our behalf in the United States.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: I appreciate the answer and I guess, perhaps, we'll agree to disagree on – not necessarily the idea of the office. Personally, I think it's a pretty good idea under normal circumstances. But given where we're to right now, given the fact we've never had it before, the timing just doesn't feel right to me. We're asking people, don't take your vacation in the US, avoid the US, buy Canadian products and then we're going to do this. So it just feels counterintuitive, but I appreciate the answer.

Because we're talking about Intergovernmental Affairs, I'd like to know what initiatives – there was an MOU, I believe, signed with New Brunswick. But beyond an MOU signed with New Brunswick, what other actions have been taken in terms of interprovincial trade? Why only one province as opposed to all the provinces, or are there other agreements that we're going to see signed in the near future with all the other provinces similar to what we saw in New Brunswick? At what stage are we with that?

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

S. COADY: Thank you.

This is important. I really appreciate the question because I think it's a very

important question on interprovincial trade barriers in particular, because it was with New Brunswick to show that we're making good strides. I will say, I've been dealing with interprovincial trade barriers for most of my career, at least the last 20 years and I can tell you this is the first time I've seen actual movement on it. I truly believe that, especially in two particular areas, you will see some very good movement.

As you know, the new prime minister has said he wants to see movement by July 1. He wants to see a free Canada by July 1. I will say on two specific areas – one is on labour mobility, and Newfoundland and Labrador has actually been a leader in labour mobility. We set up an agreement with the rest of Atlantic Canada, actually, for doctors. Now, labour mobility is recognizing credentials across the country in allowing labour to move.

I know the time, so allow me just to get to get to second one and that is a mutual recognition of regulations. There are barriers in regulations but, as I say to my colleagues across the country, if you can work in downtown Toronto, you should be able to work in downtown St. John's. If you can purchase a product in Ontario, I'm sure that their safety standards are good, and we should be able to purchase it in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The other one that's of particular interest, I think, for this province is trucking. Right now, you can't drive a truck right across this country moving goods. You have to have – I'll just give one example – different types of equipment in your vehicle for emergency services or first aid. You have to have different types of first aid equipment in your vehicle depending on where you work in the country.

So I know the former premier was very heavily involved in trying to establish a national recognition for trucking, and we're making very big progress on that, and I

think that there are good things happening to eliminate those things.

But the big thing, I think, that we have to recognize, we still want to make sure that Newfoundland and Labrador is first. I think everyone in this province would recognize that, and then we want to make sure that we're not having any unintended consequences. But I can tell you, on labour mobility and on mutual recognition of regulations, I think we're pretty safe to make sure that we could move across our country very readily.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you for that, Minister.

My final question – or it depends on how long it takes to get the answer, I might get another one in, but anyway, no big deal – is around Marine Atlantic, which is, I think most would agree, probably the largest barrier we have in this province is Marine Atlantic. I know that Prime Minister Carney, as part of the campaign, said that Marine Atlantic would be cut by at least half, I think were his words. At least that's what was in the media.

So what discussions have taken place with the prime minister as it relates to that? When can we expect rates to be reduced by at least half? Do you know if it's going to be the very least, being half? Or are you pushing to get it lowered even lower than half because he said at least half?

Also, in addition to the cost – and, of course, even with the rates, there are passenger rates and then there's commercial rates, and I know that there are issues when we get into commercial rates with the viability of Oceanex and it's not necessarily straightforward, but can you comment on where we're to with ferry rates in and out of this province with the prime minister, and not just the rates, but capacity as well? Because I understand from people

in our tourist industry that they have also raised the issue around capacity, particularly in the busy times of the year. I know we have Argentia, but even with that, capacity is an issue.

So on those two issues related to Marine Atlantic, can you give us an update on to what discussions you've had and when we may see some movement on behalf of the federal government?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

I can tell you that this was something that was very much advocated by Newfoundland and Labrador as helping us reducing our trade barriers. As you heard, the now prime minister has said he agrees and he's going to lower them. I think his terminology was at least by half.

The first meeting that the new Premier and the new prime minister had, this issue was raised and it is something that we will hold the prime minister to. He's committed to it. I would think – and I don't know this for certain, because of course they have to develop a budget. They just today introduced their new Cabinet. But I would think that we would see something in the budgetary process surrounding this because it was a commitment the prime minister made.

CHAIR: Thank, you.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Okay, I have a couple of seconds.

I was wondering about, you didn't answer the capacity piece. Have you spoken about the capacity piece?

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

S. COADY: I think that's always on the agenda.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Member's time is expired.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Chair.

My questions will be directed towards the Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, section 2.7.

So just starting off, I do have some general questions before we get to line items. Just looking at the office now, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, the role is mostly one of advocacy. When I go into the mandate page, it talks about collaboration to advance reconciliation to support provincial government apologies to residential schools. Also, on the mandate webpage, it talks about the line of business. The three bullets talk about providing advice. Provide advice to provincial government departments and agencies.

So my general questions at the beginning is really about budget and how the money is spent by the office on this role.

I was looking back at past questions, past years during budget Estimates. Normally one of the questions that were asked over again would be to give us an update on the Calls to Action that came out of the Truth and Reconciliation inquiry. There were 94 Calls to Action; 33 are the responsibility of the provincial government.

But to clarify, Truth and Reconciliation rose out of the residential schools. What it was, was the residential school survivors and their children started talking about the truths, the legacy of harm. The Truth and Reconciliation documented the harms. Also, missing and murdered women, Indigenous women and girls, there are 231 calls to

justice. There are many that are the responsibility of the provincial government.

So looking at the role of advocacy of providing advice to the other departments so that they can govern accordingly and really advance reconciliation, one of the things that came out of the Truth and Reconciliation, Minister, was genocide. Truth and Reconciliation is about residential schools. First there was cultural genocide, but when they actually documented the accounts, it was documented as a form of genocide, and it documented the intergenerational trauma.

I do have some general questions. Have you met and had discussions with any of the Inuit survivors who were forcibly relocated from communities in Northern Labrador, and have you met and had discussions with any of the survivors from the residential schools who attended or their children?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

S. REID: I have not. I've met with a number of leaders of Indigenous groups, but I have not met directly with the survivors. I look forward to being able to do that and get that first-hand knowledge of some of the issues that were faced in these cases. I look forward to visiting the North Coast in particular this summer and, hopefully, I'll be able to discuss with some of the leaders.

I've had some discussions with Indigenous leaders on these matters. Maybe I don't understand completely the total impact, but I've talked to some representatives. I've attended a women's conference of Indigenous leaders that was held in Steady Brook, and there was some discussion at that point of the impact of residential schools and people who have attended in some of the presentations that were given at that conference.

But, certainly, I'm willing to listen, and recognize the importance of listening and

hearing these stories, those recollections, first-hand.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Minister.

You've been the minister now of the Office of Indigenous Affairs for almost a year. I was pleased that you are keeping your position so that it wouldn't be a loss of experience and knowledge you've obtained in the last year. You talked about a conference in Steady Brook when I asked you about residential schools and also the forced relocation of Indigenous communities in Northern Labrador.

So, Minister, when you talk about residential schools, are you talking about the Island or Labrador?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

S. REID: I believe there were some representatives from Labrador there at that conference as well. And again, I'm not claiming to have the full knowledge. I visited Natuashish and had an opportunity to talk to some people in Natuashish, but I really look forward to visiting the community and having more extensive understanding of the issues faced by people there. I've talked with some of the leadership of the organizations, and we've had discussions about these issues, but again, I look forward to doing more of that in the future.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Chair.

