



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume L

FIRST SESSION

Number 48A

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

Wednesday

May 4, 2022
(Night Sitting)

The House resumed at 5:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Are the House Leaders ready?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, first reading of Bill 57.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Savings Plans Act And The Pension Plans Designation Of Beneficiaries Act, Bill 57, and I further move that this bill be now read a first time.

I think, Mr. Speaker, I did that in the wrong spot this afternoon, earlier.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded the hon. Government House Leader have leave to introduce a bill, Bill 57, and that the said bill now be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a bill, “An Act To Amend The Income Tax Savings Plans Act And The Pension Plans Designation Of Beneficiaries Act,” carried. (Bill 57)

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Savings Plans Act And The

Pension Plans Designation Of Beneficiaries Act. (Bill 57)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 57 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 7.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I will not take a lot of time on this motion, but, Mr. Speaker, I will start off debate on the debate on this this evening by proposing an amendment.

SPEAKER: Mover and seconder first, please.

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, Motion 7.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I was getting ahead of myself.

Mr. Speaker, I’ll start debate on this motion this evening by actually offering an amendment.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that this resolution be amended as follows:

In the second recital, by deleting the word “business” and substituting the word “clear sitting,” and by deleting the third recital and substituting instead of the following;

AND THAT the Speaker is ordered to appoint a mediator to assist the parties to resolve the matters described in the report;

AND THAT the mediator appointed by the Speaker shall, within seven clear sitting days, report to this House;

AND THAT if the House is not then in session, the mediator’s report may be tabled as if it were a report under section 19.1 of the *House of Assembly Act*;

AND THAT where the mediator finds that a resolution of the matter cannot be achieved due to unwillingness of the MHA for Humber - Bay of Islands to comply with a reasonable requirement of the Commissioner for Legislative Standard and that as a result the Member’s statutory obligations are still outstanding, the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands shall, as of the date of the tabling of the mediator’s report, be suspended from the House of Assembly in accordance with paragraph 45(1)(c) of the *House of Assembly Act*;

Therefore, the amended resolution would read as follows:

THAT this House concur in the report of the Commissioner for Legislative Standards entitled, *The Joyce Report, April 12, 2022*;

AND THAT the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands is directed to submit the required information to the Commissioner for Legislative Standards within seven clear sitting days of the adoption of this resolution;

AND THAT the Speaker is ordered to appoint a mediator to assist the parties to resolve the matters described in the report;

AND THAT the mediator appointed by the Speaker shall, within seven clear sitting days, report to this House;

AND THAT if the House is not in session, that report may be tabled as if it were a report under section 19.1 of the *House of Assembly Act*;

AND THAT where the mediator finds that the resolution cannot be achieved due to unwillingness by the MHA for Humber - Bay of Islands to comply with the reasonable requirements of the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, and as a result the Member’s statutory obligations are still outstanding, the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands shall as, of that date of the tabling of the mediator’s report, be suspended from the House of Assembly in accordance with paragraph 45(1)(c) of the *House of Assembly Act*;

AND THAT the said suspension be without pay and shall continue until such a time that the Commissioner for Legislative Standards advises the Speaker that the statutory obligations referred to in the report have been met.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: This House will now recess to review the proposed amendment.

Recess

SPEAKER: Are the House Leaders ready?

Order, please!

I have reviewed the proposed amendment and I find that the amendment is in order.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I am happy the amendment is in order.

Thank you.

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Government House Leader for the amendments. I just want to make it quite clear; first, I apologize to the people of the province because we have a lot more issues to discuss than this, as I have said before. But there are times that you must stand on principle and this is one of the times.

How can anybody in this House – anybody – Liberal, PC, independent, NDP, anybody – let an Officer of the House who is in a civil suit – forget what’s going on with the civil suit – have a privacy breach and still have to deal with the Member after asking the person on at least 10 occasions, maybe more if I go back – assign it to somebody else?

This was the crux of it all, and actually I won’t do it now because there is no need. I even had a certificate of dissolution of the company 10 years ago to show we don’t owe a company. My spouse doesn’t own the company. But to have to come in this House and do that is pretty sad. I have been in this House now 20-something years. I think twice I had to withdraw statements in 20-something years.

To have to come into this House, and on principle, go through what I had to go through to get this, which I asked right back at the beginning, probably in September, October, to hand it off to somebody else. Then have the process go through whereby I’m forced to give it to him in front of someone who he tried to expose as a government employee, ended up being his private lawyer. Then say that he couldn’t get a certificate of conduct because I was past the 60 days, which he never even gave me the information to file and then putting in a report.

I don’t care if you’re Liberal, PC, NDP – this is where you have to make people accountable. When you won’t give a Member a certificate of conduct because you’re gone past 60 days, supposedly, because of his negligence not giving you it. And admitting that there are others here but I’m not going to bother them, they’re all right, I’m not going to bother them.

So it is obvious – it is very obvious, I’m not going to belabour this point anymore. The only

thing that I will say to all the Members of the House of Assembly is it could happen to anybody. It happened to me back in 2018, and I won’t get into who said what, but I can tell you, the Minister of Energy – I don’t even know the department – Andrew Parsons.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Industry, Energy and Technology.

E. JOYCE: Industry, Energy and Technology, Andrew Parsons, went outside this House of Assembly and said to the media that the Officer of the House of Assembly made false statements at the meeting of the IEC and made false statements to the Management Commission. He went out publicly and said he made false statements because he couldn’t answer them in the House. And do you know what was done? Zero. Zero.

And the person who asked the question was the Deputy Premier. She is shaking her head; she asked the question. Did Members participate? The Officer of the House, at the time – and this is where it all started – he said one refused to participate. The Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology went and said who was it? And he said Eddie Joyce refused to participate. I’ve produced a letters where I asked for meetings.

This is a lesson for all of us, by the way. When that was confirmed, publicly, that the statement was false, do you know what was done? Zero. That’s why Andrew Parsons walked out of this House and went on. The Member for Baie Verte – Green Bay came over to me. He was walking away and I said no, don’t ruin your career over me. If they’re not going to do it, they’re not going to do it. And he stuck with it, too.

But when you have a Member saying that it’s different. So my thing here tonight is whoever is involved with this thank you very much for getting this done. This is what I have been asking for, for the longest time, to make sure that my obligations as a Member of the House of Assembly is completed, it is done and it is done properly. I won’t go any further on any more details of the report itself, but I just ask the people – all Members of this House – if there is someone answerable to this House of Assembly,

let's make them answerable to this House of Assembly so we don't have to go through this again.

Thank you.

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just for the record, I just can't let this go and say nothing. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I, too, acknowledge that some of our colleagues, I think, got together from both sides and came up with this amendment. I certainly – not just for the Member who can speak for himself, but I think on behalf of us all – think it was the right thing to do. I'm glad to see that, in the end, all Members stuck together to some degree to try to make this situation, I guess, as palatable as it can be. I acknowledge that and thank everyone who was involved in doing it. Not for the Member, per se, although I am glad that it is getting addressed for him, but for all of us because it sets a precedent of how matters are handled or should be handled in this House of Assembly.

Now, with that said, there are a couple of points that I do want to re-emphasize and I raised this the other day but, again, for the record, for *Hansard*. The first point I think needs to be said in all of this is that regardless of what's in the report, regardless of the personalities involved, the reality of it is that this particular Member, who has a civil litigation against the person who was issuing this report, this Member has a privacy breach investigation against the person who issued this report. How can anybody in this House of Assembly tell me this is not a conflict of interest? How could there not be a conflict? Just think about it for a second. I've got a person here who I'm taking to court –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'm going to ask the Member to stay relevant to the amendment to the motion, or to the actual report.

P. LANE: Thank you, Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker –

SPEAKER: I granted the Member a little bit of lenience, as he was being impacted, but I ask you to stay relevant.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm trying very hard to stay relevant to this matter. It's all tied together because it's about the same two individuals. It's what got us here; it's what started this report to begin with.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, is that clearly not only should we be utilizing – well, right now, in this amendment we're talking about utilizing a conciliator, which I agree is the right thing to do, and I think the Member himself has said he's satisfied with that.

But given the fact that we have these other two outstanding matters, my point is that the Commissioner for Legislative Standards should have recused himself. The minute that he was served and saying that I'm taking you to court, he should have recused himself. He should have assigned someone else in his office to say I'm going to look after the other 39 Members, you look after this Member. Because clearly there is either a real or certainly perceived conflict of interest. A lot of this stuff is sort of a judgment call.

A lot of these things here, in terms of what he's going to ask for – and as we seen, the Member had pointed out in this report, to be relevant, that one of the points he made was that he didn't give him the information within the 60 days. While, at the same time, there were other Members in this House who did the very same thing and, oh, that's okay with you; don't do it again. That's okay. But for this particular Member, he was the only one that was treated differently.

So you have to ask yourself, why would he be singled out? Why would he be treated different than other Members? Given the fact that this is sort of a judgment call, and what he asked for, and how he deals with this. So, one could, I think, conclude that perhaps there was a built-in bias. There could have been a built-in bias of the fact that this is the guy who has a litigation

against me, so I'm going to forgive these people over here, you, you and you, but shag him.

Now, whether that's what happened, I definitely think that the perception could be that's what happened. I definitely think that could be a perception and anyone, I think, a reasonable person considering that matter and that circumstance would say that is a real possibility.

I would say that until these two matters are resolved, before the court and the Privacy Commissioner, I would suggest that not just for this particular matter but any further dealings that this Member has with that office should be through either a conciliator or somebody else in that office, not the Commissioner for Legislative Standards. It is fine to do this right now, but we have to put these in every year and there are other things that come up. So I would say that until the matters are resolved, this Member should not have to deal with that individual any further, period. I think that is the sensible thing to do.

The other point I want to make around this process, which I thought about, was, what is our avenue for appeal as Members of this House? What avenue do we have for appeal? Remembering that the Commissioner for Legislative Standards is all for the House and he is supposed to report to us, not the other way around, but he does have duties to carry out under the act.

So if in carrying out those duties, as in this particular case, where he is saying one thing and the Member is saying another thing; he is putting things in the report that the Member didn't do and the Member who swore an Oath of Office, the same as we all did, is standing up publicly in this House of Assembly and he is contradicting things that were said and inferred and so on in these investigations – there is obviously a conflict there somewhere. They both can't be right; somebody has strayed away from exactly the facts of what happened.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, looking at the bigger picture on an ongoing basis for not just the Members of this House of Assembly but future Members, we do need to look at that relationship between the Commissioner for Legislative Standards and this House of Assembly and how

will these things unfold in the future because, to the best of my knowledge, we don't have any appeal.

So he could put whatever he wanted in the report – not saying he did, but he could put whatever he wanted in the report. It could be done in a biased manner as opposed to an unbiased manner. There could be false information in there, false interpretations, misleading information could be in there. If any Member of this House says that's not what happened; that's not true; I swore an oath in office and I'm standing up in this House of Assembly and I'm saying this is not true; this didn't happen – who does he or she appeal that to? Who does the Member appeal it to, to have this matter looked into? Nobody.

My thought would be I could appeal it to the Members of the House of Assembly to say this is what went on, this is not true or the Management Commission or whoever the case might be, but the Management Commission has to be willing to investigate it. It's fine to say yeah, the Management Commission, but they have to have a majority of Members that are willing to investigate it. Of course, if politics gets involved and everything else, for any reason, the majority might say no, we're not going to investigate that. We're going to let that slide.

So I think there should be an automatic – I think we need something in legislation that says it shall be investigated. That if a Member has any kind of a dealing with an Officer of this House, that is untoward, or reports are not being done properly or they're not being treated fairly, it should not go to the Management Commission, who have a majority, who could say no, we don't want to do that. The rules should say they have to do it. The rules should say there shall be an investigation by a third party.

So, in this case, this mediator, whoever it is, it should automatically go to an independent mediator that will do an investigation and will present it to the Management Commission and to the House. Not on the discretion of the majority of the committee, it automatically happens.

We need some protection, because we don't have them right now. We don't have them right now. Again, it's not just about this Member; it's about every Member in this House. It's about making sure everybody is treated fairly and squarely, and it's about accountability. I don't think that's unreasonable to ask for.

I can't see how any Member in this House would not want to have a system in place that ensures every one of us are treated fair and square and if, for some reason, we feel that we were not treated fairly, that there's an automatic mechanism where we can appeal that situation, have it investigated by an independent party who could come back with a report to the House to say if indeed this Member has a legitimate right or they don't. We don't have that right now. I think that's something we should do.

Beyond that, I just wanted to put that out there for the record in fairness for all of us. With that said, I will support the motion because I think the Member has told me he has no problem complying now and, again, I thank whoever was responsible for amending this to make it more palatable.

But as we move forward, I really believe that the Management Commission or this House needs to look at how these situations are dealt with and if we need to update the policies or the rules around this kind of stuff to make sure everybody is guaranteed to be treated fairly and squarely, then that's what we need to do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers to the amendment, shall the amendment carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The amendment is carried.

Back to the main motion, the hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I will only take a couple on minutes but I think it is important to speak, I guess, on behalf of our caucus, the Official Opposition. This issue is not new to the House and by no means am I going to go back and revisit anything that is – but I think probably the important point to make is, we will come into this Legislature, we will not always agree. We're not always in agreement with one another, we're not always on the same side, we can be very adversarial and nothing is truer than government and Opposition.

But, I guess, on this situation, there was a lot of struggles going on. People have their own issues because you are dealing with one Member, putting everything else aside. We all stake our place and we are all held to a high standard. MHAs are held to a very high standard, more than the average person, and that is a lot of responsibility and sometimes we take it. We come in, we sign the Oath of Office when we get elected and we walk away.

But as recently as probably a week or two ago, and don't ask me why, but I actually got reading. I went in and read our Oath of Office. I've done it three times now, but we all should go in and read it again because it's really interesting. One of our commitments is that we have to help the people of the province. Like I said, I spoke earlier today when I said it earlier, but it is really written there and it stuck with me. It's so true. It don't matter who you are, we are all equals.

But in this Legislature it is much the same. This is kind of a different club, as we get our different routes and you're on a different stage, it's a different platform, but, ultimately, we're all individuals trying to do the right thing. We find different ways to get there.

The Member for Humber - Bay of Islands is no different than myself from CBS, or any of my colleagues. You can find yourself sometimes into difficult situations. But to make a decision that you are probably not comfortable with; you are not certain about; you have reservations. I know I'm a very principled person and I think most of my colleagues are pretty well on the

same page. You all struggle. You're not picking one side over the other. You struggle with your principles, your morals; you're trying to get it in your mind.

I don't do this very often either, but I will throw a compliment out to my colleague, the Government House Leader, and I know you're all kind of surprised, but I have to give the man credit. I do give him credit and the Minister of Justice and Public Safety and my colleague, the Deputy Opposition House Leader from Harbour Main, and my colleague from Lab West. It was a combination of everyone in caucus kind of working together. We have to try and find something to go forward; it's not just for this individual. It's probably something to go forward. We need to make improvements.

I think we can all agree some of this stuff is pretty outdated. Some of the ways we do business here is pretty outdated. I think we say that a lot of times in confidence, sometimes in our Management Commission, or probably inside the hall here. I think if there's anything you learn from this, and I'm reinforcing it here now, I think we really have to sit down and make changes to some of this legislation.

I know the Clerk told me today, I asked one question, it's 30 years old. We're doing our Elections Act. I think we need to look at a lot of things, because some of this stuff, it doesn't fit into today's world.

So we're committed to that, and I think my colleague, the Government House Leader, is discussing it. I think he's committed to it, too, to do better because we're talking about one individual today; that could be any of us next week. Until we make the right changes and get this right, and that's not nothing to do with the issue, the mediator will decide that, but it's the principle of what stage we're on and how you can be exposed.

You know, I guess, it's one thing we forget, I think all of us forget; I don't think we forget it every day, but we have families. At the end of the day, we all have families, we all have loved ones that rise and fall with every high and low we go through. We'll only fall this much, they'll fall 10 times more than we'll ever fall. They'll

read the news one day and they'll say wow, why did this person say that? They might turn on the station in here and say what are they getting on with? I tells my mother not to watch it too much because that becomes a problem.

