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

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Department of Justice and Public Safety

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Honourable Paul Lane, MHA

SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Department of Justice and Public Safety

Chair: Joseph Power, MHA

Members: Paul Pike, MHA
Jim McKenna, MHA
Jeff Dwyer, MHA
Sherry Gambin-Walsh, MHA
Hal Cormier, MHA
James Dinn, MHA

Clerk of the Committee: Bobbi Russell

Appearing:

Department of Justice and Public Safety

Hon. Helen Conway Ottenheimer, MHA, Minister

Gerrie Smith, Deputy Minister

Justin Caines, Assistant Deputy Minister, Legal Services

Kim Harding, Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Safety and Correctional Services

Mike Noseworthy, Assistant Deputy Minister, Courts and Justice Services

Bonnie Steele, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate and Strategic Services

Lisa Stead, Director of Public Prosecutions

Joanne Turner, Director of Provincial Court Services

Mark Walsh, Departmental Controller

Cayla Hillier, Manager of Budgeting

Vaughn Hammond, Director of Communications

Lesley Clarke, Media Relations Manager

Clair Bartlett, Executive Assistant

Chief Pat Roche, Chief of Police, Royal Newfoundland Constabulary

Andrew Green, Executive Director Support Services, Royal Newfoundland Constabulary

Terri Twyne, Manager of Court Security

Shelley Organ, Chief Executive Officer, Supreme Court

Also Present

Pam Parsons, MHA

John Hogan, MHA

Sheilagh O'Leary, MHA

Angelica Hill, Official Opposition Caucus

Nick Ellis, Official Opposition Caucus

Steven Kent, Third Party Caucus

Emily Gushue, Committee Analyst (A)

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Pam Parsons, MHA for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, substitutes for Paul Pike, MHA for Burin - Grand Bank.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Sheilagh O'Leary, MHA for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, substitutes for Jim Dinn, MHA for St. John's Centre.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, John Hogan, MHA for Windsor Lake, substitutes for Sherry Gambin-Walsh, MHA for Placentia - St. Mary's.

The Committee met at 5:30 p.m. in the House of Assembly Chamber.

CLERK (Russell): Good evening.

Welcome to the first meeting of the Social Services Committee. The first order of business is the election of the Chair.

Are there any nominations from the floor?

H. CORMIER: I nominate the hon. Member for Labrador West.

CLERK: Are there any further nominations from the floor?

Are there any further nominations from the floor?

The motion is that the Member for Labrador West be elected Chair.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CLERK: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

The Member for Labrador West is elected Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR (Power): I'm going to announce the Committee substitutions. The Committee Member for Burin - Grand Bank is substituted by the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, Pam Parsons; Placentia - St. Mary's, Sherry Gambin-Walsh, is substituted by Windsor Lake, John Hogan; and St. John's Centre, Jim Dinn, is substituted by St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, Sheilagh O'Leary.

We're going to take a 10-minute break halfway through the proceeding, so probably in an hour and a half or so.

Some reminders for the Members and department officials. Each time you're asked to speak, wave to identify yourselves, wait for the tally light on your desk to come on, your little red light there, before you proceed. Say your name and position each time you speak for transcription purposes. Do not adjust your chairs. Water coolers are located in both corners of the Chamber; glasses are provided next to the coolers on each side of the Speaker's Chair.

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

J. HOGAN: John Hogan, MHA Windsor Lake.

A. HILL: Angelica Hill, Researcher for the Official Opposition.

P. PARSONS: Pam Parsons, MHA for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

N. ELLIS: Nicholas Ellis, Executive Assistant to John Hogan, Official Opposition.

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

S. KENT: Steven Kent, Researcher for the Third Party caucus.

J. DWYER: Jeff Dwyer, MHA for Placentia West - Bellevue.

H. CORMIER: Hal Cormier, St. George's - Humber.

J. MCKENNA: Jim McKenna, Fogo Island - Cape Freels.

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

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Helen Conway Ottenheimer, Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

B. STEELE: Bonnie Steele, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate and Strategic Services.

M. WALSH: Mark Walsh, Department Controller.

G. SMITH: Gerrie Smith, Deputy Minister.

M. NOSEWORTHY: Mike Noseworthy, Assistant Deputy Minister, Courts and Justice Services.

L. STEAD: Lisa Stead, Assistant Deputy Minister, Criminal Law.

J. TURNER: Joanne Turner, Director of Court Services, Provincial Court.

S. ORGAN: Shelley Organ, Chief Executive Officer of the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal.

J. CAINES: Justin Caines, Assistant Deputy Minister, Legal Services.

K. HARDING: Kim Harding, Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Safety and Correctional Services.

P. ROCHE: Patrick Roche, Chief of Police, Royal Newfoundland Constabulary.

C. HILLIER: Cayla Hillier, Manager of Budgeting.

A. GREEN: Andrew Green, Executive Director of Support Services for the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary.

C. BARTLETT: Clair Bartlett, Executive Assistant to Helen Conway Ottenheimer.

V. HAMMOND: Vaughn Hammond, Director of Communications.

L. CLARKE: Lesley Clarke, Media Relations Manager.

T. TWYNE: Terri Twyne, Superintendent of Court Security in the Sheriff's Office, Eastern Region.

CHAIR: We will now proceed with the Estimates review process.

I ask the Clerk to read the first subhead grouping for this head of expenditure.

CLERK: 1.1.01 to 1.3.01 inclusive, Executive and Support Services.

CHAIR: I recognize the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Chair.

First of all, I'd like to welcome everyone here this evening. Before I begin my remarks, I would like to introduce myself. I'm Helen Conway Ottenheimer, Minister of Justice and Public Safety, and Attorney General. I have had the privilege of being in this position for the last six months. In addition to my ministerial portfolio, I am the proud Member of the House of Assembly for the District of Harbour Main.

Interesting to note, for the past seven years I would have been on the side asking the questions and this year, now, I am the one answering the questions along with my

team. So this is a new experience for me, as well, this year.

With that in mind, I would like to give you an idea of how we will be proceeding this evening. I will be happy to take your questions but I may call upon one of my department officials to provide any additional details, if necessary, since they are the content experts.

For your awareness, I would like to note that there have been a number of executive changes in the Department of Justice and Public Safety. In addition, there has been a reorganization of the department to reflect the transfer of emergency services, emergency responsibilities to another department. But it was also an opportunity to improve coordination amongst the different areas of the department, which is intended to serve the public better.

So I would like to take the opportunity now to thank everyone that's sitting around me for the incredible work that they do and the support they have provided to me in the past few months as minister in all areas of the department. I can certainly say I'm very impressed with the hard work and dedication that they have for the entire justice system and legal system in our province.

Our government was elected with a mandate from the people of the province, and one of those pillars of that mandate or that platform is safer communities. I am proud to say that *Budget 2026* is an important step towards creating safer communities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The total budget for the department this year is \$355.4 million, an increase of approximately \$14 million. Budget decisions in this year include approximately \$2.4 million to create new court staff positions to enhance court operations; over \$1.7 million to create seven additional Provincial Court judge positions.

Also important to note is the \$162,000 to continue support for the Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network, or otherwise known as NAWN, to fund the Gladue report program as part of a multi-year, cost-shared agreement with Justice Canada.

There's also \$350,000 to support the Provincial Court to implement a unified bail court based in St. John's where judges will hear bail hearings scheduled for St. John's, Stephenville and Grand Falls-Windsor Provincial Courts.

To enhance policing in the province over the next two years, there will be 46 new officers hired – 21 at the RNC and 25 at the RCMP – and that will be at an annualized cost of \$9 million. There will also be \$1.2 million to create 14 new resources within public prosecutions and for digital modernization to give Crown attorneys the tools they need to manage and prosecute charges as technology advances in our modern society.

We are also looking to spend public money smarter and find the best value to deliver our services and programs effectively and efficiently. The funding commitments announced in *Budget 2026*, in my opinion, do just that.

As of March 31, 2026, across the department, there were approximately 1,900 employees and, of those, 1,400 were full-time staff, 400 were temporary and another almost 100 people were contractual. It should be noted that those numbers do not include the RCMP or Legal Aid, so those are additional numbers of employees.

This Department of Justice and Public Safety is responsible for the administration of the justice system, for court services, correctional and community services, as well as public safety and law enforcement in the province. It has a combination of both union and non-union employees and provides services 24-7 through front-line services that touch all areas of our province.

As we go through Estimates this evening, you will see variations in salaries in most areas of the department. It is no secret that recruitment and retention is a challenge in the justice system, which is no different really than any other sector in the province. However, with the support of the Public Service Commission, departmental officials are constantly looking at ways to improve recruitment and retention.

For example, to make it easier for people wanting to apply to be a sheriff's officer, there is now a streamlined process with one competition process covering all locations, rather than having a separate competition process for each vacant position based on location. That is an initiative that is making it easier for people wanting to apply to be a sheriff's officer, and work is continuing that regard.

In conclusion, we are elected for a four-year mandate and our focus will be on ensuring that the programs and services the Department of Justice and Public Safety delivers will truly support the people of the province.

I and my team are now open to your questions.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Windsor Lake.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister, for the opening comments.

I guess, I'll say at the outset, I have full faith in your team as well. I know a lot of them. It's nice to see everybody again, especially those who I had the opportunity to work with, not only in the Department of Justice and Public Safety, but in the Department of Health as well.

I know the answers you're going to give are great answers, but we'll ask the questions anyways and look forward to this opportunity, as the minister said, to be on a

different side of the House but an important side of the House.

I'll just get started, with the Minister's Office. Minister, the revised budget for this year '25-'26 has increased by about \$50 thousand-odd. Two questions, can you explain why; and the follow-up question is if it has increased, why is the estimate for this year gone back down?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I can say with respect to Salaries, the revised is up by \$52,600 from the 2025-2026 budget. That is an increase due to termination costs for outgoing minister and support staff.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Windsor Lake.

J. HOGAN: So termination costs for outgoing minister – I thought you said minister and support staff?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That is correct.

J. HOGAN: So termination of the minister – I guess if you could provide some information on that.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The deputy minister will take that from here.

G. SMITH: Thank you, MHA Hogan.

The termination costs are not used in the context of letting a minister go, but as we know we don't have that–

J. HOGAN: I thought it was a bit harsh. I mean, we lost but –

G. SMITH: We don't have that authority. It's just outgoing costs when a minister finished up their term, there are costs that they're entitled to, in conclusion of their portfolio. While we use the words "termination costs,"

it was in that context and not that they were let go from that perspective.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Windsor Lake.

J. HOGAN: So that \$52,600 go towards an exiting minister and support staff?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That's correct.

J. HOGAN: To how many support staff?

M. WALSH: It would be just one additional staff, the executive assistant.

J. HOGAN: So are you able to provide the breakdown of the \$52,600, what went to the minister and what went to the support staff?

M. WALSH: I don't have it right now, but I can certainly get it.

J. HOGAN: Okay, thank you.

Just a quick question: Purchased Services, an increase of about \$2,300.

Thanks.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes, that revision up by \$2,300 is due to the increase due to higher than anticipated photocopier costs and payment of prior year invoices. So I understand photocopier costs can be attributed to a new lease on copiers as well. I think that explains that item there.

J. HOGAN: Are we moving on to Executive Support, 1.2.01? Did you call all that?

Bobbi, sorry, did you call it or not?

CLERK: Yes.

J. HOGAN: Okay, so I keep going?

CLERK: Yes.

J. HOGAN: So in Executive Support, 1.2.01, can you explain why the revised salary for '25-'26 was increased over what was budgeted in '25-'26?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So you're referring to the revision up by \$127,400 from the 2025-26 budget. That increase is due to the addition of two positions during this year, the ADM of Corporate Services and ADM secretary. As well, there were all overtime costs incurred during the summer wildfires. That accounts for that increase.

J. HOGAN: So the increase budgeted for '26-'27 would be up by about \$230,000, so would that be for those new positions that are going to be maintained into the future years?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That would be my understanding, yes. That is correct.

J. HOGAN: Can you explain the increase for Transportation and Communications, as well as Supplies for the '25-'26 budgeted versus revised, please?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So with respect to Transportation and Communications, there is no change from what I can see.

J. HOGAN: Sorry, yeah, I read it wrong.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

J. HOGAN: I meant Supplies and Purchased Services. Sorry, Minister.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, no problem.

With respect to Supplies, the revision up is \$2,600 from the '25-'26 budget, that increase as well reflects additional meeting supplies for the executive during the summer wildfires. There was an increase due to that.

As well, Purchased Services, you had asked about that, I believe as well. There's a revision up by \$13,700. That reflects, again, increased Purchased Services requirements as copier costs and media monitoring.

J. HOGAN: Minister, were there any terminations without cause in the Department of Justice and Public Safety during the '25-'26 fiscal year?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: No, there were not.

J. HOGAN: Minister, moving on to 1.2.02.

I ask, why have Salaries decreased from \$2.595 million to \$1.99 million for the '25-'26 budget compared to the Estimate for '26-'27?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That revision down is approximately \$365,000 from the '25-'26 budget and that decrease is due to the timing of hiring related to the Drug Treatment Court and divisional vacancies as well.

J. HOGAN: So I'm not quite sure, this is in Administrative and Policy Support? So there was –

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Are you referring to the \$365,000 revision down?

J. HOGAN: No, I'm not looking at the revised down. I'm looking at the '25-'26 budgeted amount which is \$2,595,500. That was budgeted at about \$2.6 million for this fiscal year. I think you answered why it was revised down but I'm asking why the Estimate is down for how much is going to be spent. It looks like there's about \$695,000 less money for Salaries.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So that decrease reflects initiatives that did not proceed and reallocation of funds with respect to the Police Transformation team.

J. HOGAN: So were there any job losses as a result of the \$695,000 in Salaries being decreased?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: No, there were not.

J. HOGAN: Where has the \$695,000 decreased out of that been reallocated to make sure those jobs are still there?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'll defer that to the ADM for Corporate and Strategic Services.

B. STEELE: The reduction in Salaries in the budget costs there were due to an initiative, public safety training centre for \$150,000 that did not proceed last year and there was a reallocation of funding for \$455,000 for the Police Transformation team. The team members now are being paid out of their own divisional salaries and other salaries that are there. So we just moved the salaries from within the salary plan to where it should be allocated now. That's why we no longer require it in Administrative and Policy Support but it's been reflected in the other division within the department.

