



**PROVINCE OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

First Session
Fiftieth General Assembly

**Proceedings of the Standing Committee on
Government Services**

May 6, 2022 - Issue 6

Department of Digital Government and Service NL

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Assembly
Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

GOVERNMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE

Department of Digital Government and Service NL

Chair: Paul Pike, MHA

Vice-Chair: Loyola O'Driscoll, MHA

Members: Brian Warr, MHA
Chris Tibbs, MHA
Jordan Brown, MHA
Lucy Stoyles, MHA
Scott Reid, MHA (via video conference)

Clerk of the Committee: Mark Jerrett, Evan Beazley

Appearing:

Department of Digital Government and Service NL

Hon. Sarah Stoodley, MHA, Minister

Sean Dutton, Deputy Minister

Gail Boland, Assistant Deputy Minister, Digital Government and Services

Bonnie Steele, Departmental Controller

Kathy Dicks-Peyton, Director of Communications

Angelica Hill, Executive Assistant to the Minister

Also Present

James Dinn, MHA

Steven Kent, Third Party Office

Benjamin Pollard, Government Members' Office

Megan Winter, Official Opposition Office

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, James Dinn, MHA for St. John's Centre, substitutes for Jordan Brown, MHA for Labrador West.

The Committee met at 1 p.m. in the Assembly Chamber.

CHAIR (Pike): Okay then, everyone, I'm going to call this meeting to order.

We have one substitution today. We have MHA Dinn for MHA Brown. We don't have any unaffiliated Members.

We can take a break if you'd like one, or we can just go through to, hopefully, cut down on how long we'll be here.

Just a note to everyone, always identify yourself if you're speaking and wait for the tally light each time. If you wave, the tally light will come on.

Consistent with protocols, we're asking that masks be worn in the Chamber by employees unless they are speaking. It is discretionary for Members, but if you're not feeling well and this goes on longer, you can certainly take your mask down and breathe, because we know what that's like here in the House.

Members and officials are reminded not to make any adjustments to their chairs – not the Chair but to the chairs – because they're set for us. When I'm in the House, I'm fooling around with mine all the time, up and down.

Water coolers on each end of the House. We have glasses provided so you can use glasses if you don't have your bottle or your cooler with you.

To start the process, we just go through the identification of Committee Members; the minister will speak. The Committee will have to move minutes and then the Clerk will call the first subhead. I'll ask the Committee to identify themselves. I'll ask the minister to identify departmental staff, which you can do right away. The Chair brings the minutes of the previous meeting forward and that's basically where we go with that.

So we'll start. First, I will ask the Members of the Committee and any staff attending to introduce themselves. Minister, you can do that too, as well.

So we'll start.

S. STOODLEY: Okay.

Hello, I'm Sarah Stoodley, Minister of Digital Government and Service NL and MHA for Mount Scio.

S. DUTTON: I'm Sean Dutton, Deputy Minister of the department.

B. STEELE: Bonnie Steele, Departmental Controller.

G. BOLAND: Gail Boland, Assistant Deputy Minister, Digital Government and Services.

A. HILL: Angelica Hill, Executive Assistant to the Minister.

K. DICKS-PEYTON: Kathy Dicks-Peyton, Director of Communications.

CHAIR: Okay. So we'll start over here.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Loyola O'Driscoll, MHA for the District of Ferryland.

M. WINTER: Megan Winter, Researcher with the Official Opposition Caucus.

J. DINN: Jim Dinn, MHA for St. John's Centre.

S. KENT: Steven Kent, Sessional Support for the Third Party Office.

B. POLLARD: Ben Pollard, political staffer, Government Members' Office.

B. WARR: Brian Warr, MHA, Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. STOYLES: Lucy Stoyles, MHA, Mount Pearl North.

CHAIR: Okay, Minister, I'm going to give you the floor and you have 15 minutes to speak and then we'll (inaudible).

CLERK (Jerrett): Actually, I'm going to read the subheads first.

CHAIR: Okay, you can go ahead and read the subheads.

CLERK: Executive and Support Services, 1.1.01 to 1.2.03.

S. STOODLEY: Okay, thank you everyone for joining us.

This is our very hard-working team in Digital Government and Service NL. And I would also like just to mention Scott Jones who is our assistant deputy minister for Regulatory Affairs. He couldn't be here today, but Deputy Minister Dutton certainly has all of that information as well.

I would also like to thank the Members who have joined us today. I do personally think Estimates is a very important process. It is very important, I think, to go through the budget line by line. So I certainly am very happy to be here and answer any questions that anyone has.

We have already done the staff introductions.

So just to give you an overview for anyone watching or listening of our department. So we do all of the licensing and inspections related to public health. We do public safety, environmental protection inspections, provision of vital document. We regulate the health and safety of employees in the workplace with occupational health and safety, and we safeguard consumer interests. We have Motor Registration Division. That gets a lot of media attention. So we do driver testing, drivers' licences, vehicle registrations and photo ID cards. We are responsible for safety on our roadways, on public highways and we do that for a number of areas. And I guess, originally, or most recently, our department was created with the goal of consolidating licensing, permitting, inspecting and regulatory functions within government and then, where possible, provide a single-window access to the public for those services.

We have over 150 pieces of legislation, standards and codes of practice which give us

that authority and we also have a lot of memorandums of understanding with other departments. For example, with Health when we enforce or do inspections or environmental protection, for example, the legislation and regulations that we are enforcing belong in other departments. So there is a lot of cross-departmental work that we do.

So we have a net budget of just over \$27 million. In addition to the \$8.3 million that is in our Estimates, there is also \$111.4 million that does not show up on our Estimates, but that goes right into general revenue. A big part of that is from MRD. When you pay your now \$90 for to renew your licence, that does not show up in our Estimates; that goes right into general revenues. We also get revenue from issuer fees, Registry of Deeds, and, like I mentioned, Motor Registration fees.

So I would just like to highlight some changes since our last Estimates in our department. We merged our divisions of Consumer Affairs and Financial Services Regulation into a single division and we also received a transfer of income support collections to our department from Immigration, Population Growth and Skills. So I believe we have now most of the collections functions across government. I think there are still a few left to come in, but we now hold most of the collections and we kind of brought Consumer Affairs and Financial Services Regulations together. We got some efficiencies from that so I'm happy to chat about that as we go.

Obviously, digital is a very important part of our department. I am also responsible for the Office of the Chief Information Officer, which we discussed in Committee recently – or two nights ago maybe.

Obviously, it's very important that we increase the number of online services available to the public. Digital Government and Service NL and OCIO work with all departments to increase the number of services available online.

Obviously, we were impacted by COVID-19, as were most departments, we assisted other departments with their COVID online

application forms and that kind of stuff. MyGovNL, which I know is not at its best at the moment, we're happy to talk about that further.

We also oversee Occupational Health and Safety, which is a huge priority for our department and the enforcement of that. We have legislation, codes and standards for health and safety working conditions and the cost of all of that are recovered from WorkplaceNL. So there is offsetting revenue for all expenditures from Occupational Health and Safety.

We are also responsible for the Office of French Services and I'm the Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs. So we do French-language training and translation services to all the provincial government.

We are also responsible for the Queen's Printer, which does most or all of the printing for the provincial government and some of the agencies, boards and commissions as needed.

So I think most people in the province would interact Digital Government and Service NL at least yearly so we're always looking to try to make that experience with the residents easier and better and more efficient.

I guess that concludes my remarks. I'm happy to answer any questions on anything that my department – sometimes referred to as the lint trap of government – covers.

CHAIR: Okay. Just before MHA O'Driscoll speaks and asks questions, I need a mover for the minutes of April 11, 2022.

B. WARR: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Okay. Moved by MHA Warr.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

CHAIR: So now we'll continue.

MHA O'Driscoll.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Chair.

It is certainly a pleasure to be here again this Friday afternoon. Thank you all for being here. I'm sure you do a great job for the minister in all

the work you do. I would like to say that I know how much work it is but it don't; I'm sure there is a tremendous amount of work but I certainly do appreciate it.

First of all, to start off, can we get a copy of the minister's briefing binder?

S. STOODLEY: Yes, we have extra copies here and you can walk away with one when we're done.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay, perfect.

I just have some general questions first and then I'll get into –

S. STOODLEY: Sure.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Is the attrition plan still being followed? If so, what are the changes for last year and this year?

S. STOODLEY: We met our attrition target for last year and we do not have an attrition target for the upcoming year.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

How many people are employed in the department?

S. STOODLEY: We have a grand total – at the moment, we have 391 filled positions in Digital Government and Service NL.

Feel free to interrupt what I'm saying at any time, team. Thank you.

L. O'DRISCOLL: How many retirements occurred in the last year?

S. STOODLEY: We had 18 retirements in the last year.

L. O'DRISCOLL: How many vacancies are not filled in that department?

S. STOODLEY: We have 71 vacancies.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

So you have a chance to fill them this year and be able to fill them I guess?

S. STOODLEY: A lot of them are kind of rolling. For example, at MRD we have a lot of people that come in and lot of people come right in and then they apply for other internal jobs in government. So it's like a steady stream of people that we train, unfortunately – we'd love to keep them longer. It is a challenging work environment.

So just for example of the 71, 25 of those are in MRD and we kind of need more just because so many flow through MRD. Then, for example, we have highway enforcement officers and they keep moving around the province. It's a lot of movement, I would say, of roles within the provincial government.

L. O'DRISCOLL: I'm sure people serving on the front counter; it's not easy to keep people there. I was in the service industry so I totally understand that dealing with the public.

S. STOODLEY: Yes.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Have any positions been eliminated? If so, what are they?

S. STOODLEY: I'm not aware of any positions officially eliminated. We do have positions that we may not need to fill or may be a lower priority to fill at any given time.

I don't know if you wanted to expand on that?

