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HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA*

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

**SPEAKER (Bennett):** Order, please!

Admit strangers.

The hon. the Minister of Education.

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

I rise concerning a matter of privilege raised the other day by the Member for Labrador West. On reviewing *Hansard*, I see how my remarks could've been interpreted and therefore withdraw them.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** Today I'd like to welcome another new Page – her name is Blessing Opoku – to the House of Assembly this afternoon.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** Blessing is also from Ghana and she's completing her master's degree in political science at Memorial University.

Welcome to the House.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

### Statements by Members

**SPEAKER:** Today we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Burin - Grand Bank, Terra Nova, Ferryland, Conception Bay South and Placentia West - Bellevue.

The hon. the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

**P. PIKE:** Speaker, Leo Papail grew up in Lord's Cove in the wonderful District of Burin - Grand Bank. Leo attended St.

Joseph's Academy in Lamaline and, while in school, developed a passion for running.

As a matter of fact, and believe it or not, Leo would run home and race the bus and, in the winter, he ran behind the snowplow. By the way, he lived 10 kilometres from the school.

Leo competed at the provincial and national levels as a student and began running in official marathons in 2015. He has completed the six main marathons in the world. He has completed the marathons in Boston, New York, Chicago, London, Tokyo and Berlin.

What is amazing about this is that Leo did all this in less than three hours; his best time in Berlin at two hours and 38 minutes. To train for these gruelling races, Leo runs 100 kilometres per week, but certainly ramps up these distances in warmer weather.

Leo has been awarded the World Marathon Majors medal. Only a select few in Newfoundland and Labrador and in Canada have had this achievement. Leo proudly drapes the Newfoundland and Labrador flag around him at the finishing lines.

Congratulations, Leo. You make us proud of Newfoundland and Labrador and you are certainly a fitting role model for all.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Comrade Carl Turner has been a dedicated member of Branch 41 of the Royal Canadian Legion in Eastport for 35 years. He has been a member of the executive for many years and has held numerous executive positions, including

treasurer, second and first vice-president, membership committee chair and he is currently serving, once again, as the president of Branch 41.

Comrade Turner can always be counted on to help with any event at the Legion, and on many occasions you can find him in the kitchen all day long. Comrade Turner is the treasurer for the Bonavista North TV Bingo, and travels to Gambo every six weeks as part of the branch's commitment to this fundraising event. He's very active in his community and he has served as a councillor and is currently the mayor. Carl is also a Canadian Ranger and a Scout leader.

Please join me in congratulating Comrade Carl Turner on recently receiving the Royal Canadian Legion Life Membership Award – well deserved.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Thank you, Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize a great group of volunteers from the District of Ferryland: the Goulds Lions Club. On Saturday, April 15, the Goulds Lions celebrated their 47th annual charter night.

The Goulds Lions have played such a major part in giving back to their community. Since the club began in the Goulds, it has played an enormous role in giving and helping in so many ways. So many great accomplishments have been achieved by the hard work of each and every member, past and present.

To name a few, the club was instrumental in acquiring the first fire truck for the Goulds Volunteer Fire Department and is the longest continual sponsor of St. John Ambulance Brigade. The Goulds Lions have made financial donations to the Goulds

Lions Arena and, as well, provided a regulation-sized softball field, cost shared with the City of St. John's. This club is a major contributor to the Lion Max Simms Memorial Camp and, as well, sponsors the Goulds Leo Club.

I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating the Goulds Lions Club on their 47th charter night and all their accomplishments over the years.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

On April 25, I had the pleasure of attending the 2023 Research Inspired Student Enrichment Awards ceremony, better known as RISE.

The RISE Awards recognize Level II high school students who demonstrate academic excellence in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The selection process is competitive, including an academic assessment, future career and research interests relevant to our province.

Today I would like to recognize Corey Matthews and Melissa Smith who both attend Queen Elizabeth Regional High School in Conception Bay South. They have been selected to attend the Da Vinci Engineering Enrichment Program at the University of Toronto.

Corey Matthews is a Scouts Canada member since the age of five and has attended multiple engineering and robotics camps over the years. Corey is aiming to pursue a career in engineering.

Melissa Smith's interest in STEM began at an early age. She participates in the robotics team, audio media production,

various contests and student groups. Melissa hopes to pursue a career in pharmacy, with a focus on researching digestive and reproductive issues in women and adolescents.

Speaker, I congratulate them both on their remarkable achievements. Please join me in wishing them all the best on this incredible experience and in their future endeavours.

Thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. DWYER:** Thank you, Speaker.

Today I rise in this hon. House to recognize the volunteers that make up our town councils and Local Service Districts in the beautiful District of Placentia West-Bellevue.

These volunteers are individuals who generously donate their time and skills to serve their community by being directly involved in the decision-making process that affects their community. They have the opportunity to work on projects that improve local infrastructure, increase public safety or enhance the quality of life for the residents.

With a total of 36 communities in our district, we have a total of 16 municipalities and 20 Local Service Districts. These volunteers are town-essential pillars that have a crucial role in the development and maintenance of our communities.

Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to please join me in thanking all town council and LSD volunteers, not just in the District of Placentia West-Bellevue, but in all communities throughout our beautiful Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

### Statements by Ministers

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

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I rise today to recognize tomorrow, May 5, as the National Day of Awareness of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, also known as Red Dress Day.

This is a day to honour the memory of all missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people across Canada, including here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is also a day to raise awareness. Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people face higher rates of violence than their non-Indigenous, cisgender and heterosexual counterparts.

Speaker, preventing this violence requires an approach that is culturally appropriate and informed by Indigenous knowledge keepers.

At the most recent annual Provincial Indigenous Women's Gathering, our Premier, the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation and I announced our government's commitment to establish a Provincial Indigenous Women's Reconciliation Council.

This council will coordinate and lead meaningful collaborative action in the actions in the areas of Indigenous culture, health and wellness, justice and human security as it relates to the violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

Through *Budget 2023*, our government will continue to provide close to \$400,000 to

support Indigenous-led violence prevention initiatives. This includes the Indigenous Violence Prevention Grants Program and the annual Provincial Indigenous Women's Gathering and funding support to the Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network.

Speaker, our government is actively partnering with Indigenous governments and organizations and will continue to support actions that aim to prevent violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** I thank the minister for the advanced copy of her statement.

Tomorrow is the National Day of Awareness of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+, also known as Red Dress Day.

On behalf of the Official Opposition, I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize the memory of all missing and murdered Indigenous persons. It is unacceptable, Speaker, that Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people face higher rates of violence. Every effort must be made to stop the epidemic of gender-based violence and violence against Indigenous communities.

I remind the ministers opposite that there are still Calls to Action outstanding from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Woman and Girls, which must be addressed. There are also recommendations from community stakeholder groups such as First Voice, which can help prevent violence.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Speaker.

First, I would like to thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

Without true gender equity an end to social and economic marginalization of Indigenous people, missing and murdered will continue to be our reality.

Why are Indigenous women and girls continuing to find themselves on our proverbial Highway of Tears? It's government's refusal to address economic and social marginalization, leaving them without hope.

Government speaks change, but words without action continue this deadly legacy of colonialism: MMIWG++.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Speaker, when questioned about his refusal to bring the parties together in the standoff in the crab fishery, the Premier offered a meeting room and Mary Brown's, but did not commit to attending such a meeting.

Speaker, why does the Premier refuse to intervene to kick-start talks in our most lucrative fishery?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**D. BRAGG:** Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**D. BRAGG:** Just wait until you get the answer.

Mr. Speaker, I'm more than proud to get up here and talk about the fishery. Yesterday, May 3, I wrote a letter to the president of the FFAW and during that letter, I asked the FFAW to conduct a poll of his membership by secret ballot asking each individual snow harvester in the province the following question: Are you, as a snow crab harvester, ready and willing to go fishing for the price that was currently set at \$2.20 a pound?

From that, I got accused of meddling into the affairs of the negotiations. Only a couple of days ago, they were saying the minister is never involved. I've been involved in this from day one.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**D. BRAGG:** My office, the phone is ringing off the wall; my inbox is full on Facebook of people who want to go fishing, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Speaker.

I do appreciate, as we all do, the minister's intervening and doing what he can. I would hope and expect that the Premier would do more to make sure this fishery survives and moves in the right direction.

Every day that goes by and the FFAW and the ASP are not talking is another day delay in restarting our billion-dollar crab fishery.

Now the lobster fishery has ground to a halt as processors are refusing to buy.

Instead of being paralyzed, why doesn't the Premier call both parties to a face-to-face meeting in this boardroom?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**D. BRAGG:** Thank you.

Once again an opportunity to get up and talk about the fishery.

Last Friday, I stayed in this city with the Minister of Labour, in which the president of the FFAW was in my office on Strawberry Marsh Road and said: we have a deal. We will go fishing for \$2.20 a pound, we will give the bulk of the inshore fishermen the opportunity to catch their quota and we will restrict some of the offshore. He walked into the ASP office – I wasn't there but was told: we have a deal. He went back to his membership and could not formalize and finish the deal.

I'm not sure right now where the interest is for the president of the FFAW, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Speaker.

Premier, boats are tied up and the rural economy hangs in the balance. Meanwhile, your government has resorted to union busting as their solution. According to the FFAW President, Greg Pretty, the Liberal government – and I quote – undermines "the elected leadership of the union" by asking for a secret vote among members.

Why does the Premier believe attacking the legitimacy of the FFAW is going to solve this problem?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**D. BRAGG:** Mr. Speaker, the reason I asked for a secret ballot: people are afraid. They're afraid that their enterprises will be burnt, their houses will be burnt and their families will be assaulted. That's the threat that's been out there in social media for the last month – maybe over a month, Mr. Speaker. That's why we asked for a secret ballot, because people are no longer comfortable. The people who call me are not comfortable anymore with putting their hand up in public. They're afraid of what's going to come their way.

So unless the Opposition Member got a better solution, I suggest that the FFAW come back with ASP, myself and Minister Davis and let's talk about getting this fishery opened before it's too late.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Speaker.

One of the solutions would be that the Premier – the leader of Newfoundland and Labrador and particularly the Liberal government here – would sit down with the parties here and find a solution that works for everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador.

According to the FFAW, the union that represents the fishing industry here, the Liberal government's actions – and I quote again – “contradict the Fishing Industry Collective Bargaining Agreement Act, and open up the harvesters and the union to litigation.”

Why does the Premier believe that this will help get our fishing industry going again?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**D. BRAGG:** What else can I say, Mr. Speaker? What else can I say to the people of this province? I've made myself available 24-7, as has Minister Davis. There was a formula in – not a formula in place but a procedure in place to come to a price: \$2.20. Nobody is happy with \$2.20. They're fishing for \$2.20 in the Gulf as we speak. The first crab is going into the market as we speak from the Gulf. They probably only got about 20 per cent of their market caught right now.

If we don't get our fishery open, not only do we stand the chance to lose this season, we stand the chance to lose many seasons because markets will be lost and, next year, plants just won't buy it, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Speaker.

Minister, we need the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador to stand up for the fishing industry in Newfoundland and Labrador to make sure it's viable. That's why he's the Premier.

**D. BRAZIL:** Speaker, as the Premier sits on his hands, plant workers and harvesters are wondering how they're going to survive. Bills are piling up, cupboards are going empty and people cannot afford their medication.

Has government received any update on extension of EI benefits for affected crews and plant workers?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**D. BRAGG:** Speaker, I must say I did support a letter from the FFAW to extend EI purposes; I really think about the people who are not out fishing right now because I'm thinking the vast majority want to be on

the water. It is in their blood; it has been in their blood for years. They want to be on the water. Plant workers want to be in the plants. EI is running out –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**D. BRAGG:** Yes, people are going to have to watch their dollars to see this through. This will be worse than any crop failure you would see anywhere in the world if we don't get a crab fishery open in this province. It has been our backbone since the moratorium; we need to get it open, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Speaker.

The Premier touts when he can make a phone call to the prime minister or to a minister to get things done.

Has he made a phone call to ensure that EI benefits get extended to these plant workers and crew members to ensure that they can get through this spring and summer until something is done (inaudible)?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**D. BRAZIL:** A few weeks ago, the Premier said he would consider outside buyers.

Has the Premier made up his mind? Will he allow outside buyers in the Newfoundland and Labrador fishery?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**D. BRAGG:** To be honest, Speaker, I have not seen a letter from the FFAW or anyone else for the whole fishery. I did, yesterday, receive a letter from the FFAW to look at

outside buyers for lobsters. We are looking at that right now but I guarantee you that if we allow that, they play by our rules. If a buyer comes into this province, they would have a licence from us and they would pay what the negotiated price is for our lobsters or for anything else for that matter, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Speaker.

Since the Liberal government has been in office, the people of St. Lawrence have been ignored. Their emergency room is closed and now the salmon will be trucked out of the Burin Peninsula. Local buy-in for producing salmon on the Burin Peninsula was based on local jobs.

I ask the Premier: When was he informed that Grieg decided to renege on their deal?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**D. BRAGG:** Thank you, Speaker.

The workings from company to company is not our involvement. What Grieg may have decided with any company in this province, we were not party of any of those agreements. So I am assuming if the broke an agreement, there is a legal process that will be followed.

So Grieg is doing great work in this province, I know their first fish will be coming out early this fall and I know they're having good success. I mean they have (inaudible) from what I can tell it has been zero mortality into that species so it is a good story. Is it bad for St. Lawrence? You know it is. When any plant – it is like every other plant in this province right now that lies dormant. We want to get our plants



open as fast as we can and do as much as we can in this province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Premier, I can reassure you if I give \$30 million to a company of taxpayers' money, I want to know what they're doing and when they're doing it and who's going to benefit from what they're doing.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**D. BRAZIL:** Particularly the people in St. Lawrence who were expecting these jobs.

The province gave Grieg a \$30 million loan to get started and the former mayor, who is now a local MHA, and I quote: "...we, as mayors, needed to stand up for this company. And that's what we did."

If the Liberals are standing up for Grieg, then who is standing up for the people of St. Lawrence?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**D. BRAGG:** Speaker, I'll speak again about the fishery and the process. I am delighted that Grieg is doing their fish in this province. It's only too easy for that species to be headed off, gutted and carried out for more processing. We're doing it in this province, we will employ people in this province, and that's the positive side. If there's any silver lining right now, they're our success in aquaculture and their fish get done in this province.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have a question now I'm hoping that the Premier will answer on this one. It's been one month since I asked the Premier if he was going to apologize to the Churchill family, if he was going to compensate them for their full legal cost, and if was going to appoint them to the steering committee for deaf and hard of hearing education.

Will he now do the right thing: apologize to the Churchill family, compensate them for full legal costs and appoint them to the steering committee for deaf and hard of hearing children?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**A. FUREY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to take the question. Of course it's incredibly unfortunate, the situation that the Churchills were in, Mr. Speaker. The Newfoundland and Labrador English School District did apologize to the Churchills and I think we can all realize that that was a frustrating and terrible situation for them and their child. If it provides them with any peace of mind, I indeed apologize.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, last night the Premier found the cameras once again and announced a new mid-size theatre –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**B. PETTEN:** – for the St. John's area.

While we appreciate the impact the arts community has for our province, can the Premier explain why he's building a new

theatre when the historic Reid Theatre has sat vacant for more than a decade?

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

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

I am very pleased to stand and answer this question today about the Premier's and the Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation announcement last night about 2024 being Year of the Arts in this province, Mr. Speaker. We truly appreciate our artists in this province and the value they bring to our economy.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**S. CROCKER:** Four-hundred and fifty million dollars annually, 5,000 jobs, Mr. Speaker, this is a very important industry. If the Member opposite would've been listening last night, what he would've heard was the Premier say we're looking for an opportunity to establish a mid-size theatre or build, renovate, whatever, a theatre here in St. John's.

Mr. Speaker, the next steps of this process will be what we decide to do and the feasibility around such a theatre.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to another question on this one.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We listened. They have an opportunity. They can go and renovate the Reid Theatre. It's been left vacant for 10 years. A lot cheaper and probably the right place to put it over at the MUN campus.

I never asked him to detail what good news they've done again, if it's good news. To them it is. I don't really get the good news of it.

After years of the Liberal government cutting the budget at Memorial University – I hope he listens to this one now – the primary issue stopping the completion of the renovation is funding. He just announced all that money.

I ask the Premier: Why are we spending money on a brand new space when half the completed Reid Theatre still needs attention? Pretty simple.

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

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

I hope I get the next 10 minutes, like the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture did, Mr. Speaker, because I will stand here all day and defend decisions that support artists in our province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**S. CROCKER:** I will repeat for the Member opposite, seeing as he likes to repeat in his preambles, Mr. Speaker: \$450-million industry in this province and 5,000 jobs. We're only just getting started when it comes to building the arts economy in this province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**S. CROCKER:** One of the main determining factors for a tourist to visit our province, Mr. Speaker, is our arts and culture.

**L. PARROTT:** (Inaudible.)

**S. CROCKER:** I hear the Member for Terra Nova over there. If he'd like to ask a question, I'll sit down.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**S. CROCKER:** So if he would like to ask a question, I'll sit down and he can ask one.

Mr. Speaker, again, I will stand up for the arts industry in this province any day of the week.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, if they all joined the arts community and they all go and audition for Disney, we're going to have to have a little general election before the summer comes, because the list is getting longer every day. Another great performance. I'm complimenting. A great performance, an Oscar award.

We support artists, Mr. Speaker, but we also support reasonable, responsible spending. Not for the photo op, not for what looks good to them –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**B. PETTEN:** – but looks good to the people of the province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, the Reid Theatre was a starting place for major talent from our province. *Come From Away's* Petrina Bromley is among those who have taken the Reid Theatre stage. The Reid Theatre is a perfect example of a mid-size venue needed by the arts community.

Did the Premier actually listen to what the artists wanted or did you just want another photo op?