J. HOGAN: So does that mean the Police Transformation Working Group no longer exists?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'd like to talk a moment about the Police Transformation Working Group. As you are aware, it was established in November of 2023. It was a multi-year initiative to evaluate the current provincial policing model, engage with the public and provide ongoing advice. It is an initiative that I wholly support and I think it's a group that have done valuable work.

It doesn't continue to be structured the way it was, but it's still in existence. The provincial policing review will continue to be evaluated by our officials, but it still exists and it is working very hard in terms of the advice that it provides to myself, as minister,

and very important work. I'd like to acknowledge that that's been a great initiative.

J. HOGAN: If I get my math right, there's about a \$695,000 decrease in salary. I think, if I heard the ADM correctly, there is about \$150,000 salary for an initiative that never happened, so I assume that means no one was in that position.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: No.

J. HOGAN: So if you take that off the \$695,000, there is \$545,000 in salary decrease in Administrative and Policy Support, which has been reallocated. I guess I have two questions, maybe three questions, under what heading has it been reallocated? How many positions makes up the \$545,000?

B. STEELE: Some of the funding has been reallocated to Executive Support, because one of the ADMs is sitting on that team right now and there is some with the RNC and the rest of it, there is still a position within Administrative and Policy Support.

J. HOGAN: I'm confused. If the \$545,000 is gone, it wouldn't remain in the Administrative and Policy Support. So there's \$545,000; you've explained why \$150,000 is gone. There's \$545,000, which the minister said had been used to fund positions related directly for the Police Transformation Team.

There are no job losses, so there should be \$545,000 taken out of this line and put in another line, so those individuals – and I'd like to know exactly how many individuals it is and where they fit in the Department of Justice and Public Safety, to make sure that \$545,000 which – sounds like it's just been moved from here to another line. Where has it been moved?

B. STEELE: The funding for the staff, they are now being paid out of the divisions that they reside in, so somebody from Executive

Support is sitting in there and their allocation would be within Executive Support. Somebody from the RNC is still being paid out of their old position for the RNC.

We can get you a further breakdown if you want it.

J. HOGAN: Sure, that would be great.

Just so I can be specific to get an answer, the reallocation of the \$545,000 approximately taken out of Administrative and Policy Support Salaries, what line item is it reallocated to?

Minister, I'd like some more clarity on the support for the Police Transformation Team. I'm not clear if it still exists or not, so could you clarify if it exists and who is on that team?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I can assure you that it still exists and they are working very hard with myself, as minister, in terms of the policies going forward. We can provide you the names of the members on that group, but the total staffing complement is five on the Police Transformation Team.

J. HOGAN: Thank you for that.

If the Salaries in the Administrative and Policy Support has decreased, as we know by \$695,000, just wondering why the Employee Benefits would stay the same? I would have assumed it would go down proportionately.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I can say that, with respect to Employee Benefits, that has been revised up by \$770,000. That's basically the category you're talking about. That reflects increased WorkplaceNL costs for Justice and Public Safety employees.

J. HOGAN: Yeah, that makes sense.

CHAIR: The hon. Member's time has expired.

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. MHA for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Yes, thank you.

Thank you very much and thanks to everybody who's here. This is a new process for me, so I'm actively learning. But the best way to do it, of course, is to ask questions. So I'll start with some general questions.

My first question to the minister would be, how many people are currently employed in the department and how many positions are currently vacant?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

Yes, it's a first for many of us here this evening. So I definitely understand what you're saying. But the number of positions that we have right now in the Justice Department, there are 1,920 positions. In terms of breakdown, if you would like that, 1,406 are permanent, 416 are temporary and 98 contractual.

I believe you asked about the vacancies as well?

S. O'LEARY: Yes, exactly.

Thank you.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay.

There are 298 vacancies, and I certainly can provide a breakdown of the area, how many vacancies are in different areas as well. We can provide that to you.

S. O'LEARY: Wonderful. Okay, thank you.

Is the department still using zero-based budgeting?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes, I can confirm that we are using zero-based

budgeting, and I'm going to pass that over to my ADM to explain exactly how we are doing that today.

B. STEELE: Yes, in our preparation for the budget, we have done a comprehensive review of each division line by line just to determine what requirements are there for the expenditures. We've been using zero-based budgeting to do that and to ensure that the allocations within the different divisions and line items are adequate to fund our expenditures for the next fiscal.

It's an ongoing process and we monitor it monthly just to ensure that we do have sufficient funding.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, thank you.

What work has been accomplished in the past year on the implementation of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People National Action Plan that was released June 3, 2021?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I will ask Bonnie to take that question, as well.

B. STEELE: We have representation on the Reconciliation Council that's working toward the meaningful action regarding the 196 recommendations contained in the *Hear Our Voices* report, as well as the national Calls for Justice. So the work focuses on relationship-building between Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and Indigenous women to address the root causes of inequity and to prevent violence and harm against Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

Of the recommendations that Justice is leading, which is 75 recommendations, they are all ongoing and progressing forward. We also partnered with other departments within the government to facilitate other recommendations as well.

Work is ongoing on 75 of them that we need and others as well.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, thank you.

Just an additional comment there. On that Reconciliation Council, is there representation from First Light?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I don't have that in front of me but – deputy minister.

G. SMITH: Yes, there is. The Reconciliation Council was created a number of years ago with representation of women from all the Indigenous groups in the province, including First Light.

S. O'LEARY: Wonderful. Thank you.

How is work progressing towards the establishment of a civilian-led police oversight board?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I can say that I'm very pleased to speak about the police oversight board and the work that we are doing on that. As I referenced earlier, in discussing the Police Transformation team, they have been working very diligently to research and analyze other jurisdictions in terms of police oversight models. They have been evaluating the current provincial policing model. They have, as well, been assisting me in terms of preparing for legislation that we intend to bring in the fall, with respect to, not only the police oversight board, but as well reforming the entire oversight model. We're looking at the things that are happening right now with respect to delivering police services that are effective with respect to the complaints commission.

We're analyzing all of that to see what type of comprehensive legislation we can have to reform policing services in our province and to ensure that we have the most transparent and accountable model that we can. So that's why we're doing an analysis of other jurisdictions as well in that regard.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, thank you.

I'm going to go to the line items, I'll go to 1.2.02, Administrative and Policy Support. Is this department taking on work to introduce trauma-informed training for justice and law enforcement personnel as well as prosecutors?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I can say with respect to trauma-informed training for police, that is an initiative that we are committed to in our government throughout the entire justice system, looking at training for, not only the police, but other legal professionals that work in the system.

I can say that I recently met with the RNC Intimate Partner Violence Unit coordinator. She is in this position for, I believe, the last year and has been involved in ensuring that there is training, specifically with respect to intimate partner violence for officers.

I might even defer this to the chief because he and I discussed this when I was at the RNC just recently and met with the Intimate Partner Violence Unit coordinator. We talked about the trauma-informed training that they are engaged in, so perhaps the chief can further elaborate on that.

P. ROCHE: Thank you for your question, Ms. O'Leary, it's nice to see you.

In relation to trauma-informed training, it's something we've been doing for a period of time with our officers throughout our organization. As the minister addressed within the Intimate Partner Violence Unit, Sergeant Lindsay Dillion has travelled to the West Coast in Corner Brook and provided training to our officers there, in conjunction with our partnership with Willow House as well as the Women's Centre out there. Paula Sheppard and Heather Davis have also presented to our membership.

Trauma-informed training is very important to our organization and we've been doing it for a couple of years now with our

members, as far as trauma-informed interviewing of persons and how we best deal with those.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, thank you for that.

A news release from February noted that your government will "prioritize community-led prevention initiatives and survivor supports." Could you elaborate on which initiatives and forms of support that you have in mind?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: May I ask with respect to the release, can you just explain community-led initiatives in what regard? Relating to what exactly?

S. O'LEARY: That was in regard to, I believe, intimate partner violence is my understanding.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay.

Can you just elaborate on the release, so I have the full context of what you're referring to?

S. O'LEARY: I don't have the release here at my fingertips.

We'll circle back to that one and then I can find out the information.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, thank you.

I can fully answer then with the information.

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

It's funny how we kind of wave; we have to do the YMCA to get the attention, but anyway I digress.

Thank you.

Thank you to the staff over there. It's nice to see you. Thank you for the work that you do, and Chief Roche it's always nice to see you, as well.

Minister, I would like to go back to Minister's Office, 1.1.01, with regard to the \$226,800. Could you give a breakdown of the salaries of your executive staff, please, in your office?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes, I'm advised we will provide that breakdown to you. We don't have that available right at our fingertips, but we will provide that.

P. PARSONS: Okay, so you don't have any particular positions, say your executive assistant or your political liaison, you don't have those?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'll just defer this to the ADM.

B. STEELE: We have the positions that are in the office. It's the minister, executive assistant and the departmental secretary to the minister. I don't have the actual salary rates each but we can certainly get it.

P. PARSONS: Okay.

B. STEELE: But that's the three positions that are there in the office.

P. PARSONS: Okay, so we'll get those at a later date.

Okay then, just moving back to 1.2.01, if the minister could answer: How many people are currently employed in the department and how many vacant positions are there?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I believe I've answered this question but I'll certainly provide it again. It's 1,920, that's the total that are employed, and 298 vacancies.

P. PARSONS: Okay.

If you could clarify whether there are 13-weekers that are included such as the temporary positions, the 13-week contracts?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I can advise there are 98 contractual positions in the department and 13-weekers. We have 99, 13-weekers.

P. PARSONS: Okay.

Now if we could move to 1.2.02. So why has the budget for the Transportation and Communications been decreased by over \$300,000 – \$300,900 from last year's budget?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So with respect to the \$300,900 the Estimates is down by, that decrease relates to funding for initiatives that did not proceed.

P. PARSONS: Could you elaborate on those initiatives?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes, my ADM will assist.

B. STEELE: You'll see in this 1.2.02, Administrative and Policy Support, that there are a number of initiatives that did not move forward or were delayed last year. You'll see some big drops in these numbers related to the public safety training centre, the police transformation team tiered policing.

In Transportation and Communications, there was an allocation for \$250,000 for T & C. So that did not go forward and the police transformation team also had \$50,000 allocation last year for T & C, Transportation and Communications, which is no longer needed this year.

P. PARSONS: Is there a reason, in particular, why they didn't proceed?

B. STEELE: The public safety training centre, we're currently meeting the policing needs by using the Atlantic Policing

Academy to fulfill and address the training. The training of the correctional officers, recruit training, we use the APA standard as well, but we locally train those in two locations in the province. One is in St. John's and one is in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

I can ask the ADM, Kim Harding, to expand on that.

K. HARDING: Yes, the training centre basically, after a review, it was decided that it wasn't required. Our police officers are trained at the Atlantic Policing Academy. Chief Roche has met with the executive director, Jeff Minten, and is very pleased with the training that is being performed at APA.

With regard to our corrections, there was a review also completed and it was decided that there would be training completed in St. John's for a class of students who are now going through a training program and another program will be put off in Happy Valley-Goose Bay in July.

P. PARSONS: Okay.

In that same area, Professional Services budget has been cut by almost \$1.5 million. Can you provide a reason or reasons for that?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I can say that decrease as well relates to funding for initiatives that did not proceed.

P. PARSONS: Okay.

We saw an increase in federal revenue last year of \$95,900, so where did that money come from?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That increase is due to the receipt of prior year revenue related to the Drug Treatment Court. As you stated, it's revenue that we received from the federal government.

P. PARSONS: Do we expect to get an additional revenue for next year?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'll defer to the ADM on that.

B. STEELE: No, we don't expect any this fiscal.

P. PARSONS: Can you tell us what accounted for the provincial revenue increase of \$60,200?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That increase is simply due to the collection of revenue relating to the prior year.

P. PARSONS: In last year's Estimates, it was revealed that there was funding for a policy position to review the speciality courts – Drug Treatment, Mental Health and Intimate Partner Violence. Is that position filled?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'll defer that to the ADM for Courts and Justice Services – Mike.

M. NOSEWORTHY: I can advise that the position was hired, approximately, one year ago. The person has been hired in that position and work has been under way for approximately a year. We're hopeful that that work will be concluded relatively soon.

P. PARSONS: Okay, so that will take me into this transition then. Has there been a formal evaluation completed on those courts?

M. NOSEWORTHY: That work hasn't been completed just yet. Like I said, it's been under way so we're hopeful it will be completed soon.

P. PARSONS: Okay.

When do we anticipate that to be completed or get that update?

M. NOSEWORTHY: I'm not entirely sure on exactly when but, like I said, I'm hopeful it will be soon and I'll defer to my colleague, Ms. Turner, in case she wants to add anything to that.

J. TURNER: I'm anticipating a draft very soon. I would think within a couple of months.

P. PARSONS: Okay, thank you.

Can you advise on how many people have completed the Intimate Partner Violence Intervention program and how many people are currently in the program?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I see that my ADM for Courts and Justice Services is going to –

M. NOSEWORTHY: Thank you. Sorry about that.

I have it broken down by court. Currently, in programming, these numbers are as of March 31, 2026. There are 20 people in programming in St. John's in intimate Partner Violence Intervention Court, six in Grand Falls-Windsor, six in Stephenville and that's it for Intimate Partner Violence Intervention Court.

P. PARSONS: Okay, thank you.

Back to the evaluation that we will get, is there money allocated in the current budget to implement recommendations that will come from that report?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'll ask the ADM, Bonnie, to answer that, please.

B. STEELE: Depending on what the recommendations are, when we do receive the report, the department will look at the recommendations to determine if there is funding required at that time. There's nothing particular at this moment.

P. PARSONS: Okay, thank you.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

I found the press release was on February 17 and it was titled Indigenous communities delivering solutions regarding trafficking and sexual exploitation. That's in regard to the news release from February noting the government will prioritize community-led prevention initiatives and survivor supports.

Just looking for, again, to elaborate on which initiatives and forms of support that you have in mind?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The deputy minister is going to address that question.

G. SMITH: Thank you.

I have to be honest, I'm not familiar with that news release. I don't believe – was it a Justice and Public Safety specific news release or was it –?

OFFICIAL: Women and Gender Equality.

G. SMITH: Women and Gender Equality.

S. O'LEARY: And Women and Gender Equality.

G. SMITH: Yes, I'm not familiar, but if you want, we can track down – maybe during our break we can have a look at it, but I think it would be difficult to answer that question without having seen the release because it's not related to our department, specifically.