But we rise and fall; they go big time. We're used to this world. We rise to it. I'll laugh, that's nothing mom, that's a part of the House. But on a serious note, everybody have families. The Member for Humber - Bay of Islands has a family home that cares about him; I have a family home that cares about me. So we need to work together. We don't always come together as a happy group, but I think we need to kind of learn from all this stuff and try to make things better for all of us on a go-forward basis, on this issue and many other issues.

I do commend the Government House Leader and thank all individuals who worked together. I think we found a reasonable solution to an ongoing issue. Hopefully, at the end of the day, it satisfies everyone's needs and everyone is happy and we can move forward.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers, shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you very much Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that this House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Supply to consider the Estimates of the Legislature and the Executive Council.

SPEAKER: The motion is that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a

Committee of the Whole on Supply to consider the Estimates for the Legislature and the Executive Council.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

Are the House Leaders ready?

We are now considering the Estimates of the Legislature.

CLERK: The Legislature: 1.1.01 through 7.1.01 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 to 7.1.01 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 7.1.01 carried.

CLERK: The total.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Legislature, total heads, carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the Estimates of the Legislature carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Legislature carried without amendment.

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

CLERK: The Lieutenant-Governor's Establishment, 1.1.01.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 carry?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here this evening and for my officials that are watching and participating as well. I will say that we were doing various Estimates tonight and it is a little different process. As people who are watching can tell, there are no officials here in the Legislature with us. It is a Committee of the Whole and we will have questions throughout this – both Government House, we'll have OCIO, the Women's Policy Office and Labrador Indigenous Affairs, for example, because all of them fit under the Office of the Executive Council, which provides whole of government support. So we will go through the various Estimates. I know my colleagues have many, many questions.

I do want to point out because we are going to talk about Treasury Board and I do want to say in Newfoundland and Labrador we have – I am going to get you the exact number now – I think it is 7,345 employees. I am just getting you the exact number – 7,237 core government positions – filled positions within government and they are hard working. They are professional. They are incredibly dedicated to providing the

services to the people of the province and I think all of us in this Legislature thank them for their efforts and certainly appreciate what they do for the people of the province.

Then there are many more that do provide services in health care and education and so on that are not part of core government but part of the civil service overall. I know we want to thank them, recognize them and appreciate them. As we move forward now, I want to say appreciation to Treasury Board and to Executive Council for their guidance and support to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador throughout the year. I know many of them are participating and listening this evening to ensure that the questions are answered fulsomely, so I thank them for their efforts.

On that note, Mr. Chair, I will await the questions.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Subhead 1.1.01.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Chair.

Under the 1.1.01, Government House, the salaries amount last year went over budget by \$66,500. I suspect I probably know the answer to that because we had a retirement, I believe. I was just wondering what makes up the type of positions that would be included in this \$600,000.

S. COADY: Thank you for the question.

You are indeed correct. There was a retirement payout last year. The slight increase for this year, coming into '22-'23, is because of a slight salary increase that was across government last year. There are 11 funded positions at Government House; 10 of which are filled, at this point in time.

There is, if I can use the term, a human resources evolution going on, refresh going on at Government House, indeed across all of government, because there's a requirement now for social media assistance and changes sometimes in the positions.

But that is the human resource component; there are 11 funded positions and 10 are filled: private secretary, kitchen staff, residence staff and a gardener make up the staff of the LG.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay, thank you.

S. COADY: And we should recognize that, I think it's three years ago yesterday, the first female Lieutenant-Governor was sworn in.

T. WAKEHAM: Happy anniversary.

S. COADY: I think it was three years, yeah.

T. WAKEHAM: Wow. It's a good thing to celebrate.

S. COADY: Yes.

T. WAKEHAM: Under the Purchased Service heading there was an increase in expenditure there of approximately \$3,900. I was wondering what type of services were purchased.

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

There was a new required copier and there was a backfilling of a chef. I understand that the chef needed some support and backfilling of that position.

T. WAKEHAM: So that would have been a temporary position for Purchased Services?

S. COADY: Yeah.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay, thank you.

I have no further questions.

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

J. DINN: My apologies, I was going to get Lela to fill in for me.

CHAIR: Sorry?

J. DINN: The Member for Torngat.

CHAIR: Okay.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: What headings are we at? I'm just getting set up.

CHAIR: We're on page 25 of the Estimates schedule: Government House.

L. EVANS: No questions on this section.

CHAIR: No further questions?

L. EVANS: No.

CHAIR: Is the House ready for the question?

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: Office of the Executive Council: 2.1.01 through 2.8.03 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 to 2.8.03 inclusive carry?

The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Chair.

Under the Salaries for the Premier's Office, the salary budget for '22-'23 is expected to increase to \$1.7 million, which is an increase. I was wondering what positions have been added and what they might be?

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

Overall, you'll see the Estimates total for the Premier's Office is actually slightly increased this year, but overall down over the years. So if you go back five or six years ago, I think the budget was over \$2 million and now it's down to \$1.9 million. If you look at in 2014-2015, I think it was over \$2 million so we are holding the line, as we are across government, we're holding the line on expenditures.

There are two new positions. We have talked about it in the House quite a number of times and they are in Central Newfoundland and, again, it's enhancing the reach of the Premier's office. You'll also appreciate, for the people that are watching, there is an office on the West Coast with an employee on the West Coast and there is also, of course, in Labrador the Office of Labrador Affairs that is staffed. So there are specific offices throughout the province that provide that kind of outreach for the Premier's office.

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you.

We won't debate the merits in this particular exercise.

Under Transportation and Communications, again, the budget for that particular area is being increased from an actual expenditure of \$110,000 to a budgeted expenditure of \$189,000. I'm wondering how that number was determined.

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

The restated original budget is \$132,000 and there is a slight increase of \$57,000. That is the Premier requires travel for national files to Ottawa, but also part of national files because of the Council of the Federation. The Premier is also assisting on some big files around health as well. It is trips to Labrador; you can appreciate the Premier has been making sure that he visits Labrador on a regular basis. I think he is very committed to reconciliation. It is also for the Atlantic Premiers meetings. So, again, it is all about that relationship.

As you know, he's also had to do some other travel within the province, as well as other travel across the country. So we've increased that mostly because there has been an overall increase in the cost of travel as well as requirements for relationship building.

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you.

Can you also explain under Purchased Services, what the \$14,900 is budgeted for?

S. COADY: A very good question but let me have someone get you the details of that. I'm getting a message very quickly. Purchased Services are – just let me get a proper response for that and I'll come back to you.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

I'll move on, then, to 2.2.01 under Salaries, again. Last year, \$2.2 million was budgeted, \$2.3 million was spent and this year the budget is again back to \$2.2 million. I guess some clarification on just what exactly is going on there.

S. COADY: Sure.

I'll be happy to answer the other question while I do that. It's for general office services, so things like printing, document management, copying, that type of thing is under the Purchased Services.

Coming to 2.2.01, Executive Support, the slight increase is because we've spent money – I think I've mentioned in the House about a change team, a change desk. As you know, we've talked about transformations and modernization across government. We've consolidated a change desk that is providing support across government to assist in those changes.

So that is the difference in salary last year. We've been able to accommodate that within the budget this year, but last year was when we started the change desk. We have a change desk that we've put in place for our transformations and modernizations, to support that activity.

T. WAKEHAM: Under the Professional Services category there's a budget of \$12,500 and an actual expenditure of almost \$9.8 million.

So can you provide a breakdown of how that \$9.8 million was spent, because the budget has gone back down to \$12,500 again this year?

S. COADY: Thank you for the question.

This is indeed important. As you can appreciate, as money is spent it comes out of the financial assistance budget of the Treasury Board and then into the appropriate location, as it's being spent. The \$5.2 billion rate mitigation, financial restructuring required some professional services and that was just over \$5 million. And, of course, the Rothschild report is the other big report that's in there as well.

T. WAKEHAM: So this is where the Rothschild report was charged to?

S. COADY: Correct.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

S. COADY: And so both the Rothschild and rate mitigation, we needed professionals –

T. WAKEHAM: The lawyers' fees –

S. COADY: The lawyers, accountants, the professional services that were required to make sure that was done appropriately.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

So are all the expense related to the Rothschild report concluded now, or will we see more expenses for Rothschild in this fiscal year?

S. COADY: Thank you.

I'm not sure if all the bills have been received. This was only worth \$4.4 million in this particular funding, so there may be an outstanding invoice. As you're aware, we are now pausing, looking at that report, and if we require more services, then it will be on a separate contract.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

So to clarify, there's \$4.4 million of that \$9,794,700 –

S. COADY: \$4.461 million, yeah.

T. WAKEHAM: That's related directly to the Rothschild and the others are related to the rate mitigation lawyer's and accountant's fees.

S. COADY: Correct.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay, one more on this area.

Under the Purchased Services category, again, we had a budget of \$103,000, we spent \$117,000, but we're going down again this year. I just wonder what the \$117,000 was spent on.

S. COADY: Just before I move on to that, I want to also say that all the bills have been paid for phase one for the Rothschild report, just got that in.

The \$117,000 was for some expenditures from the Premier's Economic Recovery Team. There are some expenditures there, I guess it was \$13,500, kind of related to the Premier's Economic Recovery expenditures.

T. WAKEHAM: And what about the rest, \$13,500 was the Premier's Economic Recovery Team?

S. COADY: Right, that was the overture of the budget. You want a full breakdown of the Purchased Services? I'll get that for you.

T. WAKEHAM: Yeah, what made up the \$117,000 in total?

S. COADY: I'll get that. Professional, no that's Purchased versus Professional. I don't have that at my fingertips but I'll certainly get it for you.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

So if I could back up for a second though, you said phase one of the Rothschild report is now completed, which is \$4.4 million. That implies there is going to be another phase or ...?

S. COADY: No, it doesn't imply that there's going to be another phase. What I said was we're pausing now, reviewing that report. Should we take a decision that we want to prepare an asset or we want to do more work, then we would continue on? But, right now, everything is concluded.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

That's another question for Question Period at some point.

S. COADY: Sorry, I'm just getting there's also one-time money in there to replenish the bravery medals for the Protocol Office. But that's under Purchased Services; I'll get a detailed note on the Purchased Services.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay. I'm going to jump over – I still have 53 seconds – under 2.3.01, under the Salaries heading again. Salaries went over budget slightly last year by \$49,700 and this year it's actually being increased again. So, again, some context about why it was over and are positions being added here?

S. COADY: There have been some changes to the way Communications is being done. You can appreciate there's more creative design work being done. I can tell you that, for example, you have seen creative development around the child abuse campaign; around some of the child care information that is being put out there; some of the Come Home Year, and it comes through this. That is why we have, now, some creative direction in that division and that's why it's basically reprofile – we have reprofiled money across Executive Council to increase the salary level there to ensure that we have that creative designing.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

I remind the Member that his speaking time is expired.

2.1.01 to 2.8.03.

MHA Evans.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Just a couple of quick, general questions to start off with. Are there any plans to alter the attrition targets in the incoming years, both for government departments and for agencies, boards and commissions? And also how many of the current targets have been calculated, for

example, is the target for government departments 0.05 per cent and not, say, 1.5 per cent?

S. COADY: Thank you for the question.

No, we have not altered the attrition targets at this point. There were 51 positions that were changed throughout government last year and we are anticipating the same or similar again this year under attrition.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

I guess the standard question always is about the binder.

S. COADY: Yes, you will have that at the end of the –

L. EVANS: Copies of the binders as well.

Would you have an update on the Mandatory Vaccination Policy for government employees? How many employees have received two doses of the vaccine? How many are non-compliant with the policy and are, thus, on unpaid leave?

S. COADY: I can go by memory. It was not in Estimates, but I can go by memory. The Mandatory Vaccination Policy remains in place. As you know, when we brought it in, in December, it would be reviewed within six months. But in an effort to protect employees of government, to ensure that there is no transmission and to set that requirement, it remains in place.

It will be reviewed. We said when we brought it in there would be a six-month review. So I'll say that.

And I understand throughout the entirety of government, that means through core government agencies, boards and commissions, there are 30 people affected.

There are almost 100 per cent fully vaccinated.

L. EVANS: So how many would have applied for and received non-medical exemptions?

S. COADY: Allow me to get that information.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

So going to the line items now, just a quick question there on 2.3.01, Communications Branch. I was just looking at Salaries there. There was an increase, I think, my hon. colleague also asked about that as well. Salaries did increase, but we notice that there's no overall increase for Women and Gender Equality or Indigenous Affairs.

So I was just wondering why was Salaries increased for the Communications Branch?

S. COADY: The salary increases are across government. So are you suggesting – is the question about the salary increase or the question about the positions? This particular communications actually provides service to women's policy and gender equality. They have a communications person, but they would get communication support from this division as well.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

In 2.3.02, Public Engagement, are there any further consultations planned through engageNL regarding the implementation of the Health Accord?

S. COADY: I'm sorry could you repeat that question. Are there any –

L. EVANS: – further consultations planned through engageNL regarding the implementation of the Health Accord?

S. COADY: That's a policy question, and I'm not aware. I can check with staff and see, but I'm not aware, it would be under the Department of Health, if they require more consultations.

L. EVANS: Because there were consultations in the development of the –

S. COADY: Yes, there was an outstanding amount of consultations. It would be under the Department of Health as to whether or not they require further consultations or the use of that division, right.

L. EVANS: Correct.

S. COADY: Public Engagement, sorry.

L. EVANS: Would you be able to give us a general summary of the activities undertaken in the past year by the Premier's Youth Council, and how many people sit on the council, and how many are selected?

S. COADY: I would have to get that policy information. I will endeavour to get that for you.

L. EVANS: Okay.

S. COADY: Again, that's not in the Estimates Book.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

2.5.02, Intergovernmental Affairs.

S. COADY: Yes.

L. EVANS: With an eye to the review on the equalization formula in 2024, has work continued on this file to help ensure that our province gets the fairest deal possible?

S. COADY: Absolutely. Under both Intergovernmental Affairs, who deals across government, as well as in Finance, we discuss, review and speak to our federal colleagues about equalization on an ongoing basis. So, yes, there would be ongoing work on that file.

L. EVANS: So work has continued.

S. COADY: I do have some information on the Youth Council. There have been two virtual meetings with the Premier's Youth Council relating to – and they have been virtual, so no cost – clean energy, youth leadership and retention. And there are 25 representatives on the council.

L. EVANS: Okay. Thank you.

Moving on to 2.6.02, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

S. COADY: Ms. Dempster.

L. EVANS: So 2.6.02, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation. Would you have an update on the status of the implementation on the Calls to Action for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which items have been addressed in the previous year and which ones are in the planning process?

L. DEMPSTER: The 94 calls to –

L. EVANS: Yes. That's the ones for the Truth and Reconciliation that apply to the province.

L. DEMPSTER: That's right.

Thank you for the question.

Thirty-three, I believe, of the 94 are being led from our office. We're in the process, right now, of working across departments to get an update on what Calls to Action have been implemented and what calls are outstanding. I can loop back and provide a more fulsome answer for you, but I don't think that piece of work is finished yet.

L. EVANS: Okay.

I missed most of it by the time I got my earpiece in, but this is recorded anyway, correct?

L. DEMPSTER: I'll start again. The 94 Calls –

L. EVANS: That's fine. As long as it is recorded, in the interest of time.

What issues arose out of the discussions at the Premier-Indigenous Leaders' Roundtable back in October? So what issues came out of that and are there any follow-up actions being undertaken as a result?

L. DEMPSTER: We had, I am happy to say, a very successful, wonderful roundtable again held in Corner Brook. It should have been Labrador and actually planning is well under way for the next one to happen in Labrador. I believe it is sometime this fall. There is ongoing discussion with the Indigenous leaders. Every week we meet combined but, in addition to that, I have ongoing dialogue. Like just today, I had a meeting with one of the Indigenous leaders and maybe three other Indigenous leaders yesterday,

So there were a number of agenda items – I am not recalling them all from memory now – that was on the agenda for Corner Brook last fall. Basically, we reach out to the Indigenous folks in the province, Friendship Centres, the elected Indigenous leaders and we invite them to bring agenda items forward. There are a number of things that we are in the process with now around the Beothuk statue, the murals. There was a request that there be increased emphasis put on mental health and, right now, we have a staff person that is working toward setting up a mental health forum. We will have a date for that very soon.

I am going from memory from that agenda. I can't think of anything else right now, I say to the Member across the way, from that meeting other than we reach out to them, they give us the agenda items and then we act on those initiatives. Some of the ones I am looking at here around reconciliation, one of the topics was cultural sensitivity training, the Innu anti-racism training. All of these initiatives are moving forward and were discussed at that table.