My next question was: Have you witnessed the barriers first-hand when travelling to the Indigenous communities in Labrador, especially Sheshatshiu, Natuashish, and the Inuit communities in Northern Labrador?

The reason why I ask that, Minister, is Estimates is all about how we spend our money, and how the Office of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation spends its money and also meeting its mandate. As a representative of the District of Torngat Mountains, all six of my communities are Indigenous. The majority of the people in my communities are Indigenous. So, really, we need the role of your office.

My next general question is based on quality of life and affordability. *Budget 2024*, the Coastal Labrador Seniors' Food and Heating Supplement was made available to seniors living in coastal communities in Northern and Southern Labrador, and that acknowledged the high cost of food in Coastal Labrador, the high cost of heating. That supplement was a one-time \$500 cheque. It's continued in this budget of 2025 because of the high cost. My communities are Indigenous, seriously impacted by colonial policies of residential schools that I talked about, forced relocation.

So in your role of advocacy, what advocacy, what advice have you given to the departments to address the cost of living contributing to the serious hardships and trauma for the Innu and Inuit in Northern Labrador?

And, Minister, you sit in the House of Assembly across from me. You see me present the petitions. You hear me in Question Period talk about the high cost of food, access to nutritional food. You hear me talk about the cost of housing, the lack of available housing. To the point where I talked in the House of Assembly about the Federal Housing Advocate coming in and saying the conditions she witnessed in my district were abominable – abominable. The Federal Housing Advocate said what she saw in my communities in terms of housing for the Indigenous people gave her nightmares.

Minister, anyone in the province could go back and actually watch the interviews

where she said that. The cost of heating homes, my petitions, the questions during Question Period; the price of electricity, petitions and questions; the cost of household goods and clothing; access to snowmobiles, speedboats, bullets – Chair, that's all about quality of life. So what advocacy have you done after hearing the petitions and questions to the different departments?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

S. REID: I've listened to many of your petitions that you've presented here in this House and I respect the advocacy that you've made to all Members of this House and all members of the province.

In terms of the housing advocate's report, there are some things that've been done through housing. We recognize that housing plays a crucial role in health and well-being of Labrador Inuit. We are investing \$12 million over four years to repair and modernize provincially owned housing in Nain, Hopedale and Makkovik. This work has begun and there are 50 homes that will be repaired and renovated once the work is completed. Funding has also supported the hiring of maintenance and repair workers who live in Nain and are responsible for ongoing maintenance in the region.

Those are some of the things that we've been doing in terms of housing in the area. I guess another issue – while I was in Natuashish, I visited the school there in Natuashish. For me, it was an eye-opening experience. First of all, I was amazed that the language was so alive because on the Island in terms of Qalipu, the Mi'kmaw language is almost extinct and efforts are being made to revive it. What I noticed in Natuashish was that the children at the school were speaking the language and it was very interesting.

In terms of school, I think the National School Food Program and other efforts in

terms of the Newfoundland child benefit for families with low income and those sorts of things are important. I would agree with you on the points that there is still a lot of work to be done in this area and I'm certainly willing to work the people in the area, the leadership, to bring about those changes.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Any further speakers?

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Yes, Chair, I will continue to use my 10-minute blocks.

I appreciate your comments, Minister, because I've been here since 2019 presenting the petitions over and over again. I got new petitions, but these are very, very important because it's about quality of life. We talk about reconciliation but the lack of action is staggering for me to witness. The language is alive and well in all my communities, especially with the children and the seniors.

You did quote the \$12 million over four years but, in actual fact, in 2019, 2020 and 2021, I brought up Newfoundland and Labrador houses being vacant, sometimes for up to 10 years, with no repairs and no real repair program. So, in actual fact, your \$12 million is just trying to get some of those vacant houses back into circulation.

That's important for quality of life so I need your office to advocate. I need your office to actually ensure that the different departments in this government are actually taking action towards reconciliation, and it's not just Northern Labrador.

My next general question is about homelessness. There are continuing problems with homelessness in the transient population in Central Labrador, most of which are Indigenous. We admit that. We own that. The transient and

homeless population you see walking around Happy Valley-Goose Bay, most of them are Indigenous, either Innu or Inuit. At the heart of the problem are addictions and mental health issues, and we're not just talking about the mental health – you know, the beds that are being provided now. What is it, six beds? Yes.

So my question is: What is your department doing to advocate for long-term solutions in terms of lifestyle, access to affordable housing and access with addictions, and have you met with any of the stakeholders, the Innu and the Nunatsiavut leaders, and have you also visited the shelters?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

S. REID: Just give me a minute, I'm looking for some information here. My staff have provided me with a lot of information on these issues and I just want to take a second to look at this.

In terms of issues in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and homelessness there, there have been a number of recent initiatives in terms of the committee that met in the area and discussed problems and put forward some solutions in terms of the residential centre.

In terms of policing and those sorts of things, there have been a lot of initiatives there in Happy Valley-Goose Bay as well in terms of some of these issues in relation to addictions and those sorts of things.

The investment in five new officers, specifically in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, the community safety plan which was developed as well, and also the initiatives in relation to drug treatment and addiction treatments and those sorts of issues have been dealt with by committees in the area as well.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

I was looking for more specific or general, I guess, information on the role of your office for advocacy. I mean in terms of who you met with, what departments, what you tried to do to influence, what produced some outcomes. Because, like I said, I've been here since 2019 and I've seen very little action in terms of progress.

That's not a reflection on you, Minister. You've been in that role now for almost a year, but it's important. I mean, we don't have an Office of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation just for statues, just for paintings, just for going for conferences and meeting with women's groups or Indigenous groups. We need to solve the problems of harm through colonialism and since I've got elected, I've seen the real need for true advocacy.

Looking at health care, I present my questions in the House of Assembly; I produce the petitions that are signed by the Indigenous people asking for access to adequate and timely health care and access to mental health care. So I was wondering what role does your department provide to try to help us get the access to health care?

It's Indigenous people. It's Indigenous lives. When it comes to mental health, we also have the legacy of addictions. We have the legacy of the highest rates of suicide and the highest rates of incarceration.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

S. REID: In terms suicide, the 2019 report, *Our Path of Resilience: An Action Plan to Promote Life and Prevent Suicide in Newfoundland and Labrador* put forward a number of initiatives that are still ongoing in terms of that issue. I think it's very important. The Member started off by talking about truth and reconciliation, and I think we have to recognize that there are some hard truths about our past and maybe some hard

truths about our current situation and the way people have been treated. I think these are part of the truths that we have to recognize before we can begin reconciliation.

I've met with people at corrections services. I've talked with people in the trades. I visited the trade school in Labrador to see how they're integrating students, because I think economic recovery and entrepreneurial opportunities and things like that are very important in terms of the future and how these issues are overcome. We have situations that are long standing and difficult and complex and hard to deal with.

The Member says she is frustrated with the slowness or, in some cases, the lack of change, and I think that's a reasonable comment. I think many people who work in these areas find that same frustration and part of my job is to be out there to talk to the people involved and to look for solutions within government. We've done that in a number of ways.

I think you mentioned artwork and statues, and I think those things are important as well because it changes the way people think. It changes the way we feel about things, the way we think about things and then, hopefully, it changes the way we act and the way things are done. I think those things are important too, but it is not enough alone. I think we have to continue to work on these issues in a constructive way.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Yes, I was talking about access to adequate and timely health care, which is the survival of people. We see our elders dying, we see our children, we see our people who don't access timely health care. I talked earlier today about my uncle who had a stroke but he couldn't actually access the nurse and then, by the time he got out, by the time he was sent out, it was too late

for his physical condition for him to be able to return home.

