



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

First Session  
Forty-Ninth General Assembly

---

**Proceedings of the Standing Committee on  
Resources**

October 20, 2020 - Issue 9

Department of Immigration, Skills and Labour (continued from October 19, 2020)

---

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Assembly  
Honourable Scott Reid, MHA

## **RESOURCE COMMITTEE**

Department of Immigration, Skills and Labour

---

Chair: Christopher Mitchelmore, MHA

Vice-Chair: Jordan Brown, MHA

Members: Paul Dinn, MHA  
Carol Anne Haley, MHA  
Pam Parsons, MHA  
Chris Tibbs, MHA  
Perry Trimper, MHA  
Sherry Gambin-Walsh, MHA

Clerk of the Committee: Mark Jerrett

---

Appearing:

### **Department of Immigration, Skills and Labour**

Hon. Gerry Byrne, MHA, Minister

Renzi Cej, Director of Immigration & Multiculturalism

Debbie Dunphy, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services & Policy

Steve French, Departmental Controller

Bradley George, Executive Assistant

Fiona Langor, Deputy Minister

Walt Mavin, Assistant Deputy Minister, Employment, Skills & Regional Services

Tansy Mundon, Director of Communications

Dana Spurrell, Assistant Deputy Minister, Immigration, Workforce Development & Labour

### **Also Present**

Alison Coffin, MHA

Hon. Bernard Davis, MHA, Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation

Hon. Lisa Dempster, MHA, Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation

Scott Fleming, Researcher, Third Party Office

Brad Russell, Director of Policy & Research, Official Opposition Office

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Bernard Davis, MHA for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, substitutes for Pam Parsons, MHA for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Lisa Dempster, MHA for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, substitutes for Sherry Gambin-Walsh, MHA for Placentia - St. Mary's.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Alison Coffin, MHA for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, substitutes for Jordan Brown, MHA for Labrador West.

The Committee met at 11:00 a.m. in the Assembly Chamber.

**CHAIR (Mitchelmore):** Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the Committee meeting for Immigration, Skills and Labour. We're reconvening after yesterday's meeting we had recessed.

The Clerk had circulated the minutes of the Resource Committee yesterday. If people could review the minutes, I'd like to ask for an opportunity to see if there's a mover to accept the minutes.

**MS. HALEY:** (Inaudible.)

**CHAIR:** Moved by the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Against.

Carried.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

**CHAIR:** I thank the minister for coming back so quickly with his team of officials.

We have allocated one hour of time for this meeting to conclude the Estimates, so I would ask that Committee Members be somewhat brief in their preamble, but ask their pointed questions. Section 4.1.01 is where we left off; up to 5.2.01 are the sections that we have to

complete. We won't be doing introductions today because it would be the same Members and the same staff seated in the place for *Hansard*, so we will get things started immediately.

I will ask the Clerk to call the subhead, beginning at 4.1.01.

**CLERK (Jerrett):** 4.1.01 to 4.1.06 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 4.1.01 to 4.1.06 inclusive carry?

Mr. Dinn.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the staff across the way for showing up for another day. I think if we didn't have our technical difficulties yesterday, we probably would have gotten through this, so I appreciate that. I'll try and be as efficient as I can and I'll expect the same, so we'll be fast and furious today.

I think I've already dealt with 4.1.01. Most of the questions have been there.

I do have, yes, one question: In terms of the FPT, the secretariat, how many years do we have left to host that?

**CHAIR:** Minister Byrne.

**MR. BYRNE:** Thank you.

We have two secretariats, two national forums that we're currently chairing: the Forum of Labour Market Ministers; as well as the Atlantic Workforce Partnership, the AWP. I'm going to turn that over to Fiona because I can't recall what the expiry date is for our term. I think one is soon.

**MS. LANGOR:** Both of those will expire March 31, 2021.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Moving to 4.1.02, Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism, I see there has been a fluctuation in the Salaries. We didn't spend what we budgeted for in 2019-2020, but we are budgeting more than that in the current

Estimates. Can I get an explanation of that as well, please?

**MR. BYRNE:** Sure. There are currently several positions which are experiencing vacancies and they're recruiting. They're highly technical positions with skill sets that are quite significant, but positions are being filled. On the Salaries side we're taking it up a notch as well. I'll ask Dana if she might be able to give details on the salary components.

**CHAIR:** Dana Spurrell.

**MS. SPURRELL:** Yes, as the minister indicated, we do have several vacancies that we had over the year, but recruitment is in progress for those. That explains why the actuals were down a little. Next year, in the budget, we created two new immigration program development officers. That's reflected in next year's budget, as well as the 27th pay period.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

What would be the full complement of staff once those are filled?

**MS. SPURRELL:** Currently we have 18 positions and four are vacant, but recruitment is in progress.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

I'm also looking at the federal revenue and provincial revenue. Can I get an explanation of where that's coming from or how it's generated, please?

**MR. BYRNE:** Go ahead, Dana.

**MS. SPURRELL:** The provincial revenue is directly related to processing fees under the Provincial Nominee Program. We had higher fees than anticipated and it's projected to be about the same next year. The federal revenue of \$1,412 is actually a prior-year Government of Canada payment that came in late and it is allocated there.

