



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume XLVIII

SECOND SESSION

Number 19

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA

Tuesday

16 May 2017

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

I recognize in the public gallery today a former member of the Legislature, Mr. George Murphy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I would like to welcome to the Speaker's gallery today members of the Hutchings family, Ms. Jane Hutchings and her mother, Lynn Croft. Jane is the daughter of the Member for the District of Ferryland and is the subject of a Member's statement today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I welcome to the public gallery Ms. Bev Moore-Davis, founder of the Miles for Smiles Foundation. Ms. Moore-Davis is present for the reading of a Member's statement today as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I understand that the Member for the District of Windsor Lake has leave of the House to present a private Member's statement.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Members' statements today we have the Members for the Districts of Harbour Main, Cape St. Francis, Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, Topsail – Paradise, St. George's – Humber, Harbour Grace – Port de Grave, as well as the Member for Windsor Lake.

The hon. the Member for the District of Harbour Main.

MS. PARSLEY: Mr. Speaker, on April 29, 2017, I had the honour to attend the 31st annual Firefighter's Ball with Avondale Volunteer Fire Department. The evening was filled with many laughs, stories, a delicious meal, and of course awards recognizing many of the volunteers for their contribution to the department and their community.

I'm pleased to announce this year's winner of Firefighter of the Year was Howard Costello. Additionally, I was pleased to present long service awards for 30 years to: Joseph Cantwell, Gordon Hawco, Andrew Mason, Owen Mahoney, James O'Leary, John O'Leary, Harold Power, Wayne Wall.

Mr. Speaker, as I have stated before, our volunteer fire departments are the backbones of our communities. They are the ones who answer a call for services at any time of the day or night. They are the ones running into a burning building while the rest of us are running out, and they are the ones who lend a helping hand in our time of need.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking the Avondale Volunteer Fire Department for their service to the Conception Bay Centre region.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to acknowledge two great events that happened last week in the District of Cape St. Francis.

Last week, we celebrated Municipal Awareness Day. It was a great day for municipalities in my district, especially for the Town of Torbay.

On that day, the town councils and staff of Torbay, Pouch Cove and Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, as well as the fire chiefs, firefighters and residents from those communities all gathered to view their new rescue vehicle. These towns signed a regional mutual aid agreement to allow their fire departments to assist each other and this new vehicle will be very helpful in responding to the many emergency calls for assistance.

On the same day, the Town of Torbay celebrated the official opening of the new municipal depot. This is a modern facility with sufficient space

for staff, extra storage and more bays for heavy machinery and equipment. The new depot is ideally located to access all residents of Torbay.

I know a lot of work went into these projects and I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating everyone involved on a job well done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to deliver accolades to the Harbour Breton Lions Club to recognize another fabulous year of service and share some highlights of their awards, volunteer and 51st annual charter night celebrations.

The 2016 Citizen of the Year went to Georgina Ollerhead, who goes above and beyond to serve her community. With nearly 25 years of service as a Lion and the prestigious distinction of the Melvin Jones Fellow and Queen's Diamond Jubilee recipient, Ms. Ollerhead has continually proven to be an energetic and committed volunteer.

We also celebrate Lion of the Year 2015-16, Glen Pierce; Lion Melvin Jones Fellowship Award, Lloyd Blake; 20-Year Service Awards to Lions Ruben Rose and Jerome Stoodley, and 10 years to Wanda Martin. As well, a special bouquet to Lion Leo Martin, charter member of 51 years, who is always there to lend a helping hand and offer advice. The Lion Eric Lace Award was presented to Jenna Strowbridge, graduate with the highest academic average and the granddaughter of our beloved late Lion Bill Strowbridge.

I ask all Members of his House to join me in recognizing the Harbour Breton Lions Club for the outstanding contributions they make to their community each and every year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Miles for Smiles Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to the support, awareness and prevention of child abuse and has become a support for adult survivors of child abuse in St. John's and surrounding area since 2011.

Mr. Speaker, on April 30, I was pleased to attend the annual Miles for Smiles walk at Bowring Park. The foundation has raised much needed awareness through a host of organized events, most notably in having the month of April proclaimed as Child Abuse Prevention Month in Newfoundland and Labrador. As well as in cities in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Alberta, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

Miles for Smiles has organized annual awareness walks in St. John's for five years and this has now expanded to Gander, Marystown, Halifax and even, Mr. Speaker, to the State of Maine, with three additional Newfoundland and Labrador communities already committed to similar walks in 2018.

Mr. Speaker, prevention comes in the form of a training program offered to adults, and also the foundation is in the final stages of developing an educational tool aimed at prevention of sexual abuse in primary age children.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating Bev Moore-Davis and the Miles for Smiles Foundation for their dedication to bringing awareness to child abuse.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. George's – Humber.

MR. REID: I rise today to recognize the 30th anniversary this month of the Grand Codroy Estuary receiving its official designation as a Wetlands of International Importance under the International Ramsar Convention.

I also want to inform Members that a celebration of this anniversary will be held on May 27 at the Wetland Centre in the Codroy Valley.

The Codroy Valley Estuary is located where the Grand Codroy River flows into the Atlantic Ocean on the Southwest corner of the Island portion of the province. The river broadens into an estuary of about three kilometres wide and 12 kilometres long.

This estuary is an important breeding and staging site for numerous waterfowl species in this province. In particular, it is significant for Canadian geese and 19 other species of waterfowl. The beach at the mouth of the estuary is also inhabited by piping plovers, a rare sparrow-sized shore bird that has been identified as a species at risk.

I ask all Members to join with me in recognizing the work of the Codroy Valley Area Development Association, along with other groups, for their efforts in protecting and promoting the importance of the Grand Codroy Estuary.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

MS. P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm excited to speak about the annual Songs, Stages and Seafood Festival in Bay Roberts, an event that celebrates the sea and our culture surrounding it. The festival is a five-day journey featuring local seafood cuisine, the province's top chefs and our traditional entertainment.

The municipality of Bay Roberts, volunteers and residents work together to make this event a success each year. The festival kicks off with a salmon dinner, hosted by Donna Fowler at Kelly's Landing on May 24. Then on Thursday evening get hooked on local at the Shearstown Community Centre, with seafood stations, while local musician Lloyd Snow will be on stage.

On Friday night, it's a Small Plates reception at the Royal Canadian Legion – a series of eight

small-plate courses and music by local favourites Connemara. On Saturday, take in the culinary workshop. It's a hands-on family event at the Wolverines Search and Rescue building. There will be singing and dancing Saturday night at the chef's barbecue at the Bay Arena.

The festival concludes with a fishcake championship and Toutons, Tomcods and Tunes on the Shoreline Heritage Walking Trail. Please join me in wishing organizers a safe and successful festival this year.

Mr. Speaker, I invite you and all hon. Members and our viewers at home to come join us in Bay Roberts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Windsor Lake.

MS. C. BENNETT: Inspiration can come from our youth, Mr. Speaker, and Jane Hutchings, a young woman from the District of Windsor Lake, provides just that inspiration. Jane was recently awarded the D&R Sobey Atlantic Scholarship, valued at \$80,000, to attend the Smith School of Business at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario.

The scholarship, established in 1999 by Donald Sobey and his son Robert, both alumni of Queen's, is awarded annually to a first-year student from Atlantic Canada enrolled in the four-year commerce program. The scholarship recognizes Jane for her academic abilities, her creativity, organizational thinking, community and school activities and leadership qualities.

Jane, a Level 3 student at St. Bonaventure's College, is an example for her younger schoolmates. Maintaining a 95 per cent average and full extracurricular schedule, Jane is the daughter of the Ferryland MHA, Keith Hutchings and Lynn Croft.

Jane is president of her student council, leads three choirs, plays in the school band. She also volunteers with the Jack Hand Legacy Foundation, and shares her musical talents at MacMorran Community Centre and The Gathering Place.

Colleagues, please join me in congratulating Jane on her accomplishment, and wish her every success as she begins her studies this fall.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I have an idea who may someday be replacing the Member for Ferryland.

Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize May 14 to 20 as National Police Week and acknowledge the important work of our Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Across this province, the dedicated women and men of our police agencies contribute to the safety and security of our communities. They are to be applauded for their unwavering dedication to protecting the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, the brave members of our law enforcement services often face difficult and dangerous situations. On Wednesday, I will pay tribute to the fallen peace officers who have been killed in the performance of their duties, when I represent the province at an International Police and Peace Officer Memorial Service. The multi-denominational ceremony, held at the Seventh Day Adventist Church in St. John's, will honour officers who died and recognize the sacrifice peace officers made to keep us safe.

Throughout the year, citizens can also visit the police and peace officer memorial here on the grounds of Confederation Building.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking the police and peace officers across this province for the difficult work they do every day. I encourage the public to work in partnership with police services by reporting crimes to assist in creating safe, positive communities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement today. On behalf of the Official Opposition, we join with the minister, government and the people of the province in thanking and expressing our gratitude to the women and men of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and also the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Mr. Speaker, I know first-hand the work and efforts that many of these officers make on a daily basis in their roles in serving our communities. I'd also like to take the opportunity to join in recognizing some of the partner agencies, wildlife officers, municipal enforcement officers, Canada Border Service officers, correctional officers, Sheriff's officers, Fisheries officers and all those who partner with both police services in the protection of the public.

Mr. Speaker, as well, again I extend our sincere gratitude and thanks. I encourage members of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, if you see a police officer today, or this week, take a moment to thank them.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for St. John's Centre.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. How lucky are we to have these wonderful and generous women and men willing to step up and serve and protect our communities with the RNC and the RCMP. I thank them for their dedication, their passion and compassion.

In turn, it is our responsibility to protect them by introducing legislation on presumptive PTSD allowing them faster access to benefits, resources and treatment for job-related PTSD.

Thank you RNC and RCMP for your excellent service to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Bravo!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I was pleased to attend Seal Day on the Hill events in Ottawa. Seal Day on the Hill brings together various levels of government and industry to discuss and promote the true values of the Canadian sealing industry.

This event provides a great opportunity to highlight the many benefits our sealing resources provide such as nutrition and health advantages associated with the Omega-3 fatty acids found in seal products.

In 2016, seal fishery landings in Newfoundland and Labrador totalled 66,000 animals, nearly double 2015 harvest levels. While statistics for this current season have not been finalized, data collection to date indicates approximately 80,000 seals have been harvested so far in 2017. This confirms 2017 will see the most seals harvested in Newfoundland and Labrador since 2013.

Mr. Speaker, events like Seal Day on the Hill allow us to highlight the importance of the sealing industry for our coastal communities and the growth opportunities that exist in that industry. The seal harvest is one of the most sustainable, humane and best managed harvests of mammals in the world. I would like to acknowledge the Craft Council of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Fur Institute of Canada for organizing this year's event and I am pleased to announce my department provided a \$10,000 grant to the Craft Council of Newfoundland and Labrador to help with this event.

We will continue to work with the industry and the federal government to ensure this economically valuable industry remains viable well into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I'm pleased to see that the minister attended Seal Day on the Hill to promote the industry. It plays a significant role in thousands of families here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I would encourage the provincial government to increase marketing plans for seal products here in our province and right across Canada. Just recently, a restaurant in BC placed seal meat on its menu and became a major hit. We know that seal products such as oil, fur and meat are becoming increasingly popular and we need to focus on this opportunity.

Increasing numbers are very encouraging and provide future evidence that we need to support this industry. With the right marketing and promotion, we can continue to make the seal industry a major success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. The seal harvest is historically tied to our diverse cultures and economies from Labrador's north coast to the east and northeast coasts of the Island. It continues to be a vital source of income in the small communities.

Thank you to the Craft Council and the Fur Institute for their work this year highlighting the sealskin products that we value so much. I invite anybody who's not yet a member of the Sealers Association, Mr. Speaker, to join.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, here in the House yesterday we asked questions about the insurance burden on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. The December 2015 mandate letter to the then Minister of Service NL calls for a thorough review of the insurance industry in the province

So I ask the Premier: When will this review be completed?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the Member for the question. This is an important issue, important enough that it went into the mandate letter of the minister responsible for SNL. This review will be started this fiscal year, but even in the current framework that we're working in, I speak on a regular basis with the current Minister of SNL who has been speaking and in direct contact with this group, with this taxi industry yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, the constant contact is there. The door is always open. This review will be done within this fiscal year, Mr. Speaker. As we know, it's the PUB that sets the rate.

AESL is also engaged looking for training mechanisms that could actually help with this

industry today, and we're ready to work with them on those aspects as well.

It's interesting to note, though, the former premier, who is also a former Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador, sat on this file while the previous administration was in government for 10 years and did nothing about it. This government will do it this fiscal year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the taxi industry has reached a crossroads as a result of the very high, recent increases in cost to their operations and this fall they could see an additional 42 per cent increase in their insurance premiums. Taxi companies cannot absorb this, and they believe it's not in the best interest of citizens or their business to try and pass this on to customers. They don't want to do that.

I ask the Premier: What assurance can you give the taxi industry today that you will take steps to reduce their operational costs so that those taxi businesses don't go out of business?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

One thing I can assure the Member opposite is that we're taking this matter very seriously.

I reflect back on what the Premier just said in terms of the mandate. The reason the mandate was there was because there had been an escalating problem, failed to have been recognized by the previous administration. He recognized it; put it in the mandate for the department.

As we've indicated, we will, in this fiscal year, be initiating that review. I look forward to working both with colleagues of the industry, government and so on, because it will be that collaboration that will get this job done.

I also look forward to the day, frankly, Mr. Speaker, when I can move forward with new problems, not those left by the previous administration.

Thank you

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, 18 months on the mandate and they haven't began, what he calls, a very important process yet, and that's after seeing two significant bumps in costs to taxi operators.

I met with a taxi operator yesterday. I met with several in recent days. I met with a taxi operator yesterday, and last year before this government put on sales tax on their premiums and before they saw an increase from the facility association, he was paying \$43,000 a year to insure his fleet. After the Liberal tax on insurance and the facility increase, he is now paying \$117,000 for insurance – \$43,000 to \$117,000.

Again, I ask the Premier: What are you going to do to ensure that these operators can continue to operate today?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Mr. Speaker, I'd almost like to join the Member opposite, because I would also note that in 2012 the fees doubled that year, they doubled the next year, and so on and thereafter, and again, no action. Yeah, it's been 18 months; I've been in the job for two months. I look forward to making progress.

When I met with the industry yesterday, they indicated it was the first time a minister had ever sat face to face and had a dialogue with them. We are listening to them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. TRIMPER: Mr. Speaker, I enjoy solving problems. We've got a good one on the go here, but we're going to get it fixed. I committed to those people that are in the audience watching, as well as out there across the province, we will get it done. I look forward to that honour.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a very important matter and I'm glad the minister is taking it seriously, but the government's been in power now, they're well into their second year, and they haven't taken any action until this week when the taxi industry has finally spoken up on this and have talked to government about it. The government should take further action and should do it today.

I ask the Premier: Will he ask for an independent review by the Public Utilities Board to conduct a full review on the insurance costs which are directly impacting not only taxi drivers, but every Newfoundlander and Labradorian who drives a car.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Mr. Speaker, I just heard in the preamble the suggestion there had been no action. Well, I'd like to remind him and this hon. House, and, indeed, the entire province, insurance is a complicated topic. It's not just about rates. It's about the atmosphere, the environment on the roads, making our roads safe, making our drivers safe and so on.

I would refer to the action of the previous minister in this role in terms of the new *Procurement Act*. I had the honour a couple of months ago of passing the new Bill 68, the *Highway Traffic Act*. They're all matter of measures we're taking right now to ensure that our roads become safer, that those that are

abiding by the laws and so on are doing so in a manner that's very safe for our roads.

In fact, later this week I have staff meeting with representatives of the taxi industry to talk about a new level of professionalism, training and so on. So, Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to say, there is a lot happening right now.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: I'm glad to hear that, Mr. Speaker, but unless I didn't hear the minister correctly, his commentary was they're going to start it this fiscal year, and the Premier said this fiscal year as well. The industry is suffering today, and that's why I encourage the government to get on with it.

Mr. Speaker, in Estimates, the Minister of Finance stated they're not reviewing the tax system, but they're waiting for the federal review to be conducted.

I ask the Premier: Will you order an immediate review of the provincial tax system?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, what I said in Estimates was the same thing we've been saying since last year's budget: Our plan is to do a tax review that would include personal and corporate tax. As a result, we will implement that tax review this fiscal year.

What I said in Estimates was that the federal government had undertaken a tax review last year. They've since broken it up into two pieces and we want to make sure that as we learn how the federal government is adjusting their tax policy that we integrate that to make sure there are no unintended consequences in the tax changes we put forward in our province, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know it's going to take some time before the insurance review is done. We now know it's going to take some time before the tax review is done. A review of the insurance industry is desperately needed, not only for the taxi industry but for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I ask the Premier: Will he commit to freezing all insurance rates until a full review is completed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Mr. Speaker, that particular question was posed in the meeting that I had yesterday with the taxi industry. It's also one that we've been evaluating.

I promised those representing the taxi industry we would deliver a message next Tuesday. I intend to do that in response to that question.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister tabled a cost to date of the EY report which was close or in excess of \$2 million. Last week, the minister said that the Oversight Committee was looking with EY on the finalization of that report.

Now that we know the cost of the report and it's continued to increase, I ask the minister: A draft has been submitted to the Oversight Committee, will the minister table that draft?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to remind the people of this province, the Muskrat Falls Project was conceptualized, it was approved and it was developed under the PC administration. It was very important when this government came into its own to ensure that EY was engaged to review that entire project.

It was a good thing we did, Mr. Speaker, because we found out that the \$7 billion that they said the project was going to cost in 2015, in September just before the election, was indeed not correct. It was actually over \$9 billion.

The EY report, the finalization of the EY report, is being handled by the Oversight Committee, Mr. Speaker, and when it is available, we'll certainly make it public.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the minister also said she engaged with EY in January to finalize the report. It's now May, four months later.

Minister, how long do you intend for the finalization of the report to actually take place? Is it months more? What's the timeline?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm obviously anxious; that's why I stood up more quickly.

Mr. Speaker, an important question, an important response. I will say what I did say was that once we were finished fixing the problem that they created with the Astaldi contract in December, I did meet with EY to start the process with the Oversight Committee to re-engage with EY to finalize the report.

Once that report is finalized, Mr. Speaker, we will make it public. It's an important document

for this province. It laid out recommendations to improve upon the situation. They failed, Mr. Speaker, in their decision making around Muskrat Falls. They failed to manage it. This government will make sure it is cleaned up, on track and to the benefit of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the minister is aware that EY was involved with the original Oversight Committee that was put in place in 2014, already did a review and made recommendations. At the time when they announced this money for another review, we asked what the purpose of it was. Eighteen months after, there's no sign of the report. It's exceeded \$2 million.

Minister, tell us, if this report is so important and the recommendations are so significant, why haven't you released it?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The report that they engaged was on process; it wasn't on getting to the root problems around Muskrat Falls and around Muskrat Falls' management. The EY report that was released in April of last year had some excellent recommendations to ensure we put this project on track. Those recommendations are being implemented, Mr. Speaker.

We have now engaged a world-class CEO. We have a stellar board of directors that has been expanded. We have settled the problem that they left from June of 2015 on Astaldi. We have an expanded and extended loan guarantee by the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, things are on track now and we will continue to ensure effective management, unlike the former administration.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Can the minister confirm that the Libraries Board met with the consultant today to finalize the library review? Will you commit to tabling the review prior to the House closing?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand in my place again and answer this question that the Member asks day after day after day. The response to the second part of his question is the same as it was the last time he asked it. I understand that the provincial libraries board is meeting. I didn't get a copy of the agenda. I didn't ask for a copy of their agenda. They're an independent, appointed body; do their work independent of me.

As I have said over and over and over again to the Member opposite when I get the report, he will get the report. That will be when it is released by the Libraries Board.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Just so we're clear, the minister commissioned it. The minister's department paid for it. The minister's staff in the department participated and helped organize it and the report is ready to be released. Yet, the minister won't commit to bringing the report to the House of Assembly.

When can we have it? The libraries in this province and the communities they serve need to know what the viability for them is in the future. Will you table the report in the House of Assembly before it closes in the next couple of weeks, Mr. Speaker?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, I ask other Members of the House to indulge me because this Member has a very short memory, unfortunately.

Last year, as a result of public reaction to the decision to regionalize public library service in this province, the department agreed with the provincial libraries board – a recommendation that they had made prior to the Government Renewal Initiative – that we would engage a consultant through a process that was guided by the provincial libraries board and a steering committee that had membership from the department but was made up of a majority of the members of the provincial libraries board that there would be a consultant engaged to do a review, extensive consultations and produce a report.

As I've said many times when that report is released, the Member will see it and I will see it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Liberal budgets 2016 and 2017 continue to take a huge toll on the people of this province. Bankruptcies are up over 30 per cent in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask the Premier: What specifically has government done to help families facing this situation?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I think the former leadership candidate and now probably potential leadership candidate is re-launching his campaign again. Mr. Speaker, with or without – I don't know if the coalition is in place or not over there, but we'll find that out, I'm sure, in a few days.

Mr. Speaker, when you talk about the financial situation of our province, the gall of the PC Opposition to talk about the financial mess that they left the people of this province in. We are left to clean it up, Mr. Speaker. A year ago, their plan for sustainability in our province that they still say was a plan for the future of our province is a complete failure.

People in this province are left with doubling electricity rates, skyrocketing debt, per capita debt reaching unprecedented levels. We are cleaning it up, and we will look after the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the challenges facing families in this province are not a laughing matter.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: If you want to talk about leadership concerns, the people of this province have far more concerns about the leadership of government than they do about the leadership of our party.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: There has been a staggering 150 per cent increase in insolvency proposals to avoid bankruptcy. These folks are just barely able to keep their heads above water and, likely, headed for bankruptcy unless things change.

What advice, Premier, do you have for these young families who think leaving this province is now their only option?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We listen to people in Newfoundland and Labrador all the time. There are a number of measures that we've put in place. Number one, we had to save the future of this province; even

getting this province to the point where we could actually put in a borrowing plan – something they could not do – for the future of our province.

There are a number of issues that we have faced. We've had thousands of people that were impacted, even with the Alberta economy, Mr. Speaker. They put in three megaprojects that were started, not even phasing them in; they did not plan for the future. In a year and a half, Mr. Speaker, we have made significant process in securing the future of our province.

So that crowd over there should not be firing questions over here, blaming us for the mess that they put the people of this province in. Shame on them for even going there, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the people of the province aren't buying it. A year and a half, two budgets and his government have done nothing to strengthen the economic conditions in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Can the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation confirm that over half of all accommodations in the Western Region have had their Canada Select star ratings downgraded in the province's traveller's guidebook as a result of a departmental error?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, on Thursday, a media report was put forward about the star ratings for the Western Region. And yes, I can confirm that there was a technical printing error that happened where 50 per cent of operators were impacted by a half star rating.

Since then, our department has taken very proactive measures by contacting all the

operators in the Western Region that were impacted. The website does have the correct information. The online version of the guide as well is correct; 16,000 people last year downloaded that online and over 1 million people view our business listings online, and 2.2 million people go online.

The call centre, the Visitor Information Centres and all of these mechanisms with our stakeholders will relay the correct information.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: I would respectfully suggest to the minister that contacting operators is not going to solve this problem. The error means that many hotels, motels and B & Bs will be overlooked by tourists who search for a certain quality of accommodation, this will very likely result in a loss of business.

How is the minister addressing this real concern, and are you considering any form of compensation?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I'll tell you what this government has done to address this, and unlike the Member opposite, I spent Saturday in Gros Morne National Park talking to operators in that area.

There was no concern, Mr. Speaker. They understood what happened here. It was an error by people who put this work together, put this piece of information together.

I will tell you, if he's worried about the tourism industry for this upcoming summer, I will tell him to get around Newfoundland and Labrador, get off your leadership campaign, put your feet on the ground where it really matters and talk to this group.

All indications are the tourism industry will see significant increases this year. Mr. Speaker, we

are making investments in this industry; the marketing campaign, an extra 9 per cent in the culture and arts community.

We are taking this seriously, Mr. Speaker. We will never take this industry for granted.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'm hearing considerable noise from both sides of the Legislature.

I recognize the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

They may not be telling the Premier about their concerns or he may not be listening, but they're certainly telling us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: In light of the profound impact that this will have on business owners, what specific actions will government take to address these legitimate concerns of small business owners?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, upon learning about this error, we contacted every person directly. We also asked them how their bookings were doing and people talked about how upbeat they were for the tourism season, that their numbers are up. I've talked to some people who have 80 per cent of their bookings, all the way to the end of September, when it comes to the West Coast of this province.

So I would say to the Member opposite, that he should as well talk to the operators. This is going to be a great year for tourism. Last year, we had consecutive year-over-year traffic for non-resident traffic at Marine Atlantic; the first time in 20 years.

We made sure that our visitor information centres will have the correct information; 130,000 people pass through there. Our stakeholders provided updated information, our call centre and online, all the information is correct with more than 1 million views –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Minister. It's good to see some of our investments are paying off.

Issues at Mistaken Point on his watch, the Liberal tax on icebergs on his watch and now problems with major tourism publications on his watch.

Is it purely coincidental that the same year that the government slashes positions in tourism, including the positions of tourism program manager and director of strategic tourism product development, to list just two, that we begin to see significant gaps that are impacting the future of our tourism sector?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, I have every confidence in my staff in tourism and the product that they deliver and work with the stakeholders for the people of the province. This was an error that happened. It is unfortunate, but we have taken proactive measures when it comes to reaching out to all the operators on the West Coast, the campgrounds and the accommodators that were impacted.

When it comes to the publication, we have only printed 100,000 booklets. They have been distributed throughout the province, but the majority of people now are going online, people are using TripAdvisor. The star grading for Canada Select is not the primary motivator for people when they're making bookings to accommodations. You can ask anybody in tourism product development or in the industry, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Minister, it has been almost two years since you took office. The ratios for social workers in Labrador still have not improved.

I ask the minister: What have you done to strengthen recruitment, retention and services available in Labrador?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, it's been 17 months, not two years.

We work very closely with the Innu round circle and the working relationship that we have with the Aboriginal population in Labrador, Mr. Speaker. We are working to address the needs. Our ratio is 1-20.

We have put in place a number of services and supports to recruit staff to Labrador. It is very difficult to recruit staff, Mr. Speaker, but we are working to do it and we identify the issues, we work with the Aboriginal populations. We deal with each issue individually, and it is a very complex situation, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: We've heard more sad stories from Natuashish regarding solvent abuse.

Can the minister confirm that additional resources have been deployed to Labrador to help with this situation?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, as the Member knows, I cannot speak about individual cases; however, Mr. Speaker, there are numerous resources in Natuashish. We have a healing lodge there. We have individual

counselling services. There are men and women's treatment programs.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of services and supports on the ground in the community and we are working directly with the social workers and with the Aboriginal leaders to try to help resolve this problem.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: That sounds to me like there are no additional resources. Having addictions counsellors and mental health professionals on the ground right now is essential for the immediate situation.

Can the minister tell us if she has a long-term plan to support the children and youth in Aboriginal communities? We're interested to know what you're going to do for them today and what your plan is for the long term to address this most serious situation.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if there's enough time for me to read off all the resources and supports and services that are in the community. I just listed a few. There are others such as the Head Start program and the daycare specialist.

The CYCP Act is being reviewed, Mr. Speaker. We just did extensive consultations. We will bring that act to the House of Assembly in the fall, and I can assure the Member opposite that we are addressing their concerns.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The medical audit of IOC workers' X-rays has found 35 suspected cases of silicosis and 86 lung abnormalities possibly related to silica dust.

Government has the medical audit but hasn't released it. We are told that workers have concerns about serious inaccuracies in the results.

I ask the Minister of Service NL: When will the medical audit be released?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the question. It's a very important issue, a very important topic.

I'm working very closely with the MHA for Labrador West. We received the report, I believe, on February 17. We are concluding our review of the report's recommendations and results, and I expect that very soon I will find myself along with a consultant in the community to speak to the findings of this report.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

MS. MICHAEL: Mr. Speaker, we have reliable information that silica dust levels are going up again on the mine site due to problems with dust collectors, a blocked fresh air duct and dust blowing into buildings.

I ask the minister: What is government going to do to ensure that the IOC workplace is free of silica dust exposure?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Mr. Speaker, as I've mentioned several times, and as my predecessor for this department has also mentioned in this government, if there are reports of unsafe work conditions and so on there are a variety of mechanisms and avenues that both the workers, those who observe the infractions and dangerous situations, can avail of. I would invite the Member opposite to give me further details. She can contact our office.

We have regularly staff associated with Service NL, particularly in our Occupational Health and Safety Division who are making regular inspections. That work will continue. Worker safety is our priority.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for St. John's Centre.

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, the request from the taxi industry to freeze their insurance premiums is understandable in light of the exorbitant increases they are facing, including the application of HST to their insurance premiums. These increases may, in fact, drive many of them out of business.

I ask the Premier: What will he do to ensure the mandatory 10-year insurance review is done in a transparent manner, giving full opportunity for input to affected industries such as the taxi industry?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned I think a few questions ago, the question about freezing their rates and so on is one that was posed by the representatives of the taxi industry just yesterday. It's one that we've been looking at and, as promised, I feel it's most appropriate that we'll respond back those representatives. They're the ones that are feeling, frankly, most of the problem that was left to fester for the last several years.

In terms of the review itself, I can assure the Member opposite that it will be done in a very transparent, very public way. It needs to be very all-encompassing; it needs to involve all stakeholders around the insurance industry. I look forward to undertaking that mandated obligation.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: In light of the financial pressure caused by these skyrocketing insurance premiums and the application of the HST to insurance premiums, what consideration has his government given to a cap on soft-tissue injuries and the implementation of a no-fault insurance regime?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for the question. As I've indicated in several of my responses, the issue is extremely complicated. The aspects that the Member just posed in her question, frankly, are included within the scope of many of the issues that I'm discussing with the representatives of the taxi industry.

That collaboration has frankly been moving along very well. Yesterday's meeting was yet just another example of how government working with industry, with those affected, can achieve a very productive result. I can assure everyone in this House that we will do this in a very transparent way and that we will be listening and we will be acting.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre for a quick question, no preamble.