S. O'LEARY: Okay. Understanding that some are fused, right?

G. SMITH: Yes, of course.

S. O'LEARY: But that's great. If we could find that information later, it would be wonderful. Thank you.

So I'll proceed. The media has reported on one former minister becoming a lobbyist at the federal level only months after leaving their job. While we don't necessarily have any control over federal rules on lobbying, has the department been looking into ways to strengthen our *Lobbyist Registration Act* and/or the code of conduct?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So I'll ask our ADM for Legal Services to address that question, Justin.

J. CAINES: So it's something that we're always looking at, ways that we can strengthen and make improvements to our laws. So that is something that's in the department's work plan for review.

S. O'LEARY: Understood. So with no timelines or anything, but just an ongoing review?

J. CAINES: It's part of an ongoing review.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, thank you.

Have all the recommendations made in the Auditor General's report into *Adult Custody and Community Corrections* in December 2022 now been completed? If not, which remain outstanding? So the AG report for *Adult Custody and Community Corrections* in December of 2022.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So I'm just going to look at the Auditor General's review. I am going to ask the ADM for Public Safety and Correctional Services to expand on it further. But we know that when the AG reissued this *Adult Custody and Community Corrections* audit, it was to determine whether the Department of Justice and Public Safety was providing and adequately managing appropriate rehabilitated programming and whether it met the needs of adult offenders in custody, and whether it assisted them with their successful integration into the community. This audit also looked at whether the department had adequate processes to

manage adult offenders in the community while also supporting public safety and an offender's successful community reintegration.

So we know that there were many recommendations made. I'm just going to ask Kim to elaborate on the recommendations that have been completed to date.

K. HARDING: So there were six recommendations. The first recommendation was to complete the work necessary for the government to enact the 2011 *Correctional Services Act*. That has been fully implemented and the *Correctional Services Act* and regs were proclaimed on February 3, 2025. That recommendation is complete.

The second recommendation, basically, was to ensure that all Adult Custody and Community Corrections policies were complete, current to reflect best practices. That's partially implemented. There are a number of policies that have been reviewed, some have been updated and some are still work in progress.

The third recommendation was to ensure classification probation officers have current, adequate training in all aspects of managing adult offenders, including the establishment of formal information transfer process to improve correctional services. Again, that is partially implemented. Some of the training has been completed.

The fourth recommendation was for Justice and Public Safety to ensure the rehabilitation program is available and accessible to all offenders. That is partially implemented and it is still currently under review.

The fifth recommendation was for Justice and Public Safety to ensure that release planning is available and accessible to all offenders in custody. Again, that's partially implemented and is currently under review.

The last recommendation was for the Department of Justice and Public Safety to ensure that probation officers and supervisory offenders in the community in accordance with established standards and are monitoring and enforcing compliance with court order and conditions. That's partially implemented and otherwise resolved.

If you would like any further specific details about these recommendations and what progress we have, I can certainly make that available to you, if you'd like.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you. I appreciate it.

Has the department done any preparatory work to amend the *Proceedings Against the Crown Act*? This was discussed last year as part of the amendments needed to deal with cases such as Jack Whelan's.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'll ask our ADM for Legal Services to expand on that question.

J. CAINES: I know that's certainly something that the minister was interested in and work is ongoing in the department to explore what might be done and have those conversations with the minister.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

The federal government has a prohibition on the resale of law enforcement vehicles. Will your government amend the *Law Enforcement Identity Management Act* to do so?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I will ask the ADM for Public Safety and Correctional Services to comment on that, please.

K. HARDING: The *Law Enforcement Identity Management Act* is currently being – there are consultations ongoing regarding the regulations and following that there will be a drafting of the instructions for the regs

and then that will be considered as part of the evaluation.

S. O'LEARY: Okay.

There's no timeline or anything attached to that is there?

K. HARDING: There is no specific timeline at this moment, no.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, thank you.

Looks like I have an opportunity for one more here.

Is the department currently looking into training for lawyers to prevent them from retraumatizing survivors of violent crime when they testify in court?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I can say that with respect to training to ensure that there's no revictimization of victims in the court, that has been a commitment that we've made in our platform. It is important to us to pursue that initiative. We plan on doing that as well. It is a priority for us in our new government.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Windsor Lake.

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

The updated numbers for this year for use of the Intimate Partner Violence Intervention Court, if we could get the numbers that are in, I guess, and that have – what's the word I'm looking for – took part and completed the Mental Health Court, as well as the Drug Treatment Court?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So you are looking for what numbers again, please?

J. HOGAN: The numbers that are currently in it and the numbers that have used it.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So with respect to each of the specialty courts?

J. HOGAN: Yes.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay.

We have three specialty courts: the Drug Treatment Court, the Intimate Partner Violence Intervention Court and the Mental Health Court. So with respect to the Drug Treatment Court, we have total applications filed – in St. John's, there are 11; Corner Brook, 9; and Grand Falls-Windsor, 1.

So those are the applications. The number that have graduated in St. John's are four, and Corner Brook and Grand Falls-Windsor there were no graduates that we have active. Up to March 26, in St. John's there are 12; in Corner Brook, three; and in Grand Falls-Windsor, there are none.

So that's with respect to the Drug Treatment Court. As I've stated, that court operates in St. John's, Corner Brook and Grand Falls-Windsor.

Also with respect to the Intimate Partner Violence Intervention Court, I can give you those.

J. HOGAN: We have those.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: You have those?

J. HOGAN: MHA Parsons asked those.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay.

So you just need the Drug Treatment Court?

J. HOGAN: Yeah, and Mental Health Court.

So fully supportive of the use of these courts in our judicial system and in our justice system, I should say, just looking at the numbers, I guess a bit of a philosophical discussion on where the department, the

minister or whoever else can answer this question. They're not huge numbers.

Should the numbers be higher? Do we have targets where they should be? Are these alternate courts working as you or we, as a province, feel that they should be?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So I think it's very important for us to have evaluation. I understand your concern. It doesn't seem that the numbers are low. However, it is important when we look, for example, at the Intimate Partner Violence Intervention Court that we have an evaluation and that evaluation is looking at, for example, whether expansion of the court is something that we'll do.

We will examine implementation of all court sites and we're considering areas for improvement and/or further expansion. So that final evaluation report, I understand, has been drafted and it's under review right now. That is something that we will examine as well.

With respect to the other courts, the report and evaluation of the Mental Health Court is being finalized as well. The evaluation, like I just said, on the Intimate Partner Violence, that began in January of 2026. We are looking and I am looking forward to receiving those reports and assessing what changes, if necessary, improvements that may be recommended to ensure the efficacy of these courts and the importance of them, we need to assess that.

I think that, as it stands now, these courts have to be assessed because the numbers are low, but that doesn't mean that they're not viable. If, for example, the Mental Health Court, there were nine that completed, well, those are still very valuable if we've had nine people complete the court. Again, we're doing that; we're looking at that assessment.

J. HOGAN: No, I don't have concern with it – those were the words you used – it was

just that I wanted to have more of a philosophical discussion. The answer might very well be if one person goes through any of these, that's great, we're better off for it.

I guess I just wanted to have a discussion about where the numbers should be. Is it one? Is it 10? Is it 100? The review will help answer those questions.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Exactly and I think that why it's important to have that evaluation, so we can look at it.

J. HOGAN: Okay, thank you.

Just turn to 1.2.04, a question about the Property, Furnishings and Equipment. It was budgeted for \$1.5 million and that looks like what the revised number was but it's increased to \$1.892 million for '26-'27. So if you could explain the \$392,000 increase, please.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That number, that increase is due to funding approved in *Budget 2026* for the new officers. There are six additional vehicles. That is the funding for new officers and the new six additional vehicles, essentially.

J. HOGAN: Under 1.3.01, Fines Administration, Purchased Services, the revised '25-'26, is down from \$962,000 to \$200,000. Could you explain that, please?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That decrease reflects fewer banking fees that were associated with payments for speed-camera tickets. The reduced cost reflects the time that it took for implementation.

J. HOGAN: You're probably not going to be able to answer this, because I'm looking at last year's Estimates book. When we look at 1.2.04, Administrative Support, there's a line item budgeted in Supplies of \$387,500 and I don't see a line item for Supplies under Administrative Support for this year, so I can't tell if \$387,500 was spent, more or

less than that, and why is there no line item for '26-'27.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The ADM for Corporate and Strategic Services will answer that question.

B. STEELE: This section has been restructured as part of the changes recently within the government departments. The '25-'26 Estimates would have included funding for the new call-aided dispatch software that was belonging to 911. There was \$387,500 in Supplies that was restated over to the Department of Forestry, Agriculture and Lands for that, so that's the difference there.

J. HOGAN: So we would be able to see the revised '25-'26 compared to that when we do the Forestry Estimates?

B. STEELE: Yes.

J. HOGAN: Okay, thank you.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

I'm just going to circle back to that question that I had. It was actually a joint press release between Women and Gender Equality and the Department of Justice. I don't know if that helps you find where that is.

Yes, it was on February 17. It was the Office of Women and Gender Equality and Justice and Public Safety on February 17, 2026. If that can help you just, again, in your search.

The question is just about elaborating on the initiatives and forms of support you have in mind.

I can leave that again but, at least, I'm trying to help you track it, if that's okay.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes, we appreciate that. It's always best to have –

S. O'LEARY: Specifics.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: – the release and so we can assess in its entirety –

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: – to give you a fulsome answer.

S. O'LEARY: Okay. Thank you.

I'll move on to the next. There's mention in the budget documents about new funds for court staff positions and modernizing equipment. Will these alone address the issues with court delays or are there other initiatives that you are planning?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So with respect to the modernization with the technology, we do believe that's going to assist with respect to the efficiencies of the courts. Why did we think that? Because it's important to see the – when you go down there or have the opportunity to visit the provincial and the Supreme Courts and to see the outdated technology that exists, I would call it the antique, perhaps dinosaur, technology that is in place. When we have improvements, as we will see, in this technology, due to the investments of our government in the 2026 budget, it's going to make it so much easier for, not only the court staff, but also the judges, the lawyers. So all of the participants in the courts, whether they're at trials or other proceedings in the courts, will benefit significantly from having technology that is modernized.

I can also say that as it exists right now, we see that the officials in the legal system, their attitude has been that they've had to make it work. I heard that, not only in the courts here in Newfoundland, but even when I visited Labrador as well and met with

some of the court staff and the administrative staff and the people who work in the courts there. That seems to be motto that they've had to make it work over the last number of years.

These initiatives with respect to modernizing the courts will certainly enhance making things more efficient. It will also, I think, relieve some of the pressures and the fact that many of the staff have perhaps felt overwhelmed and overworked because of the inefficiencies with the technology. So we certainly have high expectations now in terms of the benefits that will accrue because there's going to be that investment into technologies to bring our courts in line with a modern society.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

I think you referenced earlier attraction and retention, and we all know that this has been an ongoing issue, so I would assume that this is certainly a large piece of that equation from what it is that I'm hearing right now, because I understand that there was a substantial bump in some salaries and such, but we're still having difficulties with retention. Modernization certainly would make sense in that regard.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: If I might respond to that. It is true and that's an excellent point, because we will be able to retain more of our staff in the courts because of the fact that they have these efficiencies. I mean, it's been very, very difficult over the last number of years for the staff to work under these conditions. We are expecting many benefits to come from the modernization of the technology.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

I'll ask one under 1.3.01, Fines Administration. What is the total current balance of fines outstanding and about what portion of that is deemed to be recoverable?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: As of March 31, 2026, the total outstanding liability with respect to outstanding fines is \$55,207,300. I can provide a breakdown if you wish. Fines receivable is \$41,856,700; late payment penalty \$3,787,200; and victim fine surcharge \$9,563,400.

Just to elaborate on that, this relates to 357,200 tickets and approximately 157,000 unique individuals and businesses. The total outstanding liability as of March 31, when we look back at 2025, just so we can compare, it was \$51,671,500.

S. O'LEARY: The second part of that was the portion that is deemed to be recoverable?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: When we look at collections, for example, the revenue collected, I can look at 2025-26, from April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026, the total revenue collected was \$8,171,500 and, if you wish, I can break that down as well.

S. O'LEARY: Sure, if you don't mind, thank you.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Fines receipts were \$5,384,400. The provincial victim fine surcharge plus the federal victim fine surcharge was \$1,591,500. There was also a late payment penalty of \$545,300 and then total processing fines were \$650,300.

There are as well, I should note, 394 active payment agreements, as of March 31, 2026.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: You're welcome.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just going to go, Minister, to 1.3.01, Fines Administration, and pick up where my colleague left off. What initiatives do you have in planning to collect the outstanding fines? We know they're significant, as you just stated.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The ADM for Corporate and Strategic Services will address that.

B. STEELE: Yes, the outstanding fines, we do have a financial collection team that work continuously on these fines to collect them. We hope that they're all collectable. Recognizing that some of them are quite old, they date back some decades, but there are continuous collection efforts. Some of these people may have left the province or even the country or could be incarcerated, so sometimes that's much more difficult.

We do voluntary payments through the Motor Registration; there could be payment of fines there. We work with the people who we do contact and set up payment plans for them. We also have a federal offset program with CRA for any tickets and fines over \$300 that we will use the incoming GST and income tax as recovery for that.

We are continuously working with the team down there to do that and tracing efforts and collection efforts, working with everybody to try to develop payment plans as much as we can, recognizing that sometimes we are unable to locate people. If they move out of the province and across the country or out of the country, it's much more difficult to do that, but the hopes are that the fines will be collected and that it all will be collected, recognizing that it does take time to do that.

P. PARSONS: I guess, in the event where we can't find people, or if they're incarcerated, because it is significant, are there any other physical measures or more tangible measures that are taken to really track down this money? One would think, you know, they're going out and they're

getting these fines for whatever but is there a concern, or the people who are getting the fines for committing the crimes, is there an incentive to deter people in the first place, if they can just skip the country or move to a different province – is there a mechanism in place, something strict to really hold people to account for what they've done, aside from working with CRA or Motor Registration?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I think I'd like to, at this point, address an initiative that has been looked at over the last number of years by the former government, and that was the Fines Options Program. I have to say the Fines Options Program has been an area of interest for me.

I think I asked a question every Estimate in the seven Estimates that I've attended over the years, and I always asked about the status of that program. I am interested in exploring with officials in my department what measures may be available to recover the amount of the outstanding fines, and the Fines Options Program is one possibility.

