



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

Second Session
Forty-Seventh General Assembly

**Proceedings of the Standing Committee on
Resources**

May 8, 2013 - Issue 7

Department of Advanced Education and Skills

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Assembly
Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA

RESOURCE COMMITTEE

Department of Advanced Education and Skills

Chair: David Brazil, MHA

Vice-Chair: Jim Bennett, MHA

Members:

Eli Cross, MHA
Dwight Ball, MHA
Lorraine Michael, MHA
Tracey Perry, MHA
Keith Russell, MHA

Clerk of the Committee: Lorna Proudfoot

Appearing:

Department of Advanced Education and Skills

Hon. Darin King, MHA, Minister
Kip Bonnell, Communications Specialist
Dan Crummell, Parliamentary Secretary to Minister
Bob Gardiner, Assistant Deputy Minister, Post-Secondary Education
Dennis Hogan, Assistant Deputy Minister, Workforce Development and Immigration
David Lewis, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services
Susan Piercey, Executive Assistant to Minister Shea
Darrin Pike, Deputy Minister
David Pike, Student Financial Services
Ross Reid, Deputy Minister, Population Study
Jean Tilley, Assistant Deputy Minister, Community and Social Development
John Tompkins, Director of Communications
Roxie Wheaton, Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Delivery

Also Present

Dale Kirby, MHA
Andrew Parsons, MHA
Kevin Pollard, MHA
Dana English, Researcher, Official Opposition Office
Susan Williams, Researcher, NDP Office

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Dale Kirby, MHA for St. John's North, substitutes for Lorraine Michael, MHA for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Andrew Parsons, MHA for Burgeo – La Poile, substitutes for Jim Bennett, MHA for St. Barbe.

The Committee met at 6:30 p.m. in the Assembly Chamber.

CHAIR (Brazil): We are all ready to go. I want to welcome everybody to the Resource Committee Estimates review for the Department of Advanced Education and Skills. I want to welcome Minister King, who is filling in for Minister Shea, his officials, and the Committee members themselves.

I would like to first start by asking the Committee if they would do introductions and then I will go back to the minister and his officials.

MS ENGLISH: Good morning.

Dana English, Researcher with the Official Opposition.

MR. A. PARSONS: Andrew Parsons, MHA, Burgeo – La Poile.

MR. KIRBY: Dale Kirby, the great and historic District of St. John's North.

MS WILLIAMS: Susan Williams, Researcher.

MS PERRY: Tracey Perry, Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MR. CROSS: Eli Cross, Bonavista North.

Housekeeping wise, I would like to move that Mr. A. Parsons fill in as Deputy Chair for this session.

CHAIR: So moved, that Mr. A. Parsons be the Vice-Chair of the Committee.

All those in favour, signify by saying 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Opposed?

Motion carried.

Mr. A. Parsons is Vice-Chair.

MR. POLLARD: Kevin Pollard, MHA, Baie Verte – Springdale.

MR. RUSSELL: Keith Russell, MHA, Lake Melville.

CHAIR: Back to you, Mr. Pike.

MR. DARRIN PIKE: Darrin Pike, Deputy Minister.

MR. KING: Darin King, Minister of Justice, Minister Responsible for Labour, Government House Leader, and Acting Minister of Advanced Education and Skills.

MR. LEWIS: David Lewis, Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, and up until last week ADM for Corporate Services with AES.

MR. DAVID PIKE: Good morning. David Pike. I am the Director of Student Financial Services and I am Acting Departmental Controller for this week.

MS WHEATON: Roxie Wheaton, Assistant Deputy Minister Responsible for Service Delivery.

MR. HOGAN: Dennis Hogan, ADM for Workforce Development.

MR. REID: I am Ross Reid, Deputy Minister responsible with the provincial Population Growth Strategy.

MS TILLEY: Jean Tilley, ADM for Community and Social Development.

MR. GARDINER: Bob Gardiner, ADM for Advanced Studies.

MS PIERCEY: Susan Piercey. I am the Executive Assistant to Minister Shea.

MR. BONNELL: Kip Bonnell, Communications Specialist.

MR. TOMPKINS: John Tompkins, Director of Communications.

MR. CRUMMELL: Dan Crummell, Parliamentary Secretary, AES.

CHAIR: Welcome to everybody.

Before we start, I need to do a little bit of housekeeping. I ask that we get a motion to adopt the Resource Committee continuation minutes for the Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development.

MR. CROSS: So moved.

CHAIR: Motioned by the Member for Bonavista North.

All those in favour, signify by saying 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Opposed?

Motion carried.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

CHAIR: Just to clarify, obviously I will direct the questions, or I would suspect the members of the Committee will direct the questions to the minister and the minister then can determine which official may want to answer. I ask each member that they identify themselves and wait until their light comes on, the first couple of questions, until the Broadcast Centre is comfortable with the seating. It may take a second or so. That way we do not miss anything in the recording.

Also, to start, just to note, and those who are familiar with me chairing the Committees, I normally give twelve to fifteen minutes. If there are a few minutes that are needed because we

are finishing a train of thought in a particular section, I will ask the member to continue and finish that section.

I do want to stress at the beginning we are on a tight time frame. We may get ten or fifteen minutes past the 12:00 o'clock deadline to complete some of the things. Unfortunately, due to time restrictions and the datelines on the Estimates, we need to get this completed today.

I do ask that you keep as much as possible to the line items here under the Estimates and be as pertinent as possible on the questions you need to ask so you get all your questions answered, hopefully. I do think the minister has agreed that if there are some questions after that we cannot get in this period of time, they can be sent to the department to be assessed and answers given back, or more information if necessary.

I would like to now call that we would start with subheading 1.1.01.

I will go right to Mr. A. Parsons.

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

I am going to make this quick because we will get three hours and we will not get extra time. I might add that I sent a list last year with forty-seven questions to the minister in May and never got a response. So, forgive me if I am not so inclined to send questions this year. I just have to put that out there.

MR. KING: We are fine with that.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

Subhead 1.2.01, Executive Support, there is an increase in Salaries. How many positions were added?

MR. KING: Subhead 1.2.01?

MR. A. PARSONS: Subhead 1.2.01, Executive Support.

MR. KING: What was your question again? I am sorry about that.

MR. A. PARSONS: It looks like there was a salary increase of \$310,000 in this year's Estimates from last year, from what was estimated.

MR. KING: That is from the \$929,000 to the \$1.239 million?

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes.

MR. KING: There was an increase there for the workforce development assistant deputy minister that we announced some time ago, and there was salary provided there for a population study division.

MR. A. PARSONS: Population study: Is that a position?

MR. KING: Yes, a salary.

MR. A. PARSONS: What is the salary?

MR. KING: What is the exact salary? \$170,000, including mandatory employment costs.

MR. A. PARSONS: \$107,000?

MR. KING: \$170,000.

MR. A. PARSONS: \$170,000?

I noticed there is basically a general increase in all the costs in this section, Transportation, Supplies, Purchased Services; does this all have to do with the population study?

MR. KING: General speaking – there are a couple of nuances there – but generally speaking most do apply to that.

MR. A. PARSONS: So basically two new positions added?

MR. KING: Yes, to be clear, it is two positions reflected here, but they are not two new

positions. It is one new position and one position moved into here.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

Who did the population study?

MR. KING: That would be Ross Reid. That is an ongoing piece of work.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

Will there be an actual study coming out, or a report?

MR. KING: There will be work generated for government. Whether or not there will be a report generated for the public is undetermined at this time.

MR. A. PARSONS: In terms of the department, how many core and non-core job cuts are there in Advanced Education?

MR. KING: What I can do, Mr. Chair, if it is okay with the group, is give you the entirety which might save you time in going through each of the divisions. We would have had a total of ten vacant positions that disappeared, fifty-two layoffs, for a total of sixty-two, and we had twenty retirements, for a total of eighty-two positions. The total Budget decrease for salaries in Advanced Education and Skills would have been approximately \$6 million.

MR. A. PARSONS: So that is eighty-two positions?

MR. KING: Eighty-two.

MR. A. PARSONS: Is it possible that there is a list out there with all these positions?

MR. KING: I can read the positions to you if you would like, sure.

MR. A. PARSONS: Is there a list I can get on paper?

MR. KING: Well, once I read it into the record here this morning, you will have it on paper through Hansard.

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes.

MR. KING: We have a director of planning and research position, a Program Development Officer, and that would be from Apprenticeship and Trade Certification, and a career development liaison officer from Career, Employment and Youth Services.

All of the following positions would be from finance and general administration, so there would be: a Clerk IV, a Clerk III, a Management Analyst II, an Archives Technician II, Information Management Technician II, a second Information Management Technician II, a third Information Management Technician II, an Information Management Technician III, a Management Analyst I, and two Financial Collections Officers. All of those would have been from St. John's.

We have a Senior Policy, Planning & Research Analyst from Immigration and Multiculturalism, a Management Analyst II from Income Support, a Client Services Officer from Poverty Reduction, three Career Development Officers, and one Client Service Officer from the Avalon region. We have two Career Development Liaison Officers from the Central region, a Career Development Liaison Officer from the Labrador region, and two further Career Development Officers from the Western region.

In addition to that, we would have had from the Student Financial Services Division in St. John's a Manager of Financial Analysis, four Student Aid Information Officers, an Information Management Technician II, and a Clerk IV. As well, from the Student Loan Corporation in St. John's there is a Clerk III, an Accountant I, two Administrative Officer I, and three financial collection officers. From Youth and Student Services Division there would be a Senior Policy, Planning, & Research Analyst.

As well, under contractual positions, we have a contractual position from Institutional Services.

We have three contractual positions from our Labour Market Agreement, LMA. We have ten positions from our Labour Market Development Agreement, LMDA. We have one position from our Opening Doors, Disability Policy Office. We have two contractual positions from our Avalon Regional Office and we have two contractual positions from our Central Regional Office.

MR. A. PARSONS: Are there still any vacant positions that exist right now within the department?

MR. KING: Yes, there are still a number of vacancies that exist. Mr. Chair, as the people would know, the department is going through a significant restructuring and we are looking at a realignment of service delivery through the entire department. There are a number of vacant positions that will be filled; the hiring freeze of course has been lifted. Some of those positions had to be realigned to suit the new roles and duties, but the number of positions that exists today in the department along with the vacancies will not change as a result of restructuring. It is just that there is going to be some realignment and readjustment.

MR. A. PARSONS: Speaking of the realignment, the Noseworthy report made eighty-seven recommendations. Will there be a timeline on the government's response in terms of what recommendations will be implemented?

MR. KING: The Noseworthy report will be used by us, Mr. Chair, just like any number of pieces of work that we do every single day. People behind me and their staff are constantly involved in research, evaluation, and collecting data to inform policy development, and we see the Noseworthy report as no different than that: a piece of work and information that will inform us. Some of the recommendations likely will be implemented, some may be adjusted, and some may not be. It will be incorporated as part of our consideration of going through the realignment of the department.

MR. A. PARSONS: I know that when we talk about the offshore, the accord we have just been

debating, there were twenty-nine recommendations and government said: We agree with all twenty-nine; we have twenty-eight, and there is one we cannot get. We had CYFS yesterday and there are another number of recommendations by the Child and Youth Advocate. They have come out and said: We agree with every one of these recommendations and we will be moving for every one of these recommendations.

In this case, there are actually eighty-seven specific recommendations. Will government actually come out and say we agree with X number of recommendations? We are not going to implement X number of recommendations? It is pretty comprehensive and specific.

MR. KING: We may, but we may not. The report will inform our decision making. When we get to the point where we have firmed up our restructuring, at that point the minister will decide whether it is a report that we need to decide to say to the public that we accept some recommendations or not, or we may just incorporate it as part of our daily work and use it to inform good decision making.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Noseworthy also suggested seventy programs within the department be streamlined to forty-three. Is there any idea on whether this is going to happen or not, and if so, how many job losses there will be?

MR. KING: Well, I just identified the number of job losses there will be and I think I have said for the record there will be no further job losses as a part of restructuring. Anything else in that report will be contemplated as part of the overall restructuring.

MR. A. PARSONS: Has there been any movement made towards the streamlining?

MR. KING: There has been internal work being contemplated, organizational charts developed, and directions laid out. Not a lot of detail I can share here because when it does come out it is going to affect people who are not currently aware that it is going to affect them. There is a

significant amount of work being contemplated right now and being prepared to roll out that will, in our view, not only streamline the service delivery, but make the service delivery better for the people of the Province.

MR. A. PARSONS: I have to ask this. I know the report is submitted, but his contract gave him some ability to stay around. Is Mr. Noseworthy still doing any work at all for the department?

MR. KING: Not to my knowledge.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

I am going to move forward to 1.2.02, Administrative Support. There is just about a \$900,000 cut to Salaries, so these positions that were cut, those were listed in the list that you came up with?

MR. KING: That is correct.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

Is there any fear that with \$900,000 worth of salaries gone there will be any negative affect on the operational activities of the department?

MR. KING: No, we do not have any fear. Like all departments, when we contemplated reductions, we looked at areas where we felt we could save money, change our service delivery model, and still provide the services that are required, both internally to government and externally to the people of the Province.

It will require, as I said, a refocusing on what we are attempting to do. The people behind me and their staff are heavily engaged in that, but we have every confidence that the decisions made here will not have a negative impact and that it will allow us to continue to provide quality services to the people we serve.

MR. A. PARSONS: In terms of that, just the generalities of refocusing on what it is we are trying to do, what is it that the department is trying to do there? What is the core mandate and what is the refocusing –where are we

moving when it comes to the department as a whole?

MR. KING: Well, it is a broad question because it is a broad department. We encompass everything from population study and poverty reduction across the spectrum to apprenticeship and skilled trades and Income Support and employment development.

Generally speaking, our objective is to try to ensure that the goals of the department align with those of the Province, which is that we want to ensure people are as educated as they possibly can be in the Province, to avail of every single opportunity available to them on the horizon. As you and others have heard us talk about many times, the opportunities in Newfoundland and Labrador today, and I just challenge members in the House to reflect back to when you went to high school versus today and the opportunities available to youth, there is just no comparison.

So we recognize that. We recognize that the government today, as with the previous government, is making significant investment in skills development, and we want to make sure that we are investing it in areas that are going to provide individuals with opportunities for employment afterwards.

Having said all that, of course, we have made significant investment in poverty reduction, and we want to make sure that the investments we are making there continue to benefit the people of the Province. Questions continue to get raised about why poverty is at a certain number when it ought to be at another number. We recognize that there are challenges, and there are all kinds of reasons why people drop in and out of poverty, none of the least of which is the increase in population in Newfoundland and Labrador as a result of people moving back here looking for opportunities. We want to make sure that we look out for those people as best we can, and we want to make sure that the programs that we have there are aligned to the needs of the people.

In addition to that, there is the whole segment of Income Support population where we have people in a situation where we believe we have an opportunity to transition them from Income Support into the workforce. Whether that is through retraining them or whether that is providing some training because they do not have any post-secondary education, we want to make sure the programs that the department offers opens the doors for those individuals to avail of the opportunities, and ultimately move them off Income Support and back into the workforce, so that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians get the most benefit from the employment opportunities.