Indigenous education is quite an active conversation in our shop, working closely with the Minister of Education and his department. There has been a number of MOUs that have been completed. There is an education advisory committee that is working on Indigenous curriculum for schools across our province. There is a whole, long list and I am happy to share them with you after if you wish.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister, and I remind the Member that her speaking time has expired.

Subheads 2.1.01 to 2.8.03 inclusive.

The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Chair.

I just want to go back for a second to 2.2.01 under Professional Services. Minister, you mentioned there was \$5 million in there broken down between, I think, accountants and lawyers to do it. Can we get a breakdown exactly how

that money was spent? You can forward it on to us.

S. COADY: I'd be happy to do that and may I also answer the question that you had for Purchased Services –

T. WAKEHAM: Yes.

S. COADY: And that was for protocol-related awards, support for diplomatic visits, normal office services, printing, documentation, those types of things, regular – but the awards were the big one.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay, thank you.

2.3.01, under the Salaries again, the Communications Branch, you mentioned some creative design work. I'm wondering if you can tell me exactly how many positions were added there.

S. COADY: Thank you.

I understand there are two contractual positions.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

Under the same area, under Professional Services, there was \$113,500 spent last year. Again just wondering where that money was spent, i.e., which firm, what projects, what campaigns. The budget was \$288,000. It wasn't spent last year, but it's budgeted back up again at the same level, so just want to understand why.

S. COADY: Thank you for the questions.

We normalized the budget because there may be important campaigns that are required throughout the year and that we want to have the monies available, but we only do the campaigns if required. So that's why there was less money spent last year than we would normally have budgeted for, because we didn't have as much a requirement.

I've already mentioned to you things like the child abuse campaigns, the child care, the Come Home Year. Those are the types of campaigns that would be held throughout that and any

writing or document services that we require would also go underneath there.

T. WAKEHAM: So all of those, you'd be able to get a list of those easy enough.

S. COADY: I would ask for them right now.

T. WAKEHAM: Yes.

The same way under the Purchased Services, just a breakdown of the \$103,000. I assume the same explanation when it comes to the budget, but the actual breakdown of the expenditure.

S. COADY: Yeah, there was less media campaigns than were required. So, across government, we only do these campaigns if required. As you can see, there was a decrease last year, but we normalized the budgeted back again, because you don't know what you may require for next year. So we normalized that budget, but it depends on what the requirements are across government.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

I've noticed that government recently updated their provincial logo and the branding. I was just wondering what the cost was of that.

S. COADY: I don't think there was a whole – no money spent on adjusting the logo to reflect the province's full name. It was done internally.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

S. COADY: I knew I saw that somewhere.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay, if I go down to 2.3.02 again, under the Salaries heading, we had a savings last year of \$277,000 in the salary budget. I guess outline if there was actual positions vacant, for how long they were vacant and the salary again is expected to go up this year. So I'm just wondering what the plan is here.

S. COADY: Thank you for the question.

There are 12 funded positions in that, and they had changes and active recruitment for five of them. So you can see that there was some movement within that division, and that's why

the salary level has been adjusted because they also are anticipating the rehiring of these people.

I do know there's some policy shop change. One of the policy people moved to another shop within Executive Council because of the services. I mean Public Engagement doesn't necessarily – I think it was thought that they could move the policy area, so there was some movement within that. But I can tell you the Public Engagement did 26 engagements and consultation projects from June to March of '22.

T. WAKEHAM: That was my next question.

S. COADY: Oh, was it? I had anticipated that one.

T. WAKEHAM: So 26?

S. COADY: Twenty-six, everything from – and I'll just run through them very quickly. Budget '21 and '22, agricultural policy framework, the building accessibility, the Coat of Arms, the child care, drinking water action plan, the embalmers and funeral directors changes that were made, the cannabis policy evaluation, mortgage brokers, moose management, the Red Indian Lake name change, the renaming of the Mary March Museum – tremendous, 26 different ones.

T. WAKEHAM: Would you have information on how the feedback was provided? How much, for example, was received online? How much was received in-person sessions, in terms of a breakdown between the two categories.

S. COADY: So of the 26 different projects, there were 39 virtual and/or in-person sessions, and the number of participants was 6,430.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay, let's skip on over to 2.4.01, Financial Administration. Again, in this particular area, it was a salary savings of approximately \$110,000 last year. I want to know what positions are actually held here in this particular line item.

S. COADY: So again, Financial Administration, it's the administration across this particular division, and there are 10 funded positions. There were three vacancies and two are under active recruitment. The third one is a contractual

and it may not be required. So they're kind of holding that one to see if it's required or not, but the other two are in active recruitment and that's why the salary has been rightsized again.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

S. COADY: Normal sized. I won't say rightsized.

T. WAKEHAM: There's a small little bit of revenue there that was received last year, \$4,400. What was that about?

S. COADY: Just sometimes there's repayment. This is very, very little, but it reflects receipts of the revenue related to repayment of any expenditures across the entire Executive Council. So if someone had to pay something in or if there's money moving, it's just extra money.

T. WAKEHAM: Nothing to do with the Auditor General's report, is it?

S. COADY: No, nothing to do with the Auditor General's report.

T. WAKEHAM: The credit card repayments.

S. COADY: I'm saying that, but I also am checking.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

I'm going to move over quickly under the Intergovernmental Affairs now, if I could.

S. COADY: I am right.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay, good.

So the big question here, I guess, is one we've talked about in the House is wondering if you could provide an update on the possibility of any increased revenues in future years from the federal government when it comes to health care funding – the health care transfers.

S. COADY: As you know the Council of the Federation is working very diligently on this very issue. It is probably the top priority, is talking to the federal government around the health transfers. I hate pulling numbers off the

top of my head because there are so many numbers floating around, but the level of support from the federal government over the lifetime of medicare in the country has been declining.

T. WAKEHAM: Right, significantly.

S. COADY: It used to be 50 per cent and now it's somewhere – and I don't want to use a number, but it's somewhere in the quarters. It has changed significantly. While there has been additional funding received by the federal government, and we're thankful for it across the country, probably there is a real need in all jurisdictions across this country for more supportive funding for health care.

At the COF table, the Council of the Federation table, as well as the Finance Minister's table, this is an ongoing and required topic. As you know, there's real work being done with the federal government on this very issue. So we would hope – we would anticipate more so than hope. We would anticipate that there will changes to that funding formula.

I will say – and you would have heard by the federal government – they have been funding certain things. We will receive \$27 million from the federal government to help with the surgical wait-list, as an example, and that money is not necessarily shown in this particular budget because we only received it days before we gave our own budget. So it is not reflected in here, but the money will be received by the provincial government. Of course, I can tell you that the Minister of Health will make good use of that money.

T. WAKEHAM: The next important one, of course, for all of us again has to do with the upcoming review, I think it is in 2024, of the equalization program. I am wondering what work is being done by the province and what work, working with other provinces, on how to prepare for this particular review.

S. COADY: Well, again, from a policy perspective, as you can appreciate, there is a fair amount of concern in the country around the equalization formula. It is not just Newfoundland and Labrador; it is across the country. So there will be, as we edge towards 2024, a tremendous amount of work will be

done around the formula itself and we'll see how that engages.

But I can tell you that as a Minister of Finance and across the country it is something that, you know, is raised repeatedly at the FPT – the federal-provincial-territorial tables. As we move toward 2024, of course, there will be more granular work being done on the formula itself. Because it is a federal government program, it does not mean that the federal government will move the parameters on the equalization formula but it is our fervent desire, as many provinces across this country, that they would.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I remind the Member that his speaking time has expired.

2.1.01 to 2.8.03 inclusive.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Going back to 2.6.02, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation. I was just wondering, what additional things have been put into place that would actually help children either stay in their Indigenous community or in the close proximity to the community that would allow them to maintain ties with their culture, traditions and also their family members?

L. DEMPSTER: (Inaudible) Minister of CSSD from '17 forward, about 3½ years. One of the things I look back at very humbly, we brought a new *Children, Youth and Families Act* into this House in, I believe it was, May of '18 and then we took a year to put the regs and things in place and it was fully implemented in June '19 and it was a very substantive bill. It was a very progressive piece of legislation. So much so that after that, when we went to an FPT meeting with ministers around the country, folks were actually asking us if we would share what we had just implemented in Newfoundland and Labrador.

In that bill, which now my colleague is responsible for, there are a number of measures and mechanisms in place that would ensure that – well, first of all, I will say that removing a child from a home is a last resort. If that has to happen, sometimes for a period of time, we have

also done some agreements with folks like in Nain where workers may have more local knowledge than, for example, CSSD social workers and they may find a spot with an auntie or grandma, et cetera.

But in the event that a child has to be removed, there are now things like a Cultural Connection Plan. So there has to be a plan attached to that individual child. I know of circumstances where sometimes the child is flown back regularly to community in terms of we are speaking of Indigenous children, or sometimes families are brought out to see that child. I know that happened on numerous, numerous occasions when I was the minister in the department, if they were around the Island. But I was happy to see that more and more we were having success either keeping children in community or at least keeping them in other parts of Labrador.

One of the other things that was put in place from that bill – I am going back from memory a while – is we also now reach out to Indigenous leaders in those communities and we inform them when court is going ahead so that they have an opportunity to attend court and to be heard. When I finish speaking, if there is anything that my colleague would like to add to that process, he certainly can.

But I just wanted to clarify something in an earlier question that you asked regarding the 94 calls. I said 33 in my department but of the 94 calls, 33 are under provincial jurisdiction and the remaining would be federal. And when you asked the earlier question, one of the bigger things I guess that we did that sort of slipped my mind in working in consultation with the Indigenous leaders was on September 30, the Truth and Reconciliation Day that I believe was appreciated and was just another step of our relationship building on this path of reconciliation.

Also while we were in Corner Brook at the Premier-Indigenous Leaders' Roundtable, we received a very wonderful presentation from the Friendship Centre on behalf of all the Friendship Centres combined, and also around the anti-racism piece. There was a ministerial anti-racism

committee struck, four ministers on that; myself and the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills were the co-chairs, along with the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Education.

I don't know right off, but it was a massive amount of work. We met with maybe more than 100 groups, for sure – I don't have that number right off – as we worked towards reaching a place within our province where we don't have to talk about anti-racism at the level that we're talking about it now. Clearly, always sending the message that we are against racism in all its various forms and manifestations.

So those were a couple that I missed. I'm not sure on the *Child Welfare Act*, if there's anything my colleague would want to add, or did I cover most of that?

CHAIR: The Chair is recognizing the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

J. ABBOTT: Just to add to the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs's comments, we have signed a protocol with the Innu Nation around child welfare matters. It's been well received by all parties and have been lauded within the Innu communities as the way of doing business. The results are showing in terms of the number of children in care has dropped considerably and the number of children having to come out of community has dropped considerably.

So we're quite pleased with that, and supportive of both the Innu and the Nunatsiavut Governments in terms of them self-managing the child welfare program in the future and we'll be working with them as they embark on that journey.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Also, I'd like to thank you, Minister, for all the work you've been doing. It's been actually having quite success, not only with the Innu protocol but with the upcoming Innu inquiry, and just the work and communication and you making yourself available for issues that arise, I must say. Also, to work with NG towards transitioning to taking over child services.

Again, I seem to be thanking and complimenting you quite a bit, but I think it's –

J. ABBOTT: Keep it up.

L. EVANS: – because of the work that you've been doing. So I must commend you on that.

J. ABBOTT: Thank you.

L. EVANS: Going to 2.7.02, Labrador Affairs, one of the questions that has been coming up is: Are there any plans to open up satellite offices for Labrador in other parts of our beautiful Big Land. For example, now with Lab West, the office that was closed, is that something that you would look at reopening? We have all kinds of issues that are arising from our caribou being poached, to mining activities, to the airstrips and we just saw with COVID and because our regions are so vast, there's such distance in between.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: It's a fair question. It's one that's come up a number of times. You're right, we call it the Big Land for a reason; 6 per cent of the population spread over a really large land mass.

There's no plan right now. Historically, the office that's there in Goose Bay, it does serve the South Coast of Labrador. It does serve the North Coast and it does serve Lab West. We've been making concerted effort to try and have staff visit other areas. That's been happening, I think it's fair to say more in the last couple of years than it has been historically. Even in my absence, there's been officials from Labrador Affairs that have gone to Lab West, that have met with municipal leaders, et cetera.

The topics that you mentioned are all very important. I guess the interesting thing about Labrador Affairs, sometimes I feel like I'm the minister responsible for everything and authority for nothing, but for that reason, we work very, very closely across departments.

The caribou is a file that I'm quite close to. We've had multiple meetings, myself and the Minister of FFA. We met with three ministers in

Quebec. Planning is well under way to go to the Lower North Shore of Quebec and to sit down with leadership in that community.

Myself and Minister Abbott have been working very closely on the transient Housing file, on the Indigenous relations file. So, for a small shop, we're working very hard with a number of departments across government, perhaps I can safely say all of them.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

I was also wondering, one of the questions that keep coming up is: What's the status on the road to the North Coast? Listening to the MP for Labrador recently in the media, she said that it's gone off the rails and she doesn't understand why. So it would be good to get an update there and some clarification.

L. DEMPSTER: Actually, I had a conversation this afternoon with one of the AngajukKàks in your riding on that very matter.

So the road to the North Coast, the prefeasibility is something that I am equally anxious to see get moving. I did say it won't be the be-all, end-all answer, given how many road closures we've suffered from, what locals call, an old-fashioned winter. We just had students from five schools in Southeast that were stranded two days in May month because the road from Red Bay to Lodge Bay was closed due to the massive snowfall again just a couple of days ago.

But where we are with that, the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure has been working with the federal government through Transport Canada. They have recently come to terms on a contribution agreement that they are ready to sign, federally and provincially.

On the 11th of April, the draft scope of work for the prefeasibility study was sent to Nunatsiavut, to Innu Nation and to NunatuKavut Community Council. To date, we don't have their comments back. When we do our weekly leadership call on Friday, I will raise it. If they have comments, concerns, or have feedback they want to give us, we'll set them a deadline to get back with that.

Following that, then, it goes through a Cabinet process and then there will be a contract signed

with a consultant and that work will begin, hopefully, in the not-too-distant future.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

I remind the hon. Member that her speaking time has expired.

2.1.01 to 2.8.03 inclusive.

MHA Wakeham.

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Chair.

Just to get right back at it. Before I do, there was one item I had in the Premier's Office. It was a practice that former premiers were entitled to administrative support for a couple of years after they retired or resigned. I don't know if there is still money allocated in the budget for the admin support for the most recently resigned premier or anything like that. There used to be a practice, apparently, and I'm just curious if there is any money allocated to the former premier for administration support.

S. COADY: I'll certainly investigate and get back to you; I have somebody who will investigate that for me.

I did want to, if I may, to the MHA.

T. WAKEHAM: Yes.

S. COADY: We were discussing the value of the federal government's investment in Newfoundland and Labrador with regard to health care. When I looked at the actual numbers, it is about 20 per cent. So the federal government contributes to the Newfoundland and Labrador's medicare system about 20 per cent.

Now, that is not referring to the funding, for example, they're giving that is coming out of COVID. For example, I just told you about the \$27 million. But on the average, it's based on per capita, as you're well aware, but it's about 20 per cent. So there is a significant request gone in from the Council of the Federation to bring that up. I don't think we will ever get to where it was when it was initially started, but it certainly will be good to have more than just 20 per cent.

T. WAKEHAM: Because if you are going to truly follow the idea of the Terms of Union and equal access and everything else, certainly 20 per cent is a small cry of what it is costing us to deliver health care services in this province. And hopefully, like you said, you will have success for your counterparts and pushing for that.

In terms of those discussions, are they formalized discussions or are they just part of a general table discussion? Like is there a group that formally looks at it and says hey, we are going to tackle health care transfers and we are going to go hard on that particular topic; or is it part of your overall meetings when you meet, type of thing?

S. COADY: So at the Council of the Federation tables are the Premiers' table –

T. WAKEHAM: Right.

S. COADY: – and they have formulized and they have made this their number one issue and they have formulized that as an issue. If you are looking at the Finance ministers' table, it becomes our number one discussion point but it is more formulated at the Council of the Federation table.