S. DUTTON: Sure.

The minister alluded to the restructuring that took place in the Consumer Affairs and Financial Services area. We've had some trade-off. So as opposed to eliminating positions, we've reprioritized some of them and there are some changes in classifications. We're going through the classification process now on those where the duties have changed a little bit, but I guess in the big picture we had a director for each division and two managers in one. At the end of the process, we'd have one director and three managers so it would be slightly cheaper in terms of the management complement and some of the staff positions have moved around. So we've used some of the resources to focus particularly on residential tenancies as an area where we want to increase our staff complement to help meet the service demand.

In Motor Registration, we've looked at our salary plan and we're focused on particularly having sufficient number of staff for things like the call taking and that sort of thing. So we've made some adjustments in the overall plan in that respect as well.

L. O'DRISCOLL: So I guess in that transition, did you have any layoffs that occurred in the department now with that last year? With the combined, when you did all that, were there any layoffs that occurred?

S. DUTTON: No.

L. O'DRISCOLL: No, okay, good, all right.

How many new hires took place last year?

S. STOODLEY: We had 20 new hires.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

How many contractual and short-term employees are in your department?

S. STOODLEY: We don't have any contractual, as far as I'm aware. We do have 12 people who have come in on short contracts.

L. O'DRISCOLL: And how many vacancies in your department that have been vacant for over six months or longer? Do you have that?

S. STOODLEY: I don't have that information on hand. I don't know if anyone else. We can certainly provide that.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yeah.

S. STOODLEY: Yeah.

L. O'DRISCOLL: And listen, if some of these have to go back and get us an answer then that's fine, that's okay. Just to say that, that's all.

S. STOODLEY: Yeah.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Did your department receive any funds from the COVID contingency fund? If so, what for?

S. STOODLEY: I'm not aware of any funds that we've received from the COVID contingency fund.

L. O'DRISCOLL: You're normally collecting.

S. STOODLEY: Pardon?

L. O'DRISCOLL: You're normally collecting money.

S. STOODLEY: Yes, I mean, the federal government funded the VaxPass, which we talked about that in OCIO, but there's no provincial government contingency funding, no.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

I'm going to move on to under section 1.2.01.

S. STOODLEY: 1.2.01.

L. O'DRISCOLL: I have some questions to go back (inaudible).

S. STOODLEY: Perfect, thank you.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Under Salaries, the budget for Salaries increased to \$1.4 million.

S. STOODLEY: Yeah.

In terms of Salaries under Executive Support, we've had kind of a transitional deputy minister situation where we were sharing Deputy Minister Dutton for part of the year. So now we have Sean as a full-time deputy minister. So that aligned, considering then other vacancies throughout the year is why we need the extra budget.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Under Employee Benefits, it went over budget. It was budgeted at \$87,200. Last year, \$181,000 was spent. I believe that before that Employee Benefits went over budget, could you please provide some detail – is the base budget being increased because of that overspending?

L. O'DRISCOLL: Under Employee Benefits, it went over budget. It was budgeted at \$87,200. Last year, \$181,500 was spent. I believe that before Employee Benefits went over budget,

could you please provide some detail – is the base budget being increased because of a pattern of overspending?

S. STOODLEY: This is all directly related to workers' compensation charges. We had higher than anticipated workers' compensation charges during the year, which is why it went up, and then it's going up a bit again because we anticipate higher than what we had budgeted in 2021-2022. That is all related to workers' compensation charges.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Under Revenue - Provincial, can you outline – there's \$104,100 less received than anticipated.

S. STOODLEY: When I mentioned occupational health and safety, that is 100 per cent recovered from WorkplaceNL. So as we kind of spend more time in occupational health and safety, we get more revenue from them for that. We had less time, I guess, to bill back for occupational health and safety related expenditures.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Under 1.2.02, can you explain why the Professional Services are included here? Additionally there are significant savings last year, and how was that achieved?

S. STOODLEY: Professional Services, so this is the French Language Services.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yes.

S. STOODLEY: Okay.

For COVID and stuff, we had fewer demand for French translation. We have an agreement with the federal government. We have three full-time French staff. We do some translation in-house, and for bigger projects, or if we don't have capacity, we use the federal government. We have an agreement with them and they provide the remaining French translation services.

We did not need as much French translation services in the past year, which is why we didn't spend as much.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Under 1.2.03, Administrative Support, Purchased Services, can you detail what purchased services fall in this line item, what accounts for the variance?

S. STOODLEY: We're responsible for Vital Statistics. There's a federal government project called the death registration project, which is meant to have an automatic way for funeral homes, that they would go into a website, they would put in that someone has passed away, and then that information is connected with government and health and the federal government so that everyone knows that there has been this death.

So we're trying to reduce paperwork, and we're the first province to do this with the federal government. That is why there is an increase. We carried forward some of the money. So essentially, we won't receive any more of the death registration money from the federal government because the project is nearing completion.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Under Revenue - Federal, can you provide some insight as to where that \$30,000 came from?

S. STOODLEY: So that is from the federal government for the death registration project.

L. O'DRISCOLL: From the federal government, okay.

How far are we going on this one? What section – just make sure I'm not gone ahead of you, that's all. 2.1.01.

S. STOODLEY: Okay.

L. O'DRISCOLL: No, that's the next section. Okay, that's it for this section.

S. STOODLEY: Okay, thank you.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Perfect. That's why I was asking; I wasn't sure.

CHAIR: Okay, are you good?

L. O'DRISCOLL: Well, until you go to the next section, yes.

CHAIR: Okay, thank you.

MHA Dinn.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

The Greene report recommended some form of privatization for motor vehicle and Registry of Deeds. In a best and final offer RFP to Rothschild, PwC and Deloitte from October last year, the government asked the bidders to devise a plan to privatize provincial registries, along with four other entities. The proposed completion date for the monetization of the provincial registries was November 2022, this year coming.

What contact has your department had with Rothschild as it begins preparation to monetize or sell off provincial assets? What is the plan for provincial registries and what work has been undertaken so far to prepare it for privatization?

S. STOODLEY: We have received work from Rothschild in terms of Cabinet documents, in terms of potentially looking at the value of our registries. We have received that information from a Cabinet context. We are currently evaluating the information that has been provided and that is that state we are in right now.

J. DINN: Okay. So you got their documents and you know as to what they've considered the value of your services would be and you're currently evaluating what they put down there.

S. STOODLEY: We're evaluating what they've given us in terms of registries.

J. DINN: Okay. I guess what you're looking at is whether their evaluation is correct or not?

S. STOODLEY: We're reviewing the documents they've provided in terms of the scope of the project in relation to registries.

J. DINN: Okay.

How is the transition progressing to increase the number of services delivered online by 75 per

cent this year and what kinds of savings are these measures expected to bring to the department and have they, in fact, materialized?

S. STOODLEY: Sure, thank you. I'd be very pleased to talk about all the new online services that we've created.

Residents can now apply for a charitable lottery licence online. So a lot of this, I think as we talked earlier, we amalgamated two divisions within our department which got rid of a leadership position and added a new lower level leadership position but then also allowed us to hire a new residential tenancies adjudicator. So we kind of moved resources around our department.

You can apply for a charitable lottery licence online. We launched a new ability to tell Motor Registration if you are transferring a vehicle online, because before that was our longest appointment. It was like 40 minutes to transfer a vehicle if you went in person or if you called and there was a lot of paperwork that you had to mail in or drop off or fax. So now you can tell us about transferring a vehicle online. That was a big priority for us and that was launched last September, October.

So you can now do your MRD permit test online. This is, I guess, where we are working with other departments to have other department's functionality in line. You can get your woodcutting permit; your MCP renewal for dependants was a new very highly used service. As part of the COVID-19 VaxPass, you could get your vaccination record. We worked with IPGS on their Provincial Nominee Program application. In terms of the COVID-19 government programs, there was the Small Business Assistance Program application, the Tourism and Hospitality Support Program application.

Within then, more focused on our department – we, obviously, have all of the licensing for financial services. So like mortgage brokers and all of that stuff. So there is a new online application process for the yearly renewal for mortgage brokers, real estate brokers, real estate salespeople, pre-paid funeral sales, licences –

you apply for a licence, renew your licence, insurance broker licences, and any of those that you need to renew you can do that online.

We also work with a lot of electrical contactors and electricians so you can now apply for your commercial electrical permit online, your electrical permit extension, your non-commercial electrical permit and then renew your contractor electrical permit online.

Some of this is there is efficiency for us. It is also making things easier for the contractors. They don't have to fill out paperwork and then there was also a data quality benefit because they put it in, there is no one has to retype it and that kind of stuff.

So those are recently the new online services that we have put up.

J. DINN: Any savings so far?

S. STOODLEY: I guess the amalgamation of the departments within our Digital Government Service NL, doing this allowed us to move – and moving more things online facilitated that. Now, there are still some wrinkles in our current processes. We physically relocated people, so that team is also moved to the Mount Pearl office. So I think there is still some normalizing, I guess, going on.

We were able to hire a new residential tenancies adjudicator. So we're going to have four soon; we have three at the moment. I can't tell you kind of a number of –

S. DUTTON: (Inaudible.)

S. STOODLEY: Oh sure, Sean.

S. DUTTON: I guess I could add that, in terms of savings, there's been no correlating reduction in our human resource budget other than the attrition targets that we had to meet in past years. Again, this digitization target of 75 per cent, that's been more than exceeded. As a result of that, we have more of the staff being focused on higher priority work and less of the back-office functions.

In Motor Registration, as an example, we don't have people in the back rooms stapling the sticker onto the letter to stuff it in the envelope anymore, because that's done print on demand. So those staff are able to focus on higher priority work like the call taking and counter service and other functions of the division.

J. DINN: So is the move to digitization also, I guess, a part of a government strategy to make the services more attractive to private capital and to make it easier to privatize them?