MR. A. PARSONS: You just mentioned population increase. What is the current population or what is the percentage that it has increased in, say, the last year? Those stats must be within the department somewhere?

MR. KING: We can get it for you. We do not have it here.

MR. A. PARSONS: Can we find that sometime this morning somehow? Maybe send a PIN to somebody – I ask that not to be facetious, I am actually serious; I would be interested to know.

MR. DARRIN PIKE: The population of Newfoundland and Labrador from the 1990s – in 1991, we went from 512,000 and we are up to 512,973 individuals in 2011. That is our current population.

I read this wrong, Ross. I should give it back to you.

MR. A. PARSONS: What was that number?

MR. REID: The Province's population, according to the 2011 census figures, is 514,536.

MR. A. PARSONS: In 1991 it was 512,000?

MR. REID: In 1991 it was 579,000.

MR. A. PARSONS: It was 579,000?

MR. REID: Yes.

MR. A. PARSONS: It is 514,000 now?

MR. REID: Actually, in 1991 the population was 579,000. The population increase between 2001 and 2011 is 0.3 per cent, from 512,000 in 2011.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

CHAIR: Mr. A. Parsons, your time is getting near to the end. Is there a quick point or something that you need to make or can we move on?

MR. A. PARSONS: No.

CHAIR: Mr. Kirby, the next fifteen minutes is yours.

MR. KIRBY: Thanks.

I just want to go back to some of the discussion that was just had. There are a number of vacant positions in the department at the moment. How many of those vacant positions are – you are going to have to excuse my terminology – in client services or case management positions in Income Support? How many vacant positions do we have in that area right now?

MR. KING: Can you narrow the question to what division you are talking about? The bulk vast of our positions would be related to client support of some sort, whether or not it is on the apprenticeship side or –

MR. KIRBY: Income Support.

MR. KING: So client services in the Income Support –

MR. KIRBY: Front-line people who would be answering the telephone, basically, or people supervising those who are (inaudible) –

MR. KING: In the Income Support division?

MR. KIRBY: Yes, in Income Support, specifically.

MR. DARRIN PIKE: One of the challenges to that question is through restructuring these vacancies that we have now are reflecting on old structure that we are moving to a new structure. These positions will be moved as we streamline services. I am not trying to skirt your question. I hope you understand that.

MR. KIRBY: Yes.

MR. DARRIN PIKE: As we move from an old structure to a new structure, the vacancies in our new structure will be a different number than in our old structure, so we are caught in the middle of a restructuring plan. Obviously, when we move to the new structure we will have no vacancies and we will have complete staffing, but right now we are about to, in the very near future with approval, move to a new service delivery model that will help service clients better.

Some of that change our employees are just finding out about or are not aware of, so we do not want to get into the specifics until employees know all about it, but we are moving on the Income Support side to the new model, or we have improved efficiencies in our model of delivery of that service.

It is not skirting your answer in that the vacancies now are reflecting a model that we will not exist in the near future because we will have a new approach to service delivery when it comes to Income Support. In particular, you mentioned around answering the telephones for Income Support clients, our current model is based on a regional approach and we are suggesting that we are moving to a different model in the future, pending approval from the appropriate approval processes.

MR. KIRBY: Sure.

I guess if I had a car, the amount of fuel required for the car I have now is far more relevant than the amount of fuel that will be required for the car that I may have down the road. I guess I am more interested in the resources that we have now and if you want to share the information about how it would line up in the future model, I

am interested in that as well, but I guess I am interested to know how many vacant positions we have in those front-line positions in Income Support at the moment. There must be a number.

CHAIR: Minister King.

MR. KING: Thank you.

We will endeavour to get that number, Mr. Chair. I do not have it directly in front of me because, as the deputy has said, we are in a process of realigning, and the number of the vacancies has been left vacant intentionally so that we would not have to displace people as positions transition into new roles and responsibilities.

In the interest of time, I will get that information for the member.

MR. KIRBY: Sure.

I just wanted to share my concern about that. Last year when this Committee met, we exhausted three hours that we had and did not have enough time to get through everything. I am not sure if we got through half of it. I believe you might have been in the Chair at the time, Mr. Brazil. The minister committed to meeting again in order to answer some of those questions. We did not have a subsequent meeting. I wrote the minister twice before I got the information, which, I believe, was just provided to me after the Christmas holiday.

When might I be able to expect to get that? Are we talking June or later? It was close to a year.

MR. KING: If the past experience is negative, then I can refrain from making commitments. I can simply say I do not have it, if that is easier. I will endeavour to get it when I leave here. In the interest of the comment, I will refrain from making commitments. I will simply say if I have it, I have it; if I do not, I do not.

MR. KIRBY: Okay.

Another question related to this: You said there were four Student Aid Information Officers whose positions were eliminated; is that correct?

MR. KING: Yes, that is correct.

MR. KIRBY: Does the Student Aid Division monitor the percentage of calls answered and that sort of thing? Is there a quality assurance mechanism that is used to understand who is getting through and with what frequency?

MR. KING: Yes, there is.

MR. KIRBY: So what is it now?

MR. KING: What is what?

MR. KIRBY: What is the percentage of calls answered, for example, if that is the metric? If that is not the metric, what is it?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: I can get Dave Pike, the director, to answer the question, but we do have service quality standards that we have to meet and that ensures we respond to clients in a timely manner. Dave can elaborate a little more on that.

MR. DAVID PIKE: At Student Financial Services, as the deputy mentioned, we do have public service standards. We also have a telephone system that monitors telephone calls, calls that are dropped, and calls that are answered. I do not have that information here available right now; however, we do monitor the call flow and it is dependent upon the time of the year. We have significant volumes of calls, e-mails, and applications through the period August to October that would impact our delivery, but we do have established service standards that we attempt to answer all calls that come into our call centre.

MR. KIRBY: One would be able to ascertain then what the before and after picture looks like? I guess that has been part of the deliberations already, what would be the impact of eliminating these individuals who are working on the front line with student loan borrowers?

MR. KING: Yes, absolutely.

Any budgetary decisions that we took relative to the staff changes, part of the decision-making process would have been a contemplation of what the impact would be on client service delivery and whether or not the increased caseload, or workload, or telephone call load, whatever the case might be, whether or not that could be absorbed. All of that would have been factored into the decision-making process.

MR. KIRBY: Is that a figure I can get access to, what the percentage of calls answered, or whatever the public service standard data was prior to this decision?

MR. KING: It does exist, yes.

MR. KIRBY: It does exist. It is something I would use an Access to Information request to get?

MR. KING: It would have to be generated by the department and in order to – if I am reading what you are looking for, generating the data for past calls would be one piece of work. The post-budget would be a different piece of work because the model of service delivery is obviously being changed as a result of all the staff impacts. Providing a number today versus two weeks ago would not be as relevant maybe as two or three months down the road.

MR. KIRBY: I guess I just assumed that if you were moving to a different level of human resources to service those calls then the department would have already ascertained what the lay of the land was, just through its normal quality assurance monitoring.

MR. KING: That is correct.

We would determine and factor in a whole pile of data as part of the decision-making process. I do not have it here because I came to talk about Estimates and that is not part of Estimates. An Estimates discussion would be to discuss the change in the budget from last year to this year and why the figures changed. The number of

calls coming into Student Aid would not be part of that discussion.

MR. KIRBY: It is certainly material to any decisions around changes and the human resources required to do the government's business, which all comes right down to these numbers and the document.

MR. KING: It would be material to the decision but not material to an Estimates discussion. An Estimates discussion is to discuss the difference in the Estimates from last year to this year.

MR. KIRBY: Sure.

CHAIR: I do ask that you stick to the lines. If not, we will run out of time and you will not get a chance to ask the pertinent questions.

MR. KIRBY: Going back to what I was asking before, what is the percentage of calls answered in Income Support then, or what do we know about whether or not we are meeting the public service standard for customer service on Income Support?

MR. KING: Can I ask which line in the Estimates we are referring to?

CHAIR: I do want to stress again that you seem to be all over the place when it comes to – if we could stick to a particular line item, and then if there is a relevant question (inaudible) –

MR. KIRBY: Sure, I guess it would be under Income Support, page 8.6, the top, 3.1.01.

MR. KING: Could you repeat that? I have a job hearing, Mr. Chair.

MR. KIRBY: Page 8.6, subhead 3.1.01, Income Assistance. I assume that is the budget line we are dealing with here.

CHAIR: Are you saying under 03, Transportation and Communications?

MR. KIRBY: I assume it comes under Allowances and Assistance, but I do not know, maybe your Salaries for this comes out of

Administrative Support on 8.4? I am not really in a position to know.

I assume it is from your Administrative Support then, your client support people?

MR. KING: I am not sure what you are asking, if –

MR. KIRBY: What is the percentage of calls answered in Income Support? So let us say a member of the general public is there wanting to call about their, I guess you would call it case maintenance, wanting to call an individual in Income Support to inquire about their Income Support payment or something related to that.

MR. KING: Right.

MR. KIRBY: What would be the percentage of calls answered? So, we were just talking about the public service standard that you have for quality assurance.

MR. KING: Right.

MR. KIRBY: I am interested to know what the percentage of calls answered is.

MR. KING: I do not have that number here.

MR. KIRBY: You do not know – but it does exist, does it, in the department?

MR. KING: I imagine it exists or we could generate it.

MR. KIRBY: It is not something that is monitored on an ongoing basis?

MR. KING: Yes, it is monitored on an ongoing basis, but as I said a few moments ago, Mr. Chair, that is not part of the Estimates discussion as far as I am concerned. We are talking about the numbers in the budgets, and the service delivery that we are providing is a whole different policy decision as opposed to discussing why the Estimates for the budget of 2012-2013 is the same or different than 2013-2014.

CHAIR: Again, I do ask that you emphasize around either increases or decreases and concerns around the impacts versus the logistical numbers that may or may not have any impact on it.

Mr. Kirby.

MR. KIRBY: I guess if we had a number to start with, then we could start having a conversation about what the impact is. My assumption is that if you change personnel around, if you change either your delivery model and/or the number of people who are working on the front line, then you are going to change the frequency with which people have their calls answered when they are calling to inquire about Income Support, student financial aid, or whatever other programs people are calling about.

I guess we need to know what the departmental data is on it. I think there is an admission at least that it is monitored and to some extent this was considered when these decisions to cut positions were made.

MR. KING: I think I responded to that already.

CHAIR: Yes.

I understood the Estimates, and I chair them based on the principle that if there is a variation in the amount of money that has been estimated after used and put into this Budget, there would be questions around the impact it may have and the rationale behind why those decisions were made.

Other than that, I think the minister can only answer based on the changes in the financial bearing in the line items.

MR. KIRBY: Sure.

I will go back to Mr. Parsons.

CHAIR: I will hand it back to Mr. Parsons.

Mr. Parsons.

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you.

Just a general question here, coming from some of the answers given to Mr. Kirby: There is a restructuring going on in the department?

MR. KING: Yes.

MR. A. PARSONS: Is the fact that we are restructuring the department less than two years after its creation an indication that it was set up improperly?

MR. KING: No.

MR. A. PARSONS: No?

We created this in the late fall of 2011; it is the spring of 2013 and we are already going through a significant restructuring process. That would seem to me to indicate that there are significant issues very early on into the creation. That would seem to be something was thrown together.

Isn't that fair?

MR. KING: It is your view.

MR. A. PARSONS: I have asked this in Question Period and elsewhere. If we created a department in the fall of 2011, why did we wait until the spring of 2012 to pay somebody \$150,000 to tell us how to set the department up?

MR. KING: I do not think that would be a totally accurate statement. Without getting into detail, the individual who wrote a report was tasked to do a particular piece of work, but from the conceptualization of this department there was a vision on behalf of government of where we wanted to move. I talked a little bit about that in some of my earlier answers around ensuring that the services we provide are aligned with what the clients ought to be receiving in the Province and ensuring that we are maximizing the money we are spending.

The work on that really started from day one and we avail of any number of resources, including

the gentleman you referenced, at that particular point in time to assist us in making those decisions. That process is still ongoing. There have been changes made and there will be, as I said a moment ago, more changes made.

MR. A. PARSONS: It just seems to me, in terms of expenditure funds and resources, this would have been done prior to the creation of the department. There might be less turmoil created probably internally and definitely externally when it comes to the people involved in this process, the workers and the people receiving the services.

I am not going to press the point because I know we are just going to hand it back and forth, and there are other questions there. I understand that you are the acting minister; I understand that as well, but to me, and I do not think it is any secret my feelings on this, we created a department that was tossed together. Now we are restructuring it already and we have this report that we paid for, which is very extensive. It shows a number of issues in the department – a number – eighty-seven recommendations, and it is just ongoing turmoil, but I will continue.

Program Development and Planning, 1.2.03, and I guess it is somewhat of a general question. There is a \$1.2 million cut to Salaries. I do not need to know the positions; you have given me those. In terms of moving forward, again, with this restructuring of this department, I would imagine that policy, planning and analysis play a big part of that. Is that going to be comprised by cutting a very hefty portion of the people working on it?

MR. KING: I think what you can anticipate is that some of the ways we would have carried out our policy and planning in the past will be altered and we will find new ways to do things. We do not believe necessarily, though, it is going to compromise our ability to do proper program planning and development. We have taken extensive time to look at this, to look at whether or not the number of positions there could be reduced and, as the Deputy said a few moments ago, whether or not we could change the way in which we do work and the way duties

are assigned across, not only the department in here itself, but across the Province.

We do not believe there will be any compromise. We believe that because of the way we are changing service delivery and changing the focus of the department we will be able to continue and provide good quality work.

MR. A. PARSONS: Moving forward to 2.1.01, Regional Operations, if somebody could clarify for me. The next page I have Income Support. The people who work in Income Support, the front-line people, are their salaries under Regional Operations or are they under actual Income Support?

MR. KING: Regional Operations.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

How many front-line positions were eliminated, vacant or otherwise?

MR. KING: Purely in this division, you mean?

There were no front-line positions. There was a Management Analyst which would have obviously not been front line.

MR. A. PARSONS: Are there just as many people answering phones at Income Support as there were previously?

MR. KING: There are some vacancies and it is a little bit fluid, but there are as many positions there as there would have been pre-Budget. There are vacancies. Vacancies occur every day where, as you would know, somebody may be in a front-line position, a vacancy comes up in a higher-level position, they apply for a transfer, and so on, and there is a backfilling process. So there are vacancies there now, but there is the same number of positions there.

We are in the process, as we said, of streamlining and changing the way we deliver service to front-line clients away from just purely telephone to other types of ways. So some of those positions will change, but the

number of positions that exist, I guess to cut to the chase, have not been affected.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

I may be skirting back and forth between Regional Operations and Income Support, but the reason I ask that is because, when you talk about the delivery of service, we know that the call volumes are probably the same, but that the call rates, when it comes to Income Support, have decreased drastically. I know my friend asked about the numbers. Right now, you are between 25 per cent and 40 per cent of your calls being answered in Income Support. Can you clarify that? Is that true?

