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Resources**

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Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation

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Honourable Paul Lane, MHA

RESOURCE COMMITTEE

Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation

Chair: Mark Butt, MHA

Members: Elvis Loveless, MHA
Riley Balsom, MHA
Fred Hutton, MHA
Keith Russell, MHA
Joseph Power, MHA
Sheilagh O'Leary, MHA

Clerk of the Committee: Kimberley Hammond (A)

Appearing:

Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation

Hon. Andrea Barbour, Minister
Carol-Ann Gilliard, Deputy Minister
Ben Gardner, Assistant Deputy Minister, Recreation and Sport
Christina Harrington, Assistant Deputy Minister, Arts, Culture, Film and Television
Lynn Taylor, Assistant Deputy Minister, Tourism
Sara Norris, Director of Communications
Jennifer Torrville, Departmental Controller
Nicole Iovanov, Media Relations Manager
Kathy Goudie, Executive Assistant

Also Present

Bettina Ford, MHA
Angelica Hill, Official Opposition Caucus
Meghan Parsons, Official Opposition Caucus
Scott Fleming, Third Party Caucus

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Bettina Ford, MHA for Gander, substitutes for Elvis Loveless, MHA for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

The Committee met at 6 p.m. in the House of Assembly Chamber.

CHAIR (Butt): Order, please!

Before we start, I'd like to announce some of the substitutions. The Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune will be substituted by the Member for Gander.

Since we're starting at 6 o'clock, normally we have a break halfway through so around 7:30 p.m. we'll be stopping for a 10-minute break.

A reminder for Members and department officials, each time that you speak, please wave to identify yourself, wait for the tally light to come on and say your name and position each time you speak for transcription purposes. Please do not make adjustments to your chairs. Water coolers are located in each corner of the Chamber and glasses are provided.

I will now ask the Committee Members, substitutions and caucus employees to introduce themselves, starting with the front row closest to the Chair.

B. FORD: Hi there, Bettina Ford, MHA Gander.

A. HILL: Angelica Hill, Director of Research for the Official Opposition.

F. HUTTON: Fred Hutton, MHA Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

M. PARSONS: Meghan Parsons, Opposition Staffer.

S. O'LEARY: Sheilagh O'Leary, MHA St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. FLEMING: Scott Fleming, Research NDP Caucus Office.

J. POWER: Joe Power, MHA for Labrador West.

K. RUSSELL: Keith Russell, MHA for the glorious District of Lake Melville.

R. BALSOM: Riley Balsom, MHA Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde.

CHAIR: I now ask the department officials to introduce themselves, starting with the minister.

A. BARBOUR: Andrea Barbour, Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation; MHA for St. Barbe - L'Anse au Meadows.

C. GILLIARD: Deputy Minister, Carol-Ann Gilliard.

L. TAYLOR: Lynn Taylor, Assistant Deputy Minister, Tourism and Parks.

C. HARRINGTON: Christina Harrington, Assistant Deputy Minister of Arts, Culture, Film and Television.

B. GARDNER: Ben Gardner, Assistant Deputy Minister, Recreation and Sport.

K. GOUDIE: Kathy Goudie, EA for Minister Barbour.

J. TORRAVILLE: Jennifer Torraville, Departmental Controller.

S. NORRIS: Sara Norris, Director of Communications.

N. IOVANOV: Nicolle Iovanov, Media Relations Manager.

CHAIR: Before we start the Estimates review process, the Committee will now consider the minutes of the previous meeting.

If there are no errors or omissions, I ask for a mover for these minutes.

J. POWER: So moved.

CHAIR: The minutes are moved by the Member for Labrador West.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

CHAIR: We will now proceed with Estimates review process. Once I ask the Clerk to call the first subhead group for this head of expenditure, I will proceed to recognize the minister who will get 15 minutes for opening remarks. Then I'll proceed to introduce the first responder/questioner from the Committee who will get 15 minutes for questions in the first round. After the first round, questions will proceed with rounds of 10 minutes each alternating between Members of the Committee.

I now ask the Clerk to call the first subhead.

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

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 inclusive carry?

I now recognize the minister for opening remarks.

A. BARBOUR: Good evening.

It's great to be here with you to walk through the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation Estimates for *Budget 2026*. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Before we begin, I would like to take a moment to recognize the tremendous impact of this department to our residents, the strength of our communities and the growth of our economy. The tourism industry, along with the arts and heritage sector, plays a vital role in showcasing the very best of Newfoundland and Labrador. It enables us to invest in the health care people rely on, create safer communities and build a better future for generations to come.

Our province is home to engaging attractions, breathtaking landscapes, talented entertainers and welcoming accommodations. With Newfoundland and Labrador's rich heritage, striking natural beauty, talented artists and artisans, we can grow our industry into one that is busy year-round, offering something for everyone to enjoy. We will build a strong, vibrant future for our province by supporting growth in our arts, culture, heritage and tourism sectors, industries that enrich our communities and strengthen our economy for all of us.

We are also committed to investing in active living and wellness for people of all ages, helping improve overall health, well-being and a quality of life.

Newfoundland and Labrador's tourism industry supports over 20,000 jobs. Arts, culture, heritage and recreation are essential components of the tourism experience and play a key role in attracting visitors to supporting jobs and improving the well-being of residents province wide.

The \$1.5-million allocation for air access is consistent with last year's budget and reflects government's commitment to improving the connectivity to and within Newfoundland and Labrador. While air connectivity links the province to the rest of the world, provincial parks provide natural spaces for residents and visitors to enjoy closer to home.

Newfoundland and Labrador has 32 parks that are spread across the province from Wabush to St. John's. We are seeing more people at our parks over the last number of years. People are more interested in spending time in nature, enjoying outdoor spaces and recognizing the benefits to overall well-being. Healthy lifestyles encourage positive mental, physical and cognitive health for people of all ages.

The province's natural scenery has become a defining feature of its branding and marketing campaigns. Our new tourism strategy being developed in collaboration with industry will be focused primarily on improving air and marine access, extending the tourism season to make the province a year-round tourist destination while integrating tourism and wellness together – a direct effort that will make us the tourism capital of Canada.

One of our greatest tourism and recreational assets in Western Newfoundland is Marble Mountain. It supports tourism, employment, youth participation and regional economic activity. We continue to take steps to optimize Marble Mountain while ensuring it remains a unique experience for residents, visitors and the regional tourism economy.

Aside from Marble Mountain's tourism significance, it also plays an important part in healthy living, which contributes to overall wellness. Our new government is committed to supporting athletes, sport organizations and active living across Newfoundland and Labrador to improve the health and well-being of residents of all ages.

Sports play an important role in strengthening communities by supporting physical health, mental wellness and social connection for people throughout the province. An active province is a healthy province, and we are proud to invest in young athletes, coaches and supporters, and will continue enhancing sport and wellness opportunities.

While active living strengthens the body and supports overall well-being, engagement in the arts is equally important in nurturing creativity, emotional expression and a sense of connection with communities. Our government is strengthening the culture, arts and heritage sectors, supporting economic development, community vitality and professional growth across the province.

Government investment in programs like the Arts Infrastructure and Programming Fund and the Cultural Economic Development Program helps create jobs, supports community organizations and preserve our shared cultural heritage.

Building on the value of arts and heritage in preserving culture and storytelling, film and television bring these traditions to life through powerful visual narratives that reach and inspire broader audiences. Our film and television sector continues to flourish and stands as a shining example of the talent and creativity found throughout this province.

We also continue to offer and promote the Film and Video Tax Credit, and the All-Spend Film and Video Production Tax Credit. These programs are jointly administered by the Department of Finance and PictureNL, and helps support local producers while attracting film and television production to the province.

Newfoundland and Labrador's film and television industry continues to showcase our province's talent, landscapes and stories to audiences around the world. These successes confirm that our investment in this industry is making a meaningful impact.

As we look at the next year or so, we recognize that there is still a lot of work to do. We recognize that our industry is sensitive to shifts in income and economic stability. We're working closely with partners and stakeholders to keep a close eye on

changing economic conditions and will adjust our approach together, as needed, as we're all in this together.

We're reducing the small business tax, which will be felt through every community in our province, from restaurants, hotels, local shops and everything in between that plays a role in the visitor experience. We know that a strong visitor economy boosts Newfoundland and Labrador's global reputation as a great place to live, work, visit and invest.

Our province offers so many activities to enjoy: hiking, nature and parks, beaches, culinary experiences, local pubs, craft breweries and historic sites. We're growing the tourism industry by extending the peak tourism season to become a year-round tourism destination, offering something for everyone to enjoy.

But with growth, there are opportunities and challenges. Work continues to strengthen provincial ferry services and push for more capacity, particularly during peak travel periods. We are in regular contact with airport authorities and airlines to respond to changes that may occur and support improved air access.

We recognize that travel to Newfoundland and Labrador requires more planning than destinations near major urban centres, making air and marine access critical, and we're focused on making travel easier with dependable air and marine connections both within Newfoundland and Labrador and beyond.

We are positioning Newfoundland and Labrador to stand proudly as Canada's prime tourism destination – a place where visitors from around the world come for something real, authentic and unforgettable. Together, we are helping to build a more resilient, diversified future for our province – one that creates opportunities, supports local businesses and reflects the identity and pride of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Our vision for the province supports lifelong well-being by creating opportunities for movement, connection, recreation, mental health, mental wellness and healthy living for everyone, every day, where we live, work, learn and play.

I look forward to going through the Estimates with you today. Before I begin, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the staff of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation for the tremendous work that they have done over the past year.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: I now call on the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you.

I'd like to start off by thanking the minister very much for this opportunity, and to thank all of the staff with the department. I'd like to think that Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation is one of the highlights of government. It's one of those things that people celebrate and enjoy and take so much pleasure from, so it's a pleasure to be here this evening to talk about this.

Thank you to all of the staff, and congratulations to you all for the wonderful job that you do on promoting tourism, sport and recreation in our province. Thank you for that.

Minister, I did want to acknowledge, of course, that this is my first time leading Estimates, as a new MHA, and your first time, as a minister, participating in Estimates. In preparation for this, I did review previous Estimates discussion for this department, just to try to get a feel for the types of issues that are discussed. We've thought carefully about the questions and plan to focus on policy and priorities. I hope at the end of this, Minister, you'll agree that the questions that were asked are

appropriate and in line with this Estimates process.

Chair, if it's okay with you, we can get right into the questions as part of these first 15 minutes.

CHAIR: Yes.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Will the minister table or provide electronically the full Estimates briefing binder for the department, including all briefing notes, project lists and variance explanations used to prepare for today's session?

A. BARBOUR: Yes.

B. FORD: Thank you.

A. BARBOUR: I have the stick behind me.

B. FORD: Can the minister advise which political staff are currently hired in the department and their salaries?

A. BARBOUR: I'm going to ask my DM to answer this one, because this one is a little technical. She was here since last July, so she can explain.

C. GILLIARD: The staff in the minister's office includes the minister, the minister's EA and the minister's secretary, as well as a short-term contract for a special advisor.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Are you able to provide salary amounts or contract amounts for those positions?