**MR. P. DINN:** When we see higher processing fees, that's a good thing, right?

**MS. SPURRELL:** Yes.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Moving over to 4.1.03, I'm looking at this. I know with the Labour Relations Board there are two contractual positions there, covered in there somewhere. One is for \$104,000; one is for just under \$74,000. Can I get an explanation of those, please?

**MR. BYRNE:** The funding is provided for five staff at the Labour Relations Division in this line item. There was a workforce review that was conducted within the board itself, within the administration of the board, so we use contractual positions.

Dana, if there's something further that you might want to add to that?

**MS. SPURRELL:** No, I think that's it, but I defer to Debbie Dunphy on the contractual amounts.

**CHAIR:** Debbie Dunphy.

**MS. DUNPHY:** This is the Labour Relations Division in this particular heading. The two contractual positions you're referencing from the board, which is over in 4.1.06, one of those is the chair of the board, which is an appointment for five years. The second one was a Labour Relations Board officer.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

**OFFICIAL:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. P. DINN:** No, I've been there. I know exactly where you're coming from. Thank you.

I'm not going to get into, given our time and that, line by line on some of the amounts. They're all significant amounts, whether it's a dollar or \$100,000. Just another question here in relation to Transportation and Communications in both instances. I see for one, for Standing Fish Price-Setting Panel, it went up in terms of actuals last year, whereas it was the reverse for the Labour Relations Division. Can you explain what's happening in those two situations there?

**MR. BYRNE:** I believe I can, Mr. Chair. Thank you. It's a very insightful question.

On the transportation side, in terms of conciliation services for our regular stream of conciliation services, the number of conciliation services or requirements were down. We had less demand, and that's probably a good indicator of the labour environment at that particular – it's kind of a bellwether in some respects, I would imagine. So the transportation costs were down because there was less requirement.

On the Fish Price-Setting Panel, it's really interesting – I just want to have a quick chat. I won't consume too much time, but it's worth an explanation as to why sometimes you hear a lot in the news and in public discourse about the fisheries and sort of a lack of harmony in terms of fish price setting. There's a reason why and it's worth the explanation. When parties come together and sign a collective agreement, it's normally for a three-year agreement and lasts for an extended body of time.

In fisheries there are, if I recall, 13 species that are constantly under review and susceptible to a Price-Setting Panel review. I could be wrong on the 13, because there are some species that have a spring review and a fall review. Anyway, the point being is that there are an awful lot of fisheries that are constantly potentially being in a bargaining situation.

In addition to that, you also have a reconsideration. Both parties to the price-setting process, the harvesters and the processors, can ask for reconsideration. So you have 13 more plus 13 more potential situations. With that said, you can have, in any one given year, multiple, multiple, multiple meetings of the Fish Price-Setting Panel to review a fish price-setting process. That's why you hear about it in the news a lot.

People often equate to disharmony in the fisheries, when, in fact, it's the process. Every year you can have upwards of dozens of panel meetings. In that particular year, there were several meetings that had to occur. That's an explanation that was given to me that I thought was pertinent to share.

**MR. P. DINN:** Appreciate it.

That leads to me a questions related: Have we looked at or explored opportunities of doing more of these reviews or more of these panels virtually?

**MR. BYRNE:** They could be done virtually. The panels themselves, there are a set number of players and it's kind of the usual players. We would want to make sure that the FFAW or SPONL, which are the two – or the ASP or the parties to them – would feel comfortable with a virtual panel as they're sometimes gritty events, gritty affairs.

Yes, I think it would be warranted. Whether or not the chair and the members of the panel would see fit to that, but I recognize that point.

**MR. P. DINN:** Appreciate that.

I'll squeeze one more in because I think I misread it the first time. The Professional Services under the Standing Fish Price-Setting Panel, I know it jumped last year. You may have already discussed it in that preamble you just spoke on, but it went up to \$95,000 as opposed to \$77,000. Professional Services in 4.1.04.

**MR. BYRNE:** The panel does receive expert opinion reports on marketing, on fish prices and so on; for example, Sackton and associates is often contracted to provide market reports, Urner Barry and other things. I think that would cover what those Professional Services would include.

**MS. SPURRELL:** Yes, there are often Professional Services engaged. This also speaks to the three panel members on the Fish Price-Setting Panel and their travel and stipends. Due to the number of hearings held last year, Professional Services were a little higher.

**MR. P. DINN:** Again, my point on virtual.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr. Dinn.

Ms. Coffin.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you.

Thank you everyone for coming back. It's much appreciated.

Okay, let's start with 4.1.01. It says here it provides for the development and dissemination of labour market information resources and services. Can you give me a list of what those resources and services that are under development or dissemination are?

**MR. BYRNE:** Dana, you can proceed.

**MS. SPURRELL:** Yes, I don't have that list in front of me but I can certainly get it for you.

**MS. COFFIN:** You can send it along?

**MS. SPURRELL:** Yes.

**MS. COFFIN:** Awesome. Much appreciated. Thank you, Dana.

Do we have a skilled worker inventory? Are we still managing that? I know once upon a time there was some talk of it. Does such a thing exist?