MR. KING: I cannot verify that.

MR. A. PARSONS: Nobody can verify the numbers? It was actually 70 per cent some time back three or four months ago, and it is actually now around 32 per cent.

MR. KING: Do you want to share what you are reading from?

MR. A. PARSONS: It is the same information. I just asked this. I would be interested to know if these are accurate. There must be some numbers within the department to show whether people are waiting up to two days to get calls answered.

MR. KING: I cannot verify the information you are providing here.

MR. A. PARSONS: Are you getting reports within the department of frustration from Income Support people who are not getting their calls answers within – we are not talking a day; we are talking two days.

MR. KING: I think it is fair to say that we would get frustration expressed by any number of clients looking for service. Some of it would be legitimate. That is not just Income Support, though. That could be student financial assistance officers. It could be in the Apprenticeship Division.

In any number of areas, you often receive frustration from people because either, A, they did not get the timely response they wanted – and some is legit, by the way. Some is not, but some is. In other cases, it is frustration because they did not get the answer they want, and it is two very different issues.

I cannot verify the numbers you are providing there. If you have something concrete you are basing that on and you want to share it, I can certainly look into it, but I cannot verify those numbers.

MR. A. PARSONS: I am pretty sure the numbers are within the department. If you go back to whoever tabulates these stats, they are there. You will have the same information.

These positions that are vacant: Are they going to be filled while the streamlining goes on or are we going to wait until the transition done?

MR. KING: The transition is an ongoing process. There are, as you know, many facets to the department that we are trying to move around. As pieces of the department are streamlined, we will fill positions. Some will be filled quicker than others.

In some areas, there is more of an impact than others around how the service is going to be delivered. As a result, there is going to be more positions that will change. So the vacancies in some cases are what provide us flexibility to not have to hire people, then lay people off, and go through that exercise. So we will leave the vacancy until we can readjust the position, but the positions will be filled immediately as the restructuring proceeds in particular divisions.

MR. A. PARSONS: Is it true that applications in Income Support have actually doubled in the amount of time it takes to complete them? We have gone from anywhere from seven to ten days to fifteen days.

MR. KING: Processing time, you mean?

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes.

MR. KING: I cannot verify that.

MR. A. PARSONS: Has the amount of time for emergency, we will say, applications increased from same-day service to up to two days?

MR. KING: I cannot verify that. I can say we give top priority to any emergency applications that come in.

MR. A. PARSONS: Now, one of the things Mr. Noseworthy brought up is that Income Support workers, case workers, should be case managing. That was one of the things he specifically brought up. What we are hearing is that these workers can barely answer the phone, let alone case manage.

Are there going to be any steps taken to actually make this recommendation happen in terms of increasing front-line staff and actually field the call volume that is coming in so they can do what Mr. Noseworthy recommended, which was to manage cases rather than just answer the phone, or in some cases not be able to answer the phone?

MR. KING: Yes, all of that is being factored in to the remodelling of what these positions do and what their responsibilities are. I am not skirting your answer because this will all become clear once we know what for certain what we are doing and able to communicate it with employees.

I am a little hesitant knowing you are talking about front-line people who take calls. Anybody who is listening to this is wondering, depending on my answer, is my job at stake? So I am little hesitant around that. I think it is suffice to say that I can confirm that any recommendations that are intended to improve the way we deliver service to the people are going to be factored in and acted upon.

CHAIR: Excuse me, Mr. A. Parsons. If you have one last quick comment, your time is up and I will go back to Mr. Kirby.

Mr. Kirby.

MR. KIRBY: Continuing along with Income Assistance, then, you are unable to say how many positions are currently vacant in client services, case management, or what have you, front-line positions or you are you unwilling what they are – are you unable to say it or you are unwilling to say it?

MR. KING: What was the first part of your question?

MR. KIRBY: How many vacant positions are there in front-line support client service or case management? You are unwilling to say how many positions are vacant or you are unable to say? Which would be the more appropriate characterization?

MR. KING: Well, I think I answered the question very clearly. I said I am unable to say.

MR. KIRBY: You are unable to say, and you are unable to say that because?

MR. KING: Because I do not have the number in front of me.

MR. KIRBY: Does anybody over there have the number in front of them, any of the staff who came with you?

MR. KING: No, we do not have that data here. We came to talk about Estimates. That would not have been factored into our discussion on Estimates.

MR. KIRBY: Sure, but you did read from a chart of personnel at the beginning, right?

MR. KING: Which line are we talking about in Estimates now, Mr. Chair?

CHAIR: I think the minister had answered exactly what positions were now out of the department. Is there a particular question or emphasis around one of the line items that you (inaudible) –

MR. KIRBY: So you are also unable or unwilling to say what percentage of calls are answered in terms of service quality standards.

MR. KING: I think I also responded to that one. We have a quality assurance model that we employ, Mr. Chair. The deputy, I think, has spoken to this as well for the record today, that we do have standards and we expect people to follow the standards. As I said before, I am unable to provide that number because I do not have it.

I am not going to give a commitment because of the member's comment scolding the previous minister. The information is available and I can certainly ascertain to get it, but I am not making a commitment to do that because of the opening comments.

MR. KIRBY: Does it make sense for me to follow up with Minister Shea to inquire about these figures? Is that how I might arrive at them?

MR. KING: I cannot comment on what would make sense for you to do. That is up to you, if you want to pursue that.

MR. KIRBY: That is not information that you are willing to make a commitment to provide. You do not have them here with you; that is basically the reason why.

MR. KING: I have responded to that, I think, three times.

MR. KIRBY: Okay.

Under 3.1.01, Income Assistance, under Revenue – Provincial, there is a number somewhere of the total number of cases, the total number of clients. Is it possible to get that by a breakdown of those cases by age?

MR. KING: Which section are you referring to, 3.1.01?

MR. KIRBY: Under 3.1.01, we are talking about the total amount for Income Assistance is \$222 million. I assume that is going to a number of individuals and the department would have a breakdown of the number of cases by particular characteristics. Is it possible to get

that? The total number of clients, for example, that would be a basic figure.

MR. KING: Just so I am clear, I am asking you the question now. You are asking if the total number of Income Support cases –

MR. KIRBY: If you have a demographic breakdown of those cases that we can have.

MR. KING: I do not have it here, but I can get that for you.

MR. KIRBY: So that is something that we can have. Do we know if that is a breakdown by family type as well? Whether it is single parent households or –

MR. KING: Yes, it does include that.

MR. KIRBY: It does, yes.

There was a discussion at some point of a review of the Income Support act and regulations. Is that something that is still going to happen? What is the status of that review? Is it ongoing?

MR. KING: Did you say the regulations?

MR. KIRBY: Income Support act and regulations.

MR. KING: It is currently being looked at.

MR. KIRBY: It is currently being looked at?

MR. KING: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: Are we expecting an announcement on that at some point in the near future?

MR. KING: No.

MR. KIRBY: What about a common screening tool for client suitability for employment and training? Has that been implemented at this point, or is that part of your plan for the new world order of things in Income Support?

MR. KING: Part of our plan for the what?

MR. KIRBY: For the new model, your transformation when you get to the other side of the Rubicon with your departmental model.

MR. KING: I am not sure I follow. I did not know we were trying to get over a Rubicon. Maybe if you could be more clear in your question.

MR. KIRBY: After your business transformation is complete, will you have implemented a common screening tool for client suitability for employment and training for Income Support clients?

MR. KING: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: So this will be part of your announcement when you get to the other side of your transformation?

MR. KING: I am not aware that I indicated that we are going to do an announcement.

MR. KIRBY: You are not going to announce it?

MR. KING: I did not say we were not, but I am not aware that I said we were either.

MR. KIRBY: Okay, I thought you said in short order or sooner or later or something to that effect, we will know.

MR. KING: There is no indication of an announcement in that.

MR. KIRBY: Okay. So how will we know then?

MR. KING: We will let you know.

MR. KIRBY: In a Ministerial Statement, I expect.

MR. KING: I have some data here, Mr. Chair, I can share for the record. I just wanted to make sure this is what the member was asking for. With respect to the number of cases, we do have a breakdown between – I will just give you the numbers. It goes by single person, a couple

without children, a couple with children, single parents, and refugees.

Under single person, there was 15,974 total cases; a couple without children, there was 2,133 cases; a couple with children, there was 1,088 cases; a single parent, we had 4,698 cases; and we had one under the category of refugee.

With respect to the other categories that you would have asked, these are the ones that I have available: For females twenty-one years of age and under, there were 3,341; for males twenty-nine years of age and under, there would have been 2,199. The total for that, the total youth, as we call them here, is 5,540. For females thirty years of age and above, there would have been 11,196; and for males thirty years of age and above, there would have been 10,379.

The total number of cases, Mr. Chair, that we would have had, as I said the single person, the couples with children, without children, and so on, would have been 23,894. So by breakdown, under single persons, the number that I quoted would have constituted 66.9 per cent of the caseload; couples without children would have constituted 8.9 per cent of the caseload; couples with children would have been 4.6 per cent of the caseload; and single parents would have been 19.7 per cent of the caseload.

With respect to the total number of adults that I quoted, females twenty-nine and under would have constituted 12.3 per cent; the males twenty-nine and under would have constituted 8.1 per cent; females thirty years of age and older would have constituted 41.3 per cent; and the males thirty years of age and older would have been 38.3 per cent.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you.

Going down to 3.1.03, the bottom of page 8.6, Mother/Baby Nutrition Supplement, Amount to be Voted is \$389,900 and the amount budgeted for the previous year was \$489,900. That is \$100,000 less for 2013. Why is it \$100,000 less?

MR. KING: The budget for this category, Mr. Chair, is based on actual trends of usage. So the budget for this year actually reflected the usage of the past number of years.

As the minister has said in the House, if, in fact, that number changes, then the budget will be adjusted up accordingly. The cut in the budget reflects usage; it does not reflect a cut in the program. There is no one who is eligible for this program, applying for this program, that would be denied service.

MR. KIRBY: So really the source of this is 3.1.03.09, Allowances and Assistance and that figure has gone from \$420,000 down to \$320,000. How many clients were supported for \$420,000?

MR. KING: For the past fiscal year, that would have been 280.

MR. KIRBY: Two hundred and eighty.

MR. KING: That is an average per month.

MR. KIRBY: That is an average per month.

So would I be correct to assume that there is a projection that you have for 2013 that has a lower monthly average that you are basing this figure on, is that what it is? It is a projection.

MR. KING: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: So it may or may not be correct, right?

MR. KING: That is correct. Which would be, just for information purposes, no different than we do with Income Support clients because we are unable to determine from one month to the next how many people will come through the door, so that budget as well is based on a projection model.

MR. KIRBY: Okay.

Going down to 4.1.01, Employment Development Programs, there was \$1.6 million unspent in 2012 under Grants and Subsidies

there. So in 2012 the budgeted amount was \$8,752,600 and the amount spent was \$7,118,400. Is there a reason for the million-and-a-half or so difference in the projected expenditure and the actual expenditure?

MR. KING: The difference, Mr. Chair, in the actual and projected would have been a result of funding that we would have budgeted notionally and allocated to a number of groups or activities and there was no take up on the money, so the money slipped.

MR. KIRBY: Groups or activities: Is there a list of what was not funded, I guess?

MR. KING: I can give you a quick overview, sure.

There would have been the Random North Development Association, Bridging the Gap program, under the Business Development Program, was notionally assigned \$800,000. There was delayed implementation in an employment transitions site, which was about \$350,000, and there was slippage in Wage Subsidy Programs due to some changing dates of placements of about \$400,000. There were a number of instances of much smaller amounts, if you do the math, where we had provided some funding commitments to community partners and they did not avail of all the funds. The bulk of the \$1.6 million, if you add up the three figures I just gave you, you will get the bulk of it.

CHAIR: Mr. Kirby, if you have one last point, you can finish up.

MR. KIRBY: I think this question is relevant to here. There were modifications to the Income Support program announced in the Budget that were intended to enhance employment services for those recipients; is that funded through here?

MR. KING: Not in this section.

MR. KIRBY: Not in that section?

MR. KING: No.

MR. KIRBY: So that is under 3.1.01, Income Assistance, on the previous page at the top? Is that where the funding for that program is coming from?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: The 3.1.01 is not the section you are asking about. The funding that you see in that is actually our funding for Income Support clients, the basic living allowance and all the supports that we provide Income Support clients.

What you are referring to, which there has not been any formal announcements on some programs, the funding would not be found in there; it would be found in the multiple places where we are initiating new programs that we will initiate in the near future, programs to assist Income Support clients to attach to the labour market and the labour force. So funding for those programs would come in a couple of other spots in the Budget, along with other skills enhancement programs for other individuals. So 3.1.01 is not the spot that you would find funding associated with potential new programs that would be –

MR. KIRBY: So it is all over these lines, is it?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: It would not be anywhere in the 3.1.01 section; it would be in the Labour Market Agreement funding, Labour Market Development funding, and a number of other spots where we fund programs for individuals who attach to the labour market. Those new programs that were referred to, there have been no formal announcements on those initiatives yet.

MR. KIRBY: That is coming, is it? That is budgeted for here?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: Pardon me?

MR. KIRBY: It is budgeted for here in those, then, in the Labour Market Development Agreement and the Labour Market Adjustment Programs? The funding is provided for?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: We have notional budgets associated with the potential new programs.

MR. KIRBY: Pardon me?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: We have budgets associated with the potential new programs to support enhanced stability for all individuals to attach to the labour force and a reference to increase the number of people that can move into employment related – so yes, I hope I am answering your question.

MR. KIRBY: Are those the modifications that were announced in the Budget, in this most recent Budget, or are those more generally what you are talking about? There are programs –

MR. DARRIN PIKE: I am taking a leap to read the reference you are making in the Budget, but I would make a leap of faith and say this is what you are referring to in the Budget announcements about enhancing services for Income Support and attachment to the labour force, in particular Income Support clients.

CHAIR: Mr. Kirby, I am just going to give you thirty more seconds (inaudible).

MR. KIRBY: Just to clarify, yes, on March 26, 2013, there was a backgrounder sent out from Advanced Education and Skills. At the bottom of that it says, “The Provincial Government will also be modifying the Income Support program to improve emphasis on providing recipients with enhanced employment services to better assist and inform their job search.” The next sentence is not relevant, so I guess that is it.

MR. KING: That is it.

MR. DARRIN PIKE: That is it, yes

MR. KIRBY: Modifications to the Income Support program; that is what we are talking about?

MR. KING: Yes.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Kirby.

Mr. Parsons.

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

I am going to go back to Income Support, just where I left off there. You mentioned, Minister, about how you did not want people to be worrying about their jobs and stuff. I guess where I was going with this is, if Mr. Noseworthy is talking about putting in more of a case management aspect to it right now with Income Support, what I am hearing is the staff are having a hard time just keeping up with the applications for glasses or dental care, let alone the work side of it.

Is there going to be a move made toward implementing more case management, which to me would signify a need for more staff?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: To answer your question, you have to distinguish what you mean by case management, what Mr. Noseworthy is referring to, and what you would adapt or we would modify in our own thinking of what that means.