I'm also wondering about justice. Indigenous people make up about 5 per cent of the overall Canadian population but they account for 32 per cent of all federal inmates according to Stats Canada. Does your department have the statistics for the Indigenous population that's incarcerated in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador? What's the percentage for Indigenous people? Are you aware of that?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

S. REID: I don't have those statistics with me right now. I'll see if I can get those for the Member.

There's funding in this year's budget for Gladue reports, and Gladue reports are very important in terms of the justice system. We know that throughout Canada the Indigenous people are over represented in the corrections system. I think part of this is the intergenerational situations that we face and the discrimination that we still face in many circumstances.

So I think these Gladue reports are one of the things in terms of advocating. I met with the officials in the Departments of Justice and I had a meeting with one of the Indigenous women's organizations in the province who advocated for Gladue reports. Gladue reports are pre-sentencing reports that are presented to the judge, so the judge can take into account the many sort of factors that would impact someone's life. The judge takes those things into account when they make their sentencing.

So I think that's a very important funding thing that we're doing. The funding is for training of Gladue – the people who would write these reports. It's a very important initiative and this will allow that training to continue. I think it will have some impact in addressing those issues as well.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: I just want to quote here – this is something that is related to the high incarceration rates – high incarceration rates for Indigenous people are the legacies of colonialism, violence, systemic racism and discrimination.

I know, personally, a lot of the people who have been incarcerated, and I look at their houses, I look at their access to food, I look at their access to heating their homes, raised children, adults – so in actual fact, I think a big solution would be to improve the quality of life of our Indigenous populations, especially the six Indigenous communities in Northern Labrador. That's why I continue to advocate on behalf of the people.

The reason why my questions are directed towards you, Minister, today in the way that they are is that I hope that, over the next year, you will advocate so I don't have to present petitions, so I don't have to ask in Question Period about trying to get people to have access to adequate health care, mental health care, nutritional food, to any kind of food so they're not hungry, so they can heat their houses. This is very, very important because I'm talking about Indigenous people.

With that, I'm going to turn my last five minutes over to my Member there from Harbour Main.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to my colleague.

Under Women and Gender Equality, 2.8.01, Minister, I'm going to ask a couple of general questions first if I may. 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.

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Chair.

During 2024-2025, there were 90 budget submissions reviewed by Women and Gender Equality staff, but I can't share any more details on this because it's part of the Cabinet budget decision-making.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

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

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: We do.

Between April 1, 2024, and March 31, 2025, the RNC intimate partner unit received 1,969 intimate partner violence unit requests for service; 1,980 domestic disturbances were responded to by the operational patrol services; and 16 Clare's Law applications, with one being a right-to-know disclosure generated by IPV.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Minister.

So the nature of those calls for services, were they primarily intimate partner violence, or was that totally the categorization of those calls? Domestic violence, or were there other related calls, related offences?

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: They were classified as domestic disturbances.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

Do you have any breakdown of what kind of offences they were? What specific disturbances that would refer to?

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: The breakdown that I have is the 2023 Juristat report. At that time, 296 females were victims of sexual assault compared to 61 males. That represented an increase of 61 female victims or 26 per cent, compared to the 2021 stats. And 998 were victims of assault compared to the 1,188 males, and that represented an increase of 176 female victims or 17.4 per cent compared to 2021 Juristat.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

Minister, do you have any current data to provide to us?

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: The Juristat report that I have available to me right now is 2023.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So is there any other evidence or evidence-based data that we can look at with respect to intimate partner violence, the specific breakdown?

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: I will go back to my staff and see if there's any further available data that doesn't breach confidentiality.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I appreciate that, thank you.

Can the minister provide an update on pay equity and transparency regulations, and specifically when will the regulations be available?

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: What we've done since 2022, we passed the *Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act*, and appointed the pay equity officer, updated the JES and launched the consultation process to inform the act. Right now, the regulations are being worked on and there's going to be a consultation process for the pay transparency component.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Minister.

Now, Minister, I'm sure you can appreciate this that, for example last year, when I asked the questions of the minister, really, we were not given an actual timeline and we were told the same thing that work is ongoing. Actually, what was stated last year is it takes time to get it right.

So that was in April of 2024 and, as you correctly note, this legislation was introduced in 2022, three years ago. The consultations have been going on in 2023 and 2024 and now we're hearing that they're still taking place. So you can, I'm sure, appreciate the frustration in that there is no timeline being provided.

You're still not in a position to give us a timeline as to when the regulations will be available?

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: So we can't give a specific timeline. As a minister, previously, I brought in 25 pieces of legislation and you have to understand that when you're bringing legislation forward when it involves multiple departments, and this particular piece involves every department plus outside parties, that putting the regulations together, drafting the regulations will take a considerable amount of time. I recall doing legislation myself from a previous administration that was ongoing for six years when I took it over.

Legislation like this is a very detailed piece of legislation and it will take time and it's really hard to say, like, this is going to be done by a specific date, unfortunately.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Rural Economic Development, and Labour.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

I can just add in to support of my colleague here and she is, certainly, correct when she says that these sorts of things take time but since becoming, now, the Minister Responsible for Labour, the latest update that I have received from staff in the department is that they are now drafting a framework for pay transparency regulations that will serve, of course, as the basis for detailed discussions with employers and employer groups.

We are helping in the planning stages to determine which groups we will meet with and developing materials to share with them to inform these specific discussions. We continue to consult with British Columbia as well as the federal government. These are the only two jurisdictions in our country that have pay transparency requirements in

place to identify best practices and lessons learned.

So those frameworks are currently in the works now.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay.

So, Minister, would you be able to provide a general update on the pay equity legislation, specifically for private sector?

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: That work is ongoing. So, no, I cannot provide an update right now.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

Also, with respect to the sexual assault nurses, can you outline how many sexual assault nurses are in Newfoundland and Labrador and where they are located? How many per region or facility? So I'm asking for a breakdown specifically, where are they located?

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: I can and it's lengthy.

There are 98 SANE trained in 28 communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Sixty-three are trained provincially, 37 within the St. John's area. The current active SANE breakdown – do you want each zone?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes, please.

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Okay.

So Labrador-Grenfell has 20; Central has 22; Western has 15; Eastern Rural, 6; Eastern Urban, 37.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

Also, with respect to another general question, is the department planning any women's leadership conferences this year?

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: I'd have to find out from the department.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

With respect to training in gender-based analysis, how many people in core public service have now been trained in gender-based analysis training, and also in the past year specifically as well?

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: So during the 2024-2025 fiscal year, 60 people were trained, for a total of 1,310 since 2019.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: And in the past year, Minister, can you specify?

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: 2024-2025 fiscal year, 60.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

Under –

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: I can answer another question.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: They're planning a virtual conference in 2026, but we haven't got the details on it yet.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

And with respect to Gender-based Analysis Plus training, we know that it's critical for strong policy development. So through the entire public service what percentage of people working policy and program development are GBA Plus trained? So the entire public service.

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: So my notes are saying that there's a total of 1,310 trained. I'm just waiting for staff to tell me if there's any additional training. There were some organizations, Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services procurement, the Auditor General's office, Municipalities NL, the North Atlantic HR department and the RNC have also completed the training.

