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Resources**

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Department of Environment and Climate Change

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Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

RESOURCE COMMITTEE

Department of Environment and Climate Change

Chair: Brian Warr, MHA

Vice-Chair: Jordan Brown, MHA

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

Clerk of the Committee: Kimberley Hammond

Appearing:

Department of Environment and Climate Change

Hon. Bernard Davis, MHA, Minister

Valerie Snow, Deputy Minister

Tara Kelly, Assistant Deputy Minister, Environment

Dr. Susan Squires, Assistant Deputy Minister, Climate Change

Robert Locke, Director, Pollution Prevention Division

Haseen Khan, Director, Water Resources Management Division

Victoria Woodworth-Lynas, Director, Policy, Planning and Natural Areas

Bonnie Steele, Departmental Controller

Debbie Marnell, Director of Communications

Kara Connors, Executive Assistant to the Minister

Also Present

Hon. John Abbott, MHA, Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development

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

Hon. Tom Osborne, MHA, Minister of Education

Chris Tibbs, MHA

Lela Evans, MHA

Bradley Russell, Director of Strategy, Official Opposition Office

Sonja Pritchett, Research Coordinator, Government Members' Office

Steven Kent, Sessional Political Support, Third Party

Jess Puddister, Sessional Support, Third Party Office

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Lela Evans, MHA for Torngat Mountains, substitutes for Jordan Brown, MHA for Labrador West.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Tom Osborne, MHA for Waterford Valley, substitutes for Paul Pike, MHA for Burin - Grand Bank.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Chris Tibbs, MHA for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, substitutes for Pleaman Forsey, MHA for Exploits, for a portion of the meeting

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Lisa Dempster, MHA for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, substitutes for Lucy Stoyles, MHA for Mount Pearl North.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, John Abbott, MHA for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, substitutes for Sherry Gambin-Walsh, MHA for Placentia - St. Mary's.

CHAIR (Warr): Good Morning.

We will finally get this under way. Anyway, great to have the department here this morning and to our Committee as well. We are a little short, but they will be trickling in momentarily.

My name is Brian Warr, MHA for Baie Verte - Green Bay, and I am happy to chair your meeting this morning. So before we get under way, I just wanted to announce our substitutions. Sitting in for the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's is the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi; substituting for the Member for Mount Pearl is the MHA for Cartwright - L'Anse Au Clair; substituting for the Member for Burin - Grand Bank is the Member for Waterford Valley.

MHA Forsey is here to deal with WorkplaceNL and he will be substituted by Chris Tibbs, MHA for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans once he is finished workplace health and safety. Substituting for the Member for Labrador West is the Member for Torngat Mountains.

We will have an unaffiliated Member come in shortly. MHA Trimper is going to join us this

morning. So as we have done in the past, two of the Committee Members will offer MHA Trimper some time at the end, 10 minutes, if everybody is in agreement.

With regard to the department, always identify yourself. Just put up your hand. If the minister decides for someone to speak, just put up your hand, identify yourself, wait for your tally light to come on and proceed with your remarks.

We'll probably take, if necessary, a washroom break maybe halfway through. Members and officials are reminded not to make any adjustments to the chairs they're seated in; they've been all preprogrammed. So anyway, before we start, we're going to look at the minutes for May 3, and I look for a mover of acceptance for those minutes.

C. PARDY: So moved.

CHAIR: MHA Pardy.

Secunder? MHA Forsey.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Contra-minded?

Motion passed.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

CHAIR: So this morning we're going to consider the Estimates of the Department of Environment and Climate Change, and we will be starting off with workplace health and safety. I'm going to ask the Committee Members to introduce themselves, and we'll go to the department after.