**MR. BYRNE:** I'm not familiar with it myself. We can endeavour to get back to you.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, that would be lovely.

I know for some time we had talked about what skills and resources are available in the province, that way you can match the need to the resources available. That would be a good thing to follow up on.

Foster the creation of employment opportunities and the recruitment, retention and training of skilled workers. Are we collecting any data on skilled workers at all? What data do you collect to help inform the decisions in this particular area?

**MR. BYRNE:** In terms of labour relations?

**MS. COFFIN:** In terms of anything that would help the work of this particular entity.

**MR. BYRNE:** The economics and Statistics Agency would be the conduit for the collection of a lot of that data. We do use the economics and Statistics Agency to assist us in labour

market planning and labour market evaluation. We're not the agency to collect the data. Most of that is collected through that agency and, of course, through Statistics Canada.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, excellent. Thank you.

In terms of Grants and Subsidies, do you have a breakdown of all the Grants and Subsidies that have been awarded in the past and the criteria for accessing those? I'm a little curious about if someone was to get money under that, how would they get it? What are the criteria for evaluating the applications? Who has received the money in the past?

**MR. BYRNE:** This may be sort of out of the norm in terms of Grants and Subsidies. This funding is provided for Forum of Labrador Market Ministers, the FLMM, which amounts to \$1.8 million.

Dana, would you be able to expand on that particular element?

**MS. SPURRELL:** The minister is correct. That's predominately a Forum of Labour Market Ministers that we're the lead province for in this secretariat.

**MS. COFFIN:** Right.

**MS. SPURRELL:** That's the mechanism by which they fund their working groups, so it's a lot of FPT funding.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, I think I may have been involved in some of that at one point. Thank you.

Let's go to 4.1.02 – I can move anywhere here. The Grants and Subsidies here, what are the criteria for the distribution of those or the administration of those?

**MR. BYRNE:** Funding under this line item is for grants to qualifying groups and organizations to enhance the implementation of the Immigration Action Plan with a focus on attraction and retention of new immigrants. We can definitely give you a listing of who has received any grants and contributions under this particular line item.

**MS. COFFIN:** The criteria for being able to access it as well, please.

**MR. BYRNE:** Sure.

**MS. COFFIN:** Now I note that the funding has been cut quite substantially: \$400,000. What's the rationale behind that?

**MR. BYRNE:** In which ...?

**MS. COFFIN:** Grants and Subsidies under Immigration and Multiculturalism.

**MR. BYRNE:** Dana, I'm going to get you, or Remzi, if you want to file through that one.

**MS. SPURRELL:** Some of this is grant funding actually that was in place for the first couple of years of the action plan. Since those initiatives are complete, we haven't budgeted for it again in the out years of the action plan.

Also, some of the money in Grants had been transferred up to Professional Services so it's no longer reflected in the – the actual is a little different because it should have been reflected in Professional Services for a social media campaign. It's a little bit of an accounting transaction that's not clear here.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay.

Talking about the whole pocket of money, what strategies – it says implement strategies of immigration – are being implemented?

**MR. BYRNE:** That's a pretty broad question. The strategies would be, I think, articulated best within the Immigration Action Plan. There are a number of different elements to the action plan and we can certainly provide you with a copy of that entire plan.

**MS. COFFIN:** That would be wonderful.

Okay, let's talk about the Immigration Action Plan. What are the updates on those? Do you have any updates in terms of any recommendations that have been made, or the implementation of the action plan or even the efficacy of the plan? Are we recruiting and retaining individuals in Newfoundland and Labrador? Do you have any of those numbers?

**MR. BYRNE:** We do. I appreciate the question because it has been said that our retention in Newfoundland and Labrador lags behind our Maritime partners. When in fact, Newfoundland and Labrador's retention of new Canadians, of landed immigrants, has actually been quite stellar. I think the statistics will present that we are the second highest within Atlantic Canada in terms of retention, with PEI being the lowest.

It is one thing to attract new Canadians, new landed immigrants, it's another thing to retain them. What we do is we take deliberate efforts to make sure that retention is as easy and as seamless as possible. What we find in Newfoundland and Labrador is that there's less of – what some might call, others might call – a revolving door. I believe it's at 52 per cent at this point in time, our overall three-year average on retention over the last number – dating back the last three years.

Either Dana, or we might refer to Remzi on retention results.

**MS. SPURRELL:** Yes, for the three-year average, Newfoundland and Labrador is 52 per cent, and for the five-year average we're 50 per cent, which is on par with many of the other Atlantic provinces. The only one higher would be Nova Scotia at 66 per cent on the five-year average. Many of the grants and subsidies that you asked about earlier are directed toward community organizations in terms of settlement and integration programs to try to bring up that retention rate. Our greatest success is in the family class, and we actually have a 74 per cent retention rate for immigrants who come as a family class.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, and thank you for that.