C. GILLIARD: Yes, we can provide that.

B. FORD: Will you be providing that now or afterwards?

A. BARBOUR: Do you have it on hand?

J. TORRAVILLE: Did you want me to read it?

A. BARBOUR: Yes, you can. Go ahead.

J. TORRAVILLE: The EA is on the same salary pay scale as was historically, and it runs about a \$91,000 salary. The contractual position, even though it's temporary, the annual salary for that one is \$87,000.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Salaries dropped from \$316,400, in revised '25-'26, to \$228,000 for the '26-'27 Estimate. What caused the drop in that revised figure?

C. GILLIARD: The 2025 budget was \$217,000 and the 2026 is \$228,000. The increase that had been in '25-'26 revised was to reflect required payouts to former employees.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Minister, can you advise which national tourism meetings or conferences you plan to attend in this fiscal year?

A. BARBOUR: There's one coming up very soon in Winnipeg. That is a national one with the ministers from all over Canada.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Is that the only national tourism meeting or conference you plan to attend in this fiscal year?

A. BARBOUR: That's the only one. There is another one in the fall, because that one is twice a year, right?

C. GILLIARD: They're combining this year, TIAC and CCTM.

A. BARBOUR: They are combining into one this year, so right now that's the only one that I have planned.

B. FORD: Okay. Thank you.

Minister, which two are those? What does TIAC stand for, and is it the CCTM?

C. GILLIARD: The two that are going to be combined this year, the first one that the minister mentioned was the Canadian Council of Tourism Ministers, which happens every November or December, and it's being combined with the annual Tourism Industry Association of Canada's Congress. They have an annual Tourism Congress every year.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Under Executive Support, what caused the increase in Purchased Services spending in the revised last year?

A. BARBOUR: The Supplies, there was an increase. It was a turnover of new staff, new cellphones and office supplies.

B. FORD: Thank you.

I just wanted to go back to the question about the travel for national tourism meetings or conferences. I also wanted to ask, Minister, do you plan to attend any international meetings or conferences in this fiscal year?

A. BARBOUR: Yes, I will be attending the Trail of the Caribou in France and Belgium coming up in June. It's not confirmed yet, but I may also be attending the one in Turkey in September.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Moving on here to Corporate Services, Salaries increased from \$657,600 in revised to \$800,000 for the estimate. Minister, can you advise of the reason for that?

A. BARBOUR: This decrease reflects several vacant policy analysts and clerical positions during that year.

B. FORD: Thank you.

The salary increased to \$800,000.

A. BARBOUR: Oh, okay. The one above.

B. FORD: I believe that's an increase here that I'm asking about, not a decrease.

A. BARBOUR: Okay. The \$2,800, this increase reflects the current salary plan for 2026-2027 including the stepping progression.

So an employee could be put into a position, say a clerk position, and within that clerk position you can move up the ladder three to four levels depending on the position. So this just reflects that step progression.

B. FORD: Okay. Thank you.

Under Administrative Support, what types of capital assets would be included in this section?

A. BARBOUR: I'm going to ask Jennifer, right behind me, to

J. TORRAVILLE: This section for Administrative Support is a placeholder, at this point, with the \$100, for any capital assets that may be purchased throughout the year.

There are no intentions that I'm aware of right now to have a capital asset, but you can't add it after. It's an accounting placeholder in case there are any capital assets purchased throughout the year.

B. FORD: Okay. Thank you.

Purchased Services – sorry?

OFFICIAL: That's the next subhead.

B. FORD: Yes, next subhead.

OFFICIAL: We need to vote on this one.

B. FORD: Okay. I'm trying to jump ahead. Sorry about that, Chair.

Chair, I have remaining on the clock five minutes and 32 seconds, can I defer any of that time to my colleague, MHA Hutton?

CHAIR: Typically, no.

B. FORD: No?

CHAIR: No.

B. FORD: Okay.

All right, we're good.

CHAIR: You're good?

B. FORD: Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister.

This is a great opportunity, and I'd certainly thank all the staff here as well. I know about the boots on the ground, how this works, and I really thank you for your efforts. As a long-time cultural producer, artist – four decades in many of the areas that you're actually all working in – I'm very passionate about this particular area. I just want to say thank you very much for the opportunity to learn more about how the machine runs.

Thank you very much.

I just have a general question. I think we kind of touched on it there, but how many people are currently employed in the department itself and how many positions are currently vacant?

Thank you.

A. BARBOUR: There are 313 positions: 115 filled positions, 28 vacant positions and

170 is seasonal positions. So 115, 28 and 170 are of the 313 total.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Under Corporate Services, are you currently working on a policy regarding the use of AI across the department, especially with the use of promotional materials?

The use of AI often leads to job losses in that sector for the very people that this department is upholding and supporting. I'm just wondering if there are any efforts there on a policy in the works?

A. BARBOUR: Which one is that?

S. O'LEARY: 1.2.02 under Corporate Services, sorry.

A. BARBOUR: We are not the department that's creating the AI policy, but I know working with other artists and from an artistic point of view, from TCAR, AI is not there to replace people or replace art. It's there because a lot of artists are entrepreneurs and it's used in a way to help an entrepreneur on the business side.

So from a TCAR point of view, it's not a policy that's in our department but, overall, government is working on the policy.

S. O'LEARY: Just to follow up on that with the government itself, is that a communications policy? How would I best direct my questions because it is an impact on the arts community?

A. BARBOUR: Yes.

S. O'LEARY: I'm just trying to make sure I get to the final answer.

Thank you.

A. BARBOUR: You can reach out to Minister Mike Goosney's department about AI.

S. O'LEARY: Okay. Thank you.

I have some general questions, but this particular area, I think that end of things is done for me. There will be further questions in other areas.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Chair, I appreciate it.

Thank you, Minister, for the time tonight. I also want to recognize some familiar faces from across the aisle who I got a chance to work with very briefly. May I say, thank you once again for the work that you've done in compiling this and the work that you do on a daily basis. Some of the finest people I had an opportunity to work with, albeit a brief period, but I really did enjoy it. I want to thank you again on the record as folks who do great work on behalf of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Thank you for that.

Minister, I want to ask you a little bit about your opening statement and a remark you made there about monitoring changing economic conditions globally and the fact that you've met with various groups to discuss it.

Can you elaborate on what conditions, exactly, it is you're speaking of that could impact tourism, culture, art or recreation in Newfoundland and Labrador?

A. BARBOUR: Like I said, I've been talking to the airlines and also the airports regularly, and also Marine Atlantic. The common thing that comes up is access, in every meeting that I've been in, actually, not just those meetings. I've been in well over 100 meetings since I've been in this position and access has come up in every meeting. The people want to come here but we're at

capacity in a lot of areas. So we'll have to get creative and look at other options.

But to answer your question, some things that we face, we know right now it's the fuel prices. Fuel prices can be something that we're monitoring for what's going internationally. But on the positive side of that, this year has been looking better than last year. Accommodations are up, parks are up, ParksNL is up. Marine Atlantic is doing really well this year and it's just looking like a good overall season.

This year, even though the fuel prices are questionable and we're watching them, tourism is looking better than last year or the year before. But we are monitoring and keeping in contact because anything can happen at any day because our economy is affected by the globe because we're all connected.

F. HUTTON: Minister, thank you for that.

You say you're looking at other options and trying to be creative. Is that the department or is that the stakeholders that you spoke of, the airports, the airlines and the ferries? What is it specifically that your department or you, as minister, are bringing to that conversation as other options?

A. BARBOUR: Right now, like, for the ferry service, for example, Marine Atlantic is usually booked up in the summer. There's a capacity issue there. We've reached out, our government has reached out to the Transportation minister, federal, and asked for the fifth vessel in that situation.

Also, we have other ways to the Island. We have other ferry services. In my district, St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows, there's ferry that goes across to Labrador. It's only an hour-and-forty-five-minute ferry. It's all paved over on the Labrador side now, so that is a great connection for people to get to the Island as well.

Our department is always working with the airlines to come up with different routes, internationally, coming to our province. Right now, our focus is the St. John's International Airport for Europe, Ireland and Paris, but we're also thinking about options for coming into different airports, not just St. John's.

It's really just coming up ideas, seeing if the industry is on board and see what we'll do next.

F. HUTTON: When you talk about other airports – I mean, I know which airports there are in the province, obviously Gander, Deer Lake, Lab West, St. Anthony and Goose Bay and a couple of other, smaller ones – can you be more specific on what you are targeting or if the airlines have they actually made a proposal? I'm assuming you're speaking of Air Canada or West Jet.

A. BARBOUR: I'm speaking about Porter. There's one specifically right now that we have for this summer in Deer Lake Airport, and that's the Porter flight to Ottawa. That's a new flight that we're promoting. It also looks like it's going to be a connection to Fort McMurray, I believe.

It's nice to have flights that have these, I guess you call them, milk runs but the connectivity because then you're not just depending on a flight just from Ottawa. There are a lot of Newfoundland and Labradorians that live in Alberta, so that brings that connection and justifies that flight in Ottawa. That is a new one that we have, starting in June in Deer Lake.

F. HUTTON: Okay. I may have some more questions about air capacity a little later, but I wanted to ask you a little bit more about Marine Atlantic and you mentioned that you've requested from the Transport minister for a fifth vessel.

A. BARBOUR: Yes.

The Premier and I have met with Marine Atlantic and all the airlines in one meeting. After that meeting, the Premier actually wrote a letter to the federal Transport minister asking for the fifth vessel there. I've actually just drafted up a letter today to send to the federal Tourism minister to also ask for the same thing.

F. HUTTON: Thank you.

Minister, I represent a part of the province which includes Bell Island, which relies very heavily on tourism. The main tourism attraction there, not last year but the year before, drew around 19,000 people. Having a reliable ferry service back and forth is crucial to the economic future of Bell Island. I know that having been a former Transportation and Infrastructure minister that one of the other big places is Fogo Island, obviously, and Change Islands that rely heavily on tourism in the province. There are others of course, but the main stumbling block is a reliable ferry service.

At this point in time – I mean, you can go on any given time, obviously, with bad weather. But we have had many, many issues with ferries that can cause delays where people just turn around and go away if they're from somewhere else and they don't want to wait or run this risk of getting stuck.

What talks have you been having with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure to make sure that the ferries that were promised in the blue book actually come to fruition, and when can we expect to see something new moved on that? What have they told you?

A. BARBOUR: I've been to Bell Island and I visited the mine out there and Dicks' cafe, I believe it's called?

F. HUTTON: Dicks'. They'll correct you.

A. BARBOUR: Okay. It's been a while.

Personally, I haven't talked to TI yet on the ferries, but it's a great idea and I'll put that in my agenda.

F. HUTTON: Sure. I'd appreciate that because it is crucial to the existence and continuation of economic vibrance. Tourism is the main economic driver of Bell Island, and it is a short season, as it is with most. I know that we're – as all people in Newfoundland and Labrador are – trying to extend the shoulder season or make it four seasons. But the reality is that that mine is opened for a tour basically May through the end of September or October, in that range, depending on the level of people who are coming here.