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Will his government require fish plants to provide measures to prevent occupational shellfish asthma, including adequate ventilation and masks, as a condition of licensing?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for the question. Mr. Speaker, back last summer I had the opportunity to meet with the FFAW and their industrial council, and I do know that the department led by the Minister of Service NL is looking at how we get the industrial council in place. But again, this is something that dates back many, many years and it's an active file within the department.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider a resolution relating to the advancing and guaranteeing of certain loans made under the *Loan and Guarantee Act, 1957*, Bill 12.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament

assembled, the petition of the undersigned residents humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS government plans to remove the provincial point-of-sale tax rebate on books, which will raise taxes on books from 5 per cent to 15 per cent; and

WHEREAS an increase in the tax on books will reduce book sales to the detriment of local bookstores, publishers and authors, and the amount collected by government must be weighed against the loss in economic activity caused by higher book prices; and

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the lowest literacy rates in Canada and the other provinces do not tax books because they recognize the need to encourage reading and literacy; and

WHEREAS this province has many nationally and internationally known storytellers, but we will be the only people in Canada who will have to pay our provincial government a tax to read the books of our own writers;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government not to impose a provincial sales tax on books.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, here I am yet again, another day, another petition on the taxes on books. We have, I'm sure, thousands of signatures from all over the province. Earlier in the House during Question Period, the Minister of Finance was talking about another tax or another fee, and talking about she didn't want to not know about the unintended consequences of a certain tax.

Well, Mr. Speaker, who has thought on government side about the unintended consequences of placing an ill-thought-out tax on books, with the lowest literacy rate, the highest illiteracy rate, taxing books? Has the Minister of Finance really stopped and looked at the unintended consequences of an extra tax on books? The only province in the country with this tax on books.

Well, let me talk a little bit about some of the unintended consequences. This I believe, Mr. Speaker, is not only an ill-informed tax on books; it's a reckless tax on books because the unintended consequences are it will reduce book sales to the detriment of local bookstores, publishers and authors.

How hard it is in this current business model, industry model for independent booksellers to survive, and how much more difficult is it for independent booksellers in this particular provincial economic reality. So there's an unintended, detrimental consequence of her ill-thought-out tax on books.

Local bookstores are affected, publishers – and it is such a precarious industry, publishing, from such a small province; and our authors, we know that the majority of people in the arts community live below a standard poverty line. Mr. Speaker, that's a specific unintended consequence of her ill-thought-out, ham-fisted tax on books.

What else? We can see the loss in economic activity caused by higher book prices; people will have to think twice. We know that a book that costs \$20, with this tax, is \$23. Some people can buy it online and not pay that extra \$3.

Mr. Speaker, the unintended consequences are reckless consequences caused by the Minister of Finance who did this ill-thought-out tax.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned resident humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS we insist that the well-being and safety of our families take priority over any economic consideration; and

WHEREAS we reject in advance any Nalcor-led plan to send its experts to Labrador to inform; and

WHEREAS we are calling for a process where independent experts are provided with everything they need to ascertain the safety of the North Spur: i.e., the proper mandate, documents, financing and time; and

WHEREAS we demand this process have a public component where we, the people, can have access and can ask questions; and

WHEREAS the Premier promised to open the books on Muskrat Falls and, so far, that has not happened;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to consider the establishment of an independent expert review of the North Spur.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I stand and speak to this very serious issue that is concerning people in Labrador and also concerning people on the Island of Newfoundland. People throughout the province are concerned that government continues to ignore the call for review of the North Spur. They don't seem to be taking it seriously. They seem to think that people who are signing petitions, maybe they think they don't know what they're talking about.

The issue is, Mr. Speaker, that there are people around the world, experts, who have questions about the North Spur. The individuals who have signed these petitions are only a sign of the questions that are being asked. I think it's very important to note that people who have continued this call for a study of the North Spur involves not just individuals but also municipalities in Labrador.

In March, Mr. Speaker, the Town of Northwest River sent a letter asking that a study be done. The Town of Northwest River is quite concerned by what would happen if the North Spur fails, and they have asked that an independent review be done.

In January, a letter was sent by the Town of Happy Valley-Goose Bay, again, supporting the call for the independent review. Asking that

government pay attention to the concerns that experts are expressing and asking for a workshop, everybody get together to really talk about the North Spur.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. MICHAEL: As well, Mr. Speaker, another municipality – no, the Government of Nunatsiavut also has written saying that they too believe there needs to be a review of the North Spur by an independent expert panel.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Orders of the Day.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I would move Motion 4, that pursuant to provisional Standing Order 11(1) that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today, Tuesday, May 16, 2017.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House not adjourn at 5:30 today.

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Supply to consider the following heads of expenditure: one, Contingency Reserve; two, the following activities of the Executive Council, Lieutenant-Governor’s Establishment, the Premier’s Office, Cabinet Secretariat,

Communications and Public Engagement, Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs and the Office of Labrador Affairs; and three, the Legislature.

Further, Mr. Speaker, I would move, with the agreement of all parties, that for the purpose of debate in Committee of the Whole on Supply we forgo the traditional process of debate in this House and, instead, revert to the process that we use in the Estimates Committee.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House resolve itself into a Committee of Supply.

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Dempster): Order, please!

I believe we’re starting in Executive Council.

I’ll ask the Clerk to call the –

CLERK (Barnes): (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: We are now considering the Contingency Reserve, the following activities of the Executive Council: The Lieutenant Governor’s Establishment, 1.1.01; Office of the Executive Council, 2.1.01 through 2.4.01 inclusive, and 2.6.01 through 2.7.02 inclusive and the Legislature.

We’re starting with Executive Council.

CLERK: 1.1.01 through 2.4.01 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 to 2.4.01 inclusive carry?

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

We're switching up the format here a little bit today and breaking from some of the normal House procedures, which is why we're sitting down. We're conducting this session as if we were in an Estimates session, which we've done for all government departments but today we have an opportunity to ask government questions about Executive Council Estimates. So with the co-operation of everybody in the House, we're going to conduct the session in that manner which is why we're in our seats and it's going to appear far more casual and perhaps even more pleasant than normal debate in this House.

With the agreement of the minister, we're going to go in order here. A number of my colleagues have questions. Members from the Third Party and the independent Member have questions as well. We'll try and go in order so that we can get through this in an efficient manner.

The first subhead that's been called relates to the Lieutenant Governor's Establishment and Government House specifically. I have a number of questions for the minister, or whoever may be able to answer these questions on the government side, mostly just points of information related to the operations of Government House.

My first question is: How much of this budget goes towards royal visits and other diplomatic visits each year, or would that be contained elsewhere in the budget?

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

If the Member has a number of questions (inaudible) to give a number of the questions, if that's okay.

MR. KENT: I'm happy to do it that way.

The minister just asked if I would – because I don't think it was picked up, for the purpose of Hansard – ask multiple questions and then go back to her and we'll go back and forth that way. I see her microphone is on now, so –

MS. MICHAEL: (Inaudible) because I just came in, I'm sorry.

MR. KENT: We're just saying that the minister has asked that I ask multiple questions on each subhead, give her a chance to then respond to multiple questions.

MS. MICHAEL: Can I ask another question then related to that?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

MS. MICHAEL: Does the minister then want me to come in with any questions on that subhead at that time? Because it could be that all the questions are asked, I won't be adding anything. Since she wants to deal with all of it at the same time, does she also want my questions at the same time after Steve does his?

MS. C. BENNETT: I'll leave that to the Members of the Opposition. If they're okay with that process, once we do –

MS. MICHAEL: If you ask yours then if I have any do it then, rather than waiting until you do other subheads.

MR. KENT: Yeah, absolutely. We'll do each subhead like we do in Estimates. That's fine by us, Madam Chair.

I'll continue with a number of questions related to Government House and then ask the minister to respond. Other Members may have additional questions and then we'll go from there.

AN HON. MEMBER: You should get in that chair.

MR. KENT: I used to.

CHAIR: Okay, so I understand following a similar pattern to Estimates, we'll try and follow the clock as much as we can, but periodically the Third Party may come in with a question while you're on that topic.

MR. KENT: Yeah.

CHAIR: And we'll try and be fair with the time.

MR. KENT: Yeah, no problem.

CHAIR: Okay.

The Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you.

The first question was how much of this budget goes towards royal visits and other diplomatic visits each year, or is that contained somewhere else in the budget? I should say to the minister, sometimes there will be follow-up questions depending on her response, but I'll ask as many as I can upfront and then await a response.

I was also curious, what kind of support does this office provide for diplomatic and royal visits, a related question, in terms of Government House. We know this year the residence manager position was eliminated at Government House. We're wondering why that is, what did the position responsibilities look like and who is now doing those responsibilities that were previously carried out by the residence manager at Government House?

My next question which is related to that, another position change was the director of protocol position within the Protocol Office. There was a protocol officer position and a director position that were eliminated. We understand there's been some kind of consolidation with a role at Government House. Again, we'd like to understand what the duties of those positions were and who's now doing them as a result of these changes?

Also, in the information the minister tabled in the House, the position of manager of protocol and general operations was added, which I believe is those positions I just mentioned being consolidated into that new position, but I'd ask for the minister to clarify that. Related to that, did you replace a director with a manager as part of government's effort to reduce costs of management?

I'll leave it there for now and would appreciate a response to any – hopefully, all of those questions.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

MS. MICHAEL: I will just add one question to those, Minister, because I had some of those questions as well. The only one I would ask is

the Purchased Services under the subhead for Government House: What does that involve and what is the implication of its dropping \$12,700 this year from what it was estimates and revised at last year? That's it.

MS. C. BENNETT: I thank the Members opposite for their questions.

As the Members of the House would appreciate, the Lieutenant Governor's Establishment is responsible for the administration of services for the Lieutenant Governor and maintaining Government House and its grounds, some 24 acres, along with the grounds of three other government properties, including the Unified Family Court, the National War Memorial and Commissariat House.

The Establishment provides food and domestic services for functions at Government House, as well as for the Lieutenant Governor and family and residents. Their Honours attend and host or participate in approximately 300 events per year – incredibly busy people – the Lieutenant Governor and Her Honour on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, Madam Chair. Approximately 100 of those events are hosted at Government House.

The Protocol Office, which also is referenced as part of this budget, is responsible for providing guidance and has a role in the installation of the Lieutenant Governor, Cabinet and parliamentary secretary swearing in, state funerals, opening of buildings or ribbon cuttings, preparing for diplomatic visits and trade missions through liaisons with appropriate Government of Newfoundland and Labrador offices, including the Premier's Office and the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, and possibly arm's-length Government NL entities such as Memorial University, the College of the North Atlantic and other Newfoundland agencies, boards and Crown corporations and Newfoundland businesses.

They are responsible also for maintaining a list of the concert corps, the Canadian Protocol Office contacts and other common contacts in Newfoundland, and providing advice on issues in precedence, for example, seating plans and order of remarks, and responsibilities respecting the administration of the provincial honour and

awards program, the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Newfoundland and Labrador Award of Bravery, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Volunteer War Service Medal and the Public Service Award of Excellence.

On April 2017, the offices of Government House and Protocol were combined such that the functions of the Protocol Office and the provincial honours and awards program are now housed in Government House, and this resulted in the elimination of two positions, as the Member opposite had referenced, and the creation of one, resulting in a salary savings. This has also created efficiencies in business processes for both offices, which will result in further budgetary savings, and we anticipate further efficiencies and budgetary savings will be realized going forward.

With reference to the question about how much of the budget that is in the budget this year is related specifically to royal visits, I don't have that information for the Member opposite. What I can say is that the royal visit for 2016, as based on the information that I have, total costs in '16-'17 were just under \$50,000. I don't have any information with regard to royal visit anticipated costs for this fiscal year.

One of the Members opposite also asked a question with regard to Purchased Services and wondering about the reduction there of just over \$12,000. That is a result of and reflects the decreases from budget '16-'17, consistent with the following items, which is the annualization of prior-year decisions as well as the zero-based budgeting that all agencies, boards and commissions, including the Government House team, would have been responsible for reviewing.

CHAIR: The Member for Mount Pearl North, if you want to do it just like Estimates, just when you're going to speak, just introduce yourself for the Broadcast Centre.

MR. KENT: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Okay.

MR. KENT: Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you.

I appreciate the minister's responses, but there are a couple of questions that I didn't get an answer to, and that may be part of the challenge of trying to ask all the questions at once. It may make more sense to do what we would actually do in Estimates, which is ask a question or two, allow a response and kind of go back and forth.

So we can try it this way a little longer, but it might cause some repetition.

Go ahead.

MS. C. BENNETT: If I might.

CHAIR: The Minister.

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

One of the reasons why I had suggested that Members opposite, if they could, ask a few questions at a time, unlike Estimates where officials have the opportunity to participate and provide information, they wouldn't be in the Legislature today but they are available and they are providing details.

MR. KENT: Right.

MS. C. BENNETT: So in trying to make sure that their time is used efficiently and that we can make sure that the answers – if they have a number of questions, and if there's information that I don't have at my fingertips here in the House, we certainly have officials working diligently behind the scenes to provide the Members the answers to the questions that they want.

MR. KENT: Thank you.

I can appreciate that. So in the interest of allowing time for that information to be passed along to the minister, I'll pose a couple of the questions again before moving on to some additional questions I have related to Government House.

I appreciated the information around diplomatic visits, royal visits. The minister's response focused more on the royal visits. I'm wondering, what kind of support does the office provide for diplomatic visits? Perhaps the work that was being done by the Protocol Office that's now been rolled into Government House is exactly that.

I specifically would like to know why the residence manager position was eliminated at Government House. The minister did allude to the two Protocol positions being eliminated, but the residence manager position at Government House was also eliminated. I'm curious what responsibilities were involved in that position and who is now doing them.

Also, there were the two Protocol positions eliminated, as we said. Have those three positions been rolled into one? Is the new manager of Protocol and general operations also looking after the role that was played by the residence manager in addition to the Protocol work? Did a director get replaced by a manager in order to reduce cost?

While I allow some time for that information to be gathered, I'll ask some additional questions related to 1.1.01. Part of the challenge – and this may sound somewhat tedious in detail to anybody who's listening, but this is part of the process we work through when it comes to the budget, to try and understand what's different from last year, how money has been moved and so on.

In this year's Estimates, the Government House and Protocol subheads have been combined, and the minister has explained that. The new description combines them both. I guess my question is: Was that simply to try and save money? But have there been any other operational changes at Government House or in the Protocol Office as a result? Can you give us an overview of the positions that are currently still at Government House or now at Government House as a result of the change? Are we to assume, then, that there is only one person, this new manager, who effectively is the Protocol Office?

Related to all of that, salaries have been cut by close to \$100,000 – actually, it is \$93,700. That

doesn't look like three positions. So I am just curious how that number is arrived at, and I will leave it there, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

MS. MICHAEL: Minister, I did not hear – and maybe you did. There has been some distraction going on for me, so I've really got to focus. I will take responsibility for that. I am not sure you talked about the Purchased Services.

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes.

MS. MICHAEL: You did? I am sorry I missed it.

MS. C. BENNETT: I will provide you the answer again. I have a more detailed answer now actually.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay, please.

Madam Chair, I am assuming, but we should never assume, that as with Estimates we will get your briefing book, Minister?

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes, you will.

MS. MICHAEL: Yes, thank you very much.

MR. LANE: Madam Chair?

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands has a question. Do you want to take that before you reply to –?

MS. C. BENNETT: Sure.

CHAIR: Okay.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Perhaps this is a simple question that the others know that I don't know. I am just curious, I see in here we talk about salaries of support staff and so on. I don't see anything in here about salaries of the Lieutenant Governor himself, his travel, all that stuff. I am just assuming, and I guess for the information of the public who

would not know, is that covered by the federal government or is that covered somewhere else by the provincial government?

And in terms of what is here, for support staff and positions and so on, is there any federal subsidy or whatever found somewhere else here that offsets these costs? Or are the people of Newfoundland and Labrador basically on the hook for all these costs? That's my question.

CHAIR: Minister.

MS. C. BENNETT: Sure.

For the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi who asked a question with regard to Purchased Services, I just wanted to provide some additional texture for her. The cost of basic purchased services for the office, such as printing and shredding, are included there. It also allows for catering services for Government House events, and costs for swearing-in ceremonies, the Order of Newfoundland medals and certificate framing costs.

The merger of the Protocol and Government House, we expect, will result in efficiencies. That's what the feeling is from the team who put the budget together to go into the *Estimates* book.

With reference to the question from another Member opposite with regard to the operational changes in Government House as it relates to the changes in the Protocol Office. The private secretary to the Lieutenant Governor is currently working on some of the specific details, but I can say based on feedback, that the work that was done before, there's no impact on services and no impact on support. The protocol officer in Government House is there to support protocol activities throughout government. My understanding is there are no impacts on the support as per one of the Member's questions earlier.

The budget for diplomatic visits for this year, we'll certainly look to provide for the Member opposite. One of the comments I will make, the Member for Mount Pearl North made a comment, was this – I think if I remember the quote precisely, he made a comment, is this simply about saving money.

Madam Chair, I would remind the Members of the House that while decisions that were made throughout government were made in the context of a significant deficit that this province has, still this year is over \$788 million in deficit. Certainly, I applaud the leadership at Government House for the initiative in providing further savings, particularly like the Purchased Services.

The Protocol Office and the work that's being done there is important to the people of the province, but we're pleased that the efforts and supports will remain the same in a more efficient way.

CHAIR: The Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate the responses. The minister referenced the private secretary position. We're aware that the person who was occupying that role was terminated. Is the new manager of protocol and general operations person – is that who's playing that role? Are they also the private secretary to the Lieutenant Governor or is that an additional position, and if so, I assume from your comments it has been filled?

MS. C. BENNETT: I tabled the information last week as to the positions that were established after the management changes, and I'd reference the Member opposite to refer to that.

MR. KENT: Well, okay. We can be that way if you wish. I thought it was a fairly straightforward question.

Why was the residence manager position eliminated?

MS. C. BENNETT: I'm still waiting on information from officials, Sir.

MR. KENT: Okay.

So you won't tell us whether the private secretary and the manager of protocol and general operations is one and the same?

MS. C. BENNETT: No, Sir. I'm waiting for the information on that answer. I'll provide it as soon as I have it.

MR. KENT: Okay, you will. Because you told me to refer to something you tabled in the House.

MS. C. BENNETT: Because the information I believe is there –

MR. KENT: That you're waiting for.

MS. C. BENNETT: – and I don't have it with me today.

MR. KENT: Okay, fair enough.

MS. C. BENNETT: And I was pretty sure that the information was there in the information.

MR. KENT: Okay, I'm sorry. I thought you were being flippant. If you're not, then that's fine. We'll carry on.

MS. C. BENNETT: No, Sir. I leave that to my Opposition colleagues.

MR. KENT: Ha, ha, ha, touché.

Other than asking the questions again that we haven't received answers to, I recognize the minister is waiting for the information. So I don't have further questions on Government House specifically, but I recognize the minister may wish to respond once she has the information and we can go back if that makes sense.

CHAIR: Okay, and if it's okay, there are other Members waiting to ask.

MR. KENT: Yes.

CHAIR: The Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I never got a response to the question I asked, is that because you're waiting for an answer or –

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes.

MR. LANE: Okay, I was just wondering. You never referenced that.

Okay, I'll wait until I get it.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Is it the wishes of all parties that we move on to the next section and then the minister can come back once she –

MR. KENT: (Inaudible) sorry, Minister, you want to speak to –

MS. C. BENNETT: That's okay.

I have an answer for the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands who asked a question with regard to federal support. Federal support provided directly to the LG's salary, and you'd see that in the number; \$65,000 is provided by the federal government for entertainment and receptions. This is governed by the Constitution of 1867.

We're still waiting on the information that the Member for Mount Pearl North asked earlier on the royal visits that were planned for this year. As soon as I have that information, I can certainly provide it.

Also to the Member for Mount Pearl North, your question with regard to the private secretary to the LG. There is a private secretary to the LG, and I'm still waiting on the answer on the residence manager. I'll provide that when I get it.

MR. KENT: Thank you.

I appreciate the response. Just on that note, I now have a copy of the document that the minister referred to that was tabled. It shows the two positions in the Protocol Office being eliminated, a position in Government House being eliminated. So that's the residence manager at Government House, the protocol officer and the director of protocol, all of which have been combined into the new manager of protocol and I guess Government House operations.

The private secretary to the Lieutenant Governor was escorted out of the building, so to speak, by

the current administration. That position has been filled. I'm sure the minister will say, well, it's an HR matter, but given the circumstances that we're aware of surrounding that, we're just curious how that is justified.

From everything we've been told, the individual was doing an exemplary job. It feels like it was very much a political decision – and that is not in reference to the Lieutenant Governor in any way. This position is appointed by government. I'm not in any way suggesting this has anything to do with the Office of the Lieutenant Governor. It has to do with a government decision.

The private secretary was escorted out the door and has been replaced, and all we're asking for is some transparency around that to understand how that position has been filled. Was there a competition, or was it simply an appointment by the current government. So that is something we would appreciate knowing.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you.

I thank the minister for the answer. Again, I just want some clarification because if you go to a number of other sections here that shows revenues. I'm not seeing any revenue here. So I'm just wondering then, when we talk about the Lieutenant Governor's salary, the Lieutenant Governor's travel and all those types of things, the minister indicated I think that salary, I'm understanding, is paid for by the federal government. Is that why – so it's just not reported at all because he's considered a federal employee, or is it reflected somewhere else to show the Lieutenant Governor's salary but then a revenue in here to offset the salary, offset the expenses; and the original question was the other expenses that are showing here, the \$803,000 for support staff, Supplies, Purchased Services, all those things that are in this, do we get any federal subsidy to cover any of those costs or is that totally paid for by the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador?

CHAIR: Minister.

MS. C. BENNETT: Sure.

So with regard to the question from the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, the budget that's presented here for Government House, my understanding is that includes only expenses related to expenditures by the province, not related to any expenditures that the federal government would have.

Federal expenses and federal revenues would not be shown in this because they are paid directly on behalf of Government House. The only thing that's in the *Estimates* book for Government House would be expenses related to items that are covered only by the provincial government.

The money, as I mentioned earlier, for the Lieutenant Governor's salary that would be separate from this and outside of that. That would be something that the federal government would be accountable for.

With regard to the question from the Member for Mount Pearl North, specifically the staff changes, as part of government's management changes that we made earlier this year, a new position of protocol and House operations was created. This position deals with all matters of protocol, including the provincial honours awards program. From the information I'm being provided, I'm being told that there was no competition and this was an executive appointment filled position, and that would answer the question for the Member opposite.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you.

I understand that new role of manager of protocol and general operations have been filled by someone who was previously working in the Protocol Office. I understand the logic of that; I'm not at all questioning that.

For that individual to take on the consolidated role, that makes sense. But in the case of the private secretary, it's not one of the positions that listed on the chart. The person who was in the role and, from what we can tell, was doing a more than satisfactory job, was escorted out of the building, and has been replaced. We

understand that they've been replaced without any kind of due process and competition.

In light of some of the recent concerns related to the clerk of the Executive Council, the director of Pharmaceutical Services, where we've seen in some cases qualified people go out the door and be replaced by political appointees, we certainly would hope that's not the case in this instance. We're just asking for some clarification on how the private secretary role was indeed filled.

What it appears is it's another case of somebody was doing a good job, was escorted out the door and replaced by somebody who shall remain nameless who could very well simply be a political appointee, whether they're qualified or not. The minister may be able to assure us that that's not the case, but we are very concerned that it is the case.

CHAIR: Minister.

MS. C. BENNETT: I certainly don't have the information on the names of the individuals, nor would I have, as the Minister of Finance and HRS, the names of individuals that have been successful through competitions throughout the management process that we undertook earlier this year, nor would I have information on the individual departments.

I will seek to find the information for the Member opposite. When I can provide it to him, I will.

CHAIR: The Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Minister, and, Madam Chair.

In conclusion on Government House, my colleagues may have other questions, but I would simply ask that the minister provide us with, at her earliest convenience – I know it can't be done right now – a breakdown of the cost incurred as a result of the terminations and restructuring. So not just the three positions that have been consolidated into one, but in addition, in terms of recent changes, the private secretary was also escorted out the door, I can only assume, for political reasons and replaced.

If that's the case, can we understand what the total cost is for affected positions – and there are at least four – related to salary continuance, paid leave, severance. What's the total cost of all those changes? I recognize that number may not be readily available but we'd certainly appreciate receiving it when it can be available.

MS. C. BENNETT: I would say to the Member opposite, if I might, that the consolidated cost associated with the management structure changes that were made earlier this year have been disclosed. They were disclosed as part of the budget process and also disclosed as a consolidated amount. But I certainly appreciate the Member opposite asking for the specifics and we'll provide that information as soon as I have it.

MR. KENT: Thank you.

The challenge, of course, is that they're not included with the information that was tabled in the House. I appreciate that the minister is willing to provide the specifics but it also relates to something that wasn't covered in that management restructuring exercise. The private secretary position was not part of that exercise. Therefore the costs associated with that would not be included in that information that was previously provided, hence my question.

MS. C. BENNETT: I'm not sure that's 100 per cent accurate. I certainly want to make sure that as we have these ongoing discussions, particularly around costs associated with changes related to management structures, I want to make sure that we're very specific and that we provide clarity on those answers.

I will take the question that the Member asked, take it under advisement with staff and provide him feedback. I want to make sure that the correct information is provided.

CHAIR: Did anyone else have any questions on what we have called in Executive Council?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: But I say to the Member that we have – does the Member for Topsail – Paradise have a question before we proceed?

MR. P. DAVIS: Yes.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you very much.

Minister, I'm just trying to follow along and understand all the information. Some of these questions, I know we're drilling down into the weeds, but that's what happens when we go through Estimates sometimes.

What I'm asking, Minister, while we're going through these line items in the *Estimates* book is – and my colleague referred to it. The private secretary is not included in the list of impacted eight positions resulting in a Flatter, Leaner Management review.

The Government House line here for abolishment of actions to date has one manager for a grand total of one, and created to date one position for a total of one. So there's a zero reduction is indicated on what was tabled last week.

I respect and understand the high-level information that you've tabled in the House before, but what I'd like to know is for Government House, what the cost was for the positions that were terminated. Some we know were filled; some we know were changed from one position to a different position. So for those employees that were terminated, I'd like to know specifically for Government House what the salary continuance cost was, the paid leave and the severance cost. Minister, maybe you can tell us if we are able to get that.

CHAIR: Minister.

MS. C. BENNETT: Madam Chair, I will let the Members opposite ask, as I said earlier, a series of questions so I can make sure that I have the most questions possible for the officials who are providing the information. So I will wait until Members finish their questions.

CHAIR: Okay. So what I am going to do, we are still working on getting some structure here. We had called a bunch of subheads. We are actually now going to go through section by section and vote. We are trying to get back to the

clock going again, just like we do in Estimates. So I will ask the Clerk to call and then we will start with you guys, the Opposition, and go on. Is that okay?

MR. P. DAVIS: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: The Member for Topsail – Paradise.

MR. P. DAVIS: Madam Chair, on this particular section, on Government House, on 1.1.01, I think we have pretty much exhausted this section. I'm just looking for concurrence from my colleagues on this side of the House –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. P. DAVIS: Oh, we haven't. Do you have other questions?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. P. DAVIS: So it is only that one item –

CHAIR: Yes.

MR. P. DAVIS: I know the minister does not have it now. I am just asking for a commitment or a confirmation from the minister that she will provide it to us.

CHAIR: That's right, and the minister can intervene when she gets that answer. But if it's okay with everybody, we will call that one and we will move on.

MR. P. DAVIS: I'd just like to have a commitment from the minister that she is going to provide the information.

CHAIR: That's what I understood from the minister that she would come back with that information.

MR. P. DAVIS: No, I didn't.

CHAIR: The minister.

MS. C. BENNETT: Madam Chair, I can answer the question with regard to the termination costs for the previous private secretary. They were released as part of an ATIPP, HRS33-2016. I'd reference the

Members opposite to refer to that, the information is provided there.

The private secretary position is an Executive appointment and was not filled by a competition. Also, I think the Member opposite asked the question about the cost of diplomatic visits this year. I think the Member for Mount Pearl North asked that earlier. The approximate value or approximate expenses related to those diplomatic visits would be \$8,200 in '16-'17.

I am hearing some murmurs on the opposite side suggesting that the information I'm providing isn't conclusive. My understanding, from what I am being told, is the termination costs related to the private secretary to the LG were posted in an online ATIPP.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank the minister for those details. The other terminations that happened at Government House, are they also posted? The costs associated with the salary continuance, paid leave and severance for those other positions, are they also posted? If you can't provide it to us here or after the House, where can we go to get those details?

CHAIR: The Minister.

MS. C. BENNETT: Certainly, we'll provide the details when I have them available. I think that's the extent.

MR. P. DAVIS: I'm sorry, I couldn't hear.

CHAIR: The minister just reiterated that she would provide the details.

MR. P. DAVIS: She'll provide the details of the cost of those terminations. Okay.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Is everybody ready to call?

The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: I'm sorry, Madam Chair. I was finished, but I just have to make a comment to be on record.

If the minister has the information, it's a little insulting to this process for a Minister of the Crown to sit there and say, well, go to the ATIPP website and find the ATIPP request from 2016 where that information was provided. Granted, yes, we could go to the site where there are thousands of ATIPP requests and find the one she is referring to and get the information but if you want to appear to be at all open and transparent and honest, then answer the question.

If you have the information, just simply answer the question. Why we need to play this cat and mouse game, where the minister says, we tabled that some time ago or you can go to the ATIPP website and search for it. It's not in the spirit in which this process has traditionally been conducted.

Yes, we're going to touch on some topics today where we're going to disagree, and they may feel a little politically charged or even heated, but something as simple as the cost associated with terminating the private secretary and then replacing them – if it's publicly available information, I don't know why the minister would dodge the question in the House. It's just not going to help this process today and I think that kind of behaviour needs to be called out. So I'm calling it out.

CHAIR: The Minister.

MS. C. BENNETT: Madam Chair, my intention is to answer –

MR. KENT: Then answer.

MS. C. BENNETT: – as we have done in Estimates throughout the process and now in Committee of the Whole, the questions that the Members opposite are asking.

While the Member opposite may not be pleased with the timing of the responses that I'm giving him, I can assure him that I am prepared to provide him the answers but I would ask him to provide patience to the team that is working to provide the information.