Can I have the absolute numbers? Relative is good, but unless you have absolutes that's a little bit different. Do we have a target and are we hitting that target, in terms of the number that we actual recruit, and then what are our retention rates after that? It certainly sounds like it went up slightly in the three-year version versus the five-year version. It would be nice to see what the absolute numbers are, if we're hitting our targets, where are people coming from and which ones are staying. I think that might be

some useful pieces along the way. Are you able to provide such a list?

**MR. BYRNE:** We can. We can speak to it now, I think.

**MS. COFFIN:** Sure.

**MR. BYRNE:** Of course, this being Estimates, it's normally a budgetary exercise, examining budgets, not policy or policy performance. But I think it would be worthwhile speaking to this.

Dana, I don't know if you have the information available immediately or if Remzi might, but please proceed with a (inaudible).

**MS. SPURRELL:** Sure.

We actually have 1,850 permanent residents in 2019, which is January to December. We've succeeded the target that we had set and we've increased our target to 2,500 by 2022. As you know, with COVID and many of the international travel restrictions, this year we're a little behind but we're still hoping to achieve that target for 2022.

In terms of some of the breakdown data around where immigrants are coming from, I would have to defer to Remzi to see if we capture it at that level. But we can certainly give you absolute numbers. We have that available.

**MS. COFFIN:** That would be great. If you have the opportunity to break it down by, perhaps, occupation or even gender might be interesting as well. Because it would be nice to see if we're recruiting doctors and keeping doctors. That would be lovely. Or any range: Is it engineers or is it computer-support specialists or whatever? So if you have that, that would be wonderful data to see.

Thank you.

Okay, we can come back. I only have a moment.

**CHAIR:** Mr. Dinn.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Just on the immigration numbers, I know when we talk retention there are really your retention

numbers and your retention rate. I know we do very well on our retention rate, but still we really need more and more immigration. I know I'm preaching to choir on this one. So I'm glad to see that we've increased our target to 2,500. I would suggest – and I'm sure I'm, again, preaching to the choir – that we probably need to go higher than that, but you have to start somewhere. Thank you for that and we are moving in the right direction there.

Thank you.

I think I left at the Labour Relations Board. I'm looking at 4.1.05, Labour Standards. Again, provincial revenue, can I get a description on that? What's involved there?

**MR. BYRNE:** Labour Standards revenue is achieved through a \$50 clearance fee. These can relate to both private and business transactions in law firms. Law firms require verification that there's nothing to impede the current transaction from proceeding. The certificates confirm that there is no liability involving parties to the transaction arising from actions, investigations of the Labour Standards Division. So that's the source of that revenue.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you for that.

I'm not going to get into the Transportation and Communications because I think that's fairly consistent over division, division.

I think Ms. Dunphy mentioned this, the contractual positions fall under the Labour Relations Board, is that correct?

**MR. BYRNE:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. P. DINN:** Okay, thank you for that.

Moving right along, we're into Apprenticeship and Trades, 5.1.01 –

**CHAIR:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. P. DINN:** Oh, I'm sorry. I'm trying to move us along too quickly.

Okay, I'll pass it along.

**MS. COFFIN:** I still have fours.



Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Ms. Coffin.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you very much.

For the record, I may ask some policy questions because a budget is a manifestation of policy. If we don't have the rationale for the policy then it's pretty hard to rationalize the expenditures in the budget. That is why I will ask policy questions.

Pursuant to the Immigration Action Plan, is the department pursuing other measures to help immigrants integrate into Newfoundland and Labrador society, such as combatting racism, facilitating workplace-based language training as mandated by the Premier? Has that been incorporated into this budget?

**MR. BYRNE:** Thank you.

We're more than delighted to answer questions on policy; however, I note that when we answer questions on policy in an Estimates meeting it does consume time.

**MS. COFFIN:** Absolutely.

**MR. BYRNE:** It's fair for you to take that choice but, of course, there's a limited amount of time.

With that said, you asked the question as to whether or not we are employing various measures to look at racism, to look at English as a second language within the workplace. We have several partners that are extremely effective in working with new Canadians that may have language skill issues, but also we're encouraging workplace-based English as a second language, in particular, or French. We're obviously concentrating on English predominately, but we're open and very flexible to both official languages.

On racism, I think there's not more pertinent a topic in Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada right now than movements toward anti-racism. I pride myself on championing, with all my imperfections, championing this particular cause, and will be stalwart in championing this particular cause.

There are two fundamental aspects of racism that I think it's incumbent upon us all to recognize. There is racism based on ethnic group and racism based on colour, amongst other considerations. There's also racism based on Indigenous. The two are similar in some respects, but they're not the same.

Indigenous racism is something which I think we have to reflect on the character, the sociology, the culture and the nature of our First Nations, both Inuit, Innu and Metis. So we have to employ different strategies and different recognitions in terms of racism on Indigenous.

Racism against those of colour, those of different ethnic origin is something which is equally serious, but is different in its characterization and nature, and we have to recognize that.

So within the government itself, within Immigration, Skills and Labour, my concentration is on battling, combating, educating against and providing awareness against racism on colour and working with my colleague, the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation. We're working collaboratively on racism strategies against racism against people, Indigenous, First Nations.