The back-end services that Income Support clients see on a daily basis or on a monthly basis, which is to provide, if you are on Income Support, the basic living allowances and other things, we need to enhance and improve that service. So that is just to ensure that people who need supports because they are in a certain situation and time of life, that they get them in a timely manner.

On a related item, our Income Support clients, we want to support movement to the labour market. So if you want to distinguish the case management piece from the – routine is not the right word, but the normal support that we need to provide for Income Support clients; if we are separating those two issues, then the move in the future is to help identify and support – one of the members referred to identifying or help support Income Support clients who are ready and able at that time in their lives to move into the labour market. We need to help support through case management of those clients who are able to move in that force.

So, if I separate the two issues, then I think I might have answered your question as yes, now that I have forgotten your question.

MR. A. PARSONS: The question is: Does that not signify we need more people rather than less?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: No, I think what it means is we have got to do things differently. We absolutely cannot do the same things the same way with the same number of people. So that is a whole part of the business transformation. Some of the references in the John Noseworthy report and our own internal work is that if we are going to change some of our business practices, there is no doubt we cannot do the same thing we are doing now with the same number of people. If we want to do different things, we are going to have to do things differently.

So, this whole process is about figuring out ways we can do our business with the resources we have better. Hopefully in the next few months, then, we will start to see that changeover, and then you will see that sense of confidence that we are changing our business and we are responding in the way we need to do things.

We have to do things differently. We cannot keep doing the same things that we are doing now in the same ways we are doing it now with the same number of people. We think we can do things differently if we change our business practices, streamline some of our services, and optimize on scale where possible. Then we can switch our resources to better case manage people who are moving into the labour market.

MR. A. PARSONS: Has that training started for the staff?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: Some of the training at, I will call it, the regional level is just starting to happen now. There were meetings as of this week, for instance, but it is not like a one-day, one-event, drive through and you are done type of training. This is going to take process time to move and make sure all our staff are –

MR. A. PARSONS: What I am worried about is the front-line staff who answer calls. The call return rate is poor right now, and these are the people facing the brunt of the angry people on the phone. I am just hoping that they will get the supports they need because from what I gather morale is quite low. I am just hoping that if we are moving forward, these people are going to be given that assistance so that they can move forward.

Speaking of Income Support and the Allowances and Assistance, I believe it is around a \$6.7 million cut to assistance. How are we going to achieve this? That is under 3.1.01.09, Allowances and Assistance.

MR. KING: Excuse me, the estimate Mr. Parsons is based on the anticipated caseload for this year. The answer to that one is very similar to the Mother/Baby Nutrition Supplement. That is a projected estimation of the number of cases we will have. That number may very well be adjusted back up depending on the cases that come in.

MR. A. PARSONS: It might seem ambitious given last year it was \$233 million and it actually worked out exactly like that, so to go down to \$226 million to save almost \$7 million.

MR. KING: It is not necessarily going to be a savings of \$6.75 million. What we are projecting here is a reduction here of \$6.75 million. Elsewhere, you will find that we are projecting or hoping that we will reinvest some of that into transition supports and training opportunities to transition some people into the workforce.

MR. A. PARSONS: In the Budget \$1.2 million was announced to enhance health benefits for Income Support recipients. Would that fall under this department or Health?

MR. KING: I think that is Health. Yes, that is Health.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

One of the press releases from last year Budget 2012, it said, “Beginning in 2007, indexed income support rates to the Consumer Price Index for a test period of six years”. So 2012, last year, would have been the sixth year. Was that continued?

MR. KING: No.

MR. A. PARSONS: What was the reasoning?

MR. KING: We just chose not to follow through with it at that point in time for a number of reasons. We have made significant investments in the Province to assist low-income earners and people who are challenged, as you would be aware being the critic in Health, the health plan, adult dental. We have invested in the elimination of school fees, and textbooks being provided free of charge, which are all benefits to low-income families; a student assistance program which provides free money and interest-free loans.

We provide the enhanced earnings exemptions of 20 per cent for those who are receiving social assistance. We provided greater allowances for eyeglasses, exams and special diets. We have adjusted the policy to provide a greater overlap so if they are transitioning into the workforce, they can still receive Income Support for a greater period of time. We just did not continue the indexing at CPI, but we do believe we provided a lot of other supports that enhance what they are getting.

MR. A. PARSONS: You do not want to get me started on the dental plan here today.

MR. KING: Fill your boots.

MR. A. PARSONS: The Poverty Reduction Strategy: How many people are tasked with that strategy right now?

MR. KING: Well, it depends on what you are asking because there is some co-ordination going on within our department, but the Poverty Reduction Strategy is a cross-government initiative. For example, the love of your life lately, the adult dental plan, would be by the

Department of Health, but it is part of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. The school fees and textbooks will all be administered through the Department of Education. Our role is more of a co-ordinating role of the whole strategy across government, but there are people working on this strategy in every department, or almost every department.

MR. A. PARSONS: We did an ATIPP request that actually said there were seven positions when it came to Poverty Reduction and that three of them were vacant: the Director of Senior Policy, Planning and Research Analyst, and Program and Policy Development Specialist. That is something we have brought up in this House a number of times with the minister, talking about Poverty Reduction, the goals, and how this department co-ordinates it.

Who is co-ordinating it if the Director of Senior Policy and these people who are supposed to be involved, those positions, are not filled?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: The lead co-ordination would follow to our ADM of Community Support Services. Any time when we have vacancies, the work that we do, we share the work around and efficiencies – it is like any organization. We maintain the file and we keep pushing ahead.

MR. A. PARSONS: It would be fair to say that I know the work gets spread around if you have almost half of your positions not filled. You can only stretch so thin if you have about half of the people working on Poverty Reduction, seeing that it does not have the same importance that it may have had.

MR. KING: I think what is important to distinguish here is the work of the staff you are referencing in the Department of Advanced Education and Skills, which is to complement and support work that is going on across departments. For example, all of the initiatives that would be included in Poverty Reduction would not be initiatives of the Department of Advanced Education and Skills. It is not the policy person in our department who would be responsible for designing all of these programs.

There is a ministerial committee, which I sit on, that provides the direction to departments on looking at initiatives that can help alleviate poverty or support those who are living in poverty. Obviously they would include social departments, Health, Education, Advanced Education and Skills, Justice, Women's Policy Office. Each of these line departments and agencies would be tasked on a regular basis with their own staff of coming up with ways that we can enhance what we are currently doing in Poverty Reduction.

I am offering that commentary, just to be clear for the record, that the fact that there are vacancies in the Poverty Reduction office in our department does not, should not suggest that we are not continuing to work on poverty reduction. These positions support the work of the ministerial committee and do other important pieces of work and when they are vacant, other people in the department pick up the work.

The actual on the ground development of strategies and refining of strategies, that is work – in my own department, in Justice, for example, it is ongoing as we speak. In the Department of Education, it is ongoing as we speak. It all feeds into this department as the co-ordinating or overseeing department. The positions that we are talking about are positions that support the overseeing and co-ordinating; they are not positions that are developing the strategy.

MR. A. PARSONS: I know we are going to have different views on it. We have half the people working on the actual co-ordination across departments to make sure that there is a government-wide approach at this – I know the front line is there, but the people putting it all together are not there. Again, we could go back and forth.

MR. KING: Just to be clear, what I am saying, though, is the work is getting done. Because positions are vacant for a period of time, one should not assume that that work is just being parked and stopped. This work is being picked up by other people within the department. Poverty reduction has been clearly identified by

former Premier Williams and current Premier Dunderdale as a top priority for our government.

In instances where we are challenged, whether it is one of these three vacant positions that you referenced, we simply expect the minister and the deputy minister to reassign resources in the department to ensure that that work continues to get done because it is one of the highest priorities for us. The work is getting done. The fact that the positions are vacant is a matter of record, but it is not a fact that the work is not getting done because they are vacant. The work would be getting done by other people.

MR. A. PARSONS: Are the positions going to be filled?

MR. KING: Any of the positions, other than the positions that I have identified early on, any other vacancies that we have now, unless they are affected through some re-tweaking, we will proceed to fill vacancies.

MR. A. PARSONS: Minister, I would love to get into the back and forth with you, because I have a very divergent point of view on this, but the time does not permit me, because I know it has been identified as a high priority, but when –

MR. KING: Well, I would appreciate hearing your views in the next minute-and-a-half, if you would like.

MR. A. PARSONS: No, I have an hour-and-a-half to go through and there are a lot of other issues, so I am going to continue on.

MR. KING: Okay.

MR. A. PARSONS: What is the plan over the next eight months to get the Province to the lowest poverty rates in Canada?

MR. KING: Well, we have said from the very beginning, getting us to the lowest poverty rates in Canada is a goal – a lofty one, albeit, considering that when we started I think we were probably the worst in Canada.

We are trying to invest in areas where we believe it will have the greatest impact on the quality of life for people who fall below the poverty line, first of all, to influence their quality of life. So, when we talk about things like the adult dental plan, and the health plan, which would have been initiatives brought forward by our government, those kinds of things influence quality of life; because they effectively provide a service that people would not otherwise avail of, first of all, and secondly, in some instances, like the education investments, they put money back in people's pockets. So that is the first thing we are investing in.

The second priority would be to provide opportunities – which is back to the bigger picture of the reorganizing of the department – where people falling below poverty can avail of educational opportunities that will qualify them to move into the workforce and avail of some of the new opportunities that the Province has seen in the last three or four years and that we anticipate for the future.

So, we are going to continue to invest in the skilled trades, we are going to continue to invest in the Income Support recipients, for example, and trying to move some of those off that caseload through an education process and into the workforce.

CHAIR: Okay, if we could take a ten-minute quick break.

MR. A. PARSONS: That will be added on at the end, Mr. Chair?

CHAIR: We will get to 12:20 p.m., if that is good with the minister. I added ten when we started, waiting for the centre, and the break.

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you.

CHAIR: At 12:20 p.m. we will conclude.

We will have a ten-minute break. Everybody be back at 10:40 p.m., please.

Recess

CHAIR: We are back at 10:40. Mr. Minister, are you ready to go forward?

Mr. Kirby, the next fifteen minutes are yours.

MR. KIRBY: Okay, thanks.

I want to pick up where I left off on the top of page 8.7, 4.1.01, Employment Development Programs.

MR. KING: Page 8.7.

MR. KIRBY: Again, correct me if I am wrong. There is an Employment Transitions program for single parents, that is funded from one of those lines? Is it from Grants and Subsidies or is it from Allowances and Assistance? Grants and Subsidies, is it?

MR. KING: That is under Grants and Subsidies, Mr. Chair.

MR. KIRBY: There are five locations right now delivering that?

MR. KING: I beg your pardon?

MR. KIRBY: Are there five locations delivering that program now?

MR. KING: Just a second.

It is three.

MR. KIRBY: Three?

MR. KING: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: Is that a change from 2012?

MR. KING: No, there is no change right? No.

MR. KIRBY: Do you have a sense of the number of single parents who participated in that program or are participating?

MR. KING: We do not have the numbers here, no.

MR. KIRBY: Is that something I should request?

MR. KING: Pardon?

MR. KIRBY: Is that something that can be provided upon request?

MR. KING: Yes, I think we can get that.

MR. KIRBY: The Linkages Program, does that fall under Grants and Subsidies here?

MR. KING: Yes, it does.

MR. KIRBY: The NL Works program?

MR. KING: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: Is there anything new going on with either of those programs that are a result of the business transformation of the department? Are they going to be changed?

MR. KING: No, not necessarily with those particular programs.

The transformation that you refer to would be more along the lines of support for apprenticeship, Income Support recipients, and how to deliver those kinds of services, but these particular programs will not be changed.

MR. KIRBY: Just out of my own curiosity, with these new programs or approaches that you are talking about using to help Income Support clients into the labour market, are these programs that were developed here or are these best practices that you have looked at in other jurisdictions and decided to go with?

MR. KING: It would be, I think, fair to say a combination. We would have done and are still doing in some areas a cross-jurisdictional review across Canada and other jurisdictions where they would have similar circumstances that we do. We would factor that into our own policy direction and decision making with the department. It would be a combination of looking at best practices elsewhere.

If your question is, would we be able to point to one change and say that came from Alberta or another from – I am not sure that we are going to end up in that place because we might very well find things in other provinces that we will use but we may change or tweak to suit our own demographic here. It absolutely does include research outside the Province.

MR. KIRBY: Between the Linkages Program and the NL Works program, do you have a sense of how many clients and how many employers are participating in those programs at present?

MR. KING: Just give me one second there now. Under the Linkages, you are interested in the number of –

MR. KIRBY: Of clients and employers.

MR. KING: Okay.

The client number, we would have to contact the sponsors for verification, but I can give you the number of sponsors and the names if you want them.

MR. KIRBY: Yes.

MR. KING: We have: the Ability Employment Corporation, Alexander Bay Terra Nova Development Association, Baie Verte Peninsula Economic Development Association, Bay d'Espoir Community Youth Network, BAYNet Inc., the Canadian Paraplegic Association with a number of sites, the Central Community Development Corporation, Community Centre Alliance, Community Youth Network for the Isles of Notre Dame Corporation, Community Youth Network in Botwood, Community Youth Network in St. Lawrence, Employment Preparation Inc., Exploits Community Association Inc., Exploits Valley YMCA, Fortune Bay East Development Association, Grand Lake Centre of Economic Development, Green Bay South Education Centre Inc., Green Bay Youth Centre Inc., Harbour Breton Community Youth Network Inc., Humber Community YMCA, John Howard Society in St. John's, John Howard Society in Stephenville, Lower Trinity South Regional Development

Association, Placentia Area Development Association, the Port aux Basques and Area Chamber of Commerce, Ramea Economic Development Corporation, the Salvation Army in Gander, Smallwood Crescent Community Centre, which would be in Marystown, Southern Avalon Development Association, St. Barbe Development Association, St. Mary's Bay North Development Association, Straits Development Association, the Bay St. George South Area Development Association, the Town of Gambo, WestRock Community Centre Inc., White Bay Central Development Association, and Women Interested in Successful Employment with three separate. To be clear, that is for 2012-2013, the last fiscal.