The reason I referenced the ATIPP request is that the information has already been publicly made available and I'll certainly redistribute that information and provide that information to the Member opposite. There's no attempt to not be transparent. It is extremely important for me, in my role as the Minister of Finance as well as a Member of this House, to ensure that as we go through the budget process the questions that colleagues opposite ask will be answered.

Madam Chair, I appreciate the Member's commentary, but I will correct him and say that the officials are working very hard to provide the answers that they would normally provide if they were sitting in the House of Assembly. For those people who are watching this at home, as the Member opposite indicated when we started, this process is different.

In Estimates, officials from each particular head would be available and participating in the dialogue and questions that would be answered in the House and we will certainly ensure that those officials that are outside the room right now are able to provide the information. There is no attempt to avoid providing that information and I would ask the Member for his patience and we will provide it.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Madam Chair, I am fully prepared to be patient. I recognize the dynamic.

Some of the detail we're going to ask for is not readily available at the minister's fingertips and it would be unreasonable to expect it all to be available at the minister's fingertips, so that I have no problem with. What I have a problem with, I say respectfully, is someone going and getting the information, it getting back to the minister and then being told go to the ATIPP website and there was a request filed in 2016, it was made publicly available then, but I'll go through the trouble of making it available to you now without just simply answering the question. That is disingenuous.

The minister said on April 11 in this House: "Having said that, the Estimates process, which this House will go through in the next number of weeks, will provide opportunity in this House

for a detailed discussion on the line items that build up the budget. The information that the Members opposite are looking for, I'm sure they'll get their answers in the Estimates debate." That's exactly what we're trying to do.

So on one hand we're told wait until Estimates to get the answers, then when we're in Estimates we're told go to the ATIPP website. That's just not an appropriate response.

I'm not trying to be confrontational; I'd like this process to go smoothly. In fact, I've publicly commended the Minister of Health and Community Services for his recent engagement in the Estimates process. He answered every single question I asked.

It didn't mean that I liked all the answers and it didn't mean that we agreed on 100 per cent, although we probably agreed on about 80 per cent, but he was at least open and as transparent as I could tell. He certainly didn't direct me to an ATIPP website to get an answer to a simple question. That's the part that's offensive, Madam Chair.

I will not repeat myself further, but it needs to be highlighted, largely due to the comments the minister previously made in this House on April 11 and at other times during Question Period.

MR. LANE: Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you.

I just have one comment as well. It's more about the process than anything. I'm not certain, to be honest with you, if this is exactly how we've done it every other year. I'm not sure if it is or not; I don't think it is. I don't know why we're doing it this way, but for all the other Estimates I've ever sat through, you had the minister and you then you had all the ministerial staff there.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: No, that's what I'm saying. The Member is saying not for this section.

I guess my point is I'm not sure why we wouldn't be doing this the same way we do all other departments and have people there who have the answers at their fingertips, then you can have a discussion. You can ask questions. There are people there who can give you the answers. Then if you have a subsequent question you can ask them right now, you're asking questions. In fairness to the minister, she's doing the best she can.

We have a bunch of people watching this on a TV screen or whatever, on a computer monitor, and they're trying to text her the answers and so on. Then there are issues around timeliness of information and then you say I'll get you the information. Then you may get some stuff; you may not get some stuff. It may not lead to the subsequent questions you would have.

I just see this whole process, Madam Chair, as just being flawed. I would certainly ask the Speaker and whatever, if this is the way it's been done every other year for Executive Council and so on and for these Estimates, that's fine and dandy. Maybe we should look at changing that process to do it the same way we do it with other departments. It would make more sense to me.

CHAIR: I will take a moment to respond to the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

Pursuant to Standing Order 74, there are a number of Estimates, traditionally, that have not been referred to Standing Committees and they are considered just like we're doing now in Committee of the Whole on Supply. Traditionally, those have been the Legislature, the Executive Council and the Consolidated Fund Services. The time from here is deducted from the 75 hours.

I haven't been around as long as you, but as long as I've been around and pursuant to Standing Order 74 in the handbook, this is how we have done it in the past.

MR. LANE: Madam Chair, if I may.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: I appreciate the answer, Madam Chair. I'm not disputing that's the way this has

been done. I guess what I'm saying is maybe it's time to change tradition; maybe it's time to update the Standing Orders to make it a more fluid process. I just out that out there.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: I'm not sure what –

CHAIR: Order, please!

Are there any more questions on 1.1.01 or are all parties ready to call it?

The minister.

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes. Madam Chair, just for the Members opposite, I believe the question that was asked earlier by one of the Members opposite was related to the entire severance, relating to any changes and all the changes that happened at Government House. The ATIPP information that would have been released, for the Member opposite, that was paid out, it was \$111,078 in severance, and that would have been for the former private secretary to the LG. That information would have been available based on the financial information close of business on March 31.

The other individuals that one of the Members asked about, we will certainly endeavour to provide that information once officials are able to provide it to me.

MR. KENT: Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: I thank the minister for that number, but does it include salary continuance and paid leave. That sounds like a severance amount. I'm just wondering, in addition to severance, does it include outstanding paid leave and salary continuance as well?

MS. C. BENNETT: My understanding is that it includes 49 weeks' pay in lieu of notice; 11 months political severance pay and also an estimated unused hours paid leave as well. And the total would be \$378,000.

MR. KENT: \$378,000.

MS. C. BENNETT: That was paid out. The number, \$111,000 would be related to – there are two amounts that are paid; one is all employees would be entitled to pay in lieu of notice if their position was eliminated and they would be available to paid severance, so it's two different amounts. The \$111,000 would be severance. The entire paid out, based on the information that officials are sharing with me, would have been some \$378,000.

MR. KENT: Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: So I'm sure there are Members on the opposite side who are perhaps frustrated that I'm continuing to raise the issue, but in fairness to all of them they're being very respectful and the House is rather quiet right now – some are, for sure, but the majority that I can tell are.

I'm now more troubled by the minister's response. I asked a specific question related to severance, salary continuance and paid leave. The minister responded with all the information in front of her saying \$111,000 and change. When I pushed further to say that doesn't sound right, does that include – and this is all in a two-minute span – salary continuance and paid leave? She said, oh yeah, well that number is \$378,000 all in.

I don't know why anyone in this House, when we're going through a process that should be – on a topic like this should be relatively straightforward, I don't know why there would be an attempt to hide the real information and avoid answering the direct question. It's not appropriate and rather frustrating if you're sitting here trying to get simple answers to simple questions.

If you have the information, provide it. If the number is \$378,000, don't be cute and try and say that it's \$111,000. That's not honest, Madam Chair.

MS. C. BENNETT: Madam Chair, with all –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: That's not honest, Madam Chair.

MS. C. BENNETT: Madam Chair, with all due respect –

MR. KENT: I believe I have the floor. The Finance Minister can attempt to cut me off if she wishes –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: – but I do have the floor and –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: – that kind of behaviour from a minister is unethical, it's dishonest and it's deceptive.

MR. A. PARSONS: Madam Chair, if I could get up on a point of order. If I could get up on a point of order, please, under section 49.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader on a point of order.

MR. A. PARSONS: In the last two minutes the Member opposite has made numerous unparliamentary comments calling the Member unethical, hiding the information. It's absolutely unparliamentary; it's absolutely disgraceful. I would suggest that firstly, he should be forced to retract the comments; secondly, he should be forced to apologize; and thirdly, as it relates to this process that's happening in the House, this is going to end. This is not how this process goes.

If we want to we can do the regular Committee and have 10 minutes and 10 minutes and this is how it's going to go. But we're not going to have Members sit there and call this government unethical and tell them they're hiding the information. It's not going to happen that way, Madam Chair. This cannot continue.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. A. PARSONS: Madam Chair, again I'll stand up. The Member said (inaudible) –

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Government House Leader on a point of order.

MR. A. PARSONS: Do I have to repeat what he just said here on the record? It was loud enough I could hear you. He said: Damn right it's not going to continue.

The Member said it loud enough for me to hear. We can hear it on Hansard. Again, I can't say how unparliamentary that is.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The only person that the Chair wants to hear in this House is the person who has been recognized to speak. Are we ready to call the first section?

MS. C. BENNETT: Madam Chair.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Madam Chair, the Member opposite has suggested that I have not provided him with the detailed information. Officials have been working behind the scenes to provide the information. He specifically asked about a position that was called the private secretary to the LG.

Earlier in this discussion, I referred him to an ATIPP request that as I reported to this House, reported that severance of – \$111,078 was paid in severance and that was the amount in the ATIPP request.

Further to his questioning, I have provided the termination entitlements, the all-inclusive amounts which would have been the numbers I referenced earlier, which would have been the 49 weeks paid in lieu of notice at \$129,318, the 11 months political severance pay at \$111,078, as well as estimated unused hours paid leave totalling \$378,680.

Madam Chair, I believe I have provided information to the Member related to his question. The other question –

MR. KIRBY: Point of order.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development on a point of order.

MR. KIRBY: I apologize for interrupting, Madam Chair, but the Member for Mount Pearl North just made, basically entered into the record here a string of unparliamentary statements. He referred to the hon. minister as unethical, dishonest and so on.

The Government House Leader pointed that out on a point of order. I'd like to inquire, are you going to make a ruling on this? I would like to see a ruling made because that is absolutely unparliamentary.

CHAIR: I thank the minister for his point of order.

What will happen in this case is what has traditionally happened in the past, we will review the broadcast tapes and we will report back to this House.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you

CHAIR: Minister, were you finished?

Okay.

Is there another question before we call that first?

The Chair recognizes the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just very, very briefly on this. The minister has provided the full information now for the private secretary at Government House. She just indicated that she's provided the information requested. I just want to confirm that we also asked for the same information for all terminations at Government House. If the minister doesn't have the information right now, we look forward to receiving that maybe later today.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Minister.

MS. C. BENNETT: I believe I had already answered and indicated that we'd certainly work to provide that information to the Members opposite.

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

CLERK: 1.1.01.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subhead 1.1.01 carried.

CLERK: 2.1.01.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 carry?

The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, a few questions on 2.1.01, just a couple of line items there I want to reference first as we go through. We look at Transportation and Communications, we looked at what was estimated, the revision was down and again this year the amount has been reduced. Can you give me some commentary on that, please?

MS. C. BENNETT: I thought we had agreed earlier there'd be a series of questions.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay.

My next question relates to line item Professional Services; in 2016-2017 there was nothing budgeted, there was almost \$45,000 expenditure. I'd like to know what that reference – again, in the estimate for 2017-2018, there's no estimate there. It seems like a one-time expenditure in 2016-2017 for Professional Services.

I will now go to some questions related to the heading of the Premier's office. I'm wondering, Minister, if you could provide a list of staff which was employed by the Premier's office in the last 12 months along with salaries. Also, if we could have a timeline to which they were employed. As well, if it was voluntary termination or termination with or without cause, could we also have information related to severance and additional benefits that were paid out?

As well, we'd like to know how many positions have been vacated in the Premier's office over the past 12 months. As well, if we could have some discussion and some information related to spend on media, media monitoring, those types of aspects, what was done with those or if there was any expenditure related to that.

I'd also like to know what consultants, or if there were any, that the Premier's office was engaged in in the last fiscal year, we'd certainly like a list of that.

I think for now, that's good for me at the moment for that heading.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the minister.

Did the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi have some – we're going to do 10 and 10 and try and stick with some structure here.

The minister.

MS. C. BENNETT: Sure.

The Member opposite asked a question about Transportation and Communications as it relates to the projected revised budget in 2016 and why that amount was lower. That \$83,000 reflects the savings from the '16-'17 budget due to lower than anticipated requirements. That would explain the \$83,000.

Under the area of Professional Services, the Member opposite asked a question around the Professional Services at \$42,900, not \$45,000 but \$42,900. That reflects an overrun from the 2016-17 budget due to the requirements related to establishing the Premier's blind trust.

As the Member opposite I'm sure may have experienced, and certainly his colleagues may have experienced, there's a long-standing government policy that's been in place for several decades that requires, as Ministers of the Crown, including the Premier, establish blind trusts. Any costs associated with the establishment of that trust would be covered, and that would be the amount that's referenced here.

With regard to the questions around the Premier's staff and the number of staff, what I can provide the Member opposite is a comparison indicating the salary costs associated with the '16-'17 actual expenses. I can also provide a copy that would detail out the salary planned as it has been established for the budget for '17-'18. Also for comparative purposes, I can also provide the Member opposite with the detailed salary costs associated with the Premier's office for the fiscal year '15-'16.

CHAIR: We're still with the Opposition on the clock. We've gone back to trying –

MS. C. BENNETT: Sorry.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the minister.

MS. C. BENNETT: Madam Chair, I was taking a breath and I was breathing too long.

The other two questions with relation to media monitoring, we're waiting to get an answer from officials. Also with regard to consultants, specifically as it relates to the Premier's office, I'm not aware but I'll certainly double-check with the officials and provide that information.

With regard to the information around the salary budget, I think it would be important for me to point out to Members of this House that the salary budget has seen a decrease in the Premier's office of 6.2 per cent over the two years. Also, the operating costs inside the Premier's office have also seen a reduction since 2015 of some 18 per cent. That would be a 6.2 per cent reduction in salaries and an 18 per cent reduction in operating costs compared to the spending in the Premier's office for fiscal '15-'16.

CHAIR: Before I recognize the next Member, because we're in a bit of a different process, I'm having a lot of difficulty hearing here in this process. I would ask people to either take their conversations outside or keep the volume down.

The Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, I think, probably the final question I have here. It's a small item under 2.1.01, Revenue – Provincial. There's an \$800 figure there. I'm just curious of what that would be.

CHAIR: The minister.

MS. C. BENNETT: The \$800 amount would be related to a repayment from an overpayment. For example, if an employee – or been overpaid as part of maybe an expense claim or if there was a ticket that was paid for, an airline ticket that didn't get used, because as we know employees are responsible for paying for that themselves. It would have been revenue that would have been collected as part of the controller's work to make sure that only those expenses that were related to government work was assigned. If there was some type of repayment, that would be what that would be for.

Officials were able to confirm for me what I had mentioned earlier with regard to consultants in the Premier's office. There are, I know, associated costs in this particular heading related to consultants. Media monitoring, the answer to that is still forthcoming.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay.

Thank you.

CHAIR: So, no further questions. We'll move to the Third Party.

The Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

MS. MICHAEL: Madam Chair, the questions I had have been answered. I wanted to know about the Professional Services and that's been answered, and about the staffing. So they were all the questions I had.

Just one, the \$800 under provincial revenue, I'm not sure if the minister explained that.

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes, I answered it a couple of minutes ago for the Member opposite.

MS. MICHAEL: Sorry.

MS. C. BENNETT: That's okay.

That relates to repayment for potential overpayments that may have been made on behalf of staff in the Premier's office and their expense claims.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you.

Sorry for the repetition.

MS. C. BENNETT: No problem.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

That's all I have.

CHAIR: Okay.

Does the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands have some questions?

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I just have one question, and I apologize if this has been answered already. I did find it very difficult to hear. I thought I heard the minister in response to one of the questions from the Member for Ferryland about one of these expenses. I thought I heard her talk about something to do with the Premier's blind trust. I'm sure I heard that, but I didn't hear what she said about it.

I wonder if you could just outline for me exactly what that is. Is there some expense to the government around that being set up, or what was it you said about the blind trust?

CHAIR: Minister.

MS. C. BENNETT: As has been government's long-standing policy for several decades, Ministers of the Crown who are responsible for establishing a blind trust, the cost associated with that trust establishment are bore by the

departments where the ministers are assigned. In this case, this particular amount relates to the establishment of the Premier's blind trust.

MR. LANE: Thank you.

Could you –

CHAIR: The Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Could you tell me in terms of this one here, because we're under the Premier's office, exactly what that amount would have been?

MS. C. BENNETT: My understanding, and this would be based on my own experience, is the Chief Electoral Officer works with Ministers of the Crown and their agents to establish what he terms are the correct parameters around a blind trust and then he would sign off on any costs that would be associated with – any valid costs that he believes would be associated with the establishment of the trust. As such then, those costs would be paid for individually by the Ministers of the Crown and then are eligible for reimbursement based on a long-standing policy of government that spans several decades.

MR. LANE: Thank you.

I'm not disputing who signs off on it, I'm not disputing that it's a long-standing policy. My question is in terms of the Premier, because this is the one that we're talking about here now, could we have what the actual dollar amount was? How much was signed off to establish the blind trust?

CHAIR: The minister.

MS. C. BENNETT: My understanding it is \$42,900, as reflected in the *Estimates* book.

MR. LANE: Thank you.

I have no further questions.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Yes, Minister, just one quick question.

Allowances and Assistance, \$20,000. Can you explain to me what that's for?

CHAIR: The minister.

MS. C. BENNETT: I'm sorry, I'm not understanding –

MR. K. PARSONS: On the Premier's Office, 09, \$20,000 for Allowances and Assistance. I'm just wondering what the \$20,000 is for.

MS. C. BENNETT: Sure. I'll certainly provide the Member opposite with that answer in one second.

The answer earlier to the media monitoring, officials are advising me that there are no costs associated with media monitoring in the Premier's office.

CHAIR: Seeing no further questions, I'll ask the Clerk to call – Minister, you have an answer?

MS. C. BENNETT: The question from the Member opposite who asked about the Allowances and Assistance, that \$20,000 is related to a budget line for housing allowance.

CLERK: 2.1.01.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subhead 2.1.01 carried.

CLERK: Cabinet Secretariat, 2.2.01 through 2.2.04 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 2.2.01 to 2.2.04 inclusive carry?

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, I wonder if you could take me through the – I will go with a couple of line items there first, when you respond to the questions.

Section 2.2.01, Executive Support under Cabinet Secretariat, there's been an increase there from what was estimated last year. The revision went up, and then it's down again this year – some commentary in regard to that.

Under Professional Services, 2.2.01, Executive Support, we saw \$12,600 budgeted last year. The revision was \$1,580,000, and again this year it has gone almost back to what the estimate was for 2016-2017. Those are a couple of line items I'd certainly like some commentary on.

I have some questions in regard to Executive Support. I think if I remember correctly, last year there was a government renewal secretariat of Executive Council. We haven't heard a lot about it. I just wonder if it still exists. What positions are currently with that secretariat? I think earlier questions indicated you did a comparison in fiscal years. I was just wondering in regard to the government renewal secretariat, what positions were there in the last 12 months and basically, what do we have there now today?

I do remember, I think some of the information the Finance Minister tabled last week indicates that may be a position there, a senior policy advisor in government renewal, a secretariat had been removed. I'm just wondering that person, was that termination without cause? Was that person moved somewhere else, or is that position vacant?

If we could also get some information on how many Cabinet officers are now in Cabinet Secretariat. I also recognize some information a while back from the minister indicates that contractual Cabinet officer positions were removed as part of the flatter, leaner cuts. Again, did this employee move to another position in government? In regard to Cabinet Secretariat, are there any attrition targets or any positions that have been removed or not filled based on attrition?

As well, we know the clerk of the Executive Council, a significant position, obviously, as we're all aware, has recently resigned. There was – my understanding – a temporary

replacement. I wonder if we can get an update on the search for a new clerk and that actual process. Will the recruitment for a new clerk be done by the Public Service Commission? Will there be a separate entity hired to do that human resource function? We'd like some information on that.

As well, in terms of an operational piece, could you let us know if the Muskrat Falls Oversight Committee submitted any recent reports to Cabinet Secretariat and, if so, could we have a copy? How much would be budgeted for the Muskrat Falls Oversight Committee this year? As well, from Cabinet Secretariat point of view, an indication of how many meetings the Oversight Committee has had to date for this particular year.

In regard to 2.2.01, those are some line items, questions, I had, Minister, as well as some operational and administrative questions as regard to functions that I think, for the most part, would flow through Executive Support.

I certainly recognize there's some time to get that information, and hopefully we'll get it as we move forward. So will I move off this and we'll go to another –

CHAIR: You have no more questions up to 2.2.04?

MR. HUTCHINGS: No, I have a lot of questions, but I'm just saying we we're going through one section –

CHAIR: No, just for clarification for the Member, we are doing all of Cabinet Secretariat now, and we've called up to 2.2.04. So you can ask questions on anything up to 2.2.04.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay.

In regard to 2.2.01, Executive Support, I talked about the Government Renewal Initiative, so I have some questions in regard to how much did government spend in '16-'17 on this actual initiative. What is the planned expenditure for 2017-2018 under the Government Renewal Initiative? Maybe if the minister shared with us some thoughts or some understanding to the House and to the public on what work is

ongoing with the Government Renewal Initiative.

We know this was billed as a multi-year plan. I'm just wondering the intention of that to flow forward and would it be replaced by *The Way Forward* document or *The Way Forward* plan. Are they integrated, do they stand alone and exactly how that's going to roll out from government had announced in their Government Renewal Initiative?

I think I already asked about staff that are assigned to the Government Renewal Initiative. We'd like to know what the positions are. Then I don't think but could you clarify for us if the budgeting for the Government Renewal Initiative – I don't think it comes from Executive Council, but maybe exactly where that would come from.

CHAIR: The minister.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Do you want me to ...?

CHAIR: Oh, you're continuing?

MR. HUTCHINGS: Yeah.

CHAIR: My apologies to the Member.

MR. HUTCHINGS: We're now up to 2.2.02 and that's Cabinet Secretariat continued. It's the Planning and Coordination component: "... the coordination and implementation of the requirements of the transparency and accountability legislation, including Government's planning, performance monitoring, regulatory improvement, evaluation and reporting activities and includes supports to enhance the policy capacity of Government."

If I could, Minister – again we're on 2.2.02, Planning and Coordination. We see in the salary line there's been a significant reduction there from the estimate in 2016-2017. What was revised was down some and then a significant reduction in the estimate for this fiscal year. Just, if you could, give us some understanding of that.

Were there positions lost? I know you did indicate earlier there's been some reduction in the overall budget. I'm not sure if it was relevant

to this one or not but you can give us some details on exactly what was here. Was it through attrition? Was it through termination of positions? What exactly may have been involved in that line item?

If we go down to Purchased Services as well under 2.2.02, last year there was a significant reduction on what was estimated to what actually was used. Then this year the estimate is up close to what it was in 2016-2017, not exactly there, but certainly is close to the mark.

I have just a couple of general questions under Planning and Coordination. Information was tabled, I think, indicating that the Policy Innovation and Accountability Office removed three positions: director, policy and evaluation; along with two senior program and policy development specialists. I am just wondering why these were removed, and it certainly could be related to what I discussed earlier in regard to some of the changes in salaries. I'd just like some information on that.

These positions were they removed from government or did these people have the ability to go in to other positions in government? The final question on that one is the issue on severance and other payments that were involved in the elimination and costs of these positions.

Mr. Chair, I only have a few seconds left, so maybe I will move and let someone else speak.

CHAIR (Warr): The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There are a series of questions; I will do my best to make sure I try to answer them in order. There will be some that I will skip over while I am provided more information from officials.

With regard to 2.2.01, I believe the very first question the Member opposite asked – and maybe he can just nod to make sure I got the right number – was a question around salaries for the department. I think that was the very first question.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes.

So with regard to the salary changes for '16-'17, those salary changes reflect changes related to staff that would be working on a series of special projects in the Cabinet Secretariat. They would include a variety of things, as the Member opposite would be aware, the Lower Churchill oversight committee, any costs associated with staff. In particular, an executive lead would be part of those salary dollars.

In addition, some of the other projects that there are staff available in that line item would include work that was done on the enhanced federal loan guarantee. So the staff that would have been supporting government's efforts to conclude that important piece of work and bring it to a conclusion would be reflected in those salaries. As well as salary funds related to supporting the work that's underway on the fisheries innovation fund.

We'd also have staff there that would be supporting work on the Labrador link, and also the work that the Cabinet Secretariat has undertaken with regard to lean organization models. That would be work that would be undertaken to ensure that different business models, business practices are being handled and are being delivered in an efficient way using lean management principles.

My understanding, and as an example, one of those projects that those salary dollars would be responsible for looking at particularly would be the leaning of the Crown Lands process and how we can ensure that process is efficient and effective, particularly for the users of the Crown Lands process. So those salary dollars there are reflective of those projects.

The Member opposite also asked a question related to Professional Services. I believe his question was specifically related to the projected revised amounts in budget '16-'17. They reflect an overrun of the dollars in '16-'17, specifically for things like the Lower Churchill oversight committee. They would have also included work that was undertaken as part of the analysis that fed into the Government Renewal Initiative and

the implementation of the Government Renewal Initiative last year.

AN HON. MEMBER: I can't hear the (inaudible).

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair is going to ask the House and its Members to respect the process that's going on here and keep the volume here in the House down, please.

Thank you.

MS. C. BENNETT: I'll go back to the beginning of that answer for the Member opposite.

Related to Professional Services, or the dollars that are reflected in the projected revised for budget '16-'17, those dollars would have been driven by expenses related to the Lower Churchill oversight committee and they would have also been reflective of work that would have been done as part of analysis on Government Renewal Initiatives in last year.

Those dollars would have been – originally, the Member opposite may remember that in last year's budget Finance had in its department a fund that was for Government Renewal Initiatives, and this would be the transfer of those expenses. The expenses would have been incurred in Cabinet Secretariat, but the funds would have been available in Finance and we would have discussed that in last year's Estimates, and we also would have discussed that as part of this year's Estimates.

The next questions, I believe, he went to was a series of questions with regard to staffing. The GRI secretariat still exists. There are currently three staff reporting to an executive position in Cab Sec. Their senior policy analyst was abolished as part of the GRI initiative last year, and continues to be a vacant position, my understanding. There are currently four Cabinet Secretariat or Cab Sec officer positions in Cabinet Secretariat, and one of those is vacant.

I believe the Member also asked with regard to an operations question related to the oversight report for the Muskrat Falls Oversight

Committee. Certainly, I wouldn't have any visibility into that nor the officials that are supporting me today. So I won't be able to provide him with any information on that, as I don't have any information to add to that question.

I believe the Member opposite also asked about a contractual Cabinet officer. That position is vacant, is my understanding, right now.

Also, with reference to the clerk for Executive Council, as he is aware, there is an acting clerk in place. Obviously, that position is a position that's appointed by the Premier. I'm not privy to the plans he has and that are currently underway. Quite frankly, we have a very competent acting clerk in place right now, and I don't have any additional information to add to that.

You asked some questions around severance for employees. We do have that – we are working on providing that information. We'll need to make sure that I can provide it in a consolidated way so as to protect the privacy of the individuals specifically, but we'll certainly provide the Member opposite with more details once officials can provide it to me.

I think you also asked around the salaries for the Cabinet Secretariat officers. Their salaries are found in 2.2.03 under the Economic and Social Policy lines.

If I remember correctly, you also asked questions around 2.2.02, Planning and Coordination. The first question you asked was with reference to the salary line and the salary drop over last year. This salary drop would have been reflective of savings in budget '16-'17 due to vacancies in positions. The salaries in '17-'18, a drop there of \$320,300, would reflect the changes over prior year decisions, changes to management structure and zero-based budgeting. They would explain that difference there of \$300,000.

I think you had also asked a question on Purchased Services. The Purchased Services amount of \$10,000 as being reflected in the projected revised budget for '16-'17, what I understand is that reflects savings from the '16-'17 budget that was due to lower-than-anticipated requirements. The budget has been

rightsized for '17-'18 as a result of the zero-based budgeting. The expectation is that those things that didn't happen in '16-'17 are expected to be happening in '17-'18.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

I just remind that the speaking time has expired.

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you.

CHAIR: Any further questions?

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Minister, thank you very much for all that information. Just to go back to 2.2.01 in Executive Support, you listed a number of positions there. Can we have a list of those positions and activities? For instance, when we look at include work done on the federal loan guarantee, would that be from internal staff, or were those outside consultants, or a combination of both?

If we could have a list of how all the activities that you listed for us, how those were undertaken, whether it was internal staff or external expenditures, that would be great. The work on, and for instance, the Labrador link, was that done by internal staff or was that consultants? The same with the Fisheries Innovation Fund.

Also, can we have a breakdown, for instance, on how much money was spent in each of those activities? For instance, the work on the LEAN organization model, how was that being done? Who is doing that; again, whether it's internal staff or external; the same with the Professional Services, if we could have a breakdown on, with all the different activities that you've listed, how much is accorded to each one. I would imagine the – correct me if I'm wrong. I would imagine the Professional Services category would be external workers, consultants. Thank you very much.

Also, when you mentioned that, for instance, currently the staff for the GRI Secretariat, there are four in the Cabinet Secretariat office; three

staff reporting to executive position in the GRI Secretariat. There are three positions; all three of those are filled?

Then in the Cabinet Secretariat office, you indicated there were four positions, one is vacant. Can you let me know whether or not you're planning to fill that position, or will that position remain empty?

The contractual Cabinet officer; that position is vacant now. Is there a plan to fill that position?

I believe that is it for me for those two particular subcategories. I believe my colleague has asked thorough questions, and I have nothing.

Again, yes, the Professional Services for all those different aspects, how much money was spent on and who did that work. That's good for me for those two distinct subcategories. I believe we did not yet get to Economic and Social Policy Analysis, so I'll continue to that.

So 2.2.03 under Salaries we see a reduction from the estimated budget for '16-'17 to \$585,000, Minister, and then a reduction yet again of over \$100,000 in the Estimates for '17-'18. If you could tell me what positions are gone or lost? What really does that represent?

I am good for that. Those are all the questions I have right now. My colleague has done a great job in identifying some of those questions.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I apologize; I'm more used to standing up than speaking so I won't be sitting down. I plan on just discussing the debate here today which I believe I have the liberty to do during budget debate.

One of the issues I wanted to bring up, I brought up a point of order earlier that I think hopefully will be addressed at some point because we're sat here having a debate – and, again, at some point we're going to debate the Legislature. The minister sat here, under an unusual procedure without the benefit of staff, answering questions from all sides.

The Member for Mount Pearl North, during one of his last opportunities to speak, called the minister unethical. Now I know that's unparliamentary and I pointed that out. Hopefully, when *Hansard* is reviewed – again, I've already put on the record what was said off the tape, what was clearly loud enough for us to hear on this side which was unparliamentary.

What's going to happen here, unfortunately, this Estimates session is going to degenerate into something that is unproductive. Maybe that's something we have to talk about when we address Standing Orders which the Member for St. John's – Quidi Vidi – Mr. Lane has had an opportunity, you know what, Members on the other side.