S. STOODLEY: I'll say for myself that is absolutely not a consideration. We are trying to make things easier for residents to deal with government, and trying to make government more efficient. Government should be easy for people to deal with. We should have less red tape. I would strongly add that is not at all what we've thought about.

J. DINN: If your department or if Motor Registration is eventually privatized, would the system that you're set up, would that go with it, be part of the deal or would any company be responsible and more less have to come up with their own data management system?

S. STOODLEY: All that is to be determined.

J. DINN: And I would guess that is part of what you're evaluating, too.

S. STOODLEY: Well, I guess, just for everyone, and for those who don't know, a lot of the IT systems that we have are very old. MRD system is very old. It's on a mainframe, which limits our ability to do new things, like, for example, have a plate-to-owner system rather than a plate-to-vehicle system like we have.

So we have a big, long list of new things we'd like to do, like having electric vehicle plates. We get requests all the time for new licence plates from organizations. We're not able to move as fast as we'd like because our technology is slow. I guess regardless of what we do, we will need to upgrade our technology as well. So that's another consideration.

J. DINN: Thank you.

What's the update on a transition from plate-to-vehicle to a plate-to-owner system, when it comes to –?

S. STOODLEY: So we have not been able to do that with our current system. We need to invest in a new system prior to that, unfortunately.

J. DINN: Thank you.

And what is the status of the shared services approach to back-office functions of government, such as financial administration, human resources, IT and so on and so forth, and has there been any progress in implementing the policy, any savings?

S. STOODLEY: The big thing that we've had progress on recently is collections. So collections, we've brought it in from a few areas of government. It now sits in Digital Government and Service NL. I mentioned in my opening statement we recently just brought in collections for IPGS. I guess from an IT perspective, OCIO is essentially a core shared service. We're now looking at how the IT and digital landscapes look when you consider, for example the NLESD or NLCHI – I think NLCHI's been announced that it's coming into government. So what does digital look like and IT with NLCHI coming in and any other organization.

But I think cybersecurity is also a relevant discussion here where government spends a lot of money on cybersecurity, and we have lots of agencies, boards and commissions who may not have the expertise or financial means to spend any money or time or knowledge on cybersecurity. And given the lack of cybersecurity experts in Newfoundland and Labrador, I think it makes sense for the provincial government to take more of these organizations under its wing from an IT perspective. Even for the simple, pure reason of protecting the information that we all have. So that would be my next big priority.

CHAIR: Okay, thank you.

MHA O'Driscoll.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Are we going on to the next one? That's it for that section, I think.

CHAIR: Oh, I thought you might've had more.

L. O'DRISCOLL: No, I'm good on that section.

CHAIR: Are you good as well, MHA Dinn?

J. DINN: No, I have just a few more, Chair.

CHAIR: Okay.

J. DINN: Are there any pilot projects under way for introducing new safety measures in school buses, such as camera technology, seat belts, automatic emergency braking?

S. STOODLEY: Okay, just one second.

I used to have something on this. We are working with the Canadian organization – Sean, I don't know if you want to talk about school buses. Thank you, Sean.

S. DUTTON: In terms of seat belts on buses, there was an evaluation done through the Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety. They completed that report and it's online at comt.ca, for anyone who wants to read it.

I think also you were asking about the braking; I don't have any specific information on the braking. The standards of manufacture of school buses is a federal matter – Transport Canada regulates that. And I am sorry, what was the third item you mentioned?

J. DINN: There was seat belts, camera technologies and –

S. DUTTON: So in terms of the cameras, legislation has been passed and regulations published around using image capture technology for highway enforcement and the regulations have been published in the *Gazette*. We formed an inter-departmental committee. Education is one of a number of departments that would be involved, along with Justice and Transportation.

So we are evaluating the options on the deployment of cameras for strong enforcement around school buses, school zones, highway construction sites and for general highway traffic enforcement by law enforcement offices. They will be reporting back to government later this year and then that will inform next year's budget process.

J. DINN: And that would include cameras in the school buses? That is what I was specifically asking about. This is –

S. DUTTON: We don't have any involvement in our department in cameras on school buses if it is for the behaviour of the children. I think what I am talking about is the use for ensuring that people are not illegally passing a school bus.

J. DINN: What policies have been put in place over the past year to help streamline the client experience for businesses at Digital Services?

S. STOODLEY: We have done more of the kind of online processing and applications and renewals rather than I guess from a policy perspective. So I will mention them. For example, you can now apply and renew your mortgage broker licence online, real estate broker, real estate salesperson, pre-paid funeral sales licence, insurance broker licences, financial services licences, applications and renewals. Then from an electrician's perspective, anyone applying for an electrical permit, extending an electrical permit, a non-commercial electrical permit or a contractor electrical certificate, renewing or applying for, all of that can happen online.

J. DINN: Thank you.

When can we expect amendments to the *Buildings Accessibility Act* to be introduced in the House?

S. STOODLEY: So the Buildings Accessibility Advisory Board gave us their recommendations and we did consultations on those. I think I did three or four virtual consultations with a range of stakeholders and then the *What We Heard* document was just recently published on our

website. So I encourage anyone who is interested to go check that out.

We are working now on taking the information we heard as well, as the recommendations of the Buildings Accessibility Advisory Board, and we will be putting together draft legislation that has to go through the process.

I have said, I would ideally target the upcoming fall sitting, but I'm not sure how confident I am in that, but that's my ideal target at the moment.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Is there a system in place now where insurance companies can tell the department when someone has cancelled his or her car insurance policy?

S. STOODLEY: The insurance validation project is in its final stages. Do you have –?

G. BOLAND: Yes, we've been working with IBC, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, as well as all of our insurers to implement a real-time validation process. We actually, this past fall, had to make some more amendments to our legislation to help facilitate the authorities required to demand the information being reported to the registrar of motor vehicles.

We're working with IBC, like I said, and the OCIO to develop the systems required and we are aiming for this fall to have that process in place.

J. DINN: Thank you.

1.2.02, French Language Services: Are there any particular efforts under way to expand the availability of French services to the public, either in the public or the private sector?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I have to say, I've has an excellent relationship with the FFTNL. We did launch the ability to get, I think, French birth and death certificates online. The experience is online and you get the certificate in French. We do look at any new online service and could we launch that in

French and what's required for that, considering the end-to-end experience.

That is something we are actively looking at. We certainly want, ideally, to have as many services in French as possible. We just have a big priority list and looking at volumes and which thing we could do next that has the biggest bang, has the most impact for residents. So where possible we do have services in French.

J. DINN: Thank you.

One final question under 1.2.03, just to make sure I heard it correctly. The death notification project that was referred to in Purchased Services, has that been completed?

S. STOODLEY: My understanding is the majority of the IT work has been completed. We are now moving on to staff training. So, recently, in the last few weeks, I've written the regional health authorities asking for contacts, just to facilitate training and the person on the ground who is going to be leading it. So all that is under way. So we're in the kind of final, I guess, acceptance phase. Now we're working on getting the staff trained so that everyone understands how to do the project and the IT systems work is complete.

J. DINN: Thank you.

That's it for me, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Clerk.

CLERK: Executive and Support Services, 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

MHA Reid.

S. REID: I'm in favour.

CHAIR: Are you okay?

S. REID: Yes.

CHAIR: Do you need to ask any questions or anything?

S. REID: No, good.

CHAIR: Okay.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 1.2.03 carried.

CHAIR: Get well soon.

Next we have – Clerk.

CLERK: Regulatory Affairs, 2.1.01 to 2.2.04.

CHAIR: MHA O’Driscoll.

L. O’DRISCOLL: Okay, thank you.

Just a couple of questions again.

In 2020, you amended a legislation to allow unlocking pensions. Do you have any update on how much was withdrawn from the pension funds in ’21-’22?

S. STOODLEY: We do have some information, I’m not sure if it’s the amount. Just one second.

OFFICIAL: (Inaudible.)

S. STOODLEY: Okay, sure.

CHAIR: Just to note that if your officials would like to take down their mask when they’re speaking, it’s fine.

S. DUTTON: So we have been monitoring the progress and I think the initial report for six-month period from – I’m sorry, it was less than six months – from 1st of March to June 30 last year there were 428 withdrawals and then for the period July 1 to December 31 there were another 336 withdrawals.

L. O’DRISCOLL: Okay. Perfect.

These are in different sections but I thought I’d just get these questions out of the way and then be able to move on.

Can you provide some information on the number of complaints received last year in the Consumer Affairs division and how many of them were related to the pricing of goods?

S. STOODLEY: I might have something on that, I think. Give me a second, apologies.

Sorry, I can’t put my finger on that but we can certainly get that for you.

L. O’DRISCOLL: Okay. No problem.

Just related to that, to costs and the rising costs and people, I’m going to say, gouging customers, I’m going to say. I don’t know if you call it gouging, but prices just jump up an extreme amount. I use lumber as an example. They pay more, but how do we track – I know they get complaints that people are charging you more. Is there a need? Is there something that you can check to go against that? Do you know what I’m saying, that they might not be price gouging but is there a way that we’re checking to say that they’re not?

S. STOODLEY: The wording in the legislation is around unconscionable acts. That was in before I came in. It’s not as, I guess, helpful I think in, let’s say, prosecuting someone who is charging more in one place.

We do welcome anyone who feels like they’ve been impacted in that way to reach out to our office and make a complaint. The team, they do consider the price of things in other similar locations. If a price was \$10 everywhere then that wouldn’t necessarily be an unconscionable act, but if one place was charging 20 or 30 times the same price as everyone else, then maybe that would be considered. So we would work with the person making the complaint to try and get together as much documentation as we could and we’d reach out to the supplier.

I don’t know if you wanted to add anything.