T. WAKEHAM: But it is a number one issue?

S. COADY: It is our number one issue.

I will also say – I am just getting more information – the Premier is one of three premiers working with federal ministers on this very important issue of health care. So he is part of a small team on behalf of the Council of the Federation working on this.

You asked about whether or not there was administrative support for the former premier. There is not. Apparently that ended a while back.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay. I was just curious.

The Atlantic Loop, can you give us an update on what is happening with that concept?

S. COADY: Certainly, that would be under Industry, Energy and Technology and there has been a tremendous amount of discussion with that department, but I would suggest it is probably a question that is better suited for the minister who is working on that very active issue. I can tell you it is something that is being actively discussed and pursued. It is an important topic for all of Atlantic Canada actually.

T. WAKEHAM: Good. We will make sure we ask.

The \$27 million you just referenced that the feds are going to provide for the surgical wait-list – that is money that you said, I think, not reflected in the budget?

S. COADY: Correct. It came very close to budget date and as you can appreciate, having worked in Finance, that all of the papers were done at that particular time. So we will be receiving that money but we will also be putting it –

T. WAKEHAM: You'll be amending the budget to include that? Just while you are amending your budget, I just thought I might get you to amend some –

S. COADY: Good try.

But that money will be received and it will obviously be spent on that particular issue.

T. WAKEHAM: It has to be spent on that account.

Under 2.5.01, under the Salaries section of Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat, again last year the Salaries went over budget my approximately \$34,000. This year we've seen another increase in the budget. So I am wondering what the increase is for. Are there new positions here in this particular area?

S. COADY: As you can see, it was decreased last year because there were two positions under active recruitment. So there are now 10 funded and there are 10 filled positions. The number has

come back to what was required. You're talking about under 2.5.02?

T. WAKEHAM: 2.5.01.01.

S. COADY: 01.01, sorry. I was on the wrong one.

T. WAKEHAM: Yeah, you were just below it.

S. COADY: I was on the one after. Let me just check that one.

Oh, it was payout of annual leave. So it was a little bit higher last year because there was a requirement of a payout of an annual leave and then we reprofiled some money from the other section that I was in –

T. WAKEHAM: Right.

S. COADY: – reprofiled that into this position to rebalance across Intergovernmental Affairs for some requirements for this area.

T. WAKEHAM: So there are no new positions, it is just a swing –

S. COADY: It is moving of the salary monies.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

Again, under Purchased Services, there is \$279,700. It seems like the budget last year, the actual revised, was the exact budget so I am wondering if there is a listing of what services were purchased here.

S. COADY: Certainly, they're standard. That's why it is pretty much – it is the Council of the Federation is \$20,800; the Council of Atlantic Premiers is \$234,000; the New England Governors is \$13,000; and then there are some document services.

T. WAKEHAM: So those are pretty every year.

S. COADY: They are every year; that is why it is so, what I am going to call, flat. It is the same amount,

T. WAKEHAM: Under 2.5.02, we have already talked about the Salaries saving there and the fact that it has been moved up to the other one.

S. COADY: Yes.

T. WAKEHAM: Again, under the Professional Services category there, the same explanation? There seems to be a standard amount.

S. COADY: It does but that really reflects third party legal advice for international and national trade. We're now actively, as of country, in negotiations with the United Kingdom, with Indonesia, with India for new trade agreements and these are professional services around those trade agreements.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

Under the Grants and Subsidies there is a small amount of money there. I am not sure what that would be budgeted for.

S. COADY: That's our contribution the Internal Trade Secretariat.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay. Small amount.

S. COADY: Yes.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay. Now I guess –

S. COADY: Just if I can go back because I didn't mention this. So that \$27 million would show up in the fall fiscal update. So any new monies that we would gain from the federal government discussion, when I update in the fall, you will see those come – that is how it flows through.

T. WAKEHAM: Hopefully, they won't spend it before then.

S. COADY: Well, likely.

T. WAKEHAM: Get these surgeries done.

I am ready to move quickly over to Indigenous Affairs. I apologize if I repeat some of the questions. I am wondering what work has been done to support the upcoming apology to the Newfoundland and Labrador residential school survivors and the families impacted. Is there a

timeline for such an apology and are there any funds set aside to support an apology?

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you for the question.

The apology is something that we committed to and had hoped to carry out right before COVID hit. As you can appreciate, especially in some of the isolated Indigenous communities, that wasn't possible. We have kept the file active and there has been ongoing conversation and just maybe within the last number of weeks a draft text has gone out to each of the Indigenous groups.

Now we have different people in the office that are assigned to each of the groups to move this along. What the apology will look like for one group may look very different for another group, so we are in the process now of receiving comments back. There is not a set timeline when the five apologies will be carried out, but we do feel that we are very close to doing the first apology.

Obviously, the first group that comes back with draft text and we can reach a consensus, then that is where we will be going and hopefully then the other four will fall in line but work is well under way. It is also an active conversation in the weekly calls that myself and the Premier have with the Indigenous leaders.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

And we move back to MHA Evans; 2.1.01 to 2.8.03 inclusive.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Chair.

2.8.02, Women and Gender Equality, the funding for the Blue Door Program at Thrive ran out this winter. What efforts are being made in the department to negotiate with its operators to see that the project continues? Are there other supports for sex workers that are currently being considered?

P. PARSONS: The Blue Door project, as we know, was a federal program that was started. I think it set the price tag of \$417,000 annually, and that went on for five years, as we know. As

we also know, of course, as has been stated here on record and in the media that certainly the Office of Women and Gender Equality doesn't have the budget to support that ask.

That said, though, we have reached out to the executive director. We've had her in; as a matter of fact, I just met with her on Monday morning to certainly let her know that we're committed to doing what we can in her efforts, if she's interested in pursuing new pathways to funding, whether it be the federal government, private sector, or even if she were to change the ask and how she would go about individual grants to submit to the provincial government for Blue Door.

Also, I think there was a second part of the question.

L. EVANS: Other supports for sex workers that are currently being considered.

P. PARSONS: That's right. As you're aware, of course, the department of Women and Gender Equality, we support S.H.O.P., the Safe Harbour Outreach Project, and we provide annual core funding to S.H.O.P. in the amount of \$142,700. Of course, as we know, S.H.O.P. provides valuable services to people engaged in the sex-trade activities in St. John's. Services include peer support, safety and exit planning, crisis support, management, navigating the system of public services, housing support, referrals for health and addictions issues, referrals to educational programs, one-on-one counselling, legal advice and life development skills, of course among other valuable skills that are needed for individuals who are in this industry and looking to exit this industry.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Just looking at this now, the next question: When can we expect pay equity legislation to be introduced and debated in the House? I know before I was elected there was a resolution, I think, about five years ago in the House for pay equity. So I was just wondering when would it be introduced and debated in the House?

P. PARSONS: In 2018, as we know, there was an interdepartmental committee that has been struck, and work has been ongoing for several

years, as we talked about recently here in the House and in the media. That work is ongoing, as we know, and it's across government. It's something that we're committed to doing. I mean, I think we can all agree here that pay equity is certainly important legislation both for the public and the private sector. I think we're all in agreement with that.

That said, I had a conversation with my colleague, the Minister of Finance, on what we can do now for next steps. So as soon as there is an update available, believe you me, we'll be happy enough to do that. It's my hope and it's my goal, it's a conversations that's going on daily in my department with staff and it's something that's very significant.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

What has the uptake been like for the Domestic Violence Help Line? And have there been increases or decreases in this use since its founding?

P. PARSONS: The domestic help line, as we know, was implemented during COVID as a response, of course, to the pandemic situations we find ourselves in. Victims, of course, of domestic violence, as we know, they can't escape, certainly during a lockdown. I think it's about \$3,000 that comes from the department of Women and Gender Equality in conjunction with Transition House Newfoundland and Labrador, which is also teamed up with CSSD.

From the feedback that we are getting, it certainly has a big uptake. There's a texting option as well as a phone call. That number is 1-888-709-7090. The texting option is available there, for obvious reasons. If a victim has – we all know they may not have that window to make that phone call, if they're living with their attacker, so the option, of course, is there to text. From the feedback that we are getting, there is uptake, unfortunately, but that said, it's important to have this service in place.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Have there been expansions to the sexual assault nurse practitioner program and are there any more budgeted for this year?

P. PARSONS: As we know, too, I'd be remiss if I didn't say, we know that we have the highest stats in Labrador, in particular for Indigenous women, compared to the rest of the country; \$225,000 has been allocated to expand that service, the sexual assault nurse examiner unit for Labrador and for Central Newfoundland.

That money has been transferred from the department of Women and Gender Equality to the Department of Health and Community Services and they are now within the regional health authorities, is my understanding. I don't know if my colleague, the Minister of Health, can elaborate on that further.

But that's obviously a needed service. It's unfortunate that we need it, but I'm happy to say it is a permanent funding structure that's in the department, and it is here to stay.

L. EVANS: Yes, actually there was an interview done, I think it was this morning or yesterday, where they were talking about the program to people in Labrador, but basically the closest they can come to a sexual assault nurse examiner or practitioner or whatever the title is, is Corner Brook.

P. PARSONS: Yeah, I don't know. Again, the funding comes from my shop in the amount of \$225,000 annually.

L. EVANS: Yes.

P. PARSONS: But, again, it is my understanding that it's with the regional health authorities for that training to be done with multiple nurses in those regions. Again, I don't know if my colleague can elaborate further on where that training is.

L. EVANS: No, that's good. I do appreciate your answer and I do appreciate the increase in funding; I think that is a good sign.

Just going back now, where I do have a little bit of time for Labrador Affairs. Just looking at Labrador Affairs, I was wondering if there is anything planned to offset the cost to travel for sports activities and cultural activities for people in Labrador. Either travelling within Labrador or to the Island, because what is happening is that a

lot of people are losing out on activities that the rest of the province, really, can engage in.

L. DEMPSTER: Yeah, there is no doubt, there is nobody that will dispute the high cost of travel and I guess exasperated more since COVID, because the airline industry is one of the areas that we have seen that has really been decimated. Even just a week or so ago, I was on quite a large plane and there was only six people. So they have a ways to go to get numbers back and flight availability up.

I'm not sure if the Member is aware, under Labrador Affairs, we do have a Labrador travel program for sports. I'm looking for the figure – here it is. So established since 1969 and in that budget there is \$730,000. It was initially created to allocate monies each year to help offset the disparity of cost, what you're referencing, for Labrador youth participating in provincial sport on the Island portion of the province.

I will say that since COVID, because schools are just now getting back to activities, the budget has not been expended. The year before last some of that money, when it was just sitting in the pot, the Member would know she and myself worked with the then Finance Minister and some of that actually went into isolated households to help offset some of the cost. Last year, it was not used as well, but I know that is a very valuable program.

In addition to that, we also have the – not under me, but in Lake Melville – Aboriginal Sports and Recreation Circle that we work closely with, and I work closely with from my time in CSSD, and through federal and provincial money, there are supports that they're able to offer athletes sometimes as well. If there's any particular group that's wondering and wanting to go, wondering what we have available, I would definitely encourage them to reach out.

L. EVANS: Okay. I don't think I have time for another question, but I was just going to – about the apology for residential schools. I was just wondering, you're going to be looking at different Indigenous groups, right? One of the things I was wondering, is there going to be some sort of educational program or education information put out there?

Because what I find is that most of the people in the province do not realize that residential schools were only in Labrador, on the North Coast of Labrador and in the Cartwright area. A lot of people think it's been throughout, right? So, in actual fact, I think a part of truth and reconciliation is about educating people. So I was just wondering do you have any plans, your department have any plans to actually educate the province about residential schools in our province?

L. DEMPSTER: It is a very, very important file, and some of us who have constituents that were residential school survivors, we certainly have had a little insight into, really, the trauma and the horrors of some of their experiences.

Where we are right now is working with the different Indigenous leaders. We want to reach a place where the leaders and the survivors in those communities, and the communities, are comfortable with what we're moving forward with.

So I already know, we're far enough along the road, I know what an apology looks like for one Indigenous group is going to probably look very different for another Indigenous group, even in terms of some groups have asked that there be supports in place in community for the triggers that will occur when these apologies are happening.

We will do our best to make all these things happen. It's really us moving forward in lockstep, in partnership with the Indigenous leaders as we get to a place to carry out these apologies.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

I'm going to take this time to apologize to my colleague, the Independent Member for Lake Melville. I should have been recognizing him. This is the Committee of the Whole, so with my apologies, I'd like to recognize you, Sir.

P. TRIMPER: No problem, my friend. No problem at all.

Thank you.

It's a great opportunity to ask a variety of questions. I'm going to start with my colleague about his announcement yesterday on the Labrador Woodland Caribou Recovery Team, the re-announcement. We had a chat earlier today and I just wanted to, sort of, bring some of that out into the open because I had some feedback, back and forth from a conversation we had this morning.

So I'd ask the minister – well, actually I'd just like to make some suggestions to him, just for the record. In terms of composition, very important that this has been re-established. I would suggest that we certainly need to make sure there are Indigenous organization representation. Groups like the Labrador Hunting and Fishing Association. Certainly, provincial, biologists from both Labrador, Quebec and the federal government also on that. And I think that there's probably going to be a need to have a couple of representatives from some key communities. So I'll just throw that out there.

You indicated the gentleman that's responsible in your department; I have full confidence in him. Again, I applaud you, Sir, for moving ahead with that. I feel it's going to make progress in solving some serious issues.

I don't know if you had a comment.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

D. BRAGG: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Yes, I'd like to thank the Member for the question because it's very important. The conversation of caribou anywhere in the province, whether it's on the Island or in Labrador is of major importance to us, but, most importantly, we know what we deal with when we deal with cross-border hunting. We are reconvening, as we mentioned earlier today, our ADM and our new – not our new wildlife officer, but the current one. Mr. Adams, you know who I'm talking about, will be the lead on this. You and I talked about this today in great detail.

Anytime, let's keep the conversation going on that. I trust to yours, and the hon. Member for

Cartwright area, to give me some guidance through all that process. But I'm hoping on getting that –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

D. BRAGG: Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, I'm so sorry.

This is, I guess, revitalizing that whole committee and getting people to talk and, hopefully, get the feds involved as well.

P. TRIMPER: Wonderful, I see I've got 77 minutes to go, so I'm doing just fine.

I would like to ask: Does the minister have any idea on timing? When do you hope to have the recovery team in place?

D. BRAGG: That's a great question. I would hope that we would have it before the spring ends, early within the summer. I mean, I don't want to drag our behinds on this. We need to get at this and be as active as we can and as quick as we can. So it's active on our desk. I met with the ADM responsible today; we had a conversation about it. So by all means reach out to me anytime and we'll see where the status is at that time.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you.

I have a series of question. All my questions I could always run them through the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs, but while I have sort of the specialist ministers, I'm also going to bring them up.

I'm looking over to the Minister of Education and I have this déjà vu going on, because I think it was one year ago in Estimates, and we're talking about the Labrador Institute, and the – what's the right word – implementation of the ban on further acquisition, purchase and so on of land for Memorial University.

I'm still looking, appealing to the minister, still aware of the challenges that we're having as a community, as a region, with proceeding with activities at the Pye farm, not having the ownership of that building. And I just wondered where you are with your review of the

infrastructure, the ban and any possibility of an exemption there.

T. OSBORNE: So I know Memorial had leased the property at the Pye farm, which I believe satisfies their needs until such time as they're able to purchase. Similarly, with the other infrastructure that was required in Labrador, they've leased, and they don't need government approval or ministerial approval to lease property. They do to purchase.

So while we're going through the review of the *Memorial University Act*, and until such time we get that in, they have the autonomy to make those types of decisions. We want to be cautious on the size of the footprint. They've got an infrastructure deficit; they have challenges maintaining their existing infrastructure. So until we know the course that we're setting them on, we want to be cautious to ensure that any new acquisitions, they're able to afford.

P. TRIMPER: Okay, thank you. I guess I'll just underline, people are anxious to get on with it, so as soon as that's done, that would be great.

Looking over to – I guess I'll go to the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs and just ask her a question. Last night, I spoke at length about the role of this province potentially in supporting and enhancing lobby efforts that need to go on, I would suggest mostly in Ottawa, regarding our National Defence profile. I'm thinking about 5 Wing Goose Bay. There was an active group several years ago called the Goose Bay Citizen's Coalition that was a heavily charged political machine that worked at different levels of government, different organizations.