What I'm going to address is something that – we talk about unparliamentary language and what we say here. One thing we cannot say here – and I'm not going to stand for it and allow it to continue – is when the minister sits here and answers questions, and Members say something in the House, and they know they're not allowed to say in the House, to say if somebody is lying, or not telling the truth, or misleading. It's unparliamentary.

You know you can't say it here in the House. You know it's unacceptable. So while the Member is sat in the House –

AN HON. MEMBER: Who?

MR. A. PARSONS: The Member for Mount Pearl North, and I have to put this out there because we're not going to continue on with this if this is how – maybe we need to change the Standing Orders. I'll tell you why, because while the Member was sitting in the House, the Member is tweeting outside.

Again, I know that he likes to share stuff, but James McLeod of *The Telegram* tweeted, talking about this interaction we just had and said: I'm not laying blame but – and I won't use the name – the Member for Mount Pearl North was definitely spotted at the scene of the crime.

The Member for Mount Pearl North tweeted while sat here, from his government-issued Smartphone, I assume, *Hansard* will have a

record of the questions asked and the misleading answers provided.

Now, what I'm saying to you, Mr. Chair, is that what's going on here is an attempt to get something in through the backdoor when you can't get it in the front door. You would not be allowed to stand here in your place and say that. You're not allowed, but to sit there in his seat and tweet it out is acceptable?

Why would the minister, who is sat here now for well for an hour and answered all the questions and had a respectful debate, why would we continue on with that if this is what it's going to degenerate into? Because no matter what you say, the Member opposite is saying that it's misleading.

You're not allowed to stand up and say that, yet you're allowed to sit there and tweet it. That is unacceptable. So if that's what we're going to have then what we're going to do is I'm going to take my time – and I'm allowed to do this because the rules of debate allow this, the rules of the Committee, the whole House. I'm going to spend my time talking about how this might be a waste.

If the minister is going to sit here and provide answers and being told that the other side doesn't want them – again, I'm not going to say the other side because that puts these two Members over here, the independent Member and the Member for St. John's Centre in the same situation and they're not, because they're asking questions and getting answers. Maybe we need to change, find a way through the Standing Orders Committee, which the Member for Mount Pearl North sits on, maybe we have to find – I can tell you, because this is different than Estimates.

I've sat here during Estimates for three hours. When I sat here during Estimates, I had the benefit and the luxury of having all these seats filled with members of my staff, because the whole point of Estimates – and I certainly believe it's the best part of the budget, because I don't mind saying, a lot of this budget debate – I bet you I'll get agreement from some Members that a lot of the budget debate is not useful. It is not useful.

The Estimates, some of it – we've seen it here, and do you know what? We all partake, all of us. I think we can change it, but the Estimates are useful.

The Member for St. John's Centre, we've had the benefit of two years now where I sat on this side, the Member sat on that side and asked question, I tried to answer. I'm sure there were answers I gave that were not what she wanted to hear. I'm sure there are questions she asked that I didn't want to hear, but that's how it goes. We really try our best. That's why I surround myself with staff because I'm trying my best to give the information. Sometimes I defer to these members; they do a great job of providing that information.

I've never seen it, but if at any point during that debate, during Estimates, a Member sat there and said: You're misleading. I'd say: I'm not going to waste my time anymore. Fill your boots and ask the questions, but what's the point of me providing information if you're going to tell me that it's wrong. Now, tell me why you think it's wrong.

There have been times that I've sat here and given answers, particularly during debate on legislation where I provided what I thought was my understanding of something and then had somebody clarify that for me. I'll stand up in the House and bring it forward and say look – I saw that when I sat in Opposition as well. Where sometimes, we are human, we may not provide something that is accurate, but I can guarantee you, it's not something that the minister is doing.

When we're allowed to continue on with this farce, that Members are allowed to sit here and say unparliamentary stuff while they're sat down and not allowed to say it when you're stood up. I just don't – what we can do is we can turn this into a waste of time, if we want. I don't think that benefits anybody, but that's what's going to happen if we're going to continue on with Members of the PC – do you know what? They're not all like it. They're not all doing it, but the Member for Mount Pearl North just tweeted. It's on the record.

So why would this minister take the time to answer questions when this is what we're going

to deal with. Do you know what? The minister has every right not to answer questions.

I can remember sitting on that side and asking questions during Estimates and not getting answers. I can remember that. I didn't sit there and tweet or stand up and say something unparliamentary, because that is against the rules of decorum, the rules of debate, the rules of the House. Maybe we need to change that.

If that's how this is going to continue on – and I've already stood up once here when the Member said a number of things that were unparliamentary. I've already stood up once here and called a point of order. Now, I'm not standing on a point of order here now. I'm using every right I have to stand here and debate, and I'll continue to do that.

We can continue to ask questions and the minister will provide the answers and, hopefully, we can continue on for as long as we need. We have lots of time, but if this is how it's going to go, I can tell you what, we're not going to sit here idly by and allow that to continue on, putting it out again through government devices, unparliamentary things. You could step outside and say stuff and, again, you'd be held liable through a civil standard. When you're in here, you have protection, you have privileges as Members of the House to stand up and say certain things; but what we got here now, as far as I'm concerned, is a contravention and a reason that our House of Assembly needs to get caught up to the 21st century, because we're not.

That's why we're trying to change the Standing Orders; that's why we're trying to amend them to make them more relevant because what we got here now is simply not acceptable. At this point, Mr. Chair, this is my first opportunity to stand to this and I can speak on this or any number of topics because those are what the rules of debate allows me to do and I'll take every opportunity I have to do that, if necessary.

At this point I'm going to sit down – and again, I apologize; the Member for St. John's Centre did ask a number of questions. I'm sure the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board will answer those when she gets an opportunity, but the other thing about debate is that all Members

of the House are allowed to participate, so I look forward to this debate continuing.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll just stand and have a few words on debate on the budget in the province, and I see no one opposite wanted to stand to ask any questions because of the great job the minister is doing. Mr. Chair, I just want to stand and talk about the budget and I'm going to talk about the District of the Bay of Islands. I'm just going to go through the district, Mr. Chair.

I've been very fortunate in the District of Humber – Bay of Islands. One of the best privileges that anybody can ever have in any sports that they do or anything you do is be recognized by your peers. When you get voted in on many occasions by the people that you live with, grew up with, you shared a lot of good times with, it's a privilege and an honour and it is something I never take lightly and something that I always cherish and something I work every day, every minute that I can do for the District of the Bay of Islands.

I'm just going to go through on one side and go around the other side, Mr. Chair, and talk about the great District of Humber – Bay of Islands. I was out to a fireman's ball there last Saturday night in Cox's Cove. The fire chief out there is a bit of a character; you wouldn't meet a nicer guy: Wayne Payne, fire chief for a number of years, firefighter for 30 years. Mr. Chair, they don't even ask for one penny from the government because they do all their own fundraising; they do all their own work.

The whole department – over 40 firettes help to keep the town safe, keep the town vibrant. In that area also there's a fish plant there, a big employer: Barry. Barry has a fish plant in there and Cox's Cove is doing well.

Mr. Chair, all the people in Cox's Cove, I will just let them know that there is work going to be done on Route 440 between McIvers and Cox's Cove. Then we move up to McIvers. Before I go

to Cox's Cove, people wonder why the great privilege of being an MHA. One of the greatest privileges I had in Cox's Cove or in the whole district, it was about three years ago when I had a waltz with a 100-year-old lady who was taking care of her 65-year-old handicapped daughter.

If anybody in this House or anybody out there looking wants to know the privilege of being a person having a waltz with a 100-year-old lady and she had her 65-year-old handicapped daughter at the party and had been taking care of her and still taking care of her to this day at 103 years old, that's the privilege that I feel honoured to be a part of. I just want to recognize that because that's the part of being the MHA; that's the good part. That's the part that makes you proud and makes them proud and as a family all throughout the whole Humber – Bay of Islands that we look forward to.

We move up to McIvers and, once again, they had the Chase the Ace. There were more people in McIvers in two Sundays than was in most of all the North Shore, down at Chase the Ace, Mr. Chair. It was a great event for them; they raised almost a million dollars. They have a new fire truck coming. The Member for Ferryland, I have to recognize that, because he continued on with that. Congratulations to your daughter, by the way, today. It was a great honour for her to be recognized.

Like I said to her when I went over and spoke to her, they're the kind of people we didn't like going to high school because we used to fight to try to get 55 and someone with that average was well beyond any of us, Mr. Chair. So congratulations to you. It's a testament to the Member and his wife to help with the upbringing of the daughter and enforcing education. It's so competitive and it was a great honour today.

McIvers, there is a new fire truck and Cox's Cove, a new fire truck, under the previous administration. I want to recognize that. Kevin O'Brien was a big part of that. The Member for Ferryland, Darin King, was a part of that. So I do recognize and we do work well on both sides of the aisle.

Mr. Chair, they're doing a project now with the sewer in McIvers also. When you move up to

Gilliams then they have an environment town council there, they are looking for a new fire hall. The town hall, they've been doing a lot of great work. I was just out two weekends ago to their volunteer appreciation night. You see the work that the volunteers do in that town.

Scott and Linda Blanchard, I just want to recognize those two individuals with the recreation committee. On the North Shore back years ago, Mr. Chair, they always had a great softball for the whole North Shore to be competitive in Corner Brook and softball dropped off. These two individuals, with their whole committee, with the support of the town – and I have to thank the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development for her support in the work that they had to help bring this out and bring this to fruition. They have a new softball field. It's mostly volunteer work, some government help; the first time in memory that the field – they could hold a provincial softball tournament in Gillams to bring their kids out.

It's not enough room in the summertime. They even have to have shifts now, the amount of kids that go on that field. So I just want to recognize Scott and Linda and all the volunteers on the recreation, the whole town council, the whole town and a lot of people from the Templeton school North Shore, Mr. Chair, supported this softball field. It's great.

We always talk about our youth, helping out with our youth. This is a prime example of how when the youth are involved with sports, they know where they are and they have good guidance. I just want to recognize that in Gillams and say congratulations. Thank you for letting me be a part of it also. Like I told Scott, I said: I know you have the big softball field, but when I bring the boys over from Curling, we aren't taking any pity on you. We'll beat you anyway. It's a bit of a rivalry there with Corner Brook and the North Shore in softball, always has been, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, as you move up the highway again – and I won't get it all in 10 minutes but I will be back. As you move up the highway you look at Meadows, another vibrant town. They started a little outdoor rink a few years ago. I'm not allowed to say his name but Kevin O'Brien was the one who helped pushed that. Kevin O'Brien

helped us to get that moving. I just want to thank Kevin O'Brien for that. If you walked in that now in the summertime and the wintertime – you have to book ice in the wintertime, and in the summertime they have such a huge program they have it broken up in shifts also. This is something for the youth.

I know, Mr. Chair, now they even have a little warming station so parents and grandparents can watch their kids play. It's phenomenal what you can do with the spirit in a community. In Meadows, they have a great fire department, they have a great town council and they have great recreation.

Mr. Chair, Irishtown-Summerside is another one. Also their fire department is very vibrant. In Irishtown they have a recreation; in Summerside they have a recreation department – a recreation commission. Both parts of the town are doing just great. There's a lot of work being done, planting will be done this year, water and sewer. There's going to be an investment in the new water system to upgrade the water system in Irishtown.

Hughes Brook is another town that's going to be helped out with the youth this summer. Mr. Chair, the whole North Shore, the community spirit is unbelievable.

When you go on the other side and you look at Lark Harbour. Lark Harbour now – the York Harbour fire department is having Chase the Ace. They're doing great for their fire department. The fire department there for a while was a bit stagnant, but in the last number of years the fire department has taken off. They received a new fire truck and they serve both communities. They have a school there that they would have to serve. The firetrucks in both towns are supporting.

Also this year, one of the things we'll be working on will be the breakwater. We have disaster mitigation. The people in Lark Harbour have a great seniors' club. They have a great church group; recreation.

Out in the Bay of Islands, the trails – anybody here who is into any hiking and you want some good trails, go to Lark Harbour. I know a couple of the Members wanted to come out, but I said

they better get in better shape than they are now if they want to do the trails in Lark Harbour. They are great trails overlooking the mouth of the Bay of Islands. Looking across, you can see the Port au Port Peninsula when you go up there.

Lark Harbour/York Harbour, Lark Harbour has \$3 million put in for water and sewer this year. The first time Lark Harbour will have water in their history will be this summer and I'm so proud of that.

Then you move up to Frenchman's Cove. Frenchman's Cove is a quiet, little town. That's where all the fishing boats park. One of their big concerns right now – on behalf of the town council, Arch Mitchell, the mayor, brought me down there two weeks ago – is the breakwater in Frenchman's Cove. We will be working on that also with the disaster mitigation.

I said this 15 to 18 years ago, that town, Humber Arm South, with the manager of the town, the town council and all the other things, will be the most vibrant town in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and I was correct. They are doing just great; vibrant town, big town, always moving ahead, great employment there in the fish plant, Mr. Chair.

The next one, I'll just move to Mount Moriah with Joe Park, the mayor, with the seniors there. I see my time is short. I will be back to talk more about Curling and talk about Humber Arm South.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity.

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

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: I recognized the first person. That's the –

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will pick up at some of the questions that the Members opposite were asking earlier. For the Member for Ferryland, I think he had asked in an earlier series of questions related to severance

and all-in termination costs for any positions that would have changed in this particular heading.

Human Resource officials are working on that information. They're hoping to provide it to the Member opposite as quickly as they can. I think I may have referenced earlier that we may have to consolidate that information so as to protect the privacy of individuals; however, the team is working on that for the Member opposite. I wanted to make sure he had that information.

The Member for St. John's Centre asked for some more specific information with reference to the salary line on 2.2.01. The projects and the Salaries that were listed there, some of the ones that I had referenced included projects like the work on the Lower Churchill Oversight Committee. My understanding on that would have been that there would have been about \$80,000, so that amount would have been referenced to the Oversight Committee. There was about \$650,000 in that amount that would have been related to work under the Government Renewal Initiative, but also work with reference to the initiatives on *The Way Forward*.

I refer the Member opposite to material that we've communicated publicly. So, for example, work that would have supported *The Way Forward* information and *The Way Forward* vision for sustainable growth in Newfoundland and Labrador that we released last fall would have been a part of the Salaries.

There was also salary in there related to, as I said earlier, lean processes. That salary line would have been about \$56,000. Also, we would have had an advisor staff assigned to the federal loan guarantee and the amount of the salary related to that would have been just over \$50,000. As well, there are some salary dollars in that line item related to the Fisheries Innovation Fund to the tune of about \$13,000 that build up that salary number for the projected revised for budget '16-'17.

I think the Member also asked some questions on the Professional Services. The Professional Services there – just for clarity, all the salary dollars would have been internal staff dollars and the Professional Services would have covered any services related to outside consultants. Those consultants would have been

working on a number of initiatives and providing government with information. Some of the projects that would have been included there, as I said earlier, would have been any work by the Lower Churchill Oversight Committee that would have been consultants supporting that committee. It would have also included analysis related to any of *The Way Forward* work we did.

A practical example would have been support related to the decisions around the long-term care facilities and analysis that we had undertaken to ensure that the decisions we were making as part of those decisions were made with an informed platform. As well, the hospital in Corner Brook would have been one of the projects that those consultants would have been providing some advice on.

I think the Member also had asked some questions about the GRI positions that I referenced earlier. Yes, all three of those Government Renewal Initiative positions were filled and we are planning to fill the position in GRI and the Cabinet Secretariat officer's position.

In the salary lines for these particular headings, it's also important for me to remind Members that monies move to the activities that needed them based on zero-based budgeting. So in last year's budget if there were dollars that were assigned to a particular heading that now are better assigned to a different heading based on the structure of work, that's happened. That's reflective in the headings that we're discussing right now under Executive Support.

I'm sure there are questions that I may have missed, let me just check under – I think the Member opposite had gone as far as the section of 2.2.03, the Economics and Social Policy heading. There was a question with reference to the Salaries in the projected revised for budget 2016-'17. As I said earlier, some of these salary dollars will move around depending on where the assignment is. This particular one would have been reflected of savings from the '16-'17 budget due to vacancies, and then the budget for '17-'18 would reflect a decrease from the '16-'17 budget based on annualizing prior year decisions in the zero-based budgeting when

those salaries were moved to the appropriate headings.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just wanted to reference back to 2.2.01. I know the minister has gone through a lot of information and I thank her for that, especially related to Professional Services. She gave a list of quite a number of projects or entities that would have drawn down on Professional Services.

I think my colleague may have asked for it but sometime in the future I wonder could we just get that complete list, something written so we'd have a detailed list of what exactly that was, the \$1.580 million. She's gone through it all there, there's a lot to keep track of, but if we could get a list of that it would certainly be appreciated.

I want to go through 2.2.03, Economic and Social Policy Analysis. I wonder if the minister could give some information. I understand there's a Major Projects unit within Executive Council. Could you give me some idea of what positions are within this unit, exactly what type of work this unit is carrying out and what they're involved with, the budget for that unit and where it would show up and the relationship between the Major Projects unit and what that relationship may be with Cabinet Committee on Jobs that was just announced.

As well, if we could get some information in regard to a breakdown of economic versus social policy analysis which is completed, and what the human resources are related to economic policy versus those that focus on the social policy aspect.

I'll move to 2.2.04, Public Service Development. These are "costs associated with the Public Service Awards of Excellence and other similar initiatives." At some point, can you just give an indication of what the other similar initiatives would be as outlined in this subheading 2.2.04, Public Service Development? How much would be budgeted for each initiative.

Mr. Chair, I'll let someone else if they want to ask, or I guess the minister, if she wanted to respond to any of that.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The questions with regard to the Professional Services that the Member opposite asked earlier under 2.2.01, those Professional Services would have been associated with work that was undertaken, as I said earlier, to support –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Thank you.

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The work on Professional Services would have been under the categories or initiatives related to a variety of things, including things that we've discussed as a government as part of *The Way Forward* initiative. It included the work – any consultant services related to the Lower Churchill Oversight Committee and any work that would have been done leftover under the Government Renewal Initiative, as well, as I said earlier, initiatives that came through *The Way Forward*.

An example I gave there was work that was related to supporting government's research and analysis of the decision to do the long-term care facility under the financing model that we've opted to use. Certainly those would have been some things that would have been covered under provincial services.

With regard to the Major Projects unit and what are they doing? One of the major projects that the unit, and the individual who's working there now undertook, was certainly with reference to the federal loan guarantee, and ensuring that the province's interests were reflected in the final details of that loan guarantee and ensuring that the material that had to be amassed, reviewed and coordinated was coordinated there.

With regard to the Cabinet Committee on Jobs initiative, my understanding is that committee is self-sufficient. Any support that is given currently comes from the department, such as the work that's being done by the minister for fish, food and agriculture and supporting the initiatives that the Premier announced earlier this week. Other departments may be involved and will be involved when the time is appropriate.

The Member also asked I think – if I remember correctly, if my notes are accurate – a question around 2.2.04 around Public Service Development. From what I understand in reviewing this material with officials, as he accurately reflected, this heading covers the costs associated with the Public Service Awards of Excellence. There are no other initiatives in here.

We expect all of this money to be used for the Public Service Awards of Excellence, as it has been in the last number of years. The reason the dollars are slightly different in 2017-'18 is that the inventory of the actual awards that would have been held on hand has been exhausted and there's a need this year to re-establish the inventory of some of the materials that are used for that award, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Whilst we had agreed to follow the more casual Estimates format for discussing this piece of the budget, I have to say, as a moment of health from Health, that sitting is regarded as the new smoking. According to the literature it's equivalent to 10 cigarettes or more a day.

Another useless fact you may be interested in is that the average person shortens by about two centimetres after eight hours of sitting, and that you need the evening to get the fluid back in your discs and stretch back to my five foot 9½ inches or whatever it is. I've not gone metric yet.

I felt obliged to stand up here rather than sit for those reasons. My back is bad. In terms of the commentary of the day, I think I was seized by

the oratory and rather pugnacious approach of my colleague, the Government House Leader, who seized the moment to kind of deal with what he felt was some very unparliamentary behaviour. It struck a chord.

In actual fact, I had personally been in a similar situation. Members may recall prior to the Easter break when, during Question Period, on a matter related to health, my responses didn't meet with the satisfaction of the Member for Mount Pearl North who, as the House was proceeding, proceeded to engage social media on Facebook, I think, at that time and actually used again words and language in the public from here that would have not been acceptable in the House. I believe the exact word was "lying," and misrepresenting the facts was the other phrase associated with my replies in the House at that stage.

I really feel constrained to use this opportunity to put into *Hansard* once again what may have gotten overlooked in the heat of the back and to of Question Period when essentially, again, what was obviously not parliamentary and would not have been allowed through the front door as it were in this House. I quote the Speaker who had said last sitting that he would not tolerate Members engaging on social media and electronic devices to produce through the backdoor what he would not accept in this House through the front door.

I think when the record of today's exchanges are reviewed I would humbly ask that exchange from prior to Easter on the topic of naloxone kits – sorry Neupogen – would be reviewed by the House as I think it speaks to the same problem. It also speaks to a pattern of behaviour by the Member for Mount Pearl North particularly, which I think is reprehensible and circumvents the intent of Standing Orders.

Again, on the point of specifically the budget, I was talking the other day about – yesterday in actual fact – my district. I would like to draw attention to some of the things that are going on there that are related to donations and monies that have flowed through the department. In particular, I would draw attention to the fact that an endeavour that did actually start in scenic Mount Pearl has moved to Central Newfoundland and that is the activity of dragon

boating, particularly for cancer survivors and particularly for survivors of breast cancer.

It has been a condition that has been close to my clinical heart for years. I actually did a two-year full-time research in familial breast cancer and have spent a lot of my professional life dealing with people unfortunate enough to have been inflicted by the condition.

This year, from a standing start with no boat last year, through the Department of Health and some money, a group in Central have gotten themselves a dragon boat. They not only have a boat, they have a safety boat and they have a wharf.

AN HON. MEMBER: They have a wharf?

MR. HAGGIE: Sorry?

AN HON. MEMBER: They have a wharf?

MR. HAGGIE: They have a wharf. It's the only wharf I have in my district. I don't know where the Minister of Fisheries is but we actually have a wharf in scenic Appleton, courtesy of a collaboration with Mayor Flynn.

On the two days immediately prior to Canada Day, Memorial Day as it is in this province, a redoubtable team of ladies have proposed that they will slay Gander Lake. They're going to paddle from one end of Gander Lake finishing up on Canada Day at the wharf in Appleton. From a standing start on a winter's day, they actually have 80 participants registered already with crews I think from as far away as BC as well as the Avalon Dragon Boating.

I have rather rashly offered to help them with a little bit of paddling. I suspect my rather diminished upper body strength may not hold out very long, but I will be there on the wharf if not in the water, having collapsed at some point over the last course. I would urge anybody who is connected with dragon boating in the Avalon or in Central to pay particular attention to the last two days of June and Canada Day morning in Appleton. I gather there will be a restorative barbeque for those who survive the exercise, courtesy of Mayor Flynn.

It is a great delight, in actual fact, through the government initiatives and through partnership with my colleagues, to be able to fund these not-for-profit community groups. There are all sorts of figures about economic benefit but the health benefits and, if you like, the enthusiastic glow that you see on the faces of the people who participate – and even the folk who spectate in perhaps a constructive way or participate with a safety boat and those kind of activities – it is well worth the investment because these people have had a long and very difficult journey. They revel in it.

On a more organized, bureaucratic civil service approach and, again, recognize the comments that were made yesterday by the Member for Humber – Bay of Islands as part of the commitment for Western Memorial and the new development there for acute care, for the cancer services that are going to be located on the West Coast, it is always a challenge for folk to have that kind of diagnosis and to deal with the stresses it puts on them and their family. One of the things we have committed to as a government is an attempt to try and deliver care and support as close to individuals and their home communities as possible.

The idea of being able to provide a more comprehensive suite of cancer care services, including radiation on the West Coast of the Island, would, I think, do nothing but enhance that geographical distribution of what is an excellent care program through the Bliss Murphy Cancer Centre. To be able to have a satellite for them funded through the government and built in a way that will rely on a partnership so that at the end of a procurement process there is a facility there that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador actually owns and there is planned maintenance and upkeep built in to that arrangement. So that at the end of the 30-year lease or 25-year lease, whatever it turns out to be, government has the keys again to a building that is up to code, brand new, and isn't subject to some of the challenges that our older facilities have as progressive governments of whatever stripe have really had to sideline maintenance issues, say for the critical ones, simply because of the cost constraints.

Again, I strayed a little bit from some of the things I began talking about, but I really would like to loop back to yourself as Chair of the Committee of Supply, to once again draw to your attention when you're looking at the tapes of the exchanges here, that what we will see will speak to a pattern of behaviour and look at the whole issue of the appropriate use of electronics and social media for Members while the House is sitting, and not allowing people to do unparliamentary things through the back door when you would not allow it through the front.

So my time is coming to a close, and I will leave it to the good officers of the Chair to steer this Committee to its ultimate goal.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It appears we're back to standing. I disagree with most of what the Minister of Health said. I agree with him when it comes to dragon boating. It's a wonderful event that I, too, have had the chance to be involved in in the past. I agree with him that standing is better than sitting, so we're back to standing.

I do have some more questions for the Minister of Finance. I hope that she'll be able to answer them. There are times in this House where it's very difficult for a minister to be in a position to do so, and I guess this is one of those times. I'll ask my questions nonetheless and I'm sure her staff are listening.

The Opposition House Leader had asked questions up to 2.2.04. We're now moving into the section related to the Communications and Public Engagement branch of government. As people will recall, the Office of Public Engagement has been dismantled. Much of it has been rolled into what was the Communications Branch of Executive Council.

The ATIPP office has gone back to the Department of Justice and Public Safety. I trust my colleague in Estimates on Justice asked questions pertinent to that. I'm going to ask a few questions to the minister – I can see she's

listening carefully – related to Comms Branch and then I'll have some more specific questions related to the Office of Public Engagement.

When comparing the 2016 Estimates and the 2017 Estimates, part of the challenge becomes that some of the Office of Public Engagement subheads have been rolled in. So I'll do my best to focus my questions to what's now the pertinent subhead.

2.3.01, Communications Branch, related to Salaries; I have a number of questions related to Salaries and Purchased Services. I think the approach we're now going to take, it appears, is to do a full 10 minutes which is fine. I hope it doesn't make it too much more difficult for the minister but we'll try it that way.

Can you please give an overview of why there was a savings of \$132,000 last year in Communications Branch? Were there in fact positions eliminated? That would suggest to me that perhaps at least one position was eliminated or perhaps was just not filled, but we would appreciate clarification on that.

This year, the budget for Salaries is being decreased by \$192,000. So we would appreciate receiving an overview as to why. The zero-based budget information lists an increase of over \$52,000, but the budget for Salaries overall in this area is being decreased by \$192,000. Those are my couple of questions related specifically to Salaries.

Professional Services: I was wondering if the minister can give an overview of the variances in this line. Last year there was a savings of over \$46,000; this year there's a budget reduction of over \$54,000.

In Purchased Services there was considerable savings last year of \$127,000. We're curious what was budgeted for but not expended. Also related to Purchased Services, this year there's a budget reduction of over \$25,000. So we're curious why that is, what's going to be changed in terms of operations and what will be impacted.

Again, there's another inconsistency with the zero-based budget information that was referred to earlier today. It lists a savings of \$9,800 as

opposed to the budget reduction of \$25,300. We would appreciate receiving clarification on that.

We are also interested in knowing what projects were undertaken by the Communications Branch in the 2016-2017 year. We're also curious what campaigns are planned for this year. I recognize in more recent years that the Communications Branch has become more of a central agency for a lot of government campaigns. I personally think that's a sensible approach. I'm curious what projects were undertaken last year and what ones are planned for this year in terms of campaigns and projects?

I think the Opposition Leader touched on this earlier but I was curious what government pays for media monitoring overall. I believe that's now centralized in the Communications Branch as well, so I would appreciate receiving some information related to that.

I'm wondering if there's an opportunity for savings there. Could there be savings by truly centralizing that if it hasn't already been done? I believe that each department still monitors media, but is there a way to save money sort of in the spirit of the zero-based budgeting exercise that's been going on? Could there be cost savings by having Cabinet Secretariat pay for media monitoring and provide reports to departments instead of having each department pay for those services. Maybe that's in process. I know there are communications people in each department and they play an important role, but if we're centralizing communications functions I just wonder if there's an opportunity for some savings there.

The government just gave the gov.nl.ca website an overhaul. I think that's rather good news. I haven't had a chance to fully experience the new site. I've checked it out a couple of times on a couple of devices and I think that modernizing the website is a good thing. There were some steps made in the past to move us forward. There are lots of challenges when it comes to the Office of the Chief Information Officer and that has placed constraints on government's ability to truly modernize the website.

I'm curious, in terms of this recent change of look and feel, what did it cost? What's the plan going forward? Is there an outside agency

engaged in improving the province's web presence? Is this all being done in-house through the Comms Branch and OCIO? On a somewhat related question, I'm curious, who is the agency of record now for government in terms of marketing and communications and how are they being utilized?

When it comes to our web presence, I think there are a lot of things we can do to be smarter in terms of online services when it comes to government. Improving the website is one step but even that website could be more friendly on mobile devices. I think there's an opportunity to make it more interactive and engaging and use the latest technology.

It's good to see some progress. I think it's an area where government – all governments, but particularly governments in Newfoundland and Labrador, past and present – could do better. I'm curious what the plan is. How much has been invested to date? Who is involved in doing that work? What did it cost? Is there an agency of record now for government marketing and communications activities overall?

I'm also curious – I'm just asking because I have a couple of minutes left. Related to the new Communications and Public Engagement Branch, I've heard the Minister of Finance in her previous role in Opposition speak somewhat negatively of the Office of Public Engagement. I'm just curious now, in its new form, what the minister's perspective is on the new structure.

I think there was a lot of valuable work being done by the people in that office. Some were escorted out the door as a result of the restructuring, but many have continued to be part of communications and the Communications and Public Engagement Branch. How have the department and its mandate changed? The department no longer exists, the office no longer exists, but how has that function and its mandate changed over the last year now that it has been rolled into the Communications branch of government?

We do have some more specific questions on the budget related to the Communications and Public Engagement Branch. We heard recently in the news that the federal government has spent tens of thousands of dollars on Snapchat

filters. I don't think we have a lot of heavy Snapchat users in the House of Assembly, not even me; I'm still trying to figure out Snapchat, although I do have an account. I don't if anybody in the House is following me; it's probably for the best.