L. O’DRISCOLL: There are examples that people ask. I would use a simple one that one of my buddies is a plumber and he bought hot-

water boilers and they're \$250, now all of a sudden they're \$500 and everybody blames it on COVID. Is that actually the case is what I'm trying to get at. Is it really the case? Because last week he could go get one, next week he goes up and they have to charge more obviously because that's the price of it. Is there anyway to check against that? I don't know if there is, but I mean that's a question that certainly comes up.

S. STOODLEY: Yes. I certainly agree and I know the cost of everything has been going up. I've seen articles in the paper about certain stores maybe charging more than inflation and more than what a supply chain markup would be.

But I guess I go back to the legislation, which I didn't bring in, around unconscionable acts, it is – I'm not an expert on how one would prove something would be an unconscionable act. I would say that the price increases we've seen in Canada, overall generally probably would not, if I had to guess, would not meet that threshold of unconscionable act, but we'd certainly welcome anyone to reach out to our department and we would work with them on any complaints that they might have.

L. O'DRISCOLL: We just hear it so often, based on COVID and is it really the problem?

I had a question on your tech system and I know that it's antiquated and it's old. Have you looked into seeing how much a new system would actually cost to get it where you want to be?

S. STOODLEY: This is more of my OCIO hat, because the Office of the Chief Information Officer would do that kind of RFP work around the systems. I guess there's no issue with me providing more information on that with that hat on. So we did do, maybe in last year, a request for information – because we have four mainframe systems. I think it was a request for information where we went out, or it could have been an RFQ, and we went out to industry and said how would you approach this problem. And we got a range of options from a range of vendors.

One of those was taking the code that we have and just rewriting it and plopping it onto a

better, newer code base and then we wouldn't get any more functionality but we would have a – it is very stable. You can't hire coders that know how to code the mainframes. So that is the problem. The security is not the problem. It is very stable. It is just no one knows how to use it. And there are other companies that have really old technology that pay more than government. In my last life, we had a mainframe system so they would pay more than what government would pay those same coders.

So we have not yet decided exactly which road we are taking in terms of upgrading the systems and it would depend on whether we did all four or just one of those. But I know the MRD, for example, is one of the bigger systems and it would be, depending on what you did, it could be \$5 million, \$20 million –

L. O'DRISCOLL: A big range.

S. STOODLEY: Yeah, to get absolutely no new functionality, like you couldn't do it for less than \$5 million. Based on the information, and I don't have the exact numbers off the top of my head, but I guess that was a range. I personally am bothered by spending that money and coming out with exactly the same functionality. So then what does it cost to have a new system with purpose built for what we actually need? And that is not what we have got the prices on. So that is all still –

L. O'DRISCOLL: It is hard to put in a new system for a plate to vehicle or plate to owner – if that is the only reason you are going to do it, it would be hard to spend that much money if that was going to be the only change in your function, which I think is a big change. I guess the other governments across Canada have difference systems. So it would be hard just to do it or spend that kind of money just for that change, but I guess eventually it will come.

S. STOODLEY: And I will just respond to that, with my OCIO hat on. We have looked at what other provinces have done and most other provinces, in that situation, they have done a like for like, so they pay and they pick it up and drop

off the exact same functionality with just a new, better code base.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Regarding MyGovNL yesterday and the issues that you had, you did say that you are considering changing it. What would be the ramifications of changing if you did go and change?

S. STOODLEY: Well, we haven't had the time – really, the team has been fully focused on getting things back so it is up at the moment – well, not up. What has happened is there is a problem with how many people can access it at a time. Even though before we launched I asked very specific questions to the vendor about volume and peak volume and they assured me that there would be no issues.

So my understanding is that's kind of the crux of the issue. At the moment, there is a queue put in front of it so if someone went on right now, I think they would be able to wait in line and do something with MyGovNL. My feeling is that is not fixed yet. So we have not put out a press release saying it is resolved because it is not resolved.

We're looking at a range of options in terms of going back to the original, what we had a few months ago, which is the same functionality. It's been four days now and I cannot tell you when the problem will be fixed, which is itself a huge problem. It's the biggest thing I'm working on when I'm not here in Estimates, with the OCIO team.

L. O'DRISCOLL: All right, no problem, thank you.

Just move on to 2.1.01, under Regulatory Affairs, Salaries. Last year Salaries came in under budget by \$357,000. Can you outline why and were there positions vacant and how have you filled them?

S. STOODLEY: This is where we merged the two divisions in advance of 2022-2023. So there were eight positions which no longer exist, which then became four new positions created. So we didn't get rid of any people, just positions that changed. And then we moved a role to

Executive Support. Then the extra savings we have from that, we are then moving to be an extra residential tenancies adjudicator position.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Under Purchased Services, last year it was over budget by \$59,600. Can you explain that?

S. STOODLEY: Absolutely. As we move things online, we unfortunately incur additional Moneris fees. Those are fees like when you buy something on your credit card online Moneris is the company that government has a contract with. That contract with Moneris is with the Department of Finance. They are, my understanding is, currently or soon to be in negotiations with them or are looking for a new provider.

So our department has a strong interest in lower fees. At the moment, it's with the Department of Finance to negotiate and there's very little we can do in terms of the extra costs that were charged to process fees online.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

CHAIR: Okay, thank you.

MHA Dinn.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

Under 2.1.01, Consumer and Financial Services, what is the current wait time to have a hearing at the Residential Tenancies Board and what is the current caseload waiting to be heard?

S. STOODLEY: Sure, just a second. So while I look that up, we recently hired our third residential adjudicator. So we have three of three and, as I mentioned, we have moved resources so that we're going to have a fourth residential tenancies adjudicator.

It is a difficult role to fill and it is a difficult job – sorry, I need to better organize my binder here. Do you have that information, Sean?

S. DUTTON: Last year, the average wait time was 86 days but so far, in 2022, it is 43 days. Again, we are anticipating hiring of an

additional adjudicator this year so we should be able to further reduce the wait time.

J. DINN: That is good news indeed for a lot of people who call my office.

I want to go back, with regard to the vacancies, and I think you talked about people move in and move out or they apply for other jobs. Is that affecting services? Because after a while, there is no continuity and there is no passing on of, I guess for a lack of a better word, corporate knowledge or the learning. I'm calling up one day and talking to a person, the next day that person has moved on and I have to start all over again. More importantly, is there any way then for that person where they pick up a lesson plan, I guess – here is what is so far and we're moving ahead.

S. STOODLEY: So I would say the movement of people, particularly coming into the front-line roles in our department and then moving to other internal roles within government, are certainly a significant problem which last summer when we saw the MRD issues, that certainly was a huge contributor to that problem.

We do have very – sophisticated is the wrong word. Training programs and all that is quite standardized. We recently did kind of a Lean review, using some of our internal Lean experts, just to make sure that everything was as streamlined as possible.

I don't know if you want to add anything. It is a big problem and we do have training and stuff.

J. DINN: Is it more of a problem for MRD than any other department or is it specific to Motor Registration?

S. STOODLEY: I'll let them add to it, but I do think it is, particularly for MRD because – well, any front-line service. If you go to an airport, there is a sign up saying please be nice to people. I guess there is the customer service side where people are generally a bit more agitated, maybe, and maybe not as nice and patient as the general public. But then there is also the challenge of hiring staff.

I know that across Canada, there are challenges hiring and retaining front-line workers to deal

with the public. So we have those two issues coming together, plus the media attention, I'll be honest, that MRD might get doesn't make it better. If they hear something on *Open Line* about MRD and then they walk in and things are not perfect, then no one is to be happy. The staff aren't happy, the residents aren't happy and then it –

J. DINN: So we need to get more people in there permanently and make it attractive.

S. STOODLEY: I mean, we try our best to bring as many people in as we can. We do have a team that handles calls. In the future, I'd like to see a team that helps via online chat. One benefit of having more things online allows people more time to deal with or help people in person, seniors who might not have access online, more time to sit down and handhold and just take care of people when they see them in person.

It is a problem and there's no magic solution. I don't know if anyone wants to add anything.

J. DINN: That's fine, just as long as we acknowledge that.

I know my colleague from Ferryland mentioned about price gouging. Have there been any reports brought to the department accusing businesses of price gouging last year?

S. STOODLEY: We definitely would have had complaints. I don't have the numbers with me, but we'll certainly get those for you.

J. DINN: Also, if there were any investigations and follow-ups or fines as a result of that would be great.

S. STOODLEY: Yes. We'll happily provide that.

J. DINN: 2.1.02, Pension Benefits Standards: Salaries were under budget last year. What was the reason for that?

S. STOODLEY: We had a vacant compliance officer position for a large portion of the year.

J. DINN: That compliance officer would be dealing with what? Would that be housing?

S. STOODLEY: Pension benefits.

J. DINN: Okay.

2.1.03, Commercial Registrations, why did spending on Salaries come in under budget last year?

S. STOODLEY: We had a vacancy in a clerk IVB and clerk III position throughout the year. We just had delays in recruitment. There was a decrease of \$117,000.

J. DINN: Okay.

Under that same section 2.1.03, Purchased Services, why did the spending in that exceed the budgeted amount?

S. STOODLEY: We exceeded the budget there because of the Moneris fees again that we didn't anticipate. Higher debit and credit cards – because what we pay for an online transaction is more expensive than what we pay for an in-person. So if you go in and use your chip and PIN on the machine, that is cheaper for government than if you pay online.

Based on the current contract we have with Moneris – that we are not involved in – that is how the pay rates go. So as we have more transactions online that require payment, the Moneris fees go up. And there is also a Unisys contract. It is not just Moneris; it is Moneris and Unisys contracts.

J. DINN: I wouldn't mind having a further discussions about the cost-benefit analysis of online versus actually having real people do – since we seem to be digitizing. I am assuming you have done the analysis and you are assuming you will save money in the long run. I guess with transaction fees you don't have to worry about pension benefits and sick leave too. Do you know what I am saying? Like if the Moneris fees are going up would, it be better to have people there.

