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**Proceedings of the Standing Committee on  
Resources**

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Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture

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Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

## **RESOURCE COMMITTEE**

Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture

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Chair: Brian Warr, MHA

Vice-Chair: Jordan Brown, MHA

Members: Pleaman Forsey, MHA  
Sherry Gambin-Walsh, MHA  
Craig Pardy, MHA  
Paul Pike, MHA  
Lucy Stoyles, MHA

Clerk of the Committee: Mark Jerrett

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Appearing:

### **Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture**

Hon. Derrick Bragg, MHA, Minister  
Jamie Chippett, Deputy Minister  
Stephen Balsom, Assistant Deputy Minister, Forestry and Wildlife  
Keith Deering, Assistant Deputy Minister, Agriculture and Lands  
Lorelei Roberts, Assistant Deputy Minister, Fisheries and Aquaculture  
Philip Ivimey, Departmental Controller  
Erin Shea, Director of Communications  
Dana English, Executive Assistant

### **Also Present**

Hon. Lisa Dempster, MHA, Minister of Labrador Affairs  
Hon. Pam Parsons, MHA, Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality  
Hon. Sarah Stoodley, MHA, Minister of Digital Government and Service NL  
James Dinn, MHA  
Scott Fleming, Research Support, Third Party Caucus  
Dave Hamlyn, Shared Sessional Assistant, Government Members' Office  
Nathan Ryan, Sessional Political Support, Official Opposition Office

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

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, Pam Parsons, MHA for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, substitutes for Lucy Stoyles, MHA for Mount Pearl North, for a portion of the meeting.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Sarah Stoodley, MHA for Mount Scio, substitutes for Paul Pike, MHA for Burin - Grand Bank.

The Committee met at 9 a.m. in the Assembly Chamber.

**CHAIR (Warr):** Good morning and welcome to the Estimates of the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture. My name is Brian Warr, MHA for Baie Verte - Green Bay, and I'll be your Chair this morning.

The first thing I'd like to do is announce the substitutions. Substituting for the Member for Burin - Grand Bank is Minister Stoodley, substituting for the Member for Mount Pearl North is Minister Parsons and substituting for the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's is Minister Dempster.

I would entertain a motion to approve the minutes of April 25.

Moved by Minister Parsons; seconded by MHA Forsey.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

**CHAIR:** I just want to remind Members, the chairs that you're sitting in this morning obviously are set for the MHAs and we ask that you not touch any of the settings on the chairs. We will have a look at taking a break at around 10:30, with the Committee's approval.

I don't see any unaffiliated Members here this morning, but I'd certainly like to ask the permission of the Committee, should they come in, we offer them the 10 minutes?

MHA Dinn, that's fine with you as well?

**J. DINN:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Okay, the next thing I'd like to do is ask the Committee Members to raise your hand and your tally light will light up and introduce yourselves, please.

**P. PARSONS:** Good morning, everyone.

I'm Pam Parsons, the MHA for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave and Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

**S. STOODLEY:** Sarah Stoodley, MHA for Mount Scio.

**D. HAMLIN:** Dave Hamlyn, Government Members' Office.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Lisa Dempster, MHA for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

**P. FORSEY:** Pleaman Forsey, MHA for Exploits.

**N. RYAN:** Nathan Ryan, Official Opposition Office.

**C. PARDY:** Craig Parady, MHA for the District of Bonavista.

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

**S. FLEMING:** Scott Fleming, Researcher, Third Party Caucus Office.

**CHAIR:** Okay, thank you.

I'll probably start with Mr. Deering here. Introduce yourself to the Committee, please.

**K. DEERING:** Good morning.

I'm Keith Deering. I'm the Assistant Deputy Minister for the Agriculture Branch, Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**J. CHIPPETT:** Jamie Chippett, Deputy Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**D. BRAGG:** Derrick Bragg, Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**S. BALSOM:** Stephen Balsom, Assistant Deputy Minister of Forestry and Wildlife Branch.

**L. ROBERTS:** Lorelei Roberts, Assistant Deputy Minister for Fisheries and Aquaculture with the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**P. IVIMEY:** Philip Ivimey, Departmental Controller.

**D. ENGLISH:** Good morning.

Dana English, Executive Assistant to Minister Bragg.

**E. SHEA:** Director of Communications, Erin Shea.

**CHAIR:** Again, I'm joined by Mark here at the table. So we'll get started and I'll ask the Clerk to call the first set of subheads, please.

**CLERK (Jerrett):** 1.1.01 to 1.2.02 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** 1.1.01 to 1.2.02 inclusive.

I'll ask, Minister, did you want to have a few opening remarks?

**D. BRAGG:** I have a brief opening remark, I guess.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, okay.

**D. BRAGG:** Thanks for the opportunity. I'll apologize first for having this postponed. I thank you guys for your co-operation on that.

A big department, as you can tell. We have a small crew, but we certainly have a big department. In Fisheries, Forestry and Aquaculture, we're looking at about 17,000 in the industry. In aquaculture alone, 6,500 people. In Crown Lands, well, we own 80 per cent of the province in Crown Lands. We know that's a big part. Forestry is about \$500 million into our industry into the province every year. I don't know what the number of people who are working – you're looking at a couple of thousand people, for sure, in the forest industry.

Wildlife, again, anything dealing with wildlife, it's us in wildlife and we also have wildlife enforcement, GIS mapping. We have just about 1,000 people in this department, 978 positions. A fair-sized department covers every inch of this province.

I'm ready to go because we only got three hours.

**CHAIR:** Okay, thank you, Minister.

1.1.01 to 1.2.02 inclusive.

May I ask who's starting off this morning?

MHA Pardy.

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

I know it's a big department and I'm just here for one-third of that, being the fisheries. My colleague for Exploits has really got me under a time count. I'm going to be succinct with my questions, which would be new for me, judging by my last Estimates.

Before I start, I just want to recognize that we lost one of the champions of the fishery over the weekend, Gus Etchegary. Gus was very outspoken on the fishery and really passionate up to his later days. I did have the privilege of meeting with him on a couple of occasions and was thankful for that. But we'll certainly miss his voice in the fishery.

The first question I would throw out, just looking for an update on the current fishery situation. Maybe even the plausibility or the probability of some EI benefits for especially those plant workers that would be now without benefits.

**D. BRAGG:** I'm guessing you're talking crab or crab and lobster?

**C. PARDY:** Yes.

**D. BRAGG:** Lobster, from my understanding, there was an agreement yesterday.

**C. PARDY:** Yes.

**D. BRAGG:** The last two Fridays we thought we had an agreement on crab and both fell through. ASP and FFAW are still in conversations again today. Hopefully, this week, we'll see something, but they were close over the weekend. But, as they say, close but no cigar. They just couldn't sell it at the end of the day to the membership.

**C. PARDY:** To the membership.

**D. BRAGG:** Yeah.

**C. PARDY:** Yeah.

How close were we, Minister, on a formula prior to the – my understanding is that we were close. I think both parties were –

**D. BRAGG:** I don't think we were that close. We spent eight weeks at it. I think it might have got there, but I'll be quite honest social media played a big part and social media threw it way off the rails on Facebook posts and that sort of thing. So then they went and resorted back to the panel.

But there's no reason you can't start now for the next year.

**C. PARDY:** Right, I agree, and the sooner they start the better.

In last year's Estimates, the deputy minister has stated, in relation to foreign ownership in the fish-processing sector, that we've got a draft report. It was going to be presented to the minister in short course and then publicly released, but that hasn't been released yet, has it not?

**D. BRAGG:** Yes, that was released.

**C. PARDY:** It has been released. Okay. My bad.

**D. BRAGG:** We'll send you a copy.

**C. PARDY:** That would be good. So that's released.

**D. BRAGG:** Yes.

**C. PARDY:** Will we see legislative amendments this sitting in relation to the fishery like the *Aquaculture Act*?

**D. BRAGG:** We had hoped this – I guess it depends on the House Leader. It's ready to go. As you know, first reading has gone through on *Aquaculture Act*.

**C. PARDY:** Right. Are there others in the queue; any other legislative amendments in areas that would be in the queue?

**D. BRAGG:** Not really. I think the closest one would be Crown Lands. We are working on something coming forward in Crown Lands. I'm not sure we'll get it through this session. It'll probably be in the fall. Fall is more about the legislation.

**C. PARDY:** Yeah.

I will get to the line items right after this one. Would the minister have any issue or thoughts related to Oceana and the Harris Centre partnering up with conferences, like I think the last one was planned regarding capelin in Gander?

**D. BRAGG:** That got cancelled, didn't it?

**C. PARDY:** It got cancelled.

**D. BRAGG:** That got cancelled, yes.

That's a great question. I mean, you've got to be careful. If you have a right-wing group sometimes that is coming in or a left-wing group and then you're trying to – capelin is very vital to this province. Two different people can have two different opinions; two different scientists can have two different opinions. We like to draw from, not our science, but the federal government's science on any aspects of the fishery. We'd rather see people partnering with the federal Department of Fisheries when it comes to how our fisheries should go than any outside interest. Right?

**C. PARDY:** Yes.

1.1.01, Minister's Office, last year you were missing, I think, an ADM or it wasn't filled, Resource and Enforcement, has that position been filled now?

**D. BRAGG:** No, it's still vacant.

**C. PARDY:** Oh, it's still vacant.

Any contemplation of – is it still in the queue to be filled?

**D. BRAGG:** Hopefully, yes.

**C. PARDY:** Okay.

Purchased Services in 1.1.01, under Salaries there, I notice that it was budgeted \$400 and it might seem a little miniscule amount, it went to \$1,100.

**D. BRAGG:** It just says variance due to higher than anticipated Purchased Services during the year. So meeting expenses.

**C. PARDY:** Okay.

You had mentioned last year that whenever the officials travelled to Corner Brook for sessions that you had a room leased over there. I think it was around \$28,000, but you decided to –

**D. BRAGG:** We did, we cancelled that.

**C. PARDY:** – cancel that and use the hotels. So we are better off as a result of that being done?

**D. BRAGG:** Currently, with the way the set-up is, yes. But say we needed an AGM in Corner Brook for two weeks out of the month, it would definitely cheaper having an apartment than what we would be having for hotels. So, right now, we don't have that set up, previously we did.

Right now, I try to get over every second month; I think my deputy tries to get over every second month or as needed beyond that.

Right now, it works. Should it change, we'll make – we always look at the dollars, is it worth it is it not worth it sort of thing.

**C. PARDY:** So since the time we cancelled the lease to now, I'm assuming –

**D. BRAGG:** Yeah, we're good.

**C. PARDY:** We're good.

**D. BRAGG:** Yeah, it was a good decision.

**C. PARDY:** In 1.2.02, Professional Services, last year there was nothing budgeted but we had \$5,000 expended.

**D. BRAGG:** 1.2.02?

**C. PARDY:** 1.2.02 under Administrative Support, Minister.

**D. BRAGG:** Okay, I'm a page behind, sorry.

So that's the \$5,176,000, Salmonier Nature Park? Jamie, I'm going to let you take this.

**C. PARDY:** Okay.

**D. BRAGG:** If we're on the same page?

**C. PARDY:** I'm on the Administrative Support, 1.2.02.

**D. BRAGG:** Okay.

**C. PARDY:** Professional Services.

**D. BRAGG:** Okay, I looked at the next line down, \$5,000.

**C. PARDY:** Yeah.

**J. CHIPPETT:** That's a breakout of the funding for the capital expenditures from last year. It was all budgeted as \$1 million, in particular associated with infrastructure project and improvements at Salmonier Nature Park. So at the end of the day, that \$1 million, obviously \$330,000 of that was spent in the category. So it was just put in as one lump sum in the original budget, but \$5,000 was spent under Property, Furnishings and Equipment for the Salmonier Nature Park project.

**C. PARDY:** The other thing mentioned last year was I think a storage shed in Corner Brook. I think that was another one that was mentioned in with the Salmonier Nature Park.

**J. CHIPPETT:** That is correct.

**C. PARDY:** Okay.

Purchased Services in that same heading, that would have been all part of the capital expenditures as well there?

**J. CHIPPETT:** Yes.

**C. PARDY:** As well for those items?

**J. CHIPPETT:** Yes, and you can see some of the – obviously with \$330,000 spent, some of the activities that were planned under the original \$1-million expenditure didn't occur last year. So that helps explain some of the \$5.1 million that you see in the 2023-24 Estimates.

**C. PARDY:** Okay.

Now, these projects that you've mentioned, from the shed to Salmonier Nature Park, is that the value that we're looking at for those projects, the \$5.1 million?

**J. CHIPPETT:** That's some of it. Some of the other things are related to budget increases that you would've seen in the budget for capital equipment for agriculture and the health lab, food safety laboratory.

**C. PARDY:** Okay.

Mr. Chair, you called the heading. I'm sorry, but you –

**CHAIR:** 1.1.01 to 1.2.02 inclusive.

**C. PARDY:** Okay.

That's all the questions I have for that section.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

I'm recognizing MHA Dinn.

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

How many people are currently – I think 1,000 you acknowledged, Minister, that's the whole of the department; 1,000 people in the whole department?

**D. BRAGG:** No, 978 to be exact.

**J. DINN:** How many positions are currently vacant?

**D. BRAGG:** That varies, I guess, because if you look at some times of the year, like if you look at when we bring on the people out to Pynn's Brook and into Wooddale and the forest firefighters, we may have 200 extra ones. So any given time of the year, there's different types of vacancies. If you're looking at full-time jobs, how many would be vacant, because the other ones would be seasonal employment.

**J. DINN:** Okay.

So the full-time vacancies were being factored into the 978?

**D. BRAGG:** Yes.

**J. DINN:** Okay.

Is the department still using zero-based budgeting?

**D. BRAGG:** Yes, we are.

**J. DINN:** Has the department received any feedback on the *Fishing Industry Collective Bargaining Act* since the legislation was amended last fall?

**D. BRAGG:** No, that would have went to Minister Davis's shop anyway.

**J. DINN:** Okay.

When do you expect the internal review of the fish processing licence to be completed and will the findings result in legislative changes coming before the House any time soon?

**D. BRAGG:** We recently got the report, we're going to review it and we're hoping to put it out within the next month or two.

**OFFICIAL:** (Inaudible.)

**D. BRAGG:** No?

**J. DINN:** Okay.

What changes –?

**D. BRAGG:** Oh, I might have been wrong on that. I might have been mixed up with another report. I'll let Lorelei take that one. I'm sorry.

**J. DINN:** No problem.

**L. ROBERTS:** There is an ongoing review of the fish processing licence and currently we're right now in, I'll say, the discovery phase, we're doing a jurisdictional scan and that sort of thing. We expect it will take probably about two years before we come to fruition on that. There may be legislative change; it depends on the outcomes of what we find.

**J. DINN:** But the legislative change is really two years hence, I take it.

**L. ROBERTS:** Yeah.

**J. DINN:** What changes can we expect to see with the proposed amendments to the *Animal Health and Protection Act* and when can we expect to debate them in the House?