I was surprised, actually, to hear that the federal government would be spending money on Snapchat filters. I assume we are not. I'd certainly welcome confirmation of that. What are we spending money on when it comes to social media? How much has been spent since the election of 2015? I guess also related to that, generally speaking, how much does government spend annually on its online presence?

I know that's a lot of questions, but now we're back to these 10-minute chunks unfortunately, so we'll do it this way. I look forward to the minister's responses.

CHAIR (Dempster): Before the minister gets a chance to respond, there were a couple of things that happened when I was in the Chair earlier this afternoon; one, I'm taking under advisement reviewing the transcript and video and I will report back to the House tomorrow. But I did clearly hear the Member for Mount Pearl North use a word in this House and I would ask if he would withdraw that comment.

MR. KENT: Madam Chair, what word are you referring to?

CHAIR: When the Government House Leader stood on a point of order and said we will get to the bottom of this and you said: That's for damn well sure we will.

MR. KENT: I will withdraw that particular comment.

CHAIR: Thank you.

I'll report back to the House on the tape tomorrow.

I recognize the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll go back to some of the questions that were asked earlier by Members really quickly. There was a question with regard to the Cabinet jobs committee. I think I said in comments that I wasn't aware of the support from Cabinet Secretariat for that committee.

I want to make sure I clarify that. The officials that are working in the GR Secretariat are the team that will be supporting the work of the Cabinet jobs committee, not the Major Projects Unit. That Major Project Unit, as I mentioned earlier, has a senior official in that role and his salary is reflected under Executive Support. There was no designated operating budget for the Major Projects salary; this is being absorbed through Executive Support.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: I have to stop the minister for a moment and call order. We're in some really detailed information here in Estimates and I'm having great difficulty hearing the minister that I am closest to so I'm sure the Opposition and Third Party is having more difficulty.

I ask Members to keep the volume down or take their conversations outside the Chamber.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd also like to just touch on the questions from the Member for Mount Pearl North. He was, I guess, making an erroneous assumption when he said that Public Engagement had been rolled into the Communications Branch. It has its own heading here as I'm sure he'll notice and we'll be providing some answers to questions as we get through there.

I wanted to make sure that the Comms Branch was reorganized as it relates to marketing, and marketing from departments was consolidated into the Comms Branch. That happened as part of last year's efforts. I just wanted to make sure that information was provided to the Members of the House.

He asked some questions around media monitoring. I'd certainly welcome the

opportunity to share with the Member opposite the work that the Treasury Board ministers went through as we reviewed departmental expenditures in ensuring that the least amount of dollars were spent on media monitoring. As the President of Treasury Board I can advise him that there was a significant amount of detail that was discussed in the Treasury Board budget meetings.

The media monitoring within government was supported through a contract in the amount of just under \$22,000, of which \$18,000 was for the provision of daily headlines to the Communications and Public Engagement Branch. That was during '16-'17 those dollars are in reference to.

As I mentioned earlier, the marketing consolidation happened and was part of government's *Way Forward* plan. It was one of the actions identified, to consolidate the marketing functions through a decentralized model with marketing staff spread across multiple departments, to a single model in the Communications and Public Engagement Branch. The marketing initiative has seen the consolidation of 11 positions into a single marketing entity. As of April, 2017, there is no agency of record for the provincial government and the newly consolidated marketing team within the public service will increase efficiencies and prove effectiveness through the delivery of marketing initiatives.

There were questions related to the salary reduction in '16-'17. That reflects savings that were due as a result of vacancies in positions. The salary line in the budget for '17-'18 reflects a decrease from the '16-'17 budget and it consists of three components.

The Member opposite referenced the zero-based budgeting dollars of \$52,000, but there was also – sorry, Madam Chair, thank you for your patience. It references annualization of prior year decisions as well as a re-profiling of funds based on intended requirements and that would be the total dollar amount of \$192,000.

Madam Chair, the Member opposite also asked questions around Purchased Services and the reduction in budget '16-'17 under Purchased Services. That reflects savings from the 2016-

'17 budget prior to projects occurring later in the fiscal year which will be finalized in 2017-'18.

However, he did mention, when he talked about Purchased Services for 2017-'18, that there was an error in zero-based budgeting information he received. There was no error in the information he received. He received a number, my understanding of, he said, \$9,800. There was a \$15,500 amount that was annualized as a result of prior year decisions so there's no inconsistency. The \$15,500 was related to annualization of prior year decisions in addition to the \$9,800 zero-based budgeting amount that he would have had, Madam Chair.

The Member also asked some questions about the Public Engagement Division. I'll certainly look forward to speaking to that in detail as we continue the discussion. I also want to take a moment to assure the Member opposite that there are no Snapchat filters being purchased by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. I might add that contrary to what, I think, many individuals – I know the Member for Mount Pearl North particularly is an avid user of paid social media – the provincial government has had no social media spend associated with campaigns according to what officials are sharing with me.

As I said earlier, there's no agency of record for the Comms Branch as of the beginning of April. In terms of campaigns, the Comms Branch supports the departments in specific campaigns; there is no overarching major campaign.

The website changes were a result of – just let me get the right information here. The website changes on May 4; there was an update on the website. Other than \$7,000 that was paid for some temporary help, all work was completed in-house through the Office of the Chief Information Officer, or the OCIO. I just wanted to make sure the Member opposite had that information as well.

Madam Chair, the Member opposite also asked some questions with regard to the Public Engagement Division. While my opinion of the Public Engagement Division – as an elected official, I appreciate that he's interested in it. What I can say is that division undertook some 106 engagement sessions as part of last year's

efforts and supported a variety of work in departments including a number of initiatives that I'm sure as the debate here tonight continues, I'll be able to provide some additional detail.

Madam Chair, I just want to review my notes to see if there's anything from earlier that I haven't provided some details on. Seeing that my time is running short, I will turn this over to my colleagues for further questions.

CHAIR: The hon. Member for Labrador West.

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a pleasure for me to rise here today and have a few words on the Committee of the Whole. First of all, I just want to premise my comments.

In this House last night we had a very important vote late in the evening, whereby the hon. House took a vote on *Budget 2017*. This side of the House voted for it. The Official Opposition and the Third Party voted against it. We're not sure where the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands stood because he didn't stand for either voting for or voting against. We're not sure where he stands on the budget.

One of the things I wanted to highlight from *Budget 2017*, about a couple of years ago – and the Member for St. John's Centre would be very aware of this because she's the one who takes credit for this all the time, that's the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and the fact that this Committee put in a lot of hard work. They did a lot of good work. They did a lot of consultations all around the province.

In *Budget 2017*, there was a \$5 million commitment to implementing the recommendations of this Committee report. There were 54 Committee recommendations, 54 altogether, and the Minister of Health in this hon. House has stood on his feet and has committed to the implementation. There was \$5 million put into the budget to do that, but it's funny, when they were advocating for the all-party committee, last night the Members who were on that Committee voted against the budget.

In essence, Madam Chair, they're voting against the investment that this government and the Minister of Health is prepared to put into the implementation of the recommendations in this All-Party Committee. You can't have it both ways, either you support the committee and the work it has done and the recommendations or you don't. In my opinion, the fact that they got up last night and voted against this, they're not supporting the implementation of the recommendations of the All-Party Committee on Mental Health.

Now, Madam Chair, there's nowhere in this province that mental health has had such a devastating effect on people as in Labrador West. There may be one other district, and that's my friend from Burin – Grand Bank has certainly experienced her share as well, but the last two years in Labrador West there were a number of unfortunate suicides and a lot of mental health issues.

We were very pleased when the recommendations came out of the All-Party Committee that that issue was actually acknowledged in the report and it was addressed. I'll just go to recommendations number 34 and 37.

Before I do that, we certainly heard in the House today, the Opposition getting up and asking questions to the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development on what she was prepared to do for all the mental health issues around Natuashish and the indigenous people of Labrador. The minister certainly addressed that quite well, but we feel – and that's why we, as a government, are prepared to invest in it – we feel that this all-party committee report is very, very important to everybody in this province.

I just want to bring it home closer to my district and to Labrador and Recommendations 34 to 37. Recommendation 34 is: "Support Indigenous people to achieve their mental wellness goals by providing resources to assist with sustained land-based programming." The exact question the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune asked the minister today: What we're we doing to help the situation in Natuashish? Well, it's in here and we're prepared to address that.

"Ensure psychiatrists provide regular visits to Labrador coastal communities, as needed." Again, that's something we're doing.

"Establish four to six dedicated mental health beds in Labrador, which will include services that are inclusive and culturally appropriate for all Labradorians." Madam Chair, the issue of mental health is front and centre for us a government, yet the people who took part in this All-Party Committee saw fit to vote against this last night.

The final one for Labrador is: "Prioritize the recruitment of two permanent full-time psychiatrists (while establishing a sustained commitment for regular locum coverage) to ensure psychiatric coverage for: new mental health beds in Labrador; emergency departments in the Labrador Health Centre and Labrador West Health Centre; and, out-patient clinics for Labrador West and Happy Valley-Goose Bay."

So I'm very pleased the All-Party Committee specifically addressed this and I want to see these things implemented. It really bothers me, concerns me that anybody who would have been a part of that All-Party Committee decided last night they wanted no part of implementing the recommendations.

They voted against it Madam Chair. They voted against it. It's shameful, I say – shameful. This is something certainly that we have a very high priority on our agenda. I'm willing to guess that there will be further questions in this House on mental health, but you can't have it both ways.

Madam Chair, I could go on and on how we are looking to support indigenous people. The Premier, who is the minister responsible for Labrador Affairs and indigenous people, has certainly put a priority on Labrador when it comes to dealing with the issues that affect those people.

When you talk about the District of Torngat Mountains, where my friend serves, and Nunatsiavut, Natuashish, Sheshatshiu, certainly these communities require some serious investment into that and we're prepared to do it. *Budget 2017* certainly doesn't go all the way to addressing it but it's a good start, when we commit \$5 million to advance the Committee's

recommendations and are being supported by an initial investment of \$1.4 million in federal funding.

Again, Madam Chair, we hear all about our relationship with Ottawa but Ottawa also recognizes, the Government of Canada also recognizes that mental health is very important to indigenous communities right across the country. Labrador is certainly included in those. I'm very pleased that we are where we are today with the investments.

When you talk about Labrador, Madam Chair, I know from your district as well, this government is prepared to invest \$55.7 million this year to advance the hard surfacing of the Trans-Labrador Highway. Not only does it link Labradorians, Madam Chair, it links the province and it links us to Mainland Canada. That's what people have to realize.

This is not an investment in Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, or Lake Melville, or Labrador West, it's an investment in Newfoundland and Labrador and it's an investment in Canada. That's what it is. Yet, the Opposition Party and the Third Party are not prepared to support that. That's what a negative vote to this budget means.

To enhance the winter highways trail system on the North Coast of Labrador more than \$300,000 will go towards a new groomer. Madam Chair, when you talk about transportation, we have to look at the regions. Northern Labrador and Torngat Mountains rely heavily on winter travel to get their goods and services. We recognize that and we're prepared to invest that.

When we talk about mental health and the court systems, we have identified strains on the court system in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. We are investing approximately \$370,000 to make the court safer for those using its services. We find that many of those cases in the courts, especially in Labrador, are as a result of mental health or the lack thereof and that's what we're prepared to address.

Madam Chair, I could go on. There are many more examples. I look forward later this evening to having another opportunity to stand on my feet and show how the investments of this

budget are very, very helpful for the people of this province.

We've developed a budget that keeps Labrador front and centre which I'm very proud of. Unfortunately, Madam Chair, when I see people on the other side stand up and vote against this, it's clear to me that they have other ideas.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Are we in Estimates? I want to continue Estimates and the minister is not here.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair.

I think the Member opposite knows that it's unparliamentary to recognize when Members are not here. That happens on all sides of the House. What I can say is if the Member opposite has questions, certainly they'll be noted and we can all provide answers.

Thank you.

CHAIR: To answer the question of the hon. Member: We are in Estimates, yes.

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

MS. MICHAEL: (Inaudible) and I thought it was all right to mention that I didn't know what we were doing. So if we're in Estimates, then I will continue with Estimates.

Thank you very much.

I would prefer to sit as we've been doing in Estimates, if that's okay. We're in Committee, we're not in the Legislature, so I'm going to sit as we've been doing.

Thank you.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. MICHAEL: No, no, I'm just –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. MICHAEL: We're in Committee.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you.

CHAIR: I just –

MS. MICHAEL: I have questions –

CHAIR: I'll take a moment to remind Members that we are in the Committee of the Whole going through very much like an Estimates process –

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

CHAIR: – with those three: the Contingency Reserve, the Executive Council and the Legislature.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Does the hon. Member wish to ...?

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much.

I don't have any questions for 2.3.01 but I do have questions for 2.3.02, Public Engagement. I have some line-by-line questions from 2.3.02.

I have questions with regard to the salary line, 01, Salaries. It started off in the budget last year at \$1,779,900 and then there was a drop of over \$400,000 in the revision and then down again by another just over \$200,000 in this year's Estimates.

I would like an explanation of the salary line. Is there restructuring that has gone on? What exactly has happened here? Obviously, there are positions gone and I'd like to know where those

positions went. Are they complete elimination? What has happened? That's my question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair is having great difficulty understanding the Member recognized to speak. I don't have a mic system here that I can put an earbud in, so I do ask Members again for their co-operation.

The hon. the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

MS. MICHAEL: Do you need me to repeat, Madam Chair, what I just asked?

CHAIR: No, continue.

MS. MICHAEL: No, okay.

I have asked about the salary line. I guess I would like an answer to that. Then, I also have questions with regard to the Purchased Services.

The Purchased Services started at \$35,600, the revision was \$39,200 and this year it's \$20,100 over last year's budget at \$55,700. I'd like an explanation of what the Purchased Services in this department are about.

My questions are about the Salaries and the Purchased Services.

CHAIR: Before I recognize the next, I just want clarification. You do have six minutes on the clock. Have you finished your time for this segment?

MS. MICHAEL: I'm finished with the questions that I have in that segment, yes.

CHAIR: Yes.

Following the tradition of the House, I will be going back to the government side.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, it's a pleasure to stand here this afternoon and talk about some of the issues and some of the good news in *Budget 2017*.

First of all, I'm going to take a few moments to talk about my district and some of the challenges that are being faced there right now; one that's being faced by a lot of communities on the Northeast Coast of this province when it comes to the fishery and that's the ice conditions, Madam Chair.

As a government we recognized, I think – back on April 20, I wrote the federal Minister of Service Canada and the federal Minister of Fisheries asking for some compensation for our harvesters and plant workers. Madam Chair, I'm happy to report that those conversations are still ongoing, they're cross-departmental. I was in Ottawa yesterday and had some really good meetings around that issue.

Also in my district this year, Madam Chair, we see a brand new crab plant. It is absolutely good to see such an investment in the fishery and realizing that the fishery holds a lot of promise for this province, even after the struggles that we've seen this year with quota cuts in 3L, primarily in crab, and the challenges in SFA 6 when it comes to shrimp.

Madam Chair, a lot of the debate we've heard over the last few weeks is around the fisheries file. I just want to point out some numbers, some things we've achieved as a government since we came into power in 2015.

You look at the investments that we've been able to negotiate with Ottawa when it comes to many different areas of the fishery, whether it's management, or science, or other things. Madam Chair, we've negotiated a \$100 million fisheries fund for infrastructure.

In my district, in the Community of Bay de Verde and as well in my colleague's district in Twillingate, we have new lifeboat stations and a refurbished lifeboat station in St. Anthony. This is another \$66 million investment.

MR. LANE: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. CROCKER: If the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands would like to stand up and have a conversation, he's more than welcome. I didn't interrupt the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands when he was having his few minutes so I expect the same courtesy.

Madam Chair, also we just recently saw an investment in a cod assessment, a \$14.5 million investment in an annual cod survey.

MR. LANE: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. CROCKER: Madam Chair, if the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands wants to –

CHAIR: The Chair has recognized the minister to speak. Anyone else who wishes to have a conversation, I ask you to take your conversations outside the Chamber or you'll not be recognized for the remainder of the day.

Thank you.

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you for the protection, Madam Chair. I'll keep going through my list.

Madam Chair, we also had a recent investment of \$2.5 million in a capelin survey. I'll just reflect for a minute back on a press release from the World Wildlife foundation: Big funding for little fishes, to see support for our fishery from the groups like the WWF, realizing that science is so important as we go forward.

As well, Madam Chair, we had harbour investments in communities; in my District of Bay de Verde, a \$10 million investment in harbour infrastructure. Under the Ocean Frontier project we had a \$34 million investment in Memorial University, \$8 million of which will go directly to seafarer science at the Marine Institute.

Just a few weeks ago I had the pleasure of being at the Marine Institute on a Friday with my colleague, MP Nick Whalen. We announced another \$500,000 for a regional aquaculture centre in the Bay d'Espoir area. This aquaculture

centre will go a long ways and a lot of the training that's needed as we go into this emerging industry. Last year, aquaculture totalled about \$161 million to our economy and we had a fishery last year of \$1.4 billion.

One of the things we've seen over the past decade – while the previous administration was here and their federal cousins, the Harper government was in Ottawa – we saw federal fisheries science absolutely gutted in this province; \$7.1 million a year removed from DFO in this province, 48 science positions removed. Since we came to power, we've seen a reinvestment back into fisheries science in the province from the federal government.

As we see the changes in the fishery, science is going to become ever more important. To see what happened over their time in office, Madam Chair, we had a fisheries scientist who was actually, under the new government in Ottawa, able to speak. Do you know what that fisheries scientist actually said in public and is quoted as saying in public? "... The amount of resources that has been allocated to us has been increased substantially."

"We went through a 10-years hell under the Harper government and I have absolutely no problem saying it because" it was the truth, where science was not considered important. So 10 years this scientist at DFO is saying that science was not considered important.

The reality is that was the 10 years that the PC Party were in power in this province. They never fought DFO on science, Madam Chair. They did not go out and fight for science and more science. They stood by and watched \$7.1 million a year come out of DFO, 48 scientists come out of DFO and this was during a period of time when our fishery was in transition.

If you listen to some of the Members opposite, you'd think that the challenges we're facing today in the fishery started in the last 15 months. Well, they never, Madam Chair. They started in 2006 in crab. Crab landings in this province have been on a steady decline since 2006. This is nothing new; this was coming for quite some time. They failed to prepare.

When you look at the shrimp stocks, the shrimp stocks, again, began to decline in 2007. This is not something that magically appeared in the last 15-24 months; these problems have been seen for quite some time. Again, they correspond with the gutting of DFO science in this province while they stood by and watched \$7.1 million come out of science, four dozen science positions removed in this province. It's unreal.

Madam Chair, as well, I can talk about the fishery all night but I'll just go to agriculture for a moment, another important part of my portfolio and a very important part of *The Way Forward* for this province. The emphasis that we, as a government, and our Premier has put on agriculture has never been seen before in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROCKER: We went out and we've identified 64 pieces of Crown lands in the province where we've broken down all the silos, we're able to get these pieces of property out to our farmers, whether it be existing farmers, part-time farmers or new entrants. One of the things we do need in the agriculture industry in this province is certainly new entrants.

Then, Madam Chair, if you look at a facility like we have in Wooddale in Central Newfoundland with 38 greenhouses, and previously that facility was used primarily for forestry research but this government – what we're about to do is take the Wooddale facility and repurpose it not only into a tree nursery but also an incubator, I guess to some extent, for the agriculture industry in the province. There's tremendous opportunity. We see it all the time.

Madam Chair, as well, we're going to see this July, Canada's agriculture ministers will be here in St. John's where we will announce the, I guess, Growing Forward 3. I don't think the name will be Growing Forward 3, it will be the third framework agreement for agriculture in the country. That agreement will bring about \$40 million to this province over a five-year period.

We're seeing other expansions. We're seeing expansions in the dairy industry, absolutely very important.

Madam Chair, as well, in another part of my portfolio is the forestry industry. We faced many challenges over the years in the forestry industry. We have some exciting prospects now with some new technologies that there are companies we are working with.

As well, it's really important to remember, just a few weeks ago I was appointed to a federal-provincial task force on softwood lumber to deal with the decisions coming out of the Trump administration. The reality when you look at our forestry industry and our lumber industry, although it is not a large industry in this province, it's a very important one.

We have a mill in this province that exports about 38 per cent of its material to the US. So it's very important that we go back to the US government. Under previous softwood challenges we always had an exemption clause for our lumber, it was a Maritime exemption. That is something we are pressing the US government for again because it's a very important industry in our province. Our whole forestry industry is very much an integrated industry.

Madam Chair, I see my time is getting short. I think we're going to have a long night, so I'll take my chair right now and hopefully have another opportunity a little bit later to speak again.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm not going to take too long. The first thing I wanted to say to the Minister of Fisheries, I do apologize. I was not heckling you. I was actually asking out of frustration, asking the Government House Leader if we could get back on track with what we were supposed to be doing here this evening, but I do apologize. The fishery is very important and I'm glad you're speaking about it. I think we should be speaking about it.

Madam Chair, I want to go back to something I said earlier. We have a process in this House of Assembly for standing committees and I realize,

as you said earlier, that this does not include what we're talking about tonight. It doesn't include the Premier's office, Executive Council, Lieutenant Governor and so on. There are a number of items that don't go through that exact same format as we would go through in Estimates.

In my experience, I found Estimates to be a very good process because you can actually ask questions, go back and forth and do so in sort of an organized, orderly, respectful manner. The minister answers the question; the minister has all of his or her staff with them that can give you the answers.

I want to say again for the record, I really believe we should look at the House of Assembly Standing Orders to introduce the same process we're using for all the other departments. We should be doing the same thing for these Estimates here because that process works and clearly this process doesn't work. It clearly doesn't work.

We started off okay and now all of a sudden we're having Members who legitimately have questions, line-by-line questions and they're not getting answers. I don't fault the Minister of Finance for it, she's been doing her best, but this has really gone off the rails. Now we're having Members jumping up and talking about everything going on, talking about their district, talk about every topic under the sun and not talking about the Estimates and not getting answers.

I would really request of the House, of the House Leader, the Chair and so on that we get back on track and we go back to the process of Members over here asking questions, hopefully getting some answers, doing so in a respectful manner, which is what we're supposed to be doing, as opposed to what's going on here now tonight which is absolutely ridiculous as far as I'm concerned.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a pleasure to be able to speak to Committee of the Whole this afternoon and some important debate that's taking place, hearing the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources talk about the importance of the fishery and the investments that are in the budget.

I want to talk about and reflect a little bit – as the Minister of Finance has been giving her time to answer questions from Members opposite on specific line-by-line items – to talk a little bit more because when we were in Estimates, I had given three hours and 40 minutes to answer any questions to Members of the opposite side when it comes to the Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation. Last night, when we had the main motion put before us, Members opposite, and particularly the Third Party, they talk quite regularly about their support for the arts, their support for the arts community. In this year's budget, in 2017, this government has increased funding to the arts and cultural industries in the Department of TCII by 9 per cent. Over \$20.2 million, a 9 per cent increase, yet that's not good enough for them. They would not support that.

The Member for St. John's Centre is a documentary filmmaker and should understand the importance of film when it comes to the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador; when you look at the line-by-line items in the budget as we have the opportunity to debate. If you look at the investment to our film equity program here in Newfoundland and Labrador, this government doubled the investment in the equity program from \$2 million to \$4 million this year.

Last year, film production in the province was \$46 million, created 600 full-time equivalent jobs and led to all kinds of great exposure. Look at what's happening with *Maudie* right now, Madam Chair. It's great to see the recognition and the development that's happening here with NIFCO and ASCO, to see what they're doing in terms of post-production and other support to the industry.

When you talk about investments in rural communities in the budget, like the Rural Broadband Initiative, we put \$2 million in the budget, but Members opposite aren't – I was surprised the Member for Mount Pearl North asked a lot of questions on broadband Internet,

because if you look at the other side of the House there, the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, the Third Party and the Opposition have 100 per cent broadband coverage in all of their districts. With the exception of Ferryland, it has 99.3 per cent coverage, and Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, 99.7 per cent coverage.

Madam Chair, your constituents would love to be able to boast those numbers. In Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair it's only 90 per cent coverage. There are gaps that still exist across this province. Communities like Bacon Cove and Kitchuses, areas that we need to look after when it comes to bridging that divide, that technological gap.

There's so much that's put forward in the budget on a line by line item when it comes to business investment, when it comes to how we've reduced expenditures, how we've looked at growing the economy here. If you look at Provincial Aerospace Limited being recognized as one of the eighth best companies for defence in Canada out of 75 Canadian companies.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: Local, homegrown, almost 1,000 jobs right here and to have that recognition.

These aren't stories that the Members opposite are proud to be touting. You know what, if you look at the St. John's airport last year, the busiest airport passenger traffic in the history, in 70 years. Last year was the busiest year. The Deer Lake airport had the busiest August in its history with over 50,000 passengers, just in the month of August.

The Member for Mount Pearl North gets up and talks then about how we're not doing anything to support tourism or growth; this is driven by tourism, these stats. If you ask the airport authorities, they will talk about the increased passenger traffic based on tourism. I was at the St. John's airport authority's annual general meeting. Art Cheeseman confirmed that.

When you look at my district – because I haven't had a lot of opportunity to talk about the District of St. Barbe – L'Anse aux Meadows – it is one that I am very proud that the Minister of

Fisheries and Land Resources has talked quite a bit about the fishery. The fishery is key to the Great Northern Peninsula when it comes to the impacts that are taking place right now with quota reductions due to DFO management, the decisions based on science and the stock assessments. This will have an impact because I have four of the eight shrimp processing plants that exist in my district and when you see things like crab quotas.

There are also aspects that are happening where the minister has been pushing the federal government to ask for ice compensation. There are different things being done to improve science. We've seen investments from the federal government.

We're also seeing where on Friday a number of fishers in my area got on the water for the first time to put their lobster traps out. They're quite excited to see the price at historic highs that they haven't seen for some time. Just a couple of years ago they were fishing for \$3-\$3.25 a pound and now it's \$7-\$8. It's great to see that industry take off in lobster.

The forest sector is one that's faced a lot of challenges and I think significantly around poor planning when it comes to the previous administration, how they put funds and how they looked at trying to find a solution. It was kind of like a half-baked idea, Madam Chair. It led to complete annihilation of what's been happening, a standstill of an industry when there could have been something happening that would create jobs in a vibrant fibre basket that exists on the Great Northern Peninsula.

I am a believer, and the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources and our government believes, that we have a tremendous forestry asset when it comes to Newfoundland and Labrador, Madam Chair, as you would be familiar. We can create value-added jobs in forestry.

As well, tourism; 18,000 jobs in the economy, \$13 million of marketing dollars being put in the budget to help drive and stimulate those over 2,000 businesses.

We have launched a provincial Product Development Plan but we've also been very

responsible as a government. The Minister of Finance has been answering the questions around the zero-based budgeting on a line-by-line reduction and review that's happened in ways of which we've found efficiencies, collectively, as a government.

We've been more open and transparent than any other government that's been before this Legislature. That's why we're here standing up, having debate around the issues, because it's so important that we do so.

I want to talk about the success that we're seeing on the international stage around some of the things that have happened around companies. We have companies that are in the ocean tech sector using sensors that are getting international contracts. Whether they're in Israel or whether they're in Ireland or whether they're elsewhere, they're doing big things. Research & Development is important. It's important to be integrated so that from the time an idea is seeded and from the time the R & D happens, that something can be commercialized and create maximum value for our economy.

We have international players here, we have procurement opportunities and we have a lot of hope here on this side of the House because we're willing to roll up our sleeves, Madam Chair. We're willing to do the hard work that administration wasn't willing to do for 12 years. They were just addicted to oil. They were addicted to this \$100-plus barrel of oil, driving up expenditures, spending your dollars.

Madam Chair, if you operated the way the previous administration operated, you'd be bankrupt many times over. It's not the way to run a household. We are going to run a responsible government, get back to surplus. We're going to be creating jobs and helping the private sector advance the economy here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have a tremendous team on this side of the House, from our Premier to our Cabinet to our entire caucus, with a collective knowledge. We're here to work with anyone in this House but we're not hearing any ideas from the other side. We're not hearing any support either for the good initiatives that are in *Budget 2017*

that's helped to stimulate and grow the economy in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'm very surprised – well, actually, I'm not surprised by the Third Party because they only criticize, ever, in the House of Assembly. No solutions, absolutely not. They will continuously criticize and criticize without coming forward with any ideas or a relevant plan that understands that there are limited dollars. You have to bring a budget and there has to be balance. There has to be a way to get back to balancing the economy.

I will have a lot more to say, Madam Chair, and the opportunity tonight because we're here for several hours. And I'll continue to ask questions.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Because I have questions in Estimates, I do need to sit.

Thank you.

I asked questions the last time I had the floor on 2.3.02. I'm hoping the minister will have answers to those questions for me.

Thank you, Minister. I see her nodding.

One other question under 2.3.02 is the Revenue line, \$900. Nothing had been budgeted last year and nothing is budgeted this year, but it looks like there was an expenditure of \$900. I'll want an explanation of that.

I think we've also called 2.3.03 so I will go down to 2.3.03. I have some questions there, Minister, as well. Under Salaries –this is Policy and Planning: "Appropriations provide for the coordination and administration of policy, planning and strategic support to the Branch's engagement and communications functions" et cetera.

Last year, it was budgeted at \$401,900 and it dropped to \$383,600 with the revision. This year at \$309,000, \$92,900 has been cut. I'm

presuming there's an eliminated position there. We'll ask for explanation from the minister.

Going further down, under Purchased Services; Purchased Services has been almost cut in half from last year's budget. I'd like to know what has been normally under that and what won't be needed this year if it's cut that much. The same way with the Professional Services –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Under the Professional Services, what would have been the Professional Services there in the past and why does it not matter? It would seem that now it's down to \$12,500?

Transportation and Communications, the same; there's been a big cut there as well by over \$20,000. Could we have an explanation to that?

Minister, I do have another question to go back up to Public Engagement. I might as well ask it now since I have my time there. You made some references to that in speaking earlier but I would be interested – I don't know if you have a list in your briefing book. If you do that would be helpful. You did refer to the many things that they have worked on in Public Engagement, but if there was a list to give us an idea of the kinds of work that they're engaged in – no pun intended – that would be helpful.