S. STOODLEY: Sean.

S. DUTTON: Again, we haven't eliminated any positions as a result of putting any services

online. In terms of commercial registrations, we have one location on Elizabeth Avenue. So it is not convenient for most of the population to go to the office. The number of offices we would have to staff in order to make that service more widely available – this is the most cost-effective way to make the service accessible to the majority of people.

It is a cost that we have to absorb, but it helps make it more accessible. The time it takes for someone to do that renewal online is a fraction of what it would take to have to get to the office and provide a wet signature or write a cheque or any of the other factors that would be involved in in-person service.

J. DINN: Thank you.

2.2.01, Vital Statistics Registry, why was spending on Purchased Services under budget last year?

S. STOODLEY: So 2.2.01, Vital Statistics, Purchased Services, we had a reduction in the number of certificates purchased. We had a registrar retire. The registrar's names are printed on the certificates and so we didn't order as many as we usually would because we are trying to use up the certificates with the old registrar's name before we order new certificates with the new registrar's name. We couldn't order too many with the old registrar's name on them because we knew they were retiring. That's why we spent less money.

J. DINN: Sounds good. It is efficient.

Under that 2.2.01, why were the projections for federal and provincial revenues so far off the mark last year?

S. STOODLEY: Sure.

Our Vital Statistics Division, we have systems where our system talks to Stats Canada, talks to Service Canada, talks to CRA, talks to Elections Canada. So as we share information with those, the federal government would compensate us for providing them records or information.

On the federal revenue, for example, we had higher than anticipated revenue for records that we provided to the federal government. The provincial revenue, we had a lower than expected revenue from shipping birth certificates to individuals.

J. DINN: Thank you.

I can keep going.

CHAIR: I was thinking how I was going to reply to that last email.

Go ahead, MHA O'Driscoll.

L. O'DRISCOLL: I'm just waiting for the minister; take your time.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

L. O'DRISCOLL: I did have one question; Queen's Printer, they must print the budget, obviously.

S. STOODLEY: Yes.

L. O'DRISCOLL: I was thinking about that last night. I said, where does that actually get printed?

S. STOODLEY: They stay up all night.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Well, secrecy on it, too; so you can't go outside. So I started to think on that last night when they were talking about it.

Under Queen's Printer, Revenue - Provincial – you might have done that already, I think, did you? No, maybe not.

S. STOODLEY: No.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Could you please provide an explanation of less than anticipated revenue last year?

S. STOODLEY: Absolutely.

As more things, more people search and find information online, we print fewer things and we sell fewer things. So university libraries bought

fewer books from us and they bought fewer copies of legislation from us.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

I'll move on to 2.2.03. Under Salaries, last year there was a saving of \$70,000. Can you explain that?

S. STOODLEY: We had a vacant printing production worker position and we did not need as much overtime as we had allocated.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Under Supplies, under the same section, last year there was a savings of \$62,200. Can you explain that?

S. STOODLEY: We had lower printing requests. In particular, we didn't have to print public exams because of COVID-19. That was offset by a purchase of a replacement part for a printer.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Under Purchased Services, there is a savings of \$15,500. Can you explain that for us?

S. STOODLEY: So we had lower copying, printing charges. This is a bulk of the printing for government. If we're not printing as much, then we don't have as many costs.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Under 2.2.04, Salaries, there was a salary savings of \$288,000. Can you explain that?

S. STOODLEY: Yes. This is due to vacancies and delays in recruitment of collection officers.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Under Purchased Services, under the same heading, there is also a savings of \$21,800. I wonder if you can supply some detail on that.

S. STOODLEY: Yes. So we had lower than anticipated legal costs associated with collections activity and we had less collections efforts during COVID-19. Actually some of the collections team were reallocated to doing other things, as were important to the government for COVID-19. We did not do as much collections activity.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Can you give an overview of how much is outstanding in terms of being owed to the government? How much was collected last year?

S. STOODLEY: I don't have that information.

S. DUTTON: For the year ending March 31, the number of outstanding accounts was 86,000 for a total receivable for \$743 million, but \$58 million was collected.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

That's it for this section for me on that section. Jim, I don't know if you have more.

CHAIR: MHA Dinn.

J. DINN: Actually not many more, I think my colleague asked just about all of them. But I do have a question with regard to the online submission of expenses for MHAs.

S. STOODLEY: It's horrible.

J. DINN: Okay, good.

I don't need to go further on that, except to say that I know when I was with the NLTA, CTF, you could submit things online boom, done. Here, it seems to be: do it online, print it off, sign it, bring it – is there any – would you have control over to upgrade so that it can be done totally online and save this – it's a rather archaic process.

S. STOODLEY: I would be happy to have OCIO engage with the House of Assembly. I'm not sure who would – because I guess there's a process piece there that the House of Assembly would be involved in outlining, then the OCIO would work with them on the technology. I mean, we can certainly get together and see if there's any way we can make that more streamlined.

I guess, from an overall government digital perspective that impacts 40 people. I agree, it's a very poor experience for someone; 40 MHAs and their 40 constituency assistants, so that's 80 people. I guess, just to be a devil's advocate, I could have them spend the time on things that

would improve the customer experience and resident experience of more than 80 people.

So those are the types of things we think about for which service to do next. I mean, we can certainly do that, but then we're taking away from improving something that impacts more than 80 people.

J. DINN: No, I'm just saying, in terms of – I don't know what the cost is, but all I want to be able to do is submit my line, put my digital signature and be done with it.

S. STOODLEY: If I had to guess, and I'm pretty sure as an MHA I've asked this before, because it is a very poor experience, they require a physical signature. But maybe one of our House of Assembly Committees can take that further and if that's no longer required then we can certainly look at changing the process.

J. DINN: Okay, maybe that's a simpler fix.

A question with the print plant: Do you actually have printing presses down there or is it digitized now? I thought they were with the dinosaurs, they're almost extinct, not the mimeograph.

S. STOODLEY: I know we do have digital printers, I imagine we also have a printing press. But I don't know if Sean knows?

S. DUTTON: These are Xerox-type quality machines, but they're for this kind of large-scale printing. It's not like a photocopier.

J. DINN: No, no.

S. DUTTON: But it's not a Gestetner machine either. So they have a variety of those machines. There's a saddle-stitch binder, things you need to make public exams, all of that stuff is there. I'm sure that the director would be happy to offer any of you a tour anytime you'd like. They're in the basement of the East Block.

J. DINN: And my point was that if it's like what I'm thinking of as a printing press, we had gone digital. It's not the photocopier. I understand that. I just wanted to know is it gone to that level. We're not using the old printing presses,

which we used to use in the NLTA. That's long gone. I just wanted to make sure (inaudible).

S. DUTTON: It's for making documents that require binding, so pamphlets, brochures –

J. DINN: Perfect.

S. DUTTON: – things that require staples in the middle, all of that sort of thing.

J. DINN: Thank you. That's it.

CHAIR: Okay.

S. STOODLEY: We're ready to go to the next section, I think.

CHAIR: Yeah, okay, just wondering.

Clerk, can you recall the grouping?

CLERK: Regulatory Affairs, 2.1.01 to 2.2.04 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 to 2.2.04 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.2.01 through 2.2.04 carried.

CHAIR: Okay, next.

CLERK: Digital Government and Services, 3.1.01 to 3.4.02 inclusive.

CHAIR: MHA O'Driscoll

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you.

Just a couple of questions. One is have you ever considered – I know I came from the car industry – just for safety reason, motor vehicle inspections on vehicles after a certain age, say five years, six years, maybe seven. Seven is old but I'm going to say five years or depending on kilometres, because there are vehicles out there,

I know and we all know that they're out there. No one ever sees them until you see them go in with – I've had mechanics or – not in where I worked, but I've had garages that take pictures of vehicle with a Vise-Grip on a brake line because that brake line has stopped, and there's no inspection until the brake pads need to be done, then they have to get into it.

So I think it went out in John Efford's days, I think. Just something I wonder if it ever came up in consideration because it is a safety factor for sure in some of these vehicles.

S. DUTTON: This was eliminated when Ernie McLean was the minister in the 1990s. We have occasionally gotten correspondence around the point that you raised, particularly from certain garages and that sort of thing, but at the time concern was that the inspections weren't overly effective. They were concerned about fraud and things of that nature. I believe they're still inspection required when the vehicle changes hands – correct me if I'm wrong.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yes, no, you're right.

If you change ownership for sure, you need an inspection, but if somebody buys a vehicle sometimes and keep it 10 years. Sometimes they're not safe, that's all I'll say. And when they're telling you, they're telling you that for a reason because they're the ones that are fixing them and they're shocked at the point that they are. It's just something that I said I'd throw out there, because –

S. STOODLEY: Well, if the PC caucus are supportive of that, we can certainly take it away. I'm all for improving safety on our roadways.

L. O'DRISCOLL: The other side of that is when I asked that question, obviously, we're talking about cost of living, and that affects the cost of living for those people as well. It's a hard question to ask but it's a safety question to ask. So that's why I'm asking it.

I'm good. I'll just go on to 3.1.01.

Did you have anything else to add there? No, okay.

3.1.01, Salaries, can you provide a breakdown of the number of employees in this division by region?

S. STOODLEY: I don't have that to hand. I can certainly provide that. It doesn't look like we have that to hand, we can certainly provide that.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Under Salaries there's a substantial savings in this line item from 2021-22 of \$801,000 was saved in Salaries. Can you explain that?

S. STOODLEY: Absolutely.

We had vacancies during the year in highway enforcement officers, clerical staff, a driver examiner and manager positions throughout the province with MRD. Those are impacted by high turnover and delays in recruitment.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Under Supplies, last year went over budget by \$119,000. Can you explain that one?