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

**S. CROCKER:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I hope I got eight minutes left.

Mr. Speaker, he referenced *Come From Away*. Now, I know they hate good news but I'm going to deliver a little bit more. About a year ago, we went to work and made an arrangement with the producers of *Come From Away* to bring *Come From Away* to Gander this coming summer.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**S. CROCKER:** Mr. Speaker, it is going to bring millions – literally millions of dollars – in GDP to Gander this summer. We've sold 14,000 tickets. As of last Friday, there were 43 tickets left for 37 shows.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**S. CROCKER:** We will continue to invest in the arts in this province, day in and day out, because it brings a return. *Come From Away* will help revitalize the arts community in Gander, and we want to spread that right around this entire province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Speaker, media has reported that residents of this province have filed hundreds of complaints alleging police misconduct over the last decade. The top complaints were assault, conduct unbecoming an officer and incomplete investigations. Multiple officers have had over a dozen complaints filed against them. Yet, the process to adjudicate these complaints is hidden closed doors.

Minister, why the hidden process?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond. I just want to make a note that the RNC Act does have a heading which is headed Public hearings and section 32(1) of the act says: All hearings conducted by an adjudicator shall be open to the public and notice of those hearings shall be published.

Now, all those hearings that make it to that stage are public, so everyone can know about it, everyone can attend and everyone can participate. But sometimes as we know, Speaker, a complainant might not want something to be public. If you read further in the RNC Act, it allows a situation for any complainant to have that situation resolved where he or she doesn't have to make it public. We all know that some of these complainants might be victims.

I have said on numerous occasions, I'm not interested in forcing a victim who doesn't want to talk about a personal traumatic issue publicly, to force them to do so. Let's look at all the act and not just one section and one media story when we talk about (inaudible).

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Yet, I'll remind the minister that the former RNC police chief in 2021 recommended that internal disciplinary hearings of officers be open to the public.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Yesterday, Speaker, First Voice repeated their call for civilian police oversight board. Their position remains the same as it did several months ago. Action is urgently needed now.

Will the minister take the advice of this important advocacy group to establish a civilian police oversight board?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Speaker.

I think, as we all know, we've heard over the last few months that the discussion around policing in this country, not just in this province, has changed. It has become more active and certainly following the report of the Mass Casualty Commission in Nova Scotia has brought a light to policing in this country.

I'm happy to report that we're a little bit ahead of the game; we're welcome to change, we're open to change and we've been investigating the best way to do change. We did an investigative report into workplace culture at the RNC here in this province and following that we established a working group back in September 2022, which involves members of the RNC and members of the Justice and Public Safety division.

As I said a few days ago in this House – actually, a couple of times in this House – because of the current budget, we are now having a 10-person additional unit to deal specifically with policing issues in this province which will look at policy.

I, again, look forward to everyone supporting the budget so we can get that unit in place.

**SPEAKER:** The minister's time has expired.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Well, Speaker, I would say to the minister that he's not ahead of the game. If you listen to advocacy groups such as First Voice, the minister, yes, has met with the First Voice group, but according to First Voice these conversations have not resulted in any commitments on the part of the provincial government, or even any counter proposals or agreed upon next steps. Those are their words.

Why is the minister not acting to restore public confidence in policing in this province?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Speaker.

As I've said before and I've said to First Voice on a couple of meetings I've had with them, I appreciate the work they've done. I appreciate the report. I've read it thoroughly more than once. I've also said to them on a number of occasions that we do have an obligation to meet with other groups in this province. That includes other Indigenous groups, that includes women's groups, which I think is very important and very fitting on this day when we look at MMIWG – to meet with women's groups and have their views on police and police oversight, as well as other racialized groups, which the Anti-Racism committee has been speaking to as well.

Do you know what? It does take time, but I'd rather take time and get it right, than jump on the first report that lands on my desk, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Exploits.

**P. FORSEY:** Speaker, just yesterday the Liberals voted against fixing serious issues with Crown lands.

Will the Liberals ever show leadership and bring in legislation facing problems against Crown lands in this sitting of the House of Assembly?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**D. BRAGG:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

If the Member opposite was paying any attention, two days ago we issued a press release saying that we issued – yesterday, was it, or was it two days ago. I've lost track of time to be honest. We issued a *What We Heard* when it comes to Crown lands and section 36, in particular, often referred to as squatter's rights.

I encourage the Member to print a copy, have a read and let's have a discussion about it later on.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Exploits.

**P. FORSEY:** Speaker, when the Liberals voted against our motion, they voted against the will and best interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Why does the government find it necessary to undermine the people who just want to see fair and timely services from this department?

Will the minister induce legislation in this sitting?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**D. BRAGG:** My only regret, Speaker, is that I didn't have the opportunity to speak on that yesterday, because the way it was written was so ambiguous. It was like it was made up. It was very fictional. There are actual hard facts. It was almost like a Disney show, a script, the way it was written. It was almost Disney.

Here it is. Here's the document: *What We Heard*. I have a newly, freshly minted copy here for the Member opposite if he wants to have a look. I'll table it. Actually, when I sit down, I'll walk across the House with it, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**C. TIBBS:** There are tons of Crown lands issues, Speaker. We're just trying to come up with the best solutions for the people of the province. That's all we're trying to do.

Speaker, the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL is responsible for Collection Services, which administers and collects certain outstanding debt owed to this government. It was indicated in Estimate's document that there are a number of vacancies and there were delays in recruiting officers within collections.

I ask the minister: Has this impacted collection of debt owed to the government?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Speaker.

Part of shared services is bringing together things across government that we can make more efficient and I'm very excited to say that last year we did that. We brought collections from multiple areas across government together under my department.

It's going really well. I thank the public servants in our department for their very important work. They work with people across the province and, you know, when they owe us money, are often in a difficult situation in their lives so we try and get a good balance in working with people to collect money owed to the Crown, which we take very, very seriously, Speaker.

During COVID, we pivoted with the team to focus on COVID-related activities and not to harshly pursue – we tried to prioritize our areas while being sensitive to people's needs during COVID.

We have a range of vacancies in our department. I'd encourage anyone to apply for any of our roles on the website. We'd be very pleased to welcome people to our department.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you, Speaker.

Salaries for Collection Services for this year are budgeted almost \$1.1 million but overall the budget for Collection Services has decreased by almost 20 per cent.

Is the minister concerned that there will be a problem collecting debt owed to this government?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the Member for the question. I thank our team who worked very hard in the collections team, working with companies and individuals across the province who do owe our provincial government money. I'm not sure, exactly, what the qualifications are

off the top of my head, but if the Member would like to apply for a job, I can certainly send him the job application.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you, Speaker.

I have a job, but there are people out there that probably could use that job. So I'll definitely put them on to you, Minister. I appreciate it.

In Estimates –

**S. CROCKER:** (Inaudible.)

**C. TIBBS:** Sorry?

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**C. TIBBS:** That's the third time you've gotten personal with me, Crocker.

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

**C. TIBBS:** In Estimates, the minister couldn't provide an answer to how much money was owed to government through Collection Services, but an official indicated that it was in excess of \$300 million.

I ask the minister: Is the amount of money owed to government increasing or decreasing under her watch?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Speaker.

As I mentioned, the responsibility for shared services – over the past few years, we've taken a bunch of different collections that are across government and brought them

together so we have a dedicated team with excellent leadership. They are focusing on prioritizing the Crown's interest in the debt owed to government. We take this responsibility very seriously.

We have a range of debt owed. Companies big and small owe us money, as well as people with student loans. So there is a range of debt. We manage that and actively work with Justice and government departments to make sure that we look at taxpayers' interest in that debt as best we can.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, in March we saw a catastrophic mechanical failure on a school bus in Mount Pearl. Despite repeated assurances from the minister, inspection reports on the bus are still not available online.

Speaker, what is going on? When will these inspections be available online, Minister?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Speaker.

School bus safety is incredibly important. At the beginning of the school year, we inspect 100 per cent of our school bus fleet and then every few months there are another 30 to 40 per cent of inspections that we do. So the safety of our students is paramount, Speaker.

The school bus in question was successfully inspected and had a pass rating in January. There's currently an RNC investigation ongoing, which our team of highway enforcement officers are participating in and

we're waiting for the outcome of that investigation.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Speaker.

In February, we were told that the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program could not be expanded into Labrador and Central Health regions until a provincial coordinator was hired. According to the then minister of Health, the work to fill this position was active and underway. That was in 2021; two years ago.

So I ask the Premier: Why hasn't this critical position been filled?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The issue that the Member raises is very important. I know that the department and the Health Authority are looking at putting the training in place for individuals throughout the province – the nurses – so that they can undertake this very important process and service to the women throughout the province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** There's no coordinator position posted yet, Speaker.

Speaker, because the government hasn't bothered to fill this position, victims of sexual assault in our province have reduced access to justice on top of their health concerns.

I ask the Premier: How high is the priority for victims of sexual assault to this government?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This issue is a high priority. I've had a number of meetings with officials in the department, Mr. Speaker. I am assured that the Health Authority is undertaking the training for nurses in areas throughout the province so that this service can be provided to the victims of crimes to women who need this service.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

**J. BROWN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Education stated that informal and formal channels of communication are established and working. Such a statement is ignoring the calls of my constituents. They have been calling me, demanding that the teachers be able to meet directly with the minister's deputy. It looks as though the minister is dismissing the issues of these workers.

I ask again, respectfully: Will the teachers, support staff and union reps in the schools in Labrador West have an opportunity to present their issues directly to the department next week?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

I think the piece that's missing in these discussions is the role of the NLTA. The union is now one and it is appropriate that I



bring this up with my meeting with president Langdon in a couple of hours.

Certainly, I would be interested in hearing views on teaching from anyone, but I think really to leave the NLTA, as an organization out, is a disservice to them.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, deaf and hard of hearing teachers are allocated on the number of deaf and hard of hearing students in the K-to-12 system, yet they are also responsible for preschool children. This increases their workload and takes away resources and supports of children in the school system.

I ask the Premier: Will his government commit to hiring deaf and hard of hearing specialists to work with preschool children so that they and school-aged children get the attention they deserve?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

This is an important topic. I have a meeting with the Newfoundland and Labrador Association for the Deaf, I think as early as Monday of next week, possibly Tuesday, I may misspeak, I wouldn't want to err.

The skills required for deaf and hard of hearing teaching are not easily found. They are difficult to recruit and difficult to retain. That is why, again, this afternoon I'll be meeting with the NLTA to discuss ways to enhance recruitment and retention of all kinds of teachers, specialists and

generalists. It is an ongoing problem and we work hard to address this as best we can.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the chairlift at A. P. Low Primary has been out of order for months, directly affecting students with mobility issues and impacting their learning. Government has done nothing to address the issue. Other schools in the area face similar issues. I can tell you that teachers have certainly brought to the attention have been ignored.

I ask the Premier: When can the school community expect to have the lift repaired or replaced so that students, staff and parents with mobility issues are not excluded?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

I'm aware that in some of the older schools in the province, and the Member opposite references one, that there are maintenance challenges with aging schools. Lifts and lift technology is in demand at the moment and there are significant supply chain issues. There are also limited personnel available in the province to do this work. There have been challenges with janitorial and maintenance staff recruitment in Labrador West because of significant competition from IOC.

All that being said, these are issues we're working with the school district on and as one would hope with amalgamation, we would be able to streamline that process between a unified department and school

district and the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

**Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees**

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's.

**S. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Speaker, pursuant to the motion of referral of March 23, 2023, and in accordance with Standing Order 72, the Social Services Committee met on five occasions: April 4, April 5, April 6, May 1 and May 3. The Social Services Committee have considered the matters to them referred and, pursuant to Standing Order 75(2), have directed me to report that they have passed without amendment the Estimates of the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development; the Department of Education; the Department of Health and Community Services; the Department of Justice and Public Safety; the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs; and Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

Further, the Committee recommends that the report be concurred in.

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

Any other presenting reports by standing and select committees?

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

**Petitions**

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Thank you, Speaker.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Witless Bay Line is a significant piece of infrastructure. Whereas many commute outside the Avalon on a daily basis for work, as well as commercial, residential and tourism growth in our region has increased the volume of traffic on this highway.

Therefore we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to upgrade this significant piece of infrastructure to enhance and improve flow of traffic to and from the Trans-Canada.

Speaker, this is my first time getting up on this petition.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Not really.

I've been speaking about this since I came in here and it's something that's very significant in my district. I'm going to call it a short cut to go to the Trans-Canada because anyone from Bay Bulls or from Trepassey, if they come down or they're going to the Trans-Canada, most times they're taking the Witless Bay Line. The road is deplorable.

We have the ongoing joke up our way is that the water bomber laid the pavement on the road, it's that rough. You can't drive across it. People with campers – after doing a petition on this, a motorcycle driver said don't forget about the motorcycle drivers

going across Witless Bay Line – another issue. They're zigzagging across. People behind you may think you're drinking and driving when you're going across, it's that bad. You're driving across the road; you're avoiding potholes. Then get in the nighttime there's no way to see them. Get out tonight now when the fog is low-lying to the ground, coming across at 50, 60 kilometres, two tires gone if you hit the wrong hole.

It's time for this government to get this done, make sure it gets in our budget to take care of the people in the Ferryland District and for the province to get this done.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Speaker.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador introduced a 20-cent per litre tax on sugar-sweetened beverages at a time when many families, seniors and residents of the province are struggling with the already skyrocketing increased cost of living in the province.

Therefore we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to encourage the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to cancel the sugar-sweetened beverage tax at the earliest opportunity.

Speaker, I've spoken many times on this sugar tax and now, of course, the budget confirmed what we've been saying all along. It's not meant to modify people's behaviour; it's meant to take more money out of people's pockets.

This year's budget is over \$12 million. When this was initially talked about, we were talking about a forecast of around \$9 million

annually. It obviously has increased as it's now in the budget. But it's just that. They reference the United Kingdom in many of the things when they talk about the effectiveness of it. But in the United Kingdom they applied the tax on the manufacturer, not on the people. They forced the manufacturers to change their formulas.

We do not have that authority or ability in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I would argue, to tell manufacturers how to change their formula. What did we do instead? We taxed the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. The biggest impact is on the people who can least afford it. That's been part of the problem and I would hope that the government would see fit to turn around and eliminate the sugar tax just as they eliminated that infamous levy tax that they put everybody when they first got elected, because this is nothing more than another way of finding a way to tax people.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

I listened with intent on the call from the Member opposite on the sugar-sweetened beverage tax. I'd like to point out to him there was a most recent article, I think it was last week, in *The Globe and Mail* that did a comprehensive evaluation of evidence from past studies on the 45 harmful health effects of sugar and sugar-sweetened beverages. The evidence review was published online on April 5. It analyzed results of 73 meta-analysis, which included 8,600 individual studies. Let me tell you what they found.

Based on conclusions, the researchers recommended consuming no more than 25

grams of added or free sugars a day. That's about six teaspoons worth. To put it in perspective, one 355-millilitre can, one can of pop, has nine teaspoons, Speaker.

Now, I will remind the Member opposite there are many, many advocates for this type of impact on sugar-sweetened beverage tax, including the Canadian Paediatric Society and I'm quoting from them: "The excessive consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages has been strongly associated with weight gain, chronic disease development, and dental caries."

Let me talk about the Heart and Stroke Foundation: "Sugary drinks are the number one source of added sugar in the Canadian diet, and too much added sugar is not good for heart health."

Speaker, I will say to the Member opposite his numbers from the budget, last year it was \$6 million; this year is \$12 million (inaudible) –

**SPEAKER:** The minister's time has expired.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Speaker.

The reasons for this petition are:

WHEREAS affordable, reliable and safe child care is a necessary component of a functioning society, especially one that expects to reduce poverty, create employment, decrease out-migration and increase in-migration, all of which are essential for a growing economy; and

WHEREAS accessible child care is as much as vital and important for a growing economy and flourishing population;

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately take the necessary action to ensure that accessible child care is just as much available as it is affordable.

Speaker, I have received a really tragic email on Monday from someone who addressed this to me as well as to the Minister of Education. I'm going to paraphrase it in the interest of time since we're limited in how much time we get on a petition, but I will reference some of the important points that this person makes. She said she wants to discuss the abysmal state of our urgent child care situation on the Avalon. She says that, of course, we're aware of it, and how difficult it is to obtain child care for our constituents.

But, Speaker, she goes on to mention a few points that have to be on the record and we have to hear about the real-life experiences of people who are enduring this child care crisis. She's a registered nurse; she has a primary position in the ER of the Health Sciences Complex. Her husband, he's a cabinet worker; he's a carpenter. Many, many years of valuable experience. They have a three-year-old toddler and another on the way.

They moved home to their Province of Newfoundland from Ontario a little over a 1½ year ago to ideally raise a family in our – she quotes – beautiful province, living near her family, but little did we know we would have next-to-no options available to us for child care.

She accepted a full-time, permanent position, which we all know is desperately needed in our hospitals. She quickly had to drop that permanent position, Speaker, as she was unable to find regulated, consistent child care. This was a terrible cost to her family financially and our health care system. Luckily, she found a home daycare provider, but that didn't last long because the daycare provider had to go on maternity leave.

She said her son is on wait-lists for every single regulated daycare from Seal Cove to Paradise for over a year and not one call or available spot. She said they are losing their –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

I am presenting another petition on reforming the justice system to better serve survivors of sexual assault.