I know, for example, during the All-Party Committee on Mental Health they played a big role in the public meetings that took place. That was a major project for them I think. Are those the kinds of things that are still happening? Do they have major projects or are they just small little tasks for different departments? Just a bit more of a detailed explanation.

I think I'll stop with my questions.

Thank you.

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Chair, as the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi mentioned, since this is a bit of an Estimates reflection, with my eyesight I'd ask the Members of the House

to allow me to stick closer to my material, if that's okay. I'm sure they'll be okay with that.

I wanted to say thank you to the Minister of Natural Resources who took some questions for me when the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi was asking around Public Engagement. I have those questions and if I miss something I'm sure she'll let me know, but I think I've got most of them.

I do want to just speak quickly about the Public Engagement Division as a whole. Despite budget and staff reductions, the Public Engagement Division continues its focus on supporting departments and agencies with public and stakeholder engagement. This involves designing and delivering activities that reflect best practice and help inform government decision making by gathering the views, ideas and perspectives of citizens and stakeholders.

The Public Engagement Division helps departments and agencies to offer both in-person and online engagement. The division has an experienced team of regionally based engagement planners who can be deployed throughout the province to assist with, or lead engagement using a variety of cutting-edge tools, techniques and approaches.

With the reduction of regional engagement positions from nine to six, the team is now responsive to engagement needs across the province based on demand and are no longer confined to a regional geographical region. This streamline is consistent with our focus under the management changes that we made earlier this year.

In addition to supporting departments and agencies with their engagement needs, staff also offer assistance to community groups and organizations throughout the province in support of their engagement efforts. The Public Engagement Division also helps foster and engage citizenry and engage communities by delivering a variety of programs that connect government to youth and voluntary and not-for-profit sectors.

These programs include: the Premier's Youth Council, which brings a youth perspective to selected issues of importance; getting out the

message, which brings the message of entrepreneurship and civic engagement to youth; the youth volunteer award program to recognize the many contributions of young volunteers; and the Volunteer Week activities that are planned and carried out in partnership with the Community Sector Council.

With the elimination of the position of the manager of volunteer and the non-profit sector engagement, all associated duties have been reassigned to other managerial staff in the Public Engagement Division. The Public Engagement Division also administers core funding to the Community Sector Council to help foster strong communities in the province, and to the 34 member organizations of the Community Youth Network to offer a variety of educational and leadership programs and services to youth, including at-risk youth.

The division also administers the project-based Grants to Youth Organizations program to allow community organizations to offer a wide range of activities, opportunities and services to young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Mr. Chair, the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, my understanding the question that she started off with was with regard to Salaries in heading 2.3.02. The first line was related to the projected revised budget in 2016-'17. The reduction there in that line item, what I'm being told is that reflects a savings from the 2016-'17 budget due to vacancies.

The dollar amount in the budget amount for 2017-'18, which is reduced by just over \$548,000, reflects a decrease from the '16-'17 budget consistent with these following line items: \$45,700 associated with annualization of prior year decisions, \$146,000, changes to management structure, as well as \$357,100 related to zero-based budgeting.

The other questions that I think the Member opposite also asked from earlier this afternoon was around the Purchased Services under 2.3.02, the Purchased Services in the budget for '17-'18 moving to \$55,700. The URock awards are awarded every second year. As a result, this budget sees an increase as a result of the awards presentation.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. C. BENNETT: It's called the URock awards that are to happen in fiscal '17-'18. The other comment I made earlier, before I get on to some of the additional questions, was in response to the Member for Mount Pearl North when he asked about my opinion of the Public Engagement Division.

The division has undertaken some 106 engagement sessions over the last year. I believe the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi asked for a copy of some of those to indicate what kind of programs or what kind of work the division is supporting. Certainly I can provide a list of those sessions.

The themes would include everything from budget consultations to the consultations that happened in the Department of TCII related to a social enterprise strategy, as well as consultations related to minimum wage. There were a number of themes that the division looked at. Those are just three examples that I can think of off the top of my head here this afternoon, Mr. Chair.

Before I leave 2.3.02 on Public Engagement, the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi also asked about the related revenue under the revised budget for '16-'17, the \$900. According to my notes, that reflects revenue associated with the repayment of a prior year expense. Those are the only notes I have there related to that.

The salary information – I think I answered that question, but if she has follow-up I could certainly make a note. I'll move now to Policy and Planning, 2.3.03. Some of the questions – and I may not get these in the order so I'll appreciate her patience. I'll try to follow them logically in the book.

We had the question around the Salaries in projected revised budget 2016-'17. There was a reduction there of \$18,300. That reflects the savings from last year's budget due to vacancies.

In the budget for this year, '17-'18, the Salaries dollars are further reduced \$92,900. That reflects a further reduction from the budget in '16-'17. That reduction total is \$92,900. It's made up of three components: \$16,200 related to the

annualization of prior year decisions, \$65,700 related to changes in management structure and \$11,000 related to zero-based budgeting.

I believe the Member asked a question with regard to Transportation and Communications for '17-'18. The budgeted amount there, the request is for \$24,500 for the budget. We've seen an overall decrease in this line. Some of the reasons we've seen that decrease is the majority reflects a prior year decision related to monies associated with the global network commitment. That was about \$22,400.

Other requirements would include changes related to lower land lines and fax lines of about \$1,800; \$400 related to fewer Blackberries; \$100 removed from taxi services, as well as the global network commitment that I mentioned earlier. That's the Transportation and Communications.

I will stop there, seeing as my time is up. I'll wait for more questions, but I'll go back to the questions for the Member for Signal Hill- Quidi Vidi. I have them noted here.

CHAIR: Excuse me.

Before I recognize the hon. Member, I asked for clarification on the speaking arrangements today before we started. I was led to understand that the first person who has been identified to speak would be the Member to speak, but when you have competing sides, on both sides who want to get up and be recognized to speak, I further understand that I will be going back and forth. I've been doing that this afternoon and that's the way it's going to continue.

I recognize the hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

That's my understanding as well, it's 10 for 10 each side.

The questions I have for the minister are following along – we're still on 2.3.01. In that section, generally speaking, how much does government spend annually on its online presence and can you explain exactly how that money is spent. If you could provide an itemized list of what the money is spent on.

This subhead includes funding for the “management of Government’s marketing services and brand strategy to highlight the Province as a place to live, work, invest and visit” We would like a total of how much has been spent this year on each of these strategies. We’d also like for the minister to provide some details on exactly what these strategies currently include. Are there new strategies currently being developed? If so, could we have some details around that?

Another question we have pertaining to the line-by-line items is: How much does government spend on Public Service Week promotion and activities? In terms of that expenditure, how does it compare to previous years? How much was spent since the general election of 2015, so over the last 17 months. How much was spent by the current government on rebranding? Was there a cost associated with the website development?

That is the conclusion of our questions on 2.3.01 and I’ll move on to 2.3.02, Public Engagement. Under the Salaries line, 2.3.02.01, can you please describe what is happening in the Salaries line? Last year there was a savings of \$279,200 and this year the budget is being reduced to \$1,231,000, so overall the budget is being cut by \$548,800. The zero-based budget information does list a savings of \$357,100, but we’re trying to figure out how you got the number \$548,800.

Here as well under Transportation and Communications, how was the savings of \$21,200 achieved last year? Under Transportation and Communications again, even though there was a savings realized last year, this year’s budget is still over \$150,000. We would like an explanation as to why that has happened.

In under Supplies, 2.3.02.01, what types of Supplies does Public Engagement use? How was a savings of \$6,000 attained last year? How will a budget reduction of \$8,200 be achieved for this current fiscal year?

For Purchased Services, we would like a list of what services Public Engagement uses. If we could have a reason as to why this line item went over budget last year in terms of Purchased Services? It went over by a couple of thousand

dollars and, of course, the amount increased by \$20,000 this year. Could you explain that for us and explain what the \$55,700 intends to be used for this year.

Under Grants and Subsidies, in the Office of Public Engagement there’s a fairly large expenditure here of \$3,219,900. We would like to know which grants and programs are included here and to whom and which groups do they go? So could we get a list of all the recipients of those grants?

In terms of Revenue, we were just wondering where the \$900 in revenue would have come from. What projects were undertaken for last year and what projects are planned for this year?

We would also like to know if you can confirm that grants to youth-serving organizations will not be cut again this year. If we could get some clarification on that, we certainly would greatly appreciate that. Will you ensure that all organizations who received funding, regardless of whether it was core funding or project funding over the last two years, can expect to receive that funding again in this current fiscal year?

Last year when funding was cut – which was considered to be core funding to youth-serving organizations – it was argued that it wasn’t core funding, it was project funding. We would argue, of course, that these organizations rely on that project funding to stay in existence. We are wondering if you have fixed your definition of core and project funding so that we won’t see a repeat of this type of situation again.

Can you provide as well an update on the progress to implement multi-year grant funding? When will this process be available to the public so we can acquire a greater understanding of how the multi-year grant funding is going to work for some of our organizations?

These are a lot of questions. Keep going for the full 10 minutes is the process we want to use?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yeah.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

In terms of 2.3.02 – still on line items – Public Engagement: Could the minister table a complete list of all the grants, the amount and the recipient for each grant and how that list would compare to last year's? According to the list tabled by the minister concerning jobs eliminated, it includes six positions under Executive Council, CPEB. I'm just wondering if I'm correct in assuming that stands for the Communications and Public Engagement Branch, the acronym, CPEB.

Can the minister walk us through these six positions? What were they responsible for and who would now take over the responsibility of those duties for the eliminated positions? Were there any new hires that filled any vacant positions?

In terms of 2.3.03, Policy and Planning, under 01, Salaries, can you describe for us what is happening in the Salaries line? Last year, there was a savings of \$18,300. This year the budget is being reduced to \$309,000, so that's a reduction of \$92,900. Are there position reductions being planned here?

Transportation and Communications: How was the savings of \$8,000 achieved last year? This year, the budget will be reduced to \$24,500. We're just wondering if you could provide some insight as to how that will be achieved.

For Supplies; last year Supplies went over budget by \$7,200, yet the amount allocated for Supplies this year has been reduced. We were hoping you could provide an explanation for that.

Under Professional Services: What services does this division purchase? Could we get a list of those services, the amount paid and to whom? That would be great. Why has the budget been cut in half for this year for Professional Services?

As well, for Purchased Services, what services does this particular division purchase? Why has the budget been decreased to \$17,800 for this current fiscal year?

With respect to 2.3.03, Policy and Planning, this subhead has been significantly cut from last year. Salaries, Transportation and

Communications, Supplies, Professional and Purchased Services are all slashed. If the minister could provide some explanation as to how the scope has changed in the Policy and Planning division that will be great. What specific functions have been impacted? Have any functions been moved to other divisions?

Moving on to 2.4.01, under Financial Administration, when money and funds are transferred from the Department of Finance into another department, what is the process which this has to go through? We would like it if you could elaborate for us what would transpire there from a policy point of view. Are these transfers of funding made public? Is the public aware of these transfers? Will the minister commit to table them in the House of Assembly when they occur?

I'm almost to the end of 2.4.01, Financial Administration. Under Salaries, if you could describe for us what is happening to Salaries here. They came in under budget by \$136,500 for last year. This year the budget has been cut to \$727,600. We're wondering if there are any employee reductions here.

For Purchased Services, can you please explain the discrepancy in the Purchased Services line for last year? Can you do the same for the Property, Furnishings and Equipment line? Our last question on section 2.4 is related to revenue: Where did the \$8,300 in revenue come from last year?

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member her speaking time has expired.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll just go back to the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi to make sure I close off the questions that she asked earlier, if that's okay.

She asked a question, I think, when I was responding to her questions. I needed to respond to her on Purchased Services in Public Engagement – no, I did that one for her. But just

in case, the Purchased Services reduction in '16-'17 was \$3,600 less due to higher – sorry, reflects an overrun due to higher-than-anticipated requirements. The Purchased Services in '17-'18 under Public Engagement, as I mentioned earlier, would relate to the URock awards. I think I gave you the answer on the \$900 with regard to – right.

I'll move then to Policy and Planning, which is I think where I left off for the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi. There were some questions around the Salaries. The \$18,000 reduction in Salaries is related to vacancies. I think I already spoke about the Salaries, the \$92,900.

Under Transportation and Communications, there's a reduction there of – oh, that's exactly where I left off – \$25,200 related to annualization of prior year decisions as well as zero-based budgeting. We saw the Professional Services, which reflects a decrease in the budget related to the annualization of prior year decisions. As well, in Purchased Services, again, it was annualization of prior year decisions.

For the Member opposite, under Professional Services, as I mentioned earlier, that decrease, the majority of the reduction reflects a prior year decision to phase out over time monies associated with the global network commitment.

For the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, a lot of these answers that I've given the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi I've provided. So I hope that in the responses I'm providing she's making notes. I'm sure she is; she's working diligently over there as I'm going through this material.

Also under Purchased Services for '17-'18, again, there was a question about why this amount was reduced, from the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi I believe, the \$17,800 under Purchased Services. That also reflects the decrease which reflects the decision to phase out over time monies associated with the global network commitment of \$12,700. Also savings from copier rentals and usage of \$4,600, general day-to-day requirements of \$400, and I've already mentioned the global network piece.

Mr. Chair, the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune wanted to ask some questions as well,

and most of the questions she had asked with reference to the line items in the *Estimates* book, I think I've provided to the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi. If I've missed anything, we'll be here for a while, so I'm sure she'll ask me again.

I quickly wanted to, her questions under the Financial Administration section. This one, Mr. Chair, the Financial Administration division provides financial management advisory service for various departments within the Executive Council cluster. You can see there, there were changes in the projected revised budget for '16-'17 and then a lower amount in '17-'18.

I'd remind Members of the House, that the Premier of the province last year wrote the former premiers of the day, I believe the current official Leader of the Opposition, as well as two other former premiers indicating that the financial circumstances of the province were such that we felt paying for secretaries for former premiers would not necessarily be the best use of public monies, and the salaries for those positions were eliminated. The severance costs associated with those decisions would have been absorbed by Cabinet Secretariat. The financial administration of termination related costs would have been in the tune of, I think – just anticipating the question because I'm sure the Members opposite will ask – about \$60,000.

With regard to the questions around the Purchased Services that the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune asked, the Purchased Services is reduced by \$2,200 in the '16-'17 projected revised. This would relate to the lower than anticipated requirements that this particular division had. The \$3,700 that is reflected in Purchased Services reflects an increase over '16-'17.

We see \$1,000 related to annualization of prior year decisions; \$1,200 re-profiling of funds based on intended requirements as periodically happens in the departments and divisions. When comptrollers are reviewing their budgets as part of the zero-based budget, we ask them to make sure that the right money for particular programs and services was budgeted in the right line items. This is an example of \$1,200 being moved to the right line to reflect the expenses.

Also, an increase in spending that was identified through the zero-based budgeting of \$200.

Under Property, Furnishings and Equipment; this reflects savings from lower than anticipated requirements because, as I said earlier, in the budget for '16-'17 they were dollars associated with the secretarial support for former premiers. As a result of those positions being eliminated, there were savings in a variety of areas, particularly in this line item.

In anticipating the question, I'm expecting that one of the Members opposite will be asking shortly around the related revenue of \$8,300. This reflects miscellaneous revenue that would be related to prior year recoveries from the entire Executive Council. So rather than doing it in individual line items, there was recovery across Executive Council related to some overages, and that revenue number is reflective there.

The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune asked some questions on the rebranding and the website. I believe I provided the information, that it was less than \$10,000 for the website and all the website work was done internally. The exact amount I referenced in *Hansard*, and I'll open my page now in a second to give her the exact number.

The Public Engagement Salaries, I had provided an answer earlier. If there are more details required, we can certainly discuss that.

I think I made mention to the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi that the list of the available – the projects that the division for Public Engagement would have worked on, the 106 that I had counted when I saw the report, we can certainly provide to the House. That will provide information for the Member opposite and her questions.

With that, Mr. Chair, I'll conclude there and see what else we have.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I thank the minister for answering all those questions.

I don't have any more in 2.4.01 because they've been asked by the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune. I thank the minister for also giving the information with regard to the provincial revenue, the \$8,300.

I would ask the minister, though, when she was talking earlier under Public Engagement, the minister made reference to nine positions having been reduced to six. Now I don't think there's a loss of three positions reflected here so I just would like more detail when that reduction of positions happened under Public Engagement from nine to six. This is just a question, because it's so I don't have to ask her for the information. We didn't actually go online to get the up-to-date staffing information with regard to the office of the Executive Council, but I would imagine that is online, Minister, is it?

That's all I have to ask right now.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, for the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, just with regard to the Salaries in the Public Engagement unit under '17-'18, as was mentioned earlier – and I think the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune had asked the question a second time in addition to the one that you had asked – there's a decrease of \$548,800. This is a 30.8 per cent reduction over '16-'17.

The decrease of \$503,000 is a result of the management restructuring and zero-based budgeting. It's a result of the elimination of the one executive position, one executive support position which was vacant, one sectorial management position which was vacant and three regional engagement planning positions, two of which were vacant. They were vacant temporarily and the division is intending to fill those positions this year.

The additional decrease of \$45,700 is reflective of a prior year decision as it relates to the attrition plan and taking advantage of

retirements. That's where the actual positions are coming from. It is the elimination of an executive position, executive support which was vacant, a sectorial engagement manager position which was vacant and three regional engagement planning positions, two of which were vacant, but those two will be recruited for as part of this year.

I think the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune had also asked – and I just saw my note here that I didn't have a chance to speak to her – with regard to core and project funding. Mr. Chair, there's been a significant amount of dialogue in this House this year and last year related to the definition of core and project funding.

The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune asked if there had been a change or an update in the definition that the current administration uses with regard to core and project funding. There's no change in the difference. We're using the exact same definition that the former administration used for core and project funding.

While I understand that Members opposite may disagree with that definition and may have even disagreed at the time, government is consistent and has been following the same definition in our administration, my understanding, as the former administration.

The Member opposite also asked for an update on the multi-year grants program and asked a number of questions related to the grants that are the responsibility of the Public Engagement Division. In 2016-'17, \$2,763,400 was distributed in core operational funding: \$201,200 to the Community Sector Council of Newfoundland and Labrador with the remaining going to 34 member organizations of the Community Youth Network. There was an additional \$456,500 distributed as project-based funding: \$5,000 to the Community Sector Council for volunteer recognition activities and \$451,500 to 36 youth and youth-serving organizations throughout the province for various activities.

In '17-'18 there's no change in the budget. For '16-'17 the dollar amount is the same. To date, the Community Sector Council has received \$5,000 to support volunteer recognition

activities as well as \$100,600, which represents half of its core annual grant; \$1,271,085 is distributed to the Community Youth Network representing approximately half of its core funding and the remainder of core funding will be disbursed in September.

A call for applications for project-based Grants to Youth Organizations program will be announced shortly. As the Members opposite would understand and I'm sure have experienced, those project-based grants for youth organizations are awarded based on the applications. Those applications have not been received yet so I can't provide her any information on that right now.

With that, Mr. Chair, I'll turn it over to my colleagues for further questions.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much.

Minister, this is starting to flow really well now. I'm just going to pick up on a few that we've missed.

In terms of the list you just provided, I certainly do appreciate that information. We were wondering, you listed 34 member organizations for the –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, with respect to the \$2.7 million-and-some in grants, if we could get – and you can provide it here or you can table it for later – a detailed list of each grant recipient and how much each respective group received, that would be greatly appreciated.

As well, in terms of the financial administration component, I had posed the question: When funds are transferred from the Department of Finance into another department, can you

explain for me what is the process this has to go through and are these transfers of funding made public? Will the minister be able to commit to tabling them in the House when they occur?

I'll pass it back to you again.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HAWKINS: Do you want to answer those questions before I –?

CHAIR: No, because –

MR. HAWKINS: Okay.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Certainly today is an interesting exercise as we walk through some of these questions and Estimates, and looking at some of the expenditures that we have there.

Mr. Chair, as I've sat here all afternoon – actually, we've been here now since 1:30 – and as we've worked through all of this process, it's becoming ever more evident to me just how effective our zero-based budgeting has been this year.

Mr. Chair, the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has been answering questions relating to some of the questions the opposite Members have asked the minister. It's becoming very, very clear as we work through that, that this government has done a significant amount of work when it comes to working through the whole budget process. We can see very clearly, Mr. Chair, many of the answers that are coming from the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, there are significant changes in spending. As we have talked about on this side of the House, our fiduciary responsibility to the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador is that we are fiscally responsible.

I think, Mr. Chair, we have, over the last two budgets, looked at that. Last year, we all know the degree of change that was necessary because we could no longer do the status quo. In other words, it was totally unacceptable. Not only was

it unacceptable, Mr. Chair, it was also unsustainable. Very quickly we realized that it was important for us not only to look at revenue generation, but also look at our expenses.

Last year we really made some very, very difficult decisions in trying to look at increasing the source of revenue. We know that is not sustainable. We cannot continually, budget after budget, look at only revenue sources. So it's important for us to strike that balance, to not only look at revenue opportunities but also we have to look at getting our expenses in line.

Madam Chair, I am very optimistic that as we worked through this budget, as we looked at ways in which we can curtail some of the spending and the expenses that have happened historically over the years that we now get this in check.

Madam Chair, as a Member of the Treasury Board, and when all departments came in with their budget for this year, we were pretty tough. Quickly, some of the ministers realized that if in fact all lines had not been addressed from a zero base – we were not interested anymore from a Treasury Board perspective in looking at historical values. That certainly was not a response that Treasury Board – we weren't looking for that.

So ministers very quickly realized that they could not come in to Treasury Board and say historically this is why this line is as it is. Madam Chair, as we worked through that process, which was very interesting but it was also demanding. I think that degree of scrutinizing, that degree of getting down into the weeds, the whole idea of building a budget from zero base, it's an interesting exercise.

It really is an exercise that requires a lot of thought. It requires being able to look ahead, being able to justify what exactly you're going to be spending. You're going to have to justify what your travel will be. You're even getting down to having to justify how many telephone lines you have, how many telephone lines are required, how many of them are active, how many of them are inactive, why are the ones inactive and why are you still carrying them in your budget.

Madam Chair, that in itself was an interesting exercise because it challenged all departments, it challenged all ministers, it challenged all staff to take another look and to take a different look, to take a different approach.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Eighty-four lines in the department.

MR. HAWKINS: I beg your pardon?

MR. MITCHELMORE: Eighty-four telephone lines reduced.

MR. HAWKINS: Okay.

The Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and what is it –

AN HON. MEMBER: Innovation.

MR. HAWKINS: – Innovation. I was going to put him over in Transportation but I'm sure he wouldn't want to go in Transportation. There are 84 lines that were eliminated.

Madam Chair, that's an example of how this government, how we treated the seriousness of the fiscal situation we found ourselves in. It's not something a lot of governments have been used to in the past, because in a lot of situations, and I understand sometimes when – and I guess we do it ourselves – when we seem to have a fair amount of money we probably spend more money than probably sometimes we should. It's probably just natural for us to do that.

Madam Chair, when we come to a situation, when we're facing the fiscal situation that we were faced in, when we're looking at oil prices the way they were, when we're looking at production the way it was, there had to be another way of doing business. Madam Chair, that's what this government is all about. We are looking for other ways so that we're not dependent. We're not dependent on oil, we're not dependent on royalties alone but we have to broaden our economy to find other ways in which we can find a source of revenue and have people working.

Madam Chair, while this whole exercise for many of us within this House and Members opposite, it's a new way of doing business. It's a

new way of building a budget. It's a new way of looking at how we can provide services that the people are expecting, our residents are expecting. How we can provide those services within the fiscal frame and within the fiscal restraints we have, and that becomes a challenge.

It becomes a challenge only when you're facing situations, when you just do not – when you're not strapped with cash. All of a sudden, no different than if you're living within a budget, an individual living within a budget and there are certain circumstances that are within that family, whether you have two people working and then all of a sudden one person is working, you have to adjust your spending. You cannot forever go out and incur debt, then add debt and incur more debt. You cannot continually do that.

So, Madam Chair, we as a government, it was necessary for us to really look at, to get down, even get down – and I know that's difficult for people that's probably listening to realize that this government got down and actually asked how many telephones you had, that actually asked our staff, do you really need a cellphone? The service you provide, is it necessary for you to have a cellphone? If it's not necessary for you to have a cellphone, we are not going to provide that. Now I know –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. HAWKINS: Yeah, it might only save \$60. The Member opposite said it would only save us \$60. That's exactly what got us in this situation we are in, because it's an attitude of only \$60 – only \$60. Well, you multiply that, you take that and do the multiplying factor of hundreds and hundreds and we multiply that, and then all of a sudden you have \$25 billion in assets and royalties.

I said I think at – my time is running out, I wish I had another 10 minutes. The Member over for Port – no, what's Scott –?

AN HON. MEMBER: Stephenville – Port au Port.

MR. HAWKINS: Stephenville – Port au Port brought in a Member's statement about putting away for a rainy day. The Members opposite

laughed at that as well, as they laughed at saving \$60 on a cellphone.

This is not a funny situation. This is very serious. Every \$60 saved is \$60 that we do not have to raise.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR (Dempster): The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good evening. I have some follow-up questions for the minister related to the Communications and Public Engagement Branch.

I know the House Leader for the NDP and my colleague for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune have asked a lot of the detailed questions on the various line items. I'd like to approach it more broadly and talk about some of the issues that the minister has touched on and some others that I'm hoping she can touch on.

My personal belief, which probably will come as no surprise to some of the folks in the House, is there was considerable good work going on through the Office of Public Engagement. While I recognize that some of the staff of Public Engagement are still intact and now part of the Communications and Public Engagement Branch, I fear that some of the initiatives that I thought were adding value in our province have gone away.

First of all, I'd like to pick up on the minister's comments related grants to youth-serving organizations. I won't belabour the point because we've debated it at length in this House. The minister and other Members of government continue to argue that grants many youth organizations have been receiving, in some cases for decades, are not in fact core funding because technically and practically, they fill out the same form every year to receive, in many cases, the same amount of money.

In light of the minister's comments, I do need to highlight that issue once again. What the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune had

asked was: Will government ensure that organizations who received funding over the last couple of years will receive funding again this year?

I would go further and ask: Is there any possibility of restoring some of the funding that has been cut from these organizations that truly did and do rely on these funds to sustain core operations?

For instance, the Boys and Girls Clubs in our province – and there are many. There are several clubs here in this region; there are clubs in Central Newfoundland. Is there a Boys and Girls Club active in Labrador at the moment?

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

MR. KENT: No, there's not.

There are Boys and Girls Clubs on the West Coast.

AN HON. MEMBER: St. Anthony.

MR. KENT: On the Northern Peninsula – thank you.

They provide very valuable outreach programs, engagement programs, after school programs for young people. A cut in some cases of 50 per cent has had a devastating impact on some of those organizations' after school programs. There are programs and services that were provided that are now not provided. That's a major challenge for these organizations, and it's not just Boys and Girls Clubs. There are dozens of organizations that receive these funds. Some of them, are indeed core funding. There are others, the organizations that apply from time to time and receive funding for a specific project, that is true.

The plea we made – well, in the previous budget process in 2016 – was if you have to make cuts, fine, put some of the project money aside, reallocate that for whatever you need to do with it, but please make sure the core funding remains intact for organizations that depend on the same grant year after year after year. That continues to be our concern.

These organizations received notice halfway through the year last year that they weren't getting their funds. So the funds had effectively been spent, because organizations rely on these funds annually and they heard the minister say there'd be no cuts to the core funding for community organizations, and these organizations themselves consider that funding core funding. Again, it's not for all.

There is project funding, but there are organizations like Allied Youth, Duke of Edinburgh's Award program, various cadet organizations, Boys and Girls Clubs, some youth centres, Girl Guides, the list goes on and on. They do count on these funds each and every year. I won't prolong the point, but we would once again ask government to reconsider its decision to cut that funding and, in fact, treat those organizations like other community organizations have been treated.

Beyond that, the Office of Public Engagement had an active volunteer – it was originally called the Voluntary and Non-Profit Secretariat. There were staff people within the Office of Public Engagement focused on supporting the community sector. I'm curious, does that remain intact? Are there any resources still being dedicated to supporting the community sector?

The minister highlighted funding that's in place with the Community Sector Council to support specifically Volunteer Week, and I think some other volunteer development initiatives, but beyond that is supporting the community sector still a priority for the now Communications and Public Engagement Branch?

Similarly, there were some great initiatives around youth engagement. I know that the government is restructuring the Premier's Youth Council and has put a call out to appoint new members to replace I guess all of the existing members. Beyond that, are there other youth engagement activities that are ongoing beyond the Grants to Youth Organizations and beyond the Community Youth Networks – because those are two major activities but there were other activities as well. I think that focus is now lost.

There are still Rural Secretariat planners in place in some regions of the province. I'm curious

how they're being managed and utilized in light of these structural changes. The URock awards that we had in place to recognize the achievements of amazing young people around the province appear to have been discontinued.

MR. K. PARSONS: (Inaudible.)

MR. KENT: Pardon me?

MR. K. PARSONS: (Inaudible.)

MR. KENT: Oh, okay.

My colleague is telling me that the funds are in place in another area and the minister has spoken to that already. So that's good news. I'll cross that one off the list. He's good.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Full marks for the Member for Cape St. Francis.

In all seriousness, I'm pleased to hear that's continuing. I believe it's now happening every couple of years. I would prefer to see it happen on an annual basis, but at least the program is still intact.

There was a focus through OPE on business and labour engagement and trying to forge partnerships between government and business and labour. That appears to have fallen by the wayside as well, as part of this restructuring, so I'd be curious if there's anything happening in that area.

The Open Government Initiative; we know that this government has abandoned the Open Government Action Plan and shelved the initiatives under the four pillars that were outlined in that plan. Is there any intention through the Communications and Public Engagement Branch to pick up on some of those initiatives that were in our draft plan and implement them beyond the ones that were already being acted upon? I say that most sincerely because I believe there's huge opportunity to improve how government does business and connects with citizens by pursuing some of those initiatives that were in the Open Government Action Plan.

Finally, I want to ask the minister about a comment she made earlier, which I think I did hear correctly so this one I think I'm okay. The global network; I thought what I heard the minister say is that initiative is wrapped up. It was in the original mandate letter that was provided to the minister who was responsible for the Office of Public Engagement who's now the Minister of Natural Resources.