S. STOODLEY: Absolutely. We had kind of an addition and a subtraction here. We purchased licence plates for Come Home Year and that was offset by a reduction in requirement for supplies and uniforms for highway enforcement officers and driver examiners due to the vacancies.

L. O'DRISCOLL: All right.

Under Purchased Services, can you provide a breakdown of the services purchased and the amount of each? Additionally, why did the line item go over budget by \$393,000?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

Purchased Services, we had higher debit and credit card fees so that was \$373,000 worth due to greater volume of online transactions. We also had \$10,500 worth of ergonomic assessments. Another thing is as we have a lot of staff coming in and going through, if people request ergonomic assessments, those are provided. The more staff we have coming through the more ergonomic assessment costs we have. Then we did have \$10,000 of charges for the insurance validation project.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Under Grants and Subsidies, can you provide a breakdown of how and where these grants are awarded?

S. STOODLEY: That is an excellent question. I'm going to refer to the team here.

B. STEELE: Can you repeat the question.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Sure. Under Grants and Subsidies, can you provide a breakdown of how and where these grants are awarded?

That's under 3.1.01, sorry.

B. STEELE: This provides membership fees for the following – and also \$10,000 grant for SafetyNL Lids for Kids program. So we provide money to Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators, International Registration Plan and American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

B. STEELE: And I have the amounts as well, sorry.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Sure.

B. STEELE: Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators is \$10,200; Lids for Kids is \$10,000; the CVSA membership is \$10,200; the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators is \$2,300; and the International Registration Plan is \$9,800.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Under Revenue - Provincial, can you provide an explanation for the less than anticipated revenue last year? I would think that is all the same: online.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

(Technical difficulties.)

L. O'DRISCOLL: Can you provide an update on how long someone needs to wait for an

appointment at the various Motor Registration divisions then?

S. STOODLEY: Sure. I don't think it is that long at the moment. We have that – okay, thank you, Gail.

G. BOLAND: I ran a report on April 28 across our office locations throughout the province, on average it's only a two- or three-day wait for in-person services. The exception, of course, is road tests. In Mount Pearl there is a wait. We do have a wait-list started and I'm working with staff now to identify a plan to address the current wait time to get that down to something that is reasonable.

L. O'DRISCOLL: How big a wait-list is it? Like is it (inaudible).

G. BOLAND: Last week, there were about 60 people on the wait-list.

L. O'DRISCOLL: How many do you do per day? Roughly? (Inaudible) different, it changes.

G. BOLAND: Yeah. It changes every day and depending upon is it a Class 5 licence, is it a commercial licence, is it a taxi licence. So for example a Class 5 licence takes about 30 minutes to do. A taxi licence would take almost an hour to do. So it depends on the type.

L. O'DRISCOLL: We'll say that I had a dealing with – I had an ATV that – when we went through the regulations, it had to be registered. I bought it from my brother and he never had it registered. So I had to go through the process. It was a real good process. Now, it took a month but that is the process because I didn't know if it was stolen. He didn't know if it was stolen so he had to go through and check the serial number. It was a good process and it did help it for sure.

G. BOLAND: Absolutely. And that is something that we are looking into to, especially with the new off-road vehicles legislation and providing that service through MyGovNL.

S. STOODLEY: I will just add, we do have an issue with people booking multiple driver tests, which does cause inefficiency. We need to sort out some kind of solution because we see someone; they book one appointment here, they book one appointment in Harbour Grace, they book one appointment in Clarenville, they might book another one in Harbour Grace the next day. I would prefer not to charge them or I would prefer not to charge and have to rebate, but we do see some people – there were tens of driver tests booked and someone then had to notice and cancel them and that. We are trying to solve that issue, but that does lead to our inefficiency in driver tests.

L. O'DRISCOLL: I guess with your antiquated system it can't stop you from booking at all other Motor Registration divisions. So at some point in time that might be another avenue for it to go.

That's fine, but it was a good experience. I will say that.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

L. O'DRISCOLL: The other question would be on ATVs. Obviously, legislation is coming down; I mean you have people that have never registered an ATV. It's going to be a big problem. You're going to have enforcement; you're going to have more costs to people.

I just think that it might be a little bit of leniency for the first time. It could be an older gentleman in the community that never registered and is driving in – in these rural communities, I'll say that, they're driving on the sides of the roads or they're going in and cutting wood. You haul them in and give them a ticket, that wouldn't be so good. Eventually it has to get there, but maybe a warning to start.

S. STOODLEY: I would just add that the enforcement of the legislation would rest in Fishery, Forestry and Agriculture or with Justice and Public Safety.

I will say that there won't be – the new laws don't come into effect until May 19, so anyone who's registered their vehicle in advance of that

won't have any additional requirements. It's after May 19.

S. DUTTON: I could just add that the requirements for registration have not changed as a result of the law. So it's a long-standing requirement that, as you say, there's probably low compliance with. And the only place where that might have an impact on people is with respect to the training requirement. So they're not coming into force on May 19, but at a later date once we have the training more widely available and people will have to do the training, if they are registering for the first time.

So a long-time user who has not registered, this would be a good time for those listening out there to register your off-road vehicle.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yeah, that's why I did mine.

CHAIR: MHA Dinn.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

I'll start by saying, I will agree with my colleague from Ferryland about motor vehicle inspections after some date. New cars, they're under warranty and they're brought back, but I think it's something to be considered down the road to look at how we can do it efficiently and cost effectively.

The other thing I'm going to talk about is I see increasing number of cars that have tinted glass all around. I don't know if there's a way of having that – just as it's illegal to remove a catalytic converter, that should be illegal, too.

S. STOODLEY: It is illegal.

J. DINN: So they're getting it done somewhere, and it's not just simply someone buying the film and putting it on there, you can see it looks professionally done. But from my point of view, I should be able to see the driver of a car, especially if I'm a pedestrian; I want to be able to see their eyes. If they're coming, I want to be able to see. So I don't know if there's a way of cracking down on that, but that's got to be –

S. STOODLEY: I will say it's illegal to have your windows tinted at the driver and in front. I'll certainly raise that in my next discussion

with the Minister Justice and Public Safety. It is already illegal.

J. DINN: I see more and more of them.

The other one, I'm just wondering – I do cycle to work. Probably the most dangerous part is coming up on Prince Philip Drive there. As someone who lost a brother to a cycling accident, I'll say this: A lot of cars, they'll slow down and move out three feet; not everyone does. I'm just wondering as a fun or positive, proactive way – we have to renew our licences every year. Maybe it's time to put in a little quiz that make it fun – hey, complete this quiz, maybe you'll get a free motor vehicle registration for a year, if your name is drawn or you get an iPad or whatever else. But each year as a way of hey, did you know what you do when you come to a crosswalk.

It just reminds people, because bad habits get ingrained over years and you don't even know it. I know I'm far from it, just as a thought. Especially if we're going digital online right now, it's just a matter of here, click on this and go from there.

How many highway enforcement officers are currently employed by the department under the highway safety program?

S. STOODLEY: I'll defer to Gail.

G. BOLAND: There are currently 13 highway enforcement officers employed throughout the province. We do have some vacancies there that we are currently actively recruiting.

J. DINN: Okay.

How many vacancies would that be?

G. BOLAND: We have five positions currently under recruitment, and we have two positions that are inactive due to extended leave.

J. DINN: Okay.

But they are replaced, though, are they?

G. BOLAND: Yes.

J. DINN: Okay.

Where would those five vacancies be across the province, or are they –?

G. BOLAND: Yeah, they're across the province.

J. DINN: Okay, thank you.

Provincial revenues were less than anticipated last year because of –

S. STOODLEY: If we're still at 3.1.01?

J. DINN: Yes, we are.

S. STOODLEY: We had fewer requests for expedited delivery of driver's licence cards.

J. DINN: No one was driving.

S. STOODLEY: People didn't lose their licence; they weren't travelling.

J. DINN: Yes, that's right, exactly.

The budget for Salaries increased this year under – sorry, I'll move on 3.2.01, Support Services. By the way, out of curiosity, I don't know if it's under your jurisdiction or not, probably not. With the advent of driverless cars, any discussion within your department or between departments as to how that's going to be as the future unrolls.

S. STOODLEY: The Canadian Council for Motor Transportation, CCMT, along with the federal government, we kind of have an agreement. The federal government has set standards for driverless cars and I guess it's currently in like a test-and-learn phase, if I would call it that off the top of my head.

There is documentation online available that we can certainly share with you. The federal government has set standards for what is appropriate and what is not appropriate. At the moment, we're still – I guess all provinces are evaluating that. Transport Canada ultimately has ownership for driverless cars and the safety. They're responsible for like the cybersecurity, the privacy and all those considerations. I guess we're working with Transport Canada then in terms of how that trickles down into the provincial regulations.

J. DINN: Will there be any discussion, whether it's your department or an insurance company, as to insurance rates? So for right now, if I were living over in Port aux Choix, for example, my premiums would probably be half what I'm paying here because I'm in a high-risk zone. I'm just wondering if there's any discussion as to what that would mean.

S. STOODLEY: Sure.

That is under us, under our Financial Services Division. The Public Utilities Board regulates insurance rates, and the Public Utilities Board legislation is under Justice and Public Safety. In the upcoming Justice and Public Safety review of the Public Utilities Board it will include a high level, somewhat look at insurance I guess.

We do have a mandatory insurance review every five years, and I think we're two or three years in at the moment. Insurers have to apply to the Public Utilities Board for a rate increase. There are formulas around that, and the Public Utilities Board has to approve those rate increases. I guess that's –

J. DINN: I was just curious as to how autonomous vehicles might affect that down the road as well.

Under 3.2.01, Support Services, the budget for Salaries has increased this year. What was the reason for that?

S. STOODLEY: If we're talking about 3.2.01, Support Services, Salaries?

J. DINN: Yes.

S. STOODLEY: I guess it reflects the salary plan. We had two previously unfunded positions, and now the government step salary increases.