C. PARDY: Craig Pardy, MHA, the historic District of Bonavista.

B. RUSSELL: Brad Russell, Director of Communications and Digital Strategy with the Office of the Official Opposition.

P. FORSEY: Pleaman Forsey, MHA for Exploits.

L. EVANS: Lela Evans, MHA for Torngat Mountains.

S. KENT: Steven Kent, Sessional Political Support for the Third Party.

J. PUDDISTER: Jess Puddister, Sessional Support for the Third Party Caucus Office.

S. PRITCHETT: Sonja Pritchett, Research Coordinator, Government Members' Office.

CHAIR: And if I could start here, please.

V. SNOW: Valerie Snow, Deputy Minister, Environment and Climate Change.

B. DAVIS: Bernard Davis, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, and representative of the beautiful and historic District of Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. STEELE: Bonnie Steele, Departmental Controller, Environment and Climate Change.

D. MARNELL: Debbie Marnell, Director of Communications.

S. SQUIRES: Susan Squires, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Climate Change branch.

T. KELLY: Tara Kelly, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Environment branch.

H. KHAN: Haseen Khan, Director of Water Resources.

R. LOCKE: Robert Locke, I'm the Director for Pollution Prevention.

K. CONNORS: Kara Connors, Minister Davis's EA.

V. WOODWORTH-LYNAS: Victoria Woodworth-Lynas, Director of Policy, Planning and Natural Areas.

CHAIR: Okay. Welcome to you all.

If I could have the Clerk call the first set of subheads, please.

CLERK (Hammond): Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Review, 6.1.01.

CHAIR: Shall 6.1.01 carry?

Some opening remarks from the minister.

B. DAVIS: Thank you very much, I'll take about an hour and half just to answer all your questions. In advance of them, we went through *Hansard* and answered every question that you could possibly answer, we hope.

But I do want to say a big thank you for the third opportunity to host our Estimates here in this hallowed hall. But the big thanks go to the people behind me and the many people that are over in the department that did all this work three times now to try to be prepared for this. So thank you to the staff. I'm lucky enough to have the best staff in all of government supporting what we are able to do in this department.

So thank you and good morning to everybody for being here today. I'm excited to do the Estimates for Environment and Climate Change. I'm also the minister responsible for labour and the Labour Relations Board, as well as the Labour Standards Division. Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Review Division as well, we're going to do that to kick off the Estimates today.

But I'm also responsible for some entities like the Multi-Materials Stewardship Board, WorkplaceNL, and the Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council.

I'll begin by highlighting some of the activities of the Department of Environment and Climate Change. As a department, we've focused on supporting environmental protection and enhancement through implementing water resource and pollution prevention regulations and policies and coordination of environmental impact assessments.

Our Climate Change Division focuses on developing strategies, policies, research, analysis and initiatives related to climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as efficiency.

It has been a wonderful learning opportunity to see how the department engages with stakeholders, organizations in support of environmental protection. Their work results in better outcomes from an environmental

protection perspective in Newfoundland and Labrador, and I've seen first-hand as a minister how the knowledgeable and dedicated staff in the department are advancing environmental and climate change actions within the province.

The Climate Change Action Plan and green economy is one of our pillars. Protecting the environment for future generations is a priority of our government. We continue to support Canada's goals for environmental protection and reducing carbon emissions, including achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. We all have a part to play when it comes to climate change. Every action we take today makes a difference tomorrow. Urgent effort is needed to meet our 2030 and 2050 greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and we're making progress, but we know much more needs to be done.

In 2019, the Climate Change Action Plan set out a course for immediate steps for green energy and the economy. This five-year plan is working toward net-zero emissions by 2050 and we know additional actions will be needed, as I've mentioned earlier. Of the 45 action items committed in the Climate Change Action Plan, 67 per cent of those have been completed; 33 per cent we've made significant progress on.

It's not just an effort of our department but it involves 11 other departments and agencies within government. We continue to work to advance the actions of the Climate Change Action Plan and achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, implementing programs that support transition to low-carbon global economy.