My position is that we need to go there now. Last night, I spoke quite at length with the – I'm sorry, today, I spoke with the Minister of Health and Community Services, who represents Gander, which is also a very busy base. Both Goose Bay and Gander are extremely busy right now. I just wondered what the minister's thoughts were on contributing her time and resources towards sort of a reincarnation of an organization, of a small network that could really help us in the competition.

We are competing with Alberta, right now; we are competing with Quebec; and some of the other provinces. They are lobbying out in front of us; we are missing opportunities.

L. DEMPSTER: That is a really important topic that you have raised. Within the last week, I have had a conversation where I raised the topic of 5 Wing. There was a time when you went to Goose Bay that was the dominating conversation, and I actually said to someone: Where are we right now with 5 Wing? We have to get back to realizing the value of 5 Wing, not just to Lake Melville but to Labrador.

So I would be more than happy to sit down with yourself, as the Member, to look at ways that we can work to try and revitalize things and support 5 Wing in whatever way we can. If that includes lobbying the feds, then I am all on board.

P. TRIMPER: I will just list a couple of examples.

First of all, in terms of the next 10 years, we are secure. We have a \$1 billion-plus contract in place now for up to 20 years. So the facilities and the operations it provides right now – very secure for NORAD and austere training and so on. It's all these other things that are coming including, right now, the German Air Force wants to return to Labrador and set up a seasonal operation. Alberta is lobbying them. It is just some examples.

One other area that is really important right now for the base that I need to bring to your attention, if you are not aware, is there is additional power that is going to be coming through the lines for Upper Lake Melville and my position is that we need to make sure that the support to displace the diesel generation system on 5 Wing is replaced by much cleaner hydroelectric power that will come from Churchill Falls. I'm not sure if you are aware of that. I have met with the CEO a couple of times.

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, I do have some knowledge of that and while, within the provincial government, 5 Wing and related initiatives would fall under IGA, as you would

be aware, I'm certainly willing to take this conversation further along, you know, after Estimates tonight. The next time I am up in that area we can pull together some of our officials and have a meeting.

P. TRIMPER: I'm jumping around. I'm going to now go to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. I have two questions for him.

I am just wondering are there any talks still about – I know the ferry across the Strait of Belle Isle, that contract was awarded for 12 years and that was to allow us, hopefully, to be in a position where we could be starting construction of a tunnel connecting our two big chunks of geography in this province. I just wondered where that is on your horizon.

It is difficult to hear. Thank you.

E. LOVELESS: No, my red light is on, I believe.

In terms of the question, it is a good question. I have to be honest, it is not something that I have had in-depth discussion over the last several months but it is a discussion that has been had. I'm certainly glad to have the discussion if you want to sit down with me and we can have a discussion further.

We recognize the benefits that can be of having such infrastructure and that is why it is worth having the conversation.

But, as we know, there is a huge cost element to it and we need all levels of government to be at the table for that. Again, I reiterate that I haven't had a conversation with the federal government in terms of where we go from here.

P. TRIMPER: Right on. Thank you. I have just one further question for the minister.

Just a suggestion, I've often spoken about that great distance, 410 kilometres, from Port Hope Simpson to Happy Valley-Goose Bay, where there is essentially absolute no washroom, no communications system, sometimes the Internet system works and sometimes it doesn't, but it is not an emergency line and no other support for

410 kilometres of – it is a tremendous highway, it is going to be completely paved this year.

My suggestion is would the minister consider putting out an expression of interest? It wouldn't cost the government anything, but let's just put it out there and say we have this great geographic challenge. We need to provide these basic services. I wonder if the department would consider doing it.

To me there are three locations: Crooks Lake, Cartwright Junction and Cache River, looking to the west of Goose Bay. Each of these locations would – it's at least 200 kilometres between each of those and your nearest opportunity, but at least it's an improvement over 410.

E. LOVELESS: Yeah.

CHAIR: Thank you.

E. LOVELESS: Do I get a chance to respond, Mr. Chair?

CHAIR: Go ahead, Minister.

E. LOVELESS: It is a discussion that I know you and I have had before. The Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs, we have had that discussion as well and it is a very important point. Without making commitment, without going back to the department, which I have responsibility as minister, I think it's a good idea. I don't see any reason why we wouldn't entertain looking at an expression of interest for something that is beyond valuable, I guess, to people who travel those highways.

We can have a further discussion on it. I'll update you in terms of that commitment on that expression of interest.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Before we continue, we're getting a little broader than what our Estimates book is saying so if it's Education, if it's Transportation, we've had those Estimates so I would like to leave it to what is involved in the Executive Council.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Right now, I am recognizing MHA Wakeham for 2.1.01 to 2.8.03.

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Chair.

I just want to get back to Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, if I could. I had asked the question about the upcoming apology and I asked if there were any funds set aside to support an apology.

L. DEMPSTER: At the moment that my time was up, I realized that I didn't answer your funding question.

What I want to say is when we are ready to proceed with the apology the funding will be there to match the need. Unequivocally.

T. WAKEHAM: The second one: Is there any money in this budget to implement the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

L. DEMPSTER: We're actually doing a piece of work right now. It was 2018, when there was a table set to look at the 94 Calls to Action, 33 of which are under this province, there have been a number of things that have been implemented, like the September 30 Truth and Reconciliation day, that was one of the calls. The new *Children, Youth and Families Act* could fit into one of the calls. So we're actively now in IAR taking a look across departments to measure what's been done and then we'll be reporting back to the Indigenous groups and to the broader piece.

T. WAKEHAM: Yeah, but is there any money in the budget?

L. DEMPSTER: Guys, I'm finding it hard to hear.

T. WAKEHAM: Yeah.

L. DEMPSTER: Sorry.

CHAIR: Order, please!

Can I just ask us to bring the noise down a little bit; it's hard to hear here on the floor.

T. WAKEHAM: Is there any money allocated in the budget, though, for that particular Truth

and Reconciliation Commission – this year's budget, in your department?

L. DEMPSTER: Initiatives that are being carried out are housed in different departments across government. Right now, that would be covered off from existing budgets.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay. So there's no direct budget allocation.

L. DEMPSTER: No.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

Last year in Estimates, there was a discussion about a statue to commemorate Indigenous history in the province. Can you provide an update on that?

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, I actually had a look at it today. It's actually quite, quite striking. It's going to be a beautiful piece that sits out in front of the East Block of the Confederation Building.

We commissioned Morgan MacDonald, we went out with an expression of interest and we had a number of folks that were interested. Every step along the way we've done that with the Indigenous leaders, providing them an opportunity to go down and to take a look and to have input into design when it was still in the clay form. We are just about there. There was money in this budget allocated and there'll be money in next year's budget for that.

We're looking forward to having a legacy of the Beothuk people, who have a very sad history really in our province, that we're just totally destroyed and wiped out. It's going to be an exciting day when we can honour their legacy by erecting the statue. That's well on its way.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

Under 2.6.02.01, Salaries, there was a salary savings last year of approximately \$208,500. Can you explain what positions were vacant and for how long?

L. DEMPSTER: So it's a couple of things. We had a couple of positions that were vacant, that were not filled. In the very, very near future, if not today, I'm happy to say that we are back to a

full complement. Also, we had a change in a senior position where somebody went out the door that would have been maybe at a higher step than the person who came in, so that contributed to a little bit of savings there as well.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

Under Purchased Services, it went over budget, spending last year \$407,000. Can you explain what was spent here under Purchased Services?

L. DEMPSTER: The Beothuk statue.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

So is that the full cost?

L. DEMPSTER: No, I don't believe that is the full cost. I believe there is \$120,000 that will be coming from the next fiscal, once it's completed.

T. WAKEHAM: But that \$407,000 is directly related to that?

L. DEMPSTER: Yes.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

Under your Grants and Subsidies, there's a significant amount of money there. Budgeted was \$604,000; actual \$587,000; budget this year is \$604,000. I'm wondering if you can provide a breakdown of who received the grant money last year.

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, sure. It is only three or four. Back a couple of years ago, we actually gave core funding to the three Friendship Centres in the province, recognizing and appreciating the valuable work that they do. So \$90,000 is there. We have a land use planning appeals board, \$6,500, and they provide some really valuable work to us as well. There's the LICA Dispute Resolution Board grant, \$11,300; Torngat Joint Fisheries Board grant of \$248,500 and Torngat Wildlife and Plants Co-Management board grant, which is also \$248,500.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay, thank you.

A couple of quick other questions: Are the Labrador Games still on track for March 2023?

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, they are.

The first Labrador Winter Games was held in 1983, and 30 years later we're really looking forward to making this March 2023 extra, extra special. So we set aside, every three years, \$500,000 for that to happen. This year, we actually held back 10 per cent, so you will see that the number there is a little – there's \$50,000 held back, and that's because we want to ensure that we get a fulsome report – it's a substantive amount of money. That will be maybe the end of June or something of next year.

T. WAKEHAM: So where will they be held to?

L. DEMPSTER: In Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

T. WAKEHAM: In Happy Valley-Goose Bay?

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, and you're welcome to come; bring all your team.

T. WAKEHAM: I've been there.

L. DEMPSTER: It's a first-class event, and we also have Cain's Quest happening in Labrador City, in March 2023, as well. So it's a big year for the Big Land.

T. WAKEHAM: Yes.

I wonder can you give me an update on the Nain airstrip. I'm not sure if that question was asked.

L. DEMPSTER: I don't have the details. I don't know if –

T. WAKEHAM: Or is that in Transportation?

L. DEMPSTER: That's Transportation and Infrastructure.

E. LOVELESS: Sorry, I had this Member here distracting me, but we were having a good, important conversation around the fishery, as you can appreciate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

E. LOVELESS: Yeah, we were talking about seals. We have to find a market for them, if you're going to –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

T. WAKEHAM: (Inaudible) I wasn't sure if you could provide an update on the Nain airstrip.

E. LOVELESS: I don't have an update right now, but I can certainly get the details on where we are.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

E. LOVELESS: There have been discussions around it, but not of recently.

T. WAKEHAM: I know we've already had –

E. LOVELESS: Your colleagues didn't like the answer, so I don't know what they're laughing at.

T. WAKEHAM: We also had a question asked about the road through Northern Labrador before, I think.

L. DEMPSTER: (Inaudible) Nunatsiavut Government have gone out seeking expressions of interest or an RFP. I'm pretty sure I've seen that, I'm just waiting for confirmation here.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

L. DEMPSTER: Yeah, I'll get back to you on that.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

Under 2.7.02, under the Salaries again, Labrador Affairs, there's a variance there in the salaries, and again, last year there was a savings of approximately \$146,000. Were there any vacancies last year? How long have the positions been vacant?

L. DEMPSTER: There were a number of vacancies. So we've been doing some recruitment and I believe, by the end of May, we anticipate to have a full complement of staff again.

T. WAKEHAM: Can you outline where the staff are located, what towns, what cities?

L. DEMPSTER: Under Labrador Affairs?

T. WAKEHAM: Yes.

L. DEMPSTER: All of the staff is in the office in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

And again, under Grants and Subsidies, it's been decreased by \$500,000. I also would like to know, can you provide a breakdown of what the \$1.851 million was spent on?

L. DEMPSTER: You just asked about the Labrador Winter Games. So, every three years, we have that funding. That funding would have went out and that is the \$500,000 difference now. In addition, Grants and Subsidies, we have four under Labrador Affairs.

We have the Labrador Transportation Grooming Subsidy. I believe it is nine agreements. We got 700 kilometres of trail that we groom. The Combined Councils of Labrador, we support them with \$100,000 annually. The Labrador Sport Travel Subsidy that I referenced earlier, it is application-based and the budget there is \$730,000. We also have a Labrador Aboriginal Nutritional and Artistic Assistance Program and that \$50,000 is split between the three Indigenous groups, where \$20,000 goes to Nunatsiavut, \$20,000 to NunatuKavut and \$10,000 to Innu Nation.

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

We are going to move back to MHA Evans – 2.1.01 to 2.8.03.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Chair.

Did you say four?

CHAIR: 2.1.01 to 2.8.03, Executive Council.

L. EVANS: Okay, I have no more questions.

CHAIR: Okay, thank you.

We are going to move to MHA Trimper.

P. TRIMPER: Two questions, Chair. I will be sure to keep this all focused in Labrador.

Just a little update. I am aware and just for the minister's benefit – she many not know that there seems that the contract for the prefeasibility, feasibility for the airstrip and the road connection, I believe that was awarded just last week. So they are making good progress which is good news, and that geotechnical investigations and so on will be going on over the next few months. I just happen to know some of the people involved. So that is good news.

I guess the other point I wanted to make – my colleague from Torngat Mountains – on the sport subsidy, I think the problem we are finding, in the MHA offices, as we hear from the different groups and so on, is just the amounts are sorely insufficient and that is the problem. I am not sure what will be required, but perhaps we need to start tallying the various asks and try to do it broader. Mr. Demers is one of the key people that handles this cash and he can only distribute so much around.

Some sports, frankly, don't get any support. Others use it up – just sending a single team out can use up a large chunk of money and then you are back to community fundraising or not going at all.

Thank you.

L. DEMPSTER: Just in response to that (inaudible) gone out with an RFP but I wasn't following it that closely so that is great news. Thank you.

On the travel subsidy, I certainly am someone who really can appreciate and value first-hand the opportunity for students to get out and to compete around the province and beyond. While I was minister for Sport and Recreation, I had the opportunity to attend provincial games,

Labrador games and lead the team at Red Deer, which were all high points during my time there.

Nothing has reached my level. I know the budget was only half spent last year and so within the last year, I guess, there wasn't a lot of events or travel. I'm certainly happy to sit down and have folks educate me on, you know, here's an example of how much money we need to get to a certain community and we fall short, we can't go. I'm happy to engage in that conversation to get a better understanding.

P. TRIMPER: Good.

CHAIR: Thank you.

2.1.01 to 2.8.03, MHA Conway Ottenheimer.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Chair.

I'll continue on now with the Women and Gender Equality heading.

I have some general questions first.

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

P. PARSONS: The gender-based analysis that was done on the budget; well, I don't have that here in this briefing, but I do have staff that are actually sitting by, they're waiting, they're actually next door. So we can certainly get all that relevant information to you in your hands.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I appreciate that. Thank you.

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

P. PARSONS: I've actually asked that question myself to our partners at the RNC as well as the RCMP, as well as the domestic helpline. I'm told that those statistics are not necessarily released due to obvious reasons. But, that said, I can certainly find out what we can, what is available.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

Yes, I'd like whatever data you have on this. I'm also interested in knowing has the pandemic resulted in an increase in violence.

P. PARSONS: Right.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So if you could find that data that would be (inaudible).

P. PARSONS: Absolutely. Based on what we hear, what we've heard in the media and what we've heard reported in statistics, I think it's safe to say that certainly we know violence has risen; it's become worse for people who are trapped, especially with lockdowns, just based on the knowledge that we've heard in the media. But, certainly, the request has gone in, like I said. My staff is listening and they're taking notes, so whatever information is available to us, we can certainly get and provide.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

I also wonder if you could provide any information with respect to whether there are any issues with the domestic crisis line. Have you heard, for example, from any of the transition houses that there have been any issues?

P. PARSONS: Again, same kind of scenario, based on the statistics from the helpline and whatnot.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

P. PARSONS: They're not here available in my briefing notes, but we'll get that request and what is available to us, I will provide to you.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

Last year in Estimates we talked about a women's leadership conference in Labrador, did this occur? If not, is it deferred to this year? And is the department planning any women's leadership conferences this year?

P. PARSONS: Just let me have a quick little glance here. It didn't occur this year based on travel restrictions in Labrador, but I do have a section on this.

No, we had the – well, the gathering that we did travel to Corner Brook, but there was actually something, if you just bear with me here for a moment.

It didn't occur this year and we couldn't get to Labrador, even for other travel that I was supposed to go up for work, but based on COVID things were postponed, unfortunately, so we didn't actually get to Labrador.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Do you know if it has been deferred to this year?

P. PARSONS: I'm going to have to get that information to you.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

Is the department planning any women's leadership conferences this year?

P. PARSONS: The Equal Voice, which is now going to be called the Future of the Vote, was supposed to happen. It is a grant that we provide from the department of Women and Gender Equality to Equal Voice but that didn't happen. The onus is on the group to organize that but they needed more time so we are hoping to do that this coming fall.