J. DINN: Why was the budget for Purchased Services decreased this year? It went from \$64,000 to \$62,000 and then on to \$49,100.

S. STOODLEY: In our Gander location, we no longer need to pay for secure cash services. We no longer need to pay an armoured vehicle to pick up cash, because our office is now next to the bank –

OFFICIAL: It is in the same mall.

S. STOODLEY: In the same mall, so we no longer need our protective cash services.

J. DINN: Okay.

You can always call on me and the Member for Ferryland, we'll be glad to deliver cash for you.

Why was the provincial revenue less than anticipated last year?

S. STOODLEY: So we had fewer inspections carried out.

J. DINN: Thank you.

3.2.02, Regional Services: Given the move to digitizing services, are there any plans to close some local offices and consolidate services into the remaining branch offices?

S. STOODLEY: So we have no plans to close branches.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Under 3.2.01, Salaries, it was under budget. Why was that the case for last year?

S. STOODLEY: Sorry, is that 3.2.02?

J. DINN: Yes, it is.

S. STOODLEY: We had vacancies throughout the province, delays in recruitment. We had environmental health officer vacancies, environmental protection officer, regional support supervisor and a word processing clerk role vacant.

J. DINN: Perfect.

And under 3.2.02, Regional Services, provincial revenue was less than expected last year. This year we are expecting to collect only half the amount that was budgeted last year. Why is that so? Why is that the case?

S. STOODLEY: Just a second. So this is related to, from an accounting perspective, the difference between if someone pays for their permit online versus in person. So fewer permits sold over the counter, they are recorded as related revenue whereas a permit sold online goes to the consolidated revenue fund.

J. DINN: So it just goes to two different, okay.

3.3.01, Occupational Health and Safety Inspections: How many inspections were completed last year and how many investigations into workplaces were conducted last year as well?

S. STOODLEY: I'll defer that to Gail.

G. BOLAND: So in 2021, we completed 4,096 inspections.

J. DINN: Any investigations into workplaces or would that be part of that as well?

G. BOLAND: That would be part of that. In 2021, we concluded 11 prosecutions. Currently, we have four ongoing fatality investigations: two that started in 2020, one in 2021 and one in 2022.

J. DINN: Thank you.

S. STOODLEY: We have many ongoing investigations.

G. BOLAND: Yes.

J. DINN: Thank you.

CHAIR: Okay.

J. DINN: You'll notice, Paul, I'm not taking advantage of you.

CHAIR: I noticed that. There's a reason for that.

MHA O'Driscoll.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you.

I'll just go back to the previous one, 3.2.01. I just have one question on Transportation and Communications. Last year there was a savings of \$57,700. I was just wondering if you could explain that.

S. STOODLEY: Sure, 3.2.02?

L. O'DRISCOLL: No, 3.2.01, Transportation and Communications.

S. STOODLEY: Okay.

We had fewer travel costs for inspection services, which is why we didn't spend what we had budgeted.

L. O'DRISCOLL: And under 3.2.02, Transportation and Communications as well was \$44,100. I was just wondering if you could explain that one.

S. STOODLEY: Under Transportation and Communications, 3.2.02, we had the same again: lower travel costs related with inspections.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Just a couple of questions. I know that the Member there had asked earlier on insurance. I think you were speaking about it. When you buy a vehicle, obviously you have a loan on it. So before you take it, the dealerships will call the insurance company, get the policy number and make sure they have it before the vehicle leaves.

Someone that pays cash for a vehicle, is that what you're trying to get – if somebody pays cash for a vehicle, say \$10,000 or \$5,000, they go and get it insured, put the insurance on it, public liability, then they go cancel it. Is that what you're trying to track in regard to insurance on vehicles?

S. STOODLEY: I guess in terms of the insurance validation project – is that what you're referring to?

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yes.

S. STOODLEY: It's important that insurance companies let us know when someone has cancelled their insurance. Obviously, public

liability insurance is mandatory. So we would cancel their registrations if they cancelled insurance. We can't have drivers driving around without any public liability insurance.

S. DUTTON: When we did the auto insurance review, that was one of the issues that came up in our EngageNL survey, in our discussions with insurers and other stakeholders. The concern was that people would go online and they could list a policy number in order to get their registration for the year and then cancel their policy. We didn't have any feedback loop to find out when those sorts of things occurred.

To do a paper-based process to have hundreds of thousands of people send in their insurance information wasn't really practical. So that's why the electronic solution was devised, so we'd get real-time data when people cancelled a policy. Then you'd be able to connect that with law enforcement.

So, again, we're at the very late stages of completing the project. We just need to ensure that we have a secure means for transfer of the information between the Insurance Bureau and their members and the registrar.

L. O'DRISCOLL: I know the bank is looking after their interest, when you – I keep saying mortgage – get a loan for a car and you call out and you're going to change insurance companies. The insurance company will notify the bank if somebody tries to change the insurance. Then the bank will get after that person to get insurance. But I'm thinking on a vehicle that doesn't have a loan on it and there is nothing tied to it. They're the ones that we have to be careful with. Because you could buy a car off me today, you go get public liability and you go cancel it. Are they calling you to say that the insurance is gone? That's the ones that get you in trouble, not the other ones.

S. STOODLEY: At the moment, they would not be able to renew their insurance, so we would find out at time of renewal because you need an active insurance policy to renew your vehicle. But with this new project, then the insurance companies would tell us when someone cancelled and we would then look at whether or not it was appropriate to cancel their vehicle registration.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Just trying to be clear because, like I said, I go get insurance today on a vehicle that has no loan attached to it. I go get the insurance, I get the policy number, register the car and then go cancel the insurance. Is that what (inaudible) –?

S. STOODLEY: That is what we are preventing against.

L. O'DRISCOLL: That is what you're trying to prevent.

S. STOODLEY: Yes.

L. O'DRISCOLL: And that is what is going to happen, so that is good. There were lots of times that happened. When we sold cars, if you bought a car for cash that was up to you if you put insurance on it. Now, if you had a loan on it, we had to make sure that if you left the lot and didn't have insurance in place – because we'd do an online one but you'd have to make sure it was done on a loan. But on the other one, if you left the lot and then wrote off a \$10,000 car, well, that's your loss because you didn't have it on it, but hopefully that is changing.

S. STOODLEY: But it is the law to have public liability insurance.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Oh yeah.

S. STOODLEY: This would be an extra measure, but it is the driver's responsibility to follow the law of owning a vehicle.

L. O'DRISCOLL: The same thing could be said for house insurance with people losing their houses –

S. STOODLEY: No, it's not mandatory to have house insurance.

L. O'DRISCOLL: No, but I'm saying the same thing could be said. House insurance is something that should be mandatory, you would think, if people happen to burn down their house and then it's gone. Anyway, we will move on –

S. STOODLEY: If you got pulled over without insurance, you'd get a ticket. It is illegal not to have public liability car insurance.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yeah, absolutely. That is where your \$30,000 to \$40,000 people that got these fines that you can never get to the end. They buy their car, cancel the insurance, get caught, they don't care and they go do it again.

S. STOODLEY: That's Justice and Public Safety.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yeah, but you're trying to get to it, so I see that point.

Under 3.3.01, last year there was a savings of \$766,000 in Salaries. Can you explain that?

S. STOODLEY: So we had a vacancy for a hygienist and occupational health and safety officer positions throughout the year and then the delays of recruitment.

L. O'DRISCOLL: We also had similar savings last year and the same Estimates. So I'm just wondering have the same positions been vacant for that period of time.

S. DUTTON: They're not all the same every year. Some of that is we'll hire people, let's say, in our Labrador West office, they may be there for a few years and then they compete for a job in Corner Brook or Grand Falls and then there's a turnover. So that's one of the types of situations we're dealing with today.

We're also looking at doing some internal review around the resources required for the investigations. We were talking about that a little bit earlier. We do have a number of investigations around serious incidents that go on. They're very time consuming and require a lot of specialized skills, so we're also taking a look at are there things we can do to help ensure we have the right skill sets to support our OHS officers when it goes from the inspection into the investigation stage.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Under 3.3.01, Transportation and Communications, last year there was a savings of \$135,000. I wonder if you could explain that.

S. STOODLEY: So the decrease reflects a savings in travel costs associated with

occupational health and safety accident investigations.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

And under Supplies, this year the budget for Supplies has been increased. Can you give us some commentary on that, please?

S. STOODLEY: Sure.

So we looked at the budget required for all of our occupational health and safety subscriptions and publications, the CSA standards, *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene*, *OHS Insider* and the Newfoundland portion towards the development of CSA standards, and we needed an extra \$7,200.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Under Purchased Services, can you explain what services are included here and what explains last year's savings?

S. STOODLEY: Sure.

So the savings, we had a reduction in in-person training and radiology services. We had a lower requirement for witness fees and experts when we're looking at securing accident scenes. This would include advertising, vehicle repairs and maintenance, equipment rentals, meeting rooms, lease of office space in Corner Brook, Grand Falls-Windsor, Wabush and St. John's; maintenance and analysis of hygiene samples; implementation of professional development for staff; and training.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Under Revenue - Provincial, how is that revenue generated and can you provide an explanation for the less than anticipated revenue last year?

I note that last year when we were in Estimates, I asked the same question. Is there a pattern here or is COVID a part of that problem?

S. STOODLEY: The revenue we get is because all occupational health and safety expenses are recovered from WorkplaceNL which are recovered from the Workplace Injury Fund. So, essentially, employers pay a fee to WorkplaceNL. That goes into a fund and then that pays for all the occupational health and

safety costs that we have. The more costs we have, the more they pay, essentially. So when our costs go down, they pay less.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Perfect.

Under 3.4.02 under Grants, can you outline the purpose of this \$8,000? It looks like only \$2,500 was spent last year.