WHEREAS the global Me Too Movement laid bare the gross inequalities and obstacles facing survivors of sexual assault who seek justice; and

WHEREAS serious concerns about how the justice system handles criminal offences related to sexual violence are evident based on statistics about the reporting rates of sexual assault in relation to other crimes. These concerns also emerge from the reported experience of survivors; and

WHEREAS in Canada one in three, 31 per cent, of victimizations is reported to police but only one in five sexual assaults are reported to police; and

WHEREAS survivors hesitate to report sexual assaults because they don't believe they will see justice; and

WHEREAS these facts and conditions all combine and result in a failure of the justice system for survivors of sexual assault;

THEREFORE we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

to acknowledge that the status quo is failing survivors of sexual assault; undertake a review of the K-to-12 curriculum to identify gaps in education about consent, healthy relationships and gender-based violence; implement alternative justice options, such as transformative and restorative justice practices and/or options rooted in Indigenous legal traditions and practices in response to gender-based violence throughout the province; have the Minister of Justice ask the chief judge of the Provincial Court to consider a practice directive which would prohibit opposing counsel from approaching witnesses and which would prohibit counsel from yelling at witnesses; introduce mandatory training for provincial judges on trauma, PTSD and consent modelled on the federal requirement; and consult with key community stakeholders to identify and appropriately fund new initiatives to prevent and address all forms of gender-based violence.

Speaker, this has been brought up a number of times and it certainly would be good for the Minister of Justice to respond to it.

In the early discussion about police oversight, there was a discussion around confidentiality and how some survivors or people may not want something made public; well, that's certainly addressed here as well. But, if anything else, when you look at four and five about the instruction to Provincial Court judges and training for provincial judges, you can bet that this is based on the experiences of survivors of sexual assault in the court system.

I'll stop here and allow the minister the opportunity to respond.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

**C. PARDY:** Thank you, Speaker.

Several abandoned buildings in unincorporated areas or LSDs pose a significant health and safety hazard to local residents and tourists, including collapsed or collapsing structures or dwellings. Others are dens for rodents. These abandoned buildings also undermine the tourism and development potential of many picturesque communities in the District of Bonavista, which is heavily reliant on this industry for economic growth.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to bring forward legislation that acts on the removal of these collapsed or dilapidated structures.

I would like to reference what the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board mentioned to the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port a short while ago on the article – we all believe in the article and the ills on sugar. We certainly believe that. I was waiting for her to say that taxation is the best way to curb it and that wasn't in the article. That is our contention is that the taxation piece wasn't the best way of dealing with it and approaching it.

These abandoned structures that we have, now that regionalization is off the table and is not occurring, I would say that if we want to maintain our rural areas and we want to maintain tourism in these wonderfully picturesque communities of which the film industry is deeply attracted to, we have to make sure we look at existing and abandoned properties that would be in these areas.

Mr. Speaker, you know that we've had conversations in the past about this. I think we need further exploration as what we can do to make sure that these dilapidated, collapsing structures that are strewn all over my district would be seen to in a very articulated and in a due process. That's what we ask.

We said yesterday we wanted a change in Crown Lands. My Member and colleague for Exploits was asking can we bring the Crown Lands legislation in this sitting? I would like to see legislation brought this sitting that would deal with the dilapidated and collapsing buildings throughout our district so that the Bishops in Newmans Cove can rest easy and the collapsed buildings in Knights Cove can be removed.

We need government intervention; we need legislation and no time like the present to bring legislation in.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** Orders of the Day.

#### Orders of the Day

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 7.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**SPEAKER:** All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to discuss the Estimates of the Legislature and the Executive Council.

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.'

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!

We are reviewing Estimates in the Committee of Supply and I'll ask the Clerk to call the subheads.

**CLERK (Barnes):** For the Legislature, 1.1.01 through 8.1.01 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 1.1.01 to 8.1.01 carry, the Legislature?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 8.1.01 carried.

**CLERK:** The total.

**CHAIR:** Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, the Legislature, total heads, carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall I report the Estimates of the Legislature carried?

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're going to call the Estimates of the Executive Council. I'll ask the Clerk to call the subhead, please.

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

**CHAIR:** Shall 1.1.01 carry?

The Chair is recognizing the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much.

I'm very happy to have the opportunity today to discuss the Estimates for a number of very important Committees, such as Government House, Premier's Office, Executive Support, Treasury Board, the Office of Information, Women and Gender Equality and, of course, Access to Information and Protection of Privacy.

I can say, without fair contradiction here or anywhere, we have a very hard-working public service. There are about 7,314 core government employees who are working. Then there are tens of thousands more who are working in the hospitals and schools around the province as well. They are hard-working professionals and we are very, very pleased to have them supporting us in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We look forward to the Estimates process. As for people who are watching today, this is an opportunity for us to have an open dialogue on all the expenditures within these categories that I just listed. Because we are in a Committee of the Whole and that means we're having the Committee in the House of Assembly, we do not have our support team with us today. But they are all very much engaged and listening and are pleased to answer any questions that anyone may have on the expenditures of these very important entities.

On that note, Chair, I'll wait for the first questions and I look forward to them.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Shall 1.1.01, Government House, carry?

The Chair is recognizing the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Like the minister, I want to echo, too, the acknowledgement of the hard work by the core civil servants – all civil servants. But particularly when we get into the budget process, the core civil servants and the programs and services that are done there, and particularly the Minister of Finance's staff themselves who put this together.

We had a very open and informative three-hour-plus debate in Estimates a week or so ago, which was informative. Obviously, as the minister just outlined, this is the next stage of Executive Council which takes in a number of the other headings that don't stand alone from an Estimates point of view but are very important to the financial well-being and the delivery of services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. So I'm honoured to be part of this process again and have been for the last number of years. I look forward to asking some questions for clarification. The fact that this is now being televised, more people can get a better understanding of how we do Estimates.

Just to add on what the minister had said, we've been spending a minimum of three hour intervals on particular headings for line departments, outlining exactly what may be some of the issues that we may have around clarification so that the general public would have an understanding as to where their taxpayers' money is being spent, what the timelines might be around particular programs or services being put out to the general public, and what may be some of the visionary expectations for future programs and services that would benefit the people of the province.

So our objective over here always has been three main components here: clarification on the monies that have been spent; accountability on the monies that have been



spent; and getting a true outline of some visionary concepts, programs or services that would address some of the other particular needs that may not now be addressed in the budgetary process. So I think we've been successful in that and that's reflected in the questions we ask in the House of Assembly about certain pieces of information to get some additional clarification for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So I do engage this and for the next number of hours myself and my colleagues on this side will be asking questions under various headings to various ministers on the government side here. We do anticipate an open, fair and informative dialogue and we look forward to that. Then, hopefully, the end result will be people will be more informed as to where the monies are going and how it can benefit them in the coming years.

As we start under the first one, under Executive Council of Government House, we all acknowledge the valued work being done by Her Honour and Government House here from a historic point of view but from a cultural point of view but even from a legislative point of view. There's a formal process here that ensures the process is fair, transparent and open, and that the process that has been used for the last number of decades to ensure fair and open government continues to happen as part of the process and the Lieutenant-Governor has an integral part of ensuring that happens here.

So we're very supportive of her operations and not only what she does here for the House of Assembly but her other responsibilities in the general public, being the collaborative support mechanism between the federal and provincial governments and as a representative federally and provincially to the Monarchy. Ironically this Saturday, it'll be another historic event happening in Newfoundland and Labrador and at Government House

with the new King, himself, where a Coronation will take place. I'll have the privilege of being part of that ceremony, as will a number of dignitaries in Newfoundland and Labrador, and I look forward to that process.

I can say, fortunately, I wasn't around when the late Queen Elizabeth's Coronation happened. Very few of us were, I think, in this House of Assembly, at the time but we did see the historic impact that she had in the Commonwealth but particularly in Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador. She was well thought of in this province.

I had the honour to meet her on occasion and see the valued work as being part of the Monarchy and no doubt there have already been some conversations about what will be the new role of King Charles, what will be the role of the Monarchy and where do people feel it fits as part of that process. That will be an ongoing conversation over the next period of time, no doubt, but right now we have a process in play that gets to play out in this province by a Newfoundlander and Labradorian who is very distinguished, in her own right, and served the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I look forward to continuing to do that. But to do that, obviously, there has to be supports for the mechanism and the oversight that she's responsible for which includes, obviously, physical assets as part of that process.

As we go through the lines here, everybody is accountable for the monies being spent and if there are additional monies being spent, we'd like to have clarification so we know it's going to be a benefit to the people of the province and to the operations of Government House in this case here.

I'll start by asking the minister, last year, the Salaries budget went up by \$56,000. Could you explain what additional costs were incurred there, please?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much.

Thank you for the important question. I, too, would like to echo my thanks and appreciate to Her Honour. I know Her Honour and His Honour work very, very hard and diligently on behalf of the people of the province. I think she just celebrated here fourth anniversary in the role and really pleased to see all the activities that they are participating in. I, too, will join you on Saturday for the recognition of the King and look forward to that.

I will say there was a slight increase last year in Salaries and that's because we hosted all the viceregal conference in Newfoundland and Labrador. There were some extra costs associated with that. There were extra supports required by Government House.

You can see the budget is rightsized again now for this year, except, of course, there will be a slight – because of the salary increases that are occurring, but it is rightsized again.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the minister for that clarification. That obviously outlines where those additional monies were, a one-time improvement or increase in the budget there.

Under Purchased Services, there was an extra \$25,500 that went over budget. Can you explain what those additional costs were incurring?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you.

I erred, Her Honour is there five years; time is passing so quickly.

It's an overrun due to the viceregal conference. As you can appreciate, we had Lieutenant-Governors from all across Canada come to Newfoundland and Labrador. I think it's the first time in quite a while that they've been here. So you'll see a slight increase but you'll see it rightsized again for this year. Again, no increase in budget for this year. It was a slight increase last year only because of the viceregal conference.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** I thank the minister again for that clarification.

I notice that there were some revenues straight across \$20,000 from the federal government. I'm assuming that was as part and parcel of hosting that, but could I just get it on the record for clarification?

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

**S. COADY:** Certainly, that reflects receipt of the federal revenue related to the annual conference of the Governor General, Lieutenant-Governors and territorial commissioners.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, I thank the minister for that clarification.

I just have a couple of things here relevant to what is happening. We saw the announcement last year of a charitable group coming together for the greenhouse for Government House and the grounds. We all see the value of that and see the value of some of the other things that Her

Honour has been doing there to engage the community and be self-sufficient and inclusive as part of that.

But there are some questions around how that will work. Could you outline or is the process outlined where I would find the donations being received on this project and the expenses of the project, if it is in Estimates? If it is not in Estimates, which it may not be, where would the financial details of this project be found? Keeping in mind that it is a public entity and we're all accountable as part of that process.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much.

Government House foundation is a separate charitable foundation and that is managed separately by Government House so questions concerning that would be found in that Government House foundation. It is a charitable foundation.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** I thank the minister for that and that clarifies that. We will be able to get that information for clarification for ourselves. But we do encourage the support and the work of the foundation, particularly for improving the aesthetic and the inclusive ability for people to be able to use the grounds of Government House, as we'll see again this coming Saturday.

Mr. Chair, from that perspective on the Government House heading, I think right now I'm good on what has been asked right there and we'll go on to the next heading after my colleagues have had a chance to speak to that.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Further questions to 1.1.01, Government House?

Shall 1.1.01, Government House, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subhead 1.1.01 carried.

**CHAIR:** Can I ask the Clerk to call the next set of subheads, please.

**CLERK:** Office of the Executive Council, 2.1.01 and 2.2.01.

**CHAIR:** Office of the Executive Council, 2.1.01 to 2.2.01.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, I have the opportunity for clarification to go through Premier's Office expenses and some of the processes around that.

Under 2.1.01, Transportation and Communications, last year was budgeted at \$189,000 but \$241,000 was spent. A fairly substantial over budget and this year is it increased to \$279,000.

Can you outline exactly what the incurred expenses will be for those increases, please?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you.

I will say that there are higher than anticipated travel requirements. That's why there was a slight increase in last year's budget. We recognize there are enhanced priorities that require the Premier and his team to represent the province. I'll use

things like the trip to Gallipoli, for example, the unveiling of the caribou in Gallipoli; discussions with Ottawa on Muskrat Falls; discussions to raise awareness of concerns from Newfoundland and Labrador. There are representations to, for example, for the film and television program that we're having here in Newfoundland and Labrador. The Council of the Federation was in British Columbia, so that has a higher than anticipated requirement. There was the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers conference that was attended this year. I think it's going to be in Newfoundland and Labrador, if memory serves, I think it is.

All I'm saying is there are requirements of the Premier and his team to travel so we've changed the budget to reflect those requirements.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Yeah, fair enough.

The new increase, I get the overspending last time because of some additional things as part of that. I'm assuming that the additional monies also take into account additional costing just by the nature of transportation, not just additional events that have to be travelled to, but the additional costing there.

Okay, that clarifies that part.

Under Salaries, last year \$2,200,000 was budgeted, nearly \$3 million was spent, an extra averaging over \$700,000. Could you please explain the additional costing there under the Executive Support, Salaries?

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

**S. COADY:** I think you've moved on to 2.2.01. Are you talking about in the Premier's Office? It was actually below requirements by \$65,000, so I think you've moved on.

**D. BRAZIL:** (Inaudible.)

**S. COADY:** Do you want me to go to 2.2.01?

**D. BRAZIL:** Yeah, if you could.

**S. COADY:** Okay, certainly, happy to do that.

Under Executive Support there were some overages. This is not an unusual thing. We had the Health Transformation team as well as a Change Desk. We were doing an awful lot of transformation within government. Both of those are housed within Executive Council. They're not permanent; they're funded as required. They're funded as required, of course, from financial assistance and we're going to talk about that in a little while. That's coming up as well.

That's why there's an overage there. It is the requirements of the transformation of the Change Desk and the requirements of the Health Transformation team.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Fair enough.

For \$725,000, how many positions would we be considering there?

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

**S. COADY:** Allow me to get that information as to how many people. I know I can probably count up six or seven, but allow me to get the exact details.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you.

Yeah, fair enough.

Under Professional Services, last year \$249,300 was spent. Could you please outline what this was for and do you have a breakdown on what particular contracts or programs were supported?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much.

That was mostly for a blind trust reimbursement. So when the former premier completed his term, the unwinding of his blind trust occurred and the majority of that – I think almost all of it – was for the blind trust reimbursement.

**D. BRAZIL:** Just for his blind trust that was held, okay.

How many years was that held for? Can you remember? Seven? Eight? I'm trying to get a timeline.

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

**S. COADY:** Sorry, I'm just waiting for my light to come on.

Well, he was in government from 2015. So from 2015 until 2020.

**CHAIR:** The Leader of the Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** So anticipated monies in that heading next year should be substantially lower.

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

**S. COADY:** Correct, and if you look, we have rightsized the budget again. So Professional Services will go back down to, what I'm going to call, the normalized budget of \$12,500, which would include things like any professional services that may be required. Sometimes it's not actually

utilized, but we do have a placeholder there of \$12,500.

**CHAIR:** The Leader of the Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Under Purchased Services, can you provide a rationale for why Purchased Services went over budget last year and do you have a breakdown of how the \$146,000 was spent last year?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much.

The overrun was due to the replenishment of the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador medals. Also two Premier's Youth Council costs that fall underneath there, as well as the royal visit expenditures. So we had some extraneous expenditures last year. Again, you'll see some better alignment in this year's budget, but those were the expenses that were incurred to increase Professional Services last year.

**CHAIR:** The Leader of the Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** I thank the minister for the clarification.

Last year in the Estimates discussion we talked about a Change Desk that would be housed in Executive Council. The purpose would be to transform and modernize government.

Could you give me an update on the Change Desk? Specifically I'm wondering what the staffing complement is and what work they have completed over the past year, and can you provide any tangible examples of work they've accomplished that people listening at home may recognize?

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

**S. COADY:** Certainly.

I'm just checking. I understand there are two new hires on the Change Desk. Their role and responsibilities are to assist with the transformations within government that are occurring. As you know, every year for the last two years that I've been bringing down budgets, or bringing budgets through the House of Assembly, even though this is my fourth one – we're only here 2½ years – there have been a lot of transformations.

I'll name a few of them. One of them being, of course, bringing of the health authorities into one Health Authority. I'll name another, which is another one that's very active at the present time, is the bringing of the Newfoundland and Labrador educational school system into the Department of Education.

So their role is to assist across government, because, of course, it touches many departments across government with the development of the policies, communications and the procedures around doing all the transformations that are occurring.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** So I'm assuming these are like a one-time shot. Once the transitions for those particular two big entities are done, then any notable savings would be directed or noted in the Estimates of those departments the following year? Or, any extra expenditures, depending on –

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

**S. COADY:** Exactly, they would be within their own departments. The Change Desk itself is housed within Cabinet Secretariat, because it's a whole-of-government exercise. As you can appreciate, there have been a number of transformations that have been announced in multiple budgets now, so their role and responsibility is to assist

departments with bringing this through by cross-government review of that.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** I wanted to take a different spin here. We've talked in this House about the income thresholds for social service programs. For example, the threshold for parental infants' supplement is about \$25,000.

Has Cabinet Secretariat or the department of any government done any analysis on the income thresholds for all social programming to ensure that the greatest number of residents is benefiting from it? If money is being left on the table each year, why aren't thresholds being increased?

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

**S. COADY:** So I'm just going to go back, just to make sure I was clear on the Change Desk. There are actually three people – that's what I thought, and then I saw two – were part of the overrun. I mentioned schools, I mentioned the health care, but there's also Marble Mountain, the Newfoundland and Labrador 911 that was brought in. So all of these are part of the responsibilities of the Change Desk.

You asked specifically about issues from the Children, Seniors and Social Development Department, so the analysis would be housed with the Children, Seniors and Social Development Department.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** If I could just backtrack a bit – I forgot I had it noted there – the Premier's office that was opened in Grand Falls-Windsor, can you give me the breakdown on the staffing component there and the costing to the taxpayers for that office?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much.

As you can see, this is under 2.1.01, just so that people understand where we're following from. In the budget for the Premier's office, it's \$1.7 million. There are two positions that are in Central Newfoundland and they would be in that vote. So they would come from the salaries of the Premier's office.

**CHAIR:** I remind the hon. Member that his speaking time has expired.

Subhead 2.1.01 to 2.2.01 inclusive.