CHAIR: The hon. Member's time has expired, but I see no other speakers if the Member for Harbour Main wants to continue.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes, please. Thank you.

I have one other general question with respect to the intimate partner violence.

There are a number of violence prevention groups that have been advocating for ankle bracelets and to instill a program related to ankle bracelets. Now, this may impact, obviously, on justice, but I'm wondering if you've been informed on any of the conversations about that issue with respect to having ankle bracelets for individuals who have been charged with intimate partner violence offences and while they are out on bail.

Do you have anything that you can share with us about that and the position of the department on it?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Education.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will just take that because I think my hon. colleague is asking about electronic monitoring systems. We currently have that in place for individuals that have been convicted. We're working towards and we're continuing to work and have discussions with stakeholders and from a variety of different stakeholders – and I know I'm not in that position any more but I know that that's something that I'm passionate about getting towards.

I know we've received correspondence and conversations with many stakeholders in that direction. I know the department is actively looking at that and I would say that it's something that we're looking towards getting towards at some point in the future. I can't say a date or anything like that, but I know we're working towards looking at how we can help monitor and protect individuals that would be either intimate partner violence of gender-based violence in any form.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

Under subheading 2.8.02, Women and Gender Equality, under Salaries, Minister, last year there was a salary savings of \$300,100. Which positions were vacant?

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: It was two policy specialists and they started on May 5.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

Under Purchased Services, last year Purchased Services went over budget by \$108,000. This year, the budget is planned to increase to \$560,000. Can you please explain why?

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Purchased Service reflects an overrun due to the Justice and Public Safety promotion and advertising of the gender-based violence related legislation initiatives. The judicial increase reflects the increase to help support education with the gender-based violence related to Commit to Kids training program.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Minister.

Can you just explain what you referred to, the first initiative? Can you just elaborate on that, please, what that initiative involves?

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: It was an overrun to Justice and Public Safety. It was promotion and advertising of gender-based violence

related legislation and initiatives and it was pertaining to Clare's Law.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So I assume it would have involved communications or it would have been marketing –

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Promotions.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: – promotions. Okay, thank you.

Under Grants and Subsidies – this is my final question – last year grants were budgeted at \$6.5 million; \$6 million was given out; and this year, \$6.3 million is budgeted. Could you please provide a list of who received this funding? And just walk me through the decision to set the budget at \$6.3 million this year. How did you reach that decision, please?

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: So the Grants and Subsidies – the Women's Centres and Violence Prevention NL groups, the Indigenous Violence Prevention Grants, the Safe Harbour Outreach program, the Multicultural Women's Organization of Newfoundland and Labrador, the End Sexual Violence NL, the Newfoundland and Labrador Aboriginal Women's Network, the Coalition Against the Sexual Exploitation of Youth, the Provincial Indigenous Women's group, the crisis hotlines, the federal agreement, the gender-based violence agreement, the miscellaneous grants and the 100th anniversary of the women's right to vote scholarship.

So it was a number of initiatives and events from the briefing that I have received thus far that meets the mandate that's within the office.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

That concludes my questions, Chair.

Thank you, Minister.

CHAIR: Are there any further speakers to this subheading?

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Just to answer a few questions.

The Member for Labrador West – there was an increase of approximately \$10,000 for the Women's Centres for '24-'25. There is no increase for '25-'26.

The Member for Torngat Mountains regarding the Gladue funding – that funding is actually in our budget for \$225,000 and we're working with JPS to prepare discussions with Justice Canada as we anticipate and hope that the federal government will match it.

Okay, that's about it. Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Any further speakers to this subheading?

If not, I'll ask the Clerk to recall the subheading, please.

CLERK: 2.1.01 to 2.8.03 inclusive, Office of the Executive Council.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 through 2.8.03 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.1.01 through 2.8.03 carried.

CHAIR: I now ask the Clerk to call the next subheading, please.

CLERK: 3.1.01 to 3.1.06 inclusive, Treasury Board Secretariat.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 through to 3.1.06 carry?

The hon. the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels.

L. PADDOCK: No, Baie Verte - Green Bay, please.

CHAIR: Sorry, Sir.

L. PADDOCK: It's all right.

CHAIR: I will get that straight.

L. PADDOCK: Yes, don't worry, I have it straight.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay. I have erred.

L. PADDOCK: I'd like to start with 3.1.05, Financial Assistance, Grants and Subsidies. So out of that \$37.3 million, I'm wondering how much in total was spent, where it was spent and for what purposes.

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Chair.

Today through Estimates, just to put it on the record, we are going to be dealing with the spending of the Treasury Board Secretariat. There are some 272 employees, and they are responsible for providing government-wide financial

management, comptrollership and oversight, wraparound human resource services, human resource management function, negotiation and administration of collective agreements, of which we have 30 of 30 complete. Really stellar team. They do grievance management, employee relations, they support the Treasury Board function of Cabinet and the administration of government-sponsored pension plans and payroll services.

I have to say I'm very proud of the people that work within the Department of Treasury Board. I have worked with a lot of people throughout my career, and I have to say, their professionalism and dedication to their roles is outstanding.

To answer the Member opposite's question, we've spent, I think it was, \$18,610,900. I can tell you what we've spent it on: Churchill Falls forest fire response – and I'm happy to provide this to the Member opposite – \$7.346 million; adult corrections, \$335,000; disaster assistance for the Labrador West wild fires was \$2.2 million; the Arts and Culture Centres, the increased expenditures related to ticket sales – this is in and out – \$350,000. That's because more people are going to Arts and Culture Centres and I think we should be happy.

There's fire safety equipment. As you know, we had to change some fire safety equipment this year, that was \$3 million; and some Marble Mountain funding, \$500,000; and \$211,000 funding; for a total of \$18,610,900.

I am happy to provide this current list.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: I guess on the same line, looking out for this fiscal year, so '25-'26, there is \$160 million budgeted, a significant increase. Again, just looking for the allocation for that amount.

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

As we discussed in Finance Estimates, this is where you'd find the tobacco settlement legal fees of \$130 million. That's the cost that we have to absorb there. The indirect tax review, we're doing a million dollars. Strategic priorities of government, the normal amount is \$30 million, that's there. I think that's the total that we have allocated for there.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: Actually, that's \$156 million: \$125 million for the legal, \$1 million, and then the \$30 million you're recurring for government. That's \$156 million.

S. COADY: Well, I can run through them again for you.

Strategic priorities, \$29,089,000; tobacco settlement, \$129,700,000; indirect tax review of \$1 million; and I think there's a small amount of the review of the fishery for \$211,000, for a total of \$160 million, and I'm happy to provide this.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: That's fine. Like I said, I guess the difference there was the tobacco settlement. In Estimates, it was reported as \$125 million, here, \$129 million. That's fine.

Okay, moving on, 3.1.06, Financial Assistance, Capital; Loans, Advances and Investments. Was any money transferred out to departments, and if so, what was it spent on?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

This is the details on the non-repayment of debt from the Corner Brook Pulp and Paper placeholder. So yes.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: Okay.

The revenue on the provincial side, can you give an overview and, I guess, a breakdown of the revenue lines? I'm looking for what was received last year and for which projects. Then, likewise for this fiscal year, a breakdown of what is anticipated.

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

S. COADY: On the revenue line, this is under —?

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: It's 3.1.06.

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

S. COADY: Are you asking why the decrease?

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: No, no, I'm asking for a breakdown.