**D. BRAGG:** We are actively working on that and there are some changes that you can expect there. Again, hopefully, we'll see that in the fall; it is something we've been working on for the last two years since I've been here and I'd like to see that come to – I don't know a better way to it, but put it to bed; we may never get that exactly perfect but we can make some great recommendations there. So hopefully in the fall.



**J. DINN:** With regard to the *Aquaculture Act*, it may or may not come up this session but it could come up in the fall for sure. If it comes up in the fall, will regulations be ready at that time?

**D. BRAGG:** Yes, I would imagine. A lot of what you would see in the *Aquaculture Act* is bringing our current policies and procedures into actually legislation. It is an act that was eight pages and takes it to about 48 pages now.

**J. DINN:** So will there be changes to the regulations as a result of the act or are you saying that the regulations –?

**D. BRAGG:** What you see now is basically what is going to be incorporated into the act.

**J. DINN:** Okay.

So, in other words, there will be no changes to the regulations that exist now.

**D. BRAGG:** I won't say there will be none because I don't have it right in front of me, but I can get a report for you.

**J. DINN:** Okay.

With regard to Executive, any vacancies in this section? I think you mentioned an ADM for Enforcement.

**D. BRAGG:** An ADM.

**J. DINN:** That's it?

**D. BRAGG:** Yes.

**J. DINN:** In 1.2.02, Administrative Support, in last year's Estimate it was mentioned that there were expenses associated with the purchase of an aquaculture vessel. I just wanted to confirm, does this boat belong to the department? Also, what type of work is it being used for?

**D. BRAGG:** We're in receipt of that boat. Actually, it was built in Glovertown. Without

knowing the exact figure, I think you're looking at somewhere around half a million dollars the boat was but it's well equipped for our veterinarian and our people who would need to go to the aquaculture sites.

**J. DINN:** Okay.

So that's an expense that the department is taking on, I guess?

**D. BRAGG:** Yes, the boat is, I suppose, bought and paid for, for the lack of a better way to put it.

**J. DINN:** With this service, I'm assuming then these veterinarian services are compensated by the various aquaculture farms, I guess.

**D. BRAGG:** We have our own vets on staff that would visit the sites. When I say sites, I mean there are offshore sites and there are land sites. So our veterinarians are always very much all about the health of the animal. That's their number one priority.

**J. DINN:** When it comes to paying for the service, is it the province or is it the aquaculture companies that depend on it?

**D. BRAGG:** I'll let the ADM take that, Lorelei.

**L. ROBERTS:** MHA Dinn, the way that it works is all companies have their own veterinarians for their companies. We have our own veterinarians at the department as well, and those veterinarians do surveillance services. So basically they go out and they do sampling. It's kind of a check in terms to make sure that what the companies are telling us is actually factual. So we do surveillance checks. We also work with the companies, should anything occur, and consult with them in terms of treatments and that sort of thing.

So they have their own vet services; we don't pay for that. Our vet services are in

place to do the surveillance work from a regulatory standpoint.

**J. DINN:** What would be involved with the surveillance checks?

**L. ROBERTS:** So they basically go out to a site, they may take a number of samples based on a sampling protocol. They'll check the fish, make sure there's no disease, make sure the fish are healthy, that sort of thing. Make sure if they have aquatic animal health plans and they have integrated pest management plans. They check and make sure they're abiding by that. Make sure their SOPs are being followed, all those types of things.

**J. DINN:** Do they do lice counts?

**L. ROBERTS:** They do. Basically, the companies do lice counts and our vets go out and do lice counts as well, and that's just as an audit to make sure that what's coming in can be validated.

**J. DINN:** Are these lice counts recorded anywhere for public viewing?

**L. ROBERTS:** The companies post their lice counts on the NAIA website and we do our lice counts and it is basically just an auditing function. So we wouldn't report anything unless there was something drastically different and then we would make the companies report.

**J. DINN:** So are these lice counts done by an individual farmer or are they done by company?

**L. ROBERTS:** Right now they're rolled up but the companies do them by pen.

**J. DINN:** By pen.

**L. ROBERTS:** They do collect that information themselves but the reporting is rolled out by a farm.

**J. DINN:** Why wouldn't it be better to have it rolled out by pen?

**L. ROBERTS:** We had no issue with the way that they report because essentially it's an average and if it goes higher than that, we would work with them on putting in an integrated lice management plan. They have those in place right now, so they have treatment processes should lice increase to manage the sea lice loads. So we see no reason to change it at this point. There are no issues or concerns that we've observed this year.

**J. DINN:** For a while salmon stocks, I'd argue that it's important because – and I'll say this again later – that wherever aquaculture has been set up, it has decimated wild salmon stocks. No if, ands or buts about it. Part of the reason is lice stock. Because of the lice counts, it will devastate smolts, especially those that are returning to the sea and heading out. No matter where this has been set up.

So I guess what I'm looking for here, if I understand it, after a certain point, the lice counts, unless they come to a problem, they're not going to be reported. But I do believe that right now it needs to be reported, not rolled up into an average but reported by pen. Especially since these pens are often located in the vicinity of salmon rivers and we've got a major one, an operation setting up now in Placentia, but you just need to look at the Conne River and you can see what happened there. So I will say that the process right now, to me, is just totally inadequate and probably reckless in many ways.

**L. ROBERTS:** MHA Dinn, just to respond, I know there was really not a question there.

**J. DINN:** No.

**L. ROBERTS:** But in terms of a response, the department is aware of the sea lice counts on every pen. It's not publicized but

we do know because, as I've said, we do audits and that information is in it.

**J. DINN:** So would it be possible then to publicize those?

**L. ROBERTS:** At this particular point, we don't intend to publicize per pen. We intend to do it –

**J. DINN:** Why not?

**L. ROBERTS:** Because we worked out a formula and, essentially, it's being managed and mitigated.

**J. DINN:** But if we don't know what the numbers are, how do we know it's being managed properly?

**L. ROBERTS:** Because the department knows the numbers.

**J. DINN:** Then I think that should be public.

**L. ROBERTS:** From a public standpoint, if it becomes a public issue, we would certainly make them report. If it affects the mortality of the fish or anything like that, then they're required to report.

**J. DINN:** The mortality of those in the pen?

**L. ROBERTS:** The fish in the pen. We don't deal with wild salmon, MHA Dinn, that is the responsibility of the federal government. They do any monitoring that's required for wild salmon. We do work with the federal government on that and so does the companies. But in terms of reporting for wild salmon, that's not something we're responsible for, nor is it our jurisdiction to do so.

**J. DINN:** No, but I –

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

MHA Pardy, do you have anything left under 1.1.01 to 1.2.02?

**C. PARDY:** No, I certainly do not.

**CHAIR:** MHA Dinn, do you have something left?

**J. DINN:** Yeah, I will finish off with, it does need to be reported by pen. If nothing else, it gives us an idea of what the counts are. Because, while you may not be responsible for wild salmon, it's going to have a direct impact. To me, as far as I can see, a healthy approach is not the way it's going to have to be left to other groups as well as the public to determine. We've seen already in this industry the mass die-offs that have happened when the public eye is not on them.

I do believe that in a department that is both the regulator and a government that's also the cheerleader for this industry, it needs to have a lot more public scrutiny, no ifs, ands or buts about that. That's not a question.

Expenses last year in all Operating Accounts except Property, Furnishings and Equipment were unanticipated. What were these expenses for?

**D. BRAGG:** (Inaudible.)

**J. DINN:** It's under 1.2.02.

**D. BRAGG:** You're talking about the Operating Account overall?

**J. DINN:** Yeah, all Operating Accounts except Property, Furnishings and Equipment weren't anticipated.

**D. BRAGG:** Okay. So here are my notes from this.

Variance from operating amounts reflects expenditures for Salmonier Nature Park infrastructure project during the year. Funds are budgeted under Property, Furnishings and Equipment and charged to the correct categories accordingly during the year and any expenditures incurred. The overall variance is due to the savings of the

Salmonier Nature Park infrastructure project and storage facility infrastructure project and due to delays. The funds have been carried over to budget '23-'24.

**J. DINN:** Okay.

**D. BRAGG:** Good?

**J. DINN:** One quick question with the lice counts. What is the lice count threshold before it becomes a public issue? We're talking on these salmon. Is it one, two, three, 10?

**L. ROBERTS:** I don't know offhand. Again, that would be a veterinarian question, what the sea lice count would be before they become an issue. I mean, obviously, I do know that you can see it. I've actually counted sea lice myself on salmon and it's very evident when there are more than three or four on it, then they take note and they put in a plan.

**J. DINN:** That's on the farm salmon, correct?

**L. ROBERTS:** Correct.

**J. DINN:** More than three or four.

**L. ROBERTS:** As well, the wild salmon also have sea lice. In actual fact, from an angular standpoint, they like the sea lice on it because it means they're fresh from the ocean.

**J. DINN:** So, yes, sea lice are a natural occurring thing. But in the wild, because of the life cycle of the salmon, they are held at bay through the natural process, the tides, you name it. But when you have millions of salmon swimming in circles day in and day out, it's a perfect spot for sea lice infestations, which then spread. Actually, this is the point, they might be naturally occurring and on a large, healthy, seagoing salmon that's just come in, two or three lice is not going to be detrimental; two or three

lice on a smolt will kill it, no ifs, ands or buts about that.

So I've heard this one before. Yes, they are naturally occurring, just like a flu virus might be naturally occurring. But put people together in a room and you'll soon have an epidemic.

My point here, it goes back to three or four on a large salmon in a pen is significant. I still think that part of this aquaculture fact does have to deal with the health. If you want to have a sustainable industry, then it's got to be measured to make sure you're protecting the wild stocks nearby.

That's it for me. I'll come back to that later on.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

If the Committee is ready for the question, shall 1.1.01 to 1.2.02 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Those against?

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 1.2.02 carried.

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

**CLERK:** 2.1.01 to 2.3.01 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 2.1.01 to 2.3.01 inclusive carry?

I'm recognizing MHA Pardy.

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

I'd like to weigh in on the aquaculture and the sea lice but I'll wait until the aquaculture section to do so on that.

2.1.01, Marketing and Development, under Professional Services, what would be included here?

**D. BRAGG:** Under Professional Services?

**C. PARDY:** Professional Services, under Salaries.

**D. BRAGG:** Lorelei?

**L. ROBERTS:** So under Professional Services, this is from market reports that support the collective bargaining process for Fisheries. We pay for various types of market reports such as like Pisces Consulting. They do reports on domestic cod. We look at Sackton reports for cod and crab. Meros we hire for turbot, capelin and crab. JEMBA for shrimp and TriNAV for pelagic bait. So we've done those types of consulting reports this year to provide to the pricing panel and the collective bargaining parties, so ASP and FFAW.

**C. PARDY:** And those would be usually Sackton and Urner Barry.

**L. ROBERTS:** No, Urner Barry is a subscription service.

**C. PARDY:** Okay.

**L. ROBERTS:** So that doesn't fall under Professionals Services.

**C. PARDY:** Okay.

I've asked this last year, as well, and forgive me for asking the same, but we had invested, at one point in time, in the Canadian Sealers Association, and forgive me if I'm wrong, but I kind of recall when I first came in 2019 that I would have seen that in a line item. If I had checked back, at that time, which I ought to have and I didn't, would that have been there as recently as

2019; a line item under this department for the Canadian Sealers Association?

**L. ROBERTS:** I'm not sure. It was before my time with the department so I certainly wouldn't know.

**C. PARDY:** No.

**L. ROBERTS:** It's not there now.

**C. PARDY:** No, I realize that.

So we're not sure as to what period of time that we ended any involvement with the Canadian Sealers Association.

I know it was stated when we discussed seals last year in Estimates and looking at marketing development, the minister stated it's all right to say that we should do something, but we need to know what we need to do. That's fair and 100 per cent correct.

Is there anything different from last year to this year as to some initiative that we can do? A sub-question to that, Minister, would be – I find, personally, I listen or whatever to hear Bob Hardy reference on seals. So if someone had to have said my go-to-person on seals, it probably would be Bob Hardy.

I just wondered whether Bob would be yours or if there's some other one that your department would use out there as a resource person to find out what we need to do.

**D. BRAGG:** MHA Pardy, I've got to tell you, people are not knocking down our doors dealing with seals.

**C. PARDY:** No.

**D. BRAGG:** I'm not lying. There's not a stack of proposals. It's disappointing to be honest. In Fleur de Lys, we're hoping to get a place open this year. I mean, they're moving through that process. That's a group of fisherpeople got together, trying to open

up a plant that, I think, the Walshs might have had there some time ago.

But there's nobody walking in the door everyday saying I have the answer; I have the answer. It's unfortunate. We have a big problem and we are nowhere close to an answer. It looks like this year the quota won't even be taken. They can't get 300,000 seals taken a year when we're not at the crab, because the price is so low. So it's unfortunate.

I wish there was a great, quick answer and easy answer, but we don't have it with anybody coming forward with any great ideas of where to go. Everybody has some – like, do the seal oil tablets, some tanning of furs, but meat is minimal. I mean if you asked everybody you knew, most people don't eat seal meat in this province. So it's a problem that we're going to be dealing with for years to come.

**C. PARDY:** I think you realize that it is a big problem. I think for the ecosystem, we all got the awareness. When you and I attended the seal summit and when you had your address that night and they served hors d'oeuvres that night, I mean they were really quality hors d'oeuvres and that was seal product, wasn't it, that night?

**D. BRAGG:** That's right.

**C. PARDY:** So I know that there's hope there, but it takes initiative that we've got to tackle an issue. I know the markets are lacking but I know that we certainly need some kind of action plan or something to be able to correct the balance in the ecosystem.

I would think that the House, and I'll be corrected if I'm wrong, is unanimous that we need a balance in the ecosystem.

**D. BRAGG:** So can I respond to that?

**C. PARDY:** Yes, you sure can.

**D. BRAGG:** The deputy just reminded me. So with the Fisheries Advisory Council, we have a subcommittee that is to keep working on what to do with seals. I mean, marketing opportunities – we know we need to harvest them, obviously, but we just can't harvest millions of seals with nothing to do with them.

That's where we are. So that's the challenge for the Advisory Council.

**C. PARDY:** I have a harvester in my district by the name of Glen Mackey and I will just give you a situation now. I'll be as short as I can. He's a harvester and has been for a couple of decades, still a young man, and he let his sealing licence lapse. Unfortunately, it was a little more than three years. But he wanted to go harvest seals this year again because of availability so he made application or he tried to get through DFO in order to go out. But the maximum limitation would be three years and then he would have to go through the five-year apprenticeship again on another vessel.

I look at that, at a time when we have the issue that we currently have, and to know that man, who was a harvester for our two decades, him and his crew couldn't go out, even though he had the humane course done and whatever the safety courses he would have had to have done, but he couldn't go into the harvest.

In amongst that period, we had the pandemic for a couple of years, where everything was – but they were firm with three years and that was it. So sometimes when we look at our regulations, they run counter to what we would all hope in order to get balance in the ecosystem. Because that was one indication I looked at that flew in the face of us trying to get, you know, a balance within the system.