For NL Works the same thing applies. We would have to check with the sponsors for the number of clients. The following sponsors would have been funded: Focenco Limited, Robin Coombs, GRI Simulations Inc., Labrador Winter Games Association, Festival 500 Inc., Happy Valley-Goose Bay SPCA, the Town Council of Lawn, the Town of Ferryland, Way 2 Grow Child Care Centre, Innwood Properties Limited, St. John's Status of Women Council, Newfoundland and Labrador Company 65762, Ann Davis, Bayview Groceteria, Bond Drover, Cardiology Consultants Limited, D P Sales Ltd., Diversions Entertainment Inc., Doug Benoit (ICR Building Solutions), Dr. Douglas Musseau Dentistry, Eastern Technical Services Limited, Farrells Foodex Ltd. "Freshmart", Fibreglass Works Ltd, First Choice Cabinets Ltd., Flynn's Limited, Hoi Tian Ltd., Hotel Harbour Grace, Hutchings Contracting Ltd., Ida's Senior Home Limited, Interprint Systems Ltd., Island Treasures, James Yick, JCR Auto Clinic Ltd., KEDS Holdings Inc., Keith Rumbolt, Lca Enterprises Limited, Madison's Convenience Incorporated, Marilyn Blagdon, Matt's Auto Service, Max Norris(C & M Mechanical), Mid Island Animal Health Centre, Natasha Greene, Paula M. Young, Philip Meade, Pipers Department Store, Pizza Plus, Precious Times Children's Centre, R & M Self Storage, Rivermill Lodge Ltd., Rodway's Printing & Office Supplies Inc., Seaview Cafe, Simmons Auto Sales & Services Limited, Simmons Tire and Service Centre Ltd., Speedy Automotive

Limited, State of the Arts, Stellar Storm Industries Inc., the Newfoundland Chocolate Company, Tiffany Village Inc., Victorian Manor Limited, Wee Gems Daycare, Younger Years Day Care & Preschool, Tangles Unisex Styling, Provincial Fitness Inc., 11134 Newfoundland Ltd (ICONS), Bast Ltd., Cre8iv Design Studio, E.G. Kelly Ltd (Kelly's Pizza Plus), Endless Enterprises Inc., Monarc Logistics Ltd, P & L Restaurants Inc., Tracey Dinn, Work Global Canada Inc., Royal Canadian Legion Branch # 22, Salvation Army Thrift Store, Africana Enstyle Ltd, Coastal Chiropractic Inc., Autism Society of Newfoundland and Labrador, Bri-mar Management Inc., Sonrise Ministries, Labrador Investments Ltd, Lisa King, Norris Arm Boys and Girls Club Inc, Admiral Ventures Ltd., CPZ Operators Inc., Jenkearle Limited, Muljack Enterprises Ltd., Wimb Foods Ltd (Quiznos Subs), Autism Society of Newfoundland and Labrador, Evergreen Environmental Corp., Dynamic Air Shelters, R & L Brown Ltd (Gambo Save Easy), St. Barbe Consumer Co-op Society, 11335 Newfoundland Limited, Central Convenience Limited, Iris Family Video Inc., Peter Hurley of Hurley's Enterprises, Weather Shore Windows Inc, Katherine Hayes, Brancy One Holdings Ltd., Proper Care Services Inc, Rosie's Orchard Inn, Carter Holdings Inc., Frank Pye, Lighthouse Productions Inc., North East Arm Ventures Inc, Salvage Bay Motel, Changjiang Restaurant, J B K Ventures Ltd., Rising Tide Theatre Association, Town Council of Hampden, Town of North West River, Beachside Manor Ltd., A & W (Atlantic Food Services), the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor, 61065 Newfoundland and Labrador Inc., Flynn's Limited, Gander Day Care Centre Ltd., Irish Loop Coffee House, Newfound Pianos, Rosedale Manor, Steve's Service Centre Ltd –

MR. KIRBY: Excuse me, Minister, perhaps in the interest of time, since we have taken about three minutes now to read the list, maybe we could have that tabled or I could request the document.

MR. KING: The document is actually a confidential document with other information, but as I said I am prepared to give you the

names. That is what we are here for, or if you are happy –

MR. KIRBY: Well, at the end, why don't we come back to that, if we have time?

MR. KING: Sure.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you.

Moving down to 4.1.02, Labour Market Development Agreement, in the previous year under 01, Salaries, there was about \$425,000 worth of salaries unspent. Is there a reason for that?

MR. KING: There were a number of vacant positions as a result of delays in hirings. People left and savings would have accrued while we went through the recruitment process.

MR. KIRBY: Moving down further to 4.1.03, Labour Market Agreement, non-EI eligible, is it 09, Allowances and Assistance or 10, Grants and Subsidies that includes the Apprenticeship Wage Subsidy?

MR. KING: You are asking which section?

MR. KIRBY: Yes, which one of those includes the Apprenticeship Wage Subsidy? Is it included in one of those lines?

MR. KING: Excuse me, just one second, please.

Sorry about this, you did say 4.1.02? I just want to make sure I am correct here.

MR. KIRBY: Line 03.

MR. KING: Oh, sorry, my apologies.

MR. KIRBY: Line 09 or 10, so Allowances and Assistance or Grants and Subsidies; page 8.8.

MR. KING: No, the apprenticeship is not included under those particular sections.

CHAIR: Mr. Kirby, your time is done.

Mr. A. Parsons.

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

Back on 2.1.01, the question I had there – I noticed there was a cut from Salaries, and we discussed that part. Now, my understanding is that there was a Regional Manager of Corporate Services position for St. John's. It was posted early last year, but the competition was cancelled. So I am wondering if that was the case.

MR. KING: The very first section, I apologize.

MR. A. PARSONS: No, sorry about that – 2.1.01, Client Services, under Regional Operations.

MR. KING: Yes, okay, and your question was there was a regional manager position –

MR. A. PARSONS: Regional Manager of Corporate Services, it was posted last year for St. John's, but the competition was cancelled, and I am just wondering why it was cancelled.

MR. KING: That position was filled.

MR. A. PARSONS: Oh, okay. When was it filled?

OFFICIAL: About two years ago.

MR. KING: They are saying about two years ago.

MR. A. PARSONS: Two years ago? Okay, but it was posted a year ago.

MR. KING: Unless we are talking about a different – do you have a copy of the ad there?

MR. A. PARSONS: I will see if I can find it here and I will come back to it.

MR. KING: Yes, if you could provide it to us. We might be talking about a different position.

MR. A. PARSONS: I am going to move forward in the interest of time.

I am just wondering now - and this is under the Income Support section 3.1.01 - when we talk about the number of people on Income Support currently, which the number I have is 24,794, does that number factor in children and partners of the people on Income Support?

MR. KING: Yes, if you recollect, I gave you two numbers there; one was cases and one was adults.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

MR. KING: Under the cases, children would be included under that.

Just hang on now; I am making sure.

MR. DARRIN PIKE: Under a case, if you are a family with children, then you are considered a case. The number you referred to I think were cases and not individuals. There is a different number than individuals.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

MR. DARRIN PIKE: The minister, when he answered the question would have referred to the number of, say, couples with children, so he gave the number. A couple with children could have two children, could have three children, and could have one child.

MR. A. PARSONS: Does that number include children?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: Cases only indicate a case, not how many people.

MR. KING: Yes, that is right. To be clear, I think I gave you 1,088. That means there are 1,088 couples. Each of them may have any number of children. It is only the case we are referencing, not the number of people.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

So there is no indication or no idea of how many children are involved?

MR. KING: Not in these numbers we provided you, no. These speak purely to the cases or, when I gave the adult numbers, it would be the adults who actually would have filed for assistance. It would not include children.

I cannot give you that. We are not sure that is right. I can get that for you.

MR. A. PARSONS: I would appreciate that.

MR. KING: It looks like we might be able to generate that number. I think there is something wrong with the number I had there. We will just make a note here.

MR. A. PARSONS: An issue that arose under this situation is with taxi services for people on Income Support, if people have to take taxis to their appointments and whatnot. Are they required to take the cheapest taxi that is available to them?

MR. KING: Did you get the question?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: I think I got the question. You are asking: Do we require them to avail of the cheapest taxi available to them?

Certainly, our endeavour is to provide the most economical solution. We have run into cases where we would be paying an excessive rate for a taxi service when there were other, more economical taxi services provided. We try to make sure we balance the needs of the client with what is economical. So we do not go for the most expensive taxi service; we try to find a good, economical taxi service.

MR. A. PARSONS: We had a person that was involved in a taxi business in this Province who was unable to give these rides and the taxis being provided to these, say, Income Support recipients were actually costing more. When you add that up it actually costs the department more, so we did not know if that was an issue that was looked at.

MR. KING: Thank you.

In the interest of time and confidentiality, if you could provide that to me after I can check that out for you. Generally speaking, the policy in the city, where there would be options, is we spread it around. There is no tender provided, but we spread it around.

MR. A. PARSONS: It is a rural situation where the cost is much higher.

MR. KING: If you can provide it to me after, I can probably follow up on that for you rather than here, if you do not mind.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay, thank you.

I am going to move forward to 4.1.02, Labour Market Development Agreement. I believe that under this falls Job Creation Partnerships, JCPs. Am I correct?

MR. KING: You are, yes.

MR. A. PARSONS: It is funny, and again it is no secret my feelings on this project, which I think the fair term to talk about how it was administered last year was horribly.

MR. KING: This is the one where you got the most in the Province last year, just to be clear.

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, well that was the year before. I guess that is due to the good MHA.

MR. KING: Yes.

MR. A. PARSONS: I am talking about the fact that the people who needed their money actually were not getting answers back for two to three months after. I will just give an example. I just got an e-mail from my CA this morning while we are here, and we received a written letter from the minister's office this morning. It came in the mail.

It said: I write in regard to your letter regarding JCP. The department is now accepting applications under JCP for the coming year. The first application deadline is May 7. The department Web site is now updated. Today is May 8 and the letter was written April 24. So, I

am just wondering, is there going to be an ongoing effort to make this situation tenuous, difficult?

I go back to last year with JCPs when people and groups were putting in their applications in the winter. Now, if they did not get them in on time, they are out; they are cut. They were supposed to have them in and I guess they were supposed to be rewarded the first round. The winter round was supposed to be awarded in, I think it was, April or May and they never actually found out until later. Then we had the summer round where they were supposed to find out in early June and they were finding out well into August, so well past the tourism season. Then the fall session, which was supposed to be awarded by September 1, did not get awarded until January. So I am wondering if somebody can explain to me what the goal is with JCP going forward.

MR. KING: Let me say, first of all, my acknowledgement of the most going to Burgeo was not meant to reflect the work of the MHA; it was the quality of the investment of this government in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, for the record.

On a serious note, we share your concerns. First of all, government recognizes the value of JCPs to the Province, not only to the clients. What I mean by that is the individuals who get the jobs, we recognize the value of that, but we also recognize the other value, and I have heard you say this many times in the House and I think we are in sync on this, around small communities who use them for tourist operators, you have community development initiatives that occur, and all kinds of things. My district is very similar to yours, so I understand that. So we accept that premise, first of all, the value of the JCPs.

Secondly, let me say that there is probably lots of frustration to go around with where we have ended up with the JCP process. I am not pointing any fingers in any direction here. We are government, and I am the minister here today, so I will accept responsibility for that, but

the goal is to fix this process and to streamline the process in a number of ways.

One is we obviously need financial accountability in the process, so some of the application procedures we are tweaking, and our officials are working with community organizations and those who apply all the time to fix that up. Secondly, we do recognize the seasonality of some of these projects, and the fact that some of the tourism operators need them late April or early May. So our goal, Mr. A. Parsons, I guess to be blunt about it, is to adjust it to make it more user-friendly while ensuring accountability and to ensure, as much as possible, the timelines for delivering the programs match up with the seasons we live in in Newfoundland and Labrador, if I could use that phrase.

MR. A. PARSONS: So, this year the new information is out now, June to August of this year, 2013, and the deadline was yesterday. When will these be awarded?

MR. KING: I cannot give you a concrete date. What I can say to you, though, is I have had discussions with officials here. The deadline was yesterday, I have asked them to expedite the process of getting them in from the regions over the next couple of days, and we will try to turn them around very quickly.

I am operating at this point on the assumption that Minister Shea will still be unavailable. If she is back, then she will pick up the ball and roll with it. We would hope that over the next several weeks you will see activity on that file and get it out there. We recognize the times are not where we want it to be this year, and we are going to try to rectify that for the future, but in the short term we have to get them out the door quickly.

MR. A. PARSONS: The other concern I have, and I will put it out there, since the department officials are here, is that the people on the ground administering and doing this work for you in your offices in the smaller areas are not given any information. They are not told anything, but they are the ones taking the calls

from the groups that are applying. There is a frustration out there that has to be figured out.

I am not allowed to call these people. I have to call Ms Piercey in the back, and I appreciate the frustration she must feel when she has to deal with me. You see what is going on here. The guy on the ground –

MR. KING: She actually thinks you are a nice guy.

MR. A. PARSONS: Well, she is very sweet.

The fact is that the guy on the ground in the AES office in Port aux Basques who handles the Southwest Coast, these applications are coming into him. When they say well, what is the word; he is saying I do not know. That is a problem.

The other thing they are being told for many years that they were getting these JCPS, year after year, there was a dependence bred on them, and then all of a sudden the rug was pulled out from under them. They are not being told where we are going with JCP. What is the thrust? What they are actually being told is: Well, we cannot keep funding you forever. That is actual wording that is being given to them. I understand that might be the sentiment within, but if you are a volunteer group putting in the work to get there, there has to be a better way.

I just put that out there, my frustration. Everybody knows it. It is very public. I am just hoping we can utilize these to the best of their ability, and get them out for the summer tourism season, which we know in many areas like yours and mine is run by small volunteer groups that can barely turn a profit, if any. They rely on this. They cannot plan and budget out because they do not know who they can hire. So I just put that out there.

MR. KING: I have just a quick comment on that. I accept your commentary on the communication piece. It is duly noted. I think it is fair to say we have had discussions internally about that.

One of the challenges we have faced over the last number of years since the devolution and the whole LMDA and LMA piece came to us is a changing in funding ratios, first of all. That is a piece we have had to deal with. Secondly is the intent of the JCPs, from the federal government's perspective. Our applying of the JCPs has strayed maybe a little from where the intent was, because really the intent was to support people by extending their hours of work and in topping up their income. The side benefit, as intended by the program, was that you got something done for the community or organization.

Mr. Chair, however, having said that, we recognize in Newfoundland and Labrador it is really a 50-50 benefit, that many of our small rural communities need these projects to help supplement what they are doing and getting very good work done. I am sure you have communities where they fix their community centres up and their parks and all that stuff.

We recognize that and we are trying to strike a balance. Your point is well taken and I certainly give you that commitment. It is our intention to try to fix that process and to provide some stability so people know what to expect in the coming cycles.

MR. A. PARSONS: Perfect. I am glad to hear that.

I am going to move forward to 4.1.05, Employment Assistance Programs For Persons with Disabilities. Would the Inclusion Strategy fall under this heading?

MR. KING: No.

MR. A. PARSONS: What heading does that fall under?

MR. KING: Program, Development and Planning. That would have been the earlier section, right at the very beginning.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

Well, I can ask the question, and we can go back if we have to. What was spent on the Inclusion Strategy for 2012-2013?

MR. KING: Are you asking – just so I am clear with respect to this – the total salaries, everything or are you looking –

MR. A. PARSONS: I would say the strategy as a whole.

MR. KING: It would be about \$1.117 million to be exact.

MR. A. PARSONS: What is the figure for this year? What is the budgeted amount for strategy as a whole?

MR. KING: It is \$704,000.

CHAIR: Mr. A. Parsons (inaudible) –

MR. A. PARSONS: I have one final question, if I could.

CHAIR: Sure, go ahead.