S. STOODLEY: 3.4.02?

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yes.

S. STOODLEY: Okay.

These are grants to safety organizations: Newfoundland and Labrador Occupational Health and Safety Association, the Canadian Society of Safety Engineering, Safety Services Newfoundland and Labrador, Canadian Standards Association, Newfoundland and Labrador Employers Council, NAOSH, Newfoundland and Labrador Construction Safety Association, Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour and SafetyNet.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

I only have one more question in that section, then that will be done.

CHAIR: Yes, you go ahead.

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

S. STOODLEY: This is just revenue – this is what WorkplaceNL pays us. We give out the grants and then WorkplaceNL pays us back.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay, perfect.

CHAIR: Thank you.

MHA Dinn.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

Just with regard to the insurance, I think it's a great idea in terms of if it's cancelled and the registration is void, but how do you enforce it in terms of – I guess it's like a locked door, locks

on doors, really they're for honest people. So how do you make sure that the person is not actually out driving around in the car anyway? Or is it going to be a chance that it gets reported or the police happens to be behind the person? Or are they notified then: I just wanted to let you know we need a response, are you aware that your insurance has been cancelled? You need to renew. Or are you then going to escalate it to the point: We'll put a boot on your car until you get the proper insurance.

I'm just curious how that would work enforcement-wise.

S. STOODLEY: So I guess once the project is live, we will be notified that someone has cancelled their insurance and we can cross-reference that with, you know, when their vehicle was renewed. And then we would just pass that information on to law enforcement and work with them on the execution and the operationalization of that.

J. DINN: Excellent.

Maybe that will save us some money, too, in terms of fines and that as well.

Under 3.3.01, how many inspectors are currently employed by the department in total? I think you said – no, sorry, that was something else. But how many inspectors would be employed there under OHS?

G. BOLAND: Just focusing on our main inspectors, so our Occupational Health and Safety inspectors, we have lots of different types of positions, but in Labrador, we have one currently. We are recruiting for another. In Grand Falls-Windsor, we have three Occupational Health and Safety officers. In Corner Brook, we have five and in the metro area we have 14.

J. DINN: Thank you.

I'm trying to figure out if this one was asked. With regards to 3.3.0, spending on Supplies and Professional Services was lower than budgeted

last year. Why was the allocated money not spent?

S. STOODLEY: So in terms of Supplies, lower than anticipated requirement for uniforms, PPE and field supplies. Then under Professional Services, we had less than anticipated need for witness fees and bringing in experts in relating to accident scenes.

J. DINN: Thank you.

3.4.01, how many dependents are currently receiving assistance through this program? Last year it was 40. The year before it was 43.

S. STOODLEY: Thirty-one.

J. DINN: Thirty-one.

That's it for the questions. One last thing and I know it was brought up in the House of Assembly, but in these Estimates there seems to be an awful lot of vacancies throughout. Is there a problem with – I guess, does government have a good name? I'm just trying to get an – as to why there seems to be so many vacancies because there's a certain level of job security or have you done any analysis as to why?

I mean, there are a lot of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and immigrants who would certainly be able to fill these positions, I figure. But I'm just trying to get an idea: Have you done an analysis as to why there seems to be so many vacant – even talk to your Cabinet colleagues as to what the rationale is here or what's behind it.

S. STOODLEY: I guess, just from my perspective, there would be – when someone leaves a job, there's the timeline associated with – we may or may not know in advance whether they're going to leave. Then the internal process, work with HR to go through the system and then I see it at a certain point. Then the time to post the job, all that to happen. We can't do all of those at once, so we prioritize at any given time which ones have priority.

I'll let Sean –

S. DUTTON: I guess I could add, though, that if you look at data from Statistics Canada and the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council, there is a higher rate of vacancy across the economy in all employers. So it's not that we're having a unique problem. There are some jobs that are harder to fill because they're very specialized skillsets. Anybody listening out there who is qualified to be an elevating devices inspector, we will hire that person to work in any part of the province; location is negotiable. We are working to try to address those types of challenges.

I guess in terms of the turnover, we are also looking at where we can try to shorten the time frames on processing of some of the back office work, like a request for staffing action approval to try to shorten those time frames as well.

There's been a lot of discussion globally about the great resignation and those sorts of things. I don't know if that's indicative of people not being as interested in work that's not completely in their niche, finding other things to do, but certainly we do have opportunities. We're posting them on the job site for the provincial government, on the main page, and we'd certainly encourage people interested that we have a number of openings in our various offices throughout the province.

J. DINN: Thank you.

That's it for me, Chair.

CHAIR: MHA O'Driscoll.

L. O'DRISCOLL: I just got a couple of small questions there. Just under the insurance again.

So somebody has a motorcycle and it has to be registered, obviously. When they park that in the shed and don't use it anymore, because they're only using it for the summer months, they cancel their insurance. It's in there stored away. How will that work? That's something I'm just going to say directly: How will that work?

S. STOODLEY: I guess this is with my insurance industry hat on. Generally, I think people don't take the public liability insurance off; they take the other insurance off. If the vehicle is still roadworthy, the vehicle is

registered for the year – at least from my experience – people in those situations they keep the insurance on, they just remove the bodily injury, all that kind of stuff, to save money. They only pay the minimum while their car is in the garage and then they call their insurance company back to say, okay, I'm going to drive it again and then they add the other insurances on.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yes.

S. STOODLEY: So they don't cancel public liability.

L. O'DRISCOLL: I'm going to say that some people will, like on a motorcycle as an example or – I wouldn't think on a car because, you know, just if you're storing it away, it would be in your house or your garage or wherever, but on a motorcycle, I would think they just flat out cancel it for six months. So you don't want the police showing up at their house and saying you haven't got your bike insured; well, they're only driving it six months.

S. STOODLEY: Well, the insurance company I worked for, we wouldn't do that. We wouldn't allow them to do that.

L. O'DRISCOLL: No?

S. STOODLEY: No.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

I will go back to the Member for St. John's Centre on tinted windows. Most of that is about enforcement and some of these side garages that are doing it. I agree with him, sometimes you can't see anything in through these side windows or front windows, but that's about enforcement and if the police see them they're certainly

One other thing that I will touch on is seniors. I know you're trying to get most of this stuff online, but you just have to keep in mind that not all seniors are able to do it. I'm sure it's never going to be shutdown totally, I wouldn't think.

S. STOODLEY: No, of course not.

L. O'DRISCOLL: No. I just wanted to throw that out there because that was some of the

questions I think we asked last year when it started.

Before I finish, and I'm done with my questions, I would like to thank everybody on the other side there from all the departments for all your work and being so cordial and answering all the questions. I'm sure it's a tough job to get this done this time of the year. It's a lot of work involved, I'm sure. Months before this budget comes out, all the work has to be done. So thank you again.

CHAIR: Thank you.

J. DINN: I want to echo my colleague and say thank you for your work. I know when it comes to registering for vehicles or anything, it can be a frustrating experience, but I will say that for the most part, my wife and I, we tend to do a lot of that online and it does work effectively for those who are competent.

But I will echo what my colleague for Ferryland says, for a lot of seniors it's a problem and it's a problem, also, if they go to – as in our case – where my mother and mother-in-law might come to us and they have to have an email. They may not have an – there has to be some way that allows family members who are able to help them to do that without having to go through that extra layer. So it can work, it's just a matter of making it less frustrating for people and they'll do it.

S. STOODLEY: From a MyGovNL perspective, on the list of things we want to do is to allow someone to have a designated person to do things on their behalf. I don't have a timeline on that but that is one of the next highest priority things and that would be for motor vehicle registration and MCP and that kind of stuff as well.

CHAIR: Okay.

L. O'DRISCOLL: (Inaudible) it's not even a question, but I will say when you're dealing with the public, lots of times when they go to your counter they're the ones that don't have the information. It's not the people behind the counter and they give you the frustration. So you're working in there – I have to tell them to stay with it. I know working in a service

industry, it's always the person at the counter's fault, it's not someone else.

So pass that on that I've been there, done that and it's pretty frustrating, but you're only following the rules. So that's where it's too, they don't have the information.

But, again, thank you and thanks for all your work.

CHAIR: Okay. I ask the Clerk to recall the grouping.

CLERK: Digital Government and Services, 3.1.01 to 3.4.02 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 to 3.4.02 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.1.01 to 3.4.02 carried.

CHAIR: Clerk.

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, Department of Digital Government and Service NL, total heads, carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the Estimates of the Department of Digital Government and Service NL?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

CHAIR: I’d just like to thank our officials and our Members for being here.

Oh, sorry, MHA Reid.

S. REID: I’m in favour as well.

On motion, Estimates of the Department of Digital Government and Service NL carried without amendment.

CHAIR: I keep forgetting you. I’m used to sitting by you, too, right.

So, again, thank you to the officials, thank you to the Members, but I’d just like to ask the minister if she’d like some final remarks.

S. STOODLEY: Sure, thank you very much.

I will say we have a very hard-working, diverse team across the province. I spent some time with some of our occupational health officers across the province, some of our highway enforcement officers. They are certainly very passionate and knowledgeable and experts in their field. In our department, we have a range of experts on a very, very wide variety of topics.

I do thank our leadership team and our executive team because they also have to become experts on a wide range of topics. I know it adds the complexity because I think we have the most legislation of any department. But we also then deliver that customer service side and those are very different skill sets. Working on policy and legislation and then also the customer service side.

I know it is a bit tricky. We have very hard working, a lot of really smart people on our teams. So I just thank them for their hard work and thank you for asking these very important questions. I think this is an important part of the process for people of the public to see how we are spending their hard-earned money.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister.

I would like to have a motion for adjournment.

L. STOYLES: So moved.

CHAIR: Moved by MHA Stoyles.

Call for a vote.

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

Thank you all so much.

On motion, the Committee adjourned sine die.