**MS. COFFIN:** So there has been some appropriations made for addressing racism and workplace language training built into the budget. Good, thank you.

I note that a number of people in recent months, many immigrant families, have decided to leave, citing lack of opportunity. Has that been specifically addressed in here? Is that something that's on the radar to be developed under the Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism?

**MR. BYRNE:** I'm sorry if I'm not quite clear on the question. In terms of there have been choices, people have left Newfoundland and Labrador who obtained their landed immigrant status on the basis of economic opportunities or choices made elsewhere. I think that's part of our 48 per cent. In terms of our resettlement, we're very pleased, very proud of our statistics, our 52 per cent; but we always know we can do better.

There are 48 per cent that do leave and they do leave for various reasons. I think, predominantly, it's because of economic opportunity. They see different economic opportunity elsewhere. That's one of the things that we're working collaboratively in an intergovernmental approach to help resolve.

**MS. COFFIN:** Wonderful. I look forward to seeing that.

Okay, in terms of – let's keep going – Labour Standards, 4.1.05: What are some of the current activities? In terms of, I guess, some of the complaints that you're receiving, do you have an overview of some of the types of things that you are addressing under Labour Standards? I know that they can range from I'm not getting paid the right amount of overtime to PPE hasn't been appropriately provided or maybe even as far as the protections that were supposed to be afforded under COVID did not get implemented appropriately. Do you have any summary of the types of activities that are currently being addressed under Labour Standards?

**MR. BYRNE:** We do. The activities of the Labour Standards Division are directed by the *Labour Standards Act* and its consequential regulations. The act does describe in specific detail things such as wage recovery, notice of termination, minimum wage, sickness, maternity leave, employment of children and other aspects. The division also monitors the *Shops' Closing Act*. It's often complaint-driven and that's why we have a group of very highly skilled, very well-trained professionals that adjudicate many of these circumstances.

**MS. COFFIN:** Wonderful. I'm looking now for a summary of some of the nature of activities that these highly trained professionals are looking into. If you could provide that, whether or not it's in your briefing booklet, but if there's a summary at some point, that would be just lovely to have a look at, please.

Have you received any complaints regarding provision of personal protective equipment and the employment of essential employees since COVID has occurred?

**MR. BYRNE:** I'll defer that question to Dana.

**MS. SPURRELL:** With respect to your other question, in 2019-20 we received 10,763 requests for service within this division.

**MS. COFFIN:** Wow, 10,000.

**MS. SPURRELL:** It's a quite active division. Yes, during COVID some of those requests were along the requirement to wear masks and the responsibility of the individual versus the requirements of employers. Requests also revolve around mediation, investigation and adjudication services. Prevention intervention: staff did 93 workplace visits last year. We do awareness seminars and training as well. They did 28 seminars last year with 633, I think, participants. There's a whole range of services that are requested under that division and they are quite active.

**MS. COFFIN:** Lovely, well I look forward to seeing that summary and breakdown.

**MS. SPURRELL:** We can give you a full summary.

**MS. COFFIN:** I knew you would. I knew you were keeping the data, I appreciate that.

There are 10,000 cases that you had come in or –

**MS. SPURRELL:** Requests for service.

**MS. COFFIN:** Request for service, I'm sorry. You had 10,000 come in. What's the caseload right now? Of the ones that had – some have been resolved, I guess, some have been held over and there must be a wait-list for service; 10,000 and you have a staff that's being paid \$500,000. I can imagine they are well-burdened.

**MR. BYRNE:** Go ahead Dana.

**MS. SPURRELL:** Many of them are in progress. We have about 47 that have been carried over because of some of the complicating nature of their requests, but they are all divided out to the various officers and they are in progress.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay, thank you very much.

Are there any plans to conduct a statutory review of the *Labour Standards Act*?

**MR. BYRNE:** We have not established a plan for a specific review of the *Labour Standards Act* per se, but we do note that it has been a period of time since a review, a comprehensive review, has been conducted. In my own discussions with members of the labour movement, it was indicated to me that the greatest value and the higher priority would be placed on labour standards as opposed to labour relations for an engagement of a review exercise.

**CHAIR:** Ms. Coffin are you almost concluded your questions on this section?

**MS. COFFIN:** Almost.

**CHAIR:** Maybe, then, what we can do is we can go to Mr. Dinn. I'll ask the Clerk to call 5.1.01 to 5.2.01 so you can ask your questions on Apprenticeship and Trades and then we can go back to Ms. Coffin and it will be open.

**MS. COFFIN:** As long as we are abiding by the appropriate protocol that will be fine with me.

**CLERK:** 5.1.01 to 5.2.01 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** 5.1.01 to 5.2.01 inclusive.

Shall they carry?

Mr. Dinn.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate you jumping to that section; however, I'm going to jump to some general questions first, to get them in before I forget them, but I do appreciate it. I'll get to 5.1.01.

Some general questions. Of course, we already agree we're getting a copy of the minister's briefing binder. I think we've already talked about zero-based budgeting in previous questions.

Question: Are there any errors in the published Estimates that might have been overlooked?