The Member for Labrador West.

**J. BROWN:** Thank you, Chair.

I ask the minister: How many people are currently employed in the Premier's office, how many positions are vacant and can we get also a description of the roles of those people that are in the Premier's office? You can provide it afterwards; you don't have to say it all out loud if you can't.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much.

There are currently 18 funded positions: 14 permanent, two temporary and two contractual. As you can appreciate I wouldn't have, at my fingertips, the job descriptions or even a line. I'll attempt to get that for you.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

**J. BROWN:** Thank you so much, Minister.

The visit by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, was that paid through the

Premier's office or if not, what department did pay for that visit?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you.

I'm getting some details; I have no information that was actually funded through any department. But I will attempt to get further clarity on that. There are no related costs to Tony Blair's visit.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

**J. BROWN:** I appreciate that from the minister, thank you so much.

Those are my final questions for this subhead.  
Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Further questions to 2.1.01 to 2.2.01?

The Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I do have a couple of more questions. The minister had talked about the social program thresholds and that the minister responsible – I don't know if there's a protocol where I can get him to answer the question or we'll have a sidebar somewhere along the way to get clarification on what's happening there, but I think it should be on the books as to what the thresholds and what the formula would be for determining thresholds, particularly in programs that there hasn't been 100 per cent uptake, because the thresholds were either too low for people to qualify.

Obviously if program monies are allocated, it's allocated based on the principle that there's a need for it. If we find out – and this is no slight to anybody – at the end of the day that there's a reason why we couldn't

spend it all, and one of it is the threshold, then we need to find a mechanism that addresses that threshold immediately, I would think, because we're losing the money and we're losing the service that obviously the residents of this province need to have.

I'll let the minister respond to that and then I'll have a couple of other questions.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much.

I think it's an important question and I'm sure you can sidebar with the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development concerning same. But I would say to you that across government we're always watching to see the uptake of a program to adjust the budget requirements, to make improvements to the program if they're undersubscribed, or if they're oversubscribed, making changes to budget. So that is, what I'm going to call, a normal process within departments.

I can tell you that in the Department of Finance, should we have a program and it is under or over funded, we make adjustments throughout the year. Sometimes we need to advertise more, make sure people are aware of it or change thresholds to ensure we're maximizing the availability of funds for people.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Yeah, I appreciate that, as part of an administration that put out a threshold one time for dentures and we realized the uptake was 300 times more than we realized at the time; then there had to be an adjustment to reflect our financial abilities as part of that. But there has to be moving parts so that people do know where they sit when it comes to access.

Keeping in that frame of mind as we look at thresholds here, do we do a jurisdictional scan to look at what would be appropriate thresholds – and I'll try to associate with Atlantic Canada, our sister provinces would have similar income levels and similar challenges as part of this process when we make a determination rather than just picking a number out of the hat that may or may not be reflective of the needs of the individuals?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you.

Again, this is kind of a policy question, but I can say to the Member opposite, absolutely there is. I've seen it in every policy that I have ever seen within government; there is usually a very thorough analysis from across the country, not just Atlantic Canada, but usually across the country.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** No, I appreciate that.

I have one last question. I am jumping back again because I didn't get a chance where I had to move on.

In relationship to the Premier's Office in Central Newfoundland. Is that a permanent statute now in the budget line process, as the Premier had touted that was representation in Central Newfoundland? So will that forever and a day be continued as a line item in the budget itself for staff and the operations of the office?

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

**S. COADY:** There are 18 funded positions within the Premier's Office. He has offices in Western Newfoundland, in Central Newfoundland, I believe in Labrador as well. These are the requirements of the Premier's



Office and, as such, are part of those 18 funded positions.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**S. COADY:** Can I just add to that? Positions within the Premier's Office are contractual as you realize. I just wanted to make sure I was clear on that.

**D. BRAZIL:** I appreciate that. So I'm trying to interpret – I'm going on the understanding, if Labrador has one, if he has one in his district and in Central, that Central will be permanent from now on. My anticipation was when you negotiate next year or the budget lines are put in play, the same amount of monies will be there to offset those additional salary bases in Central Newfoundland also, I am assuming.

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

**S. COADY:** The Premier's Office and the 18 positions, I would consider it to be that those are the needs of the Premier's Office and therefore they will be continued. The needs of the Premier's Office could change, but I'm just saying I would consider them – they're 18 funded positions. They will make the determinations or what the requirements are, but I would anticipate them to be continued.

**D. BRAZIL:** No, I appreciate that.

Mr. Chair, I'm good on that.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

If the House is ready for the question, shall 2.1.01 to 2.2.01 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, 2.1.01 through 2.2.01 carried.

**CHAIR:** Can I get the Clerk to call the next subhead, please?

**CLERK:** Office of the Executive Council, 2.3.01.

**CHAIR:** Office of the Executive Council, 2.3.01.

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

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you very much, Chair.

Under Salaries, the budget for Salaries is being increased to \$2.3 million. Could the minister please outline how many more ATIPP coordinators or support staff for ATIPP will be hired this year?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Chair.

I'll get to that question in one second. I just want to outline a few things before we start.

As the Member pointed out, it is a \$2 million increase for ATIPP with the vast majority of it which is in Salaries there. Just to say at the outset, the first step is to hire an executive team and then put in place a recruitment plan. So it's very much at the early stages here.

What the purpose of this is to streamline the process and to allow us to better use the resources that we have, the increases in resources now after we go through this budget process. What this will look like, will look like some other branches in government. For example, our communications branch, where the coordinators, in this case the ATIPP coordinators, will be embedded throughout the departments but they'll be centrally

accountable to one ATIPP office. So that will certainly streamline the process, I think.

The new model will allow our dedicated ATIPP officers, when they're hired, to be dedicated throughout government. Right now, there are some people who have a policy job, for example, and do ATIPP on the side. I don't think that's the most efficient way for people to do jobs.

To answer the question, I don't know the number of people that will be hired, but that's the sort of grassroots plan to move forward with the \$2 million increase.

**CHAIR:** The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you, Minister, I appreciate it.

Minister, what results do you hope to see by moving ATIPP into Executive Council? What specific results do you wish to see?

**CHAIR:** The Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

**J. HOGAN:** So a couple of things I mentioned there already was that I think it will streamline the process, allow individuals who are going to work on ATIPP to be slowly dedicated to that aspect of their job. By streamlining and focusing ATIPP into one single office, we'll also be able to track metrics a little bit better, which will allow whoever is around in the future – whatever minister is responsible for ATIPP – to make decisions based on metrics for ATIPP requests.

We all know that ATIPP goes up year after year in terms of requests, but this will allow us to better track the metrics of it.

**CHAIR:** The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you, Minister.

Minister, how many ATIPP coordinators are there now? Of these, how many have been in the positions for less than two years? I know those are pretty specific numbers but if you have them on hand.

**CHAIR:** The Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

**J. HOGAN:** Yeah, I don't have those specific numbers but I can get those for the Member.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you, Minister, I appreciate that.

Under Transportation and Communications, the budget for Transportation and Communications is planned to increase by \$62,900. Is this reflection of the increase in staffing, Minister?

**CHAIR:** The Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

**J. HOGAN:** Partially, but it's also due to a plan to allow these individuals to go out throughout the province to train municipalities. So yes, staff; yes, increased staff; but yes, increased travel for that specific purpose – for training purposes.

**CHAIR:** The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you, Minister.

We know how important it is to get to those municipalities so they can jump on board as well.

Under Purchased Services, the budget for Purchased Services is planned to increase by \$158,300. Could the minister please explain what the reason is for this?

**CHAIR:** The Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

**J. HOGAN:** Same answer as for Transportation and Communications. When they're going out travelling they have to stay somewhere, they have to book rooms, they have to eat. So the big component of that would be for that same purpose.

**CHAIR:** The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you, Minister.

Minister, core government posts ATIPP responses publicly, but not all ABCs do. Is there a commitment to post all ATIPP responses publicly including those from Crown corporations, boards and agencies?

**CHAIR:** The Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

**J. HOGAN:** They always follow the legislation and, obviously, we have a statutory review of that legislation which is now due to come to the House of Assembly in the very near future. So I think that's something that we can certainly discuss at that time.

**CHAIR:** The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you very much, Minister.

I appreciate your answers today. That's all I have.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Further questions to 2.3.01?

I'm recognizing the Member for Labrador West.

**J. BROWN:** Thank you, Chair.

I actually just have one question on this line. Going forward, with the moving of this into

Executive Branch, are there any other activities or anything that's budgeted there that's going to carry out, any changes or something that we should anticipate coming from this now that's being rolled out, or anything that we should be aware of?

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

**J. HOGAN:** No, I have nothing unanticipated other than increased salaries for more people to be dedicated to these ATIPP issues.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

**J. BROWN:** Thank you.

That's my only question for this.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

If the House is ready for the question –

**J. HOGAN:** Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** Sorry, the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

**J. HOGAN:** I'm just going to try and answer a question that the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans put to me that there are over 40 employees who are related to ATIPP. But they're not necessarily dedicated to ATIPP, so they could have other duties that they have in relation to ATIPP.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

**J. HOGAN:** Thanks.

**CHAIR:** If the House is ready for the question, shall 2.3.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subhead 2.3.01 carried.

**CHAIR:** I'll get the Clerk to call the next set of subheads, please.

**CLERK:** Office of the Executive Council, 2.4.01 through 2.6.01 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Office of the Executive Council, 2.4.01 to 2.6.01.

I'm recognizing the Leader of the Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, as we look at the heading here, particularly under the Communications and Public Engagement process here under Executive Council, very important component here of getting the information out from government to the general public here and being responsible for some of the programs and services that will obviously improve people's lives as part of that.

But I've got some questions here around the amount of money spent in the past to what's being budgeted to be spent in the future, and it seems to be a big variation here and there may be some obviously clear explanations and I expect as such.

Under Professional Services, despite only spending \$24,000 last year, the budget for this year is being maintained at \$288,000. Could you explain why, and could you please identify what the \$24,000 last year, well below the normal budget process, was spent on?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much.

I will say that the normalized amount is \$288,500. That's what is normally placed in budget. It's money set aside for any marketing campaigns. If there's something that comes up during the year, that there's a marketing campaign that hasn't been budgeted for within government, across government, then this is where there is money available to do just that.

I'll use an example – not an actual one. I mentioned it the last time we were in Estimates together that we're going to do a public service campaign to attract people to the public service and there might be monies underneath here that might be used for that, just to give you an example. It's a normalized budget that we would put basically a bulk sum of money – it's been going on for many, many years – right here and then if you need to use it, you use it. You can ask us all the questions next year if we used it, what we used it for, how we used it. If it's not used, then it just lapses, and that's what you're seeing here.

The \$24,000 is really for media monitoring. That would be probably the normalized amount being spent for that service. But the \$288,000, if we need it, it is there to be spent, but not if it's required – because each department would have, again, a sum of money. But if something happens across government and there is a requirement to do a marketing campaign or a public awareness campaign, then that's where the money would come from.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Just so I'm clear and for the people at home, these are ones that are not already identified as a promotional campaign or communications strategy but are a backup if something unique happens. If COVID happened again and you had to do a promotional thing, fair enough, just so we know where it is. Okay, I appreciate that.

Under Purchased Services, again, only spent a little over \$43,000 last year but the budget is being maintained at \$226,000. Could you explain why and could you give me a breakdown on what the \$43,000 was for last year, please?

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

**S. COADY:** Again, less than anticipated government-wide initiatives. Much the same as the last answer; didn't need to have the government-wide initiative. There was money in departmental budgets that handled it. Mostly that is also for – Purchased Services, I'm just looking at it – things like shredding, copier rental, media buys, printing activity brochures, any media subscriptions or any event funding that's required. Money has been spent for the post-budget campaigns, for example.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Okay, thanks for that clarification.

Obviously we had a fair, open discussion last year and we were all very supportive of the Come Home Year. Because we saw the value in people being upbeat again and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians being able to reunite with their loved ones and to be able to celebrate the cultural and historic significance we have here and people being able to get to see the beauty and all the amenities that we have to offer here.

How much did the Communications Branch spend on the Come Home Year activities last year?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, I'll just await for the official to give me a definite response, but I will say that most of that funding would've come through TCAR, through Tourism,

Culture, Arts and Recreation. But I will – oh, absolutely nothing came through this because it would've been budgeted in the department.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Probably you're not the appropriate minister to ask now, knowing that the money came there, but do we have any stats to show the success for Come Home Year? I mean we all know there was numbers come of that but, from a financial point of view and a numbers point of view, would that be reflective in your numbers afterwards or the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation?

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

**S. COADY:** I would say the post-event review would come through the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation; I'm sure the minister responsible would be happy to answer that question.

It would flow through the Department of Finance, again only because we would see the uptake in travel, taxation and that type of thing coming through. But I know it was a very successful Come Home Year and a lot of people really thoroughly enjoyed visiting Newfoundland and Labrador and most importantly coming home again.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you again, Chair, and thank the minister for that answer.

Would it be possible for us to get a list of the media and communications campaigns carried out, how much the cost and what agencies or companies were contracted for each campaign? I'm curious to determine what are local companies, how we're promoting, the money it cost and what we're using nationally, regionally or internationally

to be able to promote the campaigns that we have here of attracting people to and from Newfoundland.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you.

I'm just going to reflect a few more thoughts on the Come Home Year campaign. We did have record uptake in the record high levels of people visiting, for example, provincial campgrounds and sites. The Arts and Culture Centres went back to pre-pandemic numbers so we had a tremendous, what I'm going to call, knock-on effect from the Come Home Year.

With regard to the campaigns, it would be across all of government but we'll endeavour to get some information around the campaigns for you.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** I appreciate that.

I'm going to move on to 2.4.02, Public Engagement, if I could. Last year there was \$158,400 unspent in salary budget. Could you please outline if positions were vacant and for how long they were vacant?

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

**S. COADY:** I don't have how long they were vacant for, but I can tell you that there was one vacant position. We have been undergoing recruitment activities, so I think we recruited somebody into that position but then we have somebody else leave. It is on ongoing recruitment process and that is why it was below. So you attract one person and then somebody else leaves. It is not the positions; it is the natural turnover in these areas.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, that clarifies that.

Purchased Services: I'm just curious if you could outline what the \$20,000 was spent on.

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

**S. COADY:** That's everything from interpretation services, accessibility requirements, audio/visual requirements; basically any requirements that are needed for the engagement purposes.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** That clarifies that.

I'm curious, too, what public engagement activities were held in the last fiscal year?

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

**S. COADY:** A tremendous number and I can tell you there were 67 different types of sessions. We had about 6,500 participants and that would be everything from the new Provincial Health Authority, to *Budget 2023*, to the minimum wage review, to the five-year Roads Plan, to the *Animal Health and Protection Act*, to the Colonial Building name change, the Crown Lands name nomination process for onshore wind energy, Hurricane Fiona response with residents. There was the Anti-Racism action plan, for example, that had engagement sessions. The *Lands Review Act* had engagement sessions. The modernizing the *Mining Act* and the *Mineral Act*. I can keep going but I think you get a flavour for the types of engagement that took place.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you again, Mr. Chair, I appreciate that.

So I can assume with the engaged process, obviously, there are a number of projects or programs or engaged activities that would take place. Is there a breakdown on the feedback that was received online versus in-person sessions?

I think you mentioned 6,500. Is that in person, was that online or a combination of both? Is there a breakdown on which divisions or which avenue the bigger uptake was on?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you.

As I said, my numbers only contain both the virtual and in person. I can get you a breakdown of what ones were all online.

There are some savings, if you look under Purchased Services, as we are having increased virtual consultations; people are really engaging. We're getting large numbers engaging online. I guess that's the pandemic world made us very comfortable utilizing some of these types of online processes. So, I think, we're getting more and more people wanting to do the online, but we can get you a breakdown of how many occurred in person and how many sessions were just online.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**D. BRAZIL:** I appreciate that.

**CHAIR:** I'm recognizing the Member for Labrador West.

That's 2.4.01 to 2.6.01 inclusive.

**J. BROWN:** We have no further questions for this section.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** 2.4.01 to 2.6.01.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have one more question under 2.5.01, Financial Administration. Could you please outline the positions which are held in this line item? I also note that last year there was salary savings of \$186,000. Were positions vacant? If so, what positions and for how long?

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

**S. COADY:** This is a challenging area. This is responsible for the financial and operational activities for support of the Executive Council and the Department of Finance, Department of Labrador Affairs and Public Service Commission. They do some tremendous work, including preparing for Estimates and as you've already noted how important that is.

We have had in this area a leave of absence. We've had some active recruitment in this area and we're working on filling but they've been hard-to-fill positions, some of them have been. We also have this one leave of absence, as well.

So we are working on filling those. We need to fill them. I know that active recruitment is ongoing.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**S. COADY:** I do have some.

**D. BRAZIL:** Okay.

**S. COADY:** It's a budget analyst and administration officer and a combo of a financial officer and a budget analyst. Just so you can get that granular – but it's not that we're holding the positions. It's that

we're working on filling them and we do have a person on leave.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** That's good for me on that. I appreciate the openness and the answers on that subhead there.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Is the House ready for the question?

Shall 2.4.01 to 2.6.01 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.4.01 through 2.6.01 carried.

**CHAIR:** I'd like to get the Clerk to call the next set of subheads, please.

**CLERK:** Office of the Executive Council, 2.7.01 to 2.7.02.

**CHAIR:** Office of the Executive Council, 2.7.01 to 2.7.02.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you.

First of all, I just have some general questions, if I may.

What work has been done to support the upcoming apology to Newfoundland and Labrador residential school survivors and the families impacted? Do we have a timeline for such an apology? Are there any funds set aside to support an apology?

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Chair, and I thank my colleague for the question.