**D. BRAGG:** But meanwhile the licence is only \$5. It was five bucks, right? The person only had to pay their \$5 and they would have had their licence. They had three

years they could have gone back and paid it. I mean, while I agree with you, it seems to be a bit petty but we didn't talk thousands of dollars for a licence here.

**C. PARDY:** No.

**D. BRAGG:** Right?

**C. PARDY:** Just inadvertently overlooked.

**D. BRAGG:** So, no doubt, the federal government is going to have to come in a licence more harvesters should we get a sizable hunt.

**C. PARDY:** Yes.

**D. BRAGG:** Yeah.

**C. PARDY:** Moving on to section 2.1.02, Licensing, Inspection and Quality Assurance. In Professional Services in this section, we know the funds are here to use to engage the service of consultants. Can you explain the variance? We had \$10,000 and it went to \$25,000.

**D. BRAGG:** So it was a higher number of meetings by the licensing board. The Fish Processing Licensing board, I should say.

**C. PARDY:** Okay.

Can you identify the number of applications we had for the primary processing licences and secondary?

**D. BRAGG:** I'll refer that to my ADM.

**L. ROBERTS:** We had seven applications that year and the majority of them were for primary processing. So that was for 2022 fiscal.

**C. PARDY:** The Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board would come under this section too?

**L. ROBERTS:** No.

**C. PARDY:** Not this section?

**L. ROBERTS:** It doesn't. It is just for the Fish Processing Licensing board.

**C. PARDY:** Okay.

So what section would that come under? That is in this section that we're discussing now?

**L. ROBERTS:** No, we don't fund the harvesting.

**C. PARDY:** Yeah.

**L. ROBERTS:** So it doesn't come in under any of it. We just have a director that sits on it as a member.

**C. PARDY:** Okay.

I got into a little bit of trouble with a petition that I presented in the House of Assembly. The petition looked at the shortage forecasted by the occupational forecast for natural resources agriculture-related production. Fishing vessel masters and fishermen, women, a shortage predicted of a little over 4,800 in the span from '22-'31.

I had a gentleman by the name of Eugene Conway of St. Brides and he was one of several who had reached out that he had trouble with the 75 per cent of the allocation coming from that, him and several others. Thus, I had a petition on their behalf.

He had claimed that we had three young children – should I wait?

**CHAIR:** Just finish it off very quickly.

**C. PARDY:** Okay.

He had three young children, he was a master mariner – Eugene Conway – and he wanted to fish. He wanted to be home with his family. He wanted to fish. But he couldn't do it by having 75 per cent of his income. He could do it when the crab price was high,

but he knew this year that it was going to be a problem. In fact, he couldn't get on a berth this year, and for the variety of species that he was involved with fishing, the berth was no longer available. Again, it was a sign of the times.

So he couldn't support his family to stay to go through the process of getting his licence. He couldn't do that for five years because 25 per cent of the income was restrictive. He had stated that you're directed, mandated to go to EI. That's the way he looked at it.

That was the genesis of the petition. There was no more than that. If we look at the shortage we've got in our industry, the genesis of the petition was that we probably need to be looking at what we've had in since the '90s and look at a change. I know that there's a letter and I think the minister probably had the letter, how far – I didn't know if you wanted to speak to that, correct me in my understanding.

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

I think the terminology would be moonlighting. People in other higher paying jobs jumping off the offshore boat, jumping off the offshore industry, jumping out of a carpenter's shop to take advantage of a short, lucrative season is what they tried to stay away from. We saw moonlighting for years and years and years; people would take two jobs.

I would argue with you, we do not have a shortage in our fishery. If you look at it today, the shortage is the quota. So people could use more quota that's in the fishery right now.

When you get someone telling me and telling you they have a 10,000-pound quota and to buy another 10,000 was \$450,000. Couldn't justify it. So they're trying to survive on 10,000 pound of crab at \$2.20 a pound, \$22,000. That's not enough. That person,

that group, could catch 10 times that quota to be fair.

So it depends on where you look at it, on which side. Mark Dolomount have sat with me now twice, because I flip-flop sometimes, I'll be honest, it depends on – I'm going to sit with him and say Mark, you have to explain it to me. He's like, Minister, we need professional people and we need people that are serious into the fishery.

Transitioning it would be like, I guess, if you want to be a farmer, you grow it to the point that you give up one job and you become a full-time farmer. That's where the fishery is to. You have a small opportunity there, but, unfortunately, if you make it, then we have all part-time people. If everybody was part-time this year and a job on an ocean-going boat, making \$250,000 a year, for argument sake, maybe more, maybe less, the \$2.20 for crab would not be a question because they would never vote yes. It would always be a no vote. They would say, nah, I don't need to go at it.

We need people in our industry that need fair prices, who are going to make a good living out of it. That's my thought of it. So I support Mark and his group thus far. Unless something changes to convince me, change my mind, I have no issue with the way the criteria is set-up.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

MHA Dinn, 2.1.01 to 2.3.01 inclusive.

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

Has there been any progress on the harvesting of red fish? What preparations are currently being made to take advantage of the opportunity?

**D. BRAGG:** I'd say three or four plants in this province are ready now for red fish. The problem with red fish right now, they're too small. They're too small for a market. They would be a baitfish if we took them right



now. They need them, I think, is it 20 centimetres?

**OFFICIAL:** Thirty.

**D. BRAGG:** Thirty centimetres, so about a foot long, before you can get a sizable fillet off it. So there's been a lot of talks. There's no decision yet from the federal minister.

**J. DINN:** So where do your department stand on this?

**D. BRAGG:** So we're in constant consultation with the minister and talks and she's assured us no decision yet. Before there is she's going to come back and talk to us again. So we're constantly chatting with her.

Because it's going to be a Gulf fishery. You're going to be looking at Newfoundland, PEI, Quebec, in particular, and New Brunswick wants some part into it, too. I should say PEI and New Brunswick is the smallest part. Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Quebec have always had the biggest quota.

**J. DINN:** Is this primary – I know there is some discussion whether it's going to be like an offshore large fleet or a small inshore. Where do you see this maximum benefit, I guess, for coastal communities?

**D. BRAGG:** This will never be a small inshore because it's a dragger fleet. So you're looking at 65-foot boats and bigger, because it's not a bottom trawl. It's a mid-ocean trawl sort of thing. So it's not something you're going to put out gillnets for.

**J. DINN:** Okay, thank you.

2.1.02, Licensing, Inspection and Quality Assurance, are there currently any vacancies here? If so, what positions?

**D. BRAGG:** I will refer to my ADM, Lorelei.

**L. ROBERTS:** Yes, there are vacancies and there are continual vacancies. We have four seasonal and two temporary vacancies in fisheries inspectors. We have an auditor position vacant and a fisheries supervisor vacant. So there are ongoing competitions for those right now.

**J. DINN:** These officers, these four seasonal auditors, what would be basically their responsibilities?

**L. ROBERTS:** So it's for fisheries inspectors. It's a field fisheries officers, which we call fisheries inspectors, that would be their responsibility. So in certain areas they're seasonal and in other areas they're full time depending on how much activity there is in that particular area.

**J. DINN:** Would any of these be responsible for aquaculture?

**L. ROBERTS:** There are a number that are located in Marystown, down in Harbour Breton, St. Alban's and out of Grand Falls office, yes.

**J. DINN:** Okay.

So all of these would have responsibility for aquaculture or just some of them?

**L. ROBERTS:** Yes, from a safety perspective, you essentially put two people out whenever you do net inspections.

The other part of it too is from a bio-security standpoint, you have to switch over vessels, you have switch over people that sort of thing, so you're not a vector for any type of disease or anything going from place to place.

**J. DINN:** How long have these positions been vacant?

**L. ROBERTS:** The positions vary in vacancies. Some are vacant for a couple of months. Some are vacant for longer than

that. We do have quite a bit of turnover in fisheries inspectors.

**J. DINN:** How does that impact then the inspection process? If you had the turnover and you don't have people there to do the job.

**L. ROBERTS:** In the summertime, which is primarily when we need the inspectors in place, we do tend to have a full complement. We are able to fill those positions, as I've said, fairly quickly. There are ongoing competitions all the time. So we haven't had any issues. I mean, obviously this year is a little bit different because plants aren't operating. The primary responsibilities for those fisheries inspectors are to visit the plants and to do their audits and inspections and visit the boats. Obviously, with the crab fishery delayed, that has minimized the work there.

**J. DINN:** Has the vacancies impacted the schedule, I guess, for inspections? Have there been inspections not carried out or delayed as a result of this?

**L. ROBERTS:** No, we schedule accordingly. For example, if we have one, we may use an aquaculture development staff to go with that individual for a safety reason. So no, the inspections get done, there's a work plan to get the inspections done and we adjust accordingly as we need to.

**J. DINN:** When you adjust accordingly, I guess you mean you adjust according to the people you have on hand?

**L. ROBERTS:** Absolutely, we move people around.

**J. DINN:** Okay. So in other words, the schedule is not dependent then on the people available or do you find if you need the checks, whether it's aquaculture or anything else, every month you're supposed to be checking. It's not a case of well, we're going to wait until we have people to do it.

But if it needs to be done, we will find people.

**L. ROBERTS:** No, we adhere to the schedule. Obviously, aquaculture inspections are done. There are two types of inspections. There are code of containment inspections and there are regular inspections, which is like the markings and things like this to make sure they're adhering to the condition of their licence. So those inspections are carried out as usual.

Again, there's a work plan done out and we don't have any issues with getting the work done. It's carried out generally from early spring to, I'll say, very late fall, depending on the weather. So there are no issues.

As you mentioned earlier, we have a new 32-foot vessel which helps us be able to conduct those inspections. We basically have enough people, enough inspectors that we're able to move folks around to have the safety standards met to have two in a boat.

**J. DINN:** Okay. Thanks.

In 2.1.03, Atlantic Fisheries Fund, are there any plans to continue this partnership with the federal government over the long term?

**D. BRAGG:** Yeah, it's my understanding this is going to be continued on. It may have a different look to it a little bit, but it's a fund. I think we've got permission to go into an extra year to spend last year's money too, right?

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

**D. BRAGG:** Yeah, we have an extra two years to spend the money already there.

**J. DINN:** The budget for Grants and Subsidies has increased somewhat. Is this response to the high demand for this funding?

**D. BRAGG:** You're talking about number 10, is it?

**J. DINN:** Yeah.

**D. BRAGG:** 2.1.03, 10?

**J. DINN:** Yeah, 2.1.03, under that section.

**D. BRAGG:** The variance is due to anticipated cash flows under the Atlantic Fisheries Fund, \$5.1 million total for '23-'24.

**J. DINN:** There's a higher demand for that?

**D. BRAGG:** Yeah, so I'll just show you some cash flows from 2017-2018 was \$1.5 million; in '18-'19, it was \$6.3 million; '19-'20, it was \$7.2 million; and then in '22, it was \$4.8 million and '23, we anticipate \$5.1 million, '24 – so it is to get the money spent. This all has to do with the Atlantic Fisheries Fund.

**J. DINN:** Yeah.

2.1.04, Sustainable Fisheries and Oceans Policy: Aside from this fund, what other areas has the department been collaborating with DFO on to ensure that the regulation and management of the fisheries runs smoothly for fish harvesters and that both organizations act more as a complement to one another?

**D. BRAGG:** I'm going to defer this one to my ADM, please.

**CHAIR:** Lorelei Roberts.

**L. ROBERTS:** MHA Dinn, can you repeat that question, please?

**J. DINN:** Sure thing.

Aside from this fund, what other areas has the department been collaborating with DFO on to ensure that the regulation and management of the fisheries runs smoothly for the fish harvesters and that both

organizations act more as a complement to one another?

**L. ROBERTS:** MHA Dinn, our staff that work in the sustainable fisheries resources and oceans policy, they actually sit on all the DFO science, they sit on all the working groups and they actually participate in any of the rebuilding plans for any of the stocks that are scheduled to have rebuilding plans. That is done in collaboration with industry and harvesters. They're heavily, heavily involved in collaborative activities with regard to the regulation of the fishery and looking at the best management practices.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

How much of the budget here goes to our own in-house research on fisheries and resource assessment and are there any scientific initiatives in the works for the coming year in this respect?

**L. ROBERTS:** MHA Dinn, there's \$100,000 in that particular category that's for grants and subsidies. None of that money is used for internal. It's all for external purposes. For example, examples of what the money has been spent on is they did a long line survey and tagging program for 2J3K for Atlantic halibut. That was just to look at and see if the fish are moving, if they've moved locations, those sorts of things, to help support the science and the information that we have around that stock.

So, in the past, we've done things on sea cucumber – not this year, but in the past. We have done, you know, studies on capelin. We've done it on aquatic invasive species, like green crab. So it's a variety and the way that it's triggered is if a group comes forward and look for funding and submits a proposal.

None of that money is spent in-house. It's all partnered with other organizations outside and it could be with the FFAW, for example, which is what that Atlantic halibut one was this year. It could be with a

community group. It could be with an academic institute. It depends on the value of the proposal that they are putting in and whether or not it provides us with information about our key stocks and species.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

2.1.01 to 2.3.01 inclusive.

MHA Pardy.

**C. PARDY:** Minister, you can see the look from the Member for Exploits, looking at the clock and wondering how much time is going to be left with his two subheadings, the pressure.

Just on the Professional Fish Harvesting Certification Board, a last minute on that. The figure that I have came from the Finance Department and they did state in their document in 2022 that the occupations with the most job openings, fishing vessel masters and fishermen/women: 4,872.

So that was the figure that I had utilized; now whether accurate, legit or not, but that was the figure I had. My understanding would be, and correct me if I'm wrong, the 75 per cent rule doesn't apply when you get your Level II. So if you become a harvester, there's no monitoring, policing or enforcement of anybody who has a Level II in enterprises to be able to go work elsewhere in the off-season.

If I'm correct in that, my understanding is that it only applies to when you're going through your levels, from your apprentice to Level II that it applies. Once you get it then —

**D. BRAGG:** There's no audit afterwards.

**C. PARDY:** No. So it may be out the window. You can see some people looking at it a little differently and say, once you get there, I mean, you can do your thing, but in order to get there what these people who

put their names on a petition said, there's got to be a whole lot of short-term pain in order to get there, if you can survive it. That's seems to be troubling to a lot of people.

I'll move on from that. My colleague mentioned and is pleased to hear that your feeling is that the federal government is going to continue with the Atlantic Fisheries Fund. You had mentioned last year in the Estimates, you suggested this year would be \$12.7 million. We're down to \$5.1 million now. Just a question on that. We estimated, I think, \$12.7 million for this year and I think we're down to \$5.1 million.

**D. BRAGG:** This is the Atlantic Fisheries Fund, you mean?

**C. PARDY:** Yes.

**D. BRAGG:** I don't have any actual figures but ADM Lorelei would.

**C. PARDY:** I think \$5.1 million or \$5.8 million.

**L. ROBERTS:** Yes, so we said \$12.1 million last year and the reason we did is because this is the final year; '23-'24 is the final year for the Atlantic Fisheries Fund. So, as we mentioned earlier, there is a two-year extension, but the projects have to be submitted and approved before March 31 of 2024. But the money can be spent out over the following two-year period.