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

S. COADY: Oh, yeah, there's only one. That's the Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, the non-repayment of debt that I had already given to you.

The difference of \$251,800 is to better reflect the loan repayment schedule for the interest portion.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: Okay. I would like to switch over to 3.1.03, Secretariat Operations.

I'll start off on the line items, Salaries first. Last year, there was a Salaries savings of \$1.4 million and I'm just looking for an outline of what positions were vacant and for how long. Basically, an explanation of that budgetary variance.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Chair.

Well, there are 290 positions, so there's a lot of moving and timing of recruitment. There were 12 vacancies, some were filled, some are under recruitment and some are actually hard to fill, but that's why when you have that many positions, you have timing and variance. You know, this was various vacancies.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: Okay.

Coming down to Professional Services, the budget last fiscal year, '24-'25, was \$662,500, but \$784,200 was spent. I'm just looking for an overview of what that Professional Services was spent on.

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

S. COADY: Certainly.

The overage was we had a payroll review done. We hired EY to look at the structure and to do a full review of our payroll, the way we manage payroll services. As you can appreciate, we have multiple payrolls including teacher payroll and public service payrolls, so we wanted to make sure that we were doing the best possible payroll

review. We also did pension system updates as well. That would explain the difference.

Under Professional Services, that's the annual actuarial services for public accounts, pensions and OPEBs. There are some pension administration system maintenance. There are arbitration and board fees as well.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: Thank you for that.

Dropping down one line item to Purchased Services. the budget for the last fiscal year, 2024-2025, was \$314,200 but the amount spent was over double that, that \$741,800. I'm just looking, again, at an outline of what was contained in that Purchased Services.

S. COADY: Certainly happy to provide that.

It was the transition to a new banking service for our debit and credit fees. We moved from one service provider to another and to do that, we had to upgrade all of our machines, which is a timely and important thing to do, and we also had printing costs.

So this year we're also looking at the Purchased Services going down because, obviously, we're not – we've transitioned to a new banking system but there are less collective bargaining agreements in '25-'26 so that means less printing.

As I mentioned earlier, we have completed 30 out of the 30 collective agreements with labour certainly (inaudible) –

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay, your time is expired.

Any additional speakers at this time?

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

I just have one question that pertains to 3.1.05 regarding the Financial Assistance. Budgeted in '24-'25 was \$37 million. I know this usually gets reallocated throughout the year to different departments. Was any of it reallocated to different departments throughout the year and can we get a list of what the reallocations were?

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

S. COADY: Yes, happy to provide.

As I mentioned earlier, \$18,610,900 was allocated out to departments. You would have seen that in various departments and a lot of it was around the Churchill Falls forest fire response and Labrador West wildfires, Hurricane Fiona, adult corrections, all the new fire safety equipment – you'll remember in your district, I'm sure, the new fire safety equipment that was required. There was some money allocated for Marble Mountain and children in care.

I'll provide the list to you.

J. BROWN: Perfect. That's my only question.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Any additional speakers for this subheading?

The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: Just to come back to the Purchased Services again under 3.1.03, you highlighted debit services, so debit machines. I'm just curious, will that include the rollout across all the provincial ferries?

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

S. COADY: I would imagine it does, but I can ask specifically about ferries. I'll ask. All of the debit and credit services throughout

government were changed, so I will just double check on ferries.

Yes, all debit and credit services. I assumed it, but I better check.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: And the reason I ask that question is because there's still some ferries waiting to be implemented with the use of debit machines. Some of them are still collecting actual physical cash.

S. COADY: So I will take that up with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, he sits behind me, so I'll be able to suggest we move forward on that, but I understand it includes ferries, and they're working on the last few that had to be transitioned. But I'll discuss it with the Minister of Transportation. Technology is there.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: Yes, and it reduces handling.

Okay, coming back over to 3.1.02, Executive Support – this is on Salaries under Executive Support, 3.1.02. Last year, there was a salary savings of \$115,700. I'm just looking for an explanation for that.

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

S. COADY: Certainly.

It's just the timing of vacancies. We have 16 funded positions in this area, and we have had, as per normal, people moving in different executive positions throughout government and the timing of vacancies.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: Subheading 3.1.01, Office of the President of Treasury Board, again, now just looking holistically across government, how many positions are currently vacant in all of government?

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

S. COADY: Oh, in all of government? That was under –

L. PADDOCK: Well, end of fiscal year, the 31st of March is good because it's a moving target.

S. COADY: I will have to get that. I don't have it – in all of government? Let me just see if I have it on something? I'm just waiting to see if they have that off the top of their head.

As you recall, there's the difference between what is housed in the Department of Treasury Board and what is the responsibility of the Public Service Commission. So I've asked. We have officials on standby so they'll get that information for me.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: Okay.

Coming back to – and this is, I guess, in a way a follow-up to what the MHA for Labrador West asked, and that jogged with my mind – 3.1.05 or 3.1.06, how much was expended for children in care?

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

S. COADY: You would have to ask the department responsible, formerly CSSD. I wouldn't have that number off the top of my head. I could look in the Estimates booklet, but I don't even have it in front of me.

I will say to the Member opposite, it is a tremendous amount of money being spent on children in care that continuously rises. As I indicated to the Estimates and to the House previously, it is something that we're working on. We have now new departments that will be very focused on this issue.

We're finding there are more complex needs, and satisfying the complex needs is tremendously expensive. So we've had to reallocate money because the needs of these complex needs children are quite expensive, and we've seen increasing pressure on those budgets. So we did increase the budget for children in care by another \$5 million this year.

I can say that we have funded – there's a difference between funded positions, meaning sometimes you have what they call a PCN within government, but that may not be a funded position or it may be a position that's on hold, so I know there are over 2,000 of those funded positions throughout government. I have asked how many are actually being advertised and utilized, because we are trying to clean up what are called PCNs within government.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: It was from Estimates and this current Estimates what prompted me, because during the financial Estimates we drew from contingency for children in care last fiscal year.

So again, just looking to be able to situate the estimate with regard to potential impact for this fiscal year.

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

S. COADY: Every year it depends on whether a child moves into care, whether a child moves out of care, whether there are complex needs or not. I can tell you that I've checked on the Estimates booklet, it's \$158

million we spent last year. That's a tremendous sum of money for – the number of children in care is not going up; it's the complexity of the children in care.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: Yeah.

That's good.

CHAIR: Okay.

No further questions to this subhead?

I'll ask the Clerk to recall it, please.

CLERK: 3.1.01 to 3.1.06 inclusive, Treasury Board Secretariat.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 through 3.1.06 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

It's carried.

On motion, subheads 3.1.01 through 3.1.06 carried.

CHAIR: I'll ask the Clerk to call the final subheading, please.

CLERK: 4.1.01 to 4.4.01 inclusive, Office of the Chief Information Officer.

CHAIR: Shall 4.1.01 through to 4.4.01 inclusive carry?

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Chair.

Let's start off with a question there, first.

The OCIO has a number of hard-to-fill positions. What are you doing to make them

easier to fill or retain these experts once they have been recruited?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: Yes, thank you very much for the question.

So OCIO, just for anyone listening, is essentially all government's IT. So they have a range of hard-to-fill positions, including computer support services in Labrador – they have a tricky time there. Our architects, it's very tricky to hire senior technical architects, senior technical developers, as well as cybersecurity.

So it's very challenging to hire experienced senior cybersecurity experts to come in to government on a full-time, permanent basis. We do go through the government processes to offer market differentials and all that whenever we can.