MR. A. PARSONS: Under where I was, 4.1.05, with the Collation of Persons with Disabilities for Newfoundland and Labrador, that is an issue that was out there. This is a crowd that was given funding for accommodations and had a cut. I am just wondering: Our understanding is that they were given assurances by the department that they could sign a five-year lease and then the funding stopped.

MR. KING: No, that is not true.

MR. A. PARSONS: Nobody within that department had a meeting with the Collation of Persons with Disabilities and said you can go ahead and sign a five-year lease?

MR. KING: Not to my knowledge and not to my deputy's knowledge, but we can follow up. If you have any info you can provide us to assist us in going to look, we will certainly check it out for you.

MR. A. PARSONS: I am hesitant to say the name.

MR. KING: You can provide it off the record if you want.

MR. A. PARSONS: That is my understanding which is one of the reasons they were so upset because I know it is not just funding from AES, it is funding from Health as well, and they were given the assurance by the department to go and that is why they signed the five-year lease.

MR. KING: To our knowledge, nobody with any authority to provide a commitment on behalf of government would have done that. For the record, if you want to speak to me privately, if there is something I can follow up on, because I do not want to mislead you, I can only say to the best of our knowledge nobody with any authority to do that would have done it on behalf of government.

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

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr. Kirby.

MR. KIRBY: Thanks.

Along the same lines, there was a vehicle modification grant that was announced as part of the Inclusion Strategy. Was that paid out in 2012-2013? People received notification about receiving grants under that program.

MR. KING: You are correct. The vehicle modification program was a program announced under the strategy. One hundred per cent of the applications received would have been approved and a portion of that would have been out. It is over a two-year period, and that is purely cash flow, people getting the work done and so on. I think upwards of 80 per cent would have been out.

MR. KIRBY: I have not heard anything unless I was not paying attention, which is possible. I have not heard any public announcement. Is there going to be a public announcement from

the minister soon about that? I get inquiries from people saying: What is going on with this? Obviously, if 100 per cent of the individuals who applied were funded, then I am not getting calls from those people. I have had inquiries from members of the public saying: What is going on with the vehicle modification program?

There was also somebody who was after the deadline, so I was not able to say one way or the other. Sometimes it is difficult to be able to get this information. So is there going to be a public announcement?

MR. KING: No, there will not be a public announcement. When we announced this program last year, it was announced as a pilot to be paid out over two years. We have allocated the full, 100 per cent funding that was allocated within the budget for that program. We are now doing a reassessment with further decisions to come.

MR. KIRBY: I want to go back where I was before. I was asking where the Apprenticeship Wage Subsidy was. So now I know it is not in 4.1.03.

MR. KING: It is 7.1.01.

MR. KIRBY: So that is under Apprenticeship and Trades Certification. Is that under Grants and Subsidies there?

MR. KING: Yes, it is.

MR. KIRBY: At risk of asking for another list of things, I wonder, could we have perhaps a number, a total number, of clients and employers who are participants in that? Can we have a total global figure?

MR. KING: You do not want the full list?

MR. KIRBY: I would just like to know the total number, that would be fine for now, in the interest of time.

MR. KING: I do not have it here, but I will –

MR. KIRBY: You do not have it?

MR. KING: I will get it for you.

MR. KIRBY: Okay.

MR. KING: I do not have it in front of me, but I will get it for you.

MR. KIRBY: Okay.

Now, I do not want to ask you questions that you are not able to answer any further, but obviously there has been an awful lot of discussion about Adult Basic Education, both in the House of Assembly and elsewhere. I have quite a number of outstanding questions about that, and I get contacts from people, as I said yesterday in the House, and basically on a daily basis, including this morning again. One of things that are most worrisome to me and to my colleague Gerry Rogers – she is the critic for Health and Community Services – is the program, and you folks may know more about this than I do, but I understand it was offered on Waterford Bridge Road, I believe, in co-operation with Eastern Health.

Eastern Health provided the space for – and I do now know if it was more than a couple of dozens seats, but the staff were funded through a grant in aid from the College of the North Atlantic. I understand that would be within the College of the North Atlantic's own budget, but it seems to me, even if government is proceeding with the decision to privatize ABE – we can put our differences aside on that part of it – I am just wondering if there is any way possible to salvage that program, because that was really tailored or people who have mental health issues. I think we agree that that population needs special attention. I am just wondering if there has been any sort of rethink on saving that part of it, because if there is anything we can save, I think that we should really, really try to save that.

MR. KING: Yes, a very good question. It is our intention to have that program continue. At this point in time the plan is to develop a tender for specifications that will match exactly what we are doing now. So, the program will continue; it just may be through another

provider. Your point is well taken, and we have actually had a discussion yesterday on that same issue. So, the best I can say to you is that at this point it is out of the college, with someone else having to provide it, at the same level of expectation, the same curriculum, and the same supports.

We will consider your views strongly as we look at whether or not we can find a suitable replacement. I will say that much to you. It is on the radar; I appreciate you raising it. I raised it myself with the deputy a couple of days ago. We understand the complexities of that situation versus some others.

MR. KIRBY: Okay, that is reassuring. We will look for developments in that. I am glad you are taking that seriously.

I know, Minister, you are acting here in this capacity today. As somebody who has worked with a lot of enrolment figures and stuff in the past in my own professional academic work, I know it is oftentimes not the minister who is producing those projections.

I am interested to understand some of the figures that had been publicly made available about this. If they are figures that are provided by College of the North Atlantic I can certainly go to them and ask for information. There was one figure that was quoted, and I assume these are numbers that fed into the decision to go in this new direction with Adult Basic Education.

There was a figure that was offered up, I believe it was the average cost of Adult Basic Education, I think the person said in the other Atlantic Provinces, so we can safely say the Maritime Provinces – that the average cost, I am not sure if it was \$2,100 or \$2,400. I have heard a number of different figures. I am wondering what the source of that is. The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission would have data like that, but I am not aware that they provided that to the Department of Advanced Education and Skills.

MR. DARRIN PIKE: On the jurisdictional data, the information would have come either

directly from the jurisdiction, for example, we ask them for their cost per student and they provided it directly, so from government to government; or through Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, CMEC had data on some of the jurisdictions. The ones that they did not have the data on we contacted jurisdictions directly to ask them that question

MR. KIRBY: Do you have a figure there for the average cost in Nova Scotia for example?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: What is the figure?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: The average cost per student in Nova Scotia provided to us was \$2,375.

MR. KIRBY: Two thousand, three hundred and seventy-five dollars.

Are you aware of whom the provider would be there?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: No, I would have to check.

MR. KIRBY: Okay.

There were a number of different figures that were discussed in the public airwaves and the House of Assembly regarding the delivery here. The \$9,413 figure: Is that a figure that was worked up by the College of the North Atlantic and provided, or is that a figure that takes in a number of different things that were worked up by the Department of Advanced Education and Skills?

MR. KING: That figure would have been developed by the department.

MR. KIRBY: By the department?

MR. KING: By the department, based on the financial assistance provided to the college for Adult Basic Education.

MR. KIRBY: To the college, so not to individuals, that just includes basically your portion of the grant in aid to the college?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: Any of the numbers, when you talk about ABE, it is split in two ways: funding to be provided to the individual, and funding that you provide for programming. Any comparison would be funding for programming for the individuals.

For instance, many of our clients are receiving funding for living expenses. That would not be included. That would not be included in the comparison data because it would not be relevant. This is the programming cost of the College of the North Atlantic delivering the program.

MR. KIRBY: Okay, I see what you are saying.

MR. DARRIN PIKE: For the individuals.

MR. KIRBY: For the seat itself, not for any other supplement income or –

MR. DARRIN PIKE: It is for how many people – it is like a classroom environment; how much is it costing you to deliver that program to the number of students in your class.

MR. KING: If I could be clear, I think I know what you are asking.

That would be money provided directly to the college to offer the program, so pay instructors and other costs. It would not include any funding that individuals would have picked up to support them in going to college.

Is that what you are asking?

MR. KIRBY: Sure, but was it the practice that the college gave government a block seat purchase figure and then you said, well, we have X number of students, and you divided the block seat purchase figure by the number of students and you arrived at this figure; or did the college say these seats cost \$9,413 a piece?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: We block fund the college and then we figure out how many students are enrolled. It is like anything – we give you \$10,000 to do something and if you have two students, it is costing you \$5,000 per student; if you have four students, it is costing you \$2,500 per student, but we gave you \$10,000 to deliver the program. This would be the block funding that we have given the college to deliver the program and the number of students enrolled in the program to figure out the cost per student.

So, the model was consistently applied in comparisons – because you could come up with different models. As long as you are consistent in applying the model when you are doing a comparison, then you are probably on fair ground.

MR. KIRBY: When you refer to the block funding, are you referring to the block of funding provided for all programs?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: We have always given a block of funding for ABE delivery in the college.

MR. KIRBY: Specifically?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: Specifically.

MR. KING: Broken out – they get block funding overall, but within the block there would be break outs for various categories, so ABE would have been broken out as a piece of the overall block that they received.

MR. KIRBY: How long has that been the practice for? Is that just since the advent of the provincial college system, or does that date back prior to that? Does anybody know?

MR. KING: It predates us.

MR. KIRBY: Sure.

I guess the one thing that I wanted to question about is on data anomalies. When you are talking about success figures, so enrolment, retention and graduation, I am wondering if

there was any thought given to whether or not there are differences in the population at the three different service providers that were involved: the College of the North Atlantic, the not-for-profits, and the private sector colleges. Because if you look at the Noseworthy report, for example, it suggests that, as least it suggests to me that, ABE Levels II and III were predominantly delivered by the College of the North Atlantic. Is that correct, or at least the seats that were being purchased by AES?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: If you asking, most of the students in the College of the North Atlantic would have been in Level II and Level III, mostly in Level III.

MR. KIRBY: Yes, but there were virtually none or a very small number of students doing II or III at a private career college.

MR. DARRIN PIKE: No, there are three groups: the College of the North Atlantic, community-based organizations, and private training institutions. The community-based organizations primarily do ABE Level I; the private training institutions almost 100 per cent do Level II and Level III; and the College of the North Atlantic does mostly Level II and Level III, with a very, very small proportion of Level I students. The community groups would be the one that is an anomaly in the sense they are pretty well 100 per cent, except for one group, that does Level I.

CHAIR: Mr. Kirby, if you are finished there or if you one last point, I will go back to Mr. A. Parsons.

MR. KIRBY: No, that is fine. I will come back to this.

CHAIR: Fair enough.

Mr. A. Parsons.

MR. A. PARSONS: If I could start on 7.1.02, Adult Learning and Literacy.

MR. KING: Mr. Kirby, are you going to come back to this one? Okay, thanks; I just want to

make sure because there is some information I may be able to add to that.

Sorry, which number?

MR. A. PARSONS: Subhead 7.1.02, Adult Learning and Literacy, and I am just looking at lines 01 and 10, Salaries and then Grants and Subsidies. We see almost a 75 per cent cut in salary, but then I am wondering if that is counteracted by the very significant jump in Grants and Subsidies. I am just wondering what the plan is there.

MR. KING: The reduction in Salaries would have been reflected in the numbers and positions I gave you earlier when I gave the numbers. Which section was it?

MR. A. PARSONS: Section 10.

MR. KING: The jump here in section 10, Grants, from \$2.4 million to \$4.7 million, there is funding increase there to factor in the tender awarding for ABE.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay. So basically, the people who were cut were in the department.

MR. KING: Yes.

MR. A. PARSONS: They are not CNA employees, per se?

MR. KING: No, departmental.

MR. A. PARSONS: That is a pretty drastic change here. Seventy-five per cent of your salary is gone. We are taking an extra two-point-something million and putting it into – this is for the private providers of ABE, whatever they happen to be.

Is there an RFP coming on that?

MR. KING: Yes, an RFP or a tender. We are not sure how that will look, but yes.

MR. A. PARSONS: What is the timeline?

MR. KING: We have been meeting on it this week, so I expect it is going to be out very, very soon.

MR. A. PARSONS: I hate to belabour the point but are we talking May month, June month, if you had to guess right now based on just where you are right now?

MR. KING: What is the date of today?

MR. A. PARSONS: May 8.

MR. KING: It will be May.

MR. A. PARSONS: It will be May? Okay.

It is my understanding, what I have been hearing, let's put it out there, that the RFP might start going with ABE in sort of a regional thing where the provider would get on providing for the region as opposed to a specific site. Right now, we know ABE has gone from the college in Port aux Basques, Stephenville, Corner Brook or wherever. Is that what it is looking like right now, that somebody will get on at a region?

MR. KING: Our focus is going to be ensuring those who are part of the college program are able to transition out into other facilities. In areas where there are no other facilities – and I stand to be corrected, but I think St. Anthony might be an example – then the RFP or the tender will factor in, ensuring we have a provider to go in there to deliver the service; but it is not our intention or focus to go in and, say, if you want to take the region of Stephenville and Port aux Basques and say that we are changing the entire region, so those who are there now in the private setting may be impacted negatively by it.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

MR. KING: It is mainly to transition out those people who are in the college setting. Certainly, we are going to be watching this closely from a fiscal perspective and make sure that the tuitions and all that sort of stuff are monitored.

The primary focus of the RFP or tender will be for those students who will come now out of the college setting, ensuring that they have another setting they can move into.

MR. A. PARSONS: In that same area?

MR. KING: Right.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

MR. KING: I think the minister has been very clear that any location where ABE is offered now to the college we will ensure a provider is there.

I do not recollect – I apologize, Port aux Basques – but if there happen not to be anyone there, we will ensure that there will now be someone going in to provide that course.

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes.

Hansard could correct me if I am wrong, but I actually think the Premier might have said there would be more places.

MR. KING: Yes, that is our hope.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay, perfect. Well, let's hope for the best.

I am just wondering: Do you have stats there on how many ABE students we have at the three different providers? How many are at CNA, how many in private institutions, and how many in the non-profits?

MR. KING: You asked for the number of students, right?

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, ABE students.

MR. KING: I can give you some numbers.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

MR. KING: The most recent we have would have been November 2012. I just want to offer you the qualification that if you go check today, they may be up or down.

MR. A. PARSONS: That is fair.

MR. KING: Students in ABE come and go as you know, but at College of the North Atlantic, we have –

OFFICIAL: (Inaudible).

MR. KING: Sorry, I am reading the wrong numbers. Thank you.

College of the North Atlantic has 800, the community-based organizations have 251, and the private training institutions have 981. That may actually speak to Mr. Kirby's previous question, if I was reading him right. I was not sure. I think he was hitting on what percentage of students was in the privates versus the college. I am not sure if I read you right, but less than 50 per cent would be in the college versus the other two groups.

MR. A. PARSONS: So what we are saying basically is there are roughly – I know it is impossible to get the numbers, and I appreciate that – 800 ABE students at the college. How many of these were Income Support?

MR. KING: We do not have the number with us, but we can get it for you.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

I come back to, because this is one thing that has been tossed out, this graduation rate. I believe all of the Income Support ABE students have to go to the college. I am correct when I say that, right?