The reason we did that is because during COVID, as you can just imagine, there were some delays with folks being able to access supplies and because it's innovative practices and that they're doing. It caused a little bit of a tightening around that time so we weren't able to get some of the money out the door.

But as a result now, we've extended that an additional two years so people do have the ability to source and fund. Also in terms of supply and availability, it gives people a

longer window to be able to access those things.

**C. PARDY:** So am I correct in assuming that not only the two years, we're expecting it to continue beyond that?

**L. ROBERTS:** We're expecting to spend that amount of money in the two years.

**C. PARDY:** In the two years, but the fund will continue beyond the two years thereafter?

**L. ROBERTS:** It would have to be a new program.

**C. PARDY:** Okay.

But talks are ongoing now in Ottawa –

**L. ROBERTS:** Yes.

**C. PARDY:** – in relation to that?

I never said at the start, but I'm assuming we can get a copy of your briefing binder?

**D. BRAGG:** Not a chance.

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

I hope now I'm not being redundant. In 2.1.04, Sustainable Fisheries and Oceans Policy, Salaries, I know that salaries were discussed earlier. I know we've increased from \$539,000 to \$618,000. I'm just wondering, what would be the positions for the increase or the position?

**D. BRAGG:** I'll let the deputy take that.

**J. CHIPPETT:** So you'll see a similar pattern in several of the Estimate headings. First of all, the \$414,300, we had some vacancies during the year. Then the \$618,100 would be for a fully complemented division with some of the salary increases and so on that have occurred this year.

The other piece there is we were successful in partnering with the federal government to fund a position to assist with marine spatial planning. So one of the other things, Lorelei mentioned this group sits in on all the DFO science assessments and so on. They also sit on the various intergovernmental around marine protected areas and so on or ocean – I forget the name of the group, but more generally about the conservation of ocean resources and marine spatial planning. So there's a position that the federal government funded for us to be able to participate in marine spatial planning as well. So that's where your \$618,000 comes from.

**C. PARDY:** I had a harvester in my district that took a snapshot of a large supermarket chain and it was a cod fillet from Iceland that was being sold there at that chain for \$12.32. I think it was \$28.64 a kilogram. That's a big price that we're moving Icelandic. But one thing in my follow-up and questions with him, he said of course we're not MSC certified.

I wonder why aren't we, for sustainability and what restraint we've shown in such low quotas and sustainability. Can we blame that on the seals for the high mortality and thus the price? I'm just curious.

**L. ROBERTS:** So there is quite an elongated process to become MSC certified. One of the activities that we are currently supporting through AFF is a fishing initiative program. So, essentially, it does the science to actually help the MSC certification. So the industry is working on getting certification, MSC certification for cod, but it requires a validation of the science. Right now, where the cod is in the critical zone, having a rebuilding plan and that sort of thing will actually support that.

But for that funding that we're paying for, for the PIT program, we're actually tagging the cod and tracking the cod and tracking the age of the cod and all that kind of stuff. So that actually helps with the MSC

certification. So even though we don't have it right now, they're working towards it.

**C. PARDY:** Good, that's good. In the efforts of time, I'm going to move on.

I'm going to go right to Aquaculture, 2.2.01. My friend and colleague from St. John's Centre there had mentioned about the sea lice issue. I had the privilege of touring in St. Alban's the Cooke outfit this past fall; a very impressive operation. As we went out, my understanding from that is that with the cleaner fish, the lumpfish, it almost negates or it certainly looks after the issue with sea lice.

When we talk about the wild salmon, which I bow that I have no idea about. I've never angled for salmon in my life. I cod jigged many times but not angled on the rivers. But I recall back to the broadcast last year and it may have been around August, middle of August, Todd O'Brien was interviewing a river warden on a river in Placentia Bay. I tuned into that only because Bob Hardy had mentioned and referenced it, so I tuned into that one and when he did the interview, it started on cormorants and what impact it would be on the salmon river.

In that interview, he quickly went on to seals. He said we never had seals in Placentia Bay before, but he said there are probably 200 on the rocks outside. So he said if there are 200 on the rocks, just imagine how many are in the water. His comment to Todd O'Brien was the smolt, the salmon haven't got a chance in that river. That was from the river warden who, if you listen to it, I would think got decades of experience on that particular river; never mentioned anything about sea lice but those were the two issues that he had raised. They had the discussion in the 15-minute block.

So it is an impressive operation. The question I had asked the association when I was down there in the tour was: How many escapees do we have? We know that we

have one in the contained pond. I'm not sure what the land-lock pond that they had them in, that wasn't an issue. But my understanding from the issue, I think there was one escapee, I think, last year?

**D. BRAGG:** One maybe two.

**OFFICIAL:** It was just one and it was retrieved.

**D. BRAGG:** What happened there was I think a lot of times you dip them when you're doing samples, so they take them and dip them out and I think the salmon might have flicked trying to put it back into the cage. From what I can tell, most times salmon come back almost like a dog to a dish. They come back looking for food. So the nets quality has gotten better. Enclosures, as you would have seen, have gotten much better than what it was 20 years ago. We just had Hurricane Fiona, no issue whatsoever on the South Coast.

**CHAIR:** I'm going to move to MHA Dinn, 2.1.01 to 2.3.01 inclusive.

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

Is the department conducting any planning or drawing up mitigation strategies for how climate change might adversely affect our fish stocks and the industry?

**D. BRAGG:** Are you talking about in aquaculture or offshore?

**J. DINN:** I'm talking anything with offshore in terms of the warming waters. We know we've seen other species move in. We know a more acidic ocean can affect the shells of crustaceans, even the whole notion of where that Atlantic current flips and it has. So I'm just wondering what strategies in the ....

**D. BRAGG:** We will be following any strategy that is developed by the federal government because they do all the science. I went to a meeting this year up in,

I think I was in Winnipeg, and talked about salmon going more over to the north and the northeast from the Pacific than ever before. They're finding salmon runs in rivers where there was never a salmon ever before in their history.

So global warming water temperatures is definitely making a change to everything. We're seeing species come further north. If you look at sharks, they're following sharks; you're seeing more sharks coming way up to the coast of Newfoundland.

Warming temperature, even in our lobsters we're seeing it. The Maine lobster fishery is on the decline, while ours is on the incline. The lobsters seem to be shifting more to the northern colder water.

**J. DINN:** But as a province and in terms of our province so greatly depends on this industry, what I hear you saying, Minister, is that we're going to leave that to the federal government to develop a plan.

**D. BRAGG:** Not so much leave it to them, but we'll be in consultation with them.

I'll let Lorelei explain more about that.

**L. ROBERTS:** As I had mentioned in a previous question, we do work very closely as part of rebuilding plans, as part of the science, as part of the consultations and working groups. Part of that is looking at ecosystems changes, as well we do participate in activities with NAFO so that is for fish stocks outside the 200-mile limit. We do look at activities from a climate change perspective that are affecting those stocks as well.

There is quite a lot of activity that we are engaged in with the federal government in partnership with regard to ecosystem management and changes we're seeing in the ecosystem. That even goes down to predation and things like that because climate change is affecting those species

that eat other species as part of the food chain.

For aquaculture, it is a huge part of our application process in terms of climate change mitigation, because we're seeing an increased water temperature warming over the last number of years and that's from climate change. So, as a result, it's part of the mitigation strategy for the aquatic animal health plan, environment and waste plan, the whole bit. There is quite a lot of activity happening with regard to climate change within the department from fisheries and aquaculture, both.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

With regard to Aquaculture Development and Management, I noticed in the new legislation it talks about aquaculture management areas versus, I guess, bay management areas. So does this allow then the opportunity for you as minister to more or less leave areas fallow and that would certainly be helpful in dealing with sea lice infestation?

**L. ROBERTS:** In terms of your question, essentially we've been doing bay management practices all along. When we looked at our legislation, we called it a different term because it's consistent with other provinces, but it basically means the same thing.

So, essentially, from a bay management perspective, we already do, when we provide sites, we look at areas for fallowing because it's like a farmer's field. When we grow fish on a site, you have to leave it fallow for a period of time before you put fish back. So we already do, as part of the licensing cycle, includes sites that allow for fallowing.

**J. DINN:** Is fallowing then a measure to deal with sea lice infestations?

**L. ROBERTS:** Fallowing allows the benthic environment to go back to normal. It also

allows if there are any issues in that water, that sort of thing. Not saying that there is, it's just a beneficial practice. It's known as a best practice in aquaculture so you don't put fish back on the same site; you put it on a different site. So it's part of regular practices.

**J. DINN:** Why would the benthic environment be affected with the aquaculture?

**L. ROBERTS:** So over time, as you've got fish there, it allows things to come back to normal. It's like your land. When you farm and you're farming a land, there are nutrients and things like that that change in the soil. It works the same thing for aquaculture. You're farming in an area and then it allows it to come back and everything to return.

**J. DINN:** But the benthic environment is basically the sea floor. So the main effect on the sea floor, the benthic environment is basically the detritus, the fish feces, the unused food that basically covers the floor, that's what we're talking about here.

**L. ROBERTS:** It could be that. It could be the fact that there are fish in that area over a time.

**J. DINN:** But any reading on the benthic environment has to do with the waste from. I think, when you look at some of them the aquaculture, I think Grieg (inaudible) pushes out the same amount of sewage or waste that you would see in the City of St. John's. So it's a significant amount on the benthic environment below.

I'm saying is if you're allowing to rehabilitate the benthic environment, does it ever enter into it as a measure to deal with sea lice infestations, to leave an area fallow? The other part is, what are the regulations about locating these sea cages in relation to salmon rivers?

**L. ROBERTS:** As part of the application process, they look at where the rivers flow and they look at how the salmon travel. So that's all taken into consideration. The actual applications for aquaculture, it's a shared responsibility, so that all goes over to DFO and because they're responsible for wild salmon, they would provide feedback on that. If there was an issue, they would let us know and that would be taken into account before we'd ever give out the licence.

In response to your other question with regard to the benthic environment, once fish aren't there, there are no sea lice.

**J. DINN:** Once fish aren't there –

**L. ROBERTS:** There would be no sea lice. Sea lice are in the ocean environment but if there's nothing in the cage, they travel wild fish.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

That's exactly what I've been saying all along. It's basically the cages that allow for this growth. That's exactly what I've been saying.

**L. ROBERTS:** It wouldn't matter whether it's wild salmon or aquaculture.

**J. DINN:** It does if you have concentrations of millions of fish.

I know in new technology that's being developed in Norway right now is the floating donut. It's certainly a containment system that basically eliminates the whole infestation of sea lice, the whole need for cleaner fish which, by the way, has a limited use. Based on any research that I've done, they have a limited use in dealing with it.

But I'm just wondering here, in Norway they are developing this. It's basically because their regulations are probably a little bit tougher than ours. I'm just wondering here, is there any consideration now to looking at



this technology and start demanding this for our aquaculture industry here? So it's a closed containment system.

**CHAIR:** Minister Bragg.

**D. BRAGG:** I know there's a company in this province that's interested in that donut. I think it costs millions of dollars, not that anything is cheap. But I want to go back to a comment you made earlier about cleaner fish. When sea lice are in the cage, fish get washed. It's the same process of any salmon going up a river. They got sea lice on them the first day, the second day; by the third day, the warmer, fresh water cleans the sea lice off.

So every single lice is washed off and collected, not put back into the ocean. That's very important, too. All of these millions of fish get a bath, get sea lice scrubbed off them and the sea lice get collected. So it's not like they go back and grow into the ocean.

**J. DINN:** So if I may, like a hot water bath or spray as they swim through the cages?

**D. BRAGG:** The way it was explained it to me is a salmon going through fast water. They go up tubes and it's like a fast water.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

Right now, there are some at least looking at the idea of a floating donut or other technology. Basically a closed containment system that's not on land.

The Greene report made many recommendations regarding government's support and involvement in the aquaculture industry. Does the revamped *Aquaculture Act* address any of these from your point of view? I noticed that the title of it is called the regulation of.

**D. BRAGG:** I'm going to defer to the ADM.

**CHAIR:** Lorelei Roberts.

**L. ROBERTS:** If you're talking about the PERT report and whether or not we subsidize aquaculture companies, in this province we don't subsidize aquaculture. If we do have any type of program, it's through ACEP and that's a repayable fund. So it's not a grant and it's not what I would consider a subsidy. Basically the money is repayable. It's no different than a loan.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

2.1.01 to 2.3.01 inclusive, MHA Pardy.

**C. PARDY:** Thank you.

2.2.02, Aquaculture Capital Equity Investment, we understand that usually a provisional amount is put into the Estimates. Can you outline any previous investments made here and what the status of those loan investments – you just referenced the loans that we would give out. How much would be out in loans?

**D. BRAGG:** I'll refer to Lorelei.

**L. ROBERTS:** Currently, right now, we have the Newfoundland Aquaculture Services Limited and we are collecting revenue from that. So it's actually a dividend and redemption repayment, along with the loan. So not only do they repay the loan, we actually get dividends as well. We make money on our money.

**C. PARDY:** That is good.

Any update on Grieg? I think last year was the big year and it was going to indicate – and from all accounts in the public is that, I think, they've had good success with their product.

**D. BRAGG:** That is my understanding, yeah. They've had good success with the triploid fish. I think their first harvest is in the next couple of months.

**C. PARDY:** Yes.

**D. BRAGG:** Yeah, I saw some pictures of some beautiful big fish. I know there's no camera, but beautiful big fish.

**C. PARDY:** When I went to the site there, they took one out to handle, but I can only imagine that if you're trying to handle and keep a hold of the fish, you can easily see that – I couldn't anyhow – so I can see that if there's ever any handling sometime and we have the inspectors go out who were on site at the time I was there that we went up and they were going their job. But, again, you've got to handle the fish in order for them to do their work. I just think it's amazing that it was only one.

**D. BRAGG:** Yeah.

**C. PARDY:** Will we see the contained unit in our industry in our province this year? You said their may be one, I've never heard reference.

**D. BRAGG:** The donut?

**C. PARDY:** It was a globe, the self-contained globe is what I know; it was in a magazine that I read one time.

**D. BRAGG:** Lorelei.

**C. PARDY:** But the donut is the right terminology, it is; it's not the globe.

**L. ROBERTS:** The donut is what they call it; that is the term for that particular company. It's a closed containment system. It's still out at sea.

Right now, there's a pilot being worked through and it has to go through environmental assessment, because obviously it's a new project. My understanding is that they're working through that process. I don't think that it will happen this year. I suspect it'll probably be a little bit longer than that. But it is in the works. They have partnered with a local aquaculture company, the folks, Bluegreen is the name of the company that owns the

donut, per se. They've partnered with a local aquaculture company and they're looking at doing a pilot.