We do need to have people in certain positions, so unfortunately we do end up using contractual individuals or we end up using suppliers to fill critical voids. But the team has focused a lot on culture. I just want to give a kudos to the current executive and management team because they've done a lot to really make OCIO a fun place to work, a great place to work, and I just want to give them a kudos for that. And they've put a lot of time and effort into that to retain employees.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Did the OCIO receive any extra money in 2024-25 from the Treasury last year in addition to what was budgeted, and how much and for what?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

They did not receive any extra than what was budgeted to my knowledge. In last year's budget and again in this year's budget, OCIO was given \$11.25 million for modernization. So it was \$50 million over five years. That was last year, and it continues again this year, but that is in the budget. There's no additional funding outside of the budget that I'm aware of.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: It's in *Budget 2023*, Modernizing Government's Information Technology Assets, in the budget it said: "Through a five year, \$50 million investment we will embark on a renewal and modernization of government's information technology assets to deliver on that priority. This considerable investment will spur innovation and operational improvements. This complements our four year, \$25 million investment to improve connectivity in the province."

What has the money been spent on, and a detailed break down if you could of salaries, equipment and infrastructure and any third party consultants that may have been hired with this \$50 million?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

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

So the \$50 million is over five years, as the Member mentioned. In this past budget was \$11.25 million and again in the upcoming budget is another \$11.25 million. That really gets disbursed around the department.

If we were to go line by line, I can explain the story of where the money goes across each of these line items because OCIO does manage the information management, so that's kind of the planning and transformation area of the Estimates. Then there's design and delivery, so that's where they plan all the new projects and then manage the ongoing software systems and programs that they have. Then there's the infrastructure and security, so that's all of the hardware and the networks and the wires and the cables and the back-ups and all that stuff. And then there's the cybersecurity office.

So that money is, kind of, I would say, sprinkled throughout. As a highlight, I would say used to update a lot of laptops and servers across government. A lot of laptops, as I know everyone in the general public would know, you can't have a laptop forever and run all of the modern software on it. Microsoft, unfortunately, at some point it will become out of life and the security updates won't be rolling out. So that money went towards purchasing up-to-date 900 laptops for the public service in this past year.

It's also going toward some of our modernization. So OCIO has a lot of, I would say, on premises, big systems on – I'm trying not to say too much because what I'm saying now is put in public record, and I don't want to, I guess, put a target on anything. OCIO has a lot of important systems that exist on physical servers in Canada. There's a modernization program as we move toward newer versions of our systems that are in the cloud, in Canada, but in the cloud, through Google or Amazon or Oracle.

For example, \$6 million of the monetization this past year went towards the mainframe replacement. So across government, we have a mainframe, and the student loan system, the MRD system and the MCP system are on the mainframe. The student loan was the first, kind of the smallest. There were a few hypotheses on how best

to transition that to a more modern piece of software, a more modern code.

The student loan piece is near completion and we're going to work with Education to roll that new piece of technology out for student loans, and that was the smallest. Then we also have MRD, so a new motor registration system which will allow plate to owner once that is implemented. Then also MCP system.

Those are major systems, and I don't want to underscore how many integrations those systems have with other systems. So it's not like a shoebox, that you just fix the shoebox and you put in a new shoebox. It's like a spiderweb. Let's say, the MRD system for example, that's our provincial record of everyone's names, their photos, their addresses, the drivers, the cars. There are probably 20 or 30 different other systems that use and talk to the MRD system on probably a minute-by-minute basis to share information. You know the RNC systems, all these systems talk to each other. I would say it's like a spiderweb.

When we modernize these systems, it's not an easy, like, pick out the shoebox, put in another shoebox. We've spent \$6 million of that extra money this past year on the mainframe replacement, student loans almost complete, and then some work has started with MRD and MCP, but we can certainly provide a more detailed breakdown.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, that was what I was going to ask. If you could get that breakdown, that'd be great.

The other one, and you did mention MCP as well, so is that the next one in line after student loan and when do you anticipate student loans to be done and then start on MCP and follow up with Motor Registration?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

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

Student loans I understand is near completion. They're just working with Education in terms of when is the best timing to roll that out and doing some final testing. It's not a big splash event, but it's an important first step as we decommission our mainframe systems.

In terms of the revised MCP system, obviously that as well is like a spiderweb, I would say, and it talks to a lot of different other systems. The MCP system, because again, we're not just taking a shoebox and putting another shoebox, with the MCP in particular, just like Motor Registration, we have to change the way it works. So just like Motor Registration, what was a plate-to-vehicle system is now a plate-to-owner system.

All the rules that are built into that system to make it work have to now change. We have to rewrite – what are the business rules; what are the government rules; how do we want the system to work with our other systems; how do we want to use that in the future?

So the same thing for MCP. This government's invested a huge amount of money in terms of leading a health information system. Health has other needs in terms of major system changes that they're undergoing. Part of this system, it's not just an IT thing, it's when is Health and Community Services ready to engage with us on planning and implementing a new MCP system.

I understand, and rightfully so, Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services, their focus is on the implementation of their new health information system, as it should be. I

believe that once that's rolled out province wide then we're going to focus and work with them on the new MCP replacement system.

Motor Registration, those discussions have started. I don't have dates to launch to roll out or anything yet, but that work has started.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yeah, that was going to be the next one.

Are you doing work on the MCP site and the Motor Registration as we speak now? Is that what they're saying in this, that there's some current work going on?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

There would be some planning work under way for both. Right now, all three systems, the student loan, MCP and MRD have the same backend mainframe. So changes to one do impact the others at the moment. There is planning work under way for all three systems.

For example, the OCIO would be also working with NL Health Services on their health information system implementation because how that works and how those spiderwebs go off the health information system is going to impact how the spiderwebs for the MCP system fit together.

It's one at a time. The health information system is the priority. Our team are working with NL Health Services on that and MCP will be just after that.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Just checking to see if there are any additional speakers.

I will carry on with the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you.

Again, going back to cybersecurity, I guess, and North America was hit with a random demand related to the PowerSchool cyber attack on December 28. Is the leaked information from this province now being held at ransom?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

I've had a brief briefing on that issue since becoming minister on Friday. My understanding is that we are not subject to the same risk as other provinces have been. We were impacted in the initial breach, not in subsequent breaches. That is the extent of my knowledge of the issue.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: All right. If you don't know the answer to the next one, then maybe you can get back to me. I know you've just been briefed on it. The worst-case scenario, and as I said this is a highly damaging data, highly personal in the hands of cyber criminals can do serious damage, can the minister tell this House is the personal information of almost 300,000 teachers and students, that was leaked out, part of criminal activity?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: I don't have a full in-depth briefing of that issue. I would say and I would encourage anyone who was informed that they were impacted, I recommend they

sign up for the credit monitoring offered by PowerSchool.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: I guess, Minister, while you're doing that, can you confirm what information has been compromised? How many people are impacted and who exactly has it? If you could do that while you're reviewing that.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I will request that that information is provided. I do want to take this opportunity to say that when NLSchools IT group, I guess, came into government, that does not rest within OCIO. I wish it did and I think that it should, but the IT for NLSchools sits within the Department of Education and I believe there is ongoing union discussions around that, but the people and the systems and all that, they have their own IT within the Department of Education.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: I will go under some subheads now, 4.1.01, Planning and Transformation, under Salaries. Last year, there was a salary overage of \$367,000. This year, the budget is planned to increase by \$1 million. Can you provide some detail on that?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: Sure, thank you.