Chair, I only have 25 seconds left so I'll defer the last few seconds and save some of my other questions for the minister.

CHAIR: Okay.

F. HUTTON: Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Lake Melville.

K. RUSSELL: Minister, I noticed that there were a couple of vacant positions in the '25-'26 budget, but now there are filled all of a sudden. When were these filled?

A. BARBOUR: I'll ask my DM to answer that question.

Carol-Ann.

C. GILLIARD: The numbers that the minister had mentioned were from a report as of March 31, 2026. We are regularly going through recruitment processes for any of our vacant positions, so they're at varying stages of recruitment. I'm not sure exactly what positions you're referring to, but that is ongoing in various stages.

As well, we just did ramp up the recall of all of our seasonal employees in the past couple of weeks.

K. RUSSELL: That's fine.

Also, overall there seems to be a decrease in staff travel from one year to the next. Any wide-ranging meaning for that?

C. GILLIARD: There is a variety of travel and communications across all divisions. You'll see later in the Tourism side of things, because of the increased cost, there was actually an increase in the cost for transportation; whereas, some divisions, like Corporate Services for example, it's really dependent on what the actual work is. They might have to do some trips around the province, but it's really dependent on any specific work that has to happen. They don't have preordained travel that they're going to do. If there isn't anything for them to do, they won't use that travel budget.

K. RUSSELL: That's good for me.

CHAIR: Any further questions?

Seeing no further questions, I now ask the Clerk to recall the subhead.

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

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 1.2.03 carried.

CHAIR: I now ask the Clerk to call the next subhead.

CLERK: 2.1.01 to 2.2.03 inclusive, Tourism and Parks.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 to 2.2.03 inclusive carry?

I now call on the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Minister, Purchased Services total \$12,416,300, can you provide a breakdown of what that spending includes?

A. BARBOUR: The Purchased Services, that would be advertising, \$10,650,000; travel trade and travel media, \$700,000; and visitor services, \$600,000.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Minister, can you provide a breakdown of what the spending is for the following categories: media buy, production, agency fees and fees to artists?

A. BARBOUR: So 62 per cent invested in paid media placements, that's \$6,603,000; 22 per cent allocated for creative production and account management of which \$250,000 to \$300,000 is paid by A-C-T-R-A, ACTRA, annually; 16 per cent covers costs associated with website, social media and digital efforts of which \$500,000 is paid to cover digital licences, services and plug-ins; and more than 60 per cent of the total advertising budget is allocated to outside entities.

B. FORD: For the record, can you state what ACTRA stands for? What's that acronym?

C. HARRINGTON: I don't know off the top of my head. It essentially just means what you would pay to artists for their related scales in their field.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Which agency of record is the department currently working with?

A. BARBOUR: Right now, the agency of record that we are working with is Target.

B. FORD: Minister, what is your understanding of your role, as minister, in promoting Newfoundland and Labrador?

A. BARBOUR: My role in promoting Newfoundland and Labrador is to show the world and show Canada what we have culturally, in our heritage and just to shine our natural beauty and our wildlife. Everything that we have, we already have everything here; it's just that we need to show it to the world. My goal is to attract and to inspire people to visit Newfoundland and Labrador.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Minister, when you spoke then about your role, what are the ways that you fulfill that role?

A. BARBOUR: Since coming into this position, as Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, I have been studying all the departments, that being sport, rec, arts, music, tourism, wellness and everything that falls under TCAR. I have been researching, I have been looking at the data that we collect at the airport and also marine. I've been analyzing and building a foundation.

Before I make any big decisions, I really think it's very important to understand your department and understand what you're making decisions about. That being said, I am currently working on a vision, a plan, I have goals and it's almost done. It'll be ready soon.

B. FORD: Minister, just to clarify, the vision, plan and goals that you're working on, is that a department project that the department is working on vision, plan and goals?

A. BARBOUR: Yes, it is. We are all working together.

B. FORD: Okay. Thank you.

Back to the marketing and the promotion of the province, are there departmental guidelines or expectations set around the department's – and extension, the minister's – participation in tourism promotion or marketing activities?

C. GILLIARD: Typically, the marketing campaigns for tourism are generally separate from the Department of Tourism business. So the agency of record works with department staff on establishing the marketing strategy. It works on establishing the campaigns, where we market all of those things. That is carried out annually at the approval of the minister. Then the minister is able to promote Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation activities through the department channels as well. So I think that there is not necessarily a policy, but there is separation of duties.

B. FORD: Thank you for that answer.

So to that, when those duties are separated and the minister embarks on tourism promotion or marketing, does the agency of record have any input on that content to see if it aligns with the department strategy?

C. GILLIARD: As I said, the agency of record and the tourism marketing campaigns are separate from the Department of Tourism activities. But if there were to be a crossover, the agency of record is responsible for the branding strategy and the marketing strategy, so it would be involved as it relates to their role as the agency of record responsible for branding and for marketing activities.

B. FORD: So has the agency of record had input on any marketing activities that have occurred outside of the department's marketing strategy?

C. GILLIARD: To my knowledge there hasn't been an overlap of the minister being involved in the tourism marketing

campaigns that we have happening in the country, in the US or in Europe. The minister's marketing and social media has been around the department activities, to date.

B. FORD: Thank you.

So the agency of record wouldn't have any input into the department's marketing?

C. GILLIARD: No.

B. FORD: Okay, thank you.

Can the minister currently advise how much money the department spends on newspaper ads around the world?

A. BARBOUR: Newspaper campaigns are \$276,563 and \$639,990.

B. FORD: Thank you.

I see my time is up, Chair.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

I'll start generally and then go into a couple of specific questions. One of the things that has become clear with the reallocation of different government departments is that there is definitely an intersection with Transportation and Infrastructure for TCAR. I guess it's more of a comment than it is a question. I would strongly advise that there are more fulsome communications happening, because obviously we saw some disconnects with former areas like Municipal Affairs and Transportation and Infrastructure.

Transportation and Infrastructure, Infrastructure is crucial to the tourism and culture industry and the arts as well. So just as an adjunct, I just want to put that forward

that I think it's a very important conversation to have. I'll certainly have some questions about that a little bit later, but the creative economy, which I've had the great privilege to do a lot of workshopping and conferencing around, is the intricate connections between all of these various players. I would strongly advise against working in silos. Infrastructure, infrastructure, infrastructure, I think is extremely important for this department. I will just state that for the record.

Now I'll go into the specific questions. Given the conflicting demands between housing needs and temporary accommodations like Airbnbs, is this government looking into ways to boost other forms of accommodations like hotels and B & Bs to alleviate the strain and, more broadly, how are you planning to boost the number of rooms to accommodate for more tourists?

A. BARBOUR: How we get more hotels and more rooms is based on how many tourists that we're going to attract to an area. You can look at it from a couple of different perspectives. You can look at it from the Brier, for example. Sporting events bring people to an area. In order to grow an economy, you need to have the population; you need to have the visitors to come here. So this department is focused on attracting events, attracting events that involve art, tourism, also sports and music.

Music is also another big, big attraction. St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, does really well compared to the rest of the province because it's the city, it's the capital and a lot of major events happen here, because we have the capacity to hold people when they come visit.

If you look at places like, for example, on the West Coast, if you wanted to have a Brier in Corner Brook, well you need the hotel rooms. You need the space. You need the car rentals. You need all of those things. You're not going to see hotels popping up

everywhere in Corner Brook, unless there are events attracting people there.

I always use the example, like the Tim Hortons in St. Anthony, Newfoundland and Labrador, in order to get a restaurant like that, it's based on population. St. Anthony wasn't able to get Tim Hortons based on their population, but they were able to get it based on their population in the summer when they included their tourism numbers.

Our numbers, our population here in our province really impacts what we can have and how far we can grow. The more we grow in population and the more people we attract, the economy will grow with that and the more hotels and that will come with that.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Minister.

Just to follow up on that, yes, and certainly from my municipal experience with the City of St. John's, the 2025 Canada Summer Games was phenomenal input, but we do know that oftentimes St. John's will be a portal, because most people that do come to Newfoundland don't want to just visit the St. John's area; they do want to actually travel the Island and the province as best they can.

So there is obviously a concerted effort to make sure that people can get cars to get to these places or otherwise, but there's also a dichotomy between the Airbnbs that happen in rural Newfoundland, as opposed to in the City of St. John's. Oftentimes Airbnbs can be neighbourhood killers; they can kill communities and neighbourhoods and take away business from hotels and B & Bs, while, of course, they are an added bonus in rural communities. It's very different methodology dealing with the capital city as opposed to rural Newfoundland. I understand that and I understand the challenge that's before you, so thank you for that.

Would your government support stronger measures on temporary accommodations,

like those in BC, that limit these units in primary residences and urban centres of a certain size?

A. BARBOUR: Did you want to speak on that one?

C. GILLIARD: Sure.

We have looked at, and regularly look at, the regulations and legislation that's offered in other provinces, and, actually, right across the world. There are some jurisdictions that have moved forward with limiting. There would certainly be opportunities in certain areas where there are challenges and significant gaps with accommodations to implement regulations like that, but they certainly do require some analysis. There's demand in a lot of regions for accommodations and filling up some of those with Airbnbs is perhaps the only accommodations that some of these communities will have.

So there is an upside and a downside to it, but we are certainly regularly exploring the regulations to see what would work here. We would certainly want to work with other departments who have a mandate for housing before we move forward with anything like that.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Just to follow up on that. Obviously, there is another department that I think it is crucial for you have an intersection with, because we're in housing crisis. Of course, while we're inviting people to our stage here and we want them to come, at the same time, of course, we're renting out Airbnbs to people while we've got people unsafely housed or, you know, unhoused altogether. So thank you.

Under Sector Research – we're still on that category, correct? How many visitors did we receive in 2025 from Canada and from other countries, and how do these numbers compare with 2024?

C. GILLIARD: In 2025, we saw a total of 531,800 visitors, which was about a 1 per cent increase over 2024. When you look at the air and auto visitors, which is the biggest portion of our visitation, that was an increase of 4 per cent over 2025, and that was an increase of 5 per cent in overall spending from non-residents.

So when you do the breakdown of where they come from, generally about 80 per cent to 85 per cent would come from Canada, about 14 per cent or 15 per cent would come from the US, and then another 5 per cent would come from international markets.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Does the department currently have any idea the number of tourists that the new air routes to Europe have brought here?

C. GILLIARD: Yes, we do have those numbers. With our annual survey, we're able to track how many come here each year and where they are from.

I'm pretty certain we saw increases in all of our visitation from all of our main international routes last year. Of that 5 per cent of vacation visitors from overseas markets, the UK makes up about 27 per cent of that; Germany makes up about 14 per cent; France makes up about 11 per cent; and funny enough, Australia makes up 10 per cent randomly. Then there's a mix of all over the world, but these would be the top four outside of the US.