The federal government has also played a role in moving us towards the green economy. We are continuing to pursue opportunities to partner with our federal colleagues on opportunities that benefit Newfoundland and Labrador. The Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund is one of those partnerships. Through this federal program fund, with partnership with the provincial government, we've invested some \$89.4 million over the past five-year period to tackle climate change and lower energy bills to support clean, economic growth in the province.

Under this fund, we have some great projects that receive funding in the province. By 2030,

these programs and funds, organizations that we've funded, will deliver over 830,000 tons of cumulative greenhouse gas reductions and over 650 person-years of employment.

To date, we've invested \$78 million to support greenhouse gas reduction projects. There's more to come from a residential standpoint, commercial, transportation and industrial sectors and public buildings as well. For example, we made a recent announcement for fuel switching at Memorial University to change out the oil-fired burners to electrifying those. This will be a significant part of our electrification and will help stimulate clean growth.

We've also put talk into action with respect to the electric vehicle programs and oil to electric, and I'll talk about those for a quick second. We provided support to residents, both reducing greenhouse emissions and, as I mentioned before, to reduce their energy consumption as well as their energy bills and costs.

We announced an addition \$1.9 million in this budget for electric vehicle charging infrastructure and incentives, including \$2,500 for consumers to purchase or lease an electric vehicle and \$1,500 towards those plug-in hybrid vehicles. These initiatives is an expansion of the successful program that we had last year.

In the end of 2021, there was 284 battery electric vehicles operated in the province, up from 195 in 2020 and 113 in 2019. The demand for electric vehicles continues to grow and it's anticipated there will be hundreds more involved in the province by the end of 2022.

In addition, we've also announced an addition \$2 million to transition homes whose sole source of heat was oil to electric. This program will provide an additional \$2,500 to the last year's \$2,500 program to \$5,000 in this year's budget. This initiative is expanding on our program from last year and last year we had 100 applicants. So far this year we've received somewhere around 140 in the first four weeks of the program. So that's an impressive increase and we're very happy with that.

We've also increased the eligibility for the Home Energy Savings Program, which is the oil program, to increase the threshold from \$32,500

to \$52,500, which is going to finish out that program and help alleviate some concerns for some more people in this province. The eligible homes are single-family homes, row, or semi-detached houses. That's a non-repayable grant for up to \$5,000 to help energy efficiency. So all of those things are working in concert together.

In December of 2021, we announced the membership for the new Net-Zero Advisory Council. This is only the second one of its kind in the country. This council will identify and review near-term and foundational actions that the government can make to help Newfoundland and Labrador on a stronger path to achieve greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. The council will also advise on global trends to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the important use of carbon sinks, which is important for our province, for sure.

Each member of the council brings their own perspective on net-zero challenges and I'm thankful for their contributions and we're looking forward to hearing their advice. The opinions expressed by these individuals are their own and does not reflect the advice or conclusions of the council.

We continue to work and advance our Climate Change Action Plan implementing programs and supports the transition for low-carbon global economy. We continue to support improvements and access to drinking water and waste water systems in the province and have regulatory programs dedicated to ensuring we continue to have some of the cleanest water and air in our country.

I'm pleased to say that the work is progressing very well towards the final public release of the Drinking Water Safety Action Plan. Public consultations have been completed and the department is the final stage of drafting that plan. The safety of public drinking water supplies and reducing the number of long-term boil water advisories is a top priority for us.

Just recently the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs and I announced almost \$250,000 to continue the regional Water and Wastewater Operator program here in our province. This program is focused on building local capacity and knowledge for the delivery of

water services. Under this program, regional operators work with communities to address the challenges associated with operating and monitoring modern drinking water and waste water systems.

With waste water in mind, I'd like to mention that we are continuing the COVID-19 waste water surveillance program. Samples will continue to be sent to the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg, which they undertake the analysis and the provincial government is committed to making waste water data available to the public through the dashboard that we have on our website. That same information will also be provided to Health and Community Services for decision making. And anything we can do that's going to try to be critical indicators and potential early warning signs, we want to maintain.