**C. PARDY:** What's the power usage on that? It's probably pretty significant, is it not?

**L. ROBERTS:** It requires so much power. I can't recall off the top of my head what it is, but it's tethered to the land, the power cord, and that's why it has to go through an EA, otherwise it would be totally at sea.

**C. PARDY:** Okay.

**L. ROBERTS:** Yeah.

**C. PARDY:** All right. But we don't see that as being any impediment on location.

**L. ROBERTS:** No, apparently there is enough power to service it. I think it regenerates some of its own power as well, the way that it's set up.

**C. PARDY:** Okay, yeah.

You had mentioned earlier about the Aquatic Animal Health, 2.3.01. The Grants and Subsidies are always constant. That would mean that we've got the same numbers that we are sponsoring to go to the veterinary school as what we've always?

**D. BRAGG:** Yeah, it's \$91,900.

**C. PARDY:** That's the Grants and Subsidies.

**D. BRAGG:** Yeah, and that's been constant for the last number of years.

**L. ROBERTS:** No, not for students.

**D. BRAGG:** No, not for students? Oh, I might be wrong on that. There are two. There's one I guess that gets our students into the veterinary school.

Lorelei.

**L. ROBERTS:** So the actual money that supports students is in the Department of Education. That's not within our department. So the Grants and Subsidies here are for the Atlantic Veterinary College. The reason why we have that funding put aside is because they work with us on the health because they are the expert.

So, for example, this year we had a winter mortality study done, doing research on how best to deal with winter mortality, looking at water quality, looking at sea lice training. Those are the types of things that we would use it for. So if there's an issue that we want to understand more about or get more knowledge or skills around that area, then we would work with the Atlantic Veterinary College to do so. That's essentially what the Grants and Subsidies covers.

**C. PARDY:** Do we have the same numbers now as what we've had in the past few number of years into the veterinary school from our province that we would be sponsoring? I know the Department of Education does that, but would it be the same amount generally that's coming back to us? I don't know what number that would be.

**D. BRAGG:** Is it three? Can you recall? Three, Keith? Keith would know this.

**K. DEERING:** So the annual subsidy from the Department of Education is \$1.2 million per year. That supports, through the four-year life of the program, basically 12 students. So it allows for the admission of three new students each year and supports them throughout their four-year program.

**C. PARDY:** Okay.

My trip down to St. Albans, the gist of which I've got from that is that when they transported the fish before they were put into the saltwater pens were more mature, I think they were gleaned in a much lower mortality because they were more mature. That made good sense.

Would that be a direction, I'm assuming, that the industry would be going is that they would hold them over in some landlocked water body until they're transported in? I don't know what the name of that pond was. Was it Long Pong?

**L. ROBERTS:** So the way that it generally works is – I think you might have been talking about trout because trout is usually held over prior to. Sometimes salmon too, but generally they keep the salmon in the hatchery for longer and then they move them out to sea when they're more mature. It actually follows the natural cycle of the salmon.

**C. PARDY:** Yes. Anyways, it's a very impressive operation.

That would end, Mr. Chair, my questions.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

2.1.01 to 2.3.01 inclusive.

MHA Dinn.

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

With regard to the process from hatched up to the time they're put in cages, what's the process in terms of handling the farmed salmon? I am assuming they are taken out – they're hatched at a certain place, moved to another tank. They're vaccinated at some point, then transferred from one pen, maybe to a boat to be transferred out to the cages. As I understand it, then there's maybe, depending as a form of a sea lice treatment, they might very well be taken out, sprayed with either hot water or cold water, whatever the fresh water sprayed over them. I am just trying to get an idea of the process.

**L. ROBERTS:** So are you asking what the process is from start to finish?

**J. DINN:** In a general overview, that's all, just to get an idea. I have a question to follow up on that.

**L. ROBERTS:** So in terms of the way that aquaculture works for salmon is the salmon come in as eggs. The eggs are kept in the hatchery, in a nursery, same as a hospital nursery. They're babies and they're put in a room where they're kept in the dark and then those eggs are examined on a regular basis and, you know, any fish that have the least amount of survival, you can see some of that in the growth as they are growing up. Then they're taking those eggs and when they get big enough, into fry, they move them into a tank. So, essentially, you put a pile of fish in a tank and you keep moving tank to tank as they grow.

So the salmon, generally, spend up to 18 months; two years on land and then they move out to sea for an additional, say, 18 months, generally. They go out to sea and they're transported in a vessel, like a hose just sucks them out of the tank. They go in the boat. The boat puts them in the pen.

They are vaccinated in the hatchery and they're vaccinated for a disease called ISAV. In terms of that, in terms of the eggs and everything when they come in, like all the genetics are looked at, the eggs are examined. There are all kinds of samples done. There's a whole process that happens with those fish as they grow.

When they go to the pen, they don't get treatment right away for sea lice. They monitor any of the sea lice and they have various mechanisms. So cleaner fish is one mechanism; that's a natural use. They also have thermal de-licers which is what the minister was referring to. So a thermal de-licer, essentially, you put it through basically a warm water bath and there is a scrubber on it that takes the sea lice out and dumps the sea lice afterwards. Not into the ocean but gets rid of them.

They also have what they call a hydrogen peroxide bath, where the fish go through in a vessel and then they come out the other end and it kills the sea lice. In addition to that, they use what is called Salmosan. It is

like a tarp that goes over the pen and that is an effective treatment and has been an effective treatment for sea lice.

There are multiple different types of varieties of treatments for sea lice that various companies use. The main one used, really, in our area is the cleaner fish because they've had really good success with it and it is more natural for the fish. So that is generally the standpoint.

When the fish are ready to be harvested, they are just fed regularly and they are checked regularly. They are monitored. I mean, if you have ever been out to an aquaculture site with salmon, you can see that. They actually have a barge, the folks do, that they monitor the salmon 24 hours. Those people live on the barge and maintain the feeding schedule, check the fish multiple times a day and those types of things.

I mean they even go so much as hand feeding them if they need to. Then when the fish are grown to the proper marketable size, they're removed through a vessel and they're killed as they're going into the plant to be processed.

**J. DINN:** Perfect.

**L. ROBERTS:** What I would say is it is very much a layman's description of the process. If you want a true description, then you best talk to an aquaculture company because I'm sure they could give you a lot more detail than what I could.

**J. DINN:** No, that's basically my understanding of it. I just wanted that on the record.

So with regard to the number of escapes since we've had aquaculture in the last few years, how many have escaped? I know at one time down in Bay d'Espoir there was open season on rainbow trout because of escapees. I'm just wondering how many salmon have escaped in each incident?

**L. ROBERTS:** In terms of escapees, what I would say is over the last number of years through the Code of Containment committee, which is a joint-managed committee between the federal government and the provincial government, as well on the Code of Containment, there is a salmon anglers group that sits on it, as well as the industry sits on it. So, essentially, if there are any escapes – this year, we only had one escape and it has been retrieved.

Essentially what the Code of Containment is about, it is a public document that goes up on our website. Basically it gives an overview of everything that happens, if there is any escapes or what types of improvements that the companies have done in order to tighten up containment measures. That's done collectively as a group at that table.

So, for example, over time you've seen different kinds of rope being used. When the minister was talking about handling the fish, and I know you mentioned it as well, you're handling the fish and they actually put a little bit of a drug into the water when they take the fish up for sea lice count because otherwise you'd never be able to hold onto the fish. But when the fish comes alive, you're right, it goes kind of flicking and crazy. So they actually have tarps and nets that border the vessel to the net so that you don't lose the fish overboard.

So all these things have come over time and it's done as a result of a partnership between all these groups that says okay, here's what could be a problem for us so they put those measures in. We're responsible as governments, both federal and provincial, so once the fish is lost, then it's the responsibility of the federal government to issue a fish recapture licence and to follow that because it's in the wild environment. But while it is within the pen and anything that we can do as a regulator, we would regulate that as part of our licensing.

**J. DINN:** Okay.

So two things, and I'm going to go back to this about marking the fish so that these fish can be physically identified. There is plenty of evidence to suggest, too, that escapees do make it up rivers and their natural instinct does kick in. They do compete for food and everything else or space in the river or so on and so forth, not necessarily food in the river.

But in clipping the adipose fin, the main reason that's been given as for clipping the adipose fin, about handling the fish, but as has just been pointed out, there's already significant and much more drastic handling, evasive handling of fish. So even at the time when they are being vaccinated, the adipose fin could be clipped. It's a simple way of marking fish so that if they are caught in the rivers or if they are caught, then it's automatically similar to what used to be for the rainbow trout. They're taken out, that's if they make it that far.

I'm at a loss really to understand why the department refuses to make that a requirement. That's the first thing with regard to that. I mean, it's a simple process, a simple measure.

Secondly, I would assume, too, that in an agricultural – if you ran a dairy farm and if you had a thousand of your cows escape and wander around, it would be the responsible of the owner of those cows in that farm to recapture them.

I understand there seems to be a gap here where the aquaculture company is responsible for all those fish as long as they're in the pens, but once they leave if they're no longer responsible. To me, there is something wrong with that. There should be that they should, basically, be responsible for that recapture. I think also putting measures in place.

So that's the key thing here. You know, I think that could be part of the regulations or

the requirements of an aquaculture licence that in the time to mark the fish so that we can – we can identify them genetically but to a visual inspection, unless I'm looking at the stubby tail or the blunt nose, it's going to be hard to tell sometimes a farmed fish from a wild fish.

**L. ROBERTS:** So you brought up two issues there. One is about traceability and clipping fins and a way to manage traceability of fish.

So, first of all, traceability is the responsible of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Our province does work together on a working group with them, industry and other agencies, to look at the traceability of fish. Experts have said that clipping of fins of fish is a detriment or causes morbidity in fish. So they're looking at other types of ways to do traceability. One of those ways that they're examining is genetics. So they're looking at – because every type of industry or every industry company uses certain types of fish and there's a way to genetically trace those fish. So that is the route that DFO has identified that they'd like to go down. Again, it is their purview to do so.

In terms of responsibility after the fish escape, the statement that the company is not responsible is incorrect. The company is responsible, but they do work with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans on the recapture. So, essentially, they're given a licence by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to be able to recapture those fish. They do work with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to do a plan for recapture.

So that happens almost instantaneously because, as part of the Code of Containment, that flow goes from one thing to the province to the federal government. Everything kicks in and then they work together to actually do that, and the companies are heavily involved in that. So those are the two issues that you identified and that's the process.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

I just want to make sure, MHA Pardy, you're done with that particular section?

MHA Dinn, do you have anything further.

**J. DINN:** Yes, one or two more.

Grieg's proposal in Placentia Bay was to put smolts of 1.5 kilos into the pens. That would've meant, basically, a new land-based facility and fish would have been able to be harvested in November of the year. As I understand it, that requirement is now dropped.

Are they putting their fish in earlier or are they – the whole idea was to keep them out of the Placentia Bay area for longer and keep them in the water out in the Placentia Bay area for a shorter period of time. Has that requirement now been dropped? As I understand it, it might be.

**L. ROBERTS:** In terms of Grieg, the way that it works is they had a pre-smolt and a post-smolt facility. Essentially, they had the facility but it's the post-smolt that they were looking to build on to that facility. That got placed on hold.

My understanding is that Grieg is looking at doing that build and my understanding is that's going to happen in the near future. But what they've done, they haven't forgotten about the post-smolt. The fish are still not put into the sea pens until later. They're just using the space within their pre-smolt to create the post-smolt facility. It's just that they haven't built the additional building for bringing in more fish and establishing more pens.

They're still doing the pre-smolt, post-smolt, I'll say, process. They're just doing it in the one building as opposed to having to add on to the building.

**J. DINN:** Right now then, the post-smolt, the 1.5 kilo, they're still going in to the pen at 1.5.

**L. ROBERTS:** They're still going at that size.

**J. DINN:** What's the total number of fish once they're up to full operation?

**L. ROBERTS:** I can't recall off the top of my head.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

That's it for now.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

If the Committee's ready for the question?

Shall 2.1.01 to 2.3.01 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.1.01 through 2.3.01 carried.

**CHAIR:** Is it the wish of the Committee to break for washroom or is everybody okay?

Five minutes? Okay.

We'll take five, please.

**Recess**

**CHAIR:** Okay, thank you and welcome back.

I just wanted to mention as well that Broadcast, for anybody who's speaking, we'd like for you to verbalize whether it's a yes or no. The nods and the shakes don't

work with *Hansard*, so verbalize your yes or no.

I'm going to have the Clerk call the next set of subheads, please.

**CLERK:** 3.1.01 to 3.3.02 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 3.1.01 to 3.3.02 inclusive carry?

The Chair is recognizing MHA Forsey.

**P. FORSEY:** 3.1.01, I don't have any big questions, but overall can we get a breakdown of the allocation of permits for domestic cutting, pulp and sawmill logging in this general section? Allocations and –

**S. BALSOM:** Yes, for the 2022 season: domestic cutting permits, we issued 26,306; commercial cutting permits, we issued 500; domestic sawmill licences, we issued 1,765; commercial sawmill licences, we issued 504; and timber purchase licences, we issued 130.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay. Can we get how many allocations they were allotted, each company? The logging companies, minor sawmill companies, how much they were allotted in regards to cubic metres?

**S. BALSOM:** What I can provide today is the actual harvested volumes on –

**P. FORSEY:** One second. Particularly in 10, 11 and 12, I'm sorry, I should've said that; particularly in 10, 11 and 12.

**S. BALSOM:** MHA Forsey, I'll have to get those specific numbers to you. I do have our provincial totals for Crown and Corner Brook Pulp and Paper limits, if you're interested. But if it's for those specific districts, I think I would have to provide that to you separately.

**P. FORSEY:** All right, well, I'll take a copy of both and a breakdown of 10, 11, and 12,

how's that? I could take the copy you have, plus the 10, 11 and 12.

**S. BALSOM:** Yes.

**P. FORSEY:** All right, thanks.

3.1.02, you spent \$1 million more last year than was estimated. Was this because the additional forest fires in Central?

**S. BALSOM:** Which line was that?

**CHAIR:** 3.1.02.

**P. FORSEY:** Salaries, \$1 million extra there.

**P. IVIMEY:** The majority of that over spend in that subhead for that year was related to Salaries. There's about an extra million dollars that was spent in Salaries and that was due to the negotiated salary increases and signing bonuses that were paid during the year for staff, as per the collective agreement.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay.

Last summer there was an increase in the forest fires in Central Newfoundland. Has the department taken any steps to become better prepared for the future?

**S. BALSOM:** Our fire program is, I guess, comprised of our seasonal conservation officer Is, who are our front-line firefighters, so we recall those every fire season. We also have ongoing recruitment to ensure those positions are filled. Those are seasonal and we consider those our primary firefighters. We also have nearly 40 of our permanent conservation officers, which are COs II, III and IV that are also trained and qualified for initial attack, front-line wild land fire fighting.

We also have a training program for our incident management team, which consists of an incident command system for the administrative logistics for large-

medium-sized fires, like the Central fires last year, which required a lot of oversight, a lot of planning and a lot of logistics when it comes to staff locations, accommodations, equipment, personal protective equipment.