S. O'LEARY: I'm out of time.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde.

R. BALSOM: Thank you, Chair.

Earlier the minister mentioned about the Agency of Record. Can the minister tell us

when the contract will be up for the Agency of Record?

A. BARBOUR: The contract will be up January 2027.

R. BALSOM: And when the contract is up, will this be going to an RFP?

A. BARBOUR: We are reviewing the Agency of Record and we will be making a decision soon if it will be going up for RFP, but right now we do not have a plan to do that. Like I said, we're just reviewing Target at the moment.

R. BALSOM: Good.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to ask a couple of more questions about the Agency of Record and the work that Target Marketing is doing. Again, could I ask you to quantify the amount of the contract per year with Target, please?

A. BARBOUR: The total is \$10,650,000 annually this year.

F. HUTTON: Thank you.

Minister, the contract is good for one more year after this fiscal year. Would that be correct? It's January 2027. Is that what you said?

A. BARBOUR: Yes, the contract is up January 2027.

F. HUTTON: Okay.

Minister, why wouldn't you go back to RFP in 2027 or before if the contract is up?

A. BARBOUR: The contract was just put in place in January 2025. It was only put in for a year and then right before I came in, it

was put in for the second year. Usually, the contracts go up for five years.

We are just reviewing it right now because we want to make sure that they are on board with the new government and the vision that we have going forward, because the previous administration was working on it in a different way.

It's evolving and you have to keep in mind, too, that advertising is evolving with increased demand. A lot of people are moving to social media.

F. HUTTON: Okay.

Minister, can you expand on that a little bit in terms of how that industry is evolving and moving to social media and what you mean by that? I mean, it's an obvious question. What were we doing prior?

A. BARBOUR: Prior, we were focused on TV advertising, newspaper advertising and also our travel guide. The travel guide is paper, for example, and it seems like there's not as much interest in the physical travel guide now and people are moving more towards digital.

So I brought up social media and the majority of the population are now connected globally with social media versus local news networks.

F. HUTTON: Minister, thank you.

Minister, can you identify what Target or this department that you represent are looking at in terms of potential visitors here? Where are you targeting the advertising?

A. BARBOUR: In Canada, we're targeted mostly like Ontario, Quebec, BC, Alberta, in those areas, and then in the United States we're focused on the northeastern side of the United States and the rest of the advertising goes in Europe.

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Minister.

When you talk about re-evaluating the work that Target has been doing, and maybe doing in RFP or maybe not, depending on where you go with this, is there an option? Does that mean that there is an option to extend the contract that Target has with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador now?

A. BARBOUR: Yes, there is an option there to extend the contract that is currently in place.

F. HUTTON: For how long?

A. BARBOUR: 2031 – up to four more years on this contract.

F. HUTTON: With a value again of roughly \$12 million to \$13 million?

A. BARBOUR: Yes, that's correct.

F. HUTTON: Okay, thank you.

Minister, in a previous answer, I think, to my colleague to my right here, you mentioned about the need to grow the population and I've heard you say on numerous times about making Newfoundland and Labrador the tourism capital of Canada. What plan do you have in place as a department to grow the population in order to have a critical mass and then create places other than St. John's that would be able to host larger events or have a draw?

A. BARBOUR: Our focus, our vision is on shoulder season and also season extension, year-round tourism. We're really highlighting Marble Mountain. That's a cornerstone of winter tourism right now. There has been a huge interest in coming to see our province, not only in the summer, but also in the winter. Snowmobiling is growing here especially on the West Coast.

Can you ask that question again?

F. HUTTON: You referenced that in order to have other places, other than St. John's,

which has a critical mass of people and can accommodate a Brier or a big concert or big conferences, you can't have a similar facility and seven or eight hotels in a place where there isn't that population to maintain all of these buildings unless these things are every month or seven or eight times a year.

So what is your plan in terms of trying to build that critical mass? You mentioned that we need to grow the population, so are you working with the department of population and immigration?

A. BARBOUR: Just from my experience in my district alone, St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows, I was out talking to municipalities and different groups in my district and all of them haven't heard of any of the grants that TCAR has to offer, or any other department, actually. They didn't know about ActiveNL. They didn't know how to get a concert to come in. I'm talking about really rural. So my focus is rural communities and helping the small communities access those grants and access that money to help them grow tourism in their areas because if we can grow the tourism and the attraction in those areas, we can then look at expanding the communities over time.

I have spoken to a couple of different departments about signage, for one. Like, when you go to Gros Morne National Park, when you go out to Western Brook, there is not a lot of signage telling you what's north of that area. I've been talking to the Department of TI and we discussed this, but we need to grow the tourism there before we point people in that direction.

So it's all about attraction and marketing. It comes down to that. That's a very important key and, also, having what you're advertising there when you get there. You want to make people feel warm and welcome to these areas so that more people will be attracted to these areas, because what you'll see is that, when people visit this area, people will start thinking about possibly moving here as well.

Myself, I was a realtor, a lot of my clients were from outside of the province looking to move back after a visit that they had there.

That's one way that you could grow the economy, just by attraction and making people feel – you can show people and tell people about Newfoundland, but unless you're here and you feel it, you don't understand. We want people to come here so they can feel it, because it's something that you'll never forget.

F. HUTTON: Thank you.

Minister, I think I understand your answer, but isn't the Gros Morne area already one of the most frequented tourism locations in the province? Is it your goal to try to replicate that elsewhere? I'm sorry I'm not following that.

A. BARBOUR: No, what I was just saying is that a lot of tourists are attracted to Gros Morne, that is one of our main attractions, but there's nothing there that attracts them to go up further. There's no signage, there's not a lot of information to draw them up to go to L'Anse aux Meadows or go to the Grenfell Historical Society in St. Anthony. There's not a lot of information shared about the ferry in St. Barbe going across to Labrador so you can visit Labrador. It's just that there isn't a lot of information out there.

My focus is on rural and it is to have that awareness so if someone is coming here, they can see what is available.

We do have our visitor centres and they do have a breakdown of what's in the province by different regions, but you have to know where they are. It all comes down to proper marketing.

You can have the best tourism industry out there, but if you don't tell anybody about it, they're not going to come. It all comes down to attraction and marketing.

F. HUTTON: Chair, I think my time expired.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Any further questions?

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Could you provide an update on efforts to sell Marble Mountain or ...?

Thank you.

A. BARBOUR: Marble Mountain, I know that they put out an RFP maybe about a little over a year ago and there was no interest. Our new government has no plan to put it up for sale. We have no plan for an RFP. Our goal is to optimize what we have and to work with Marble Mountain to keep it and make sure that we can really grow the area for the West Coast.

S. O'LEARY: Understood.

Thank you, Minister.

Park Operations are still under this category, is that correct?

CHAIR: Yes.

S. O'LEARY: I have two things in the Park Operations that I'd like to ask, one, is centred around Pippy Park, in particular. From my former experience as a Pippy Park Commission board member, there's been a very, very long, long history of smoking on the trail that basically began as a result of Eastern Health, at the time, putting in a no smoking policy. What has happened has been that oftentimes the workers from the hospital or the area, the school and such, will go into the woods and smoke. Of course, while we're trying to promote healthy living, preserve our beautiful parks, the ducks, all the rest of the nature and such that are there.

Of course, we've been dealing with this for well over a decade now. It's been an issue for me that I've been trying to tackle for some time; however, now the issue has really escalated, because now we're not just talking about, oh, I might have to walk through some smoke while people are smoking – and this is not an anti-smoker thing, this is an issue of appropriate locations for doing these activities.

One of the things that has happened, now, of course, with fire hazards and drought, now we're talking about a very high-risk scenario.

A letter was written to the Pippy Park Commission very recently by myself, and the Member for Mount Scio was copied. I'm just wondering if that's something that you and your department are able to have a look at in regard to some sort of conversation with the board on – we were trying for a long time to collaborate and trying to find an appropriate location.

There was some collaboration with and possibility with the university that they may provide a little lay back where people can have a bench and just sit out, that isn't on Eastern Health property where they are not allowed to smoke. But it's also not in nature, on the pond where all the cigarette butts are going into the wetland and all the rest. Of course, as I mentioned, now it's escalated to a potential fire hazard.

So I was just wondering, is your department willing to go and speak with Pippy Park Commission around this issue and try to resolve the issue for folks in that area?

A. BARBOUR: Yes, definitely. I didn't know that you sent a letter in, so thanks for letting me know and I'll have my department look into it.

As you know, I'm an advocate for wellness and healthy living. I wouldn't want to go for a walk on a trail where it's smoky and cigarette butts. It is a danger, especially

now that our forests are dry. So it's definitely something that I will take seriously and we'll look into it.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

I'd be happy to forward you the letter. I didn't realize at the time that parks was under your department.

A. BARBOUR: Yeah.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

The other issue that I wanted to bring forward – I brought it forward in another Estimates, but it was directed here about illegal dumping in parks areas. So one that has come to my attention on the Cape Shore – of course, we know that this is a prolific issue right across Newfoundland and Labrador, illegal dumping. Of course, we're trying to deal with it, sometimes with a dull knife.

But illegal dumping certainly has been noted in particular areas, and I'll talk specifically about an area on the Cape Shore, which I have certainly brought to the attention of the Member who represents there as well. In the correspondence, there is no capacity to do any kind of cleanup, any education. All that was presented to me at the time when the complaint was put forward was the ability to put up a couple of signs, no dumping and a potential fine.

So I ask you as minister and, of course, your department, is there something else that we can do to escalate this issue? Because this is, again, a deterrent in a provincial park, or otherwise, to have this kind of practice continue in this day and age which, of course, is not tolerable at the best of times, but especially when you're trying to bring tourists to the area.

Thank you.

A. BARBOUR: Yes, I have an environmental background and when I was

attending Memorial University, I used to volunteer with oceans.net and go around cleaning beaches. I know the importance of it from an environmental perspective and also the tourism perspective. Because if you want to go and relax and see something beautiful in our province and there's just a dumping of garbage everywhere, that's not really something that I would like to promote and show what our province is all about.

So that is an interest of mine, to look into that. Do you have anything to add to that?

C. GILLIARD: I can.

A. BARBOUR: Yes, my DM will ...

C. GILLIARD: Typically, if there is any dumping in our provincial parks, we do monitor our parks and try to address it very quickly to uphold the standards, but we do receive frequent complaints from all over the province of illegal dumping, particularly off our highways and in some of our beaches and those areas.

We have tried to work with various departments, Municipal Affairs, to see if there are resources within the municipalities in the region that might be able to assist. We also, from time to time, have worked with Environment and Climate Change, depending on the nature.

We do certainly think that we have a responsibility from an education standpoint to make sure that we are communicating the very best to the residents of this province about how important the natural environment is, not just as a tourism destination, but for our quality of life.

S. O'LEARY: Hear, hear!

C. GILLIARD: We do that quite a bit and, obviously, we would certainly be a part of any coordinating effort to address issues as they happen.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Perhaps, a conversation again or interaction with MMSB –

C. GILLIARD: Yes.

S. O'LEARY: – to have those conversations because there are a few grandfathered sites on a provincial park beach. So thank you for that.