As part of the modernization, we're doing major transformations. We're building new systems. We've begun the process of moving Oracle to the Cloud. We've done major transformations with Microsoft. That

often requires different complements of people, so this increase would be partially to implement the modernization initiatives.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you.

Under 4.2.01, Design and Delivery, under Salaries, despite having a salary savings last year, the budget is planned to increase this year to \$12.3 million. Can you explain that?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: Yes, thank you very much.

I guess we had a decrease this year because of vacancies. Again, we have hard-to-fill positions that we're always trying to recruit for. So the extra money is based on the complement – so just for anyone listening, this is Design and Delivery section, so this is where the team builds new systems and supports existing systems. This is hundreds of systems across government, across the RNC, so there are a lot of people that do a lot of different, very important work in this department.

Sorry, this is the non-capitalized part of that work and the next section is the capitalized part.

So the extra funding is based on the complement of projects that the team are planning. They need different skill sets and they ideally try and bring in full-time staff if it's going to be a multi-year project with multi-year demands and needs. They always try to get a full-time, permanent person in that roll.

If they can't and we definitely need the expertise, then we would use a contractor or a vendor. So that's what they believe they need with the budget we have based on the

transformation agenda that they're implementing.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you.

When you say hard-to-fill positions, is it because of salary? I know you have to do some adjustments. Is it because of the salary?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: I would say that this is not the same thing as an elevator inspector, in terms of salary. A senior cybersecurity expert in the private sector would be making \$400,000, \$500,000, \$600,000, \$700,000, \$800,000 a year. This isn't a \$10,000 problem or a \$30,000 problem; this is a \$400,000 or \$500,000 problem, so government does not pay enough to recruit and retain senior cybersecurity experts for example. But if one showed up and was willing to work for the salary that we are willing to offer, we would love to have them.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you.

Looking at the cost is a bigger cost when they breach the security, so sometimes we have to bite the bullet to do what we've got to do. I know it's not cheap, absolutely, but it's a cost that comes with that security.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: I would say though – I'm not saying we're not covering the need. This is the salary line for full-time government salaries so because we can't get them at the salary, we then either have a contractor do that work or we have a vendor. We have numerous cyber security vendors that do

the role of what cybersecurity full-time staff would do because we can't hire them.

So there's not an unmet security need. We fill it in other ways.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you.

But it is serious, so I'm sure that you're trying to fill that position. There's no doubt.

Let's go under 4.2.01, under Supplies. Can you give me some insight on the Salaries line? Last year it went up over budget, spending \$2 million and this year the budget is remaining in there \$2 million as well.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: Sorry, which line item was that?

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: 4.2.01 under Supplies. Do you need me to repeat the question?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: So this is not like normal office supplies. This is where we're actually paying for software. The software that departments use that's not capitalized goes in this line item.

I guess part of the challenge with this budget for OCIO, you're building new things and maintaining the existing things. As we're building a new student loan system, we still have to keep the old one going. As we build the MCP, we still have to keep the old one going and the same with Motor Registration.

We see higher software costs as we are – for example, 2024-2025 Supplies there, we have a \$1.3 million increase due to the work ongoing on the modernization. It would be our Oracle, our new systems. The student loan system and the MRD and MCP planning but then – where was I going what that? I lost my train of thought.

Then we did, in the next year, reprofiled a bit because of our future software mix and then in the following year, there's an extra million dollars that's coming from the extra \$11.25 million.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Can the minister please provide a list of how the \$2.56 million was spent in Professional Services last year and how the savings was achieved under the same section 4.2.01?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

There's a decrease of \$5.6 million. As the project mix changes and the priority changes and the new money moves around, that is where you see a decrease in funding. As they change what they're doing, and it's a different mix of contractors versus software, so we might have something that, I don't know, four people were doing, four contractors were doing, and now a piece of software does that work. As the execution changes, that money changes. So this decrease has been moved into Salaries; Supplies; Purchased Services; Property, Furnishings and Equipment.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Under Property, Furnishings and Equipment, that would explain that \$2.3 million expenditure?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: Yes, so that was spent on things related to the new student loan, the MCP, the MRD and Oracle upgrades.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Just a couple more questions there. If upgrades are being done internal or by a contractor, the IT upgrades?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: So I would say a mix. Everything would be a bit different. I can certainly get that information.

In terms of the student loan, there were very few mainframe developers in Newfoundland and Labrador. I've had this conversation with all the consultancies. There's almost no one we could hire. When I previously was in this department, I think we had two mainframe developers. I don't know if we still have two.

My team are saying most of this work will be internal, but where we can't get people or where – sometimes it makes more sense to use external experts. Like, for example, we're doing Oracle transformation from on physical servers in Canada to the Cloud with Oracle in Canada, and sometimes you have to pay the vendors to help execute that work. And then once it's live and running, then you don't need them anymore, so it's kind of a short-term, project-based funding for those experts.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: How many of your contractors are Americans?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: Sorry?

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: How many contractors are American?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: I would assume zero, but I will ask how many contractors are American.

CHAIR: The Member's time is expired.

No other speakers?

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Chair.

Just going back to your conversation about the Cloud earlier. I know that there's some pretty big players out there trying to break into markets provincially right across the country, specifically Amazon and Microsoft. Are we engaged with either of those companies right now to manage our Cloud?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

Just to answer the previous question, we have zero American contractors. So we don't have any.

We're with Microsoft and they're American. It's a bit different for every different system in terms of whether or not we're in their Cloud or our Cloud. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has a data centre and then we also pay for data centre

storage through Bell – the last time I checked I'm aware it was Bell. We might have others with other vendors. And that exists in other places in Canada on a server.

But when we look at Microsoft, I don't know exactly if we're on Microsoft's Cloud or our Cloud that Microsoft manages. I think some of it is semantics. But it's not like all government things are in one big bubble. There are probably 300 bubbles. Some of them are ours; some of them belong to the vendors. I know we have GISes for mining and development and all that, like oil and gas and those types of systems. If I had to guess, they are probably on the system Clouds of those individual systems. They're not necessarily on government's Cloud.

But I know that they go above and beyond to make sure that things that have key privacy considerations and all that, we do our best to make sure that all of those are within the core government's either on-premises physical infrastructure or Cloud. Because if they're in the Cloud, they have to be physically somewhere. All of our information about people would be in Canada. Whether or not they are in Montreal in a data centre, here in our data centre or in Toronto in a data centre.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: So outside of storage, I guess the question I'm trying to get to is from a cybersecurity standpoint, right now, does the province manage all of its own cybersecurity?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: I would say that cybersecurity is not just one box. I would say everyone looks at cybersecurity. We would have numerous cybersecurity vendors doing numerous things.

When there was the cyber issue with Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services, everyone took a step back, took a very detailed look at everything with outside expertise and then there's been a significant effort to fill all of those gaps but also keep up with new requirements as the criminals get more sophisticated.

So those are sophisticated remedies, but there are also not-sophisticated remedies. Just as an example, I know that government removed everyone's email address from the public – there was a public registry of all government email addresses online, and that received media attention when that was removed. So there's still a directory of all the government employees and all the government phone numbers, but not email addresses because those were a huge target for cyber activity.

I would argue that's kind of a simple solution to de-risk some bigger cyber issues. So we would have many different organizations, different companies on hire and they would all do a range of different things.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Is there any kind of an overall number of how much the government's going to be spending on AI this year?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you. That's an excellent question.