I actually thought it was an interesting idea to build a global network of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. I got the sense from the minister's comments tonight that has stopped. I'm just curious, was anything done? Is there something in place? Is there an intention to do more or not? I actually think it was a decent idea and worth pursuing further.

I think of how the Irish government has engaged its citizens who are all over the world. There have been some real social and economic benefits to Ireland as a result of having that kind of global network in place. I think that something could be done here that could be of value to Newfoundland and Labrador as well.

So to recap, I'm still very concerned about Grants to Youth Organizations. The minister has talked about it already but I do want to be on record as expressing that concern.

What is the Public Engagement Branch's role now in terms of community sector, in terms of youth engagement, in terms of the Rural Secretariat and the planners that remain? We've heard that the URock awards will continue. That's good news.

How about business and labour engagement? What about the Open Government Action Plan? It was scrapped, but is there any intention to dust that off and pick up on some of the initiatives that weren't executed. Also, what about the global network initiative that was part of the original mandate letter when the Liberals took office in the fall of 2015?

I'll leave it there for now. I'd welcome the minister's insights on those areas. They are things that I actually really care about.

I think that there was good work being done and there's more good work that could be done. I

hope that in the restructuring, those priorities don't get lost. But what we're observing is that they have in fact gotten lost. I hope that's not the case and I hope that more can be done to get some of those things back on government's agenda.

Thank you.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

A couple of comments; I know earlier Members opposite asked for details around the Grants for Youth Organizations in '16-'17, as well as the CYN core grants in '16-'17. I have a list of those here and rather than reading them in the record, we can certainly provide those to the Members opposite. As we go through the rest of the discussion, I can certainly provide those.

The other point I wanted to make sure I clarified, as my mother used to say: To err is human, to forgive is divine. Earlier this afternoon, in responding to a question from the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi – so I'm just going to make sure I have eye contact with her to let her know that I'm just correcting something that I said to her earlier.

Earlier this afternoon, there was a question from the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi that you asked with reference to Salaries in the Public Engagement unit. I believe at the end of a statement I said there was the elimination of one executive position, one executive support which was vacant, one sectorial management position which was vacant and three regional engagement planner positions, two of which were vacant. I said those were temporary yet to be filled.

I was incorrect in that. Those were temporary positions that were eliminated. They were not permanent positions, they were temporary. So I just wanted to correct that and make sure I had provided the information.

Those officials that are working in the back providing information as we go through this process are making sure that I'm dotting my i's

and crossing my t's. I appreciate being able to provide that information.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Minister.

I will correct my notes here to reflect that correction. I did ask you and you may have – so much has been going on. As with other departments, I presume the staffing information is online? Yes, okay. I think you may have nodded before and didn't sort of answer, but it is online.

Okay, thank you very much. Thank you for that correction.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Terra Nova.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HOLLOWAY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm glad to get a bit of support here this evening as we're running through Committee and talking about some of the – well, I guess we're talking a little bit about everything. I just wanted to take a moment, if I could, since we're talking about an area where I worked.

Before I ran for public office, I was actually in the Office of Public Engagement. I know that Members opposite are asking some of the questions about my former colleagues who are working around the province helping with engagement activities, helping with collaboration and partnership development. I did that job. I consider that to be a great training ground, actually, for the kind of work that departments need as they're creating partnerships between government and the community.

When we talk about some of the savings that this government has had to find, one of the positions they've talked about is the position that I actually vacated when I decided to leave the public service and decided to run for public office.

Just like the fact that I don't get any salary as a parliamentary secretary, which is another \$27,500 that I don't get annually. With leaving the position as a regional engagement manager or regional planner, that salary also contributed to some savings. I think, Madam Chair, I've certainly done my part to help contribute to some of the savings that we've needed to identify in this province because of the mess we've been left, as we inherited when we formed government. I thought I'd throw that in there.

Last night, after we were here and we took a vote – and of course Members opposite decided to vote against some of the great things that have come out of this budget, in *Budget 2017*. I know the Member for Mount Pearl North, the first thing he did, he responded to my comments on social media because I had said that the Members opposite voted against the great things that the people of this province require and have asked for coming out of *Budget 2017*.

The first thing the Member for Mount Pearl North came back and said: no, you've passed two crappy budgets in two years. I completely disagree with the Member. I think there are some great things that have come out of this budget, things that as a newly elected MHA, that people – as I'm meeting with my constituents, travelling throughout the district, all 38 communities – people are asking for those supports.

I just want to touch on one aspect of that, and that would be around clean water and waste water. It's extremely important to many of our – all of our communities and certainly our rural communities. I just want to reflect and comment on back in the early part of April; maybe a number of us received an email that came in from this company that talked about boil orders in the province. They were specific to us as MHAs to talk about communities in our districts that have been under boil order advisories.

AN HON. MEMBER: Boil water.

MR. HOLLOWAY: Yeah, boil-water advisories, yes.

When I looked at the list and I saw communities like Deep Bight and Hickman's Harbour, Lower

Lance Cove which is on Random Island. If people aren't aware, Random Island is a beautiful, beautiful community that has about 10 communities on the island. Petley is also on Random Island and Random Sound West.

When I saw this email, I said you know what, as an MHA I've already flagged those communities to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment to say we need to do something in those communities. Last year, the fact that we've identified \$43.5 million this year which will through our partnership –

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

MR. HOLLOWAY: It's \$43.5 million. I'm glad to see that others are joining us tonight.

We've utilized that money to leverage another \$70.6 million from our friends and our great partnership with the federal government. We've had communities that have come forward to us and ask for some support to help with their water systems. Last year, we were able to – because I was in Deep Bight, Madam Chair. I was pleased to go there and announce some money to enhance the water system in Deep Bight and to enhance the water system in Queen's Cove. So in this list that was sent to me, it talks about Deep Bight as one of the communities that has been on this boil-water –

AN HON. MEMBER: Boil-water advisory.

MR. HOLLOWAY: – boil-water advisory. Sometimes you just can't get those words out.

Then the other is Random Sound West and, of course, that includes Queen's Cove. We announced some money last year.

Now just as a bit of an education to Members opposite, because I know they've sent me emails – and even the former Member that stood, not certainly in this place but it was in the role I have today. I can remember that he commented on, well, I got that money for that community and that was about roads.

Here's how things work, and we've seen it this year. We announced projects last year to deal with waste water and clean water, but those projects weren't ready to go. They are carried

over and they come out of this year's budget. We will see a lot of activity around clean water and waste water in the communities that I've talked about.

We did some work for Petley. We did some work for Queen's Cove and Random Sound West. We'll see some work this year in Deep Bight. We also will see some work in Hickman's Harbour. The other community this group has flagged is Lower Lance Cove. I'll have to meet with some of the folks down there and find out exactly what's going on with their water system and how I can advocate and see if we can address that issue. I'm keenly interested in that.

I want to move on just for a couple of more minutes and talk about our five-year road infrastructure plan. Again, there were a number of projects that we were able to do last year that have impacted what we're going to do this year. One of the projects was over \$1 million invested in the causeway bridge in Port Blandford. This year, it's about \$280,000 that's going in to repair and replace some armour stone and replace the guardrails along the causeway. It's another example of projects we needed to start last year and that we will finish this year.

Another nearby project – and certainly for the Minister of Natural Resources, she would be keenly interested in terms of the Thorburn Lake area. So a project that had been started last year was to put in a turning lane going into Thorburn Lake.

Well, last year we were able to get – there was a large culvert that allows for ATV users and snowmobile users to be able to go through the T' Railway park. This year, we will see that there will be some paring down of the highway on top of that culvert area and we will see some repaving and a turning lane that will go into Thorburn Lake.

That really helps in terms of the safety. I drive a lot between my constituency office in Clarendville to go to my home in Port Blandford. When I get to the Thorburn Lake area and there is left-turning traffic – there's a lot of traffic that would go into the Thorburn Lake area. It's been extremely important for us to address that safety concern. As people are turning there, we want them to turn in safely so that people don't have

accidents and we don't have any loss of life. We will see a continuation of that project this year.

The last thing, before my times runs out, that I also wanted to reference was just after I got elected we had some significant issues with the trestle in Terra Nova. There was some money that was put into the top of the trestle bridge. Quickly after that piece of work was done, we realized that the trestle was unsafe. Through this winter and through great support of the construction company, I think that comes from the Burin Peninsula area, they were able to work under extreme conditions. Again, it was another \$653,000 or thereabouts that was invested to open up the Terra Nova trestle.

Now people, ATV users – and we know people come to the Island, come to Newfoundland from Nova Scotia; there are groups of them who come. They will leave Port aux Basques and they will come all the way to the East Coast because they want to see the beautiful scenery that we have in this province. Those are some tremendous investments, just very quickly, to highlight the investments that we have made through *Budget 2017* to address some of the important issues and help generate great things in the economy in this province.

While the Member for Mount Pearl North says that's not a good budget, this is two years in a row that you've brought down not a good budget, I beg to differ. I respect his opinion but I beg to differ.

This is not a bad budget. This is actually a very good budget. I'm very pleased to be able to stand and speak to it tonight.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Seeing no further speakers, I'll ask the Clerk to call – actually, shall 2.2.04 to 2.4.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.2.04 through 2.4.01 carried.

CLERK (Murphy): 2.6.01 to 2.6.03.

CHAIR: Shall 2.6.01 to 2.6.03 carry?

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's indeed an honour to stand here tonight as we go through Executive Council and ask some questions relevant to particularly the Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs Secretariat and the different line items here. Obviously, for those who may not be aware, this is a collaboration of the former Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs Department and Intergovernmental Affairs combining and some of the issues relevant to that and some of the budget lines.

I will be asking the minister some particular questions in different line items and then ask for some clarification. I want to stick to exactly the normal process in Estimates around questions to the minister and then some answers. Then, no doubt, my colleague from the Third Party will have some outlying questions for some clarification.

I just want to ask the minister: Under Salaries, there was a decrease in Salaries from the previous year. I'd like to ask for some clarification there – sorry, a decrease from 2.6.01, Executive Support, clarification for that one when you get a chance, please, Madam Minister.

Also, Transportation and Communications; a change there, a drop from the original what was revised. Under Purchased Services, a substantial amount of money being used here. I'd like to have some clarification of what the increase was about, but particularly look at some of the details of the unique types of purchases that are made under that line heading and what they would entail.

I'm also looking for, under Grants and Subsidies, very unique there to see where do these grants go, particularly under that line Executive Support, and particularly where the two line departments now have sort of jelled together and meshed together under exactly what's happening as part of that whole process.

Under 2.6.02, Intergovernmental Affairs, there's a decrease there of \$31,000 in the salary line. I'm curious to know exactly what that's all about. Also, Transportation and Communications, some issues around there. How many people would that entail? It seems like a fair amount but, then again, if it's Labrador, it may not be substantial for the travel there.

The Professional Services were in line with what was originally budgeted but the revised is dramatically down. I'm curious to know exactly what Professional Services –

AN HON. MEMBER: Up.

MR. BRAZIL: Oh, up. Sorry, I meant to say up – yes, down.

I'm talking 2.6.02 there now. Sorry. Okay, fair enough.

Grants and Subsidies; again, anywhere where there's Grants and Subsidies in either one of these line headings, I'd be curious to know exactly what is entailed there. Also, because the Premier is responsible for this particular portfolio, I'm curious to know – the Premier outlined various meetings and conferences which would take place via Intergovernmental Affairs, which particularly falls under his heading also.

What would be the topic of the next Council of Atlantic Premiers? People know it's part of the responsibility, as you've given notice. How has the office increased Newfoundland and Labrador's equity in the federation? Can the minister provide an update of costs for the Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers First Ministers' meetings, all a part of it, and where that would be covered off?

What ministerial meetings have taken place in the past year? What is the agenda for various meetings and conferences? As we've talked about here, because it's a unique set-up, it was fairly fluent last year where we knew it was Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs. We knew all the relevant expenditures were directly connected to Labrador issues: Travel, staff complements up in the departments, it had its own rental cost, programs and services that they offered up there, negotiations that were going on, services for the indigenous portfolio, a number of the other things that were in house around all the Labrador Affairs that took in all components from the Northern to the Western to the Southern parts of it.

Right now it's encompassing, no doubt. It's all in under something but it's not clear exactly which parts are which and where the budget lines are allocated for each part of it. There are a number of questions there that I will have outlined to the minister, particularly around those types of things.

Supplies; I'm just curious, what kind of Supplies are we talking about there? We've been hearing rumours there have been staff changes as the Intergovernmental Affairs Department became part of it or the division became part of it, that there is less staff in the actual office in Labrador. I'd be curious to know what the makeup of the office is in Goose Bay itself. If there is any outreach staff that deal in other regions of Labrador, or what the connection between the Labrador – or the working relationship between the Labrador staff and the staff that are here at Confederation Building as part of that process.

In the zero-based budgeting, what impact that may have had in the ability to provide services, or is there a change here – because some lines I'm a bit confused, if there's integration of services from the two different units that have now come together. There are a number of things there that I'm curious to see over a period of time how they've managed to pan out and how they've been successful.

So I'll sit and let the minister answer some of those, and then I may have some other questions as we go through as part of that.

Thank you.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just for clarity, the Intergovernmental Affairs we're speaking about, particularly 2.6.01 and 2.6.02, are just for Intergovernmental Affairs. They're not for Labrador. Indigenous is in a separate budget vote as Labrador Affairs, and we'll get to that now in a second. There is not less staff in the Labrador office. I just wanted to make sure I answered that, and I'll go back to the specific questions that the Member asked on the line items.

On 2.6.01, Executive Support; the Member asked about the salaries and the increase in salaries in the budget revised for 2016-17. That reflects an overrun from the '16-'17 budget due to the fact there was no budgetary allocation for the deputy minister position. That was transferred partway through the fiscal year when there was the department re-org. So that in fact is the additional salary to pick up for the deputy that moved there.

The Salaries for the budget for '17-'18 reflects an increase from the '16-'17. There was a savings of \$36,700 for zero-based budgeting, but there was \$171,200 that was reprofiled from funds from another department. Again, related to the transfer of the deputy in there, and that's why you'd see the increase in the Salaries at a total of \$421,000.

The Member opposite also asked about Purchased Services in Executive Support. I'll provide him some information on that in one second, as well the details on the grants, which I think I have here as well. Purchased Services here for '17-'18, the \$282,100, includes the per capita allocation for Newfoundland's participation in the Council of the Atlantic Premiers' Secretariat and the Council of the Federation. The \$35,000 in Grants and Subsidies is Newfoundland and Labrador's contribution to the Canadian IGA Conference Secretariat. Those would be the amounts that are there in the Estimates.

Under the heading of 2.6.02 the Member had asked a number of questions. The first one I'll answer is in the area of Transportation and

Communications. Under the budget for 2017-'18, Transportation and Communications is there at \$96,800. A breakdown of that is for \$70,600 for travel related to trade negotiations and \$26,200 for traditional intergovernmental meetings.

For the Professional Services, the Member opposite asked about the projected revised number for '16-'17 which was increased from \$120,000 in the budget in '16-'17 to \$240,000. The \$240,000 amount is related to Professional Services, the increase – Professional Services of \$119,500 for legal services for trade policy advice.

Specifically, the number for '16-'17, the \$240,000, that would have been trade advice specifically related to the Canadian Free Trade Agreement. Again, the budget in '17-'18 reflects the amount that the department is anticipating it may need for ongoing trade negotiations and services; for example, like legal fees related to that.

I think the Member opposite also asked about the Salaries under 2.6.02. The Salaries are reduced by \$8,800 in total from the budget of '16-'17. So if you look at the '16-'17 budget at \$931,700 and the budget this year is \$922,900, that is made up of three components: \$40,000 related to the annualization of prior year decisions, \$36,700 related to zero-based budgeting which increased it – so the \$40,000 is an increase, \$36,700 is an increase and then you take off \$85,500 for changes as it relates to the management structure.

I think those were most of the questions. At least that's what I had noted. I'll turn it over to my colleagues.

CHAIR: The Member has a quick follow-up question. Does he have leave for a moment for follow-up?

MS. C. BENNETT: Sure.

MR. BRAZIL: Just some clarification on the trade negotiations, the amount of money spent there for travel. What would they totally include, if you could, please?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: I think the Member was asking about, in a follow-up question, under Transportation and Communications. I just wanted to make sure you were asking about Transportation and Communications.

The breakdown for '17-'18 is \$70,600 for travel related to trade negotiations and \$26,200 for the traditional intergovernmental meetings that happen.

MR. BRAZIL: Can you give me a breakdown of (inaudible)?

MS. C. BENNETT: I'm noticing that the Member may have a question related to the specifics of the \$70,000, so I'll take that away and see if I can find some additional information for him.

CHAIR: There's time left on the clock.

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Placentia West – Bellevue.

MR. BROWNE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a pleasure to rise this evening to speak today on this matter. For those who are tuning in from home, I think it's a useful exercise, Madam Chair, to explain exactly what's happening here in the Chamber this evening.

We're going through the Estimates process with regard to Executive Council. I explained this on *Open Line* one day and I will explain it again.

To those who are watching at home, of course, the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board would come in on budget day and read out a Budget Speech. Following that, there's a thick book of Estimates where line by line, in each department, every number and figure is given. Each department comes in here to this Chamber during the evenings and in the mornings when the regular House sittings don't occur and gives the Opposition, and government Members as well, the opportunity to sit through Committees and ask very detailed questions.

In fact, I had the fortune of sitting in on the Minister of Transportation and Works' Estimates. I recall the Member for Conception Bay East asked: There was one line for \$100, Madam Chair – \$100. Now we're getting down in the weeds and that's a good thing. The minister responded, if I recall, to say that was an account that was no longer needed at the present time, but was advised by the Department of Finance to leave \$100 there to keep it active and open should they require it. The minister can correct me if I'm wrong.

I use that example, Madam Chair, and I did pay attention for the entire three hours of that session. That's usually how long they last. That gives the opportunity to go down through each department questioning the ministers. That's a wonderful thing, because we can't underestimate that as a functional role in our democracy. I can guarantee you it's hard to sit through sometimes because you're there so long, but the level of depth and detail that you get into is democracy in action.

To contrast that exercise where we're here often until 9 at night – and I thank my constituents, some of whom waited an extra day or so to hear back from me because we were so busy with Estimates. Today, the Executive Council is done here in the Chamber – that is the practice – by the Minister of Finance. We've been here now since about, I think it was 2:30, 3 o'clock, and the minister has been answering questions.

Also, another important distinction to make is usually the seats that are here in the Chamber, Madam Chair, filled with MHAs this evening are usually on this side of the Chamber filled with staff from the departments: the DMs, the assistant deputy ministers and even some directors. This evening we have only the Minister of Finance because, of course, the Members themselves are occupying these chairs.

It is quite an exercise, Madam Chair. I certainly tip my hat to the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board for sitting through this exhaustive process now since about 2:30, 3 o'clock today. Last year when we did this, just by contrast for Executive Council, it was about 50 minutes. So obviously the Opposition are a bit more chatty today, and so are we granted, but

this is democracy and I'm very happy to see it unfold.

In other news, Madam Chair, I did want to take some time to highlight some of the funding I received in my district and that I've acquired and secured for my district. I won't be touching the ferries at this present time, but I just wanted to touch on some of the funding we've acquired. That includes the five-year roads plan that the Minister of Transportation and Works and his officials have worked so hard on.

We're going to be seeing some very big work going on in Placentia West – Bellevue. You drive across the Trans-Canada, you're going to be seeing a lot of work happening. My constituents, certainly in the Bellevue area along the Trans-Canada, would have had all those commuters going to Long Harbour which is in my district, going to Bull Arm which is in my district, going to the refinery which is also in my district. Such a high traffic area, Madam Chair, and the roads really have deteriorated with the high levels and volumes of traffic.

I was very happy last year before the five-year roads plan to work with the minister to secure a \$1 million project between Whitbourne and Goobies to do some mill and fill in that area. Now, in addition to that, we see tenders going out under the five-year road plan for major work in that area and much needed. We also see some work happening now in the Marystown area, from Marystown towards the Crescent causeway area, much needed there as well. The project signs are up, the work will take place. That is what delivering looks like, Madam Chair.

I also want to talk about the \$4.5 million in the clean water and waste water funding that I received through our partnership with the federal government in partnership with the Minister of Municipal Affairs. That funding had projects in Marystown, Arnold's Cove, Come By Chance, Chance Cove, Terrenceville; all over the district, Madam Chair. There's work going on everywhere.

I also want to talk about – and these are two very important funding announcements I made in the last number of months with the support and partnership of my colleagues in the Cabinet. One is \$700,000 for upgrades to the Smallwood

Crescent Community Centre, and I look towards my colleague, the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development. This is a community centre in Marystown that serves the underprivileged. It serves a very important segment of our communities.

It's an old building, Madam Chair, one of the oldest in the province in terms of community centres under Newfoundland and Labrador Housing that's getting a \$700,000 upgrade to make it accessible. Accessibility is very important, is it not? Accessibility is very important, Madam Chair, and that's going to get an upgrade so the children that avail of it for a homework haven and other things, that's what we're going to do there.

I also want to highlight, that same day, with the support of the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation, we announced \$94,000 for enhancements to the Marystown Industrial Park. This is where, in fact, the road going through the industrial park, Members will be happy, I will report to the House, was actually renamed some years ago to Kaetlyn Osmond Drive, and very happily named, Madam Chair, for the silver world champion and the Canadian National Champion.

I had the very good privilege of welcoming her home to the province over Easter; in fact, in the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis. We had a wonderful time. Kaetlyn Osmond, of course, was so wonderful with the children, and I was very happy to welcome her home.

We also had \$100,000 secured for the leading groundfish processing plant in the province, with the support of the Minister of Fisheries. At Icedwater Seafoods in Arnold's Cove we announced \$314,000 in capital works and special assistance funding from the Department of Municipal Affairs from Southern Harbour. Of course, my colleagues now, Madam Chair, they're wondering where I get all the money to for my district, and I can assure you I'll keep getting the money for my district because I have no intentions of slowing down.

Before my time expires, Madam Chair – and this is a really important announcement – I wanted to also highlight the \$17 million repayable loan to Canada Fluorspar in St. Lawrence for the mine

that now has dozens and dozens of people working, which is an excellent opportunity for people there. I really wanted to highlight the \$1.3 million announcement, with the support of the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, I made with my colleague for Burin – Grand Bank for displaced shipyard workers.

We know Members have heard me talk about the lull in terms of the ups and downs in the industry in Marystown, and this \$1.3 million – we worked very closely with the union there, Unifor Local 20. They did an employee survey to determine what the short-term training requirement was, and we went out, and based on their feedback, responsive to them, secured \$1.3 million – \$1.3 million. I'm very proud of that because I understand there was trouble in terms of people's EI running out. I understood this was challenging for a lot of people, and we stepped up, we stepped up.

Last night, as has been mentioned, there was a vote here. All the Opposition voted against – and this is the kinds of monies I'm talking about that they voted against. I can't believe it. Now the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, he did not vote against, he did not vote for. We're unclear on what his position is, but I can say that I'm very proud of these accomplishments. I'm very proud of what we have accomplished thus far, not even 17, 18 months into this term.

We're going to continue supporting those who elected us, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'm happy to stand again to –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: – ask a few questions in this time of Estimates. I would simply like to go back to 2.6.02. I believe my colleagues in the Official Opposition thoroughly asked all the questions that I would have asked, but I do have one outstanding one and it might also relate to 2.6.01, Minister.

The Purchased Services of legal advice, if we could have a list of the firms that provided or the individuals that provided the legal advice. What was the budget for that and for which items they were providing legal advice, if that would be possible.

Thank you very much.

Then I will move on to 2.6.03, Indigenous Affairs.

Pardon me; I did have one more question on 2.6.02. Can we have the rationale of moving the International Business Development portfolio from the former BTCRD? Could we have a better understanding of why that might have happened, why that decision was made and what was behind that decision?

Then let's move on to 2.6.03, Indigenous Affairs. When we look at the salary allocation, in '16-'17 the budget was \$1,097,800. We see that only \$1,109,000 was spent so we see an increase of \$11,300. But more importantly, the decrease of \$208,000 in 2017-2018, if the minister could explain what that decrease represents.

Also, under Professional Services we see \$100,000 was allocated for '16-'17 and wasn't spent. If the minister could give us an idea of what exactly was intended for that money and why it wasn't spent? Also, we see that there is nothing allocated for Professional Services in '17-'18. The provincial revenue of \$8,200; can the minister inform us a bit on what that is?

Then I do have some other questions. My specific question, as well, for Indigenous Affairs for the Grants and Subsidies: Why was the \$10,000 not allocated? There was \$10,000 from '16-'17 that wasn't allocated, if we could have an idea. I would think that almost every penny would be desired out there in our communities.

Then my final question would be to the minister: Where is the Labrador Aboriginal nutrition and artist program money? It used to be in 2.7.02, Labrador Affairs, Grants and Subsidies. If we can have some indication of where that money is now and how much that might be, where it's being administered from or does it still exist.

Thank you very much. Those are my questions for that section.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just wanted to go back to a question that I was asked earlier from the Member for Conception Bay –

AN HON. MEMBER: East – Bell Island.

MS. C. BENNETT: – East – Bell Island. Sorry, my apologies. I appreciate him giving me his proper title in the House.

It was around the Transportation and Communications in 2.6.02; under IGA, the Transportation and Communications costs there of \$96,800 as well as the expenditures in '16-'17 of \$97,100. In fiscal '16-'17 there was work undertaken by the department related to the CETA negotiations and the Canada Free Trade Agreement which would have built up that travel.

In fiscal '17-'18, it's anticipated that the federal government's work, that Newfoundland and Labrador will be participating under the Canada-China trade agreement. It will be a source of expenditures there related to transportation. Certainly, any ongoing conversations related to NAFTA as well would be another area that monies may need to be spent there.

With regard to the rationale for the change with regard to Intergovernmental Affairs and the Trade division I think the Member for St. John's Centre asked, the negotiation of domestic and global trade agreements involves analysis and building relationships with other governments to advance the province's interests. This is consistent with the role of IGA and the Trade Policy division, which was formerly located in

the Business Branch of the former department, BTCRD. It was moved into this department.

The three resources that were in that branch are now in this department. While the position of director of international trade negotiations was eliminated in the department which is now called TCII, the person occupying that position was transferred back to their home position in this department and continues to work on the files, just so that there's clarity there.

The Member also asked under 2.6.03 on a number of line items. The first one that I'll go to is the line item under Professional Services which was the \$100,000 that was budgeted in '16-'17, was not expended in '16-'17 and isn't going to be budgeted in '17-'18. My understanding of that \$100,000 that wasn't spent was related to savings because the department didn't need these particular Professional Services. As a result, that number has been removed from that line item.

The other question I think that the Member – and I just realized I skipped ahead. The Member was asking questions related to the trade negotiations and the legal services that the department would have used for legal services. The legal advice would have been provided by a firm that specialized in trade. It would have been approved by Treasury Board and administered through the Department of Justice. That legal expertise has been used for around five years.

The other question the Member asked was with regard to – and I'm on 2.6.03, I apologize for going back to 2.6.02 there for a minute. The Member had also asked about the \$8,200 in related revenues. This item reflects an increase in revenue from the '16-'17 budget due to fuel tank replacement assistance repayments. That's the note that I have here.

The Member also asked about the \$10,000 reduction in the Grants and Subsidies in the projected revised in 2016-'17. Based on the information I have from officials, that savings reflected a return of unused funding by grantees.

The other questions that the Member asked were around the Salaries piece for Indigenous Affairs under 2.6.03. I just want to make sure I have the right information.

The \$11,300 reflects an overrun due to severance and related benefits that the department was able to absorb but has to be reflected in that line item. The Salaries reduction of \$208,000 is made up of three items: \$31,800 from annualization of prior year decisions; \$91,300 from zero-based budgeting; \$85,500 related to changes in management structure.

Specifically, the communications director for Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs was eliminated as part of the overall restructuring for communications directors. That was about \$85,500. There was a vacant position, a policy analyst for Indigenous Affairs position, and the duties of this position have been taken up by existing Indigenous Affairs staff.

As well, as part of the overall change to management structure across government, there was an Indigenous Affairs senior analyst position and where the occupant had been working elsewhere for a significant period of time, the duties of that position were taken up by the four remaining senior analysts and this position was no longer required and was eliminated.

I think, if my notes are correct, the only other thing – I just want to make sure. The \$100,000 – just to go back, maybe to provide a little more detail to the Member, for Budget '16-'17 the \$100,000 in Professional Services that you asked about, there was a contingency for land use plan for a Labrador Innu settlement. That work is still ongoing. The \$100,000 was originally budgeted for a consultant for land use. That process is still committed to and still going to be happening but the actual dollars to cover that aren't budgeted but will be taken care of as part of requests through Treasury Board or a request that the department may need once negotiations are resolved. The plan is that it's actioned this year.

CHAIR (Warr): The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just have a few more questions for the minister under 2.6.03, Indigenous Affairs. Under the \$400,000 for Grants and Subsidies, when the

minister gets a chance, can we get a copy of which agencies received that funding?

Also, there used to be a big focus on the Aboriginal ancestry program. I'm just curious, is there still a focus on that as part of the division's focus?

Also, Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs was previously mandated to oversee land claims, self-government and other associated agreements. Can the minister provide an outline of what specific agreements have been a priority this past year?

My last question in that heading, many individuals hoping to achieve Aboriginal status were denied this year in Newfoundland and Labrador. Has the office seen an increase in the number of people reaching out to the provincial office on their claims?

Thank you.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: For the Member opposite, there are a couple of those questions that I'm just making sure I have the right information from officials. We'll be able to provide that shortly.

CHAIR: Can I ask the – sorry.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Bonavista.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's an honour to stand here and speak to the Committee of Supply. I talked quite a bit over the last few weeks about the budget, so it's a great opportunity to do so again here this evening.

As I mentioned yesterday in my speech, there are four big industries in my district. We have tourism, fishery, agriculture and forestry. I talked in detail about the fishery and the forestry yesterday. Tomorrow, during the PC private Member's motion, I'll speak to the fishery again because I'll have 15-good minutes to do so.

This evening I want to talk a bit about the tourism industry we have in the District of Bonavista. Unfortunately, the PC and the NDP don't believe in the tourism industry of Newfoundland and Labrador, they voted against the budget last night.