One final one in this category, Chair. Under the Capital, I'm just wondering if there is any projected capital this year for C.A. Pippy Park. I'm just circling back to Pippy Park again. I'm just looking at the differential.

A. BARBOUR: Okay.

The \$450,000 that you're addressing there, that was the one-time money for the Canada Games.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, thank you.

CHAIR: Any further questions?

B. FORD: Yes.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Minister, I wanted to come back to the Vision plan and goals that you referenced earlier. It said the Speech from the Throne commits to a new tourism strategy. Is that funded under this subhead?

A. BARBOUR: Yes, it is.

B. FORD: Which 2026-2027 budget lines fund its development and why didn't that line increase over last year's budget?

C. GILLIARD: For the subheads that we're talking about from Tourism, up through to Pippy Park, all of them have a role to play in the provincial tourism strategy. The wonderful thing about the provincial tourism strategy is that we work very closely with

our private operators and our industry associations and Regional Destination Management Organizations. What we would do with our existing budgets in this section, we would certainly adapt, as we need to, to focus in on season extension, for example, is an important part of our next strategy.

We would adapt some of our marketing efforts to focus more on the season extension. We would adapt some of our product development work to focus on air access or season extension. So we would be able to maneuver within our existing budgets, but we also partner with the Regional Destination Management Organizations and Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador and they are able to, as core partners, access and leverage other provincial funding and federal funding to help achieve some of the other initiatives within the tourism strategy.

B. FORD: Thanks.

If I'm understanding you correctly, there's no set amount specifically laid aside for the new tourism strategy, but that pieces of it will be funded throughout different budget lines.

C. GILLIARD: Correct.

B. FORD: Okay.

Do you have an estimate of what that total investment will be into the new tourism strategy? When you consider how much you would need to take from different lines or different sub-departments, is there any estimate on what that resource or investment is going to be?

C. GILLIARD: In the development of the provincial tourism strategy, we have a core responsibility around tourism marketing, tourism research and product development, in addition to the operations of our parks, facilities and sites throughout the province. We know how we need to adapt our marketing; we know how we need to adapt

our research and our product development for focus areas throughout, but right now we are just at the strategy, the priorities and outlining our key actions. We don't have a line for line on how things will shift in the existing budgets at this time.

B. FORD: Okay, thank you.

Minister, I just want to be clear that I'm understanding it, will there be a – I want to say physical document but I don't mean a physical document? I mean, it might be an online reference. Will there be an actual plan, a new tourism strategy, where we will see this is the strategy from 2026 to X-amount with your goals broken down, priorities, action items or whatever that might be?

Like when I think of a plan in a traditional sense, will there be a plan and, if there will be that type of a layout, that plan, what is the timeline for having that made available?

A. BARBOUR: Right now, there was a plan in place, the 2026 strategy. It is 2026 so that one is coming to an end. That one is available right now, the 2026 one. We are currently working on expanding from that plan and creating a new vision, a new plan from that one, using that one as a framework to go forward.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Minister, I'll ask again, what is the time frame or timeline when your department will have the new tourism strategy completed? When will it be available to stakeholders?

A. BARBOUR: It should be available before the end of 2026, when this Vision is completed – the one that is currently out.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Minister, I wanted to ask you, your government made a decision to cancel the National Marine Conservation Area. The

decision for that seemed to lean more in favour of the aquaculture industry, but, certainly, there were a lot of tourism operators, as you're aware, particularly Western and in your district who had concerns about that from a tourism perspective.

Can you offer some of your commentary and opinion on the cancellation of the National Marine Conservation Area from a tourism perspective? It was certainly going to be a major tourism draw.

A. BARBOUR: From what I know is that it was cancelled. It doesn't mean that it's not going to be done. From the information that we were given in the department was that it may be looked at again so that everyone is involved and it's done to make sure that everybody has a voice at the table.

Right now, it did get cancelled, but that's something that we will have to look at from a departmental perspective if it goes back under environmental assessment review for this area because not only does it affect the land, it also affects the ocean and when you include the ocean in these environmental assessments, there are a lot of pros and cons. It needs to be looked at from every department and every level.

B. FORD: Minister, are you suggesting that the people who needed to be around the table when that decision was made, weren't at the table?

A. BARBOUR: I can't really speak on it because it's not under my department and this wasn't going on when I came in. It was already happening when I came into government so I don't know who exactly was at the table. It's just that I know that it was cancelled. It's being re-evaluated and it may go back on the table and it may not, that would be under environmental department.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Minister, so the decision to cancel the National Marine Conservation Area was made since the election, since your government came into power. Maybe I can ask, did the Department of Tourism offer any commentary on the proposed area – aye or nay – or was any perspective provided from a tourism lens?

C. GILLIARD: The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation was engaged as it relates to the feasibility around converting Sandbanks into a national park. So we did have our parks staff participate in a working group around that feasibility section in particular.

So the work that we did was to provide clear understanding of the value of Sandbanks Provincial Park and to identify any of the concerns that we would have in relation to what was being proposed. So that was the objective role that we played there.

There are a number of priorities that would be in place if there was to be a national park in that area. There is certainly value from a marketing standpoint to have a national park in that area, but it has to be balanced with a lot of other industries that would need to operate in that area. So we came at this particularly from the tourism perspective and what a national park could bring.

B. FORD: Thank you.

I see my time is up, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Since we're about halfway through, it's a good time to stop for a 10-minute break. So we'll pause now and reconvene at 7:44.

Thank you.

Recess

CHAIR: Order, please!

Are there any further questions on subhead 2.1.01?

The Chair recognizes the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you, Chair.

The Minister of Labrador Affairs has said that TCAR is assisting with the study on airline costs to Labrador. Minister, what role is your department playing in this study and do you agree that a study is necessary to discover what is driving the high prices in Labrador?

C. GILLIARD: We have a number of connections with Labrador Affairs as it relates to tourism in Labrador and other events and activities that we are undertaking. One of those is air access. We do try to work with Labrador Affairs to assist in the affordability issue, where they take the lead for Labrador affordability.

We haven't completed anything with this process yet, but we are certainly at the ready to work with Labrador Affairs on it when they are working on this piece.

B. FORD: Has any funding been allocated from TCAR to conduct that study?

A. BARBOUR: Our air access fund is used for international routes and routes that bring people into the province and not internal provincial routes.

B. FORD: Thank you, Minister.

I understand that, but specific to the study on airline costs to Labrador, that the Minister of Labrador Affairs said your department is assisting with, has there been any funding allocated by your department for this study about airfare to Labrador?

A. BARBOUR: No, TCAR doesn't have any funding for that.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Has the air access fund been funded this year? Not the Labrador Air Access fund, but the air access fund that supports other areas of the province and those airports, has that been funded for this year?

A. BARBOUR: Yes, it has.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Minister, are you able to provide the breakdown of how much is being allocated to each of the following airports: Gander, St. John's, Deer Lake, Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Wabush?

A. BARBOUR: We get a fund of \$1.5 million annually. We got the same this year as last year, so there were no cuts in the air access fund. How it works is we don't allocate out the same amount to each airport. They come to us and, usually, what happens is we give about an average of about \$250,000 to an airport to fund their air access. Like I said, we don't give the money upfront. They come to us with a proposal.

B. FORD: Thank you.

For this fiscal, have any of those airports reached out yet to request their portion of the air access fund?

A. BARBOUR: As of right now, Deer Lake has actually reached out on the Porter flight that's starting in June, to help with that flight from Ottawa to Deer Lake. It is just discussions right now. There hasn't been any more money allocated right now. Other ones are just discussions.

B. FORD: Thank you.

With air access and that process, is there any kind of a deadline, thinking about fiscal year and expenditure of money, that the airports should approach your department about accessing some of those funds?

A. BARBOUR: There is no deadline per se; it just goes by the season, depending on

where the focus is in that airport. What you'll usually see is the airports will come in the fall, for example, looking for help with their airlines.

My DM, would you like to expand on anything there?

C. GILLIARD: We work with the airports and we meet with the regularly – a close relationship and collaboration. We have a notional idea of the routes that are most important to the airports, so they will certainly indicate to us where they are looking to either expand, introduce a new route or increase the frequency of the route.

So we have a notional idea of what they're going for, but there's no deadline. It's when the airports are ready, they have their agreements and they know exactly where they need the support from us, that's when they submit it.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Just a last question on this, Minister. The \$1.5 million and no cuts, does that include air access for Labrador or is that a separate pot?

A. BARBOUR: Air access for Labrador is not under our air access fund.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Minister, moving here to Grants and Subsidies – so this is under Tourism and Parks. Grants and Subsidies decreased by \$1 million, despite spending the full amount last year. What accounts for that? Is there a program being cut?

This is 2.1.03, under Strategic Product Development for Tourism and Parks. The Grants and Subsidies are being decreased by \$1 million.

A. BARBOUR: That's a reflection of the Year of the Sport. That was one time.

B. FORD: Okay, thank you.

Minister, as you know, industry talks quite a bit about the labour shortage and labour gaps. Is TCAR coordinating with Jobs, Growth and Rural Development? I'm just thinking about support for, not necessarily wage, but for employee attraction and helping to solve the labour issues that industry is experiencing.

What is TCAR's role with that and are you coordinating in any way with Jobs, Growth and Rural Development?

C. GILLIARD: One of our big partners for the provincial tourism strategy is Jobs, Growth and Rural Development. They work with us. We have a working group on implementation. We also have a leadership group that they participate in at a strategic level. So we are very closely coordinating with Jobs, Growth and Rural Development.

We don't have a mandate in labour market development, but we understand how important it is as an issue for the tourism industry. So we do work with Jobs, Growth and Rural Development to support Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador and the tourism industry to achieve what their key priorities are.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Minister, just thinking about the labour shortage, particularly in the tourism industry, what's your assessment of the cause of that? Why is the industry struggling to find employees?

A. BARBOUR: I could say just from observation of our population here in our province, our population is aging, so the working class is changing.

If you'd like to expand on that.

C. GILLIARD: This was a really important question for the tourism industry as part of the most recent provincial tourism strategy.

Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador took the lead on doing an extensive workforce development strategy, which outlined a number of reasons: aging population, COVID did a number on the tourism industry. So there was an outmigration of people moving into other, what was considered more stable industries at the time.

I believe there were eight to nine reasons that had been identified: wages and career opportunities, as well as a mix in where people were located and where the jobs are, and then moving them, all of the wraparound supports that they needed in terms of transportation and accommodations and those types of things. So from that, Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador developed a strategy and is currently implementing that, which we are supporting in whatever way we can.

B. FORD: Thank you.

CHAIR: Any further questions?

B. FORD: I do.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Minister, we spoke earlier about Marble Mountain and you had said that your government isn't looking at selling that as an asset. What long-term plan supports the sustainability of an asset – and I know that you've said that you can't see Newfoundland and Labrador without it – given the failed sale process and the continued reliance on an annual operating subsidy that's almost a million dollars? Is there a long-term plan for the sustainability of Marble Mountain?