So that is certainly something that is important, that is of interest to me to explore. I know that it was one of the former ministers of Justice who had looked at it, but I think it got off the rails in 2020 because of COVID, I think. I believe there was real interest, but it didn't come to fruition. So I'm certainly going to be assessing and analyzing that. It's important.

P. PARSONS: Certainly.

How do we compare to other jurisdictions, in particular, in Atlantic Canada, for how much we're waiting to receive in outstanding fines?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: We don't have that information available. We certainly can look into that and do perhaps a jurisdictional scan to assess that. I think that would be something anyways that would be a part of any fine options program. Going forward, that would be something important

to assess and evaluate if we're going to implement a fine options program.

P. PARSONS: Absolutely. I've always found them helpful, jurisdictional scans.

Sticking with Fines Administration, can the minister advise why only \$200,000 was spent in Purchased Services last year?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I can see that Purchased Services was down by over \$762,200 from last year's budget. That decrease reflects fewer banking fees associated with the payments for speed camera tickets and reduced costs reflect the time for implementation.

P. PARSONS: Do we know about the speed camera – in particular, do we know precisely how much has accumulated? Again, we talked about this previously, about the impact in the closure of the courts on certain services that are available, how that's impacting collecting those fines and, ultimately, getting them out to people.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So let me speak to the ICS camera project, first of all, in general. The 2025-2026 budget submission approved over \$1,706,900 annually for Fines Administration to implement the speed cameras. There was funding for 12 positions, which was included. Now the speed enforcement tickets are being issued by vendor Jenoptik through Government Modernization and Service Delivery's automated camera system.

Within our department, Fines Administration has successfully integrated with the speed camera initiative and Motor Registration Division. It's a streamlined process for the public to pay fines related to image-captured speed violations as a result of the speed cameras.

The ticket management system, referred to as the TMS, that's been integrated with MyGovNL. That allows users to view their

tickets directly on their personal dashboards, on the portal, and pay them conveniently through the application.

As you know, I'm sure that the Department of Government Services, they're responsible for the actual initiative of the speed camera. They established where the speed cameras are located. They set the fine amounts and the penalties and they issue the tickets to the registered vehicle owners.

Our role, as Department of Justice and Public Safety is Fines and Administration Division maintain a registry of the tickets. We also collect payments for the tickets and we work with debtors to arrange repayment plans, if necessary.

P. PARSONS: Are there plans to further implement more cameras, other than the seven that are currently in place?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Again, where that is their initiative, that would be a question to direct to Government Services.

P. PARSONS: Okay.

I just want to go back to the Gladue report that was mentioned earlier, how some funding, I think, was used for the Gladue report. I remember when I was the Minister of Women and Gender Equality, that was something that came from my department, Women and Gender Equality, through the bilateral agreement with the federal government. That was actually moved to Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

I'm just wondering, that money that you have referred to, is that the money from the bilateral agreement with the federal government with regard to end gender-based violence, the national action plan?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: First of all, I'm just going to give a little background about Gladue, if I may. I think that's important for us to talk about because we

know that R. v. Gladue was a landmark Supreme Court of Canada decision back in 1999 and essentially what it did, it directed the courts to consider an Indigenous offender's background when they make decisions with respect to sentencing in courts.

It's important because it directs the courts to take into consideration all available sanctions, other than imprisonment, other than incarceration, for all offenders and to really focus and pay attention to the circumstances, the background, the mitigating factors as well as of an Indigenous person.

Gladue reports are really important because what they do is they help address the over-representation of Indigenous people in the justice system. We've already heard from First Light about the alarming numbers with respect to the over-representation, just in our correctional facilities here in the province,

The Gladue report is really important. The courts consider the background. They look at the legacies of colonialism. They look at racism and they look at the important mitigating factors when the courts and the judges make their decisions.

We, Justice and Public Safety, partner with Justice Canada to cost-share funding to continue the pilot project in partnership with NAWN, the Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network, so that we can have Gladue writers from Indigenous communities trained across Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'm pleased to say that we are funding approximately \$162,000 this year as well for the next two years.

P. PARSONS: So it's federal-provincial combined partnership?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes, there's a federal-provincial partnership there, yeah.

P. PARSONS: Thank you.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: You're welcome.

CHAIR: Seeing no further questions, I'm going to ask the Clerk to recall the subhead.

CLERK: 1.1.01 to 1.3.01 inclusive, Executive and Support Services.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 to 1.3.01 inclusive, Executive and Support Services, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 1.3.01 carried.

CHAIR: Now we're going to take a recess for 10 minutes.

Recess

CHAIR (Power): Okay, we're ready to get going again.

I'll now ask the Clerk to call the next subhead.

CLERK: 2.1.01 to 2.4.01 inclusive, Legal and Related Services.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 to 2.4.01 inclusive, Legal and Related Services, carry?

I call on the hon. Member for Windsor Lake.

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

Minister, I'll jump right to 2.1.01, Civil Law, to Professional Services, budgeted '25-'26 for \$2 million and \$135 million was spent. So can you explain that please?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So essentially what happened here is that it's been revised up by \$133,307,700 from the 2025-26 budget and that is related to the legal fees for the tobacco settlement which was \$132.7 million. As well, it was for external legal council.

J. HOGAN: So the \$133 million additional was all related to the tobacco settlement?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes, \$138.9 million was received in 2025-26 relating to that tobacco settlement, but that will not be reflected in JPS revenue. It would be reflected in government's Consolidated Revenue Fund. Then there's also the external legal fees, \$132.7 million in legal fees for the tobacco settlement were paid during the 2025-26 fiscal year.

J. HOGAN: So I don't know if this is a question for you or the Finance Minister, maybe both of you. There's obviously been some going back and forth since the budget of '25-'26 about when the revenue from the tobacco settlement should be allocated in the government's budget, what year and things like that.

I guess my question is how was the revenue allocated? If you could you just clarify, again, from the tobacco settlement, over the course of how many years and in what years and is this all – I guess maybe just answer that question first.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I think that should be asked of the Minister of Finance.

J. HOGAN: So the \$130-odd million that was spent in the legal fees on the tobacco settlement, is that all the legal fees that GNL will be spending in relation to those court cases?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes, that is correct.

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

All the expenditures for legal fees were allocated in budget '25-'26 expenditures?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That is correct.

J. HOGAN: I think I'm correct in saying that not all the revenue collected from the tobacco settlement will be allocated or has been allocated to the '25-'26 budget year.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes, that is correct, as well.

J. HOGAN: So can you explain to me why we would allocate all the expenditures in one year and allocate the revenue differently over a number of years?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The ADM for Legal Services is going to address that.

J. CAINES: That comes down to when the timing for payment was triggered under the retainer agreement we had with our external counsel. The fees were payable when the settlement was reached, so once we received the initial transfer, the entire amount of the legal fees were due.

J. HOGAN: So under the terms of retainer agreement, once the matter has been settled and approved by the court in BC, I think is correct, the \$130 million is due, regardless of if and when the revenue actually comes into GNL. Is that correct?

J. CAINES: That's correct.

J. HOGAN: Okay.

Just to be clear, that money is owed based on the retainer agreement.

J. CAINES: That's correct.

J. HOGAN: So there's always risk in collecting. We can't collect \$55 million in fines. I'm not sure, at this stage, what the risk is, if it's high or low or in between in

collecting the revenue for the tobacco settlement for GNL. Is that correct?

J. CAINES: Sorry, whether there's any risk?

J. HOGAN: Okay, maybe I'll ask it that way. When do we expect to get the revenue from the tobacco settlement?

J. CAINES: So that's over the next number of years. The court-approved settlement has a schedule which is based on performance and other factors. So the department sits on a number of groups that monitors that and we expect revenue over the next number of years, but the exact amount we'll receive in each fiscal will vary, but it is anticipated that we will receive most of that revenue in the first number of years. But, as you say, there's some risk that in out years that may

J. HOGAN: So are you able to comment on the level of risk? It's a large amount of money. I don't know what the liquidity of tobacco companies are nowadays, specifically these tobacco companies. Are you able to comment on the level of risk for collection?

J. CAINES: I can't comment on that.

J. HOGAN: Does the committee have those – I think you said a committee or working group, I'm not sure what word it is – do they have those discussions on an ongoing basis?

J. CAINES: So there are ongoing discussions that would help the province assess those factors and those risks.

J. HOGAN: In the event that there is a great risk of not collecting a portion of this, would Newfoundland and Labrador's risk be proportionate to the size of this province compared to the other provinces that participated in the class action?

J. CAINES: I think that's something I'd have to take away and look at the terms of the settlement and how that's allocated.

J. HOGAN: Okay.

In Allowances and Assistance, budget '25-'26 fiscal year was estimated to be \$5 million and the revised number is \$55.8 million. Could you explain the difference please?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So that was revised up by \$50,814,000 from the '25-'26 budget. The increase is due to the higher than anticipated legal settlements during the fiscal year.

J. HOGAN: Can you please provide, I guess, the settlements and how that totals \$55 million?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The ADM for Legal Services is going to address those specifics.

J. CAINES: So you'll note it's public as a settlement agreement was filed with the court recently with respect to the CCAA proceeding related to the RCEC in which the province was identified as a settling defendant for \$46.3 million, which would include that. The rest would be just a number of legal settlements that arise during the year. The balance would be additional ones that can't be anticipated based on the timing of when matters are ready to settle but generally comprised general negligence against the province.

J. HOGAN: I guess, historically, I'm not sure what the numbers are, but does the minister feel that \$5 million is the – I guess she does feel it's the appropriate number for '26-'27, but can she elaborate on why and would there be a risk? As we've seen, it's gone up by \$55 million. What are the increased risks that that will be more than \$5 million this year?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Again, the ADM for Legal Services is going to address that question.

J. CAINES: So I think the \$5 million is a true contingency and a placeholder. It's very hard to predict the number and when matters will be ready to settle. So, at this point, I think it's sufficient, but that's always subject to change and there is risk that additional matters will identify and be ready to settle throughout the year.

J. HOGAN: I just want to go back to the RCEC settlement. I think the news story would have come out fairly recently, certainly since March 31, so in the '26-'27 fiscal year. So my question is why would that number be taken out of '25-'26 budget and not '26-'27?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Again, the ADM will address that.

J. CAINES: I think that relates to the timing of payment when we reach the proposed settlement with the parties. So, obviously, that matter is subject to court approval and is currently before the courts but the province has made the funds available when it was prepared to settle the matter and it's currently subject to court approval.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

So my first one is: Is your government continuing to pursue the legal challenge against the federal equalization program that was started by the previous administration?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: With respect to the equalization challenge, Newfoundland and Labrador's challenge on the equalization program, that was announced back in May of 2024, intervenor applications were heard on October 20, 2025, and a case management judge has been

assigned. I can tell you that the challenge is working its way through the legal system.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, thank you.

How many people are currently employed in Legal Aid? How many of these are lawyers and how many vacancies are there as well?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The total staff complement is 156. Of those 156, 68 are practising lawyers and 88 are support staff.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Could we have an update on the work by the Commission of Inquiry into the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: With respect to the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment Experience and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System, in terms of the staff, the total complement of staff is five, that's the lead executive officer, inquiry manager, executive assistant and hearings clerk, records analyst and legal assistant.

We have numbers with respect to the budget. Did you want me to just provide those later?

S. O'LEARY: You can provide those later, that's fine.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay. We can give you the budget breakdown as well.

S. O'LEARY: Okay.

How many active complaints is the Commission currently looking into and does this represent an increase or decrease over recent years?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Just want to clarify, you just asked about the Human Rights Commission, was it?

S. O'LEARY: Yes, that's correct, how many active complaints is the Commission currently looking into and does it represent an increase or a decrease over recent years? Are we seeing it escalate or are we seeing it de-escalate?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Right now, we have 275 active complaints, currently. I'm advised that we don't have last year's numbers right now but we can provide them to you.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, thank you.

This will be my final question in this section. Could you tell us a bit about this new unified bail court, how it will operate and whether it will result in a more efficient court system?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: With respect to the unified bail court, I can say that we are looking forward to seeing the implementation of that and there are investments related to that in our budget.

I am going to ask the director of the Provincial Court, Joanne Turner, to explain to us some of the further benefits that we're hopefully going to see from the unified bail court.

J. TURNER: With the virtual bail court, how we're initially starting that is we're hoping to have bail courts done virtually out of St. John's, Grand Falls-Windsor and Stephenville. The idea behind that is when you have a judge in a court centre who has a full docket and there are individuals that need a bail hearing, we prefer to allow the judge to proceed with the scheduled trial and then have a virtual bail court operating so that bail hearing can be removed from their court room over into the virtual bail so it doesn't disrupt any trials.

Oftentimes when a bail hearing starts, it could take a half day, it could take a full day and then these trials are getting set aside. We feel confident that it will certainly create efficiencies where if there is a trial

scheduled, it can proceed and bail hearings that come up that need to be heard, they can also be heard at the same time with little to no impact to that judge and the proceedings in their court centre.

Right now, we're doing that in St. John's, Grand Falls-Windsor and Stephenville. With the added resources, we're hoping to be able to expand that to other courts throughout the province.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, thank you.

That's it for me.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

J. HOGAN: I think the minister (inaudible).

CHAIR: Oh sorry.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I just want to go back to a question that was asked regarding the Human Rights Commission 2025, we do have the number of active cases from last year and that was 233.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I'm going to Sheriff's Office, 2.1.02. The Salaries has a budget increase of \$477,800 in Salaries over last year. Does this mean that there are additional positions being added, as this was not in the Budget Speech?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The 2026-27 Estimates, as you say up by \$477,800, that increase reflects a full year of funding for the 14 deputy sheriffs and the one manager of court security for Labrador, which has been approved in *Budget 2025*. That accounts for six months of funding in 2025-26.

P. PARSONS: Okay. So could you explain why the budget for Purchased Services decreased by \$225,000 from last year's budget?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That decrease relates to funding for initiatives that did not proceed.

P. PARSONS: Okay. Why did we only spend \$2,800 on Property, Furnishings and Equipment last year?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That was down by \$9,200. That was a decrease of fewer ergonomic assessments and equipment required during the fiscal year.

P. PARSONS: Okay.

Can the minister explain the decrease of over \$40,000 in Salaries from last year's budget in Legal and Related Services for Support Enforcement? The section, Minister, is 2.1.03.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So we're at 2.1.03. You're referring to the Salaries; it was down by \$40,500?

P. PARSONS: Correct.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So that decrease reflects adjustment of salaries across the department to better reflect actual requirements. So, essentially, what that is, is rightsizing the salaries for people in positions at current salary level.