AN HON. MEMBER: What?

MR. KING: They voted against the budget last night, unfortunately.

So just to let people know what the tourism industry – I have to find my notes here – brings to the table for the District of Bonavista, we're investing \$20 million to support cultural and heritage initiatives, with another \$13 million being allocated to our tourism destination marketing.

On top of that, the PCs and the NDP voted against a \$2 million increase to the film industry. It might seem like a whole lot, Mr. Chair, to vote against \$2 million in our film industry but I'm just going to let you know about a little movie called *Maudie*. *Maudie* was actually filmed partially in my district. It was filmed in Keels, the Town of Trinity, in Champney's West.

I can tell you, I was at the premiere here in St. John's. The premiere of *Maudie* but I guess it was a special screening. They called it premiere, but there was no red carpet or anything like that. They must have known I was coming. But \$900,000 went into *Maudie* and you know what, that was filmed two years ago in the District of Bonavista. That helped our economy quite a bit.

When they go and vote against \$2 million for great productions like *Maudie* – and I really enjoyed that movie. It's nice to look –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. KING: Well, I know that. It's sad to say when the advocates on both sides vote against a budget that supports \$5 million for the All-Party Committee on Mental Health.

Getting back to the tourism industry; if you look at the \$20 million that's invested in the tourism and culture industry, that goes a long way in the District of Bonavista. We are one of the largest tourism markets in the province. I'm just going

to give a shout out to some things culture related that we have in the District of Bonavista.

I know Baie Verte – Green Bay – and I'm going to give you a shout out again. Baie Verte – Green Bay always has some good things on the go but I don't think it compares to the District of Bonavista when it comes to our tourism and culture initiatives. It's second to none, Mr. Chair.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Trinity Pageant. Just imagine, 25 years of the Trinity Pageant. The Member for CBS could have been the lead role in that every year of those 25 years.

All jokes aside, I'd like to send congratulations to Donna Butt in Rising Tide Theatre for putting off such a great performance year after year. Last fall I attended, and I think I went there the first year that it premiered and I went there 24 years later and it was still a remarkable show.

I'd also like to give a shout out to Geoff Adams of New Curtain Theatre, which is in Milton. They just came off a successful run there at the New Curtain Theatre from *Leave of Absence*. That play is going to be showing here in St. John's from May 29 to the 31 at 8 p.m. at the Barbara Barrett Theatre at the Arts and Culture Centre. I'm hoping to get an opportunity to go see that show on one of those dates.

Also –

AN HON. MEMBER: What was the date?

MR. KING: Pardon?

AN HON. MEMBER: What were the dates again?

MR. KING: May 29 to 31. The Member for Humber, Port au Port is interested as going as well. That's good to see.

Also, we have our Vista Heritage Fair taking place at the Rising Tide Theatre in Trinity tomorrow. I'd encourage anyone who's out there listening tonight, if you're interested, go down between 11 o'clock and 12 o'clock, and 1 o'clock until closing and you'll see some great, great exhibits from our local schools throughout

the District of Bonavista. I was going to say high school but I know it's elementary right up to high school. Those are some good things going on in the District of Bonavista.

You look at \$20 million which unfortunately the Opposition voted against – so they're voting against the District of Bonavista – cultural and heritage initiatives. We, in the District of Bonavista, were fortunate enough to receive \$177,000 in CEDP money for various organizations throughout the District of Bonavista. You take Rising Tide Theatre, which I already mentioned, you take Home from the Sea in Elliston, you take the Sir William Coaker Foundation: that money goes a long way to support their operation and brings an experience to a tourist in the District of Bonavista that is second to none.

We just have been blessed with the number of growing businesses that we see in the District of Bonavista. I've mentioned this before but I can't say enough about the Port Rexton brewery and what Alicia and Sonja have done there. It's becoming a destination for our area. People are coming out primarily to go to the brewery. Coming up within the next year or so, you're going to see the Newfoundland Cider Company in Milton. I'm looking very much forward to that, Mr. Chair.

MR. BRAGG: Free samples.

MR. KING: I have the Member for Fogo Island – Cape Freels asking me for free samples. He should take a trip out to the district and enjoy a beverage at Port Rexton Brewing.

With the \$13 million of marketing in our tourism industry, that is highlighting the Bonavista Peninsula region. Mr. Chair, \$13 million goes certainly a long way to promoting our area. What we've actually started to do this year is when people get off a ferry in either Argentia or Port aux Basques or in one of the airports across the province, they'll be treated to an experience.

We're going to point them in the right direction. We're going to have people in those facilities that are actually going to be there giving advice to people who may not be familiar with Newfoundland and Labrador saying: What are

your areas of interest? Where would you like to go? Here is where you could go if you like this, that or something else. That's a big benefit. That's \$33 million which the Opposition voted against.

AN HON. MEMBER: Voted against it?

MR. KING: Voted against it they did.

I'm going to talk about a little something else. The Member for Mount Pearl North is going to be shocked because I actually agree with him on something. He presented a petition in the House of Assembly yesterday about a financial literacy program. I agree. We need to get financial literacy in our classrooms and I think that's a very reasonable petition, so thank you to the Member for Mount Pearl North. I'd like to give a big shout out to the Member for Ferryland's daughter who won the \$80,000 scholarship through Sobeys and will be attending Queen's University in the fall.

Finally, I'd like to give a big shout out to my friend and colleague for the District of Cape St. Francis who had a grandson born last Tuesday. I was sitting with him in Estimates last week and I can tell you, and I don't mind saying, he was a nervous man, he was checking his phone. He was asking some good questions so he's multi-talented. I want to send a big congratulations to the Member.

When I gave a speech a couple of weeks ago and put it on Facebook someone said to me: Neil, why do you have to go back and forth with the NDP and the PCs? I said: Well, that's part of our parliamentary process, that's a part of legislative debate. But the funny thing is, I said, I actually like the people on the opposite side and that's what I like about the House of Assembly.

With that, I have my time up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Shall 2.6.01 to 2.6.03 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Those against?

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.6.01 through 2.6.03 carried.

CHAIR: Can I ask the Clerk to call the next set of subheads?

CLERK (Barnes): This is Office of Labrador Affairs, 2.7.01 through 2.7.02 inclusive.

CHAIR: 2.7.01 to 2.7.02 inclusive.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm happy to move on now to the Office of Labrador Affairs. Under 2.7.01 we see that in the budget for '16-'17, in the revised amount, there was a reduction of \$62,400. If the minister could let us know what that involved, and then a further reduction once again in the budget Estimates for '17-'18.

Then if the minister could talk to us a little bit about the budgets for Transportation and Communications; we see a \$50,000 reduction in the revised Estimates for the budget of '16-'17. It's significant; it was reduced by over half. Who didn't travel and why didn't they? What was intended and what actually happened? Then we see again a further reduction in the Estimates for '17-'18 of \$18,000.

Then if we go on to 2.7.02, Labrador Affairs, there's a salary increase of \$34,000, if the minister could speak to us about that. Then also looking at Transportation and Communications, there was a reduction of \$36,800 in '16-'17. If we could understand what was budgeted for initially, what happened, what didn't happen? And then a further reduction in the Estimates for '17-'18 of \$19,300.

Then Purchased Services, if the minister can give us an idea of what kind of purchased services that covered. We see a reduction of \$17,000 in '16-'17 and a further reduction of \$10,000 in the Estimates for '17-'18.

The list of Grants and Subsidies; we see an increase of \$290,000 for fiscal year '17-'18. If the minister can inform us of what that increase is. Also, if we could have a list of the grants and subsidies and perhaps even if she could identify some of the types of grants and subsidies that were covered last year.

I will ask once again – and I'm wondering if the Black Tickle fuel subsidy is included in that area of grants and subsidies. If not, where might that be? I'll ask the minister once again, where is the Labrador Aboriginal nutrition program? Where is that situated? Also, where is the Labrador artists program now? Where is that situated? What is the budget for both of those items and where is it being administered from?

I do believe those are all my questions.

Thank you very much.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll start with 2.7.01, Executive Support for this particular division. The question that was asked was with reference to the Salaries, a reduction of \$62,400 in the projected revised for '16-'17. That amount reflects savings from the '16-'17 budget due to vacant positions. The amount of \$62,400 is related to vacant positions that weren't filled for the fiscal '16-'17.

In the salary change in '17-'18, the \$57,000 amount, that reflects \$2,500 amount related to annualization of prior year decisions. Actually, an increase as a result of zero-based budgeting of \$31,600 and then a restatement of funds related to the creation of the IGIA and LAO of \$86,100. Those would be the salary answers.

The question on Transportation and Communications, the reduction in Transportation in the projected revised amount for '16-'17, the difference there is \$50,600 and that really is a result of reducing travel requirements. From what officials have shared with me, there's an increased use of technology. Having been in the office for this division and actually borrowed their technology for other

work the Department of Finance has done, they have some exceptional capacity to use technology to be able to look at ways of reducing travel but increasing the frequency of discussions which they've taken advantage of; hence, the reason why, through the zero-based budgeting exercise, there was \$18,000 removed from the budget request for this year. The budget request for Transportation and Communications is \$63,600.

The questions with regard to Grants and Subsidies, I want to make sure that the Grants and Subsidies in 2.7.01 – just for the Member opposite, they reflect a one-time \$40,000 fund to address the fuel issue in Black Tickle, and the addition in budget of \$330,000 for T' Railway improvement equipment.

The remaining \$500,000 is broken down as follows: \$351,000 for the Labrador Transportation Grooming Subsidy to support safe access to isolated communities; \$100,000 to the Combined Councils of Labrador; \$50,000 to support access to nutritional and artistic initiatives for Labrador Aboriginal groups, and I think the amount for \$50,000 to support access to nutritional and artistic initiatives. There's also a contract based at \$20,000 to the Nunatsiavut Government, \$20,000 for the NunatuKavut Community Council, and \$10,000 for the Innu Nation that are reflected there.

I think the questions that – I just want to make sure.

CHAIR: Order, please!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Minister, for all that information.

Just a point of clarification; so the \$50,000 for the Labrador Aboriginal nutrition program and the artist program, is that \$50,000 for each of those programs or \$50,000 for both together?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: I'm going to get staff to just double check. I want to make sure that the answer I provide is crystal clear. So I'll go on to 2.7.02, answer the questions there and come back to that one, if the House is okay.

Under 2.7.02, the \$34,000 reduction in Salaries in the actual '17-'18 budget versus – sorry, my apologies. The increase of \$34,000 in Salaries for '17-'18 versus '16-'17 reflects a reduction of \$25,700 as it relates to annualization of prior decisions. But zero-based budgeting picked up an expense that wasn't reflected in there for \$59,700 which nets the \$34,000.

Under Transportation and Communications, again, the technology that I described earlier is a video conferencing technology. The department's access to that technology, not only here in Confederation Building but also in Labrador, is one of the reasons why they've been able to reduce the transportation. You'll see the actual results in '16-'17 at \$32,500.

Then the budget for '17-'18 of \$50,000 would have been reduced based on the zero-based budgeting; work that the department undertook and looking at having as many meetings as possible, important meetings, in person. But also using technology to increase the frequency of which the officials who may be in St. John's can communicate is an additional tool that the department has at their fingertips to use.

With regard to the nutritional and artist initiatives for Labrador Aboriginal groups, the contract for the Nunatsiavut Government is \$20,000, for the NunatuKavut Community Council is \$20,000 and for the Innu Nation is \$10,000.

The other question that the Member had asked was with regard to Purchases Services and the change there. The change for the budgeted revised, down from \$192,000 which was budgeted last year to \$175,000, reflects the budget being lower due to lower-than-anticipated requirements. In the budget for this year, the \$182,000 reflects a decrease from '16-'17 as was identified in zero-based budgeting.

As an example, we're continuing to look at how we make sure those office spaces that are in various parts of the province are using efficient

space. That's one of the opportunities that this office may be able to take advantage of with just some tweaks on space there.

The other question was related to the Grants and Subsidies for the \$831,000. This reflects an increase in the budget versus the '16-'17 budget of \$290,000. There was a \$40,000 reduction related to prior decisions from last year, but a \$330,000 increase for new one-time funding approved in the budget to facilitate the purchase of new trail way equipment under the Labrador Transportation Grooming Subsidy program. That's the increased amount there.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Minister, I did get, for the Labrador Aboriginal nutrition program, \$20,000 for Nunatsiavut, \$20,000 for NunatuKavut and \$10,000 for the Innu Nation. Just one more point of clarification. The artist program, is there any money allocated there for the artist program and where that might be?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: I'm just asking for the officials to give me some clarity. My understanding from an earlier answer is that both those, the nutritional and the artistic funds, are in this line item, but I certainly just want to double-check that to make sure what I said earlier was accurate.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Minister, if you could just indicate for me – I know you probably already have done that – which line item the Labrador Aboriginal nutrition program is in.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: That would be the Grants and Subsidies line, the \$831,000.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the minister for outlining a number of those key explanations.

I also want to note before I have a few other questions, my hon. colleague from Bonavista, who got up and talked about the budget and that we voted against investments in, particularly, the arts, the movie theatres and *Maudie* and that, I have to tell him, this Member here – and I know the Members here didn't vote against it because that was a 2015 production. We're very proud that we endorsed that and voted towards it.

It was great. It was a great piece of art and theatre for Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm glad we could foster that and I'm glad you're continuing to move things forward on that same venue also. Good for you guys.

Minister, I'd like to ask a few questions here around the Office of Labrador Affairs. Previously, Lab and Aboriginal Affairs was responsible for the administration of a number of grants and subsidies unique to Labrador including the Air Foodlift Subsidy, and I know you noted that on some of it; the Labrador Transportation Grooming Subsidy, and I think you just noted there was a one-time \$300,000 investment to do that; the YC Grants, Youth Conference Grants; and the Combined Councils of Labrador. I'm just curious to know if they're all still being funded or if they've been moved somewhere else and are being funded under a different heading as part of that.

One of the other questions here, the current website has only one grant program offered to the public, that's the Labrador Transportation Grooming Subsidy. Can you explain if any other change has been made to this program? Are

there additional programs that are just not noted there?

Also, any other specific government policy or programs that have been implemented by government which has a direct impact on the Labrador region, of course, you know what ones have been implemented. It could be other departments, but I would hope that it would fall under at least the umbrella for promotion purposes under Lab and Aboriginal Affairs.

Has the Labrador Affairs office provided funding for any of the following groups in the past fiscal: Destination Labrador, Grand River Snowmobile Club, Labrador Virtual Museum, Labrador winter trails, Northern Development Ministers Forum, Stepping Stones: Experimental tours in Nunatsiavut, White Wolf Snowmobile Club.

Also, in previous years, Lab and Aboriginal Affairs had non-voting observer status at meetings of the Torngat Mountains Co-operative Management Board. Is this still the case? Are they also participating on other shared commitments with government, community groups and other stakeholders?

Does the office still have an advisory role with the Community Advisory Panel in Labrador West? Can the minister provide an update with respect to the Labrador Training Initiatives Committee? Is it still ongoing? What I'm asking here is a number of the things that have a direct link to that line department. Do they still exist? Has it been taken over by another line department as a shift in the responsibility?

In the past, the department played a role in the Arctic Opportunities. Given the cuts to this program in TCII, is there anything being worked on by this office?

As a measure to combat violence in the region, the previous administration had a deputy minister committed for the VPI. Are officials from the Labrador office still involved in this initiative?

Labrador was represented on the Deputy Ministers Committee and the Officials Committee in support of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. What is the status today? Is the office

working with any other departments on these matters?

Is the office still part of the provincial George River Caribou Herd Advisory Committee? Can the minister provide an update for the recent activities?

What has been the office's recent involvement with the Labrador Regional Senior Management Council? Does the office still participate with the advisory capacity to Destination Labrador? Does the office still participate as a member of the Happy Valley-Goose Bay homeless transitional house working group? What has been done in the past year?

I know, Minister, there's an onslaught of questions here around what is still existing between existing organizations. A lot of good work has been done, and I'm hoping it's continuing to be done in Labrador to address the particular unique needs there and the roles and responsibilities of either the bureaucrats or the part in agencies that are supported by the government itself.

So, I propose those to you and look forward to some information.

Thank you.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Member for St. John's Centre had asked a couple of questions with regard to further clarification on the nutrition and artists funding. What I'm being told is the dollars are exactly the same as they were last year, and they would be in this particular line item. The dollar amounts I referenced regarding the Aboriginal communities would be including both amounts. So there is no change in those dollars.

The information related to some of the questions the Member opposite asked, there are no changes in the grants this year, other than the trail improvement has been added. That trail improvement is related to, I believe, based on the information I have, the equipment that's

going to be purchased, but there's been no change to any other grants in '17 versus what was in the budget for '16.

Officials are also indicating that we have the exact same staff, still the same as before.

With regard to, I think the Member actually asked about the Violence Prevention Initiative. It gives me a good opportunity to say that I'm pretty proud of the fact that representatives of the Women's Policy Office had a chance, working with the ADM in Labrador, to visit a number of stakeholders, as well as transition houses. As a result of those visits and the work we undertook last year, that generated the decision by government to increase the funding to transition houses. Particularly in light of the fact that we had, under the former administration, transition houses that weren't able to be open for 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

So on that note, certainly the collaboration between this particular office and the Women's Policy Office yielded I think some good decisions that will help in very desperate situations for women and children in Labrador.

Mr. Chair, with that, I think I've provided most of the answers on the individual Estimates.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the minister. I do ask, though, if there's any additional information that the officials share with you over the next 24 hours or so, if you could share it with us, some clarification they may have noted or additional information, I'd appreciate that.

MS. C. BENNETT: Absolutely.

CHAIR: Shall 2.7.01 to 2.7.02 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.7.01 through 2.7.02 carried.

CHAIR: Can I ask the Clerk to call the next set of subheads, please.

CLERK: The Legislature, 1.1.01 through 7.1.01 inclusive.

CHAIR: Under Legislature, 1.1.01 to 7.1.01 inclusive.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 7.1.01 carried.

CLERK: The Contingency Reserve.

CHAIR: Shall the Contingency Reserve carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On the Contingency Reserve, Minister, as we know, last year there was \$30 million allocated for the Contingency Reserve and you've made some – I guess I'll go back and just have a few comments in regard to, last year we went through Estimates in regard to questions we asked at the time in regard to the \$30 million contingency fund and what that would represent.

At that time, you talked about the fact that this fund had not been used – I think it was back in 2001, maybe 2002. I think at that time it was about \$10 million. When you described it, you talked about used for unforeseen circumstances. Certainly it was applicable under the *Financial Administration Act*. It would require Lieutenant Governor in Council approval and would be used based upon advice of Treasury Board. Any

requirement that any provision used of that \$30 million would be tabled in the House of Assembly within three days of approval. Obviously, if the House wasn't sitting, it shall be tabled as a report of an office of the House under section 19.1 of the *House of Assembly Act*.

We talked about at that time, I think the reference was there was a tragedy happening and some serious goings on at Fort McMurray in Alberta. We talked about the fact that we looked at things like natural disaster. Issues like that would come up and certainly the reserve would be looked at in regard to being drawn down from a particular circumstance like that.

Now I know you have referenced over the past while and there have been orders in council that have been brought down, orders in council for the transfer Contingency Reserve. I think if I'm correct there's a little over \$20 million that's been drawn down. Some of those were related to a commission, a settlement of litigation and there's reference to, I do believe, a repayable loan, a contribution to Canada Fluorspar in regard to that particular project.

I guess my question on that, Minister, in regard to last year, there's a list; I think it's about \$20 million. If you can confirm that was drawn down and that some of the items I've listed, that that would be accurate. This year, it's \$25 million. Again, your thoughts on the use of the contingency going forward for this fiscal year, what you foresee that would be possibly used for. As well, I wonder if I could ask a few questions to you in regard to statements in the budget document in regard to the Consolidated Revenue Fund. Statement II lists the revenue type; a couple of question in regard to that.

Budget 2016 estimates the revenues for '16-'17 for sales tax would have been about \$1.152 billion. The revised number for '16-'17 came in at \$1.136 billion, so the revenue targets for that weren't reached. Obviously, that indicates a downturn in consumer spending. I'm just wondering your thoughts on that in regard to your targets and the tax itself, what it's doing in regard to reaching those targets and what your thoughts are moving forward for this fiscal year.

The other one I wanted to reference is in *Budget 2016* Estimates, the revenues for '16-'17 for

gasoline tax will be \$328 million. The revised number for the '16-'17 year was \$305 million. Again, with the high gas tax and people to purchase less, the revenue generation wasn't at \$328 million, it was \$305 million. What are your thoughts on just the amount of tax, not meeting your target and the decrease in subsequent revenue?

The other question, I know we discussed it in – I'm not sure if we did in Estimates or not, but I think I might have asked it in the House. I think it's relevant to bring it up tonight for the public to hear. In last year's budget you brought in a revenue risk adjustment and had it in the budget. If memory serves me correctly, I think it was \$125 million.

This year, there's no oil-risk revenue adjustment, but for the next five years there's a revenue risk adjustment. Recognizing your logic last year was related to the volatility of oil prices – international play, geopolitical issues going on all over the world, OPEC, non-OPEC members – it seemed somewhat reasonable to have that buffer. I had it last year and do not have it in this fiscal year, but for five years out you have it. I'd like you to comment, if you could, on that and your rationale for not having the oil-risk adjustment in this particular year.

I think those are the questions I have for the minister right now, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The first item I'll address for the Member opposite is the Contingency Reserve. As he has already indicated, last year's budget had an amount of \$30 million related to that Contingency Reserve. A couple of things I want to just clarify are the process to be able to access that contingency fund.

The Member opposite, I think if I was listening correctly and heard, referenced Treasury Board as being the decision maker. Treasury Board is a participant in the decision making, but the process for the issue of Contingency Reserve would be consistent with section 28 of *the*

Financial Administration Act concerning special warrants.

Where funds are not available for an unforeseen expenditure, and upon the report of the minister that there is no countervailing savings available from other subheads of the head of expenditure concerned and the service in question that is necessary is urgent, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may, on the recommendation and writing of the board, order that Contingency Reserve to be utilized for the amount estimated to be required and the amount shall be added to the head of expenditure.

Just to explain again, if a department feels that, for whatever reason, it needs to use the contingency fund, the first thing that has to happen is that the deputy minister must have looked at and reviewed spending in the department to see if the department can absorb the potential expenditure. If not, they must report to their minister that there is absolutely no countervailing savings available for that amount.

Once that happens, a submission is forwarded to Treasury Board for consideration. Treasury Board would consider that, would confirm the information that's provided by the deputy minister and authorized by the minister that there is no countervailing savings in the department. Then, Cabinet authority would be required to actually access the contingency fund.

To be clear, to avail of the Contingency Reserve, departments would have to prepare a Cabinet paper requesting approval. Once approved, the details of the expenditures will be tabled in the House of Assembly.

As the Member referred to earlier – and I just want to correct the dollar amount that he referenced this year tabled in the House as part of fiscal '16-'17 and last year's contingency fund of \$30 million – just over \$19 million was tabled in the House. They related to a variety of items. Some were settlements of legal challenges related to court issues that Justice was dealing with. There was also the transfer of funds from the Contingency Reserve from, at the time, the Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development Strategic Enterprise Development to facilitate a repayable loan contribution to

Canada Fluorspar Inc. to assist with the reactivation of the St. Lawrence mines.

The Contingency Reserve, as I said, the process to access the money is consistent with section 28 of the *Financial Administration Act* concerning special warrants. We want to ensure that the fund is used through a very clear and transparent process.

Unlike the concerns and the accusations that some of the Members of the House had last year about this being some type of slush fund, there's a fairly exhaustive and rigorous process of making sure that this fund is used in an appropriate way with appropriate approvals; first from the deputy minister, then signing off from the minister, then signing off from Treasury Board, then signing off from Cabinet and then being transparent with that fund here in the House.

This year, as a result of last years' experience with the fund, we made a decision to reduce the Contingency Reserve from the \$30,000 down to \$25,000. We felt that based on the experience that deputies had in their departments and ministers had as well, we thought it was a responsible thing to do to lower the contingency fund. Certainly, we'll be following the exact same process in fiscal '17-'18 as we did in '16-'17 to allow departments, where necessary, to avail of that fund.

I do want to point out though that last year when we did provide some suggested areas where we thought this fund might be used, I want to commend departments for really looking internally to see where they could find the savings. Significant work was done to make sure that there were no savings that could have happened in a department before they actually came to ask for access to the reserve fund. That's one of the reasons why we were able to keep the reserve fund as low as we did; the actual expenditures and then, in turn, reduce the Contingency Reserve for this year.

With respect to the particular Consolidated Revenue Fund line items that the Member opposite asked, officials will be able to provide some additional texture around those questions shortly. I will comment on the revenue risk adjustment.

Last year, based on the fact that I think the budget was presented at roughly 110, 120 days into our administration, we felt it was very prudent to identify the risks associated with our revenue based on the thinking that we had last year. We had \$125 million in our fiscal plan for each year related to revenue risk adjustment.

Going into this year's budget process, in working with the team inside Finance, as well as our own internal experts around oil price, as well as consulting with economists through our syndicate and an economists round table, the discussion and the review of our forecast for oil price, it was felt that the risk adjustment we were taking in the early years was certainly higher than would be deemed necessary. The advice we received was that we should blend that or soften that risk adjustment to where the risk actually lies, which is significantly more in the out years than it is in the early years.

As we've seen this year, the price of oil for the first month of the fiscal year has been under the forecast that we had in the budget. Based on the information that I have from officials and our early indications, we would see that to be about a \$6 million impact on revenue, based on preliminary numbers, but we review that on a regular basis and will be monitoring that.

The risk adjustment is related to making sure that those changes in our forecasted dollars in the out years are covered, on the chance that the oil prices shift slightly over the next number of years.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll just clarify, the \$17 million that was paid out of the contingency fund, I guess that was referred to BTRCD as part of a repayable loan contribution to Canada Fluorspar.

Was all that money disbursed to Canada Fluorspar or would some still be held with the line department?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS. C. BENNETT: I would assume that the money was put in a trust, but I don't have the accurate, most contemporary information on it. I'll certainly provide you with that.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Yes, if you could confirm it at some point that would be great.

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes.

MR. HUTCHINGS: That's it for me, Minister.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Seeing no further questions, shall the Contingency Reserve carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Shall I report the Estimates of the Contingency Reserve and the following activities of the Executive Council: the Lieutenant Governor's Establishment, the Premier's Office, the Cabinet Secretariat, Communications and Public Engagement, Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs, the Office of Labrador Affairs and the Legislature carried without amendment?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Those against?

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Contingency Reserve and the following activities of the Executive Council: the Lieutenant Governor's Establishment, the Premier's Office, the Cabinet Secretariat, Communications and Public Engagement, Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs, the Office of Labrador Affairs and the Legislature carried without amendment.

CHAIR: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report having passed without amendment the Estimates of the Contingency Reserve, the Lieutenant Governor’s Establishment, the Premier’s Office, Cabinet Secretariat, Communications and Public Engagement, Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs, the Office of Labrador Affairs and the Legislature.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Those against?

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise and report progress, the Speaker returned to the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): The hon. the Deputy Chair of Committees.

MR. WARR: Mr. 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 Contingency Reserve, the following activities of the Executive Council: Lieutenant Governor’s Establishment, the Premier’s Office, the Cabinet Secretariat, Communications and Public Engagement, Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs, and the Office of Labrador Affairs and the Legislature.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report that they have passed without amendment the Estimates of Contingency Reserve and the following activities of the Executive Council: the Lieutenant Governor’s Establishment, the Premier’s Office, Cabinet Secretariat, Communications and Public Engagement, Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs, and the Office of Labrador Affairs and the Legislature.

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I have received a message from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

MR. SPEAKER: All rise.

Order, please!

The message from the Lieutenant Governor:

he Province of
brador, I transmit
quired for the Public
e for the year ending 31
of further Supply, and in
rovisions of sections 54
tion Act, 1867, 1
imates to the House of

(Sign)

Sgd.: _____

Administrator

Please be seated.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice, that the Message be referred to a Committee of Supply.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the House resolve itself into a Committee of Supply.

All those against, ‘nay.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

We are considering Bill 6, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year March 31, 2018 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

Resolution

“That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2018 the sum of \$4,624,059,200.”

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

A bill, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2018 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 6)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 5 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 to 5 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 5 carried.

CHAIR: The Schedule.

CHAIR: Shall the Schedule carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

On motion, Schedule carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: WHEREAS it appears that the sums mentioned are required to defray certain expenses of the public service of Newfoundland and Labrador for the financial year ending March 31, 2018 and for other purposes relating to the public service.

CHAIR: Shall the preamble carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, preamble carried.

CLERK: An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2018 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the resolution of Bill 6 carried without amendment?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Those against?

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the resolution and a bill consequent thereto, carried.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Chair, I move, seconded by the Premier, that the total contained in the Estimates in the amount of \$7,327,757,400 for the 2017-'18 fiscal year be carried and I further move that the Committee

report that they have adopted a resolution and a bill consequent thereto.

CHAIR: The motion is that the total contained in the Estimates in the amount of \$7,327,757,400 for the 2017-2018 fiscal year be carried and that the Committee report that they have adopted a resolution and a bill consequent thereto.

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Those against?

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, Mr. Speaker returned to the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): The hon. the Deputy Chair of Committees.

MR. WARR: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have passed the amount of \$7,327,757,400 contained in the Estimates of Supply for the 2017-2018 fiscal year and have adopted a certain resolution and recommend a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report that the Committee have adopted a certain resolution, and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

When shall the report be received? Now?

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes.

On motion, report received and adopted.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and

President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that this resolution be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

Carried.

CLERK: “That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2018, the sum of \$4,624,059,200.

On motion, resolution read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that this resolution be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

Carried.

CLERK: “That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2018, the sum of \$4,624,059,200.”

On motion, resolution read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, for leave to introduce the Supply bill, Bill 6, and I further move the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded by the hon. the Government House Leader that he shall have leave to introduce a Supply bill, Bill 6, and that the Supply bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, “An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2018 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service,” carried. (Bill 6)

CLERK: A bill, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2018 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 6)

On motion, Bill 6 read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: I move, seconded by the Minister Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the Supply bill be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Supply bill be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2018 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 6)

On motion, Bill 6 read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the Supply bill be now read a third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Supply bill be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2018 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 6)

MR. SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2018 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 6)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that this House do now adjourn.

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 10 a.m.