A. BARBOUR: So, right now, we are working on getting a new chair for Marble Mountain and we are working with the Marble corporation with a plan going

forward. As you may know, our operating cost in the budget is \$956,400 and our capital cost this year is \$500,000. You may also notice that the \$500,000 was higher last year. The reasoning for that is because each year that will fluctuate depending on the needs and what is going on, on the site.

So the capital budget could be used for The Struggle area – I don't know if you're familiar with Marble, when you go up a lift, there's a Struggle area that goes across the top. It could be used for infrastructure, for decks, for lifts and snow machines.

The plan is being developed, at this time, looking forward. We're working with, not only the Marble Mountain corporation, but also the local municipalities that are impacted by Marble Mountain.

Is there anything else you would like to add to that?

C. GILLIARD: Just to build on what the minister had said, there's a great deal of assets in Marble Mountain which we are investing in – the infrastructure that exists there. There is a focus around year-round operations.

There are opportunities to expand the offerings that are offered at Marble on a year-round basis. Those would contribute to, you know, picking away at the aging infrastructure and finding more energy efficient infrastructure, year-round operations and looking to find some of those efficiencies in how we operate from year to year, that would contribute to the long-term sustainability.

B. FORD: Okay. Thank you.

So, of course, this winter, I think we can all agree, was a bit of an anomaly with our snowfall and Marble certainly benefited from that.

Minister, you said that you're working on a plan for the sustainability of Marble

Mountain and you said that you're working with the municipalities, I think you've referenced. Can you please outline for us who else is involved with that plan and timeline of when that plan will be unveiled?

A. BARBOUR: Yes, this winter you could say that we had an old-fashioned winter. We had a lot of snow and it was very favourable for Marble Mountain. We had about 76 ski days, which, last year, that's up from about 54 ski days, which was really, really amazing for the area. That comes into season extension, winter tourism, that really reflects on what our vision is. Marble Mountain fits into our vision for going forward with this department.

Yes, we are in discussions with the Marble corporation, the board, on a plan going forward. We are looking at opportunities, not only for winter tourism, but also four season. Marble Mountain has the potential for four-season tourism. There are a lot of concerts that happen in that area; weddings, for example, are very popular there as well. I know there are conferences held there as well.

Also, you mentioned what municipalities. We had Pasadena, Steady Brook and Corner Brook. Was it Corner Brook or Deer Lake?

OFFICIAL: Corner Brook.

A. BARBOUR: Corner Brook. Three of those are the closest to Marble Mountain. They are working together. They have reached out to our department; they want to have further discussion with us as well, along with the MHA for that area, Hal Cormier. He has also reached out to us to have discussions on future plans for Marble.

B. FORD: Thank you.

I know it's just semantics but I'm asking for a reason. Are you planning with them, or are you developing a strategic plan? Is

there a process and who is leading that, or is it that you're having meetings with them?

A. BARBOUR: The board and the corporations are the ones that make the decisions.

B. FORD: Yes.

A. BARBOUR: There's no concrete plan on paper, physically. We are working with them in discussions.

B. FORD: Okay, thank you.

That's all the questions I have on that section, Chair.

CHAIR: Seeing no further questions for this subhead, I now ask the Clerk to recall the subhead.

CLERK: 2.1.01 to 2.2.03 inclusive, Tourism and Parks.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 to 2.2.03 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, subheads 2.1.01 through 2.2.03 carried.

CHAIR: I now ask the Clerk to call the next subhead.

CLERK: 3.1.01 to 3.2.02 inclusive, Arts, Culture, Film and Television.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 to 3.2.02 inclusive carry?

I now call on the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Under 3.1.01, Arts and Culture Centres, the first question I'm going to ask is about potential restoration funding for St. John's Arts and Culture Centre, specifically as the library has run into deep issues with the infrastructure there. This is a question that I asked at Transportation and Infrastructure, so now I'm bringing it back to this one, because it's Arts and Culture Centres.

In my former capacity, I sat as a member of the St. John's library board from the City of St. John's. I was well aware of the really deplorable building condition of the Arts and Culture Centre. I can't speak on behalf of the other Arts and Culture Centres across the province, but the St. John's Arts and Culture Centre, which houses the A. C. Hunter library, has been having major infrastructure issues for quite some time.

The walls in the library are coming in. It's inaccessible at the front entrance. There are a myriad of issues that have been going on and certainly one of the other issues as well is, with no HVAC system, they actually had to close the building. Because the heat, during the summertime, got so bad the staff actually had to close the facility.

This is really one of the pivotal centres for arts and culture in the City of St. John's. We are deficient in many other areas in terms of kind of creation production spaces, and I can certainly talk about that until you're blue in the face. The Arts and Culture Centre itself is a building that needs rehabilitation. So I ask you, as minister, if you have that on your radar? Is that something that you are considering putting any financial resource into or how you're going to deal with that situation in conjunction with T & I?

Thank you.

A. BARBOUR: Yes, the Arts and Culture Centres are aging and they are across the province. For funding, the buildings are owned by TI. All I could say right now is that

I can have conversations with TI on the importance of these structures and the value of them, because they share our arts communities. Well, they rely on the Arts and Culture Centres, a lot of people do.

These are discussions that I can commit to having with TI on.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you very much for that.

That's precisely personifies or characterizes the issue that I mentioned earlier about ensuring that the left hand knows what the right hand is doing, making sure there is interdepartmental kind of conversations happening, so thank you for that. I really appreciate that.

Is there any money under the subheading currently going to *Come From Away* this year? How much are they receiving this year in total from the provincial government?

A. BARBOUR: The answer is yes, but I will get my DM to break down how the money is being allocated because some is brought in through revenue through ticket sales and some is given in advance. She'll describe all that.

C. GILLIARD: The money to *Come From Away*, to support the production in Gander, we have provided through Celebrate NL, through their homegrown events. We supported them \$390,000 to the non-profit organization that does the production for the organization.

In the Arts and Culture Centre proper that the minister was talking about, we receive all of the ticket revenue that comes in because they book through the ACCs. We put an extra \$1.7 million in our budget and then it goes out directly to the third party. It's a bit of an in and out. We need the money, so that was the \$1.7 million the minister was referring to.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Is there anything to report regarding discussions under way with the Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Arts Society about hosting the 2026 Folk Festival? Now, of course, I understand they are doing their own fundraising efforts. I'm quite well aware of that, but I'm just wondering if the provincial government has had a hand in any of the discussions or any funding or so on.

Thank you.

A. BARBOUR: Yes, I, along with my department, have had a meeting with the Folk Festival – the new temporary board – and they have applied for a CEDP allotment. They also told me about their fundraiser in June this year to help with their funds.

We are back and forth in discussion right now. This week, actually, when Estimates is over, I'll be contacting them again to see where they are, to see if we can come to an agreement of what we're going to do this year – focusing on this year because it is the 50th anniversary.

We are working with them, as ongoing conversation but this week, I'll be reaching out, again, to see where we are.

S. O'LEARY: Wonderful, thank you.

Still in the same section, could we have a list of facilities receiving funding and the amounts for each as well?

That's for Arts, Heritage and Historic Development.

C. HARRINGTON: Yes, we can provide a list of grant recipients under that subhead.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Will there be any work budgeted this year for improvements to or restorations of Provincial Historic Sites?

Of course we know that there has been a lot of talk recently about historic sites either being demolished through long-term neglect or inability to rehabilitate them, ones that are on our docket right now. Certainly for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, there is a building right now, the S.O. Steel building, which is in a very prominent location right on the War Memorial that has great historic significance.

I'm just wondering what is budgeted, if anything, for this kind of restoration or any plans to help rehabilitate?

Thank you.

A. BARBOUR: There are two different areas here under Heritage and Historic Development. We have the heritage homes. This is where a person, a resident of a community, a private property owner, can apply for a heritage grant for their home. There are different things that your home has to fall under, certain criteria, for example, the home has to be over 80 years old. It's up to the citizen if they apply for this. This grant money, if they put an application in and it's granted, will cover restoration and any kind of maintenance that needs to be done on the home.

Then, on the other side, we have historic development. These are historic sites. For example, Heart's Content, Mistaken Point, L'Anse aux Meadows and those type of historical sites. That's a different process there. So that's two different pots of money.

I don't know if you – yes, expand on that.

C. HARRINGTON: For the heritage grants that we provide through Heritage NL, those would be the same for this year. For provincial historic sites, when it comes to any of the infrastructure or upgrading of any of our provincial historic sites, that again is through the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure.

What we do for our arts and culture centres, provincial historic sites, our provincial parks, all of our provincial parks pay for its own investments and upgrades. But we have a running list of upgrades that we need, any issues that we have and we work with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure to get some of those prioritized.

That's generally how we work with TI to do some of those upgrades.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Just a follow-up to clarify. Can I finish a clarification?

CHAIR: Go ahead.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Just trying to clarify the difference between heritage homes, but that also includes historic buildings as well. Then we're talking about historic sites as in areas that are noted as – I'm trying to be very clear about how those two intersect.

C. GILLIARD: I can take a shot and then Christina

There are probably three layers that we're talking about. There are the provincial historic sites, which the Department of Tourism is responsible for. We work with Transportation and Infrastructure on any of the upgrades or capital investments we need there. There are a number of historic sites throughout the province that are operated by third parties, by non-profits. We would support them through our heritage grants. Then the third area would be the private ownership of heritage properties. There are grants available through Heritage NL that you could apply for to have some support for maintenance or revitalization – just small grants.

That's essentially it, yes.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I just wanted to start by saying that – and I know my colleague here, MHA O'Leary, asked about the investment in *Come From Away*. I'm always cognizant when I talk about *Come From Away* as the tourism attraction and draw, to remember that it came out of significant tragedy and in trying to see the good in the world, that came out in our response to that tragedy. But *Come From Away* is a significant tourism attraction for the entire Central region.

I did want to say thank you, first of all, to the department for all the support that has been provided to *Come From Away*. It has meant a really big deal to visitors and to the industry in the entire Central region, not just to Gander. So thank you very much for that.

My question is I understand that they're having some struggles with the lack of multi-year funding. I know this won't be new to department staff when I ask about this, that, of course, bus tours, when they do their booking, they're doing their bookings and their itinerary a year out, as I know I don't need to explain to the Tourism Department. So unless the operators can do the group bookings for *Come From Away* a year out, the *Come From Away* production can't secure those ticket sales. I'm told it's because the Arts and Culture Centre can't facilitate ticket purchases into the next fiscal year. I'm like, that can't be, can it? There has to be a way around that.

So I guess what I'm asking – I see perplexed looks over there – so if that's not the case, I know you can't make any promises now for a budget next year, but is there an opportunity for tourism providers to seek and receive multi-year funding?

I'm asking are there any challenges logistically for that. I know there are financial

implications, but logistically, is there any challenge to that so that *Come From Away* can guarantee their show is going to be happening next season so they can book the bus tours now for next season and build it into the itinerary? Are there any logistically reasons why that can't happen?