So the commitment to make an apology to residential school survivors by our government is certainly a priority and that work is ongoing. What I will tell you is that with the different groups around the province, we are at different places. So possibly in the near future we may be ready to go with one particular group, but we're continuing to work with the Indigenous governments and organizations as we move forward in that process. A part of that will be identifying, not just an appropriate time frame but an appropriate delivery. But there are several staff in my office that are working on that file top of mind and sort of being guided and going along in partnership with the Indigenous governments and organizations.

**CHAIR:** The Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Chair.

I note that last year in Estimates you had indicated that you were in partnership with Indigenous leaders and specifically with respect to supports that would be in place in the community for the inevitable triggers that will occur when these apologies are happening.

So could you please elaborate on what kind of supports that are going to be put in place?

**CHAIR:** The Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

**L. DEMPSTER:** So that will likely look different for different groups. I know and I have a little bit of experience with this already from having been in Happy Valley-Goose Bay when the prime minister delivered the apology. Even constituents of



mine that had been residential school survivors face this trauma and worked for years – and when that apology was made – I'm thinking of a particular individual that had a very difficult time; things that he had suppressed perhaps for 60 years.

So given that knowledge and what we know, a couple of things that we're guided by is the apology has to be meaningful for the people that are being apologized to. That looks different for different governments and organizations, and they will tell us what supports they want in place. We're certainly working with them and we've committed to doing that.

What that looks like, how much money is attached to that, the cost at the end of the day: we've basically made the commitment. They know that our commitment is there to work with them and when they're ready, they will definitely roll out.

I know that it's taking a little bit longer even than we thought, and it seems like we reference COVID a lot of times, but during that whole COVID period, we had governments tell us that we do not want big numbers coming into isolated communities and they have a vision of how they want this to roll out.

Basically, while there was a pause on that, work did continue in terms of relationships and meetings on the files. My latest update from my staff just this week is that, with one particular group, they feel we're just about there and ready to have our first apology happen.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Minister, that provides clarification.

Last year in Estimates there was discussion about a statue to commemorate Indigenous history in this province. Can you please give us an update on that as well?

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** I'm happy to speak to the statue. It does feel like it's been a long haul and I think if we had a dollar for every time we mention the statue in Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation the past year, we'd probably have it paid for. But, you're right; in 2021 we did commission a statue commemorating the Beothuk.

Morgan MacDonald was the successful artist and we have been working very closely with Morgan, but engaging the Indigenous leaders every step of the way. The regular calls that the Premier and I have with Indigenous leaders, the statue has been a regular on almost every single call. We've discussed at some point the statue, where it's going, where it's going to be placed.

Right now, finally we're at a place – then we were sort of ready to move forward and one of the Indigenous groups wanted to know some detail of the likeness of the remains at The Rooms and could we have the head shapes and things modelled closely to that – all things that took time. I've learned so much myself along this process.

Finally, we are now at a stage where Morgan MacDonald is casting the statue. That's in full progress at the foundry and should be completed within the coming months. I hope that we will be gathering for a little ceremony with our Indigenous partners – I'm probably going to give anxiety to staff if they're watching, but I'm going to say – at some point in the early fall.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Minister.

I note that in last year's Estimates you had indicated that pretty much every step along the way that you had engaged Indigenous

leaders, getting them to provide input, for example, into design when it was still in the clay form. I would expect and the question is that's still ongoing, I would assume, with Indigenous leaders to obtain their input and feedback?

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Absolutely.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Chair.

Could you also please give an update on the status of the implementation on the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, please?

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you.

I will start by saying that as a government we remain committed to implementing the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation that are within the provincial jurisdiction. There are a number of things happening on that front, like just recently – I can't put a time to it – we've been having discussions across departments in government again to continue to identify and review actions taken towards those calls. I'll point to my colleague the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development. He would be able to speak as an example to some of the significant work that they are taking.

One of the pieces that are taking a lot of time in my particular shop right now is as we continue to work on in response to Call 57, which was a call to develop a program that everyone in core government would have to take. So I don't mind saying in this hon. House, we started and there was a fair

amount of work that went into that. On some of our regular calls that the Premier and I have, we quickly learned that we were not going in the right direction. Scrapped all that and started a new approach; co-development being the operative word. Working very much hand-in-hand with officials across the different Indigenous governments.

I got a new look just recently at the direction that we're going in, and it is such an impressive piece of work. Whether you want to pull up where Nunatsiavut is in their draft work or NunatuKavut, the different governments, it's a very engaging piece of work.

Sometimes we hear, oh, we have to do online training and it sounds boring. But this, I think, will be super educational, educating all of our public servants. Everybody will be in a better place at the end of the day in terms of, moving forward, working with our Indigenous governments and their people and having a more solid understanding of them.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Minister.

So I understand, even from last year's Estimates, that 33 of the 94 Calls to Action are led under your specific department. I also understand that you look across different departments to measure what's being done. I'm just wondering, in terms of the money allocated in the budget, it was mentioned in last year's Estimates that there's no direct budget allocation. So is that still the case with this year, or is it being housed in different departments across government?

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Chair.

So I can't give you a dollar figure. There is work happening across departments. There may be work happening in Justice and in CSSD, as I alluded to earlier, and the co-development of the public service training that is happening in Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation and much of the money for that is just built and embedded into the budget process that we put forward.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** I believe I am out of time.

**CHAIR:** Oh, sorry, thank you. I'm caught up in the debate.

Subhead 2.7.01 to 2.7.02.

I'm recognizing the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Chair.

First, I would like to recognize the importance of this office, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation; it is very, very important. It provides a vital role in terms of advocacy for all Indigenous people in our province.

Just looking at the line items now, 2.7.01, the Minister's Office. There is a line item, Transportation and Communications; last year's revised value was \$46,300 under budget. Can we just get an update as to why that number was so significant?

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you to my colleague across the way. Really, it was just savings due to less than anticipated travel. I can tell you we're back pretty much in pre-COVID levels of travel, but for a while we weren't travelling even to our federal-provincial-territorial meetings and things like that which we normally travel to. We were still doing so much work virtually as we sort of

ebbed and flowed through and now are mostly out of the pandemic.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Thank you.

Just looking at some of the questions – and I would also like to thank my hon. colleague for Harbour Main for asking some of the questions. I was just looking at the updates there. She asked for an update on the Calls to Action for the Truth and Reconciliation. Just looking at what came out, those Calls to Action. Also we have the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. There are a lot of action items there as well.

Would the government be able to provide us with an itemized update on the relevant Calls to Action? Because we ask the questions in different places and we get different answers and the answers are quite vague. So I was wondering if you could actually give a detailed update, not only for us here, the MHAs, but also for the different advocacy groups and the different Indigenous groups across the province.

**CHAIR:** The Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

**L. DEMPSTER:** I certainly will take that away. I say to my colleague, at one point in time – and it may have been when I was in a different department – but I did see a chart because the Calls to Action do fall within different departments across government. I just spoke to what we are involved in, a tremendous amount of work just in one that I identified in Call 57.

On the MMIWG, it was mentioned here in the House today that tomorrow is the day set aside – I think every day those whose lives are impacted certainly think about this. But tomorrow is the day set aside. Some of us are wearing red here in the Legislature as we reflect on our Indigenous girls and some of the sad history there.

On that note, I want to say to my colleague that I'm not sure if folks in the House would have been aware, but some of the groups that I had been meeting with and people connected with First Light, et cetera, were looking for a reconciliation council. I had met with them back early in the fall and one of them had said to me that this is something that we have been looking for since 2005.

So in late November, myself and the Premier and my colleague, the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality – there was a reconciliation council that was announced by the Premier in North West River and, basically, that's a table where government will sit at a table with Indigenous partners, Justice and the Office of Women and Gender Equality. There's a whole group at that table. But to continue to advance to things that are of importance and a priority for them. So that's one of the things that's been done – I just wanted to share that – since we've been through Estimates last year.

**CHAIR:** The Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Chair.

I thank the minister for her answer, but most of her time on that answer had nothing to do with my question for an itemized list. We get different answers over and over again; so we'd like to see text actually indicating the progress on these Calls to Action. That's one way to actually hold a government accountable. We went through this incredible, traumatic thing called Truth and Reconciliation. We went through this very traumatic inquiry on the missing and murdered. So it's difficult when we don't get the specific answers that we're looking for.

Like I said, it is difficult. This is really, really important. It's not just Indigenous Affairs now; it's about reconciliation.

Anyway sticking to the section there, my hon. colleague from Harbour Main asked about an apology and we just recognized that there are different Indigenous groups that will actually need an apology. Before I got elected and when I got elected in 2019, I was told by certain Innu that they would not accept an apology until they saw real action and there was actually merit to an apology.

Would the minister be able to give us an update on the relationship of the government now with the Innu Nation and the two Innu Nation communities?

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you.

I think my hon. colleague may have missed – at the beginning when you said you asked a question and didn't get an answer, I did reference a chart, a table, of what's happening across departments and I will endeavour to get that chart and to provide to you on what the different departments are doing.

In terms of my relationship with Indigenous governments and organizations, I can't speak for their views. What I can tell you, as a minister, is that I have endeavoured to work very hard to build positive relationships with all of the Indigenous governments. There are a number of files with the various groups that we are working on. You referenced Innu in particular. We've got quite a dedicated staff that's working very diligently with the Innu and the federal government to finalize the Innu land claim. I know that have ebbed and flowed through the years, but we've certainly very recently renewed our commitment to have that done in the foreseeable future.

There are different things that we have done in community that was big for them. I'll mention ABE. When I went into the department, a file that they had been working on a number of years was stalled. I

was able to successfully work with my colleague in Education and we were able to make that happen.

So there are a whole list of things that I could go through but sometimes the grand chief and sometimes more often deputy grand chief do attend our Acute Response Team meetings and we certainly always welcome any opportunity that we have to work with them and when they identify needs to us, we do our very best to respond to the issues that they identify as a priority with them.

I guess that's, on the road to reconciliation, an approach that we take every day now in Indigenous Affairs is that we are advancing files that are a priority to them. I think the old way was, past governments maybe thought they knew what was best but we know where that got us. So very much now they identify the priorities and we're committed to working with them.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Chair.

The reason why I was looking for, sort of, an itemized update on the Calls to Action and I talked about Truth and Reconciliations and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls is because every single one of those, when you look at them, they actually go back to the root cause of the trauma, the root cause of why women and girls went missing. If you look at it, it goes back to social and economic marginalization. The government has to ensure that the Calls to Action really, really is answered by ending social and economic marginalization, right? There has to be action on that.

My next general question for the department: What work is being done to address the six priority areas of action identified by ITK for suicide prevention?

Before we get to that, I actually want to read out the six Calls to Action because it applies to my district, it applies to the Innu and it applies to the Inuit. One, create social equity; two, create cultural continuity; three, nurture healthy Inuit children; four, ensure access to a continuum of mental wellness services for Inuit; five, heal unresolved trauma and grief; and six, mobilize Inuit knowledge for resilience and suicide prevention.

These are the Calls to Action for Inuit but, in actual fact, for my District of Torngat Mountains and for all of Labrador, it's also a call for Innu as well.

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Chair.

I want to say to my colleague when she was talking about our relationship, I guess, with the Innu and what we're doing, I actually missed a significant piece of work that this government is doing with the Innu in terms of following along on the Inquiry into the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System and *Budget 2023* has allocated \$10.8 million and we're going to continue to advance that important work so that we can look into things that have happened in the past and move forward with better outcomes into the future.

In response to ITK and the suicide, I know the Member said last week that she didn't get fulsome answers, but I can't speak for my colleagues on some of those things in detail. I can certainly provide you with things that we are doing around suicide prevention. What I can tell you is I was part of the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, the 54 recommendations and they have been carried out, addressed or they're in the process.

So there has been substantive investment around mental health, which is linked to

suicide in terms of increasing access, reducing wait times and there actually is a suicide prevention plan. Actually, at the Premier-Indigenous Leaders' Roundtable, which the Innu Nation was there, Nunatsiavut and NunatuKavut; we had a very fulsome, full agenda, fantastic, powerful meetings in Goose Bay last fall, with our Indigenous partners. There was a presentation that was given on the suicide prevention program and there was an opportunity for questions to be asked. Actually, somebody well known to people across this province, Anastasia Qupee, was a very big part of the work that we done around suicide prevention.

I think we've been out of time for some time, so thank you.

**CHAIR:** We have.

Thank you.

2.7.01 to 2.7.02, I'm looking at the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you.

With respect to 2.7.02, under Salaries, Minister, last year there was a salary savings of \$236,000. Could you please outline what positions were vacant and for how long, please?

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** One of the biggest things showing here is we did – I'm looking for the right word because I say seconded and it's not the right word. We did have one of the senior staff in my department who went to work with the federal government for a year and then they paid the money back. I'm looking for a word; I'll think about it shortly. I'm looking to my colleagues, they might be able to help me, but really that was primarily the biggest reason for the savings there, due to that interchange agreement.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Chair.

Now under Purchased Services, last year Purchased Services went over budget, spending a total of \$175,000. Could you please explain what was spent here and if there is a list of expenditures available?

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you.

Salaries were savings due to vacancies in the department and the interchange agreement – that was the word I was looking for to your earlier question.

The \$164,500 was all related primarily to the cost of the Beothuk statue. I believe we have done three \$120,000 payments for a total of \$360,000 for the cost of the statue.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you.

Under Grants and Subsidies, could you please provide a breakdown of who received the grant money? I also note that not all of last year's grant funding was awarded. Could you please explain why?

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Just before I answer, I missed the very last part of your question. Something wasn't –

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Yes, not all of last year's grant funding was awarded. Could you please explain why?

**L. DEMPSTER:** Okay, under the Grants and Subsidies that are funded here, I can

certainly list them. There are not many. There's the Torngat Wildlife and Plants Co-Management Board. That's a grant of \$248,500. They do a lot of work in the Member for Torngat Mountains' area. She would be familiar. There is the Torngat Joint Fisheries Board grant of \$248,500. The LILCA Dispute Resolution Board grant of \$11,300. The Land Use Planning Appeals Board of \$6,500.

One of the things this government started doing back a number of years ago was giving a small core funding amount to each of our three Friendship Centres in the province, so there's \$90,000 there for that. There's additional community-base funding of \$12,600. I think I've got them all.

I'm looking to see – we did have some savings due to the LILCA Dispute Resolution Board and the Land Use Planning Appeals Board not being established. It's something that working with Nunatsiavut Government they had asked us to sort of revive the board and let's go back to the table and start working on this file again. That just recently started.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Just one question on the community-base funding that you just referenced. The community-base funding, I believe you said that was \$12,500, I think. Could you just elaborate on what exactly the community-base funding would be?

**CHAIR:** The Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

**L. DEMPSTER:** I'm just waiting for that answer.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Okay, thank you.

**L. DEMPSTER:** I may have to come back to it.

Also, one of the things I didn't mention that we were funding under Purchased Services, one of the projects that we're working on with our Indigenous partners, which is just about ready, and it has also been a long haul, are murals for the foyer out here.

So each Indigenous government – each of the five of them – were able to contract an artist and do their own design. So the Nunatsiavut Government will have a mural, NunatuKavut, Qalipu First Nation, Miawpukek First Nation and then we are also going to have a mural to honour the Beothuk and that design is happening now. Government is actually sort of taking that on but working with all of our Indigenous partners. I just don't have a figure right in front of me, but some of the funding has gone to helping with that work as well.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Just for clarification, so the murals will be displayed in the foyer. All of the murals are in the foyer of the Confederation Building. Is that correct?

**CHAIR:** The Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

**L. DEMPSTER:** When you walk in, up where you see the flags. I had my first look at all but one and it's absolutely incredible, the art. Each Indigenous government commissioned an artist and did their own piece and it's really quite something.

I just got some information on the grants. The \$12,400 is for next year. Last year, it was for \$6,400. We provided that to the Labrador Friendship Centre in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. It actually went to school snacks for children. There was a line set up and families with the high cost of living that feel they needed snacks for kids could provide that. I was actually in the Friendship Centre in Goose Bay last week and I heard

over and over that it was very well received and it filled the gap for them.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** That sounds like a good incentive, a good initiative. That completes my questions for this.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Just before I recognize the Member for Torngat Mountains, the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality wanted to comment on a question from the Member for Torngat Mountains in the last session but we ran out of time.

I'm recognizing the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you for that; I appreciate that.

I just want to pick up where my colleague, the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, left off with regard to the question pertaining to the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, the Calls to Action and what funding support is available.

I just wanted to outline, actually, some grants from within the department that I represent. For example, the Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network receives \$125,000, which is budgeted annually and in the actuals it's \$133,917. Also, the Indigenous Violence Prevention Grants is \$241,500, as well as money that is allocated for the Provincial Indigenous Women's Gathering annually. That's \$25,000.

So there is significant funding which ultimately goes toward Calls for Justice, both based on what the national inquiry saw, as well as our own local provincial report which was received by myself; the

Premier; my colleague, the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation; as well as the Minister of Justice and Public Safety. I just wanted to add that to the record for my colleague from Torngat Mountains.

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

I'm now recognizing the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Chair.

The Office of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, as I said initially when I began my speech here, is about advocacy and about ensuring that the groups are properly advocated for within the departments of this province.

My general question is about housing. The Canadian government, the Canadian representative – the Canadian Federal Housing Advocate – actually went to Nain, in my district, and looked at the housing conditions. The word she used was “abominable.”

She went on to detail that she has nightmares from what she saw. I think the phrase “human rights violation” was also spoken by the Federal Housing Advocate about housing conditions. So as the Office of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, in terms of the advocacy and making sure –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**L. EVANS:** Chair, please.

**CHAIR:** Sorry?

**L. EVANS:** Chair, there's so much background noise here. If people don't want to listen to what we're saying and talking, and listen to the answers, then maybe they should actually leave.



What's this department doing to address the mental health and the physical health implications of these findings about the housing? Indigenous Affairs has to advocate for Inuit and Innu to have proper housing. Yet, we had a Federal Housing Advocate go in and talk about nightmares of what she saw: human rights violations in terms of access to housing.