P. PARSONS: Okay, thank you.

Criminal Law, 2.2.01: Can the minister provide the number of Crown attorneys positioned in the province as well as the number of vacancies?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So, currently, with respect to Crown attorneys, there are 58 Crown attorneys in this expenditure. With respect to the entire staffing complement, it would be 86.

Did you want me to give you a breakdown of those?

P. PARSONS: Sure, a breakdown, as well as the number of vacancies.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay.

So we have 14 legal secretaries, nine articling clerks, three administrative officers – there's one funded under the federal flagging program – there's one information management tech and one contractual. With respect to vacancies, we can get those for you. We don't have them right here at our fingertips.

OFFICIAL: (Inaudible.)

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Oh, one moment, I understand that we may have these at our fingertips.

So the ADM for Criminal Law is going to speak to this, Lisa Stead.

L. STEAD: Yes, I don't know if it's at my fingertips, other than I just know it. I can say that there is currently – I am very happy to say – only one Crown attorney vacancy, that's in Stephenville. In St. John's, there can be short-term vacancies when we have a maternity leave that we need to fill, that kind of thing. But, right now, we're fully staffed with Crown attorneys. We have a vacancy for a legal secretary position in – actually, no, we're filling it, but Happy Valley-Goose Bay had one missing, but that's being filled now. Otherwise, our staff positions are filled.

P. PARSONS: Thank you.

The Salaries line has increased by nearly \$2 million over last year's budget. Can the minister please advise how many new positions are being created here?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'll happily provide that information.

The increase relates to six additional Crown attorneys that were approved in *Budget 2025* and in this budget, we have 14 new positions approved in the budget. That will be six solicitors, three legal secretaries, one administrative officer and four information management staff.

P. PARSONS: In 2024, there was an announcement for 18 new Crown attorneys over three years, so there would have been funding for six of those positions already forecasted for this budget. Can the minister confirm if there are – just elaborate on the additional Crown attorney positions over the ones announced in 2024.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The ADM will elaborate on that from Criminal Law.

L. STEAD: Eighteen were announced, we got six last year. In this base budget, there were six but then there are six over and above. This year, I will be hiring 12 Crown attorneys, hopefully.

P. PARSONS: Okay.

L. STEAD: Then there will still be another six next year, hopefully.

P. PARSONS: Yes, hopefully.

L. STEAD: I won't count them before they hatch.

P. PARSONS: Again, 18 Crown attorney positions were funded from the announcement on November 13, 2024. The announcement was for 18 attorneys over three budget cycles, so as you mentioned six should be included for this year.

L. STEAD: Which it is.

P. PARSONS: Right. So brought to the complement of 51 Crown attorneys, three were vacant, six new hires, that's from last year.

L. STEAD: We had six last year that are filled. Six were in base budget from that announcement for this year and then a further six have been added so there will be 12 this year and then next year that other six in year three is still coming.

P. PARSONS: Okay, thank you.

Also, can the minister advise the reasons for the revised amounts in Supplies, Professional Services and Purchased Service lines?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: With respect to Supplies, we see an increase of \$31,800, that's an increase mainly to higher than anticipated costs. There was an AGM, the Public Prosecution's annual general meeting, and general office supplies. Then, as well, there was an increase of \$18,800 from the '25-'26 budget. That increase related to new staff resources approved in *Budget 2026*, specifically software licences and general office supplies. Then Professional Services, that was up \$60,200 from the last year's budget. That increase relates to additional costs for external legal services and expert witnesses.

P. PARSONS: Okay.

Minister, can you also advise why the Property, Furnishings and Equipment budget has increased by \$35,000 over the last year?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That increase of \$35,000 relates to new staff resources that had been approved in *Budget 2026*. For example, purchase of desks, chairs and cellphones.

P. PARSONS: Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. Member for Windsor Lake.

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

I'm just going to go back to the RCEC settlement. I was just reading some news stories on my phone while other people were asking questions. I think the first I can see was reported on April 22, so, obviously, in fiscal year '26-'27. My understanding is that has not been approved by the courts yet, so that settlement may or may not go ahead. So I'm curious as to why the money would be allocated as an expenditure for fiscal year '25-'26 when we're not even sure that that actually will be spent in '26-'27 or at all.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'll ask the ADM for Legal Services to address that, please.

J. CAINES: So as part of our agreement on that we had paid the funds in preparation for the court approval. Some of that timing is due to when the matter is called in court. Our obligation to pay was triggered in the prior fiscal year to comply with our settlement terms that we've agreed to.

J. HOGAN: So is that approximately \$45 million in a trust account somewhere or in trust with the courts?

J. CAINES: Yes, it's with our counsel in their trust account.

J. HOGAN: Just to the Sherriff's Office, Salaries, I just want to be clear. The increase in Salaries from \$7.251 million to \$7.729 million, my understanding from the answer was that would have been the full amount of salaries for Sheriff's officers that were allocated prior to budget '26-'27. Is that correct?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Could you just repeat that question please?

J. HOGAN: Sure, I'll just do it this way instead: Are there new Sheriff's officers in the \$7.729-million budget for '26-'27? Are there any new Sheriff's officers?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: No, there are not.

J. HOGAN: Okay.

I guess I'll ask this question now. I'm not really sure where to start, but obviously we've seen some issues, and we can get into a little bit more detail when we talk about the courts, but the closure of certain courts throughout the province, I'm not entirely clear about why the courts were closed. I certainly heard things about staffing issues, so I don't want to start rumours or why they were closed.

I guess I'll ask the minister: Was the availability of the Sheriff's officers a reason that the courts have closed and are continued to be closed?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So one of the findings that the Provincial Court working group found was the issue with the closure of the courts, the factor was the Sheriff's officers and the issue with recruitment and retention. That was one of many factors, though. It certainly was a complex problem. I think, at this point, it is important to say that I also was not aware that the courts – this took me by surprise as well, when the courts were closed down in late November.

I just wanted to be clear that this was a decision that was made in view of many pressures and challenges that had been existing in the courts over a number of years. It came to this point at the end of November, just shortly after my taking on the role of Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

J. HOGAN: So I understand, as you said, it's complex. It sounded like the answer was in part that there weren't enough Sherriff's officers. So I would ask, if there aren't enough Sherriff's Officers and more needed, why is there not an increase in the number of Sherriff's officers in fiscal year '26-'27?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: In the analysis by the working group, they looked at many factors, as I stated, Sherriff's officers were just one aspect of that. They looked at many of the other pressures that existed at the time with respect to the court not being able to handle many of the cases due to deficiencies in the courts. For example, the Jordan cases and the Jordan timelines were also a factor in there being many matters that weren't being heard or not being heard on their merits.

When it comes to the working group, they looked at the magnitude of the challenges that have been faced by the courts. These issues did not happen overnight and, quite frankly, were the result of many years of neglect and indifference. The Provincial Court was then forced to implement measures to continue operations, which these were the cause of the disruptions and, unfortunately, resulted in reduction of court services across the province.

We have begun to address the many challenges faced by the courts, thanks in part to the expert advice that has been provided by the working group. We have invested, for example, \$8.3 million in supporting our courts in *Budget 2026*. I can say, some of those investments of \$8.3 million, we're looking at seven new Provincial Court judges across the province, 51 new court staff such as court officers and we're also looking at audio-visual modernization to support the courts.

These investments are going to go a long way, but, as I say, Sherriff's officers were just one part of a very complex problem that has been accumulating for many years.

J. HOGAN: Did the working group recommend more Sherriff's officers?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'm going to direct that question to the deputy minister. She was actually one of the experts that was a part of the working group and she can specify exactly some of the details and

operational specifics that came out of the working group.

G. SMITH: As the minister indicated, there were a number of issues that the working group identified. As part of their work, they did hear from a number of the stakeholders with respect to courts and those would have included representatives from the Office of the High Sheriff.

There are a number of vacancies with the Sheriff's officers, so the focus was less on increasing the number and more focusing on the recruitment and retention of the vacancies. There's been lots of work that's continuing with the Public Service Commission to try to recruit and retain Sheriff's officers because of the vacancies that we currently have.

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

I'm going to ask a third time: Did the committee recommend more Sheriff's officers for budget '26-'27?

G. SMITH: In terms of the recommendations, because we had so many vacancies, the focus was on recruiting for the vacancies that we have. There was no recommendation in terms of additional Sheriff's officers in this particular budget cycle.

J. HOGAN: Was there a recommendation for hiring in new Sheriff's officers in future budget cycles?

G. SMITH: The way the working group presented their findings to the minister, it was in urgent short-term measures, so we didn't look at out-budget years; however, I will say, at the minister's request, the working group is continuing their work and as we work towards implementing the measures that have been announced, we will continue to have those discussions. Even though they may not have been a recommendation for this budget cycle, those talks will continue.

J. HOGAN: Minister, you talked about how it was a surprise to you when the courts closed, I think you said the date was November, who made the decision to close the courts?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: With response to your question, who actually closed the courts, I have to say this would not be possible for me, as Minister of Justice, to close the courts, I'm sure you're aware of that. That decision would have been made by the courts and the judiciary in that decision, but, again, that is not something that I would be able to really get into any further.

I can just tell you that I had no involvement or participation in closing the courts in Newfoundland and Labrador.

J. HOGAN: My question then to follow that is, how much notice were you given before you were advised of the courts were being closed?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'm looking back at exactly when and I believe the morning that the announcement was made is when I learned of it as well.

J. HOGAN: The courts are still closed – November, December, January, February, March, April – I'm only assuming there was no discussion about any immediate measures that could be taken, and I mean on the day or during that week, because it's pretty late notice I would suggest for the minister to hear the day of that the courts were closing. Were any discussions held that this is something that can be dealt with the day of, as I said, rather than extended now on to months?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: First of all, I have to be clear because you're making statements that suggest that the courts were closed in the province. There were disruptions in the courts but I think it's inaccurate to suggest or make a representation that the courts were closed

in the Province of Newfoundland, that's not entirely accurate. I have to correct you on that.

But with respect to when I was given notice, I was given notice the morning of and then I was meeting with the chief judge that following Monday.

J. HOGAN: Obviously, all courts are not closed but some courts have closed and are closed. Is that correct?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Well, we just need to be clear.

J. HOGAN: Sure.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: We have to be very accurate in what we're saying here in terms of saying the courts are closed in the province. That's not quite accurate. So, yes, some of the courts were disrupted and we saw closures – some of the courts, yes.

J. HOGAN: If we could just go back to the Support Enforcement, 2.1.03, Salaries, which was budgeted in '25-'26 for \$1.034 million and has been moved downwards to \$993,000 in '26-'27. I think the answer I heard was that the salaries are being rightsized. I'm not sure who answered it, sorry, but can they clarify what they mean by rightsizing salaries?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The ADM for Corporate and Strategic Services will address that.

B. STEELE: I think the question is why is the budget being decreased? We've had one vacant position that was there for six months and several enforcement officers that were vacant. So some of these people were hired at a lower step level. So the salary plan, we didn't require the full \$1 million, so we put it in at the actual cost for step one.

J. HOGAN: Just because when you said rightsized, it sounded like a person's salary

had been changed as opposed to a new person coming in or something.

B. STEELE: Yeah, with the salary plan, we look at it and try to fit the dollar value to the value of the staff salary at the time. So if we have a vacant position, it's budgeted at step one. Usually when people come into government, they're at a step one, which would be lower than somebody that's been there for five, six, seven years.

J. HOGAN: Thank you for that. That clears it up.

2.2.01, Criminal Law, we talked a little bit about Crown attorneys, and we talked a little bit about hiring Crown attorneys. I think it's fair to say that there's been some challenges in the past so it's great that six out of six were hired from last year's budget. I think that's a big success story.

I guess I'd ask what led to the success of that when there's been some struggles historically about hiring Crown attorneys throughout the province.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'll direct that to the Director of Public Prosecutions, or the ADM for criminal law.

L. STEAD: I think we have focused a lot on our articling program. We have hired as many articling students as we can. We've been hiring them across the province and some have stayed outside of St. John's which is great because those are the positions that are harder to fill.

As well, currently, our Labrador office is full. I think that's attributable to the Labrador salary adjustment that was put into place and is, I think, approved until next July. So we have a full complement in Labrador. This year, you see that we have quite a number of articling students. We have been able to recruit, as well, some people from outside of the province who have some connection to the province. That's how we've been able to get some more senior Crown attorneys.

It is our hope this year, again, hiring back articling students and we have had interest from, I'm going to say, younger lawyers from other government agencies. We've generally had some success, and I'm very happy about that.

J. HOGAN: Yes, you should be. Congratulations. That's a really good job on that.

On the Labrador salary adjustment, I think you said that ends in July? Can you clarify that?

L. STEAD: That is reviewed, generally, biannually. Every two years we go and ask for approval from Treasury Board to continue that. That's just constantly reviewed.

It has been successful for us, so we keep asking for it, and so far, so good.

J. HOGAN: Just to clarify, when someone takes that position in Labrador, within that two-year framework, they know that they're getting that salary adjustment for however long they have left in –

L. STEAD: Yes, for both of those years.

J. HOGAN: Until the two years are up.

L. STEAD: Then we apply again, and I guess they wait with bated breath to see if it's going to be approved. We tend to try to ask for it a little bit in advance.

They sign a return in service agreement. So when they come on with us, they'll sign a return in service agreement for that. That will be for the year and then the following year, if they stay with us, they'll sign it again.

In the meantime, if that's up, they might have to wait or if we're lucky enough to get our timing right, they don't necessarily have to wait to see if it's going to be approved.

J. HOGAN: Do you or does anyone know off hand what the cost of that salary adjustment would be if it's reapproved or approved in July of 2026?

L. STEAD: It would be 2027, because we're good, I think, this year.

J. HOGAN: Okay.

L. STEAD: It's \$25,000 per lawyer and we have six lawyers, currently; although, I hope to have seven soon.

We tend to pay it out of salary savings, is what Bonnie Steele would tell me. As you can see, we often have that. So it has been worthwhile for us, we have the money to do it and it's important to staff Labrador.

J. HOGAN: Yes.

I should probably know the answer to this, but it's not based on year of call? It's \$25,000 for everyone who's a –

L. STEAD: Flat.

J. HOGAN: – Crown attorney in Labrador?

L. STEAD: Initially, when it started it was tiered so that the less money you made, the more you got. We found that lawyers left then after a couple of years, and if you want to keep your people with a bit of experience, you need to keep a flat rate.