With respect to early warning signs, the Department Environment and Climate Change also has a mandate to undertake flood risk mapping under the *Water Resources Act* in order to minimize flood damage in flood prone areas and communities. Flood risk mapping is an important tool for governments and communities in terms of land development, infrastructure investment and sustainability. Through provincial and federal funding for climate change adaptation, flood risk mapping studies are being updated and new ones undertaken using climate change forecasts.

It is critical to update flood risk mapping on a regular basis in order to protect public safety and effectively adapt to impacts with respect to climate change. This will allow municipalities to both plan for current and future climate conditions and minimize the damage to property, infrastructure and as a result cost savings over time.

With our Labour Relations and Labour Standards Divisions we provide conciliation services, assist employees and employers to promote stable and constructive labour relations, a climate to foster productive workplace relationships and partnerships.

On January 24, the provincial government announced the membership of the five-member Minimum Wage Review Committee. The

purpose of this committee is to review inputs solicited from targeted stakeholders on minimum wage in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. This committee announced their consultation process on February 21. Interested parties, employers and employees had the opportunity to participate online through engageNL.

I thank everyone that contributed their opinions to this public consultation process. By establishing an independent review committee which includes individuals who have first-hand lived experience with minimum wage from both an employer and an employee perspective, we are providing another outlet to examine and address the minimum wage rate in this province.

I expect that report very soon. Later this month in particular. We remain committed to monitoring and reviewing labour standards legislation to ensure it remains relevant and responsive and comparable to other jurisdictions across the country. On April 1, the minimum wage was increased to \$13.20 an hour and the minimum overtime wage increased to \$19.80.

Newfoundland and Labrador has joined several other provinces and territories by recognizing the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation with a paid holiday for provincial public servants and entities. The federal government passed legislation to create this statutory holiday to commemorate the legacy of the residential schools in Canada.

Bill C-5 creates a statutory holiday for employees in the federal government and federally regulated workplaces. To date, no provincial or territorial jurisdictions have introduced similar legislation for a paid holiday. We are monitoring the implementation of the federal amendments and potential discussions across the province and other territorial jurisdictions.

To honour survivors and raise awareness about the terrible legacy of residential schools in Canada, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador reserved National Day of Truth and Reconciliation on September 30, 2021, as a paid holiday for public servants. Non-essential

government agencies, public schools and entities were closed for the day.

The provincial government is committed to undertaking a review of how the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation will be adapted by the public service and province-wide this year. As part of the review, government is seeking targeted input and submissions from Indigenous governments, employee groups, employer groups and other key stakeholders regarding the implementation of a statutory paid public holiday to recognize National Day of Truth and Reconciliation.

Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Review Division reviews final decisions of WorkplaceNL for errors in the application of policy or legislation under the authority of *Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act*.

The final report of the Statutory Review for Workers' Compensation System was released on June 18, 2021, and it contained a total of 48 recommendations. As minister, I receive regular updates from WorkplaceNL and Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Review Division on the status of 29 of the 48 recommendations that are considered operational.

WorkplaceNL and the Review Division noted that the operational recommendations are complete at addressing record keeping and monitoring systems for phone calls, maintaining the current structure of occupational health and safety committees and standardizing training of occupational health and safety committee members. In addition, substantial progress has been made to modify the language of decision letters to improve clarity and the use of plain language, including the removal of references to final decisions from decision letters.

Preliminary work has begun on the establishment of the two joint committees between WorkplaceNL and the Review Division that was recommended from the review. The remaining operational requirements are at

various stages of review analysis and the implementation.

The 19 non-operational recommendations require additional financial, legal and policy consideration. Some may even require legislative amendments. Further updates on the status of these recommendations will be made in the department and WorkplaceNL's annual report. I appreciate the due diligence being exercised by WorkplaceNL and the Review Division, as well as the department officials as they work through the next steps of the process, and we thank all those involved in the process.