**CHAIR:** The Chair is recognizing the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Chair.

The Member raises a very important topic. I know from my time in Housing – and in January, myself and the Housing minister actually travelled to Nain. We went into a number of homes that are maintained, some by Nunatsiavut Government and some by Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. We are always advocating; we are working across government.

During the time when I was the minister of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, and we were renegotiating a new nine-year housing agreement – I think it was \$270 million. It was a historic investment that's rolling out over three, three-year action plans. At that same time, there was an Inuit housing strategy that the federal government was working with the ITK members on, including Nunatsiavut Government.

During the time that we were in Nain in January, the president and his ministers talked to us about the – I'll probably get the name wrong – Housing Commission that they had just set up. There's going to be substantive money put into address the need. Nobody questions the need that's there. There is a need. That's why the Nunatsiavut Government has set up a Housing Commission; work is happening, under way.

In addition to that, myself and my colleague have said: We will come in where there are gaps. As this work rolls out, and if there are places that the provincial government can come and play a role, then we'll certainly be there. I don't know if my colleague wants to add anything or that's certainly it.

So it's not that there's a housing need in that area and it's being ignored, there is substantive money that's been put aside. The need is there and we want to work in partnership across government and in partnership in this case, with Nunatsiavut Government, to try and address that need.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Chair.

I thank the minister for her response. I don't think it should have to take a Federal Housing Advocate to come in and actually go national with her response.

Also, I think it could be extended from housing to other areas in terms of the Office of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation. They have an obligation to advocate for the Indigenous people in the province. Just looking at my district and the rest of Labrador, I know there are significant gaps.

So I also ask the minister in terms of her advocacy, this report, the *Adult Custody & Community Corrections* report came out in December 2022. We've just actually seen it. It's been based on up to the end of 2019, I will acknowledge that, but it's only been two years since her investigation.

The reason why I bring this up is one of the percentages that is always talked to me about is our high rate of incarceration, especially in Northern Labrador. Our Innu and our Inuit actually make up a majority of the inmates when you look at the percentage.

We look at these horrific findings about the lack of programming in terms of corrections. One of the things we always want when people go into custody, that when they leave custody, when they're finally released back into our communities, that they would be better, that their abilities to adjust back into civilization have improved and they come out better than they went in. But when you look at the programming and the lack of risk assessments, the lack of case management and basic lack of supervision, also, in terms of programming that will actually help people lead good, substantive, productive lives.

What has the Indigenous Affairs office been doing to advocate for actually helping our Indigenous people that go into corrections?

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Chair.

The Member raises an important question. It is always concerning when we see – and sometimes predominantly our younger people going into corrections. We have made substantive investment as a government. I think it was \$5.7 million for the ongoing extension of the Labrador Correctional Centre.

Myself and my colleague, the Minister for Justice and Public Safety, went to Happy Valley-Goose Bay. We toured the correctional facility. We talked to people there about what they're seeing. We visited the courthouses. We talked about exploring things like restorative justice, things like that and rehabilitation, so I can tell her that this is not lost on me.

I think that our Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation department probably touches across every department in government; we're a small but a pretty busy team. So that's always an active conversation with us as well, how do we support those people that need help? Of course, everybody at the

end of the day wants them to be rehabilitated and back as contributing members of society.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

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

I don't have any more questions, but I just want to say the priorities outlined in the National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy, those strategies apply to Innu and to other Indigenous groups in the province. I do support the minister in continuing to advocate, but we really need to see this office step up and ensure that the other departments are aware of the tremendous barriers that Indigenous people face when they're trying to access equality and quality of life.

Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

If the House is ready for the question, shall 2.7.01 to 2.7.02 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against?

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.7.01 through 2.7.02 carried.

**CHAIR:** Can I ask the Clerk to call the next set of subheads, please?

**CLERK:** The Office of the Executive Council, 2.8.01 through 2.8.03 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 2.8.01 to 2.8.03 inclusive carry?

The Chair is recognizing the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Chair.

First of all, I have a number of general questions that I'd like to ask first to the minister.

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

**CHAIR:** The Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

**P. PARSONS:** The Gender-Based Analysis Plus – I'll just read into the record here. Obviously, all government departments and agencies are mandated to perform the Gender-Based Analysis Plus on all work, which includes policies, programs, services, legislation and, of course, budgets. The Office of Women and Gender Equality have trained 625 individuals in the public and private sector. The majority of those trained were public service employees who were involved in program, policy and budget development.

**CHAIR:** The Member – sorry.

**P. PARSONS:** I'm going to continue, if that's okay, Chair. I've got a lot of good news to add into the record here.

GBA+ training is now available to all public service members through the PSAccess learning platform. The Office of Women and Gender Equality will be hosting regular GBA+ training sessions for public service sector employees. There are five training sessions planned for the spring of 2023 and six more being offered in the summer of 2023, which will help to grow the understanding and application of GBA+ throughout government decision-making.

Of course, Women and Gender Equality reviews all program and government

Cabinet papers to ensure that GBA+ analysis has been completed. To date, from 2021-22, 405 Cabinet papers have been reviewed. In 2022-23, 399 Cabinet papers have been reviewed.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Chair, last year, I asked this same question to the minister and was advised then that the minister didn't have that information, but would undertake to get that relevant information to us.

I, again, need to understand exactly what gender-based analysis was done on the budget, specifically, if she could provide that information.

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

**P. PARSONS:** Chair, what I have here pertaining to the GBA+ is what I have read into the record, but I certainly will take away and advise staff from – the Office of Women and Gender Equality are watching and making notes. We can certainly provide that information following this session.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Minister, I would appreciate that.

With respect to the instances of domestic violence in the province, could the department and the minister provide some statistics on the instances of domestic violence over the last year, please?

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

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

Yes, I've often asked that as well about particular statistics. It has been said to me and staff that for privacy reasons those statistics are not necessarily easy to come by, especially as it pertains to transitional houses, for example. We know that people, women in particular, gender diverse fleeing domestic violence – again, it's a take away to see what we can provide because due to privacy concerns regarding that particular question.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Chair, I asked this exact question last year as well and I was advised by the minister that she would certainly find out what she could and what was available. So I would ask again that information be provided to us, specific information about the numbers on domestic violence.

Thank you.

Last year in Estimates, we talked about a women's leadership conference in Labrador. Did this occur? Is the department planning any women's leadership conferences this year in Labrador?

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

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

With regard to leadership, we do an annual gathering every year. I'm happy to say that staff and I travelled to North West River this past fall, actually in November, where myself, also the Premier was among us as well, as well as the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development and as well we were joined by the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation – known as the Gathering.

Among other important topics pertaining to Indigenous women and gender diverse, leadership, of course, is also discussed at that. As I said earlier, \$25,000 in funding is provided each year for the coordination of the Gathering and we didn't indeed hold this gathering. It was actually hosted by local Indigenous groups up there, women's groups, and it was a success. It was actually very intense, two days of meetings.

I'm happy to say we did indeed get to Labrador and it was just before December, although it was still cold and there was snow on the ground, but it was a good visit. I look forward to again continuing the Gathering wherever it's going to be this coming year.

**CHAIR:** The Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Minister.

With respect to pay equity, the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour released an analysis of the pay equity legislation and recommended changes. Will any of their recommendations be brought into the House for debate, Minister?

**CHAIR:** The Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

Again, I'm happy to say it's been a historic year this past fall with regards to pay equity and pay transparency here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We all know, and we've said many times here in this House on both sides, that there's never been an act but we have an act now. History has been made on moving and advancing pay equity for women and gender-diverse people here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

As we know, pay equity has been implemented in the public sector currently as of April 1. We do know that consultations

are currently under way with targeted stakeholders across the province, as well as our virtual platforms are set up and we have had significant uptake in that. So I'm happy to report to my colleague that, yes, of course, these consultations will be considered going forward to ultimately implementing pay equity in the private sector, as well as pay transparency. That, as we know, is a living document that's currently moving forward.

**CHAIR:** The Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Minister.

I'm aware of the consultations. In fact, I attended one of them as well. But my question was specifically with respect to the recommendations from the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour, and whether the minister would have any of these recommendations brought into the House of Assembly for debate?

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

Again, I thank the Member and I'm aware that she did certainly participate in one of the consultations, as well as my colleague from Torngat Mountains who was also present. Close to 70 stakeholders have participated in the in-person and virtual consultation sessions with representation from women's centres and equity seeking groups, unions, of course, which the Member has particularly asked about, and labour groups, public sector employers and private sector employers.

Again, we're working collaboratively with my colleagues from the Public Service Commission, as well as the Labour Division, to put forth the best legislation. As we know, those consultations are under way.

So I would say absolutely, yes. This is an ongoing conversation and ultimately the goal is to put forth the best legislation that we can for the people of our province. I certainly welcome the Member's input going forward as well, as she has been doing.

Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR:** The Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Minister, I still haven't received an answer though on whether you'll bring recommendations from the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour before the House for debate.

**CHAIR:** The Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

Yes, it's important to note that all stakeholders, not just one group – it's important to bring forward the information and the input from all stakeholders. Again, as I said, these consultations are under way. Further work, of course, is required, especially with regard to private sector pay equity, which ultimately will make the most impact for women and gender-diverse people throughout our province.

Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** I am going to move on to the next question to get an answer. Violence Prevention Avalon East has spoken out about not receiving an increase in their funding, despite an increase in the need for their services.

Why haven't organizations, such as Violence Prevention Avalon East, received an increase?

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

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

As we can appreciate, everyone is certainly welcome to write any department to ask for an increase in core funding. I'm happy to say that core funding is provided annually to groups, such as the Violence Prevention Avalon East, as every violence prevention organization across Newfoundland and Labrador.

That said, too, I'm also happy to say that currently there has been a national plan that has been announced – that we're well into agreements and talks now; it is going to be a big infusion of funding support – to come to each province and territory. We're actually working with these local organizations here in our province now to see how funding can be best spent, and what needs to be done to enhance these prevention efforts with every organization.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main, for a quick question.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you. A quick question.

Last year in Estimates, we talked about nurses that were trained in sexual assault examination. Do you have a regional breakdown of how many sexual assault nurse examiners – or in other words SANE; we refer to it as S-A-N-E, SANE – are in the province and where they are located?

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

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

Yes, as we know, in the past two consecutive years \$225,000 has been dedicated from the Office of Women and Gender Equality that has been transferred to the Department of Health and Community Services in particular, with focus to establish the SANE Programs in, as we know as Labrador-Grenfell and Central.

Currently, they are up and running here in Eastern, as well as Western regions of our province. As my colleague said today here in Question Period, that recruitment process for the provincial coordinator role for the SANE Program is currently under way and is being led by Eastern Health.

With that said, what's important to note with regard to the SANE Program is should someone present symptoms or come forward with sexual assault violence, I am told – it's been referred to me and my staff, as well as my colleague – that those services certainly will be available to support those victims coming forward.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

2.8.01 to 2.8.03.

I'm recognizing the hon. Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Chair.

I'll just continue on along the lines that my colleague from Harbour Main was talking on, the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program. You mentioned the amount of money being allocated for the program. Could you just tell me again: was it \$220,000 being allocated for the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program? Does this include the salary of the program coordinator, the unfulfilled provincial program coordinator?

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

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

Yes, it's actually \$225,000 that's allocated annually in two consecutive years. The provincial coordinator will be responsible for standardizing program delivery, including training nurses to a provincial standard of care, and will facilitate the expansion of the SANE services throughout the province.

Recruitment of health care professional remains to be a challenge, as we have said here in this hon. House, Chair, across our province, as well as, we know, across the country. Also, the SANE Programs are currently in place in three emergency departments: one in Eastern Health, as I've mentioned, and two in Western.

Obviously, we understand the importance of the need to have these services in place. Again, it is reassured that these services will be available, should victims show up and present symptoms for sexual violence or sexual assault. I guess that helps clarify the \$225,000.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Will the salary for the provincial coordinator come out of this budget? If not, will it be coming out of the Women and Gender Equality department's budget?

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

**P. PARSONS:** As far as I'm aware, Chair, that is the number that comes from the Office of Women and Gender Equality; however, as I've said, the coordinator position is being led by Eastern Health. So perhaps that's something that I can certainly consult or the Member can actually consult with our colleague, the Minister of Health and Community Services, to get those specifics with regard to the salary for the coordinator.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Has this budget been completely spent over the last three budgets? If not, what has been done with

the remaining money that's left over from the budget?

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

**P. PARSONS:** Again, Chair, what I can say is the budget from the Office of Women and Gender Equality of \$225,000 has been allocated to Health and Community Services. My colleague, the Minister of Health, would be better equipped to talk to what spending has been done under that department, as I'm not the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** I was going to ask the minister: Out of the budget, how much was spent on assessment kits, but she probably doesn't have the information.

This SANE Program is not present in Labrador or Central Health regions. Does the budget reflect the expected influx of work that will be taken to expand the program when this provincial coordinator is finally hired?

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

**P. PARSONS:** Can I just ask the Member to repeat that question, please?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** The SANE Program is absent in Labrador and Central Health regions. Does this budget of \$225,000 reflect the expected influx of work that will come when it expands the programs and the provincial coordinator is finally hired?

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

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

Again, I can elaborate on the allocation that comes from the budget within the Office of Women and Gender Equality. But perhaps the precise details can be better answered by Health and Community Services, in particular, Eastern Health.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Chair, to clarify my question to the minister, we have a budget of \$225,000 that's been spent each year. We don't have a provincial coordinator person hired yet. We have no program in Labrador or in Central, so that's why I asked the question on the budget.

My next general question is: A recent ATIPP suggested that there's no clear or no new action has been taken to indicate work is being done on the SANE Program. Looking at recruitment for a coordinator position, we were told in 2021 by the former minister of Health that it was active and under way, yet, there's been no work that we can see done since 2021.

Also, when women's groups bring it up – they started raising this issue in 2020. So my question is: What specific action has this office taken in the past year to advance the file and also to hire a provincial coordinator position?

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

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

And as I've stated, this particular initiative is led by Eastern Health. So I would suggest to the Member that this could be a take-away and maybe the details can come from Health and Community Services where you can get the accurate details for that.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Minister.

How much of the \$225,000 for the SANE Program is focused on basic trauma-informed care training to all nurses to let nurses in the province know that the test can be offered even if a SANE nurse isn't present?

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

**P. PARSONS:** Again, I thank the hon. Member and I recognize her passion on this particular topic. It's an important one, as we know, but, again, I'm going to have to defer to my colleague about all questions pertaining to the logistics and the details with regard to the health and community aspect of this file with regard to nursing, to training, to the coordination.

My office simply provides the \$225,000 annually for this. We work with our colleagues in Health and we are an advocate, but I think the Minister of Health and Community Services would best be suited to provide these details.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to thank the minister for her responses. I realize now from her answers that a lot of the information and answers that we've been seeking lies with the Minister of Health. But I hope my questions did prompt you to sort of recognize that your department needs to advocate on behalf of women for this particular topic.

The reason why this topic is so important and why I'm bringing it up during this session for Women and Gender Equality, I think the Member for Harbour Main, my colleague, shares the sentiment, that when sexual assault takes place on a woman or someone who self-identifies as a woman, that's basically a violation of their autonomy, of their being and Women and Gender Equality has to advocate to make sure that



there are things in place across the province that help women with mental health and also the justice that they deserve. So I do thank the minister for her answers and I hope it prompts her to advocate.

Just moving on now looking at the pay legislation that was introduced earlier. When can we expect consultations that we've seen – consultations take place regarding the expansion of pay equity legislation to cover the private sector and not just the pay transparency because I attended the consultations as well?

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

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

Yes, again, those consultations are under way to advise on pay transparency, but, as well, those conversations will be happening on pay equity, under these targeted consultations that are happening now with in person as well as the online, virtual engagement, the platform for public service.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Yes, it's about expanding pay equity, but, also, when do we expect to see some consultations to cover the private sector?

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

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

Yes, these conversations are happening now in these consultations about pay equity as a whole for public sector, as well as private, as well as the pay transparency. This conversation is ongoing now and it will be, as we know, when we introduce the legislation in the fall across with my colleague, the Minister Responsible for Labour, as well as the Public Service Commission, this will be done in phases.

As we know, the public sector pay equity has been implemented as of April 1 and those consultations and conversations are happening now. They will be consistently until we are ready to bring forth the next step of the legislation for private sector pay equity.

**CHAIR:** There are only 10 seconds left.

Do you have something?

**L. EVANS:** I'll save my question for the next lot and defer to –

**CHAIR:** Okay, thank you.

I'm recognizing the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Chair.

I feel it necessary to go back to the general question that I asked, as well as my colleague for Torngat Mountains, with respect to the SANE Program. When I look back at the Estimates from last year, the minister had indicated that \$225,000 had been allocated to expand that service, the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner unit for Labrador and for Central Newfoundland.

I just need to ask. It was to be expanded into Labrador and for Central Newfoundland, but that is not what it appears has happened. Could you, please, Minister, provide some clarity because it is confusing?

I'm just referencing from the Estimates of last year where that statement was made. Especially, given the fact that you had acknowledged even last year that the highest statistics were in Labrador for sexual assault, particularly for Indigenous women, compared to the rest of the country.

As the minister who represents Women and Gender Equality and, in particular, Indigenous women, and although I

understand that the Department of Health has a role to play, but you have the very important role as the minister for Indigenous women.

Could you please explain the fact that this has not been expanded into Labrador?

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

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

Yes, individuals who present at a facility in Central and Labrador-Grenfell Health regions following a sexual assault are indeed able to receive services and supports that are guided by compassion and trauma-informed approach to care. That's what's happening in the interim.

Labrador-Grenfell Health has also posted an expression of interest for the SANE – the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner – training throughout that region. It's important to note that the SANE training is provided to nursing staff and is not a stand-alone position. As I've said and as I've heard my colleagues say, recruitment has been a challenge, not just unique to Newfoundland and Labrador, but we're seeing this across the country.