In terms of AI, we recently had a new provincial government policy, Treasury Board policy, I think that's rolled out. We have AI training for public servants. Throughout government there are a few different pilots happening with the aims of efficiency and improving service delivery for residents of the province. All of those

initiatives would have to comply with our new internal AI policies.

Government, as part of our Microsoft agreement, we do have – I think it's called pilot, the Microsoft AI tool that is available for public servants to use. That's kind of been very carefully designed to make sure that it allows government employees to play with and use and test AI, kind of like a ChatGPT kind of thing, but within the safe confines of the rules that have been set up. So in Canada, aligning with all of our privacy legislation.

I don't have a cost, but it's happening all over the place. It's built into our Microsoft agreement, and we have to keep a close eye because a lot of the vendors and tools are integrating AI within their own suites of software. We're trying to keep a handle on it, but we don't want to restrict efficiency and productivity gains.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: I assume that when it comes to computer software and all that stuff, that your department is responsible for Newfoundland health systems?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services has their own IT department and their budget is double the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's IT budget. I would love to be in charge of that, but I'm not.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: I'll ask a question; I'm not sure you can answer it.

There's currently some kind of AI plan to come in here and help with cardiology

services where AI would eliminate the necessity of people requiring angiograms; nothing to do with you whatsoever, hey?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: Absolutely not. I will take this opportunity to talk about AI because –

AN HON. MEMBER: She wants to be in charge of that, too.

S. STOODLEY: No.

There was federal government legislation that died – Bill C- – I can't remember the bill name – 27, I think, and that had some AI potential regulation in it. The second version of the amendments that came out of Senate were significantly improved and would regulate things like AI in implanted health devices.

Right now, I guess, nationally, there are no rules around where and when you can't use AI. You have to apply with the privacy legislation but not from a strictly AI perspective.

OCIO is not involved in NLHS, other than we help and support because a lot of the systems impact each other.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova is done.

Back to the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: One other question – OCIO, you said earlier, is on service in Canada. Is that on private service or government or public service?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: We have our own data centre that is government owned on

government land. We have a partner that manages that 24-7. We have agreements with vendors like, for example, Bell. They run a data centre for us that is not in Newfoundland and Labrador. I don't think there are public – Sir, I am not quite sure what you are getting at, but we would be using the Microsoft Cloud but that would be physically on servers in Canada.

There are different rules that apply for Canada and the United States. The government public servants are very careful to make sure that everything is physically in Canada even though it's still in the Cloud.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Under section 4.3.01, Salaries are slated to increase to \$9.5 million. Can you explain that?

S. STOODLEY: So 4.3.01?

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yes.

S. STOODLEY: Okay. So that is increasing to align with the staff required for the modernization. So that's coming from the extra budget.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Under Supplies, can you please explain why Supplies went over budget by \$3.4 million?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: Yes, so, again, Supplies here we're talking about software. There has to be software that runs on the servers. This is what my husband does for a living, so he talks about all this kind of stuff and there are drawings at my house of network diagrams, so I know a bit about that just from him.

J. ABBOTT: Sounds like a fun place to live.

S. STOODLEY: Oh yes, it's a hoot. This is what we talk about at the dining room table.

The supplies would be the software that runs the backups and all that kind of dry, boring, stuff like that.

Obviously, software costs are going up, so we had an increase in software costs here. Maintenance costs have gone up. Because we have the old mainframe to maintain, as well as the new stuff we're building, those costs went up.

We're also partially funding some of this through other savings identified in the department.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Under 4.4.01, under Salaries, was there a position or positions vacant last year? What positions are being added this year to increase the budget to \$665,800?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. STOODLEY: Sure. Thank you very much.

I'll answer the question and then I'll say something about this heading, I guess.

We had a decrease due to the timing and hiring of people. The other thing is employees within the OCIO would move around, as they do in government, they apply for new jobs and they get a new job. So this would be also employees who move from one area and came over to this area, or from this area and left to another job in another area, so we did have a vacancy for a while.

An increase is we're reprofiling work from the Design and Delivery to work on cybersecurity programming. This area, the cybersecurity office – sorry, my team tells

me they hired four students out of the CNA program into full-time roles here, so that's great.

Honestly, this office helps the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador but also there are so many Crown corporations that have no cybersecurity knowledge at all, or very little. So let's say government, we are now back in this department, we oversee the Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation as an example. They don't have a full-time IT person, so they need advice and recommendations – the university and then Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

There are many different organizations that if there was a cybersecurity issue, I think the public would expect that government would be involved. So this is kind of our initiative to help, outreach, communicate, share information, share information about risks so that we can de-risk the public sector risk for cybersecurity. This is kind of more of an outreach, confidential information sharing, they get together and they talk about, they give hints to each other.

So the university people will talk to this people to share information, because they also get information from the federal government in terms of where the risks are, this breach over here, this system has this issue over here.

There's a constant flow of information from the federal government to our team and then we reach out to a range of organizations within the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. CNA is one, City of St. John's, C-NLOPB, Newfoundland Power. All these organizations are at cybersecurity risk. So we're trying to take an approach where we share information to protect everyone for the public good.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Chair.

Just go back to 4.3.01, the question about the budget going over by \$3.4 million. You indicated that a portion of that was software. So would that be new software that was purchased, or licensing of existing software?

S. STOODLEY: Sorry, which line item?

L. PARROTT: 4.3.01 under Supplies.

S. STOODLEY: This would be existing and new. So anything under Infrastructure and Security. That would be like anything to do with servers, Cloud, backups, anything to do with the networks, the infrastructure. This includes the government support desk, desktop support. If you have an issue with your computer, the person that comes over to you and helps, that's all under this area. And the security program, some security software, that would all be under this area.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: No, that's it for me now.

CHAIR: The Member for Terra Nova's done, everybody's done?

Any further speakers?

I'll ask the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board if she'd like to make a few comments.

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Chair.

I would like to thank all the officials that were available for these Estimates today. This is a very broad-reaching Executive Council. I think it would be incumbent upon all of us to thank them for their dedication, their determination, their hard work, their professionalism and being available to all of us in the House of Assembly as we consider the Estimates before us today.

So I wanted to take a moment on all of our behalf, but in particular my behalf, to say thank you. Because they are monitoring and

watching us at all times because they want to be able to be helpful in ensuring that the information provided to the Estimates Committee is accurate and deliberate.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Now I'll ask the Clerk to recall the final subheading.

CLERK: 4.1.01 to 4.4.01 inclusive, Office of the Chief Information Officer.

CHAIR: Shall 4.1.01 through to 4.4.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

The final subheading is carried.

On motion, subheads 4.1.01 through 4.4.01 carried.

CLERK: The total, Executive Council.

CHAIR: Shall the total for the Executive Council carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

It is carried.

On motion, Executive Council, total heads, carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report these Estimates carried without amendment.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt that direction?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Thank you.

On motion, Estimates of the Legislature and Executive Council carried without amendment.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report the Estimates of the Executive Council and the Estimates of the Legislature carried without amendment.

CHAIR: Is it the pleasure of the House that this Committee of Supply rise and report these Estimates carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Thank you very much.

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 Member for Lake Melville and Chair of the Committee of Supply.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Speaker.

The Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have passed, without amendment, the Estimates of the

Executive Council and the Estimates of the Legislature.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and directed that they have passed, without amendments, the Estimates.

When shall the report be received?

L. DEMPSTER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Premier, that this House do now stand in recess until 6 p.m.

SPEAKER: This House do stand in recess until 6 p.m. this evening.