It will also be rebranded; it is called Future of the Vote as opposed to Daughters of the Vote event.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

The Member for Torngat Mountains had asked a question about pay equity. I want to ask you specifically about the – I understand that your officials would have been working on this with you and I know you have referenced briefings with various departments.

What I'm wondering about is, with respect to the officials that have been working for you, can you provide what advice they have given you – your officials have given you with respect to the pay equity issue?

P. PARSONS: Again, there is not necessarily new information that has been made available.

As we know, the briefing binder for the Office of Women and Gender Equality has been ATIPPed and that information is available, so there is nothing different.

What I can tell you, as we know, this work is important, that's not a debate, we all agree on that. Again, it comes down to finding best practices. We do know that we have the reactive pay equity legislation available. That is available through the *Labour Standards Act*, as well as the Canadian Human Rights, of course. We also know, my colleague commented and elaborated on the JES, which we have here in the public service that prohibits and prevents any gender bias with salaries and positions.

But, again, the work is ongoing. It's something I'm passionate about, and believe you me, there's nothing more that I'd like to stand up in this House, before the media or whoever to talk about the advancements that we will make.

I'm certainly mandated in my department, as are other departments, to advance pay equity for Newfoundland and Labrador. It's something that, as we know, as I've mentioned here earlier, it was first talked about by Premier Peckford in the '80s. As we know, Premier Williams didn't bring in pay equity legislation, but this work continues to find out the best practices for what will be best for Newfoundland and Labrador; what we can do with our fiscal reality; and what we can do. But it's important. I concur. It certainly is an important issue that we're committed to advancing.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

The Elizabeth Fry foundation provides services to women in the criminal justice system. I have spoken to them. They've expressed disappointment that they have not received any core funding. Is there a process that they should go through? How would you suggest they go about seeking core funding?

P. PARSONS: I'm going to defer.

S. COADY: I'm going to take that.

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

S. COADY: Thank you.

It's an important question, and it's falling to Finance, so I thought I'd provide the information.

As was indicated in this year's budget, we're having a new process to go through for core funding. We're going to have – and this is what most community organizations have been asking for – a centralized portal. They'll come in and they'll make their request on core funding and continuous funding.

So when that process is underway – and we're hoping to get that up probably during the summer, but I don't want to make – there is some work that has to be done in the background. So within the next number of months, we're hoping to have that process underway. It is a new process and the Elizabeth Fry foundation can put in an application at that time.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

So what would you suggest that an organization like this, like Elizabeth Fry foundation, do in the interim while they're waiting for your process to get started?

S. COADY: This is for core funding. They can certainly apply to multitudes of departments across government for project funding. That is available to them and multitudes of departments have funding available for organizations.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

Under section 2.8.02, Women and Gender Equality, under Salaries, could you please explain the variance in the Salaries line item? I note that last year there was \$1,010,700 budgeted and \$776,700 was spent, and this year \$961,800 was budgeted. I'm wondering if you could outline if positions were vacant, what were they and for how long they were vacant.

P. PARSONS: Yes, savings that we're seeing is \$234,000. Those savings are due to vacancies. Those were an extended maternity leave. Three employees also accepted positions across government in other departments.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

I note that last year you had advised that three senior policy and program specialists took leave. I believe there were two other policy, planning and research analysts moved in to, really, perform acting roles. What is the current situation with respect to those vacancies?

P. PARSONS: The two current vacancies are for recruitment for policy analyst positions, and they are ongoing. They are not yet filled, but they are ongoing for recruitment.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

Under Transportation and Communications, last year there was a savings in Transportation and Communications of \$40,500. I assume it's because of less than normal travel, because of the pandemic. How did this impact the services the office provides to women serving organizations and women in general?

P. PARSONS: There has been no impact, and you're right there was a savings of \$40,500. Again that's due to the reduced travel for COVID. For example, the FPT this year was scheduled for in Saskatchewan in December, but it certainly was a virtual, as opposed to travelling, so that's precisely why. But no, there has been no negative impact or decrease to services due to this.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

CHAIR: (Inaudible) if you have a couple more questions.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I do actually. I only have about five remaining questions.

CHAIR: Thank you.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

Under Professional Services, could you please give some information on this line item, including an outline of how the \$270,000 was spent?

P. PARSONS: Sure.

Professional Services, as you mentioned \$270,000 – the Intimate Partner Violence Unit is funded through Professional Services. RCMP Intimate Partner Violence Unit resides in the RCMP provincial headquarters here in the White Hills, and provides service to 43 detachments that are respective throughout the communities, throughout the province.

This unit also bolsters police responses to issues of intimate partner violence, and brings a standardized degree of methodology and accountability to investigations and supervision relative to intimate partner violence. These resources complement existing resources in the implementation of the strategies to reduce and prevent intimate partner violence, with an emphasis on violence against women. The IPV Unit ensures that the RCMP's response to intimate partner violence is aligned with community-based provincial and RCMP priorities.

There's one corporal at the salary of \$131,920 and an analyst of \$112,953.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

Under Purchased Services, could you please give some information on this line item, including an outline of how the \$337,000 was spent?

P. PARSONS: Yes.

Purchased Services provides support for events such as room bookings, catering, captioning, audio-visual equipment, speakers, artists and facilitation in support of the gender-based analysis plus training, leadership initiatives – for example, like Future of the Vote, which I just talked about, which was Daughters of the Vote but now we will be rebranding as Future of the Vote, in conjunction with Equal Voice.

Violence prevention, intimate partner violence training for assessment, sexual assault nurse examiner program, which we talked about earlier, in an amount of \$225,000. And of course the Premier's Roundtable on Gender Equity, which I'm happy to say you were also a part of, and you'll be certainly invited again when we put off the next one, which we're hoping for this fall.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

Under Grants and Subsidies, I would like to see if you have a list that you could provide on how this grant money is distributed.

P. PARSONS: Absolutely. I can provide a list and I can actually give a little overview now, okay, if we want to.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, yes, please.

P. PARSONS: I can provide you with that list: Status of Women Centres, \$1,059,000. And of course we know these are feminist organizations that continue to do work to achieve equality and justice throughout political activism, community collaboration and in creation of a safe and inclusive space for all women.

Also Violence Prevention Newfoundland and Labrador organizations, at \$820,000 – there are 10 regional coordinating committees against violence, located across the province.

Indigenous violence prevention grants, as well as the Safe Harbour outreach program known as SHOP, and multicultural women's organizations of Newfoundland and Labrador, the NL Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre, Newfoundland and Labrador Aboriginal Women's Network and the Coalition Against the Sexual Exploitation of Youth, also known as CASEY.

Provincial Indigenous women's gatherings, that's at \$25,000, and of course I'm getting into the miscellaneous grants now, but those are the organizations. We can provide you with that list, for you to have in hand.

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

Under 2.8.03, Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, under Grants and Subsidies, last year there was \$10,000 extra given out. Can you please outline where this went and for what project or activity?

P. PARSONS: These were due to salary increases – just regular, normal salary increases.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay.

Under Grants and Subsidies again – this year the budget is being increased. Where is the additional money going?

P. PARSONS: I do think that is, again, because of the salaries but I will have staff get that precise information for you.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

That concludes my questions.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Is the House ready for the question?

Shall 2.1.01 to 2.8.03 inclusive carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Those against?

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.1.01 through 2.8.03 carried.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Those against?

Carried.

On motion, Office of the Executive Council, total heads, carried.

CLERK: Treasury Board Secretariat – 3.1.01 through 3.1.06 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 to 3.1.06 inclusive carry?

The Chair recognizes the MHA for Stephenville - Port au Port.

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Chair.

I want to start off with some general questions. The Budget Speech had talked about the establishment of a House Committee to review financial statements, budgets and the annual reports of Crown corporations and organizations. I am asking: When will this be done?

S. COADY: Thank you for the question.

As I have indicated in the House in Question Period, this was left to the House Leaders to implement. So I would suggest that the House Leaders have been discussing this very important point because I think it is an important point. I think the scrutiny of Crown corporations is something that the House would have a good role in providing – the same type of process. That is what I see.

T. WAKEHAM: Yeah. That's good. We will get after our House Leader to work on that.

My next question was around the attrition plan, which government is now following. What is the attrition plan and is there a multi-year forecast by department which you can provide?

S. COADY: Thank you for the question.

The attrition is basically 0.5 per cent. I believe my colleague from across the way from Torngat Mountains indicated earlier it is basically at 0.5 per cent. So there have been 51 positions removed over the last year across government. It is an attrition plan. There are escalating annual attrition targets and they're removed then from the base budgets.

As I said, there have been 51 positions eliminated through attrition across core government.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

Has the Treasury Board Secretariat done an analysis to determine the total savings which occurred as employees were working from home? And subsequently to do this, are all

employees now back in the office or is working from home long term being explored?

S. COADY: eWork or working from home is something that I know has been a very active subject of conversation. Things have changed in the general workforce and we have many people looking to work from home. Everyone has returned to the workplace. There are some pilot projects that we are doing in certain areas and departments to see how it we would transition to an eWork environment. I know it's a pretty hot topic today across all industries, not just government.

T. WAKEHAM: Right.

S. COADY: But everyone has returned.

With regard to your question as to how much the savings were because people were home. Of course, we had multiple lockdowns and then hybrid models throughout the year, so it would be very, very challenging, I would say. There have been, obviously, savings in paper costs. There have been savings in transportation costs, but it would be hard to accumulate all those savings and determine whether or not they can be eliminated, because I don't think they actually can be. We're seeing activities return to normal.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

As we've been going through Estimates, of course, there's been a pattern that departments are saving money because positions are vacant. Again, has the Secretariat done any analysis on this pattern? Do you monitor how long positions are vacant for? What impact it has on the budget? Because there seems to be a number of vacant positions that are left vacant for extended periods of time and I don't know if they're able to use the money for something else or what? So I'm just curious as to what analysis is being done.

S. COADY: Well, certainly they can only use the money for something else if there is a vote and if they have the approval of Treasury Board itself. If they're moving monies within a vote, they have to have the approval of Treasury Board.

I will say that like others, not just governments but all industries, we have about 500 job vacancies in a general sense. It could be down to 400, it could be up to 550, in a period of time, that we're actively recruiting. There's a process for active recruitment. We are doing a lot of work around marketing and improving the process. So we're improving the processes to hire more efficiently, but we're also doing some marketing to entice people to come to work for the provincial government. That is why we introduced the Graduate Recruitment Program, for example.

The intent is not to hold these positions vacant, as much as it is taking a longer period of time, as it is in every industry, to recruit. The big thing is retaining, but we have a lot of retirements. You would know this; we have a lot of retirements. There are about 800 people eligible for retirements this year. We did have 238 people retire last year. So we're just at that period of time, as we are in the world, because the baby-boom generation, which was a large demographic, they're moving through to retirement. So we're actively doing an awful lot to try and recruit people into the civil service. It is a noble and honourable profession and we want people to come here.

T. WAKEHAM: I asked when we did the Estimates for Public Service Commission for a listing of how many positions have been vacant for more than six months and how many have been vacant for more than one year. Is that something that you could follow up for me –

S. COADY: Oh, certainly.

T. WAKEHAM: – to find out where that is.

S. COADY: I would imagine they're compiling all that information and I will be interested to see it as well.

T. WAKEHAM: I appreciate that.

S. COADY: Some positions are notoriously hard to place.

T. WAKEHAM: Right.

S. COADY: And I can tell you I had a conversation most recently and chartered

professional accountants are hard to come by these days. The front-line workers are hard to come by. So we're in a situation where we have to make it very attractive to come to government.

T. WAKEHAM: That's right. They have to be competitive salaries with the private sector in order to come to government.

Have you considered any incentives for those employees who are perhaps have the years of service but not the age? In other words, one-time offering to suggest that if you have the 25 or 30 years of service but you don't have the age that you could go without penalty?

The fact that our pension plan is in good shape these days and an opportunity to allow people who want to retire to retire without penalty. That gives you two options: one, you can review the positions to be filled; or two, open more positions up for recruitment as you're trying to do. I'm just wondering if it had been considered.

S. COADY: We have 800 people that are eligible for retirement. There are two concerns, if we incentivize people to go early, one would be we would add to that number; secondly, that we would lose that institutional memory as well. So we're managing now, through a recruitment process, to bring more people into government. So we need to attract more people into government, as I said, roughly 500 jobs on the board. We need to keep some of that institutional memory. So, no, we're not considering, at this point in time, any incentive or inducement to encourage people to go.

T. WAKEHAM: I think that comes down to a very robust recruitment process and competitive salaries. I mean, we all have heard the stories in Transportation and Infrastructure, for example, of inability to get mechanics and a lot of other positions in simple things that for years I would never would have thought we would have a challenge in some of those areas. I mean, the ferries is another one where we seem to have challenges with crews and others. So I guess it really needs that look, to really take that close look at it, to see where we go with it.

Under 3.1.01, under the Salaries there, there is a small variance last year in the savings and then

this year Salaries have gone up. I'm just wondering if you could explain that one.

S. COADY: Yes, we had a secretarial position or an assistant's position that was vacant. We're anticipating that, obviously, again in the budget coming back and, of course, we've had salary increases.

T. WAKEHAM: Under 3.1.02, significant savings there in the Salaries area, \$584,000.

S. COADY: I'm happy to say we have 17 funded positions and we only have one vacancy now. Last year, we were recruiting for ADMs and DMs – sorry, I should say because there are people watching – deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers. So now we've filled those positions with excellent recruits and we've even brought in a new person as assistant deputy minister responsible for continuous improvement and accountability. Really happy to have her expertise brought into government.

So that's why you see the salary levels, the budget for Salaries, is back to where it should be. But it was the recruitment process, because we had a change in deputy minister and we had a change in ADMs. Again, we are having these changes and retirements.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

3.1.01 to 3.1.06, MHA Brown.

J. BROWN: I just want to ask the minister, I know with the new recruitment and retention program, with the graduate program you're introducing, I want to know if she can elaborate a bit on the goals and targets that are set out by that program and what expectations they hope to meet with this in the changing workforce that we are, nationally, seeing?

S. COADY: I think that is a couple of questions. So if I may, let me talk about the Graduate Recruitment Program because it has been very well received. Hundreds upon hundreds of applications and we are thrilled to receive them. Hopefully, if they can't go in the Graduate Recruitment Program, we can suggest they apply for other positions within government. So we are really happy to see this.

The Graduate Recruitment Program is a program that offers mentorship and leadership skills. There were other iterations in previous years, previous decades and we had a lot of good people come in to government, including our Clerk, by the way, who is responsible for all of the civil service. So we are really excited to have these people.

Now, it is up to each department how many people they can take in. So we are anticipating an influx in September, maybe of 20, and then there will be more as we move through the program. But this is kind of a mentorship, leadership, across government process. Then others can take on other positions within government that may not have that same kind of robust training program, I'll call it.

With regard to recruitment within, you are absolutely correct. It is becoming harder and harder, and this is not a government phenomena. There is a lot of movement in society right now with job creation so that's why we have moved back to the Public Service Commission as a more robust entity now. Again, we are looking at new marketing programs. This, I guess, is under the Public Service Commission Estimates, but we've also brought on new people to run the recruitments as well.

So you are absolutely correct, we are having to do a more robust job on recruitment.

J. BROWN: Excellent. I'm glad to hear that you are getting the feedback and you are getting the applications.

Another thing is has Treasury Board or any of that looked at what seems to be some hesitation from the general public to apply to the public service right now? Has there been some research internally or anything to have this looked at?

S. COADY: I thank you for the question. That would be under the Public Service Commission, not Treasury Board.

J. BROWN: Okay.

S. COADY: Because this is a public forum, I just want to make that – under the Public Service Commission, I don't think there has been any active research around that, but it is a good suggestion.

J. BROWN: All right, thank you.

And just one more question there from me on this one here. Is there any interest or anything from the Public Service Commission for this to actually expand how we recruit and what kind of techniques we're using to recruit right now, since we're in such a large deficit of employees right now?

S. COADY: Absolutely, without a doubt. So the Public Service Commission is doing a full review of how they're recruiting, what are the best practices of recruiting. We've brought in new recruiters, if I can call it that, the Graduate Recruitment Program, the marketing program, so absolutely. There's a full amount of work being undertaken in the Public Service Commission.

J. BROWN: That's my questions for this.

Thanks.