J. HOGAN: A little bit of mention about Jordan applications. I think we've probably been pretty successful here in Newfoundland and Labrador over a number of years of not having a lot of successful Jordan applications – you're nodding your head, I think you agree. I guess you were in charge for a lot of them, so –

L. STEAD: I can speak to moment in time. Right now, I can say that there are seven applications that relate to provincial Crown matters before the courts. Those are

applications filed, whether they'll ever be heard or pursued, I can't say.

We've had some, what we would say, favourable Jordan decisions that help narrow down what factors will be at play and what will be held against the Crown. I have to attribute it to a lot of hard work of the Crown attorneys who spend a lot of time making sure that they're ready to go, even if it's at personal expense and juggling and deciding how to make everything work, they work with the court to do that.

While it's a factor for us, I can't say it's not, I think, compared to the rest of the country, we are doing okay.

J. HOGAN: Things change, courts change, caseloads change, do you feel that we're in a better position than we were say two to five years ago, or worse position, anything extra to worry about, I guess, going forward in terms of Jordan?

L. STEAD: In terms of Jordan, I'm happy we're getting more staff and that we're able to spend the money to train them up to be handling more serious cases because they do tend to be junior. I think it's true of a lot of our workforces right now. I think it's good that there will be more Provincial Court judges to hear more matters.

Even five, six years ago I don't think we had many successful – I don't know if we had many applications, so I have become more concerned in recent years but I'm hoping that we're able to address that now, is what I would say.

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

CHAIR: I'm going to ask if there is anybody else who has any questions, then you go again.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

I just want to go back a bit to the Sherriff's officers with regard to the court closures and whatnot. As we do know, we do have some significant cases that are before the courts involving intimate partner violence, and I would not ask you to comment on the case itself, but we do know that there were some delays and we do know that made the media with the concern of the delay.

Are we taking from Sherriff's officers from different parts of the province to transport them or have them relocated in order to get these trials back on schedule, because we do know there was a significant delay in a significant case that is currently before the courts now?

What is that strategy and, again, if we're doing that, is it impacting access to justice in other courts here in the province?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I can't comment about any cases before the court, but we'll acknowledge clearly that Sherriff's officers is an area that is challenging but we are working very hard in terms of recruitment and supporting and retaining our Sherriff's officers. That is certainly a priority of our government going forward.

P. PARSONS: Also, we do know there was a delay, about a year out, to a very prominent case, again, that's happening here involving intimate partner violence here in St. John's with regard to translation services. What update can you give there? Again, not asking for any comment on the particular case that's before the courts but the services that are needed for those to proceed?

We do know that there has been a significant delay in a year and, of course, there is the fear that if it's so far out in the future that it gets dropped. Of course, we do know that this particular case, as well, involves a murder.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Again, I can't speak to any specific case before the

court, but translation services, there is investment in 2026 for funding for translation services for the courts.

With respect to scheduling of the courts, I wouldn't be able to speak to that because that's independent, but I will ask Shelley Organ, the CEO of Supreme Court, to address that question.

S. ORGAN: I can just add that yes, interpretation services are very limited, in this case, for this type of language, very limited in Newfoundland and Labrador. So we do have to go outside the province for that. We did have interpreters lined up for this case in September of 2025. They did come to court often on applications, that type of thing. The same interpreters that we had lined up for the trial; however, one of them was unable to start the trial, but we were searching for other interpreters. That is something that we're used to doing, going all over the country and looking for interpreters.

I will say, too, Ms. Turner and I are part of the Heads of Court Administration, FPT committee, and every court across Canada is struggling with this. Because it's a jury trial, we need to go straight through, we can't have breaks, and they have to be in person because we don't have the technology right now, but it's coming. So we're asking people to travel to Newfoundland for six or eight weeks straight.

That is difficult, but we're working on that. I can tell you, we have staff working on it now for the new date and we'll be on top of it.

P. PARSONS: As we do know, over the past number of years, not just here in Newfoundland and Labrador, but other provinces, of course, across the country, that there are new Canadians and there are new people moving to our provinces, so it's something that has been happening for years. It's something that we need to be prepared, again, because we know the

significance of some of these trials and these cases. It's where loss of life has occurred and there are many people who are impacted by it when there is such a delay.

Again, I know you can't comment on any particular case, but there's need for great concern when something like this gets delayed, especially a year out. I'll go out on a limb and ask this question, should we get those services in place sooner than next year, is there an opportunity at all for maybe the judiciary to make a different decision, or is that something that you can comment on?

S. ORGAN: No, that's not something I can comment on, sorry.

P. PARSONS: Okay.

Also, I'll conclude on this question for this section, when can we expect to have electronic monitoring, ankle bracelets in particular, implemented? We know it's something that's been talked about here in the House of Assembly for quite some time, on both sides. We know that there's a need, we know that there's a want. There wasn't anything mentioned today in the budget about that. When can we expect this to be implemented?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Before I answer that question, I just want to go back to the question with respect to the language and interpretation services. I'd like to mention the fact that I did visit Labrador, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, and had the opportunity to meet with judiciary and court staff in Labrador, as well, who had expressed some concerns and some of the problems they were having in terms of having interpreters. That's with respect to Labrador, but I've heard that as well throughout the province and that's why it was so important for us to make those investments in the budget, *Budget 2026*, with respect to interpretation services. I just wanted to respond to that previous question.

With respect to the question of electronic monitoring, as the Member is aware, we do have electronic monitoring in place for offenders who have been convicted of offences. The issue that we're now looking at is expanding that to pre-conviction offences, that is someone who would be on bail or out on judicial interim release. That is something that we are looking at carefully.

I have met with a number of important groups who have informed me and given me a great understanding about some of their concerns, ACT NOW NL, Janet McNaughton, as well as other groups. I've met with many individuals who have concerns about the fact that there isn't electronic monitoring for people on bail.

That is something that I'm carefully looking at with my officials. I've directed them to explore the viability of having that program, to do a feasibility study on that. That is something that we're definitely going to be looking at.

P. PARSONS: That's good to hear. I look forward to that update and when that expansion will be for people out on bail because, as you mentioned, we brought that in for convicted offenders.

That said, when people are in the system, we know that some day they're going to be coming back to society. Are there any plans to implement educational courses involving men and boys, in particular, about intimate partner violence while they're incarcerated after conviction?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: When we look at after conviction, in the community, this is something that is very important in terms of education. I have been working, as well, with the Minister of Women and Gender Equality. I think it's important together where our departments intersect in those areas that we look at different types of education for our youth. That's something that's very important.

This perhaps can be best directed to the Minister of Women and Gender Equality, but there are going to be a lot of initiatives with respect to violence prevention. I'll just mention with respect to the HMP, there are a number of programs that are in place. I've met with the 7th Step Society, for example. They're looking at self-help and peer-based recovery programs. On two occasions, I've met with the Corrections working group, a number of very dedicated individuals and also representatives from groups in our community who are also very concerned about that issue and want to see that there's programming, viable rehabilitative programming, for individuals upon release. There are many initiatives that we're looking at.

John Howard has been very involved in terms of programming at the HMP and looking at different programs with anger and emotions management that's offered by them.

Yes, that's very important. We think that's an initiative that has to be definitely explored and we're going to be focusing a lot of attention on ensuring that there is training and programming available.

P. PARSONS: Thank you.

I'll just conclude by saying, given that the portfolios have been combined by, obviously, the Premier's choice, I just want to put on record, I was disappointed when Women and Gender Equality was removed from your responsibility because you were, as stated, in a good, unique position under Justice and Public Safety, as well as Women and Gender Equality, to kind of merge those.

That said, I digress, we certainly are committed to working together on this on all sides of the House.

That's it for me for now.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Windsor Lake.

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

2.3.03 under Other Inquiries, right to Professional Services, \$2.1 million budgeted and \$3.1 million spent, if you could comment on that, please.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So this was revised up by \$1,011,100 from the '25-'26 budget, that increase was due to higher than anticipated legal services requirements for the Innu inquiry and costs associated with the Independent Review Committee on the Churchill Falls MOU.

I can break that down, if you wish?

J. HOGAN: Yeah, I guess the total cost spent to date on the review panel inquiry.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So on the MOU inquiry, the Churchill Falls MOU, it was \$611,250.

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

I guess in large part, the budget Estimates for '26-'27 would cover, I guess, about a month of that panel and the rest would be for the Innu inquiry?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: If you wish, I can provide the budget breakdown, specifically. Did you want me to give you that now or later?

J. HOGAN: You can provide that later, that's fine.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay.

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yeah.

J. HOGAN: Electoral Districts Boundaries Commission, 2.3.07, this is a new item, \$1.138 million allocated for this. Minister,

maybe you could just explain to the public what this is?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'll give you a description of the Electoral Districts Boundaries Commission. This is to establish a budget for the Electoral Districts Boundaries Commission as per the legislation, which is the *Electoral Boundaries Act*. What that act requires is that electoral boundaries be established every 10 years.

That's where we are with that. I can give you some indication of the salaried positions and what the professional services cost are, or we can provide it later?

J. HOGAN: Thank you, yes, you can provide that later.

A question I would have, I'm just going by memory, I think that the legislation says that the Electoral Districts Boundaries Commission shall be struck as soon as possible or practicable after March 31, so we're here now, we're 22 days past that.

Can the minister provide an answer as to when she will work with the Speaker – I think it's the Speaker that does this as well – to strike this Committee.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I can say that now that the budget has been announced, we're going to act on that very expeditiously.

J. HOGAN: I'm not sure if the minister or anybody knows if there's an end date on the requirement of when that has to be done?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The deputy minister will address that question.

G. SMITH: There's a requirement to have that report filed with the House of Assembly in the fall. I don't remember the exact wording of the section, but in terms of what I have to do to make sure that happens –

J. HOGAN: So you have a time crunch.

G. SMITH: – my deadline is when the House is sitting in the fall of 2026.

J. HOGAN: So what you mean is they should strike the Committee as soon as possible?

G. SMITH: Yes, that's correct.

J. HOGAN: All right.

Thank you, we're okay for section two.

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

CLERK: 2.1.01 to 2.4.01 inclusive, Legal and Related Services.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 to 2.4.01 inclusive, Legal and Related Services, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, subheads 2.1.01 through 2.4.01 carried.

CHAIR: I'm going to ask the Clerk to call the next subhead.

CLERK: 3.1.01 to 3.2.01 inclusive, Law Courts.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 to 3.2.01 inclusive, Law Courts, carry?

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

I'll ask the minister if it's possible that we can receive a copy of the minister's binder? I understand that's standard protocol or practice?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes, we will provide that after Estimates.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

I have no further questions in this particular section.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Windsor Lake.

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

This 3.1.01, Salaries for Supreme Court, two standard questions: Why was the budget revised downwards in '25-'26 and why is it revised downwards in '26-'27, as well?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So '25-'26 was decreased due to vacancies and delays during the recruitment process. So that also included positions eligible for claim under the federal cost-shared agreements.

With respect to the '26-'27 Estimates down by \$272,100 from '25-'26, that decrease was due to the conclusion of the federal funding agreement, partially offset by new resources. So the seven positions that have been approved in the budget, which are four court officers, two legal officers/solicitors and one manager of Corporate Services.

J. HOGAN: Can you advise what the vacancies were to make up that \$800,000-ish?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: We don't have a list with us at this moment, but we can provide that.

J. HOGAN: Okay, thank you.

I just wasn't clear on that answer about it's being revised downwards from \$8.3 million

to \$8.1 million, I think either partially or fully because of the expiration of a federal-provincial agreement. Can you just clarify what that federal-provincial agreement provided for?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The ADM of Corporate and Strategic Services will answer your question.

B. STEELE: That's in relationship to supervised parenting.

J. HOGAN: So the feds were funding partially those positions, now they're not. Does that mean those positions are now gone and we're short those positions in the Supreme Court that they've had during the course of the existence of that agreement?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So the ADM for Courts and Justice Services will answer that.

M. NOSEWORTHY: So those positions under that agreement were not being utilized. That's why the agreement concluded.

J. HOGAN: So when you say they weren't being utilized, they weren't filled positions?

M. NOSEWORTHY: No, they weren't.

J. HOGAN: Okay. Were they not filled because they were of no value to the Supreme Court or because you couldn't find anyone to fill the positions?

M. NOSEWORTHY: So it was a federal agreement that was entered into but there was no opportunity to avail of the funding at the Supreme Court, including filling the positions.

J. HOGAN: Just maybe you can elaborate on what you mean, there was no opportunity to avail of the funding?

M. NOSEWORTHY: So this was an agreement that was entered into and the

funding was put in the Supreme Court's budget but there was no identified use for the funding or the positions at Supreme Court and the agreement just concluded.

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

The federal revenue – I'm not an accountant – I think less revenue came in than was anticipated – the brackets. So why did the JPS anticipate over \$1 million in federal revenue and only received \$373,000?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The decrease in the revenue was due to less than anticipated expenditures eligible for reimbursement under the federal agreement.

J. HOGAN: Reimbursement for what under what federal agreement?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Victim services.

J. HOGAN: I'll just move on to Provincial Court, 3.2.01, an increase of almost exactly \$5 million in Salaries. Can you explain that please?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes, I can. I can say that reflects the judges' salary increases and additional resources, which are the 51 positions approved in *Budget 2026*. That will include seven judges, eight secretaries for the judges, 23 court officers and 13 support staff.

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

Can you advise at this time where the seven judges will be going in the province?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes, I can. There will be one in Stephenville, Grand Falls-Windsor, St. John's, Harbour Grace, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, one for the unified bail court and one for the traffic court.

J. HOGAN: Which unified court?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The bail court.

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

There's a budget, a two-page document, I guess, it was handed out today, which says over \$1.7 million to create seven additional Provincial Court judges. Is that the right amount for seven judges?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'll ask the ADM for Corporate and Strategic Services to address that.

B. STEELE: The \$1.7 million that was announced was for seven judge positions but we allocated it for part of the year because the hiring of the judges and the assignment would take a little bit of time. For this fiscal, there's only a portion of it.

J. HOGAN: Okay, that makes sense.

Say for fiscal year '27-'28, what will be the cost of seven new judges?

B. STEELE: We'll get that number for you.

J. HOGAN: Okay.

The same question, I guess. The readout says \$2.4 million to create new court staff positions. Obviously, that'll take time. It's not going to happen today.

B. STEELE: Yes.

J. HOGAN: I assume that \$2.4 million would be the estimate about what will be spent this year depending on hiring, so could you provide the total amount for a full fiscal year?