MR. KING: Almost; there are some exceptions in the Province if there was a private college in a community and the College of the North Atlantic was a fair distance away. We have made some exceptions to allow that student to stay in their home community.

MR. A. PARSONS: So the vast majority, we will say.

MR. KING: Yes, absolutely.

MR. A. PARSONS: The number has been tossed out that the graduation rate at CNA is 11 per cent lower than at the private colleges. One thing that we have to acknowledge, and it was acknowledged in the White Paper, is there are more barriers for Income Support students when it comes to Adult Basic Education. So I was wondering if that was taken into account when this whole study was done.

Sometimes, whether it was intentional or not, the commentary made publicly by various members was that we are paying at CNA and the graduation rate is lower, which many people working at the college took offence to because it sort of took away from their work. Again, I say that I do not think people tried it intentionally, but it was there. The fact is Income Support students who had the barriers recognised were there, so I am wondering if that was factored into the decision.

MR. KING: I think it is fair to say it was factored in. Certainly, I would apologize if there was any misrepresentation on behalf of government by anyone to characterize any individual or any instructor in a negative way. That certainly was never the intent in any discussions that anybody representing government from the Premier on down would have had. That was certainly never the intent. I would apologize if that is how it was received. We recognize the quality of the work that is provided by the college, as you would know. There are great people there doing great work.

Our shift of the ABE into a new model was not about what they are doing, and it was not about the Income Support individuals in general. It was about finding what we believe to be a more efficient way to deliver the same program and same service.

It is our full intention that none of our Income Support recipients, who, as you referenced, sometimes face barriers, will be disadvantaged in this process. That is a commitment I think the Premier herself has made. We will ensure that the same programs are delivered in the same communities now, with an intention that as more privates potentially get involved in this, or

community-based organizations, there may be further expansion into other communities. Our goal is, if anything, to make it easier and more accessible for these people.

MR. A. PARSONS: No, that is the thing, and maybe it comes down to the speaking notes that were given out. It was almost used as, well, the graduation rate is lower at the college. I do not think the people understood maybe some of the reasons why the graduation rate may have been lower. I just put that out and there have been other reasons.

Mr. Noseworthy says that if an Income Support seat is instead filled by an LMDA student, the department pays for the seat again and at a higher rate. Can someone explain that to me?

MR. KING: If a seat at the college is filled by an LMDA student –

MR. A. PARSONS: An Income Support seat.

MR. KING: Yes.

MR. A. PARSONS: Advanced Education pays for the seat and at a higher rate.

MR. KING: Yes, you are right. We pay the tuition directly to the college through block funding for Income Support recipients. If someone chooses to avail, through the LMDA, of support to go back to school, the rate is higher, quite simply, and we do pay that.

MR. A. PARSONS: So when we toss out the numbers of why it costs more to go to CNA, this is one of the reasons?

MR. KING: Yes, two comments to that: one would be generally when we do up our cost to deliver, it would not have factored those in; it would have factored in purely and for the most part Income Support recipients. The number, as a point of interest, would be very small: less than 10 per cent of ABE students at the college would actually be LMDA.

MR. A. PARSONS: I might come back to this now shortly, but I wanted to move on and just

cover off a different area very quickly. College of the North Atlantic, generally, what is the status of the infrastructure plans? I believe this might be under 7.3.01, Operations?

MR. KING: Okay, what is your specific question?

MR. A. PARSONS: We talked last year when we were here about the infrastructure plans for the College of the North Atlantic. There was some development plans. I am just wondering if that has been curtailed, scaled back, or increased. There are certain areas, like Stephenville, undergoing some expansion, I believe.

MR. KING: We are investing about – I am just trying to figure out now if we are in the same ballpark, what we are talking about. We have major expansion in Lab West, you are probably familiar with that, and we have been engaged in a number of significant shop modifications, we call them, throughout the Province. Is that the kind of things you are talking about?

MR. A. PARSONS: Stephenville, too. Stephenville was undergoing some big – there was some coverage on this last year, too, in the various media publications.

MR. KING: I do not have that information in front of me. I will see if I can. So you are asking specifically what is happening in Stephenville with capital, like renovations and expansions, or whatever?

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes.

MR. KING: Okay.

MR. A. PARSONS: Remember there was a report that came out last year, and then somebody said, no, the information was wrong? There was a lot going on there.

MR. KING: Okay, we will track it down for you.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

Sort of going off on a different topic here, we asked in Justice the other night about a legal fee spent by the College. What are the legal fees spent on the McBreairty case?

MR. KING: We would not have that here. That would be within the college's own budget itself. We block fund the College, and the College, in turn, would develop an operational budget.

MR. A. PARSONS: So we do not know what the College, which is paid for by us, is paying out in legal fees?

MR. KING: What am saying is I do not have that information here in my Estimates for this department.

MR. A. PARSONS: Can I get a confirmation that I can get that information?

MR. KING: Yes.

MR. A. PARSONS: That is here on record. I will get that information?

MR. KING: I will endeavour to follow up and see if the information is available, and we will let you know.

MR. A. PARSONS: Again, the reason I put that out there is it is my understanding that the fees spent in the legal fees, from an outside solicitor, not the College's own solicitor, like a private firm, are actually probably higher than what the person claimed in the settlement, would have asked for or settled for. So I just put that out there. I am just wondering where we are, and I know it is not under Justice. Again, it is a public expenditure, so I think we are entitled to that information.

MR. KING: Yes, it is a public expenditure and it is fair to state you are entitled to it, but in the Estimates of this department, though, they are not part of the discussion, no more than if you asked me how much I was spending to run the electrical program at Prince Philip Drive. I could not give you that answer because that would be within the college's detailed budget and would not be part of our Estimates; but,

having said that, we will endeavour to see if we can get that information for you.

MR. A. PARSONS: Some very nice wording on that.

MR. KING: Well, if you are asking me if I am committing, I am absolutely not committing because I am not sure I can. I have to go through the roots. If it is possible to get it, we will get it.

MR. A. PARSONS: I think it is possible to get it because you can just call the law firm and say: What is the bill at so far?

MR. KING: Well, then you give them a call.

MR. A. PARSONS: They will not give it to me. I do not have a consent form.

MR. KING: Well, I will check it. If I can get it, you will have it.

MR. A. PARSONS: While you are at it, could we find out what has been spent on the ESG situation over in Qatar, the end of service gratuity? I think there may have been some cases over there where employees were claiming the end of service gratuity and matters went to court in Qatar.

MR. KING: It is the same answer. We do not have those kinds of details. You are really getting into lines of the college's budget, and this is more about the department's budget. I can inquire for you.

MR. A. PARSONS: While we are on it, though, maybe I am completely off track here, but the college is a big part of the expenditures in this department. It falls under it and it is paid for. It is publicly funded. Shouldn't we have an opportunity to see what they are spending and how they are spending, or is it a closed shop?

MR. KING: No, it is not that it is a closed shop. It is just that you are doing the Estimates of the Department of Advanced Education and Skills. We have provided here the appropriations for a number of broad categories for the college, just

as we would do for Memorial University and they in turn do for the Marine Institute.

The defence and explanation in Estimates is about our budget and where our money goes. We do not have the breakdown for the college, no more than if you said to me: Can I defend the John Howard Society budget? I cannot do that. I do not know how they are spending their money. I can tell you how much we gave them. This is not a defence of John Howard any more than it is the college. This is of our own appropriations. Just to be clear, and having said that, we will endeavour to find out the information for you.

MR. A. PARSONS: My time is up, so I will come back.

CHAIR: I will go back you. Thank you, Mr. A. Parsons.

Mr. Kirby.

MR. KIRBY: The decision to go this new route with Adult Basic Education, where did that recommendation come from?

MR. KING: That would have been a decision informed by viewpoints from a variety of sources and data collected from a variety of sources. It would have included Cabinet discussion and ultimately a decision of Cabinet.

MR. KIRBY: Was there ever any discussion with senior officials at College of the North Atlantic about whether or not they could deliver the program more efficiently?

MR. KING: I cannot speak to that. I can only say that, in terms of how the decision was made, it was a decision of Cabinet. Anything that would have informed that decision would be under Cabinet privilege.

MR. KIRBY: You said that the RFP will be going out next month?

MR. KING: What I said was hopefully by the end of May. That is our target.

MR. KIRBY: Hopefully by the end of May?

MR. KING: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: Is there anything that would prohibit College of the North Atlantic from being an applicant to that? I know we are always encouraging institutions to be more entrepreneurial and to be more efficient.

MR. KING: I am not sure what to say to that. That is an interesting question. Other than to my knowledge and my deputies they have not shown any interest in pursuing that. I really cannot answer you.

MR. KIRBY: Just legally or in terms of their independent governance, is there anything? I cannot think of anything.

MR. KING: To be frank with you, I cannot think of anything that would prohibit that to answer your question.

MR. KIRBY: Okay.

MR. KING: It has puzzled me a little bit because I had not anticipated that kind of a question. I am not sure, to be frank with you. Off the top of my head, I do not see anything legally that would prohibit that. In any discussions that we have had with the college, they certainly have not indicated an interest in pursuing that. That is not to say that they will not.

The whole move of the ABE out, we focused a lot on the costs. As Mr. A. Parsons mentioned, I guess somewhere in the mix we got caught up in talking about past fail rates and all that or success rates. The other piece of this was to help refocus the college somewhat on the labour market, the Outlook 2020, the projected jobs and careers available, where the shortages would be, and to try to refocus them into those areas. I do not know. They may come with an interest, I do not know. I do not see anything legally I guess, back to your question.

MR. KIRBY: I have been conferring with my colleague here, so correct me if I overlook

something. On page 8.12, 7.1.02, Adult Learning and Literacy, I do not think we have covered that. I do not think Mr. A. Parsons –

MR. KING: Mr. A. Parsons did, but that is fine.

MR. KIRBY: Okay, so I did not catch that. The source of the \$732,000 saw a reduction in Salaries. It went from \$1 million to \$280,000. It was under spent, and then it goes way down. These are probably positions you named off at the top, right?

MR. KING: In the Salaries section? Yes, that is correct.

MR. KIRBY: So which positions were they, can you tell us, associated with Adult Learning and Literacy?

MR. KING: We will have to get back to you on that one. I have a whole list with oodles of information here that is not relevant, but I do not have them broken down by section. So I could get that for you if you like.

MR. KIRBY: There is a big switcheroo, and I do not know if that is associated with that or not, with Grants and Subsidies. You can see it is \$2.4 million in 2012-2013, and then it goes up to \$4.7 million. That is 7.1.02, 10, Grants and Subsidies. See the big jump there?

MR. KING: That is correct. As I said to Mr. A. Parsons, we have included an increase there to provide for the anticipated cost of the tender of the new ABE.

MR. KIRBY: Sorry, yes. That was the part that I missed.

Will the RFP itself include monitoring and quality assurance issues, or is that going to be something that is more contractual in nature, or both?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: The tender that goes out, the monitoring of privates is something we do now under this division we are talking about. We have people who monitor the institutions. Our monitoring of institutions will occur as our

normal business. The accountability measures we would want to build in is to ensure students are successful and moving through, more on the measurement to make sure our investment is well spent; and also other services they need to provide for student supports.

The accountability measures built in the tender will be built around those two dimensions to make sure we are tracking students well through the system, know where they progress through, and how they are progressing. Can we identify any issues with the progression? Those kinds of close monitoring of the students as they proceed, as well as other accountability measures on the institution or the service provider around student supports and such. That would be monitored through our Adult Literacy division, as well as our private training institution staff.

MR. KIRBY: Okay.

I will go back now to 5.1.01, Youth and Student Services. The variety of programs that are funded under here, I guess they are through Grants and Subsidies. A Student Work and Services Program is under this line?

MR. KING: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: Has there been any change to funding for that program?

MR. KING: There is a \$50,000 decrease in the overall budget from \$9.23 million to \$9.172 million. My understanding is the \$50,000 will be spread over six different programs.

Just to be clear, the adjusted amount in the budget is a reflection of the trend we have seen in slippage in these programs. From an operational perspective, we do not anticipate that you will see any reduction in any of those.

MR. KIRBY: It is closer to \$62,000, though, right?

MR. KING: Pardon?

MR. KIRBY: It is about \$62,000, the reduction, is it?

MR. KING: I have \$50,000, but I did not do the math here. It could be.

MR. KIRBY: Maybe.

The Youth Advisory Committee is still active, is it?

MR. KING: The Youth Advisory Committee is not with us. That is with the –

MR. KIRBY: Youth Engagement, is it? That is under Public Engagement?

MR. KING: Yes, Public Engagement, the youth activities piece of the budget.

MR. KIRBY: The Office of Youth Engagement, that is now under Public Engagement?

MR. KING: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: Okay.

Going over to the Office of the Immigration and Multiculturalism on the next page, 8.11, the federal revenue is reduced. Why is that other than –

MR. KING: That is due to the completion of a project that we were funded, one-time money.

MR. KIRBY: A project you completed with a community partner?

MR. KING: No. It was a development of a Web portal.

MR. KIRBY: Okay, for immigration and settlement?

MR. KING: Yes. We received funding from the federal government to do that.

MR. KIRBY: There is a total of \$798,000 cut from that overall, so that is part of it. There is a reduction in Salaries of close to \$400,000. You do not have a list of those positions by this line, do you?

MR. KING: No. Other than they would have been incorporated in the list that I read in for the record. The positions as well that would have been decreased here would have been vacancies. There were no individuals affected here.

OFFICIAL: Except for one with the Web portal (inaudible).

MR. KING: Yes, thanks.

There would have been someone working on the Web portal project, which was a one-time block of funding, so when the project finished, the job finished.

MR. KIRBY: Do you have a number over there for the number of skilled immigrants who came here in 2012 under the Provincial Nominee Program?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: On the Provincial Nominee Program we have the number of people who came here. Are you looking for just how many of our 300 allotment came last year?

MR. KIRBY: Yes.

MR. DARRIN PIKE: We do have the number: 250.

MR. KIRBY: Two hundred and fifty?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: That is just the Provincial Nominee Program. There are a number of programs; the Provincial Nominee Program and there are the federal programs that we also have immigrants come to the Province under.

MR. KIRBY: Would the federal number be larger or smaller?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: I do not have the number in front of me. Ross, do you want to take (inaudible).

MR. REID: Mr. Chairman, I can only report that the number that I have for 2012 was 751 immigrants settled in the Province.

MR. KIRBY: That includes the 250, right?

MR. REID: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: Thanks.

Under 7.1.01. Apprenticeship and Trades Certification, the skilled trades strategy falls under here. I am just wondering is there an update on – we talked about refocusing the work of the College of the North Atlantic to meet with your 2020 document. I assume that is part of it. Are there other elements?

MR. KING: Are you thinking of the skilled trades taskforce? When you ask for an update, is that what you are –

MR. KIRBY: The Province's overall skilled trades strategy increasing the number of apprentices and journeypersons.