CHAIR (Pike): I recognize the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Chair.

Just to continue on under 3.1.02, we had just talked about the additional positions under Executive Support and I noticed there was an allocation of monies under Property, Furnishings and Equipment. Is that to buy office equipment for all the new ones you just hired?

S. COADY: No. We're consolidating, and you'll also see it under Supplies as well. So what we've done to ensure, kind of, better executive oversight, if I can call it that, or improved executive oversight, under Supplies, we've consolidated all the mobile phones and then under the Property, Furnishings and Equipment, we've consolidated all the materials for ergonomic equipment. Sorry, it's getting late and I'm losing my tongue.

So you know how there's a tremendous amount of work being done on ergonomics to ensure the proper fit for people at their offices, that's where we've consolidated across all of it. And if you look you can see it from 3.1.03, we've moved the money from there into here.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay, yeah. Okay, I can see that.

S. COADY: Yeah.

T. WAKEHAM: The other one under this particular area is the revenue piece. I notice that the revenue budgeted last year, received last year, \$151,000 but this year it's gone down to \$95,000.

S. COADY: Yeah. So as you know, we have consolidated – sorry, we have moved the pension payroll – and you're going to see this throughout the Estimates, so it's a pretty big topic. So as you know, we have three different consolidated pension plans and we have now moved the pensioners' payroll into PSPP. So before, our department under Treasury Board, under the Office of the Controller General, was providing those payroll services. It's now moved to the pension plan.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay, under Public Service.

S. COADY: It used to be that the revenue for the provision of those services came from the pension plan, but now it's being provided by the pension plan.

T. WAKEHAM: So you're starting to move it back.

S. COADY: We're moving it to Provident10.

T. WAKEHAM: Yes, okay.

S. COADY: And you'll see that. It will be a common occurring – it will come up again.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

My next questions are under 3.1.03. Again, under the Salaries piece, significant savings last year of \$1.47 million. Again, what positions were vacant and how long they were vacant for?

S. COADY: So this is an entry point to enter into government. So they're very entry-level positions and there's a significant turnover. So people come into government, into these positions and then might be there six months or they might be there a year and they find other opportunities within government, they have improved their careers. They move on to other positions. So we have a significant amount of turnover in this area.

So there were 43 vacancies and, unfortunately, that's what's going to happen. You're going to see this, the entry-level positions, people come in, move on, they upgrade their position, they move to other positions.

There's also some very hard-to-fill positions in here. I just mentioned about chartered public accountants, internal auditors. So a lot of professionals in here take time to recruit. So they're hard to find sometimes.

It's a matter of, we spend a significant amount of time recruiting into this area; it's just the way it is.

T. WAKEHAM: Under the Professional Services heading, again the budget for '21-'22 was \$573,000. We actually spent \$610,000 and we're going up to \$698,000. I'm wondering if you can explain the increases in that particular section?

S. COADY: Yes. So let me just tell you first about '21-'22 and I'll build on it for this year.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

S. COADY: So that's the actuarial and accounting services for employee benefits, pooled pension plans, the OPEBs, the renewal negotiations pension administration system maintenance and arbitration costs, all fall under that category. The difference this year is we're making some changes to the document management system. There's been some technological advancements there and we want to keep up with them. So that's why there's additional funding in that category.

So you'll see that last year, the projected revised budget is \$610,000, we're going to \$698,000 and the difference is that technical

advancements. And the regular answer to your Professional Services are actuarial costs, arbitrations costs that I just mentioned.

T. WAKEHAM: Right.

So the Revenue - Provincial there, is that the same explanation as was on the other page in terms of the significant decrease in the budget and the revised and has to do with the move -?

S. COADY: You've got it. It's that pension payroll transition. There's no longer a recoverable expense there, so it's moved to Provident¹⁰.

T. WAKEHAM: So at some point will that go down to zero?

S. COADY: I can ask.

T. WAKEHAM: No, I'm just curious -

S. COADY: I don't know if it will ever go to zero, but I'll ask if -

T. WAKEHAM: - to zero, but it's going to continue as more -

S. COADY: It'll basically be gone, yeah.

T. WAKEHAM: The next area I had was under the 3.1.04, Government Personnel Costs, and this one last year we budgeted \$41 million. I'm wondering how much of that was transferred out and spent in what departments.

S. COADY: To answer your previous question about whether or not that'll ever go to zero, not likely because it's the whole pensions division's recoverable costs.

T. WAKEHAM: Oh, okay.

S. COADY: But it won't be very high. Put it that way.

So on the \$41.2 million that was budgeted, no, there was no spending. It wasn't required in '21-'22. So it's zero. But this year we're anticipating \$35 million and it's only used and only sent to departments, as required. But we've settled some big things this year, like NLMA, like

judges, so there are some things that we know that we will be sending out this year.

T. WAKEHAM: So that's basically someone would have sat down and calculated out the estimates of each of those types of settlement?

S. COADY: Absolutely.

T. WAKEHAM: So we can get a listing of those?

S. COADY: I will endeavour to provide that for you.

T. WAKEHAM: Yeah, because somebody must have done the worksheet up, you're right, to figure out what the budget –

S. COADY: Right, because the estimate last year was for \$41 million, but we didn't settle with the judges until it came to the House. Therefore it wasn't used, so there was nothing transferred. This year, we know we're going to do that, so it will be transferred.

T. WAKEHAM: So you are going to spend it.

S. COADY: So somebody would have done a worksheet.

T. WAKEHAM: Yes.

There is revenue here from both the feds and the province again. In this particular case, though, provincial revenue, we only got \$65,000 but it has gone up to \$325,000 again. I am curious about those revenue items.

S. COADY: Sure. They are basically like funded positions, if I can use that. From the provincial side of things, there are a number of positions funded through WorkplaceNL, for example, because they assist with the review processes. So they are funded positions and then WorkplaceNL compensates government on that and that is that revenue.

T. WAKEHAM: You bill them, yes.

S. COADY: There are some pension plan administrators and again because it deals with the pension plan, we get revenue to offset those costs and that is where you are seeing it there.

On the federal side, again, much less significant, it is for some federal cost-shared personnel. Specifically around, if I can remember it, water quality agreements and climate change response initiatives. But because they are cost shared with government, we have to have a place where we take in the revenues.

T. WAKEHAM: Yes.

Let's see if I can get through this now before the 55 seconds runs up.

3.1.05, under the Grants and Subsidies again, looking for a breakdown of how much money was spent, including what was transferred out to other departments or the ABCs, and wondering how much in total of the \$27 million was spent, where it was spent and for what purpose.

S. COADY: Okay, let me try to do this very expeditiously. There was \$18 million of the \$27 million utilized and \$16 million of that was Come Home Year. So the majority of it was Come Home Year.

T. WAKEHAM: So there was \$18 million used; \$16 million, Come Home Year.

S. COADY: I'm using rounded numbers.

T. WAKEHAM: Yes.

S. COADY: So that was what was appropriated and transferred then to the department.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

S. COADY: And then there was some money there for reconciliation and a few other small things, but they were small things.

For this year, there are things – I'm going to say we augmented it, but there are things like the vaccine passports, the money for the community grants program. I mentioned today \$5 million more we're going to put towards community grants. There are some strategic initiative things in there. There are some third party legal requirements, reconciliation requirements, so that makes up the rest.

T. WAKEHAM: So you can get us a list of those things?

S. COADY: I can.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay, because my time is up.

CHAIR (Warr): There are no other questions?

T. WAKEHAM: There are no other questions?

CHAIR: Yeah, they're done.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay, I got one more then.

CHAIR: There you go.

T. WAKEHAM: Quickly, under the Revenue - Provincial \$10 million.

S. COADY: Wait now, just –

T. WAKEHAM: 3.1.06, Financial Assistance, Capital. I'm just wondering where the revenue is expected to come from and was anything collected last year.

S. COADY: That's the Corner Brook Pulp and Paper loan. During COVID, that has not been paid down. So there have been no recoveries on the Corner Brook Pulp and Paper loan, and that's what you're seeing there. We're working with Kruger.

T. WAKEHAM: Right.

S. COADY: As you know, there was a downturn in the industry. There seems to be a bit of an upturn now, so we're having continuous conversations with Kruger, but that is where it's being held because, of course, there is a loan to Corner Brook Pulp and Paper that was to be repaid.

T. WAKEHAM: That was the \$90 million –

S. COADY: And that's what you're seeing here.

T. WAKEHAM: Okay.

Okay, that's all the questions I had.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Is the House ready for the question?

Shall 3.1.01 to 3.1.06 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.1.01 through 3.1.06 carried.

CLERK: Total for Treasury Board.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry of Treasury Board Secretariat?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Treasury Board Secretariat, total heads, carried.

CLERK: Office of the Chief Information Officer: 4.1.01 through 4.1.05 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 4.1.01 to 4.1.05 inclusive carry?

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Chair.

I'm aware that many of the line items and budget items in OCIO will change. As projects are finished, they move on to the next stage. Could you please give an overview of the major projects, which are ongoing at OCIO currently?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Sure. I'd like to answer the question, and then I can just give a bit of brief overview.

We have, I guess, a full section on projects, 4.1.01. We have a lot of projects in flight and different stages of starting, and, obviously, when we do a project it's in conjunction with the

department. Unless it's like an OCIO project. If we're doing a project with Crown Lands, we need Crown Lands to be ready. So there's a lot of kind of partnerships for all the projects.

We have a certain amount of control about how projects proceed and when they stop and start. Some of the projects we have ongoing, Digital Government project, for example, we have Amanda, which a permit and licensing program for Digital Government and Service NL, but we use that same technology across multiple departments.

There's a payroll system upgrade that is going on. The IPGS has a LaMPSS Program replacement. There is a building upgrade for the Department of Health and Community Services. We are looking at overall how we modernize some of our older systems. We have a project around managed services. We are upgrading servers. There is a shared Apprenticeship Management System. That project is across with all of the other Atlantic provinces.

We are working with Crown Lands on improvements. We are doing a financial system upgrade for the courts because we do all of the IT for the courts as well. We are doing a project with Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, a merged manifest. I think that is part of their internal systems that they have in that department. We are doing an electronic death notifications with Vital Stats. That is funded by the federal government. We are the first in Canada to do that.

There is a Kiteworks project for Registry of Deeds. We are upgrading CADO. For education, there is a special education case management system. For ECCM, there is a Municipal Support Information System upgrade. For Justice and Public Safety, we are improving the chief medical examiner case management system. For HRS, we are doing an upgrade of their HRMS system. We are replacing the Digital Government and Service NL alert program.

For ECCM, we are doing a greenhouse gas registry. We are also doing some mobile

inspection software so a lot of inspections that happen across government, people can do them on their iPads, tablets and phones rather than having to do a paper-based one. We are doing a training intake program. We are looking at cloud strategy, I guess, overall and what things and when we migrate to the cloud. So rather than being physically on something, somewhere, here, it is hosted in a lake that Amazon owns just as an example of in the cloud.

We are looking at the MRD system upgrade – to submit a photo for MRD, to get your driver's licence. We are doing an upgrade of a program we have called Qmatic and Dealerweb.

So those are the projects that are going on in various stages at the moment with OCIO. I would like, I guess, to just provide anyone watching or listening with some overall feedback, information about OCIO.

So we support all the IT and the information management functions of core government and agencies, boards and commissions – everything from the RNC, the Provincial Courts, Supreme Courts and the Public Procurement Agency. We also do everything for, essentially, all core government, digital government – MRD for example, anything online, all the web sites. It goes on and on and on.

One huge thing that we've focused on, I guess, in the last so many months, is cybersecurity, which I'm sure we'll get to further. We're doing a range of things to just make sure that we're as beefed up as we can be. We continuously monitor for cyberattacks. We work with the Government of Canada's Communications Security Establishment, the Canadian Center for Cyber Security and Public Safety Canada on that, to continuously monitor, I guess, our threats and the threats of other provincial and federal governments, and we kind of share data at a higher level to make sure that we're as protected as we can be.

I'd also like to add in terms of the structure of our Estimates and the financial structure of our department. We have Corporate Services and Projects, so that's Current and Capital projects. That's all essentially IT projects for all

departments and agencies that the OCIO works with. And then the second section is Application and Information Management Services, so that area is responsible for support and maintenance of all the departmental applications across government.

Operations and Security, which is the next – we have Current and Capital; they're responsible for government's data centre, all the core technology infrastructure. Like the laptops, desktops and servers, networks, email systems, all the mobile devices. Managing the stuff on your phones, the backups, recovery of government data, information protection and security.

So then just some notes for OCIO that's different than in some other departments. In OCIO when we have Supplies lines, I think it's important to note that supplies includes things like software purchases and subscriptions, you know, when we buy a piece of software that counts as supplies. We have over 160 software renewals that are in supplies.

Then when we talk about Purchased Services, that could be anything from – we have a contract with the company who helps us maintain our data centres, or it could be we have a contract with a cybersecurity company to help us with that. So Purchased Services is like all the IT contracts that we have with different organizations.

So that's, I guess, my overview and looking forward to lots of other questions.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: How many computer assets are in use, and do you know the breakdown of desktop compared to laptop computers?

S. STOODLEY: I don't have that with me; we can certainly get that for you.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yes, that's fine.

Do you know how many people have two computers assigned to them as well, a laptop and

a desktop? While you're checking that out, I guess.

S. STOODLEY: Sure.

I would like to add that I've insisted that no one have both, unless they absolutely, absolutely needed one. When someone was given a laptop, for example, during COVID, we were going to take away the desktop, or when they went back into the office and if they're no longer working from home, we took the laptop for someone else, and they're back on the desktop.

Ideally, in a perfect world, everyone has a laptop so that they can work from home, but we do have a lot of desktops in government and they are slightly cheaper to buy. There is a government policy on single devices. So unless it's absolutely necessary, that everyone has to have one device.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

4.1.01, under Salaries, can you please outline any vacancies, which gave the savings of \$155,000 in the previous fiscal year, and how much did this impact operations?

S. STOODLEY: Sure.

Hiring in IT is extremely difficult in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have lots of jobs and we just can't hire people for them. That is a problem for all companies in Newfoundland and Labrador, and government doesn't pay as much as other companies. There is a big financial services technology company in St. John's and they hire all the graduating classes of all the IT classes for college and university. So it is a problem for all tech companies in Newfoundland and Labrador, and it also impacts government.

Any salary savings is not because we didn't try; it's just the nature of the environment. I don't have the number exactly of salaries broken down in this area, but I can tell you – no, I do, sorry. I guess, in total, across OCIO we had 52 vacancies. I don't have the breakdown by division.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

When I'm asking about Salaries and you're talking about IT, maybe somewhere along the way, because you're competing for people, that salaries may have to increase because of the cyberattacks and having the best people in the industry.

S. STOODLEY: Yes.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Last year the spending on Supplies went over budget by \$71,700. Can you please explain that, if you could?

S. STOODLEY: Absolutely.

So Supplies, we had a big increase and a big decrease here. We obviously put in the VaxPass program, which was fully funded by the federal government. So that shows up in this line item, which was \$950,000. But then we also moved a mix of software – some projects required less software but more professional services, so we moved \$878,300 to the Professional Services line. So that is the difference in what we were going to spend and what we did spend.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

4.1.01 to 4.1.05, the Chair recognizes the MHA for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: No.

CHAIR: Sorry, I recognize the MHA for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Chair.

Before I begin, Minister, it's been a very hectic time for your department with COVID and the transition to many of your staff working from home; a lot of services working from home; also having to have a lot of services online. Then the cyberattack. I'd just like to take a moment to say that you've weathered a lot of storms and I must congratulate you. I know that your department has received a lot of criticism, but I must say you've done a tremendous job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

L. EVANS: Thank you for your resiliency. I think we need to recognize that.

Moving to 4.1.03, Operations and Security, I do have some questions there. How many data breaches have occurred across government since April 2021, not counting the cyberattack last fall? How many people have been impacted by these breaches?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL

S. STOODLEY: Sure.

I thank the Member for her compliments of the team. They are a very hard-working team. I think that they are stretched and over – I don't know exactly when, but the OCIO budget continuously continues to decrease. It would be easy to spend four times as much money. So I think part of the challenge is spending within our budget, which I think is very important, and trying to maximize what we're doing and see what we can stop doing.