Waste reduction programs – we announced a new initiative led by the Multi-Materials Stewardship Board to help clean up litter across Newfoundland and Labrador in preparation for Come Home Year 2022. The MMSB Come Home Year Community Cleanup Project was a funding initiative to support cleanup of litter and properly dispose of bulk items in areas such as roadsides, trails, beaches, parks, outdoor recreational spaces. Grants of up to \$5,000 were available to municipalities, Local Service Districts, Indigenous community groups, organizations, non-profit and community organizations. The program was an overwhelming success, with 256 projects receiving funding of about \$520,000.

In December of 2020, we launched the Recycle at School Program in western region of the province. This is another initiative led by the MMSB and the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District. They are providing 45 schools with colour-coded recycling bins, as well as educational resources to help students and staff properly sort paper, mixed containers and refundable beverage containers. Recycle at School will support schools participating in Western regional waste management's mandatory recycling program.

The Recycle at School Program was first piloted in 2014 in selected schools at Eastern waste management service region. Key findings from the pilot identified potential for schools across Newfoundland and Labrador at diverting about 50 per cent of their daily waste from landfills through recycling efforts. In 2016, the program was implemented in 43 schools in Central

regional waste management service region, and as of today we are pleased to see that 89 schools in the province are now using the program.

These programs have a positive impact in protecting the environment and supporting our schools and school communities. It also supports the changes in students as they go home, as well. Every piece of litter begins in someone's hand, and these projects will help divert waste from our trails, parks, school grounds and roads, and keep our communities clean.

In conclusion, there are just so many initiatives to be proud of in the Department of Environment and Climate Change, and I look forward to going through some of them in the line-by-line review with my colleagues in the House of Assembly here today. I would be remiss if I didn't say a big thank you in preparation of all this stuff to the staff that are going to help answer some of your questions here today and I look forward to that. So off to the races we go.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

I've been doing Estimates since 2015, and it's probably the first time that I had an opportunity to sit a minister down for going over his time, or her time, in opening remarks. So good on you, Minister.

B. DAVIS: I made sure I didn't look up, by the way.

CHAIR: 6.1.01.

MHA Forsey.

P. FORSEY: Thank you.

First of all, Minister, thank you for your time. I really appreciate the time to be here to answer some questions this morning. Other than the long-winded info there, everything is okay, everything is good.

Especially though, I'd like to thank your staff; I really would. All staff within the government departments have been good to us. I know when you spoke your names there, I did remember sending emails or even conversations with a couple of you that you don't see from day to

day, so it's nice to actually put a face to the name. Again, thanks for all your help during the year.

We'll go with the line-by-line questions first. I do have some extra questions, but we'll just go for the line-by-line ones first. In Salaries, there is \$155,600 more budgeted this year compared to what was spent last year.

B. DAVIS: The increase over what was spent last year?

P. FORSEY: Yes.

B. DAVIS: That's forecasted salary increases that would be based on the contract.

P. FORSEY: In Transportation and Communications, there was \$36,300 less spent compared to what was budgeted last year. What was the reason for that?

B. DAVIS: There was less travel. Travel to the regions did not occur in the first part of the fiscal year due to COVID-19. In-person hearings then resumed after that. You're going to hear throughout there where there are differences in that area, right across the board, it's probably going to be based on COVID, or as I say, because COVID.

P. FORSEY: Professional Services: \$65,000 less spent compared to what was budgeted last year.

B. DAVIS: Yes, so that is lower costs due to the review commissioner vacancies.

P. FORSEY: Purchased Services: \$20,000 more budgeted for this year compared to what was spent last year.

B. DAVIS: That was again due to lack of out-of-town hearings, and lower meeting costs during COVID restrictions and in-person hearings have now since resumed. So that's why it's gone back up in this budget verses what was at the end of last year.

Revenue - Provincial, there is basically \$270,000 more budgeted this year compared to what was taken in last year.

B. DAVIS: So I think the revenue is down, recovery cost from WorkplaceNL; that is an in and out sort of thing. We pay the bill but WorkplaceNL funds the review division through the – what's the body?