We also have our partnership with Air Services Division of Transportation and Infrastructure where, using our remote weather stations of forecasting the fire weather index, we have daily discussions on where the air tanker should be located based on the fire risk. We also have a helicopter contract that is administered through Transportation and Infrastructure where we have five contract helicopters, which we can place on standby and locations around the province to support initial attack fire suppression.

As part of the national federal, provincial and territorial program, we're also partners with the centre for – the exchange for mutual aid and response where we aid other jurisdictions, which we've done many times in the past with either fire fighters, equipment or air support, as we did last year where we utilized the assistance from other jurisdictions to assist us with the Central fire, which was the large campaign fire.

That's kind of our main fire program. We've recalled our seasonal staff and we have our remote weather stations up, our website is now available online so you can see the forecast. Also, now where the fire season has been implemented, you require a permit if you're going to do any kind of burning outside of small campfires. Then as part of it, we also have our enforcement division which is monitoring for any illegal fire activity.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay.

Do we have a cost breakdown or a cost evaluation of what the forest fires did cost you last year with regard –



**S. BALSOM:** I have a total, which was approximately just over \$5 million, that was the cost of the Central fire complex last year, which included everything from salaries, overtime, travel, accommodations, equipment and also payments through our mutual aid and resource sharing agreement for the other jurisdictions that assisted with that fire, which we had 20 firefighters which assisted from Nova Scotia. We had air tankers and support planes from Quebec. We had some specialists from Parks Canada that assisted with fire weather predictions and we did actually bring in a safety officer, as well, from Nova Scotia.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay.

**J. CHIPPETT:** If I could just add. I just note in terms of 3.2.02, in the current set of headings, in terms of the individual breakdowns, you can look at the budget for last year and the revised section to see in terms of operating accounts, where the increases were.

I guess in addition to what Steve said, I just wanted to add that, as was announced in the budget, we are working on a wildland fire agreement with the federal government. So you'll see increased federal revenue there and that will allow us to look at some of the longer term priorities that would be lessons coming out of the Central fires last year.

**P. FORSEY:** All right.

Under 3.1.03, there's a salary adjustments there of \$263,000 in this section. Last year it was estimated an additional \$150,000. The minister stated that there were two federal-provincial, cost-shared initiatives. Can you update us on the specific arrangement of that?

**S. BALSOM:** Would you mind just repeating that so I can find the line that you're –?

**P. FORSEY:** Salaries, 3.1.03.

**S. BALSOM:** 3.1.03.

**P. FORSEY:** Under Salaries, there's an additional \$150,000 there.

**S. BALSOM:** For Salaries, again there were variances due to funding for the negotiated salary increases.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay.

Last year in – pardon?

**S. BALSOM:** I can add to that as well.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay.

**S. BALSOM:** We're also partnering with our federal partner on the \$2.3-billion initiative that was announced as a climate change initiative. We have included in that as part of the administration of that program, two positions.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay.

What type of trees is that, Mr. Balsom?

**S. BALSOM:** That will be our native tree source that we produce at the Wooddale Centre for Agriculture and Forestry Research. The number one species there would be black spruce but we also produce white spruce and a small number of our pines are native pines, red pine. Although the majority of our planting targets in Central Newfoundland, which is heavily black spruce dominated, is black spruce.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

I'll remind the hon. Member his speaking time is expired.

3.1.01 to 3.3.02 inclusive.

MHA Dinn.

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

3.1.01 – I don't know if this was asked, but I'm just curious. What was the source of the one-time expense on Professional Services?

**J. CHIPPETT:** That was a contract to evaluate the way that we do inventory and wood supply in the department. So that's kind of the baseline science, if you will, or technical work that happens and Remsoft is an expert in wood supply modeling and we asked them to have a look at what we were doing to see if there was anything we could improve upon or learn about the way we're doing things.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

3.1.03, Silviculture Development: Just with regard to the situation with Charlie's Place in the area in Central Newfoundland south of Appleton, which Abitibi wants to harvest but locals were asking for a deferral.

**D. BRAGG:** I'm not sure I understood the question.

**J. DINN:** Right now –

**S. BALSOM:** I understand that there's been a request for emergency listing of the area known as Charlie's Place. That is an area that is under forest tenure to Corner Brook Pulp and Paper that was released through the environmental assessment process for harvesting. I understand that the WERAC discussion would be with the Parks and Natural Areas Division, which we're not responsible for, but we certainly are involved in any conversations with regard to the harvesting of that area.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

I'm assuming then there's no forestry activity taking place, wood forest harvesting at this time, until that's resolved I take it?

**S. BALSOM:** It is approved through a five-year operating plan through the environmental assessment and it is also

approved under an annual operating plan that's submitted to our department, but, to my knowledge, no harvesting has occurred there to date.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

I go back to 3.1.02, Operations and Implementation – sorry for that. How many vehicles, cars, trucks, ATVs, et cetera, are in the division's fleet? I'll probably have more on that later on but how many, in total, vehicles would be in the whole division?

**P. IVIMEY:** For light vehicles, there are approximately 250 vehicles that are assigned to the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture. In terms of recreation vehicles, which would include ATVs, UTVs, snowmobiles and those type of vehicles, there are approximately 325 within the department.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

Is there any indication of the age of these overall? Whether the majority are within 10 years, over 10 years, the number that are off the road or still in operation? Any breakdown on that?

**P. IVIMEY:** No, I don't have a breakdown on that.

**J. DINN:** Would it be possible to get that breakdown?

**P. IVIMEY:** Sure.

**J. DINN:** Okay, thank you.

In 3.1.03, why did we not receive any of the expected federal revenue last year?

**S. BALSOM:** We're still working with our federal partner on the final agreement. There has been a few changes to the program since it was announced and the federal government is still finalizing some of their program availability with regard to reforestation for insect, fire, natural

blowdown type areas, but they also are looking at wildlife habitat, regeneration as a part of the program and developing those prescriptions where it have been a bit delayed. So our agreement didn't get signed last year, but we're very hopeful for it this coming season.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

In 3.2.01, Insect Control, if so little of the Purchased Services budget was spent last year, why are expenditures predicted to increase so much?

**J. CHIPPETT:** First of all, we're involved in an initiative called the early intervention spruce budworm program with the Atlantic provinces and the federal government. It's a change in the way the program will work this year. Last year, we paid directly for the company who delivered it – I believe it was, Steve. This year we're actually entering into an agreement with the federal government so it will be done as a purchased service this year.

**J. DINN:** From the federal government, the purchased service or from the –

**J. CHIPPETT:** The purchased service is actually from a Crown corporation in New Brunswick that delivers this service. So that's why it's a purchased service versus a – we paid for, I think, the spray last year, the supplies.

**J. DINN:** Okay.

So this year is paying for the full service, everything. Last year, you were paying for just the supplies, if I understand you correctly.

**S. BALSOM:** Yes, as the deputy minister just outlined, last year our spending was primarily on the purchase of the product itself that was utilized. This year, it is a purchased service with Forest Protection Limited, the company, who will provide all the service which will include the product,

the planes and some of the GIS work to do the final blocking. So it's more of a professional service as opposed to us purchasing a product, which was our contribution, and the federal contribution last year was to pay FPL for that service. So it's just a slight change in the agreement, the way it was set up.

**J. DINN:** Okay, thank you.

Just to make sure I understood this with regard to firefighting, I think you said CO2s, 3s and 4s are able to help with the firefighting, I don't know. Would they be specifically to do with forestry or would they be included, like enforcement officers? I'm just trying to get an idea because some of those are designated at that as well.

**J. CHIPPETT:** So just in 3.2.02, it's strictly in terms of the – I think you're talking about the federal agreement I referenced.

**J. DINN:** Yeah.

**J. CHIPPETT:** So that's for training. You can do capital equipment purchases as well. So it would primarily be the folks that would normally fight a fire, as well as some other strategic positions who would provide advice and so on, but not enforcement officers per se.

**J. DINN:** Okay, thank you.

3.3.01, Wildlife Operations, has the department noted any positive results arising from its conservation and public awareness campaign regarding the bat population?

**S. BALSOM:** I would answer, yes, that has been a positive campaign. We are receiving more reports when bats are found on private property and those type of situations, which allows for the safe removal of the bats. Some of the attitudes in the past have not been so favourable when someone would find those bats.

So people are starting to understand now the bat population here and the impacts of the white-nose syndrome that we're seeing across Canada and North America have landed here with potential impacts of 90 per cent of the population. So we do have a group within our own organization that will respond to any calls that bats have been discovered and then we'll work to do the safe removal and relocation.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

A quick question with regards to the pine marten. I know there's a pine marten study. Any results of that so far as to whether they're going outside their area.

**S. BALSOM:** Yes, we're very happy to report that the work over the last 20 years with the marten research, the work that's gone into educating the public on snare wire; changing over to the requirement for brass snare wire versus stainless steel; changing some of the trapping techniques with the Trapper's Association; and just general awareness overall. We're happy to report that the Newfoundland marten reassessment has recommended downlisting and we will be reporting on that shortly once we get the official listing through our *Endangered Species Act*.

The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada – COSEWIC – has recommended that it be downlisted. So it is a good news story and we feel that the number of adult breeding populations now are at a point where they're self-sustaining and we're seeing pine marten fairly well-distributed across the province.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

3.1.01 to 3.3.02 inclusive.

MHA Forsey.

**P. FORSEY:** 3.1.03, the forest fire last year, is there an estimated value – how much

fibre was lost in that forest fire alone? How many cubic metres?

**S. BALSOM:** We've estimated that there were between 300,000 and 500,000 cubic metres of timber lost in that fire. Our wood supply calculations that the deputy referenced earlier that are run through Remsoft, when we do our wood supply calculations, which we've done recently for Central Newfoundland, we take in an adjustment account for the traditional trends for fire and insects. Our 10-year trend is 20,000 hectares of burning in the province. That's where we landed in 2022, actually, we kind of lined up with the 10-year average. Those losses are taken into consideration when we're allocating for sustainable harvest.

But I can get you the exact figure, because we have done a detailed look at that area. We are also currently reviewing that area, our silviculture prescriptions for the upcoming season for reforestation opportunities. We also have some trials with the Canadian Forest Service where they're looking at some pine plantations on these well-drained sites in Central Newfoundland. We're going to be looking at the fire complex from a number of different ways, from reforestation to also looking at any impacts on wildlife populations.

As much as it was a large fire that impacted so many people, we're going to look at getting all the lessons that we can from that in our programs.

**P. FORSEY:** How many allocations – obviously, some of the contractors lost allocations during that fire. Do you have an estimated value of what they have lost?

**S. BALSOM:** There was really no allocation lost, per se. Like I said, when we calculate the total allowable harvest for the area, we take into account that we will lose so much timber from fire and insects. Their allocations weren't impacted. Some contractors did have temporary impacts

because they had to leave their cutting operations. Some of the timber in those operating areas was burned. But, as I said, we kind of predict and build that into the allocation.

Overall allocations are not impacted by the fire in the area because we take that into account up-front before we allocate it to ensure that we're harvesting in a sustainable fashion year over year.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay.

3.1.01, a number of moose management areas have seen decreases in the volume of moose in their areas. How are you conducting your surveys with regard to moose and caribou, of course?

**J. CHIPPETT:** I know there were parts of eight moose management zones, I think, surveyed this year and when you do counts – of course, moose management is done on the basis of individual moose management areas and then you get an aggregate number in terms of the population and also in terms of the licences. So the methodology for moose involves what we call stratification, looking at the habitat for an entire moose management area and looking at whether the habitat would be low productivity, mid productivity or high productivity.

So you classify all the habitat that way and individual squares representing those types of productivity are surveyed. When I say surveyed, surveyed in detail so that you count the number of moose in the area and then you extrapolate that to the entire moose management area.

Like I said, I think there were eight areas done. One had to be stopped because of weather. I know two of the eight were the moose management reduction zones that exist on the Trans-Canada Highway, I think Avalon and maybe Central were done.

I don't have an answer to the number of caribou. Steve, I don't know if you have that one.

**S. BALSOM:** We did complete three of our caribou survey areas. We did the Northern Peninsula regional survey. We did Fogo Island, we did the upper grey and we did several caribou classifications, which is basically counting the number of does, calves and male stags in the herd, to classify it, to see that we're maintaining the proper number of stags per herd.

We did La Poile, Buchans, Grey River, Middle Ridge, Avalon, Gaff Topsail, Pot Hill, Mount Peyton, Northern Peninsula, Merasheen Island, the Grey Islands, Fogo Island, St. Anthony, Cape Shore, Hampden Downs and Adie's Lake.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay.

In the moose management, again, I took a particular interest in '21 this year because somebody did apply. In '21, we notice that there was a reduction in the licences but the amount of licences with regard to the resident licence and non-resident are basically the same. There was no reduction in the non-resident licence, even though there's a reduction in the amount of moose.

**S. BALSOM:** Yes, the number of non-resident licences is kept for three years to allow for the planning and the selling of non-resident licences that's required for that industry. Overall, we monitor to ensure that if the moose population does decrease, that non-resident licences will not exceed 50 per cent. But overall, they are managed at less than 15 per cent for the total number of licences on the Island.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay, I'm good with that section.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

3.1.01 to 3.3.02 inclusive.

MHA Dinn, back to you.

**J. DINN:** Just in 3.3.02, how much of the money here goes towards the caribou conservation agreement? I don't know if you had touched on that then or not. I'm not interested in the numbers, but just how much money goes towards it and, if it's possible, have breakdown of how that money is spent.

**S. BALSOM:** It might be better for a breakdown because within the Cooperative Wildlife Projects, subhead 3.3.02, we have a number of cost-shared agreements in there which include the Valentine Lake monitoring contribution agreement that's looking at caribou on the Buchans plateau, caribou and collaring. We've got the Department of National Defence caribou monitoring agreement up in Labrador related to the herds in that area. We also have an extension on the boreal caribou conservation agreement. The breakdown of those, it would probably be better if I provided those to you if you wanted to have some more information.

**J. DINN:** That would be great, thank you. I appreciate it.

**S. BALSOM:** Okay.

**J. DINN:** Also under 3.3.02, there is a decrease to the budget for Supplies and Transportation and Communications. It's been decreasing significantly by half, I think. I'm looking at it correctly.

**S. BALSOM:** Yes, that reflects the wind-down of the boreal caribou conservation agreement in 2023-2024. Basically that agreement, which was \$5.4 million over four years, due to some of the impacts of COVID and our inability to engage with our Indigenous communities in Labrador, we rolled over a year so that we can complete that engagement process, which is basically just a small portion of the overall.

**J. DINN:** Okay, thank you very much.

That's it for that section, Sir.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

If the Committee is ready for the question, shall 3.1.01 to 3.3.02 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.1.01 through 3.3.02 carried.

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

**CLERK:** 4.1.01 to 4.5.01 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 4.1.01 to 4.5.01 inclusive carry?

MHA Forsey.