B. STEELE: We will. It was allocated for nine months out of the 12.

J. HOGAN: Nine months. Okay, great. Thank you. That's helpful.

CHAIR: The Member for St. George's - Humber.

H. CORMIER: Thank you, Chair.

It seems like everybody is having so much fun, I wanted to jump in on it tonight.

Minister, you recently shared an update from the Provincial Court Working Group, what measures does this budget implement to address the challenges identified by the group?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I had mentioned earlier about the Provincial Court Working Group and how – first of all, I'm very appreciative of the incredible work that they have accomplished so far. As my deputy minister had indicated earlier as well, they have committed to staying on to support us going forward. Their assistance and their expertise will be very beneficial to us because now that we have these new investments in our budget, we can work with them as well to obtain advice and to ensure that we're tweaking this so that it's to the benefit of everyone in our legal system.

I can say that, as I mentioned before, we are investing \$8.3 million in supporting our courts in the budget. We've already heard about the great investments of the new Provincial Court judges across the province, 51 new court staff, court officers, audio-visual modernization to support the virtual bail court. I believe these investments are going to go a long way to giving our courts the support that they need and that they haven't had for many years.

It is our goal to support them in ensuring timely access to justice. That's what this is all about.

H. CORMIER: Thank you.

One and done. That's it, Chair, thanks.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I believe the ADM for Corporate and Strategic Services has a response.

B. STEELE: No, just an update.

Just on the judges' salaries for next year. This year was \$1.7 million and next year, full year, it's \$2.3 million.

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

CLERK: 3.1.01 to 3.2.01 inclusive, Law Courts.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 to 3.2.01 inclusive, Law Courts, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, subheads 3.1.01 through 3.2.01 carried.

CHAIR: Do we want another little break before we go on to the next subsection?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: We'll take 10 minutes.

Recess

CHAIR (Power): Ready to go?

I now ask the Clerk to call the next subhead.

CLERK: 4.1.01 to 4.2.02 inclusive, Public Protection.

CHAIR: Shall 4.1.01 to 4.2.02 inclusive, Public Protection, carry?

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

I'd like to ask how many public complaints did the Commission receive in the past 12 months? This is in regard to – oh, I'm sorry, my apologies, I've jumped ahead.

How many police officers are there currently in the force? How many new recruits will be joining the force this year? How many have left in the previous year?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: With respect to the officers, the total staffing complement is 609, that includes 452 officers and 150 civilians.

With respect to recruits, I'm going to pass that on to the ADM of Public Safety and Correctional Services, just to give us the accurate number. I know I attended the cadet graduation just recently; it was a great experience. I believe there were 18 graduated then. There's going to be another group cohort in September and there will be another in January, but the ADM can elaborate on that for us.

Thank you.

K. HARDING: I'll forward it to you, Chief.

P. ROCHE: Yes, I'd love to.

S. O'LEARY: There you go.

P. ROCHE: Thank you, Minister.

Ms. O'Leary, thank you again.

You're looking for how many cadets or recruits we've just hired or are planning?

S. O'LEARY: Yes.

P. ROCHE: So in 2023, we hired 17 cadets out of the Atlantic Police Academy. In 2024, there were 13 cadets hired from Atlantic

Police Academy, as well as nine experienced officers. In 2025, we had 17 cadets graduate, as well as two experienced officers, and we just recently hired 18 graduates last month.

There is a class of 20 that will be finishing and coming back for their on-the-job training the end of May. They will graduate and be sworn in as police officers on September 2.

In addition to that, 19 more will be selected. We're in the process of recruiting and selecting those young persons to go for training to start in August. They'll be in PEI by the end of August, then they'll be back here by the middle of December for their on-the-job training and they'll, again, graduate next year. As well, we're continuing to recruit for a class of next January of 20.

S. O'LEARY: Okay.

P. ROCHE: So it's an ongoing process for us.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, thank you.

How many public complaints did the Commission receive in the past 12 months? Is this an increase or decrease over the year before that?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So I'll just say the complaints that were filed right up to March 31, 2026, were 133. That would be 64 that were accepted, 43 dismissed, nine withdrawn and 17 awaiting decision. There were 81 resolved or concluded in '25-'26, but when we look at '24-'25, there were 114 complaints filed and, I'll even go back to '23-'24, there were 55 complaints filed.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

In regard to the Serious Incident Response Team, how many cases is the Serious Incident Response Team currently investigating?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: There are four active files. I can tell you that there were 34 files opened in '25-'26; 35 files were closed; four trickled in from 2024 but they were closed in 2025.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

So I'm looking for statistics here, quite obviously, there's a theme going, so thank you.

How many classification officer and community officer positions are currently vacant and how many total positions are there?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: In order to give the specifics, I'll direct that question to the chief, if possible.

OFFICIAL: (Inaudible.)

K. HARDING: We have four classification officers at HMP and all positions are filled.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

What initiatives are currently being undertaken to address staffing shortages at HMP? I'm not sure if that answers it, but are there any changes to the job vacancy numbers as a result?

K. HARDING: We did have 40 vacancies of corrections officers. We currently have a class that will graduate in May, which will be 20 new corrections officers added to that 40. We have another class starting in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and it will be approximately 20 new students at that class as well.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Do corrections officers receive support for skills advancement training and raises to incentivize skills development?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Can you repeat the question, please, the ADM didn't hear that?

S. O'LEARY: Yes, no problem.

Do corrections officers receive support for skills advancement training and raises to incentivize skills development?

K. HARDING: I can't answer that question right now but I will get the answer for you.

S. O'LEARY: Okay. Thank you.

Is there any change in the amount of money that the provincial government receives from the federal government for housing federal prisoners in our facilities?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I can start with this response. The amount paid to the province to house federal inmates is \$376.85 per inmate per day. We do know that the revenue will decrease as federal inmates are moved to federal prisons, when it is necessary to accommodate the increase in provincial intake numbers.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

How many federal prisoners are we currently housing? What portion of the inmate population does that represent and is that an increase or a decrease over the last year?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The ADM will respond.

K. HARDING: I'll have to get that information for you. I don't have that information available right now.

S. O'LEARY: Okay. Thank you.

Could you provide the number of inmates currently in each facility, as well as their maximum capacity?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I can start this and if there's anything further, the ADM can expand on it.

Well, first of all, we know the capacity for HMP is up to, approximately, 230. Right now, we have on remand, 295. With respect to sentenced inmates, there are 90. Parol suspension, there are 13 and dual status are 24.

The ADM can elaborate further if –

K. HARDING: Yes, in Bishop's Falls, we have 28; Clarendville, we have 33 inmates; Corner Brook, we have three; Labrador, we have 31; HMP, we have 236; St. John's Lockup, we have eight; the RCMP on the Island, we have five; and the RCMP in Labrador, we have nine. So we have a total right now of 420 inmates.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

How far along is Pathways in its new employment program? I believe there were two phases to that project with the second introducing participants to the construction and trades industry.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The ADM is just looking for that information, one moment.

K. HARDING: No, I'll have to get back to you with that information.

S. O'LEARY: Okay, thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Windsor Lake.

J. HOGAN: Just look at 4.1.01, Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, Salaries: budgeted '25-'26, \$68 million and budgeted in '26-'27, \$70.9 million, so an increase of about \$2.9 million. Can you explain that, please?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That increase is mainly due to the RNC

negotiated salary increases. In addition, the approval of the 21 new RNC officers over the two years that you see in *Budget 2026*. As well, there are 11 in '26-'27.

J. HOGAN: Just to clarify, the 21 new RNC officers are announced over '26-'27 and '27-'28?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes, that is correct, in budget 2026-27.

J. HOGAN: This is similar question to the judges; how much salary has been allocated for new RNC officers in '26-'27?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The ADM for Corporate and Strategic Services will address that.

B. STEELE: Right now, there's \$1.4 million for the officers and '27-'28 is \$2.8 million. In '26-'27, we've only allocated nine months because of the recruitment time, we're taking off three months there. So, next year, it will be for a full fiscal.

J. HOGAN: That full fiscal would be a full complement of 21 officers?

B. STEELE: Yes.

J. HOGAN: I know the chief rattled off some numbers very quickly about members joining the ranks over the last number of years, how many do you anticipate joining the RNC in '26-'27?

P. ROCHE: I'm sorry if I rattled them off a little bit fast for you, Sir, would you like me to go over them again?

J. HOGAN: No, no. Chief, I can keep up with you.

P. ROCHE: Thank you.

We have 18 who were just sworn in this past April. There will be 20 sworn in on September 2, officers. There are 19 in the process of being selected who will go away

and start their training in August. They will be sworn in next April and we are selecting 20 more to start next January who will be sworn in September of 2027. Does that help?

J. HOGAN: No, because I'm going to ask this specific question. Out of the 21 who are allocated for budget '26-'27 and '27-'28, how many of those 21, because what you're talking about are officers that have been in the system before this budget, so I'm just wondering how many of the 21 new RNC officers will be hired in '26-'27 and how many will be hired in '27-'28?

P. ROCHE: So I guess to explain it, we are in a constant recruiting phase. It depends upon how seats I'm allocated from APA. Right now, Director Minten and I have a very good working relationship. I have 19 guaranteed for this coming fall – that could go up. It depends on their capacity, as they service all of the Atlantic region.

That's the best answer I can give you at this point in time.

J. HOGAN: I understand – go ahead, Kim, sorry.

K. HARDING: I think I'll try to clarify the question.

J. HOGAN: Or the answer.

K. HARDING: Sorry, the answer.

In September, the chief will swear in 20 new officers. They will be 20 in '26-'27 and then in January, he will swear in another 19 officers that come back. Actually, they'll be sworn in by the end of March. That will be a total of 39 officers that will be sworn in underneath '26-'27 budget.

J. HOGAN: Okay, thank you.

I know the RNC have spoken about the size of the membership with the RNC, and you'll know more about this than I do, about being

a certain ratio, police-to-population ratio, compared to other provinces around the country.

Can someone comment on that and whether the increase of 21 RNC officers will meet what the RNC have asked for in terms of the police-to-population ratio?

K. HARDING: The police-to-pop ratio is fluent. I can tell you that this month, Statistics Canada is going to release a new report, police resources in Canada, which will provide the updated police-to-pop ratio. Once that report is released, we will be able to do an analysis, whether or not the new additional resources that have been added over the last number of years meets the national number or whether we are above or below.

J. HOGAN: Okay. Thank you.

I'll just move on to the RCMP. As the budget announced today, I think 25 new RCMP members, can the minister advise under what head in 4.1.02 the allocation for those new RCMP members is?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Under Professional Services, that item, there's an increase mainly due to the negotiated salary increases for RCMP officers and funding approved in *Budget 2026* for 25 RCMP officers over two years. Also, we have the cost-shared federal agreement with the National Crime Prevention Strategy is included there as well.

J. HOGAN: I ask that because it doesn't come under the Salaries line. That's not Salaries for RCMP members, correct?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That's right.

J. HOGAN: So an additional almost \$7 million would cover off the portion of 25 RCMP members for '26-'27?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The ADM for Corporate and Strategic Services has something to add there as well.

B. STEELE: For this new initiative, the salary cost for the year '25-'26 is \$3.3 million and because it's part of the year for nine months, next year, it's annualized at \$5.5 million.

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

The \$5.5 million would be for the full complement of 25 new members?

B. STEELE: Yes.

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

Minister, can you comment on the vacancy rate for the RCMP in the province?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I can say that I have met with Assistant Commissioner Patrick Cahill, who has indicated that they're in good shape when it comes to the level of officers in the RCMP, but I can also direct this for any further addition to Kim, the ADM in that area.

K. HARDING: Currently, under the RCMP police provincial contract, they have 466 funded positions underneath our contract. Of the 466, there are a number of soft vacancies and hard vacancies. The hard vacancy, which are positions not filled, that's approximately 23, as of today. Again, that number changes as well.

J. HOGAN: Can you explain how the contract works between the province and the federal government in relation to the RCMP and any money that the provincial government allocates to the budget, then the federal government has to match a certain portion of it? Is there any guarantee that if we put money into the RCMP, and we want it for new members, that the federal government has to match that money to make sure that we get new members here?

K. HARDING: Can you clarify the question for me?

J. HOGAN: Sure.

So the federal RCMP decides where they're sending the members. Part of the reason that we have vacancies here, I mean, we have to push for members being sent to our province as opposed to other parts of the country. So even if we increase the budget, is there any guarantee that we will get those 25 members in Newfoundland and Labrador?

K. HARDING: So what we have been told is that there was an agreement a number of years ago where anybody that was applying for the RCMP, they would have a return policy to Newfoundland and Labrador. What we've been advised by Commissioner Cahill is that has been very successful and those members that wanted to come home to Newfoundland and Labrador have returned home.

J. HOGAN: So has the vacancy rate gone down since that measure was taken?

K. HARDING: Yes, absolutely. The vacancy rate has gone down since that initiative, and Newfoundland and Labrador has actually one of the lowest vacancy rates in Canada, compared to other provinces because of that incentive.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Chair.

I just have one question for the minister.

One of the pillars of this government's platform is safer communities. While many people across government help with our community safety, our first thought often goes to law enforcement officers. How does this budget support our law enforcement community?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So I can say, again, one of our important pillars in our platform as a new government has been to ensure that there are safer communities and that every resident of the province feels safe in their homes and in their communities. Of course, we know that law enforcement officers are a key ingredient in that safety element, so that's why we're investing in the number of police officers that we are. That's 46 new police officers: 21 RNC and 25 new RCMP.

I think, also, I'd like to, at this point, reference the Special Constable pilot program. I'm very excited about that program. That's also to support our police officers, and our government will be implementing that Special Constable pilot program. It's important because it's going to see the new role of Special Constable.

What do they do? They're going to work alongside RNC sworn officers to support the important work that they do every day.

I've had many productive meetings with Chief Roche of the RNC as well as Assistant Commissioner Pat Cahill of the RCMP to talk about service delivery. We're really excited about the Special Constable because it's a very important initiative. I think it's going to also relieve some of the pressures that we see on our police officers. It's going to free them up so they can focus more on the core elements of policing that's important.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Minister, what new initiatives does your government plan to take to advance rehabilitation and ensure that inmates get the mental health and other supports that they require?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: We do have numerous programs that are in existence

right now at the HMP. I can provide a list of all of those programs, but we have different groups that offer and go into the facility, the John Howard Society, the 7th Step Society, various programs. We have AA meetings, NA meetings, pastoral care as well, and Turnings. I can say that I have met with these individuals and groups that go into the prison in terms of rehabilitation and the types of programs, and we're working with them.