Again, I will respectfully recite again for the record and for my colleagues that \$225,000 is allocated from the Office of Women and Gender Equality, annually, but this process is indeed led by Eastern Health.

So, again, it's a take-away. Again, staff are watching this Estimates process. I can only answer what I can answer on that. We all recognize the importance of it and I have given the details that have been provided to me on this.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Chair, the Department of Finance has \$5.2 million set aside in the federal programs activity, which in Estimates for that department we were told would be set aside to address gender-based violence.

What is the plan for this \$5.2 million? What exactly will be done with it?

**CHAIR:** The Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

It is hard to hear in here, I must say; even though I do have my earpiece in, Chair.

But, again, yes, about \$5.4 million is allocated for the department of Women and Gender Equality with regard to gender-based violence initiatives. Actually, I can provide a list of core funding and organizations that all that funding goes to. But it is indeed gender-based violence preventatives and, also, as was mentioned earlier, Indigenous Violence Prevention Grants and so on.

So we can actually get a take-away to have a list, if that's what the Member is asking.

**CHAIR:** The Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** That would be helpful. Thank you, Minister.

Minister, earlier we were discussing the gender-based analysis training and I'm not sure if you stated this; my apologies if you did: How many people in the core public service have now been trained in the gender-based analysis training? So, in essence, how many have been trained in the past year?

**CHAIR:** The Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

Again, I'm always happy to talk about this work that we know is mandatory. It has been implemented on all policies, budgets and legislation. So the Office of Women and Gender Equality have trained 625 individuals in the public and private sector. The majority of those trained were public service employees who are involved in program, policy and budget development.

GBA+ training is now available to all public service members through the PSAccess learning platform. The Office of Women and Gender Equality will be hosting regular GBA+ training sessions for public service sector employees. There are five training sessions being planned for the spring of this year 2023, and six more being offered in the summer of 2023, which will help to grow the understanding and the application of GBA+ throughout government decision-making.

WGE reviews all provincial government Cabinet papers to ensure the GBA+ analysis has been completed. Again, for the Member's information, 405 Cabinet papers were reviewed in year '21-'22 and '22-'23, 319 Cabinet papers have been reviewed.

**CHAIR:** The Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Chair.

We are all in agreement that training in Gender-Based Analysis Plus is critical for strong policy development. Throughout the entire public service, can the minister please provide a percentage of people working in policy and program development that are GBA+ trained? I know that you said the majority are, but could you please give us a percentage?

**CHAIR:** The Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

**P. PARSONS:** I will request that information to take away, to provide to the Member.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Okay, thank you.

Under 2.8.01, Minister's Office, Salaries, last year, Salaries in the Minister's Office went over budget by \$27,600. Could you please explain why, Minister?

**CHAIR:** The Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

The salaries are for three permanent positions within the Minister's Office: the minister, the executive assistant and the minister's secretary. There is an overrun of \$27,600 due to backfilling of one position reflected in the '22-'23 actuals. So an increase of \$11,300 in '23 to '24, which reflects increases due to a reprofile to balance the salary plan and the salary increases.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Minister.

Under 2.8.02, Women and Gender Equality, Salaries, could you please explain the variance in the Salaries line item? I note that last year there was \$961,800 budgeted, \$849,000 spent and this year, \$1,050,900 budget.

Can you please outline if positions were vacant, what were they and for how long were they vacant?

**CHAIR:** The Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

In '22-'23, there was \$112,800 in savings due to vacancies. In '23-'24 there is an

increase of \$89,100 due to a one-time salary profile, which is an increase of \$51,300 from *Budget 2022*; \$41,000 in salary increases; and a salary profile decrease of \$3,200 to balance the salary plan to the Minister's Office for Women and Gender Equality.

**CHAIR:** The Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Under Professional Services, Minister, could you please give some information on this line item, including an outline of how the \$254,500 was spent, please?

**CHAIR:** The Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

Question to the Member: Is she referring to 2.8.02 or 2.8.01?

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** No, 2.8.02, Women and Gender Equality, under Professional Services.

**P. PARSONS:** In Professional Services, Chair, in '22-'23, there was \$15,500 in savings due to vacant positions within the RCMP associated with the Intimate Partner Violence Unit. That one? That good? That clarify it?

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, that clarifies that.

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

**CHAIR:** The Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

**P. PARSONS:** 2.8.02?

**CHAIR:** The Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Yes, I'm on 2.8.02.

**CHAIR:** The Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

In '23-'24, there has been a redistribution of funds from Professional Services to Purchased Services to better reflect the work and expenditures within the Office of Women and Gender Equality. In '23-'24, \$25,000 has been removed from Professional Services to Purchased Services, and this reflects the ongoing work related to the Gender-Based Analysis Plus leadership initiatives and violence prevention initiatives.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Okay, thank you.

Under Grants and Subsidies, last year grants were budgeted at \$2.8 million, \$2.9 million was given out and this year \$3.3 million is budgeted. Could you please provide a list of who received this funding, Minister?

**CHAIR:** The Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

For Grants and Subsidies, in '22-'23, there was an overrun of \$117,500 and it's due to an increase of community-based funding of \$177,500. This increase was particularly offset by the West Coast grant funding not happening in the amount of \$60,000. Also, there's a net increase in Grants and Subsidies reflected in '23-'24, and that's due to an agreement with the federal

government which will see \$280,000 allocated to the crisis hotlines.

Also, an increase of \$207,700 in community-based funding, which was proportional to the Office of Women and Gender Equality from the overall increase of community-based funding which was announced in *Budget 2022* and continued in *Budget 2023*. Staff in my office now are also determining and working with our groups to find out how to allocate this increase best in the community-based funding for this year.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Chair.

Myself and I'm sure my colleague from Harbour Main is wishing for a day where there wouldn't be a need for the Office of Women and Gender Equality, hopefully. But until then, there's a need. There's a need for the department. There's a need for that voice, advocacy.

With that in mind, just looking at the gender pay equity legislation that was brought in this past year, it covers the public service. We know that up to 80 per cent of the public servants now already have access – this is built in to their workplace, through their contracts, through their working environment.

So for us, for me, it's very important to ask for an update on the work that's being done to bring in legislation that would cover the vulnerable, the needed work to cover the public sector and also other groups that have been left out by this legislation, such as contractual work.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you.

As President of Treasury Board, this is more related to the public service. I can tell the Member opposite that prior to the most recent legislation, about 85 per cent of the public service had access to the four key components of equity. The four key components, one of them, of course, were working conditions and that has been established now for 100 per cent of the public service.

So it was more around the 15 per cent that were not covered under working conditions were more executive or management level, but now we've been able to include working conditions as one of the four key pillars. So we are fully pay equity compliant.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

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

But I was looking for an update on expanding the legislation to the private sector. So I was wondering are there any timelines to bring forward pay equity legislation for the private sector?

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

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

Absolutely, I would say, and I think that was made abundantly clear – legislation was introduced this past fall; that is certainly the intention. We had to start in-house. I mean, we're asking the people and the community of Newfoundland and Labrador to become pay equity, pay transparency compliant but ultimately we have to start in-house first, as we know.

As my colleague outlined, as of April 1, public sector pay equity has been implemented and the sessions are offered throughout the province, with in-person

consultations held in St. John's, Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Multiple virtual sessions were held to ensure that the stakeholders in all regions of the province were able to share input. Of course, as we know, the purpose of these engagement and consultation sessions is to indeed inform the regulations of the act.

I will read into the record the outline of this: "Preparing of pay equity reports in the public sector; prescribing the time period in which public sector pay equity reports must be submitted; prescribing the employers or classes of employers in the public and private sector who must prepare pay transparency reports; prescribing what information public and private sector employers should collect for pay transparency reporting purposes; prescribing the information public and private sector employers must include in a pay transparency report; and prescribing on what capacity employers have to report on pay transparency and how that may inform timelines for reporting."

So as we can appreciate, it's important to consult with the appropriate stakeholders in this province. The objective goal to this is not to put anyone out, not to put any employer out, small business, larger businesses. That's why these consultations are under way. But I can assure the Member that this is something that's a priority for myself, as the minister, my colleagues involved in this legislation, as well as our Premier. It's really important to establish this and to implement this.

Again, the progress that we've made in a year, whereas this time last year there was no act. What we have now – we have to start somewhere. I'm very optimistic about where this legislation is going. I would hope that everyone here in this House of Assembly, this hon. House, certainly is looking forward to the best legislation as possible that we can implement.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Chair.

The question I asked was an update on timelines for legislation for the private sector. Like a year, two years, three years, maybe the next decade? It's been made quite clear that this legislation that came in for the public service, really the gap was 15 per cent of the public service.

Really, when we look at the value, the value is not going to come from introducing legislation to the public service where only 15 per cent needs that advocacy and legislative supports. It's the private sector; it's the minimum wage earners. It's the contract workers. It's the people that don't really have, a lot of the times, stable income. So anyway, like I said, that was the question I asked.

Just moving on, looking at the pay equity legislation, I was just wondering if – anyway, I'm not going to ask that question because I won't get an answer to it.

I'll just go back to one thing that I was going to ask and my fellow colleague from Harbour Main sort of prompt me when she was talking about her questions. Looking at the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program, when can we expect that position to be posted? Not filled, posted. When can we see an advertisement for that position?

Minister, I'd like to be clear for my motives for asking that question. The reason why I asked that question for the posting of the position, to advertise to have filled the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner coordinator for the province, is that we've been told that the program will not be expanded into Labrador, can't be expanded into Labrador or Central Health until this coordinator is hired to expand the program.

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

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

Again, this process is being led by Eastern Health. I would say as soon as possible, to the Member. That's probably not the answer that she wants to hear, but it's the truthful one. It's the honest one. Again, the process is being led by Eastern Health.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** I'm done with this section.

Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Anything further from the Member for Harbour Main on 2.8.01 to 2.8.03 inclusive?

I'm recognizing the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Chair.

I just have a couple of more questions on this. Going back to under Grants and Subsidies, when I had asked that question to the minister and she had indicated there was community-based funding allocation for that. Do we have any further details about to whom that's going to be allocated as far as community-based funding?

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

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

With regard to the community-based funding across government, it's my understanding that \$5 million was added to that last year. Again, the commitment has been made of another \$5 million for this fiscal year for the community-based projects. That's not necessarily specific to

the department of Women and Gender Equality, but across government in general.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Okay.

Under Revenue - Federal, could you please explain where this \$280,000 will come from and which federal program it is in support of?

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

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

I think the Member is referring to the federal – that was allocated for crisis hotlines, correct, \$280,000? I think that's what she referenced. That was received from the federal government and has been allocated here locally to the Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis Unit, to be rolled out there. It was a federal initiative.

We have worked with local stakeholders, in particular, the Sexual Assault Crisis hotline. That's where that funding is. Apparently, as we know, since COVID – and we know, we've been told through statistics, statistics that we did receive – there has been indeed a need for help in regard to this crisis hotline.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** So could you please identify which federal program, though? Could you provide that information as to which federal program you're talking about?

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

**P. PARSONS:** I'd like to say to the Member, when I'm the federal minister for Women and Gender Equality I'll be better equipped to answer that. Indeed that is federal jurisdiction, but again, it is a take-away; staff are watching. We can certainly get those fine details; we will reach out to our federal counterparts.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Yes, just the name of the federal program I'm asking for.

How many calls did the Intimate Partner Violence Unit respond to last year?

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

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

I will read into the record violence of any kind, obviously, in our province and communities, is unacceptable. I would like to add my voice to what my colleague, the Member for Torngat Mountains, said.

Unfortunately, there is a need for this work and this funding. I commend the RNC and the RCMP of the Intimate Partner Violence Units, for the work that they do to assist and support victims of intimate partner violence by advising of the available resources, criminal investigation information and the court process support. This is, obviously, a very sensitive topic but nonetheless very important.

Officials from my office met with both the RNC and the RCMP Intimate Partner Violence Units in February of this year to receive an update on their efforts. I can share some statistics, as the Member has asked, that were made available through the 2021 Royal Newfoundland Constabulary report. I should note that the 2022 Justice

report is not yet published, according to the RNC report in 2021.

Two hundred and fifty-nine females were victims of sexual assault, compared to 44 males. This represents an increase of 45 female victims or 6.14 per cent compared to 2020. One thousand and thirty-four were victims of assaults compared to 1,148 males. This represents an increase of 20 female victims or 1.97 per cent compared to 2020. Two hundred and seven were victims of violence or threat of violence, compared to 214 males as reported to police by a victim in an incident. This represents a decrease of 43 female victims or 17.2 per cent compared to 2020.

I'd also like to share some of the reports of the sexual assault and assault by individuals who do not identify as male or female. Victims of sexual assaults decreased by 71.4 per cent compared to 2020, victims of assault decreased by 100 per cent compared to 2020 and victims of violence or a threat of violence increased by 100 per cent compared to 2020.

These are the numbers that have been reported and may not capture the actual quantities of people experiencing violence in the province. Because, as we know, unfortunately, and I know my colleague knows, not all of these assaults are reported. Too many are not, actually.

But, that said, I want to state into the record violence of any form, whether it be verbally, physically, financially, emotionally is certainly not acceptable. I think as a whole House of Assembly we all take a stance against that. I hope that clarifies the Member's questions.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Minister.



Under 2.8.03, Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the last question I have is with respect to Grants and Subsidies. This year the budget is being increased to \$443,600. Where is the additional money going?

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

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

The budget allocation for '23-'24 includes an increase of \$12,100 over '22-'23. This reflects an increase due to community-based funding increases.

Just some additional messages I have here to read into the record about the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women: It's mandated, of course, to provide guidance and direction to the provincial government on potential policy actions to achieve equal and equitable outcomes or to deal with policy gaps that negatively impact women living in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I can elaborate further if the Member has anything – I can stop there if she has any precise questions.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Minister, I appreciate your responses.

Thank you very much.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

If the House is ready for the question, shall 2.8.01 to 2.8.03 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.8.01 through 2.8.03 carried.

**CHAIR:** Before I get the Clerk to call the next set of subheads, I know that the Leader of the Official Opposition had missed some questions in Intergovernmental Affairs and is asking leave to be able to go back to – I know we voted 2.4.01 to 2.6.01. Does he have leave?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Leave.

**CHAIR:** There you go.

I'm recognizing the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I do appreciate the leave from the minister and the Government House Leader over there.

Just a few questions here relevant to Intergovernmental Affairs, as we have a debate on what's going on now with the budget lines. These are more general questions, as I'd mentioned to the minister around some of the things that are very important to the people of this province and no doubt very important to government as they start the negotiations.

I want to talk first about the negotiations with Quebec on the Upper Churchill here. I'm wondering if we could get an overview of – we saw the recent press releases that were out around the Churchill River itself and negotiations will ensure the value of the Churchill Falls plant and the Churchill River itself. The PERT report recommends: "Package the Churchill River resources as a single opportunity, including Muskrat Falls, Gull Island, and the 2041 contract on the Upper Churchill ...."

Are Gull Island and Muskrat Falls now part of the negotiations with Quebec and can

you tell us exactly where Newfoundland resources are as part of the conversation?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much.

As the Member mentioned, this has been in public, that we have a three-person team. Namely Karl Smith, a very well-known former utilities executive. He is leading the team with Jennifer Williams, who is the president and CEO of the Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro and Denis Mahoney, who is the deputy minister of Justice and Public Safety, who is a renowned lawyer.

This team is bringing together its expertise of both industry, utility and law, and are heading up the discussions – very high-level discussions – with Quebec. I don't have further granular details of what's being discussed, but, of course, all of this is emerging out of the opportunity that we have now with the Upper Churchill.

As the people of the province know, the contract is expiring in 2041. Newfoundland and Labrador is in a very strong position right now. As we know, the corporation is owned 65.8 per cent by Newfoundland and Labrador and 34.2 per cent by Hydro-Québec. So it is timely to have some conversations.

I did note the – as they say in Quebec, the prime minister – but in English, the premier of Quebec did visit Newfoundland and Labrador, and I listened and I'm sure the Member opposite listened intently to his language and to his words. I think there's an overture there, and the three very capable individuals that I just named will have high-level discussions with Quebec as they move forward. What the outcomes will be, what the scenarios will be around that, very preliminary, very high level at this point in time.

So I have nothing further to add, except that those three people will be meeting with Quebec to have these high-level preliminary discussions and then we'll get to more granular levels as we move forward, if there's something to move forward on.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** I thank the minister for outlining that and obviously she's right. We listened very intently to what the premier of Quebec had said when he was here. A number of the comments he made were somewhat positive in the sense of identifying that there had been an injustice done in the past and that the deal itself, in some way, shape or form, should reflect a partnership between both. We're hopeful, as part of the negotiations goes on, that that will be reflective in the final document that's signed.

I do ask and maybe you know: Has there been any concept or discussions around a particular timeline? Are we talking within the next year or two? Are we talking before 2041? Are we talking prior to Muskrat Falls being totally sanctioned and operational? Are we talking about another project that may run? Are we talking that the feds have to intercede with some part of a policy change or a partnership as part of the development?

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

**S. COADY:** Again, we're at the preliminary stages. Newfoundland and Labrador will not be rushed in this. We'll take our time and we'll do what we think is in the best interest of the people of the province.

We've heard from the premier of Quebec that timing is of the essence for them. Of course, because 2041 in utility time is basically tomorrow. If they do not have that energy, they want energy security. If they

don't have that energy, they're going to have to make other determinations.

So I would say to the Member opposite, we'll take the time that is required. Again, we're in the early stages of this, but we do know that time is of the essence for some people at the table, but may not be for Newfoundland and Labrador. But we're going to do what's right.

There is full information, of course, on the Churchill River expert panel. There is a website [churchillriverexpertpanel.ca](http://churchillriverexpertpanel.ca). I am saying that for the people of the province. I know the Member opposite knows this. It will give some information on what's being thought through when it comes to planning for the future of the Churchill River.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Chair.