C. GILLIARD: I'll turn over the ACCs and the booking system, but, as a department, we are only able to commit to one year of funding at a time. We certainly try to have a longer outlook when we're working with our partners, but we aren't able to commit beyond the current fiscal that we're in with our grants.

So that would be a limiting factor there, but I don't think insurmountable for long-term planning. I think everybody understands the great value and the economic impacts that it presents.

I will turn it over to Christina to talk about the limitations of the booking system.

C. HARRINGTON: We can offer tickets in advance. I think one of the challenges has been the decision around the continuation of *Come From Away* funding, as Carol-Ann alluded to, in that the decision to proceed each year has been a joint decision in terms of you are hearing the production company putting it off based on ticket sales and response whatnot.

So determining whether or not the cast, crew and production company are looking to proceed, combined with whether or not we're able to support with continued funding is sort of the question that has caused it to be a yearly decision. We would be capable of putting the tickets on sale in advance.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Minister, what I'm hearing is that if you are here, the non-profit, if they commit to a show in the upcoming season, then there is a possibility that funding in advance could be negotiated with them so that they can

guarantee to their operators that the show will be going ahead. They can only let the show go ahead if they know they're receiving the funding.

So, I guess, what I'm hearing is that logistically it's doable and it's just the policy around funding one year at a time. It might require a policy change. I'm assuming, Minister, that direction comes from the Department of Finance.

A. BARBOUR: Yes, that would come through the Department of Finance.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Chair, I'm going to move us forward a little bit because I wanted to make sure that we get to it and I appreciate we've got a couple of more rounds of questions here.

Minister, can you provide an update on your work with the Ocean Ranger Legacy Foundation?

C. HARRINGTON: So ourselves, with TCAR, as well as our colleagues in Intergovernmental Affairs and our colleagues at The Rooms have been meeting regularly with foundation members to work with them as they have identified the full scope of their vision and what they're looking to achieve as a foundation.

That work is ongoing. They have completed some visioning exercises, provided us with some information and we're doing some internal analysis within the department to see how best we might be able to support them moving forward.

B. FORD: Thank you.

So at this point, has there been any location determined that would be suitable to repatriate some of those artifacts from the Ocean Ranger from the museum in Ottawa to here?

C. HARRINGTON: Not specifically.

That is part of the analysis that we are doing, is considering a number of different locations and possibilities.

B. FORD: Thank you.

I'll just move on to Celebrate NL, which does not have a subheading, and it was referenced earlier as part of the contributing organization to *Come From Away*. Celebrate NL reported supporting 125 projects and partnerships across Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation. The Celebrate NL line is now completely removed from the budget. What is the government's plan for the organization going forward? Will Celebrate NL continue to exist?

A. BARBOUR: Celebrate NL was in the previous section, under 2.1.03. Celebrate NL is being absorbed into the Product Development.

B. FORD: Sorry, can you repeat which section that's now under?

A. BARBOUR: Tab 7, section 2.1.03, Strategic Product Development.

B. FORD: Thank you.

It's being absorbed there. Are there any changes in staffing levels for Celebrate NL?

A. BARBOUR: No, there are no changes in staffing positions. Celebrate NL is being put under TCAR, Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation department, and there will be no layoffs.

B. FORD: Okay, thank you.

Minister, the CEO of that corporation is currently vacant. So now with it being absorbed into TCAR, does that mean that there will not be a CEO for Celebrate NL?

A. BARBOUR: They were originally six positions and we are absorbing five, so that one position will not be absorbed.

B. FORD: Thank you.

So there is a loss of one position from Celebrate NL?

A. BARBOUR: Currently there isn't. I guess, the position, yes, but a person in the position, no. There are five active people working with Celebrate NL that are going to be absorbed.

B. FORD: Okay, thank you.

There are no plans to hire that sixth person?

A. BARBOUR: No.

B. FORD: Okay, thank you.

Will Celebrate NL change its legal structure? I mean, it was set up differently and outside of the department. So are there legal changes to it? As an entity, because it's being absorbed, how will it function differently now?

A. BARBOUR: Celebrate NL was a Crown corporation that was created to attract concerts and events to our province. Now that it's going to be a part of the government, Celebrate NL brand will no longer exist. Now, as our government has events, you will see the Newfoundland and Labrador provincial logo instead of the Celebrate NL logo.

B. FORD: Chair, with your indulgence, I know that my time is up but I do have to ask. There used to be a \$5-million allocation for Celebrate NL, so is there now no funding for Celebrate NL? With that absorption, there doesn't appear to be a corresponding \$5-million addition.

A. BARBOUR: Celebrate NL originally had \$5 million there. Chair, \$1 million was for operations, \$4 million for grants and \$1 million of that was for the Year of Sport last year. So there is no change into the grants.

B. FORD: Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Chair.

Further to Celebrate NL, the absorption as a Crown corporation into government, how will that work in terms of the promotion of events or concerts or branding for specific events like that? Who will oversee that?

A. BARBOUR: So it will be pretty close to the same process, but it will be under this division, under Product Development. The grants and events will go out the same way as they always did, but now it just won't be done as Celebrate NL, it will be done as the provincial Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The difference is that Celebrate NL – it's still the same people that are going to be in the positions. But what is going to happen is that it's going to take time for this to happen because it has to go through the Treasury Board, when you get classifications for these positions, job descriptions, so everything has to be created on a different level through the Treasury Board. This is not going to happen overnight. It's going to take time. The staff are all aware of this process.

Is there anything you would like to add to that at all, DM?

C. GILLIARD: The way that our regular grants would work is the way that the grants for the event attraction would work with the Celebrate NL programs, through ministerial approval. There are some things that we would have to work through like to dissolve the corporation, obtain precommitment approval to be doing the bid processes. There are a number of steps that we would have to take to be able to perform that role that a Crown corporation had performed.

F. HUTTON: Thank you.

CHAIR: I just want to remind everyone that was a subhead we've already completed. We're now on 3.1.01 to 3.2.02 and to keep questions to that subhead.

F. HUTTON: From Celebrate NL?

CHAIR: Celebrate NL would be under 2.

F. HUTTON: Okay, all right.

B. FORD: Sorry, if I may, it wasn't obvious that Celebrate NL was back in that section there. I don't think it was named. We were told that Celebrate NL was being absorbed into the department.

CHAIR: We just had a review; we will continue on with your questions.

F. HUTTON: Okay, thank you. I appreciate that, Chair.

Further to the answer that you just gave, deputy minister or Minister, I understand that if the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador now no longer – Celebrate NL would want to bid on something like the Junos or the Brier or something like that, it would have to go – that's on your desk now, is it, either the deputy minister or the minister or the people who are being absorbed in? Do they have the opportunity to go and make the decisions on what's bid on?

A. BARBOUR: Right now, there's no change in that because they're currently not absorbed, but how that would look in the future, that would come up to the minister level for approval.

F. HUTTON: The same level of funding is available, it's just the structure is having to get a pre-commit through the Treasury Board or Finance so that if you want to put \$100,000 or \$400,000 or \$1 million on the table to get the Brier here, you'd need the pre-commit from Cabinet?

A. BARBOUR: Yes, that's correct.

F. HUTTON: Okay.

I think we're still in this section. I'm going to move away from Celebrate NL here now, Chair.

Under 3.1.06, The Rooms Corporation, and the search for a new CEO. Minister, can you update the House or this Committee or whatever, on what process is underway now to replace Ms. Chafe, who just retired? I would like to also congratulate her and wish her the best in her retirement. What is the process to replace her now? I know there's an interim in place, but what are you doing to replace her permanently?

A. BARBOUR: Yes, our CEO, Anne Chafe, is retiring. She's not technically finished until September of this year, so we do have someone that is in a temporary position. Right now, the position is advertised. You can see it on The Rooms website for the CEO.

F. HUTTON: Thank you.

Can you explain, if she's not finishing until September, why is there an interim in place?

A. BARBOUR: We have an interim in place because in order to hire on a permanent position, we can't have two people in the same position hired on permanently. So you have to wait until September until they can start, until Anne Chafe is officially retired.

F. HUTTON: Okay.

Can you explain the process on who makes the decision on who will be hired for that job?

C. GILLIARD: So the minister wrote to the Independent Appointments Commission to outline the role and the experience and expertise that would be required for that particular CEO position. So the Independent Appointments Commission is currently working on the recruitment process.

F. HUTTON: Is it ultimately, though, a ministerial decision on who gets hired after recommendations are put forward?

C. GILLIARD: That would be the LG?

F. HUTTON: The Cabinet?

C. GILLIARD: Yeah.

F. HUTTON: I'm going to continue on to 3.2.01, the Film Development Corporation. What programs are currently being offered at the Paul L. Pope Centre for TV & Film, Minister?

A. BARBOUR: I don't have that information in front of me but we can provide that.

F. HUTTON: Thank you. I appreciate it.

Maybe you could include in that the enrolment numbers and if there's any plan to expand the school. Knowing from previous experience that there was a lot of interest in it and on the day that they opened, folks who were there even said that they wished the building was bigger already and they hadn't even had their first class.

There is a notification through ATIPP that you met with Netflix. Minister, is there any investment planned from Netflix in the province in the coming year?

A. BARBOUR: That information would be confidential. I wasn't even told the plan. That's confidential with Netflix and what they're working on.

F. HUTTON: Sorry, can you explain what you mean, you weren't told the plan but you did meet with them?

A. BARBOUR: Yes, I did meet with them. I know that Netflix is looking at filming more here in Newfoundland and Labrador but I wasn't given details on when and what exactly they're working on.

F. HUTTON: Is there a timeline when they will be able to reveal that to you, Minister?

A. BARBOUR: No, I was not told that.

F. HUTTON: Sorry, I got distracted, would you mind repeating that, Minister?

A. BARBOUR: No, I wasn't told the timeline or anything.

F. HUTTON: Is there any government investment toward Netflix or any future plans that they might have here?

A. BARBOUR: Not that I'm aware of.

F. HUTTON: Final question on the Film Development Corporation. How many companies received funding through the equity program last year?

A. BARBOUR: There were 41 projects filmed in fiscal 2025-26 supported by equity investment program and tax credit programs.

F. HUTTON: Okay.

Thanks. I'm good, Chair.

CHAIR: Any further questions?

The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, we know that creation and production for artists is certainly something in and of itself but also is a tie to the tourism industry. Investing in artists who are creating, obviously, is something extremely important.

Many artists were pleased with the \$2-million boost to grant funding in 2024 for Year of the Arts because inflation has eaten away at previous increases made by the government. Will your government commit to a permanent increase in funds?

A. BARBOUR: Where's that?

S. O'LEARY: That's 3.1.03, under Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council.

A. BARBOUR: Right now, there are no plans for additional funding at this time. Last year, we did have a \$1-million increase and this budget also had a \$1-million increase in arts.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Minister.

That \$1-million investment, did that go directly to grants or was it embedded in a number of different avenues, just for clarification?

A. BARBOUR: It did go directly into grants.

S. O'LEARY: Into grants, thank you.

A summer production company had to push back their season due to delayed arrival of funds from ArtsNL, which is their biggest source of funding. Are you aware of what is causing the delays and what can the department do to ensure that, in the future, funds go out on time?