We just recently, last week, had another meeting, which I attended. It was the second meeting that I had with the Corrections Working Group. One of the important issues that we talked about was rehabilitative programming and how important that is that there is proper programming so as to ensure that people that are released from custody are in better shape in terms of being able to go forward and reintegrate into society.

So that's very important because it's something that definitely has to be given serious attention because, obviously, if we have people being released and they're not getting the help and the rehabilitative programming that they need, then really it's going to impact the safety and security of our towns and communities because we can see recidivism and repeat offenders. So it's something very important that we have to focus on, which is programming, and we're very committed to that.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

So just to follow up on that, and I'm fully aware of the great work that many of these – many who are non-profits, of course – are doing in communities. So I'm just wondering if there are any new initiatives on top of the work that's already happening from these organizations, like Turnings and John Howard Society, et cetera?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: As I said, we're meeting with the stakeholders to look at implementing different types of

programming, that's something that's very important to us. We are new in our mandate and, obviously, it requires meeting with important stakeholders and being informed by them as to what the needs are in the HMP and other correctional facilities.

But that's something that we're definitely exploring with the necessary stakeholders and groups and individuals that have been very involved in this initiative and trying to encourage rehabilitation of offenders.

I must say, at this point, too, I want to thank them for the work that they're doing because, as you point out, they are – most of them – non-profit, yet they're very committed to ensuring that we have a safer community and that we also are ensuring that the well-being of our inmates is also considered and important.

S. O'LEARY: That's right, for all of us.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes.

S. O'LEARY: That is correct. Excellent. Thank you.

Could we have some more detailed information about the electronic monitoring program – I know that was certainly referenced earlier – like, the name of the vender, the value of the contract, et cetera, what is included for that fee?

I assume that when a person with a monitor goes where they're not supposed to, that the police are immediately notified and act on it.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Just to reiterate – I know I have spoken about this earlier tonight – right now, we have 31 offenders on electronic monitoring; 19 of those are subject to conditional sentence orders, 11 probation orders and one on temporary absences.

To add to this, I will ask Mike, ADM for Courts and Justice Services, to elaborate.

M. NOSEWORTHY: In terms of the name of the program or the entity for ankle monitoring, it's called Buddi, and that's an acronym.

In addition to what the minister outlined, I can advise that there are currently 30 ankle monitoring bracelets in use, as of today, six are currently being repaired or checked to see whether they need repairs. We have an additional 11 on hand, unused and available right now.

S. O'LEARY: Okay. Thank you.

This is under Youth Secure Custody. Actual spending was higher than expected last year and the budget this year has increased, so what cost pressures is Youth Secure Custody facing?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Can you just repeat that question? We want to identify exactly what you're referring to.

S. O'LEARY: Absolutely.

It's under Youth Secure Custody. The actual spending was higher than expected last year and the budget, of course, has increased this year. What cost pressures are they facing? What is causing that to increase?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I can say that there's been an increase in overtime costs due to higher staffing requirements. I think that can be attributed to complex cases, from what I understand, unless the ADM wants to expand on that any further, to elaborate.

K. HARDING: Yes, the increase is contributed by overtime. The reason the overtime costs have increased is because there are a number of complex cases where there is a policy where youths have to be separated and not kept, therefore more youth care workers are required to supervise these youths; therefore more overtime is incurred.

S. O'LEARY: Understood. Thank you.

This will be my final question for this. This is one that comes from my experience formerly as a municipal leader but certainly from the public as well. One of the questions that continues to come forward is about foot patrol officers. So I put forward that question about whether or not there's any intent to have the RNC provide foot patrol officers because there seems to be an ongoing call within community to see police officers on the street, obviously, in pairs or whatever, obviously, for their own safekeeping and all the rest, but to integrate more in community. Just wondering if there's any intent to see more of those.

Thank you.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So just recently I attended, with the chief of police and a number of groups with the Downtown Safety Coalition, and that topic of foot patrolling came up.

Perhaps the Chief can take this opportunity to speak.

P. ROCHE: Thank you, Ms. O'Leary.

As in past years, we look at events taking place within the community, and I think you're referencing more specifically the downtown core area.

S. O'LEARY: Yes, that's correct.

P. ROCHE: So it's a good time, we had a meeting earlier this morning surrounding these sorts of issues. We will continue to evaluate and provide foot patrol, not just with officers, but certainly with our mounted unit, as well as with our Community Services unit and we can utilize our pedal bike services as well.

Last year, when the mall was open in the downtown area, during specific events like the Georger Street Festival and the like, we

certainly provided officers there on foot patrol, as such.

It may be liked by the community and felt that it's warranted; it's not always necessarily the most efficient way for officers to respond, shall we say, but we provided it last year during the summer months. We're making plans to continue with that this summer, just not in the downtown area; the Bannerman Park area, Queens Road area and other areas that are brought to our attention that need it.

S. O'LEARY: Absolutely, in the beautiful St. John's East - Quidi Vidi District.

Thank you.

P. ROCHE: You're most welcome.

CHAIR: The hon. Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I'm going to go to subhead 4.1.02, the RCMP. During the election, it was also a commitment to reopen the RCMP detachment in Grand Bank. Is that still a commitment and is it going to be implemented?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: With respect to the RCMP and their operational plans, I think perhaps it would be best to direct that to the ADM in this area.

K. HARDING: With the contract with the RCMP, we have a procurement policy when it comes to different RCMP buildings, so that will be taken into consideration. There will be an analysis done, but it's also done through the RCMP in Ottawa. The province would have to work underneath that initiative to basically say when it's going to be approved.

P. PARSONS: Okay. So I guess my next question is, respectfully, that commitment was made, if you can't make the decision,

why was that election promise made? I guess that would be for the minister.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'm going to take that away and look at that. We'll get back to you on it.

P. PARSONS: Okay.

Also, for the 25 new hires for the RCMP, as we know, in particular, Conception Bay North has been very vocal. There have been numerous meetings which you and I have attended with our community leaders out in the Conception Bay North region for joint council and whatnot.

Will you and your department have control over where those RCMP officers will go? Can we expect to have RCMP presence increased, in particular, in Trinity-Conception-Placentia, which is the area that is impacted?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I can say that I meet with the leadership of both the RCMP and the RNC, but when it comes to operational delivery, that is something that is left in their purview.

With respect to directing the police, I'm sure you can understand that that's not appropriate for me as Minister of Justice and Public Safety to do.

P. PARSONS: Thank you.

Minister, have you had any recent, I guess, formal meetings or conversations about federal legislative change with regard to bail and catch and release, if you will, that we've seen recently in the media, because, ultimately, there is a call for change, modern change with letting people out, especially repeat offenders? Is there anything there federally that you have done to lobby our federal counterparts, formally?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes, that is very important to me, as Minister of Justice and Public Safety. In that regard, I have met

with Minister Sean Fraser and discussed those issues, yes.

P. PARSONS: Any update? Did he give any commitment or any indication that there's going to be an actual change or an update?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Well, there is legislation that they're putting before the House of Commons, so those are ongoing discussions that we're having with them.

P. PARSONS: That's great.

Also, can you provide an update on the mobile mental health crisis teams in the province and advise whether they are fully staffed?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I can advise that even in the budget announcement today, the Premier did announce in our budget that there will be more mobile crisis units that will be implemented in our province.

I'll direct it to the ADM – actually, we'll get back to you with the exact numbers where they are, but I'm very excited about the initiative that was announced in our budget today by the Premier and our commitment to implementing more mental health mobile crisis units in our province.

P. PARSONS: It's encouraging, we definitely need more. We know that came out of the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and the recommendations that have been made, but currently do we know if they're fully staffed, the ones that are currently in place now?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: As I said, I'll get back to you with those specifics.

P. PARSONS: Okay.

In Justice and Public Safety, 4.2.01, in Adult Corrections, there's only an increase of \$240,600 over what was spent last year with this year's budget. So does this mean

that there are no additional positions planned for this year in our corrections system?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So which variance explanation are you looking for again?

P. PARSONS: 4.2.01, under Adult Corrections.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes, I have that.

P. PARSONS: Salaries.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Under Salaries. Thank you, that's what I was looking for.

P. PARSONS: Public Protection, Salaries.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So under Salaries, that reflects the increased overtime cost as a result of staff shortages within the Adult Custody Division.

P. PARSONS: So there are no new positions?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The ADM will elaborate. My understanding is that there are none.

K. HARDING: There are no new positions for this fiscal year. There were 25 new positions allocated in '25-'26.

P. PARSONS: Okay.

Do we still have individuals sleeping on cots at HMP?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: My understanding is that there are. I will get an accurate number from the ADM on that.

P. PARSONS: Okay.

K. HARDING: Currently, there are 25, basically, sitting on the cots at the HMP.

P. PARSONS: Okay.

We do know that based on media reports as well that there were struggles, of course, when it's raining and when we have inclement weather, as well as rodents – rodent problems that the individuals who are utilizing the cots are experiencing, and problems. So what is the update on that situation with regard to the rain that is getting in and, again, the rodent problem at HMP?

K. HARDING: With regard to the rain, TI is currently doing renovations at HMP. Some of those renovations, the first phase is going to be completed the end of June or July, then there's going to be another assessment and further renovations will be completed.

As for the rodents, HMP have a service which comes in on a quarterly basis or on a need basis to basically deal with that problem.

P. PARSONS: Okay.

Just before I move away from that topic again, just to go back to the media. I actually heard an interview from an inmate who was sleeping and woke up to a rodent actually giving birth in the leg of his pants. That has been reported by local media here. So we do know that rodents are a significant problem in HMP. So, I guess, to hear that they come in when needed, it would sound like it's needed consistently until this can be eradicated. Any further, I guess, expanded efforts to combat this?

K. HARDING: They do have a schedule when they do come in. I can clarify what the schedule is, whether it's weekly, monthly or quarterly, and then if there are any incidents, they'll basically be called in as well.

P. PARSONS: Okay, thank you.

Also, can you please provide a breakdown of the number of positions and number of vacancies at HMP, currently, 24 were reported last year.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'd just like to address your previous question as well.

We all know the state of HMP and it's very well-known to us. I'm sure you've probably visited there; I know that I have had the opportunity to do that. We recognize that facility has to be closed and that's why we're supporting the construction of the new facility, which is planned to happen in the fall of 2029.

I think that's important to put on the record that we're all aware of the difficulties and the challenges that HMP poses for inmates and correctional staff who have to work there. The safety and well-being of the inmates in HMP is of primary concern to our government.

With respect to your second question, that was in regard to –?

P. PARSONS: A breakdown of the number of positions at HMP and the number of the vacancies, currently, as 24 were reported last year.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Currently, the positions in the adult custody, total staffing complement is 418. That's 335 correctional officers, 45 management, 38 support staff.

With respect to adult probation, did you want me to explain that or can I provide that later, those numbers, or was it just in custody?

P. PARSONS: You can provide that later.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Later?

P. PARSONS: Sure.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay, I'll do that.

CHAIR: Your time has expired, I'll come back to you.

P. PARSONS: Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Windsor Lake.

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

Just back to the RNC. I know there have been programs in place with regards to bursaries to help individuals pay for the cost of the Atlantic Police Academy. In the budget is there any funding for any such programs?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So I'll ask the chief to address that.

P. ROCHE: Thank you.

Mr. Hogan, could you repeat your question? It was a little hard to hear you over here.

J. HOGAN: Sure. Maybe, Chief, you can talk about the success of bursaries that were provided to people in this province to go to PEI to the Atlantic Police Academy – so funding provided to them to keep the cost down, to encourage them to go so they can afford it, so they can come back here and be great members of the RNC. So maybe could you speak to that?

The question was is there any money in this budget for those programs to continue? I'm not sure why you would know that but –

P. ROCHE: Thank you very much.

We started that bursary back in 2023 and it was a sum of \$10,000, at that particular point in time. Over the course of that, we saw how successful that was with our recruiting and certainly alleviating the financial burden for the total funds for the APA, which is about \$32,000 before they

travel back and forth, which is a substantial amount. It was probably holding us back getting potential candidates who are older and trying to go from one career to another.

We've upped that, it was up to \$15,000 in the last two classes, shall we say. I've been having ongoing conversations with the Department of Justice and Public Safety as to how we could even alleviate that even greater.

When the cadets are home on their on-the-job training, they are put on a salary with us at the student rate. So that's for about eight weeks, I believe, thereabouts, that they're here with us. I'm working with JPS as to how we can even improve on that even more so we can continue to give the \$15,000 bursary and maybe even extend that on-the-job training funds a little longer.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I just wanted to say thanks to the chief because he addressed the issue with respect to the bursary.

To address the budget question that you asked because there is no further new funding for bursaries in our budget, just a continuation.

J. HOGAN: Sorry, just to be clear. The 21 new RNC officers for '26-'27 and '27-'28, do they have access to any bursaries at this point in time?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes, they do. But you asked if there was any new additional.

J. HOGAN: Okay, I guess that was the wrong way to ask it. They have access to the same bursaries that existed previously?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That is correct.

J. HOGAN: Okay, thank you.

I just want to ask a follow-up question on the issue with the RCMP or the question on the RCMP Grand Bank detachment. Just for clarity, does the minister have the authority to decide where RCMP detachments go in this province?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yeah, so as I indicated before, and I'll restate that response, certainly there's consultation with RNC and RCMP. We advise and we will have those discussions, but it is ultimately the decision of the RNC leadership and the RCMP leadership as to exactly where their resources are directed.

J. HOGAN: Okay. Thank you very much.

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

CLERK: 4.1.01 to 4.2.02 inclusive, Public Protection.

CHAIR: Shall 4.1.01 to 4.2.02 inclusive, Public Protection, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, subheads 4.1.01 through 4.2.02 carried.

CLERK: The total.

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 Justice and Public Safety, total heads, carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the Estimates of the Department of Justice and Public Safety carried?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Department of Justice and Public Safety carried without amendment.

CHAIR: At this time, I would like to thank the minister, the department officials and the Committee for their attendance.

The next meeting is Monday, May 4, at 6 p.m. to consider the Estimates of the Department of Social Supports and Well-Being, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

I ask for a mover for adjournment.

J. DWYER: I move to adjourn.

CHAIR: Moved by the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

The meeting is adjourned.

Thank you.

On motion, the Committee adjourned.