**MR. BYRNE:** My gut reaction would be to say, no; however, I will ask my deputy minister to certify that now.

**MS. LANGOR:** There may actually be some minor errors. Of course, going through the budget process, as we did this time around, was somewhat different than in previous years. Given the time constraints, in particular on the Department of Finance, there may be some minor errors, but nothing of any substance or circumstance.

Debbie, would you like to add ...?

**MS. DUNPHY:** Yeah, I can confirm that the actuals for 2019-20 have been reviewed and submitted to the Comptroller General's office and they have confirmed there are certainly no material errors. To speak to Fiona, there are – you know, we're all human. There's obviously an opportunity, but certainly nothing that would be deemed material in nature.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

If something comes up, I assume you'll let us know.

The clock, yeah, I was just about to say. Thank you for that.

How many people are currently employed with the department?

**MS. DUNPHY:** At March 31 we had 582. Now, again, it's always a moving target because people come and go; some people retire. With the reorganization in August, we did have a transfer of some staff to Education, but right now we're around 560. That would be a good estimate.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

I believe earlier we talked about six retirements. I think some of the vacancies that are not filled there have been some that have been abolished. I'm not sure if you talked about those positions that were abolished. Do you know what they were?

**MS. DUNPHY:** I do, and if I don't have them here I can certainly endeavour to provide that for you. Yeah, I don't have my list but –

**MR. P. DINN:** That's fine. In the essence of time, yeah, please.

**MS. DUNPHY:** Yeah.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Did we have any layoffs over the last year in the department?

**MS. DUNPHY:** Not as a result of a shortage of work, so I would say no.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

I know I talked about some contractual employees earlier on. How many short-term employees do we have?

**MS. DUNPHY:** Eleven.

**MR. P. DINN:** Eleven.

**MS. DUNPHY:** By short-term I'm assuming you mean the, quote, thirteen-weeker. Eleven.

**MR. P. DINN:** I appreciate that. Thank you.

With regard to the contingency fund, has this department received any amount of that and for what?

**MS. DUNPHY:** In '20-'21 we have not.

**MR. P. DINN:** No? Okay.

**MS. DUNPHY:** Pardon me. Sorry, Mr. Dinn. You're aware of the Essential Worker Support Program. That's federal funding and we are receiving that from the Department of Finance and through the federal government. I'm not sure if that's coming through the contingency. That may be coming through the contingency fund through Finance, but it is being funded by the federal government.

**MR. P. DINN:** Okay. Appreciate that, thank you.

**MS. DUNPHY:** My apologies.

**MR. P. DINN:** No, not a problem. You might've touched on this already, but with Advanced Education moving to the Department of Education, has this had any impact on the department in any way?

**MR. BYRNE:** Well, obviously it has some.

**MR. P. DINN:** To what extreme?

**MR. BYRNE:** Well, it's very minimal in the sense that we still maintain a strong linkage with the Department of Education on post-secondary education as part of the training regime. We still maintain apprenticeships; we still maintain various programs.

What makes the department and its structure relatively unique and, I believe, much envied within the Canadian federation, is the integration of employment supports with income security, income assistance. This is one of the aspects; we are one of the few jurisdictions to have combined that capacity. I think it makes infinite sense to make a Department of Education from early childhood to post-secondary and lifelong learning, including Adult Basic Education being housed in the Department of Education and us being a workplace economic department.

Yes, there have been, obviously, some changes. Our staffing component within post-secondary education itself was not particularly bulky; it was not huge, so that staffing component moves to the Department of Education. I think this is, from a machinery of government point of view, a prudent move.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you for that.

I think I'm quite aware. I think Mr. Mavin will agree because we've been around government for – we came in when it was Career Development and Advanced Studies. It's after going through how many iterations since then, so that's all good.

Okay, back to 5.1.01. I'm looking at Apprenticeship and Trades Certification and I'm looking at the Purchased Services. We went from \$63,500 budgeted in 2019-20 and it jumped to almost \$900,000. Of course, now it's dropped down to just over \$160,000. Can I get an explanation of that, please?

**MR. BYRNE:** Sure. The bulk of this funding – the actuals being up by \$822,941. This increase is due to additional funding required to finish the Apprenticeship Information Management System in this fiscal year. The savings came

from within the division as well as other areas of the department.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

So we have a new AIMS program? If we do – which is great – is it possible to get the latest breakdown of our apprenticeship in terms of who is active and the journeypersons, trade qualifiers and such?

**MR. BYRNE:** I think we can.

Walter, is that ...?

**MR. MAVIN:** Absolutely, we can provide that for you.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you for that.

Also on that note, because I know COVID has created quite havoc – especially when you're talking about industrial trades and that, in terms of a lot of hands on required – can we get a breakdown of how many have challenged exams during the COVID period and what the pass rates were?

**MR. MAVIN:** Yes, we can provide that as well.

**MR. P. DINN:** Okay, I appreciate that. Included in that I wouldn't mind seeing those that have done rewrites as well. Is that an issue?