I guess I will just clarify that OCIO and core government were not subject to the breach – the cyberattack, sorry. That was NLCHI. I just want to be clear about. We are looking overall at our cybersecurity to make sure that we're doing what we can, but core government was not impacted by that.

So, I guess, in terms of data breaches, I don't have a number – I'm not aware of any IT system breaches. I know there are sometimes like a manual privacy breach. Like if someone sends an email to the wrong person, for example. I don't have the information for that for government. I can certainly find out if there are any in OCIO.

My team is telling me they're not aware of any IT breaches whatsoever.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

What was the role of your department and OCIO in the response on the cyberattack last fall? What steps did you and the employees of OCIO take to help mitigate the impacts?

S. STOODLEY: Obviously, when the cyberattack was announced, I was not part of the core team. But certainly the experts in OCIO were engaged to just – kind of all hands on deck. There were additional supports that were brought in from the federal government, for example, to just make sure. We did do kind of like a second look at everything just to make sure; we brought in fresh eyes to make sure that in terms of core government there were no vulnerabilities, for example, that we weren't aware of. We've also looked at a bit of a cyber review just to kind of triple check again.

Our team was just kind of stepped in and helped as needed, but it was not led by our team.

L. EVANS: No, it was of an assistance type of –

S. STOODLEY: Yeah.

L. EVANS: Yeah.

Has OCIO entered into an agreement with a management security service provider to increase the level of tools and expertise available to government in protecting its computer systems from threats?

S. STOODLEY: Yes. So before the cyberattack, we did engage with a managed security provider and part of the rationale for that is that we cannot hire cybersecurity experts. They make way more than we can pay; I think we should pay them a lot. So because we can't hire them because they are in such high demand, I think a safe, prudent, road we can go down, which we did go down, was engaging with a cybersecurity provider who can come in and fill some of those – provide that expertise as a company rather than as employees. So we have 24-7, 365 support from the managed cybersecurity company.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Has there been an audit completed recently on the vulnerability of all the technology and databases in government networks? And if not, has this process at least been done for some of the systems in the departments?

S. STOODLEY: I will say that we have done a review with different partners and we're kind of

actioning and looking at what we need to do and what we can do. I guess that's all I'll say about that.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

Next question: Is there now a concerted effort to upgrade our health information systems away from Meditech and build something more efficient and secure?

S. STOODLEY: My understanding is Meditech is the health – like with NLCHI, that's not on core government, so we do have, for example, the MCP system within core government, so we do have some health systems. I'm not involved in the Meditech or any of the software within the health authorities. Although, I know that the Health Accord, and in the upcoming blueprint, we'll have a better – my understanding, I could be wrong – idea of the technology for the future of health care in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I've looked to that document, I don't know what it's going to say yet, but that will be my guiding point for technology for health.

L. EVANS: And to be quite honest, Minister, we don't have a full picture of exactly how the government interacts or OCIO interacts so sometimes our questions are a little bit off base.

S. STOODLEY: Yup.

L. EVANS: I do appreciate you answering them. I also know, too, there are some areas that you don't have much reach into the knowledge of the activities, so I think we're both sort of trying our best to formulate questions and to get answers.

A lot of these jobs get contracted out, and due to the precise technology expertise that you alluded to, involved in projects to be undertaken, what kind of things is OCIO capable of building in-house? Like, for example, the contract that was awarded to change health care in 2020; with that deal, we paid \$35 million and they own the data that's produced from the operating software.

Is that something like our team in government could have built, and if not all, maybe some type of the program, rather than spending tens of

millions of dollars that would then leave the province?

S. STOODLEY: Sure. That's an excellent question. So we do have some things that we do have teams for. I guess I'll say in terms of all the core things we have experts on, like Microsoft Outlook and Exchange and the networks and devices, all those, we do have experts for those types of things. We do have teams focused on some of the bigger software. For example, PeopleSoft is a huge application that we have. We would have experts on that, for example.

We do have a technology that we're using to build new online things for employees and residents and that uses one team. It's kind of like an agile approach where they might do something for Digital Government and then they'll pivot and they'll go do something for Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation using the same technology. So someone online goes online and does like a series of steps on a form and it goes into a place where the data can easily be manipulated and stored. We do have specialized teams for things like that.

We also have a digital team, like a Web team, focused on website things. But there would be projects or certain technology where we would have to bring in people that it would not make sense to have experts, or maybe we can't find experts.

L. EVANS: Yes and you did allude to the cost of actually hiring and retaining that expertise.

S. STOODLEY: Yes.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

That's the end of my questions.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Chair.

I will do the same as the Member for Torngat Mountains and congratulate your department, to come up with the VaxPasses during COVID and implement all that and make sure it's safe and

secure is a pretty good job to do. I congratulate you on that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Could you please outline the Professional Services that were purchased last year? I note that last year the line item went over budget by \$1.3 million.

S. STOODLEY: Which one is that, sorry?

L. O'DRISCOLL: On Professional Services under 4.1.01. Some of it, I think, came from Supplies, you did say earlier but there was a bit more there. There was \$850,000 you said, I think.

S. STOODLEY: Sure.

The \$2.6 million, the revised budget, that was some additional VaxPass funding, which was fully offset by the federal government and included \$400,000 for a security review. We did have to hire some additional project managers and business analysts for projects. Then \$73,000 of mixing projects around a bit.

Then if you look at the budget for the upcoming year, we had to move some things around and that was \$265,000. We've reprofiled a million dollars from Capital to Current, so that's to reflect, I guess, as a government, when we buy things and spend money, we're spending them less on physical things that sit here in the building or in another building and more things in the cloud. More things that you pay for on a monthly basis, for example, or as you use them.

So if you buy things that are in the cloud that you use on a regular basis, that is Current. If you buy hardware, for example, that sits in a data centre, that is Capital. Just as a process, we would have to go to Treasury Board and ask for that, for example.

We did move \$1 million from Capital to Current, which is here, for the upcoming year. Then, I will say, as a government, we are investing an additional \$3 million in cybersecurity for the upcoming year.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

That was my next question. So good. Thank you.

Under Purchased Services, last year Purchased Services went over budget by \$136,100 was spent, but could you please provide some information on that?

S. STOODLEY: Sure.

So during COVID we weren't able to do as many – we had some, I guess, areas where we had staff who had some time available so we did do additional training. We did additional user experience training for some of our staff and Microsoft Exchange training.

We kind of moved money around and that is why it's in this line item. We are not having it again because we kind of took advantage of some time and money to do additional training.

L. O'DRISCOLL: All right.

Under 4.1.02, Salaries, can you please give some context to the Salaries budget? Last year, there was \$8.4 million budgeted; \$8.1 was spent this year; and \$8.4 has been asked for again.

S. STOODLEY: Sorry, are you on 4.1.02?

L. O'DRISCOLL: 4.1.02, yes.

S. STOODLEY: Okay.

So the difference between what we spent originally and what was budgeted was attrition, employee turnover and just the delays in finding and hiring people. Then the extra increase is just the general government step salary increase.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Under Supplies, last year Supplies went over budget by \$145,600. I was just wondering why that was.

S. STOODLEY: Sure.

One of our big software is PeopleSoft and it is a bit complicated the way, sometimes, we buy

technology, but we had to do an upgrade so that extra funding was to do this PeopleSoft upgrade. Now, OCIO has a project to make some changes to that software, so we won't need that spending next year.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Under Professional Services, can you explain how the money was spent in Professional Services last year and where the money is planning to be spent this year?

S. STOODLEY: Yes, Professional Services is for contractor supporting government systems. We were slightly less than what we expected but we still anticipate that level of need moving forward.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Under Revenue - Provincial, can you please outline how the revenue is generated and what accounts for the variance? I note last year \$52,000 was expected and \$15,000 was received.

S. STOODLEY: There are some organizations that we provide specific IT services to, for example, Provident10, the Teachers' Pension Plan, the Newfoundland and Labrador Municipal Financing Corporation and Legal Aid.

Depending on what we do for them, we have different agreements where they pay us for our team, kind of track their hours, and they pay OCIO for their work. So we kind of charge them as we use it and they didn't need as much from OCIO. They also have their own IT teams but they didn't need as much from OCIO so we didn't need to bill them as much.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

I am going to move on to 4.1.03. I just have a couple of questions there first. Given the recent cyberattack, has OCIO increased its spending on security, which I think you did answer, I think you said \$3 million?

S. STOODLEY: Yes, our government gave OCIO an extra \$3 million to focus on cybersecurity.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Did OCIO have to spend any money last year in response to the cyberattack, like right away?

S. STOODLEY: We did engage a partner to help us with a review. I mentioned that already, I think it was \$400,000. We did reallocate a lot of people's time to looking at that, so that wouldn't necessarily be cost, it's just their salary time. There might have been a few small things, but the big, substantial thing is the \$3 million that the government is giving to OCIO in addition to its budget for this upcoming year to kind of just make sure that we're shoring up what we need to shore up.

L. O'DRISCOLL: I'm pretty sure it won't be hard to spend.

S. STOODLEY: Oh, no. I mean we could have quadruple the budget and still not be able to do everything.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Following the cyberattack, has OCIO conducted a review of the security of all ABCs and departmental technology?

S. STOODLEY: We have looked at core government; we've done an initial review with a partner. In terms of all ABCs, that's an ongoing discussion and what OCIO's role is. I think we could have a bigger role, but we haven't worked that out yet.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Under 4.1.03, under Salaries, can you please outline the variance in the salary line item. I note that in last fiscal year there was a savings of \$698,100.

S. STOODLEY: Yes, so this is just people that we could not hire. There are jobs and no one applies. That's why we didn't spend as much. There was a \$27,000 increase for the salary increase of staff who are there, but the difference is that we can't hire people.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Under Transportation and Communications, can you please outline what this expenditure of \$1.5 million was for?

S. STOODLEY: Sure.

We had an additional wide-area network. Like our network, which is what we use to connect to Wi-Fi and stuff, we had additional costs for that, which was offset by reductions in travel and deliveries. Then the increase is we've just moved some money around with the zero-based budgeting process. So there's a \$22,000 increase there.

L. O'DRISCOLL: So in your previous question, you said it's a hard job to fill. Is that because of IT – you're specifically looking for in those jobs that you're saying that you can't find people?

S. STOODLEY: The tech sector in Newfoundland and Labrador is booming, and it would be 10 times bigger if there were people to hire.

There is one big financial services technology company here, who's in the news a lot and they hire the graduating class of every college and university. In my previous life, we would have had 10 times the IT people, but we hire as many people as will come. As a government, we don't pay as much as some of the private sector or companies, which is why we have to go with the managed providers, like we did for security.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Right.

S. STOODLEY: Outside of my OCIO role, as a province, we could employ another 5,000 people like that in IT, and you don't need to be coder. Anyway, that's another conversation.

L. O'DRISCOLL: It's just that it's –

S. STOODLEY: Those jobs pay really well. Anyone in high school listening – I'm sure there's not – do an IT field or email me.

L. O'DRISCOLL: I'm sure in high school they're listening to this.

S. STOODLEY: Tell your grandkids to go into the tech sector; you'll make more money than any other sector.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Under Supplies, could you please outline the types of supplies purchased last year and why there was \$8.9 million spent last year?

S. STOODLEY: Absolutely.

Supplies for OCIO is software. This would include all the software that 160 departments use. So it's a lot of software. Anything from, like there's graphical user interface systems for mapping. It could be all software. It's all software for all departments, I guess, like IBM, the court systems, Adobe, Oracle, Microsoft, McAfee, all that.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Just keep going?

CHAIR: Yes, there are no more questions.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Under Professional Services, I note that last year Professional Services went over budget by \$166,400. I'm just wondering why.

S. STOODLEY: So we had additional demands for contract resourcing due to, I would say, a cybersecurity review. Then there was an additional \$12,000 added just from the zero-based budgeting moving some money around.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Under Purchased Services, can you please outline what services are purchased here and what accounts for the variance in the line item?

S. STOODLEY: Sure.

Purchased Services would be a contract that we have the company to help us run our IT. That would include, for example, the company we pay to help us run our data centres. That would include the cybersecurity company. We had savings from hardware maintenance costs, because we bought some new equipment. When you buy new equipment, maintenance is included for so long. I guess like when you lease

a car or something. When you buy new, we had so much of that included.

We had a \$59,000 increase for what we pay OnX to run our data centre, and then we had \$167,000 decrease as a result of realigning some of the resources. So if we needed anything for our data centre, like any physical hardware or anything, that would also go in Purchased Services.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Under Property, Furnishings and Equipment, could you please outline what was purchased totalling \$795,700?

S. STOODLEY: Sure.

It's IT hardware.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Under Revenue - Provincial, could you please outline where this revenue comes from?

S. STOODLEY: So the extra revenue, I guess this would go to things that we support for other organizations as well. But the extra revenue, the \$58,000, was from a carryover of extra revenue we received for essentially expenses that were invoiced in the previous year.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

I will just go back. Why wouldn't government do more support and more training for IT people? That would be something to look at.

S. STOODLEY: Well, we did spend more money on training; we talked about that earlier. We do a lot of training.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

S. STOODLEY: We could always do more.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yes, invest more, for sure.

Under 4.1.04, last year the Salaries savings was \$440,000. Can you please outline why, and the impact that had on the projects?

S. STOODLEY: So the Salaries were less in this Capital bucket. This is kind of a special bucket for if we're doing something, from an accounting perspective, gets to be billed to

Capital costs. Our digital government team, we didn't need as many resources initially because of COVID. We weren't ramping up projects and stuff. We took the Digital Government people away from what they usually do and they were redeployed on special projects and vacancies.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Under Professional Services, can you please outline what the \$6-million expenditure was for and what this year's \$5.9 million is budgeted for?

S. STOODLEY: Sure.

The difference is we're doing an immigration project, which again it goes to Capital costs. That's a project with all the Atlantic Canadian provinces. The project was a bit delayed, so that's why we didn't spend as much as we had budgeted, about \$500,000 worth, which is carried forward to the next year, which we're going to spend on the project now. This would include funding for big projects that, from an accounting perspective, we can capitalize. So we get to amortize the money over a longer period of time.

What we did was work on the immigration initiative. The reduction is the million dollars that we moved from Capital to Current, which I talked about earlier. An extra \$500,000 was for the immigration project. Up until this past year, there was a special pot of money brought in for Digital Government. So that special pot of money is used up and now we're just doing Digital Government from within what we currently have.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Under Property, Furnishings, and Equipment, can you please explain how the savings was found in the previous year?

S. STOODLEY: The projects that were capitalized, we didn't need as much hardware as we thought. That's why the amount is lower. Then looking at the projects that we have, that are Capital in the upcoming year, we need less again. This kind of, I guess, aligns with what I was saying about we're doing fewer projects that are Capital and more projects that are Current. I

guess we need to buy fewer pieces of hardware and we pay more monthly subscriptions, for example.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

The last one is under 4.1.05, Property, Furnishings and Equipment; could you please explain how \$558,000 is spent?

S. STOODLEY: Sure.

This is Capital costs, I guess from an accounting perspective, things that are Capital related to Operations and Security. This is the budget for the physical parts of our data centre. We have a data centre. We have three supplemental disaster recovery sites and this is support for our – so here it says over 10,000 desktops and laptops and over 1,700 services. So that's what the money pays for.

L. O'DRISCOLL: All right, that's all the questions.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Is the House ready for the question?

Shall 4.1.01 to 4.1.05 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 4.1.01 through 4.1.05 carried.

CLERK: The total, Office of the Chief Information Officer.

CHAIR: Shall the total of the Office of the Chief Information Officer carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Office of the Chief Information Officer, total heads, carried.

CLERK: Total, Executive Council.

CHAIR: Shall the total of the Executive Council carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Executive Council, total heads, carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the Estimates of the Executive Council carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of Executive Council carried without amendment.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report having passed, without amendment, the Estimates of the Legislature and Executive Council.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, the Speaker returned to the Chair.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay and Chair of the Committee of Supply

B. WARR: 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 Legislature and the Executive Council.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and directed him to report that they have passed, without amendment, the Estimates of Supply.

When shall the report be received?

S. CROCKER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I'm getting some very strong, very good information from the Clerk. She looked at me and she said just adjourn.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I don't think there would be any objection.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that this House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

This House do stand adjourned until 1:30
o'clock tomorrow.

Enjoy your evening.

Go Leafs Go!

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned
until tomorrow, Thursday, at 1:30 p.m.