**P. FORSEY:** In 4.1.01, where is the latest review of the Crown lands? You did a review back in January through EngageNL. Where do we stand on that review now?

**D. BRAGG:** Jamie, can you take that?

**J. CHIPPETT:** The *What We Heard* document, as you know, was released a few days ago. In that engagement, we looked at three particular amendments to section 36 of the *Lands Act*, the squatters' rights provisions. The first one, as you know, there's a 20-year period right now to be eligible for a grant for squatters' rights. So one specific amendment that was put to the public was reducing that to 10 years – the more recent 10 years. There was also an amendment that the Crown consider a document that you would issue to say the Crown no longer have an interest rather than having to go through a grant proceeding every time for section 36.

I'm forgetting what the second amendment was. The second of three? We talk about it every day. Anyway, that will come to me.

We did get feedback on those amendments. People were generally in favour of the 10 year's change in that it would help – one of the big challenges is around affidavits and finding people in the communities who are old enough to remember the occupation of some of these lands. People also agreed and I think the percentage was really high in terms of this document the Crown could issue to say they no longer have an interest in the land.

The second one was setting a definitive time period for people who could make claims to Crown Lands on adverse possession. There was less support for that. People thought that you might see people who were outside of the time period and, therefore, wouldn't get a chance to claim their land.

In addition to those, there was public feedback around how the Crown Lands system and registry works with the Digital Government and Service NL and Registry of Deeds. The Registry of Deeds piece was outside the scope of the consultation but the feedback is there in the document. We have shared it with SNL. There was also interest in the first period, the first change being more substantive. In terms of the 10-year change, numerous people wanted to move that period into more recent time or to have a rolling period of time that people could possess the lands.

So we've done that step in terms of policy development and process. We are analyzing the feedback and not just from the consultation but other feedback the division has gotten over the years. We hope to get decisions and look at legislation in the near future.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay, so will we see legislation, say, this fall?

**J. CHIPPETT:** I am hesitant to put a timeline on it for sure, but we're certainly in the throes of the analysis now on that particular bill. So the hope is certainly for the fall.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay.

How many applications are on file now with Crown Lands?

**J. CHIPPETT:** So I really do have it here somewhere. I can give you the applications received by year, by region and it goes back from 2018 to 2022. So in 2018, there were 2,700 applications received; in 2019, there were 2,416 applications received; in 2020, 1,813; in 2021, 2,862; and in 2022, there were 3,165 applications.

I don't have the data for every one that was issued but what I do have is – when I find the right page – an indication of how many of the applications by year were processed within our service standard of 90 business days. In 2018, it was 24 per cent; in 2019, it was 31 per cent; in 2020, it was 37 per cent; in 2021, it was 53 per cent; and in 2022, it was 65 per cent.

So we think it is improving and what we've done there is taken out applications that would be problematic. In other words, if an application was incomplete, if we didn't get a survey come back, if somebody decided at the end of the day not to proceed or withdrew. But out of applications that were complete, whether they were routine and non-routine, that's the percentage of time we met the service standard.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay.

Wind development, the land nominations: Has the approvals been done on the land nominations, especially in Exploits? I'll say Exploits.

**J. CHIPPETT:** Our role, as people might know, in December, government decided to issue the land reserve order under the

*Lands Act* to reserve several parcels of land within the province. The call for bids themselves are obviously managed through Minister Parsons's department, IET. As they progress through that process, we'll have additional action to take from a Crown Lands perspective, whether those reserves are reduced in size or whether selected proponents apply for parts of that land. But the deadlines and progress around selecting companies is being done through the Department of IET.

**P. FORSEY:** How many nominations did you get for Exploits?

**J. CHIPPETT:** I don't know. You could ask Minister Parsons or IET about that.

**P. FORSEY:** All right.

How many land leases have gone to farmers under the agricultural Land Consolidation Program?

**CHAIR:** Keith Deering.

**K. DEERING:** The program is an annual program. There's \$2.2 million for the program and that's essentially for the purchase of new agricultural land. It varies from year to year. You didn't define which particular year you were interested in, you just said how many –

**P. FORSEY:** This year – over the last year.

**K. DEERING:** I'd have to get the precise data. I know that there have not been as many land purchases and, therefore, not as many leases issued under that program in the past year. I'd have to get the specific number of leases that have been actually issued under LCP.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay.

4.2.01, Supplies: This year you expect to spend \$634,000 more than what you spent last year. Why is that?

**K. DEERING:** This year we had encountered basically the same increases in cost of production as farmers would have for things like fertilizer, seeds and various types of equipment. A majority of these supplies that are allocated under this budget would be going to the Centre for Agriculture and Forestry Development, and specifically for the cost of increased production of vegetable transplants.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay.

4.3.01, Salaries: Are there any vacant positions here?

**K. DEERING:** At this time there are not. Although in the variance that you see in 2022-23, we had two vacant industry development officer positions as well as an admin support position that were vacant last year, but they are currently filled.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

4.1.01 to 4.5.01, we're going to turn it over to MHA Dinn.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

In 4.1.01, last year it was mentioned in passing during Estimates that there was a study of cabin lots along salmon rivers in Labrador. Could we have an update on that and what the plan will be once the study is completed?

**CHAIR:** Jamie Chippett.

**J. CHIPPETT:** So that review remains ongoing. The application freeze, as was instituted at the time of the start of the review, remains in place.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

Is there any timeline of when you anticipate it being completed?

**J. CHIPPETT:** We do hope to conclude it, I would say, in the next couple of months.



**J. DINN:** Okay.

If that happens, it's going to a while after that before any decision going forward, I would assume.

**J. CHIPPETT:** So decisions around that, depending on the outcome of the review, most likely can be made by our department. We wouldn't necessarily see an extended approval process around that.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

4.2.01, Agriculture Production and Research: The department has come out and stated that it has reached its goal for 20 per cent food self-sufficiency. Are there any plans going forward to expand that figure further?

**K. DEERING:** I guess, at the time when we had announced that, we had surpassed our target. Obviously our baseline number was about 590 hectares, which is the amount of production that we had in fruit and vegetables when we started down the road to double our food self-sufficiency. We had actually achieved 1,210 hectares at the time the announcement was made. Again, to be clear, that is in fruit and vegetable production only.

So, at that point that we had made that announcement, there were still additional land development payments that were being made right up until the end of March. So imbedded in that, as well, there was one particular project that we had undertaken out in Junction Brook and Deadwater Brook whereby the department had undertaken to contract the land development ourselves. So there's a substantial amount of additional land production that will take place in those two parcels as well, which if we had to run the numbers again this summer, we would have already substantially increased our food self-sufficiency targets.

So a little bit later on, in these subheads, I guess there are a couple of other funding programs. There's a new Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership program, which also has a land development envelope within it. Additionally, we have a Provincial Agrifoods Assistance Program, which about half the money allocated under the program is also for land development. Again, we are expecting to steadily increase our food self-sufficiency targets as we develop additional land.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

Last year, it was in the news that the amount of land for use had declined although that doesn't seem to be the case, yet we're apparently producing more food than before. I guess is it just better production costs or better production methods, or is it because of the starter plants and that for the farmers? I'm just trying to get an idea why.

**K. DEERING:** I apologize, MHA Dinn, I only got about half of what you were saying.

**J. DINN:** If we look at last year, the amount of land used for agriculture had declined, yet we're producing more food than before. Is there any understanding as to why that is the case? How they're both true?

**K. DEERING:** I think that I'm a little bit familiar with the circumstance that you describe and, in fact, the data that was being advertised and publicly pronounced by Stats Canada. I can't remember the exact group that he represents, but Sylvain Charlebois is his name; he's from the Canadian centre for food security or something like that. It was in fact not the same baseline data that we were using ourselves.

Our numbers, we feel, are correct. We were measuring land on a square-foot basis so we have a pretty good idea where land was developed and put in production. In fact, it was acknowledged afterwards that the

baseline information that he had used was not quite the same as what he probably ought to have used.

**J. DINN:** Okay.

Is your department responsible when it comes to lime? I don't know if it was in this department where I was talking about it last year or another one, but the agricultural lime a discount or subsidizing lime for farmers.

**K. DEERING:** So that is covered under 4.2.03. We had 37 applicants this past summer for limestone. We ran short in November, which was an opportune time to run short. Once snow falls, then I guess we have limited opportunity to be able to spread limestone.

As you can see in these numbers, we were basically fully subscribed under the program. In fact, I would suggest that as we develop additional land base, there will be even more appetite for limestone application.

**J. DINN:** My understanding is that there was some discussion as to whether the limestone would be subsidized for farmers or for those who, let's say, use it to grow grass, lawn companies. Is it still primarily for production of fruits and vegetables or food production, or is it expanded to the commercial production of sods and that?

**K. DEERING:** Yes, you're absolutely right. The priority was for food production for the past two years, actually. Of course, what we had indicated to landscape sod producers was that if there was additional limestone that was available to other producers after food producers had made use of the program, then it would have been made available for them. All that being said, there's an abundance of limestone available to everybody. It's just that the subsidy is prioritized towards food production.

**J. DINN:** Perfect, thank you.

Under 4.3.01, can we have an update on how the regional abattoir and beef industry initiative is progressing?

**K. DEERING:** So we have had substantial success in growing our beef sector. We doubled our food self-sufficiency footprint in beef production quite early on in our journey. Through the program as well – actually I'll describe a couple of different things here. We had a beef genetic enhancement program whereby we had positioned 200 genetically superior beef cows out on beef producers' farms to substantially increase the production levels of beef. That worked out very well.

So the other part of the program was to support the establishment of two regional abattoirs in the province. One was in Hopeall, Trinity Bay. That facility is operating, I want to say, around the clock today. Suffice it to say he has lots of people calling him wanting to get their animals processed at that facility. He's working pretty hard to keep up with it all. Secondly, we have a facility which has been completed out in the Bay of Exploits area. That's a state-of-the-art facility that's capable of substantial production.

I guess he has been struggling in the last couple of years in trying to meet the standards of the environmental assessment release for waste management. So he has been released from environmental assessment now and has been directed through their process to construct a compost facility to specifically look after the specified risk material, which is basically spines and brainstems. For everybody in the room who aren't aware, this is where bovine spongiform encephalopathy is located, which is in layman's terms, mad cow disease.

So the environmental assessment folks, you know, obviously, pollution prevention people had specific requirements for the disposal of that material. Again, the operator of that facility is aware of the environmental

assessment release conditions and is currently evaluating the options for the construction of a compost facility.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

In 4.3.04, Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, what changes are there to the new CAP program as the previous one ended last year?

**K. DEERING:** So there have been subtle changes to it. I want to say that when we did our consultations with farmers and processors in the transition in between the Canadian Agricultural Partnership and the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, it was at a time when there was substantial climate change disasters taking place in a lot of the other places in Canada.

Farmers told us two things. They wanted to ensure that climate change mitigation fared fairly prominently in the new agreement and, secondly, they wanted to ensure that we preserved a lot of the programming that was in the previous agreement under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership.

So we did those two things. I think you will find that a lot of the existing programming under the previous agreement is still in this agreement but, as well, we have two programs; one of which is called the Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program, as well as the Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Program, for which we've allocated \$4.6 million and \$1.6 million, respectively.

I will also add that for the first time in 15 years we actually got an increase to our envelope for this particular program. We've increased it from \$37 million up to \$46.25 million. A substantial portion of that increase is allocated towards these Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program and Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Program.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

4.1.01 to 4.5.01.

Back to you, MHA Forsey.

**P. FORSEY:** In 4.3.02, regarding the \$1 million that was spent on 200 cows. How many were slaughtered here on the Island?

**K. DEERING:** So that's a real good question. I'm not exactly sure that I have a specific answer to that. We know that about 79 per cent of the animals that were placed on farms, again, to preserve the genetic capacity, are still there. We had several of those animals that were lost because of factors beyond the farmers' control. Several other farmers had actually sold some of those animals.

So, you know, our understanding is that some of those animals have made their way from the East Coast to the West Coast of the province. But, I guess, what I can say is about 79 per cent of the animals that were placed on farms are still being used for genetic enhancement of those herds.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay, so 79 per cent are still alive? Is that –?

**K. DEERING:** That's correct. The last time I checked.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay.

You mentioned the abattoir in Exploits; so you're saying that that's now after passing the environmental assessment and moving through the process to get done.

**K. DEERING:** Yes, that's correct. That would have been released from environmental assessment – I don't have the exact date, but I'm thinking maybe two months ago. We have been working with the proponent fairly closely for the past couple of months to try to offer opportunities for the construction of a compost pad, which would allow that facility to operate.

I should have noted, as well, by the way, that the facility out in Hopeall was also subject to the same condition, which was to compost the specified risk material. He does also have plans to construct a compost facility; however, he also is fortunate enough to live in fairly close proximity to a substantial mink farm which is just down the road in Heart's Delight-Islington.

While he's developing his plans for a compost facility, he's actually moving his specified risk material down to that facility to be composted down there.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay, so the cost to that farmer with regard to the abattoir, is this being compensated by government or is the cost on the farmer?

**K. DEERING:** So it certainly would be an eligible expense under our Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership program, for instance, which under routine applications offers a 75 per cent non-repayable contribution to those sorts of facilities.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay.

So, as far as you know, the abattoir is going ahead down in Exploits?

**K. DEERING:** Well, the abattoir is built. It's ready to turn on the lights and start production, provided there is an immediate solution for the specified risk material.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay.

4.3.04, Salaries: Why did you spend \$144,000 less than was budgeted last year?

**K. DEERING:** We had three vacancies throughout the year and I think I mentioned earlier that they're all filled now, but we had two financial officers as well as one industry development officer. All of those positions, they were vacant at some point during the year last fiscal year, but they're all filled right now.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay.

4.4.01, Salaries: Why were Salaries \$225,000 more than what was expected last year?

**K. DEERING:** That can be explained for a couple of different reasons. Number one, the regular additions for salary increases and signing bonuses was included there. But, as well, we had vet locums throughout the year that were required to fill capacity for vets who were off.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay.

In 4.5.01, are there initiatives to improve Crown land applications? I know there's a long list of departments it has to go through. What is the wait time from each department to have the applications in to Crown Lands?

**J. CHIPPETT:** The standard referrals that go to departments in Crown Lands provide for 21 days. That's the standard ask. I can tell you that in the case of simple applications where there aren't land use conflicts and so on, there's good data to support things coming back on time. But in more complicated scenarios, it can take longer.

A couple of things we're talking to departments about include having one point of contact for referrals. If you think about a department like Environment and Climate Change, there are a number of divisions that would feed into the Crown Lands process. We're trying to streamline those particular referrals wherever we can.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay, that's it for this one.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

4.1.01 to 4.5.01 inclusive, back to you, MHA Dinn.

**J. DINN:** That's it, I'm good.

**CHAIR:** You're good?

Okay, if the Committee is ready for the question?

Shall 4.1.01 to 4.5.01 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subheads 4.1.01 to 4.5.01 carried.