OFFICIAL: Injury fund.

B. DAVIS: Injury fund. So it is funded directly from that. So it's an in and out fund for us so there was less money required last year because of those vacancies, is my understand.

P. FORSEY: Good.

B. DAVIS: And it's expected to be normal again this year.

P. FORSEY: Okay.

We have a few general questions. How many review commissioners are there at this point?

B. DAVIS: Susan, do you –?

S. SQUIRES: There are currently four review commissioners; one is a chief review commissioner and the other three are review commissioners and they are all full time.

P. FORSEY: Okay, thank you.

B. DAVIS: That has changed from back in 2017 I think it was. They were usually part-time review commissioners. But we had seen a backlog and based on some of the concerns that were raised in Estimates in the past and in the House of Assembly, we looked at that and made them full time. So that has allowed them to clear some of the backlog; there is still some but it is moving a lot faster.

P. FORSEY: How many are full time and how many are part time?

B. DAVIS: They are all full time right now.

P. FORSEY: All full time.

Is the current complement of review commissioners adequate to handle the workload in a timely manner?

B. DAVIS: Well, we just put in place the chief review commissioner and, obviously, there was a backlog there with a position that was vacant. We're going to wait and see. I know we're still in the process of recruiting another person, I think, is it?

OFFICIAL: No.

B. DAVIS: No, okay. So we've got the complement that we have right now and we're going to assess it over time and see if that clears the backlog. We haven't had a full complement, without vacancy, in the last fiscal for sure.

P. FORSEY: Okay.

How many applications are currently on file requesting hearings?

B. DAVIS: We can get that. Susan has that.

S. SQUIRES: They completed, last year, 173 applications; another additional 29 of them were withdrawn last year. So that is comparable to what they did the previous year. They currently have 109 cases to be scheduled and that was as of April 5.

P. FORSEY: Okay.

How many applications have been withdrawn?

S. SQUIRES: Last year, 29 were withdrawn. It's early in the year to have cases withdrawn this year but that is comparable to the year before in 2021-22, where 30 were withdrawn.

P. FORSEY: Okay.

Are you aware of the reasons why: unable to get representations, delays?

B. DAVIS: We can look into that but I think most of that would be decisions of the party themselves to withdraw them. It could be based on, I guess, changes in their life themselves, maybe not wanting to proceed with it or maybe having it worked out from that standpoint.

We can look at seeing what information we have from a privacy perspective, but I don't think it is

readily available to us here today. But we can get that for you. If it's available, you can have it.

P. FORSEY: Thank you. I appreciate that.

So how many hearings are currently scheduled?

B. DAVIS: There are, I think, 109 to be scheduled.

P. FORSEY: One hundred and nine?

B. DAVIS: One hundred and nine. And that's usually typical because there's usually waiting for representation or trying to coordinate meetings with people. It takes time to get that done and generally it is at the whim of – that is why we went with the full-time ones because it gives a little bit more clarity for us.

P. FORSEY: So how many of those hearings would be held each month, we'll say?

B. DAVIS: Susan?

S. SQUIRES: So they did 173 cases as an example last year. The number of cases were, on average, 14½ a month. So in the lowest month it was about eight cases and the highest month it was 24 cases. So it is variable, I am sure, depending on the cases gets and the longevity of those cases' complexity. The average is about 14½ a month.

B. DAVIS: (Inaudible) some of these cases are very complex in nature so some cases could be dealt with quickly and some cases take a lot more time. Obviously, that dictates how many you get done in the run of a month.

P. FORSEY: Great. Okay.

During COVID, have restrictions from COVID impacted the scheduling resulting in any further backlogs?

B. DAVIS: I think I am going to say – I can't say no – but I didn't think it impacted it quite heavily. What they transitioned to very quickly was digital or virtual. And I think that's going to help in some cases and some clients really

tended to like that approach because it was a bit quicker for them, less travel requirements and things like that.