MR. KING: The overall strategy for skilled trades would include more than the journeyperson-apprenticeship support. I would include, first of all, an adjustment that we have made to the apprenticeship-journeyperson ratio. It includes the increase in wage subsidy support to employers to take on apprentices. It also includes, back to focusing on the college, we have invested significantly in the college over the last three or four years, upgrades to skilled trades suites, expansion of skilled trades programs to make more opportunities available. All of those particular activities would be part of our investment in preparing for making sure people are prepared for skilled trades.

MR. KIRBY: Has that increased the number of apprentices and/or journeypersons, the number of Red Seals, in 2012?

MR. KING: I can say, categorically, it has. I do not have the numbers in front of me, but I think if we had the numbers, the trend over the last maybe three to four years in the work we have done has seen a significant increase in the number of individuals (a) doing skilled trades as an option; and (b), those proceeding on to gain the Red Seal would have certainly increased.

Obviously, we would take some satisfaction in believing that some of the investments we have made contributed to that, but I think it is also important to recognize that business contributed to that because the skilled trades taskforce was a partnership of government and the private sector and a number of the trade unions. So, they would have engaged in activities as well, and then there are other offices like the women in technology program and so on. All of those would have brought focus to skilled trades and would have played a role in increasing the profile and, thereby, the number of people going through the program.

CHAIR: Mr. Kirby, I need to go back to Mr. A. Parsons.

We have two ten-minute allotments left; one for Mr. Parsons and one back to Mr. Kirby. Then, we will call for a motion and conclude.

Mr. A. Parsons.

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

I just want to double check this here. How many DMs and how many ADMs are currently in the department?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: I am the only DM for Advanced Education and Skills.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

MR. DARRIN PIKE: Mr. Ross Reid, who sits behind me – we fund the population study through the department and he reports to the minister. He is not deputy minister within Advanced Education and Skills. I think that might be what is confusing you.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay. How many ADMs?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: Five.

MR. A. PARSONS: Five, okay. A question on –

MR. DARRIN PIKE: That number is the same as we have had; it is not a new number or any change.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

The CNA college in Qatar – we all know that there was a new CA signed for three years. I am just wondering what happened. Was the intent to go for ten years, or are we working on the other seven?

MR. KING: Yes.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

Can you elaborate any of the issues on why we have settled with the three now or why we could not get the ten?

MR. DARRIN PIKE: I will make a simple attempt. One of the things we wanted to make sure was obviously to protect the interest of the government's fiscal situation and Newfoundland and Labrador's liability issues. We just wanted to make sure that the new contract stiffened those kinds of requirements to protect the college as they go forward.

We are not anticipating any new issues. It went well after it started. We are hopeful that this will just proceed through its normal processes that these documents go through.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

We know that in the review being done for next year, I guess this year or whatever – next year's budget, MUN and the college are being looked at for the sustainability review. Is there a targeted goal of reductions? What can we expect in terms of cuts as we look at these institutions?

MR. KING: We do not have a particular goal by way of a dollar figure or anything like that. The plan is, as part of the exercise we went through this year, we would extend that out into Memorial next year.

I think it would be a bit of a leap of faith for me to comment on that. The discussions will have to occur with the minister, and I am certain the president of the university, and the board of regents as to how we are going to do that first of all, and the format that will take. I think it is fair to say at this point that government nor Cabinet has indicated any target or figure.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

MR. KING: It is all about ensuring that we are continuing to do what we need to do, in Memorial's case, to make Memorial continue to be as far as I am concerned the best university there is. I cannot give you a figure; we have not really dived into those kinds of details at this point.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

We just mentioned this earlier, but I am just wondering – and I know Mr. Reid had been hired to run the population strategy – how many support staff does Mr. Reid have at his disposal?

MR. KING: None.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

MR. REID: I have two policy analysts and no support staff.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay, so two policy analysts.

Targeted Initiative for Older Workers: What was the funding expended on that last year and where are we with it this year?

MR. KING: Do you have a line item, by chance?

MR. A. PARSONS: I will see if I can find it here now.

Line 4.1.03.

MR. KING: Sorry, your question was?

MR. A. PARSONS: The question was: What did we spend last year on the targeted initiative, the TIOW?

MR. KING: It was \$1.2 million.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

What is the allotment for this year?

MR. KING: The same thing.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

The Strategic Adult Literacy Plan is something that the minister said last year would have been released before this year's year end and it was not. Where are we on it?

MR. KING: We are in a state of revision, to be frank with you. The plan that was close to being released was, at one point in time, applicable. There are a lot of things that have changed in the Province over the last twenty-four to thirty-six months, so we are in the process of revising that plan, communicating with some stakeholder groups seeking further input.

To be frank it you, it just does not reflect –

MR. A. PARSONS: It is outdated.

MR. KING: It is outdated. It does not reflect where we are today.

For whatever reason it was not out there, the fact of the matter is now releasing what is there is just not appropriate or acceptable. We are going to try to get it revised and then move forward.

MR. A. PARSONS: What is the new date for release of this important plan?

MR. KING: I do not have a date I can provide you. I suspect once the minister gets back and gets her own affairs straightened away, she will have some time to look at that because there are a number of pieces on her plate that require timelines, as you know. I will defer that to her to provide you with a future date.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

Line 6.1.01, Immigration and Multiculturalism, just looking at line 1, Salaries, and line 10, Grants and Subsidies, just as general question – we have cut \$340,000 from Salaries and we have cut \$200,000 from Grants. We all know that immigration is one of our biggest population drivers. The minister has stood up and done statements on this. Why would we cut this if our job is to grow the population?

MR. KING: Why would we cut if –

MR. A. PARSONS: If we are trying to grow the population, why would we cut this specific section, the Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism?

MR. KING: A couple of reasons, we are not linking the cuts to trying to grow the population. The positions that we eliminated here would have been vacancies, other than as I mentioned a few moments ago one position that was project-based for the Web portal from the federal government.

The other piece is that this office and the focus of this office will tie in with the work that Mr. Reid is doing around the Population Growth Strategy. We are finding some savings here that we believe are wise decisions to make. It is certainly not going to reduce the focus that we have on this office or our ability to tie that together with any work that Mr. Reid does.

MR. A. PARSONS: Subhead 4.1.02, Labour Market Development Agreement, under line 09, this is Allowances and Assistance, there is about a \$20 million cut here. Is that for EAS offices?

MR. KING: There is a combination here. There is some funding here that we have reallocated and invested in the college. There is funding that we have reallocated out of here to support apprenticeship and trades certification, and the Wage Subsidy Program –

MR. A. PARSONS: How much for each?

MR. KING: It is \$6.4 million to support apprenticeship and trades certification and \$12 million for the college.

MR. A. PARSONS: Where are the EAS cuts?

MR. KING: The EAS cuts would have come from this section. The EAS cuts would have been reinvested as part of this budget.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

MR. KING: If you are asking me the money that was saved EAS, where did it go, it is factored into the overall budget; it is not in one particular area.

MR. A. PARSONS: Okay.

The groups that were extended for a year: What are they looking at next year? There were certain groups like the Port aux Basques Community Employment Corporation was extended for a year.

MR. KING: Are you asking us if we review those as well?

MR. A. PARSONS: They are sitting there. Put it this way, they are not spending any money; they are not taking any vacation.

MR. KING: Sure. I am just asking for clarification. Are you asking me if I would go out and review them?

MR. A. PARSONS: I am just wondering in a year's time, are they going to get cut?

MR. KING: We do not have any plan to do that, but would you like us to go out and review them is what I am asking you? Is that the point of your question?

MR. A. PARSONS: Do I want you to go out and review them?

MR. KING: Yes, I am just trying to determine the point of your question.

MR. A. PARSONS: The point of my question –

MR. KING: We do not have any decision made on them, I guess, is the point I am making to you. We provide a support to them; we have not made a decision on whether we are going to do a review, whether we will continue them or discontinue them. We recognize at this point that they are a priority, so we continued the funding.

MR. A. PARSONS: So, when will they have word? Because they are sat out there wondering if they are going to get cut, too, and have it come on a Friday afternoon like the last crowd and tell them how we are making service efficient. So I am just wondering, for their sake, because I actually have my office next to one office: When are they going to get word?

MR. KING: I do not have a timeline I can give you on that. I would suspect once the House closes and Cabinet has time to assess the priorities of government as we head into the fall and the next Budget process and Memorial and all the things that we have anticipated having to do, we will take some time to contemplate it then. So we do not have a timeline at this point.

CHAIR: Mr. A. Parsons, your time has elapsed. I now need to go back to Mr. Kirby.

You have ten minutes on the clock.

Mr. Kirby.

MR. KIRBY: Thanks.

I am just going to go back to some of these lines and pick up some questions that I omitted. Do we know, under employment assistance for people with disabilities, 4.1.05, is there an accounting for the number of persons with disabilities that were employed and/or hired newly by government in 2012 under any particular programs that government has in place to provide for assistance for employment for persons with disabilities?

MR. KING: Are you asking for the numbers employed, or are you asking do we anticipate any changes?

MR. KIRBY: The numbers for 2012.

MR. KING: Okay, under the training services program, we have 270 clients; under the Supported Employment Program, 478 clients – 270 and 478.

MR. KIRBY: Okay, thank you.

I was going to ask under 6.1.01, the Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism – I am not sure if there is a different way to ask this, but what is the connection or the linkage or what is the fit between the Immigration Strategy and the Population Growth Strategy? How are they connecting? Have you revised your Immigration Strategy based on the inclusion of that?

MR. KING: I think that is a fair statement. The Population Growth Strategy will be, what I would call, all-encompassing. So, it would be like the umbrella to look at any and all activities that we are engaged in within government to grow the population. In under that, the Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism, of course, is an office that is actively focused on a particular target group, so we would see them frankly go hand in glove as we move forward with that.

MR. KIRBY: Those individuals – other than the deputy – who are working in the Population Growth Strategy now, were they working in immigration and multiculturalism prior to that? They are new hires, are they?

MR. KING: I will ask Mr. Reid to speak to that.

MR. REID: One was working in AES in the youth retention section and the other was working in Voluntary and Non-Profit Secretariat, both as policy analysts.

MR. KIRBY: That is an interesting point. Is there a connection between the youth retention strategy and the Population Growth Strategy?

MR. REID: I would have thought that one of our prime targets would be to keep young people here. We certainly encourage immigration amongst younger people as well. If there is any

possibility to bring younger people who have moved away back, then we want to investigate that.

MR. KIRBY: Does government see access policies related to post-secondary education, for instance, the tuition fee freeze, as something that is associated with the work that they are doing with population growth, in terms of youth attraction?

MR. KING: I think that is a fair assessment. If you seek the advice or counsel of anyone, particularly in Atlantic Canada, I think they would acknowledge – and Memorial, frankly, would acknowledge the fact that we have been able to invest in a tuition freeze has allowed us to grow the population of Memorial.

In addition, in my view, to the quality programs that we have – and I am sure you and I can agree on that; it is a fine institution. The fact that we have quality programs and we offer lower tuition, allows us to (a) keep most of our students at home, and (b) attract many others from Atlantic Canada. I do not have the numbers here, but I do remember seeing a document from –

MR. KIRBY: Someone wrote a report about that.

MR. KING: Pardon?

MR. KIRBY: Some wrote a report about that.

MR. KING: Someone did.

MR. KIRBY: Yes. Good, thank you.

I also wanted to go back. Under the Apprenticeship and Trades Certification, under 7.1.01, I asked about the apprenticeship incentive program, or I think I neglected to ask about how many clients. We would normally ask for that figure in previous Estimates.

MR. KING: What was the figure you asked for?

MR. KIRBY: The apprenticeship incentive program: How many participants, how many clients? Do you have a figure?

MR. KING: Are you referring specifically to the Wage Subsidy? When you say incentive program, I am not sure what you are referring to.

MR. KIRBY: Well, if you have the Wage Subsidy Program, if you can give us that figure, I will go back and look at this.

MR. KING: The Wage Subsidy Program would be the main program that we offer.

MR. KIRBY: How many?

OFFICIAL: (Inaudible).

MR. KING: He is going to check for the numbers while we are chatting here. We do have a number of programs. The term you used is what threw me off a bit because I do not think either one is called incentive program. There is the Apprenticeship Wage Subsidy Program; then there is an employer support program. There are two or three we have. We are going to see if we can get you those numbers in a few minutes.

I also have other numbers you asked about that I did not think I had. You asked about the impact on apprenticeship in the Province. I just want to give you those numbers very quickly. The total number of apprentices registered in the Province in 2007 was 3,464; in 2013, it is 5,912. The number of registered trade qualifiers in 2007 was thirty-one; in 2013 to date, it is 442.

New apprentices registering in 2005 was 734; and in 2012, the most up to date I have is 1,431. The new trade qualifier registrations have increased. In 2005 there were seventy-one, and in 2012 there were 240. The final number I have for you is the journey person certificates issued to apprentices in 2005 was 257 and in 2012 it was 434.

MR. KIRBY: Those are pretty impressive numbers, for sure.

I think the employer program is what I was referring to as the apprenticeship incentive program. It is the employer support program?

MR. KING: The Wage Subsidy Program, the total number of participants would have been 650.

MR. KIRBY: Six hundred and fifty.

MR. KING: Six hundred and fifty individuals.

MR. KIRBY: For the second one, the employer –

MR. KING: We will have to check on that one and we will get that for you.

MR. KIRBY: I do not have any further questions.

Mr. A. Parsons, do you have a final question that I can –

MR. A. PARSONS: (Inaudible).

MR. KIRBY: I do not have anything further. Thank you very much for your time everyone.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Kirby; thank you, Mr. A. Parsons.

What we will do before we conclude and thank everybody, I am going to ask that we have a motion to adopt the Estimates headings for the Department of Advanced Education and Skills, and Persons with Disabilities, from heading 1.1.01 to 7.5.01 inclusive.

Motion made by the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

All those in favour, signify by saying ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Opposed?

Motion carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 7.5.01 carried.

On motion, Department of Advanced Education and Skills, total heads carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Department of Advanced Education and Skills carried without amendment.

CHAIR: I would like to thank the minister and his officials, and I am going to give the minister a last word in a second there. I would particularly like to thank the Committee for the last two weeks of going back and forth with the six line departments, and the Table Officers for all the diligent work in preparing everything for this point of view.

Minister, I give you the last minute before we ask for adoption to adjourn.

MR. KING: Sure.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank members of the Committee as well for being here, and I would like to thank my colleagues for their understanding and patience, given the circumstance we are in with Minister Shea being away for family reasons; and if there is any follow-up that I can do to assist, I will certainly do my best. I make that available to both colleagues.

Perhaps most importantly, I would like to thank the people behind me because they are the ones who really have had to struggle with two ministers, and then one out and one in, and help me get ready for today and whatnot. They have done great work. On behalf of everyone, I would just like to say thank you to my staff here as well.

Thank you.

CHAIR: It is appreciated. Thank you, Minister.

Can we have a motion adjourn?

MR. RUSSELL: So moved.

CHAIR: The Member for Lake Melville.

All those in favour, signify by saying 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Opposed?

Motion carried.

We are adjourned.

Thank you everyone.

On motion, the Committee adjourned *sine die*.