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

**CLERK:** 5.1.01 to 5.2.02 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 5.1.01 to 5.2.02 inclusive carry?

MHA Forsey.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay. Just a couple of questions on this one.

In 5.2.02, why is the extra spending there for \$176,000 last year?

**J. CHIPPETT:** That depends on which subhead. Are you talking about Salaries?

**P. FORSEY:** Salaries, yes. Sorry.

**J. CHIPPETT:** So in terms of the \$6.3 million going to \$6.7 million, or \$6.8 million I guess it is, the variances have been explained in other Estimates activities in terms of negotiated salary increases and signing bonuses. Then obviously you'll see that we budgeted back closer to the original amount, which would be \$6.4 million.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay.

Actually, under Supplies is what I was trying to get to. The extra there is \$176,000.

**J. CHIPPETT:** Yeah.

So, as you'd expect in these types of professions, there are requirements for uniforms, floater suits, different personal protective equipment. There were additional uniforms and floater suits, body armor required for either new officers, or obviously over a certain period of time these things would need to be replaced.

**P. FORSEY:** How many vacancies are in the enforcement area?

**J. CHIPPETT:** I don't have that number on hand, but I can certainly get it for you. There are 95 positions in that division.

**P. FORSEY:** Okay.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

5.1.01 to 5.2.02 inclusive.

MHA Dinn.

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

Under 5.1.01, has the rollout of online hunter education training helped matters for the department regarding cost, speed of applicants and speed of applicants receiving training?

**S. BALSOM:** That would have been earlier under our wildlife management heading. But yeah, basically with the rollout of the online big game education, now you're only required to do the in-house firearms safety course, which is your federal component. So two-day courses now, if you choose so, to do the hunter education part, has cut the time frame in half. Therefore, our instructors can offer more slots for the firearm safety training.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

GIS and Mapping, 5.1.02: Why was spending on Salaries and Purchased Services under budget last year?

**J. CHIPPETT:** So the salary difference there is accounted to by vacancies within the division. There were four vacancies at some point during the last fiscal year. Then the increase from last year's budgeted number to this year's budgeted number is due to the negotiated salary increases.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

5.2.02, under Enforcement, I think it was mentioned that there were 95 positions within this division. How many of them are actual enforcement officers who would work in the field?

**J. CHIPPETT:** A very high number actually. There's a director and there are three regional managers. The remainder are conservation officers that would work in the field.

**J. DINN:** Okay.

So there would be around 79. Of that then, you're looking at so many there from management, I guess, but the bulk of them would be in the field.

**J. CHIPPETT:** Yes, by far, the bulk of the people in that division are enforcement officers.

**J. DINN:** Excellent, thank you.

With regard to vehicles, I'm thinking in terms of pickup trucks and those vehicles; how many vehicles do you have now, pickup trucks? Do you have enough for each officer to be in the field at all times if they need to be?

**J. CHIPPETT:** I don't have the specific breakdown. I can say that there were new vehicles provided to that division at the end of the last fiscal year. If I recall correctly, somewhere between 10 and 12 would've been new vehicles and we continue to work with Transportation and Infrastructure who manages the light vehicle fleet on new vehicles across the department.

**J. DINN:** So there are 71 total vehicles and 34 of those are over 10 years old and 37 of them are under 10 years. Any idea of the kilometres on each of these vehicles? Is it possible to get access to that?

**J. CHIPPETT:** I don't have those numbers with me but certainly that would be a thing that is a regular check every year when vehicles go through inspection.

**J. DINN:** I understand that there are roughly 64 vehicles for officers. So there are not enough vehicles for the officers in the field. You can certainly confirm or deny that later on, but as I understand it, of the 71 vehicles, 64 of them are for officers. I'm just thinking in terms of enforcement officers, that truck or that vehicle is their office for the most part, unless they are getting ready for court or they're involved with training.

So I'm just wondering in terms of making sure that there are vehicles up to standard enough so that people can do the enforcement work, it seems to be that there's a disparity between the officers you have hired and the vehicles for them to be able to do their work.

**J. CHIPPETT:** First thing I'd say to that is we're not on a model in all cases where one officer would have a truck. So, in some cases, they do work together and there would be more than one officer utilizing a truck. Secondly, as I said, there were at least 10 new vehicles, if not 12, fairly recently provided to that division.

We continue to work with Transportation and Infrastructure who manages the light vehicle fleet and has the budget for the light vehicle fleet to assess vehicle needs across our department.

**J. DINN:** So there would be the case where two officers at a time are going out in one vehicle. From what I understand that's not the case, but that's what you're saying is that is the case.

**J. CHIPPETT:** Well, I think, it's a consideration when you look across the department that a department with whatever it was 978 staff, then you need to look at vehicle needs across the department. I do understand enforcement officers in some cases use vehicles more than some other staff but, either way, we would not want a staff person in any of those professions to be in a vehicle that was unsafe and we need to measure those needs across the department.

**J. DINN:** We have gotten issues where actually the vehicles are not, in some cases, written off and then put back on the road, I guess, with the appropriate repairs. So there is a concern from an occupational health and safety point of view, especially where these vehicles are going to be little bit different than – I primarily use mine maybe on the road, if I'm 30 kilometres inside in the wilderness somewhere or following up and the truck breaks down, it's a significant challenge.

Is it possible to have the inspection slips, a record, of these vehicles? Get a copy of those for the vehicles that you have.

**J. CHIPPETT:** So Transportation and Infrastructure would be where you should direct that inquiry. I would say that there are other staff in our department who would end up in the backcountry whether they be wildlife biologists or what have you. So I'll stick with my statement that we're responsible in terms of the safety of all our employees and we need to balance that obligation with the resources available.

**S. STOODLEY:** Chair, could I answer the question?

**CHAIR:** Does the –?

**J. DINN:** I would just like a copy of (inaudible).

**S. STOODLEY:** Something I'd like to mention, though, to the –

**CHAIR:** The Chair is recognizing Minister Stoodley.

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

Just to mention, MHA Dinn, you mentioned how when vehicles are written off. I just wanted to note as part of that, that if a vehicle is deemed unrepairable by the insurer, then that vehicle can never be registered again. I've had many complaints from people trying to change that, but I just want to make sure everyone is clear that once a vehicle has been deemed unrepairable, under no circumstance can the vehicle be registered for road use in any province in Canada.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

MHA Dinn.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

I understand that, if I'm looking at it, the oldest vehicle you have in the fleet is around 2008. I certainly wouldn't mind a breakdown, just from your point of view, of where these vehicles are and the age. I would also assume, too, that you would have records in your department of keeping track of which vehicles are and what state of disrepair. I know it would be with Digital Government, but I would also assume that in part of your planning that you'd have some indication of the age of the vehicles.

What I'm asking for is the breakdown by age, kilometres and the inspection, please. That goes for ATVs, I guess, and I'm taking a look at ATVs and snowmobiles, but ATVs, if it's possible to get a breakdown of the total number of ATVs, their age and snowmobiles as well.

Again, my concern is of the fact that often the officers who use them are on their own and it's about the safety issues for these people in there. If I understand it correctly,

the age of one snowmobile goes back to the bulk of them around 2011 but snowmobiles is the oldest as 2001.

So I'm just curious, it seems to be they're well beyond their life limit, but that's something that can be debated at a later time. But I wouldn't mind a breakdown as well.

I do have further questions.

**CHAIR:** MHA Forsey, do you have anything further?

**P. FORSEY:** No, I'd just like to say thank you to the minister and the staff for coming in. I really do appreciate it. I do appreciate, and I know MHA Parry do as well, the conversations during the year and quick responses that we do get. We value that and we value the work that you do.

Thank you very, very much.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

MHA Dinn, do you have anything further?

**J. DINN:** I won't be much longer.

With regard to the radios and the communications, what is it that officers have at their availability for communication?

**S. BALSOM:** Generally, our officers are equipped with a cellphone for when you're in cellphone range. They also use VHF radios and we have a series of repeater towers throughout the province that assist with backcountry communication. They also carry a SPOT type GPS device that can send various messages, whether that's just to require assistance, to send a Cormorant to get to our location. So we do have some redundancies from cellphone to satellite.

In some remote areas, they will also carry a satellite phone which we have within the department. I think that speaks to all of the staff that we have that operate in the

backcountry that we want to ensure that they have proper communication when they're in those locations. If they're in an area where the VHF radio doesn't hit the repeater, we want to make sure they have satellite.

**J. DINN:** So are they on the first responder system, whether it's police, RNC or RCMP; would they be on that system?

**S. BALSOM:** Our group has not switched to that system yet. The province-wide radio system is being done in phases. So they've looked I think primarily at those that operate on pavement, ambulances and law enforcement and fire and emergency services. The next phase, they will looking at how to incorporate our type of operations which include more of the backcountry, woods-road scenarios.

**J. DINN:** And the VHF radios – you were talking about walkie-talkies, basically, here.

**S. BALSOM:** Yes, I guess it would be radio-to-radio communication and that's why we do have the repeater system. So you hit the repeater tower and then it will hit a district office. So that walkie-talkie system operates. The system also is utilized for communication with helicopters as well. They operate with the VHS system and we also use it when coordinating responses with the air tankers and water bombers for those reasons.

**J. DINN:** So it sometimes can depend on whether there's a repeater tower available nearby within range. With the SPOT, I know I am familiar with that, but that's limited in what it can do because I would assume, too, that an enforcement officer, if you're in the middle of the woods and it could be anything, an emergency, it could be anything to being injured and in need of a stretcher – I had one myself – or to an armed conflict of some sort depending on the time of year for that matter, I guess what it comes down to when you're looking at an emergency, depending on whether the



emergency is I need to get a stretcher in here to get someone out or we need backup here as quickly as possible, especially if it's for an officer, I'm just wondering if the communication capability is actually sufficient to protect the men and women who are in these positions, especially when they're off-road in areas that are isolated.

**S. BALSOM:** We do have a very detailed working alone policy that covers, depending on a situation, when you turn off the pavement, turning on your GPS locator so that it can be followed at a district office with check-in and check-out procedures. So if we do not get a check-in, as required, then it's followed up.

**J. DINN:** So are these officers able to be in contact with the office at all times or are there blind spots where they – and, again, I've used cellphone off-road and there comes a point when it's pointless. Even walkie-talkies, for the most part, the ones I use, the best ones I can get are usually within line. They don't work in the valleys so much. So I'm just wondering, considering it's one thing for me to be out of communication, it is another thing for an officer to be out of communication; are there times when if they are out of contact, you can't reach them?

**S. BALSOM:** Yeah, there are definitely a lot of scenarios across our province. We certainly depend on each officer understanding their geographic location, the roads that they're accessing and the area communication if there is a requirement in their area to carry a satellite phone, as an example. I guess each officer in their patrol area needs to have a good understanding of working alone and when they're considered alone and the proper device they should have at that time to provide the best coverage available.

As part of the risk assessment, especially for enforcement, they really assess your personal situations when they are in the backcountry, when you're going to engage

or not engage and part of that is understanding your ability to communicate accurately and safely. There is a part that we play, as the employer, to provide coverage and then there is a part to understand where you're operating and that you operate safely as an individual. So it is kind of that everybody has to understand what we're involved in.

**CHAIR:** Mr. Bragg.

**D. BRAGG:** Can I add to that?

Well, as we all know with our cellphone, it is not just backcountry; it could be anywhere. On a main highway, out in the bay, multiple places each and every day that we put our own self in. You go out moose hunting by yourself, you know, you have to be very conscious. I think our crew are well trained.

I have been in some remote areas and stopped by some individual enforcement officers and I have had two in a vehicle as well. I can recall from an accident a couple years ago, and anybody can have an accident and we realize that, but our officers are trained to the degree they need to be, given the environment that they work in.

**J. DINN:** I would submit then that really it shouldn't be left up to the wildlife officer to know what the backcountry is and determine what type of communication equipment; that should be standard so that at all times they are always in communication, period. To me, that is a life-safety issue especially.

I'm assuming then that they'll be part of that province-wide radio system; at least that would give them a certain amount of security, especially where they do operate on their own a lot.

Night-vision goggles: Since I know a lot, when it comes to poaching issues and that, is probably at night, I am just wondering how many night-vision goggles do we have

and the age of them. If you don't have that now, I'll certainly take that later on.

**D. BRAGG:** We'll get back to you with that information.

**J. DINN:** Perfect.

Cameras: Since a lot of evidence in the court depends on evidence and evidence gathering, what is the equipment provided to officers or is it simply their cellphone in terms of that? Because I would assume that taking a picture of a salmon river for me is vastly different than if you're going to have something presented in court.

**D. BRAGG:** In my two years here I've never been confronted with any question by any member of the enforcement saying we don't have the necessary equipment that we need to carry out our duty. I can only assume what they need is in their arsenal of supplies that they would require. Will that lead to conviction all the time? Probably not, but they do the best job they can, given situations they're in most times.

**J. DINN:** Minister, no disrespect, but I can tell you in the education system those in authority would also say the same thing: We have never heard any complaint from teachers. Often because they're afraid to move up and bring it up, bring it to the attention.

I'll bring this up a last time – I'm not looking for an answer right now – but drones, in terms of a helicopter – I'm sure we're not talking about off-the-shelf drones, but I was talking to a gentleman who has drone technology that can fly and then go underwater, too, for that matter. I'm thinking in terms of the enforcement capabilities for officers in expanding their arsenal, the use of drones in that process. Is that something where we should be going as well?

**D. BRAGG:** Forestry will use drones at all times, whenever they want. Because we have multiple enforcement officers, so

Forestry would have it. I'm assuming if we needed it, we're in the same department, we could use it.

**J. DINN:** How does that compare to our use of helicopters?

**D. BRAGG:** Helicopters are really expensive.

**J. DINN:** Drones should be a lot cheaper.

**D. BRAGG:** Yeah. We use a fair amount of helicopter patrols as well.

**J. DINN:** I'm just thinking, that's my point, using drones instead of the helicopter service and getting bigger bang for the buck.

That's it, I'm done.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

If the Committee's ready for the question, shall 5.1.01 to 5.2.02 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subheads 5.1.01 through 5.2.02 carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, total heads, carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall I report the Estimates of the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture carried?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Those against?

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture carried without amendment.

**CHAIR:** Okay, MHA Forsey had a few closing remarks on behalf of the Committee.

MHA Dinn.

**J. DINN:** No, thank you very much. I appreciate the answers and the knowledge that goes with it. There are no two ways about it; we may not always agree, but I do appreciate the professionalism and good job.

Minister, thank you for being here, too.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Minister, do you want a few closing remarks?

**D. BRAGG:** I just can't thank my staff enough. As everyone can tell, I have issue with my speech so they really picked up the speed.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

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

**CHAIR:** This the end of our Resource Committee Estimates, so I certainly want to thank the Committee and Mark, who was here with me this morning. Certainly hats off to the Broadcast Centre as well.

I will entertain a motion for adjournment.

I knew Lucy was going to put up her hand, so there she goes; seconded by MHA Forsey.

This Committee stands adjourned.

On motion, the Committee adjourned sine die.