**MR. MAVIN:** Just to clarify, you're asking for the information on a per-trade, aggregate level?

**MR. P. DINN:** Please, yes.

**MR. MAVIN:** Okay.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Again, back to 5.1.01, Apprenticeship and Trades Certification, I'm seeing there's federal revenue and there's provincial revenue. Can I get an explanation of those two? That's in 5.1.01.

**MR. BYRNE:** Yes. The federal revenue is related to the Atlantic Apprenticeship Harmonization Project – it is \$408,000 of federal revenue – and advancing women in apprenticeships, which is \$66,000 in federal

revenue. In terms of the provincial side, the revenue related to the registration from the apprenticeship exams, trade-qualifier applications and certificate renewals encompasses the provincial revenue.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you for that.

Just a question, then, on that. Can I interpret this – and, again, those figures for the provincial revenue, they're declining there. Is that due to less registrations? Is that a decline in apprenticeship registrations?

**MR. BYRNE:** I'll ask Walt if he would ...

**MR. MAVIN:** No, not entirely. In fact, it's the result, in part, of a decision that was made by the department with respect to the recertification of certificates. Previously, there was an expiry date on those. The decision was made to certify those with no expiry date, and that included close on 11,000 certificates at a cost of about \$50 per. That made up for part of the reduction in the revenue there.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

Moving down to Training Programs – and I apologize; I know I asked the questions and you're over there saying he knows the answer, but I have to ask them on this.

The federal programming, the amount of money that went to Industrial Training was – \$8 million was approved. Of course, \$4.7-something million was used and we dropped it down to \$6 million. Can you explain that figure but also explain why we've dropped it down? Is it a result of less training?

**MR. MAVIN:** Yes, it is a result of less demand for that particular activity.

We had budgeted, in '19-'20, \$8 million as noted there. Our actuals came in a little over \$5 million. This year we've budgeted \$6 million based on what we anticipate the level of activity is going to be. In part this refers back to yesterday's conversation because the funding for this comes from the Labour Market Development Agreement. That \$2 million that we adjusted last year was put back into the main

LMDA budget to be allocated across other priority areas.

**MR. P. DINN:** One quick question: With our LMDA funding – because I know it’s sort of a use it or lose it type of fund – we haven’t had any issues in terms of utilizing that full amount? Not just here but overall.

**MR. MAVIN:** Previous years there have been smaller amounts. For example, in 2018-19, I think the amount was a little over \$200,000 on an over \$130-million budget. You’re correct that there was no carry-forward provision under the LMDA up until this year. In response to COVID, the federal government has provided some flexibilities to the jurisdictions and part of that will be a carry-forward provision under the Labour Market Development Agreement.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr. Dinn.

Now we’ll move to Ms. Coffin for her final 10-minute allocation.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you.

We should be able to do that. Let’s hope so.

Under Labour Relations Board, so just flipping back to that briefly. How many cases, I guess, or what are the activities of the Labour Relations Board broken down by, I guess, broad categories? I mean, are they adjudicating; are they doing mediation; are they doing conciliation? So some sense of the numbers of activities being undertaken, broken down by activity type.

**MR. BYRNE:** Okay, I’ll ask Debbie Dunphy if she can elaborate on some of the finer points.

**MS. DUNPHY:** Certainly.

While I don’t have the numbers, I can certainly provide those to you in a follow-up. They process various numbers of types of applications, so it could be certification of trade unions, the imposition of first collective agreements, a revocation of a certification, unfair labour practices, basically complaints throughout the *Labour Relations Act*. As well,

they also have jurisdiction over the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. So those are the types, but we can certainly provide you the number of cases.

**MS. COFFIN:** Lovely, thank you. I would appreciate that.

Going over to Apprenticeship and Trades Certification, I note that the department was mandated to provide better access to online training and services for apprenticeships and trades certification. Can you provide an update on your progress in that area?

**MR. BYRNE:** We certainly can. There are a number of different activities that were undertaken, some very, very successful.

I’ll ask, Walter, if you ...?

**CHAIR:** Walt Mavin.

**MR. MAVIN:** Yes, I guess the primary initiative that we’re about to see come to fruition is the development of our apprenticeship management system, which essentially is going to take a heavily paper-based system and digitize and put that online, which will create significant efficiencies for apprentices, JPs, employers and training institutions. For example, just the whole notion of the physical logbooks that today apprentices have to have in their possession and getting the JPs to sign off on, all that process will be online.

**MS. COFFIN:** Oh, good. That will lead us to having that skilled-trade database because I would image if you become an apprentice we can potentially continue on and have a better sense of how many carpenters and how many welders and how many plumbers we have. I think that will certainly help us adjust our labour market outlooks along the way.

Thank you.

**MR. MAVIN:** If I could, just on that point. Yes, that will be a part it, but I guess to an earlier question in terms of the collection of data on skilled tradespeople, we do that every day in terms of the interactions that we have with all of our clients across a myriad of programs and services; we’re case managing clients.

Part of that case management process, of course, is a collection of data in terms of their skills to date, any skills that they acquire and so on, so there's also a repository of information through that as well.