I do appreciate the candor and openness from the minister and do agree that Newfoundland and Labrador should not be rushed in these negotiations. I do agree negotiations should start and be intently discussed, as we move forward, but I do agree that the minister is probably accurate. Maybe one of the proponents here are in a bigger rush than the other proponent, and the other proponent being the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, we know where 2041 will bring us. We just need to know at the end of day to what value it will be and we need to maximize that value.

I, like some other people, have heard rumors that Hydro-Québec needs a quicker deal because some of the customers they have want long-term deals signed, and as part of that they're not comfortable signing a long-term deal with a proponent that may not own the entity or may not have full access to the entity at the end of the day.

So that puts us in a better negotiating position from our perspective, and I would

think from the minister's and the government's perspective anyway. So we can attest to that, we're all on the same page there and, at the end of the day, while we move this along, we will encourage you to be as open and as transparent as possible, understanding the concept of negotiations. It can't be 100 per cent public until they're ready to be unveiled, as part of that proponent process, but the more engaged people are, the more informed they are, the more respect they'll be to the fact that Newfoundland and Labrador will see the benefits of the fruits of their labour for the last 70 years when we get to 2041 as that new production moves forward.

Given that discussion, and we've said it a number of times in this House and I've had the other side nod in agreement, looking at a national energy grid would be in the best interest of this whole country, but, particularly, Newfoundland and Labrador when we talk about green energy and the potential we have, not only with the assets we have now but the ability to expand those assets, greatly would benefit everybody in this country and this Confederation.

Given the federal government's interest in the Atlantic Loop, something that we see the value in. Once we know more about how it can be put in play and how the partnerships will be developed, still a bit sceptical on who is getting to negotiate what at this point, but that will be clarified, hopefully, over the next period of time.

Has the Premier had discussions with the prime minister or Minister LeBlanc about the federal government's exercising the power it has under the Constitution Act to declare the transmission of electricity across provincial boundaries to be a national interest?

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

**S. COADY:** I don't want to speak on behalf of what may have occurred between the Premier and the prime minister on this matter, but I will say that there is a committee of officials – there has been for a number of years now – from multiple government departments and utilities from the four Atlantic provinces. They've been meeting regularly.

That continues and, you know, quite frankly, I've heard the Premier say in this House there's really no Loop without Newfoundland and Labrador because, of course, we hold the energy. The Loop itself would be transmission, would be very active. We did see in the federal budget some moneys for transmissions. I think it's transmissions around the Atlantic Loop.

But I would say to the Member opposite the point that he is making about a national grid is something that has been advanced by Newfoundland and Labrador in the past, I think by multiple administrations actually. Most recently I can recall discussions when we talked about the internal trade agreements.

So there's a lot of work being done around the Atlantic Loop. I know officials are completely engaged. I know that, administratively, from a ministerial level, from a Premier's level, we've been engaged, but talks continue, work continues on this area.

What you saw in the federal government was advancement of one particular piece in a different area, but, again, there is no Atlantic Loop without Newfoundland and Labrador's energy.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** I appreciate that again, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the minister's openness in discussing this issue.

Again, I want to reiterate what we've said in this House and what I've said in the media, that we're open to supporting government, particularly, if they stand up for the use of our energies and developing a partnership with our Atlantic province sisters, 100 per cent supportive of that and doing our part for the environment. But it has to be done in a manner that Newfoundland and Labrador becomes beneficiary of the use of our green energy and, at the end of the day, we're at the table from day one.

The minister did mention the acknowledgement in the federal budget. That was good. Obviously, and we've outlined them, one of the concerns was that the minister inadvertently or openly noted that there are discussions going on with the other three provinces. So it was a bit of a concern there for clarification as to what does this mean in negotiations for Newfoundland and Labrador?

So we're open to be cognizant, but understanding that maybe there are certain things that need to be discussed with the other proponents here that necessarily wouldn't have to be. My only concern and our concern on this side is that because of the history with Newfoundland and Labrador being taken advantage of by a multitude of administrations or companies or other provinces, we would want to make sure that every discussion that includes Newfoundland and Labrador, or is looking for some part of our assets, that we would be at the table or informed from the minute it starts, not be left out after the fact.

So we encourage that to happen. I would hope and think that the government thinks the same manner here and that the Premier would draw a line in the sand when necessary to say unless this happens there will be no discussions around where we are.

We will, again, agree, and I would think everybody in this House of Assembly, that the Atlantic Loop does not exist if Newfoundland and Labrador is not the key

proponent of those negotiations as part of that process here.

Also, again, –

**S. COADY:** (Inaudible.)

**D. BRAZIL:** Sure.

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

**S. COADY:** Just if I would say to that, I think Minister O'Regan has come out and said on the Atlantic Loop and what was included in the budget was a particular ask by a particular province. It had nothing to do with what I'm going to say, the strategic Atlantic Loop. As you pointed out, there is no Loop without Newfoundland and Labrador.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, again.

Just so that we know it's on record, that we want to make sure every discussion that happens, Newfoundland and Labrador may not have to be at the table, it may not be that necessary, but they would have to be aware of exactly what's being discussed and what implication, if any, is going to happen for Newfoundland and Labrador and nothing happens until there's another follow-up discussion.

As we talked about earlier, when the premier of Quebec was here and the openness that he had mentioned, that he saw a lot of flaws in the previous contract and things could've been rectified; I'm asking would the Premier be looking at, as part of his negotiations, asking the premier of Quebec in a gesture of good faith to find a way through, you know, a multi-billion dollar corporation they have now with Hydro-Québec, to offset some of the losses that Newfoundland and Labrador have incurred over the last 45 years to ensure that we move in an equitable way, to know,

in a good gesture of faith, that a contract can be signed in 2041 that's equitable and develops a good working relationship that's a good partnership?.

**CHAIR:** The Minister of Finance and president of Treasury Board.

**S. COADY:** Thank you.

I'll reiterate that Newfoundland and Labrador has always been part of the conversation. I want to assure you that we will be part of that conversation around the Atlantic Loop. Again, there is no loop without Newfoundland and Labrador.

With regard to your advice, I'll take that. Your advice with regard to what may be discussed as part of the negotiations or part of this very preliminary and very high-level discussion with Quebec, I'm sure that the three very learned people, the people that we have at the table, will take that under that advice and, in their discussions, keep that in their minds.

**CHAIR:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** I appreciate that and that's in line where we are. It's been the message that we've been sending and, hopefully, this will be another one of the times when both sides of the House are on the same page about what's in the best interest of the people of the province.

Again, keeping with the Atlantic Loop, just curious to see an outline for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador what the structure is right now when it comes to Newfoundland and Labrador's negotiating process or formation. Is it a committee set up of line departments right now? Is it the first meeting with the feds to have a conversation? If it's bureaucrats at a certain level having dialogue with bureaucrats in other provinces? Just for clarification so we'd have a better understanding, if you could.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you.

There has been a committee with the four provinces made up of both officials from the Department of Industry, Energy and Technology, mostly, because they are indeed responsible for hydro, but there's a cross-section of individuals. Finance could be involved if needed, as well as Hydro, and they've been meeting on a regular basis and have been for some time now.

Then, as required, ministerial involvement, even at the more senior levels. It's a committee of deputies across each province with the federal government. It's what's been meeting, regularly, but, obviously, with engagement and involvement of ministers as required.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Again, thank you, Minister, for that clarification.

I think it's a piece of information that the general public would feel a little bit more confident that at least we're at the table with the right officials and if we need to expand that and if there is some nuance that some other province brings forward that we have the expertise to be able to address that as part of that.

I'm going to change the tone a little bit or a little bit different on one of the other bigger issues that I think everybody in this House and every Newfoundlander and Labradorian has had some challenge with and that's equalization from Ottawa on a formula that has spanned a number of administrations and, unfortunately, when you look at it, has been detrimental to equitable fairness, financially for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Acknowledging the fact, from a moral point of view, our stake in this Confederation as part of that process, particularly when we see some of our sister provinces rake in millions, tens of millions, hundreds of millions, in some cases a billion-dollar level, while we go a decade without any acknowledgement that because of some the challenges we have here, from a financial point of view, or some of the decreases or valleys in our revenue streams, particularly around some of our resource values, yet all of the revenues in there have been taken into account and not given an approach that would offset our losses.

When you're driven based on an asset, particularly natural resources, and if they're being taken into account as your pure revenue, but not taken into account when the revenue stream becomes less, then obviously there's a challenge here as part of that process. I know we've had conversations in the House here and some discussion around that there are some upcoming discussions around the review for 2024 on the equalization program and what that would mean for Newfoundland and Labrador.

We had hoped that would have happened a couple of years ago when the initial review process was to take place, but it didn't. Too much to our chagrin because, at the end of the day, we've lost three years of equalization. Our economy hasn't grown that dramatically. COVID had an impact on it. The downturn in the oil industry obviously had an impact and a number of other industry impacts from tourism with COVID to the fishing industry. We know what the woes are that we have right now as part of that.

So if the minister could give us some assurance or a better understanding of what's happening now when we get closer to that negotiation, what the province itself is doing and are you having dialogue with other provinces about coming up with a process or formula that doesn't only benefit

a handful of provinces but benefit everybody on an equal share.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you.

This is an important conversation. I don't want to rush it and I had hoped I'd have the letters that we've written to the minister of Finance on this very issue.

To answer your question directly, we have had engagement with the federal government on this very important issue. Equalization is to be renewed in 2024. The Premier's written, as Minister for Intergovernmental Affairs, I've written, as Minister of Finance, to the federal government on the two key issues. You pretty much outline them so I won't belabour them. One being the inclusion in the formula or the inclusion in the removal in the formula of non-renewable resources. We have a very strong stance with regard to how non-renewable resources are treated within the formula.

The second key point, and I'd be happy to have further conversations as we move through this, but the second key point, of course, is around the cost of service delivery in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, based on our geography. It's not equal, you have to consider the cost of service delivery within our province. Those are the two key main points that we've advanced to the federal government.

I will say that the Leader of the Opposition did indicate that are you talking to other provinces. Yes, we've spoken to other provinces; we've spoken at federal/provincial/territorial meetings on this very point. We are concerned that the federal government is not taking those two key elements, those two key points into consideration. We have been heavily engaged in this issue. We've written multiple letters. We have made

advancements to the federal government everywhere we can. I know both the Premier has spoken about this to the ministers, I've spoken to the ministers. I know that there has been engagement across the country on this very issue. There is a legitimate concern that we will not be advantaged in this formula.

As you know, there are other provinces in this country, our colleagues throughout Atlantic Canada, of course, that do receive equalization. We feel that we have an opportunity to present to the federal government our case. I don't know if they're hearing us when we talk about the cost of service delivery and the issue of the fiscal cap which, of course, deals with the issue around non-renewable resources.

So, you know, I am concerned they're not hearing us on this very issue. I am concerned, from what I saw in the federal budget, that they are moving forward on some technical amendments but not, necessarily, on the broader, strategic things that I'm discussing here today.

We're going to continue to push, but I will say to the Member Opposite that advancing this file is going to be challenging.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Chair.

I do respect and thank the minister for her candour and openness on this particular file because it's too important to the people of this province and our future, financially and socially, as part of this great Confederation of ours.

Again, we may not always agree on certain programs and policies or processes, but I will say on this one, and I'll make the overture again as we have on a couple of things like the fishery and the equalization on our offshore resources and our hydro net power, that the Official Opposition will stand

with government to outline exactly to the federal government what's necessary and what's fair when it comes to equalization payments for Newfoundland and Labrador and what should be taken into account in the formula that should be equitable across the board.

So I'll put that out to the minister and to the Premier, that if there's a rally that needs to be happening, if you need us in any way, shape or form to reach out to colleagues we may have in Ottawa or people there to outline the agenda item that we have in Newfoundland and Labrador, which is about fairness when it comes to this process and program, then we're more than willing to do it. If it means we head as a delegation to Ottawa to sit down and explain the benefits of changing the formula here that would also benefit the rest of this country, too, because we all have a stake in what's happening there.

So I just want to acknowledge the fact that we're very cognizant of supporting that. At times we'll probably disagree or butt heads here, but there are times here when we need to stand unified here to make sure what's done is right for the people of this province.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you and I do encourage the Member opposite to voice his concerns and if you feel so inclined putting it in writing to the federal government or even to your federal cousins. The changing of this fiscal cap and the issue around the cost of delivery of services, I think are the two key, main elements that we're pushing forward. I heard the Member opposite almost say the same language at the beginning of his discourse.

This is, as you pointed out, important to the province that we are treated equally within this Confederation. This could mean a substantial investment in the Province of

Newfoundland and Labrador. We should be recognized in the cost of services in this province and the fact that we have non-renewable resources.

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you.

**S. COADY:** Sorry, just if I may, I will say multiple letters, as well as multiple face-to-face meetings and interface with the federal government has occurred, but multiple letters have been sent and I know the Premier just sent another recent one as well.

**CHAIR:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Chair.

I will reassure the minister that the federal Conservative leader will know in a few hours the views of the Progressive Conservative Party in Newfoundland and Labrador on equalization and also what the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador feel about equalization and us getting our fair shake. I would hope he will become a champion for changing what needs to be changed to ensure that we're treated equal and fair in this Confederation again. So that you can guarantee.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**D. BRAZIL:** Minister, there are a number of multi-year deals that have been signed with the federal government and we welcome those, without a doubt. Too often in this House, we see programs that are funded by the feds, and I do like the fact that they do five-year blocks because it gives agencies and organizations a timeline to be able to get to address a particular formula or issue to be done. But then unfortunately after the five-year block, it becomes who picks up the costing of a particular program.

We've seen that so often that we've advocated to government and so have a number of not-for-profit agencies about



continuing the funding. Sometimes it's possible; sometimes financially it just isn't. You can't fund every program. That becomes the issue.

What we see here now is some programs again that we're concerned about that the feds have signed blocks for all provinces. I get that, but what happens after that five-year funding block is gone? Is there a discussion on continuing that or does the province have to pick it up? One example is the \$10-a-day daycare process. What happens after the five-year process? Is that now then becoming a burden to the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador in a different manner or is there a long-term discussion around the federal government keeping this as a line item in the federal budget continuously?

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

**S. COADY:** This is a very important discussion, especially around child care. It's been something that I've been advocating for I guess 30 years – all of my business career. It is an economic issue and it's one that is particularly important to the people – especially for women but men as well – across this country.

So I would anticipate that a national program implemented across the country will continue to be funded. I think from the federal government currently there are indications that they'll continue to fund this. There have been – and this is being honest – discussions that other parties may not continue it if they go forward. So that's a concern and I ask for you to continue to lobby and make sure that, especially for early learning and early child care, that we fund this program going forward. It is very, very important for the economic well-being of our country and very important for families.

So I would think that the current federal government, of course, has made it

abundantly clear that this is a program they'll be moving forward with. I would be concerned about the renewal of that as it goes forward should things change in Ottawa.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** No, fair enough. We support you in that and we will continue to support. Any time there is a program that gets funded for a period of time in Newfoundland and Labrador, obviously if it is a government-controlled program or a not-for-profit program, we see the value in it particularly and we see the concern if, all of a sudden, people are set up for success and then it is pulled away and then obviously there is failure to the programs if there is not somebody else to be able to pick up the financial process here. So we see there has to be a mechanism for continuing funding for, maybe not all programs, but programs that are going to be necessary forever and a day, as part of those processes, as long as we have a demand for that.

I have one last question for the minister or request if she could. Is there an ability to get a list of the programs that have an expiry date, that are 100 per cent federally funded, so that we can anticipate in two years what that could mean in certain programs, five years down the road as part of that?

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

**S. COADY:** I'll endeavour to get that from the Department of Finance. I don't know if there is a master list kept, but I'll certainly inquire as to whether or not there is a master list or can we get the information across government.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** No, I'd appreciate that. It is not a rush on that because we're going to be here for a period of time over the next sessions in the House here to be able to identify what to expect next year, the year after and three years down the road as part of that.

Mr. Chair, under Intergovernmental Affairs I do appreciate the minister and the House Leader giving me leave to go back to get this clarification there because I think it was informative for not only me and my colleagues here, but I think for the people who may be watching this at home.

That's it for me on Intergovernmental Affairs heading so you don't need to (inaudible). It's already been called.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

I'll ask the Clerk to call the next set of subheads, please.

**CLERK:** Treasury Board Secretariat, 3.1.01 through 3.1.06 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 3.1.01 to 3.1.06 inclusive carry?

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, I have a few questions here to have a discussion about. Last year we had a conversation about the number of core government positions that were here, which were filled. Could you please provide an update?

Last year, I think it was 7,237 that were noted in the Estimates last year. Any chance we could get an update on the numbers on this and how many core government positions are not filled right now, if you have that?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you.

I did give that at the beginning: 7,314 public core government employees. So slightly ahead, I think, of last year. I believe, if memory serves me, in the Public Service Estimates, I think he said there was somewhere around 300 that are currently on the board. Of course, that changes daily because they're all under active recruitment.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Exactly, I appreciate that.

In previous years, Treasury Board, before it was HRS, would generate a salary detail report to accompany the budget documents. I know this was a point-in-time report, but it is not being generated for years. Is there a particular reason?

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

**S. COADY:** Certainly, I can endeavour to get that for you but I do believe now that we produce what's locally referred to as the Sunshine List, but the list of people earning certain levels, we do produce that. I think the granular list of everybody's documentation was labour intensive, but if there's something in particular you need, you can certainly ask for it. But we do produce the list of anyone who's earning over \$100,000.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**J. HOGAN:** Chair, I move that the House rise and report progress on Estimates of Executive Council and the Legislature.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Motion 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 the Whole.

**B. WARR:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

**SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered to them referred and directed him to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the report be received?

**J. HOGAN:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** When shall the Committee sit again?

**J. HOGAN:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Committee ordered to sit again on tomorrow.

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

**J. HOGAN:** 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.

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