C. GILLIARD: We weren't aware of any big issues with delays. We do meet with ArtsNL quarterly and go through a number of items. We will certainly follow up with them to understand what the issues might be here in this particular situation.

S. O'LEARY: Wonderful, thank you.

Are there any plans in the works for a cultural export strategy? It's one of our greatest exports and we should be trying to increase production and grow the industry. I certainly know, historically, there was a real push on this kind of export strategy in previous years. I'm dating myself now but I'm just wondering if government has any intention to proceed.

C. GILLIARD: There had been some work done in the past two to three years to put a

finer point on the export plan for arts. I do believe, Christina, that there is certainly a desire in the sector to have much more focus on that. So that is a part of the work that we are doing as part of our activities this year is to look at more stakeholder engagement on what the needs are and the gaps that exist in being able to advance cultural exports.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Under 3.2.01, Newfoundland and Labrador Film Development Corporation, how many television and film productions are expected to be produced in the province this year? That doesn't include, of course, the Netflix (inaudible).

C. HARRINGTON: I don't have those numbers with me in terms of exactly how many projects are planned and in development this year. However, there were 79 new projects funded under the Equity Investment Program through '25-'26, which would include upcoming projects. We do have seasons of *Saint-Pierre*, *Hudson & Rex* and the last season of *Son of a Critch* being filmed this year, as well as a number of other projects. But we can get a complete list and provide it if needed.

S. O'LEARY: That would be great. Thank you so much.

What's the budget for market development and awareness activities out of this total fund?

A. BARBOUR: I don't have that number in front of me right now. We'll have to get that number for you.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, thank you.

One of the big topics of discussion has been about soundstage production facilities, et cetera. Certainly from my vantage point of the City of St. John's, this has been an ongoing issue because it is a huge industry attraction, and I know that certain members

of the community have been working diligently on trying to ensure that we have a production facility that will actually be able to entice the world stage to come here to create these kind of productions.

Is there anything right now that you can provide in terms of information about any of those types of projects going forward? Is this government going to invest in any of those going forward?

C. GILLIARD: We were aware of one in particular that was being planned. I think Jobs, Growth and Rural Development was working very closely with that particular one. But I don't believe that we've had any recent updates and perhaps Christina –

C. HARRINGTON: My understanding is that project is on hold right now and there are no active requests with Jobs, Growth and Rural Development, as I understand, for projects. But we are open to reviewing any proposals and Jobs, Growth and Rural Development funding is available to support development in that area.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

So Jobs, Growth and Rural Development would be the department, is that correct, where they would go for that kind of funding support?

C. HARRINGTON: Yes, it would be the funding arm for that type of development work.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, thank you.

That's it for me.

Thank you.

CHAIR: I just want to remind everyone that due to the time constraints on the 75 hours allocated for business of Supply, we'll be reaching our three-hour time limit at 9:06, so we'll be stopping at 9:06, with an absolute hard stop at 9:11.

Any further questions?

B. FORD: Yes.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I just wanted to go back for a moment for clarity on the CEO of The Rooms. As you rightly said, we can't have two CEOs operating at the same time, but I think that's what we currently have. The interim CEO is effective, I think, it's May 13 and you said that Anne Chafe is not retiring until September. That's approximately a four-month period when the two of them will be in place.

A. BARBOUR: I'll get my DM to explain this, but I'll explain the Coles Notes of it. When someone is on a leave, you can put someone temporary in that position to fill that position. It's not double permanent positions there if you want to explain it a little further –

B. FORD: I understand it now, that Anne Chafe is retired but she's using leave before her retirement.

A. BARBOUR: Yes.

B. FORD: Thank you.

That's all the questions I had for that section, Chair.

CHAIR: Any further questions?

Seeing no further questions for this subhead, I now ask the Clerk to recall the subhead.

CLERK: 3.1.01 to 3.2.02 inclusive, Arts, Culture, Film and Television.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 to 3.2.02 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, subheads 3.1.01 through 3.2.02 carried.

CHAIR: I now ask the Clerk to call the next subhead.

CLERK: 4.1.01 to 4.1.02 inclusive, Sport and Recreation.

CHAIR: Shall 4.1.01 to 4.1.02 inclusive carry?

I now call on the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, the Grants and Subsidies line is being cut here by \$75,000. What's the rationale for that?

A. BARBOUR: This decrease reflects the funding for the Newfoundland and Labrador Games that is part of the division's budget every second year.

B. FORD: Thank you.

So the Newfoundland and Labrador Summer Games are happening this year in Corner Brook. So is that \$75,000 not needed by them? Has that already been paid to them?

A. BARBOUR: Yes, we gave \$75,000 in advance of the Newfoundland and Labrador Games.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Minister, is there any contingency funding available should the games require more funding than the \$75,000? I know that was the case when Gander hosted the games.

C. GILLIARD: We certainly work with our host communities to help them have a successful games. We certainly try to monitor how they are doing and any sudden upgrades that might come upon us, if there are any challenges with any of the facilities or in the operations. We would certainly work with them to determine that well enough in advance that we could try to find the funds in some way.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Minister, you referenced earlier about municipalities in your district not being aware of the ActiveNL Fund, for example. That fund was last open, I believe, March 2025. We're a few months beyond that at this point into 2026, into this season for ActiveNL, so when can we expect those applications to open up again?

A. BARBOUR: That is something that I'm going to be looking at. I'm going to re-evaluate to make sure that ActiveNL is capturing everything that we want in the criteria for the application, so they will be coming out very soon. I would say in the next month or two.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Minister, you said that you're re-evaluating ActiveNL. Can we anticipate that there's going to be changes in the criteria or the parameters, the application process? What specifically is being re-evaluated for ActiveNL.

A. BARBOUR: Right now, as you may be aware, the Auditor General put a report in that the previous administration didn't submit their Active Living Action Plan. So that is something that I'm actively working on. I want to make sure that ActiveNL reflects the new Active Living Action Plan that's going to be put in place.

B. FORD: Thank you.

So you say the applications will open up within the next two months?

A. BARBOUR: Yes.

B. FORD: Okay, thank you.

How many applications were received for ActiveNL last year and how many received funding through that program last year? So applications versus what was funded.

A. BARBOUR: There were 954 funding requests that were received and 550 projects were awarded.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Minister, given that so many organizations across Newfoundland and Labrador have come to rely on the ActiveNL funding for summer programming, a delay of two months is really going to impact offerings and how that program has been used. Are you concerned about the effect of your decision to delay this, really to towards the end of the summer, and how that's going to impact communities?

A. BARBOUR: I mean, the snow is still not melted in most of the province so we're still into spring. ActiveNL is actually used for updating playgrounds, accessibility. It could be used for someone that wants to bring in a fitness class into their community, for equipment, uniforms and equipment. So ActiveNL can actually be used year-round, not just in the summer months.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Minister, we're at the middle of May here now and if you're committing to have the ActiveNL out, the applications out, that takes us up to the middle of July, and with all applications, there's an application process and evaluation. I certainly can't anticipate how any organization is going to receive funding before August.

I welcome any data you want to provide on the number of applicants who use this for summer programming versus other time of year, but with playgrounds, for example, are you concerned that the announcement, I think, at earliest would be made mid-August?

A. BARBOUR: Yes, I understand that the priority here is to get this out for the summer months. Like I said, the previous administration did not submit their Auditor General – the Auditor General asked for an Active Living Action Plan and it was not submitted by the previous government. So that is the priority here, to make sure that we are in alignment with ActiveNL so there may be a delay of getting ActiveNL out for application process.

If the previous government did put in their Action Plan earlier and it was in place, we wouldn't be in this situation right now, but I want to make sure that we're in alignment going forward. I don't want to put the Action Plan out and then right after putting out the Action Plan and it doesn't match ActiveNL. It is very important that they are in alignment.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Has the department provided input into guidelines associated with the expansion of the Physical Activity Tax Credit that was promised in the blue book?

A. BARBOUR: Can you repeat that question please?

B. FORD: Has your department provided input into guidelines associated with the expansion of the Physical Activity Tax Credit that was promised in the blue book? What are the parameters going to be around that?

A. BARBOUR: Right now, the Physical Activity Tax Credit has not changed, currently, but this is also something that I am looking at with the department to maybe

put in an amendment in the future, to make sure that it is in alignment with the physical activity action plan and ActiveNL applications so that everything is in alignment and all makes sense.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Minister, can you explain what you mean by you want to put forward an amendment? An amendment to what?

A. BARBOUR: In order to change the Physical Activity Tax Credit, I would have to work with the Department of Finance and put an amendment that would have to go through economic committee and that would have to go through Cabinet and then brought to the House for changes to be made in any kind of tax credit.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Minister, can I ask, as the minister responsible for Sport, what type of parameters or guidelines would you have in mind?

A. BARBOUR: That is something that I'm currently working on, as I am working on the action plan for physical activity right now, so stay tuned.

B. FORD: Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Two final questions for me under Sport and Recreation. Minister, there have been a number of high-profile cases of abuse in sports by coaches and other professionals. What mechanisms does SportNL have to prevent such cases and to deal with them properly once they arise? That's a tough one, I know, but it's necessary to ask.

Thank you.

A. BARBOUR: The department provides funding to Sport Newfoundland and Labrador to support the independent third party as the safe sport reporting and compliance mechanism for provincially recognized sports.

S. O'LEARY: Sorry, what is it, safe support?

A. BARBOUR: Independent third party.

S. O'LEARY: Minister, my final question, coming from again municipality experience, regional sport centres and facilities is something that is kind of contentious issue with municipalities. Everybody wants their own rink, their own facilities. But, of course, in the spirit of regional development obviously and costing, regional centres is something that has been bandied around for a long time.

I'm just wondering where you stand on that and your department on the future for sports centres and if you're looking at a regional focus or not?

C. GILLIARD: This is an issue that all provinces and territories are quite interested in. We work very closely with Transportation and Infrastructure around infrastructure priorities. We are engaged with our national counterparts in a bit of an effort, right now, to come up with a strategy right across the country for how to build a strong foundation of existing infrastructure that needs upgrades and capital investments and then to address any of the assets that are missing in particular areas.

I don't know, Ben, as the ADM – do you have anything to add to that or is that –?

B. GARDNER: That's the situation.

S. O'LEARY: Okay.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Any further questions?

Seeing no further questions for this subhead, I now ask the Clerk to recall the subhead.

CLERK: 4.1.01 to 4.1.02 inclusive, Sport and Recreation.

CHAIR: Shall 4.1.01 to 4.1.02 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, subheads 4.1.01 through 4.1.02 carried.

CLERK: Total, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, total heads, carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the Estimates of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation carried without amendment.

CHAIR: I'd like to thank the minister, department officials and Committee for attendance.

The next time and date for the next meeting will be at the call of the Chair.

I ask for a mover for adjournment.

Moved by the Member for Labrador West.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, the Committee adjourned to the call of the Chair.