**MS. COFFIN:** Wonderful, love data, thank you. All right, that's grand.

May I have a list of the Grants and Subsidies, people who have received the Grants and Subsidies and some criteria around how that is awarded and how one might apply to it? I assume you have that for at least last year.

**MR. BYRNE:** Yes, so the Grants and Subsidies, just so we're clear, this is for the hiring of apprenticeships, the program, with a number of different boards and commissions, and as well for advancing women in apprenticeships. The government has a deliberate program to hire apprentices within the government operations.

Walter, I don't know if there's a little bit more clarity you can offer.

**MR. MAVIN:** That's correct, Minister.

The government hiring apprenticeship program – so apprentices are hired through Newfoundland Housing, health boards and so on – that's the bulk of the funding that's provided through the Grants and Subsidies.

**MS. COFFIN:** Oh okay, so this is a subsidy for government to hire apprentices, so government subsidies government.

Training programs, I note that comes from the LMMA, so that's reasonable there.

I think I'm okay on these, so if you would like to call these and then we'll have some time to do 6.1.01.

**CHAIR:** We did 6.1.01 and voted on it.

**MS. COFFIN:** Oh, right, yes, we did that.

**CHAIR:** If you have a few additional questions you'd like to ask.

**MS. COFFIN:** No, I think that might be the end of the questions.

Thank you very much.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms. Coffin.

Just for consistency, we'll call 4.1.01 to the end of four; then we'll call five and then we'll start from the beginning and call 1.1 to 6.1 inclusive because we've had a paused session.

**CLERK:** 4.1.01 to 4.1.06 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 4.1.01 to 4.1.06 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Against?

Carried.

On motion, subheads 4.1.01 through 4.1.06 carried.

**CLERK:** 5.1.01 to 5.2.01 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 5.1.01 to 5.2.01 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subheads 5.1.01 through 5.2.01 carried.

**CLERK:** 1.1.01 to 6.1.01 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 1.1.01 to 6.1.01 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 6.1.01 carried.

**CLERK:** Total.

**CHAIR:** Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, Department of Immigration, Skills and Labour, total heads, carried.

**CHAIR:** I would like to thank everybody and thank Minister Byrne and his staff at Immigration, Skills and Labour for all of their information that they've provided the Committee here today. An incredible team of people that you have working for you. I've had the privilege of working with them as well, Minister Byrne.

I would also like to recognize MHA Dinn and MHA Coffin for their questions in Committee, and also the additional MHA Dinn in the previous session, as well as the Committee Members: the MHA for Bruin - Grand Bank, the MHA for Lake Melville, the MHA for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair and the MHA for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

I'll give Mr. Dinn an opportunity, if he would like, to just say some closing remarks and to thank the Members.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you. I appreciate it.

I do appreciate the staff coming out again to get through this. As you know, we represent the people, as all MHAs do, and we have to ask questions and have to deal with any discrepancies, so I appreciate the answers. They were very concise and precise.

I do want to just go back to a discussion during our initial half where we talked about empathy in terms of our staff. I worked with a lot of these people over the years and I can attest to them, attest to everyone that they're fabulous staff, fabulous people to work for. I just want to say, not to misconstrue, that the empathy I think that we discussed was dealing more with

programming in general, how you have to look at programs and adjust them. They're not static; they have to be constantly changing.

I certainly can attest to the staff. I worked through a couple of general strikes where I had to go front line for social workers. I guarantee you, it's a very admirable profession. It has its rewards, but it's also a very stressful profession. I applaud anyone who's working with clients, such as those who are the most vulnerable, as well as in this time of COVID those who are looking for jobs and who have been put out of work. It's very difficult to deal with them. You have your programs that have the parameters and certainly our staff do the best they can to serve that.

My closing remark is I hope we still continue to look at programs and services as something that we can constantly change and improve and be a little bit more flexible, especially in this trying time, in terms of trying to make sure everyone has an opportunity to be the best they can be. I thank you for the extra time that we had today to do this, and carry on with what you're doing.

**CHAIR:** Ms. Coffin.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you very much, and I won't take very long.

I want to thank everyone for their time, their dedication and their professionalism. I'm sure you know, but for the record, my asking about policy and asking the pointy questions is not about addressing your work. It's about making sure, for the record, that we as government are doing our appropriate duties and making sure that the right things get done. Thank you very much for being forthcoming and open about that.

Recognizing the times that we are in, I well imagine that your roles are going to be grown quite substantially because we are going to see a great deal of demand, I imagine, for a lot of the services provided by this particular department. So you have my support in making our way through this next part. Thank you very much again for your time and I think maybe you can have a big sigh of relief now because Estimates is over for you.



Thank you very much.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, MHAs Coffin and Dinn. I have one other thing to add.

Shall I report the Estimates of the Department of Immigration, Skills and Labour carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Department of Immigration, Skills and Labour carried without amendment.

**CHAIR:** We passed yesterday's minutes at the beginning of the meeting and that was voted on. So the final motion that I have to ask for is for a mover to adjourn.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** So moved.

**CHAIR:** She's very quick with this one, the MHA for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

We conclude our meeting exactly on time, really, just at 11:59.

On motion, the Committee adjourned *sine die*.