So they have advised me that it didn't impact it other than regular impacts when it was at the height of COVID, but it has progressed fairly well here.

P. FORSEY: How long after the hearing date is a written decision given?

B. DAVIS: It depends on the complexity of the decision. I think there is a – is there a time frame? We can check into that if there are any thresholds for that, but my understanding is it takes some time to get some of those, depending on how complex it is and how much evidence is provided.

P. FORSEY: Okay.

B. DAVIS: But we can get that for you if you would like us to.

P. FORSEY: Yeah. That would be good, too.

How has the injured workers' fund at WorkplaceNL been impacted by this year's markets?

B. DAVIS: I don't have the numbers right off the top of my head, but I don't think it's been impacted by the markets at all. But that can change, that could've happened this morning, a drop, but it seems to be positively impacted currently right now.

P. FORSEY: All right.

You did mention the statutory review and the 48 recommendations. Can we get a list of the recommendations that were there and –

B. DAVIS: Absolutely, you can get a copy of the recommendations, for sure.

P. FORSEY: – when they be implemented and that sort of thing? Can we get a copy?

B. DAVIS: We can give you a status report on what's been done so far of those

recommendations. That's no problem. We can give you the 48 recommendations. And there are sub-recommendations underneath each of those. So I can't remember how many it is. It is 72 or something when you take out the ones that are underneath, maybe?

S. SQUIRES: There are 17 and there are sub-categories under them. So we totalled them up as 48 total recommendations.

P. FORSEY: Okay, but like I said, we can get a copy of those?

B. DAVIS: Yes, absolutely.

P. FORSEY: All right. Other than that, I'm good with this one.

CHAIR: Thank you, MHA Forsey.

MHA Evans, 6.1.01.

L. EVANS: Yes, thank you.

Just some general questions first. How many hearings have been conducted in the last year and what was the nature of the cases that came up for review?

B. DAVIS: We can give you a full list of the details of how many hearings happened, what was withdrawn. I think there were 130-ish that have come out. We can give you a full list, a spreadsheet of that.

L. EVANS: Yes.

B. DAVIS: What's been withdrawn, what's been taken, what's been pushed, what hasn't been scheduled yet, we can give you a full copy of that.

L. EVANS: Yeah. And I do apologize if I do repeat some of the questions.

Also, we'll get a copy of the binder?

B. DAVIS: Absolutely.

L. EVANS: Yeah. I'm just trying to remember, because we started and we stopped. For example, questions that you answer now, saying

of the total recommendations, 48, you'll be getting the information to the –

B. DAVIS: We'll get the information that we provide to one party or one group, we'll provide to two.

L. EVANS: To two.

B. DAVIS: Or to everyone.

L. EVANS: To everybody. Yes, exactly. And that'll cut down on some time.

B. DAVIS: Yeah.

L. EVANS: Now, you did talk about the backlog of the cases and I wasn't sure exactly what the number of backlog cases are. You did refer to 109 to be scheduled.

B. DAVIS: Yeah, so what we consider a backlog would be the 109 that need to be scheduled. And it's sort of a misnomer to say they're backlogged because they may not be backlogged because of scheduling from the review division's side. It could be because the client is not ready to go at this point to be scheduled.

So it's sometimes contingent upon them as well, or actually it's with them and the Review Division scheduling times. So we can get you a list of those – not the list of the 109, but we can let you know that in the spreadsheet how many here are from time to time if you'd like.

L. EVANS: Right.

The positions of the review commissioners, you're basically taking a look at that to see if you're going to be putting in additional ones, right?

B. DAVIS: Well, right now we've had a vacancy this year of one of the review commissioners anyway. Now that's been filled with the chief review commissioner. We're going to see how that works out to try to reduce that time frame with respect to those 109 scheduled cases.

L. EVANS: Would we be able to get a breakdown of the number of people receiving workers' compensation by industry?

B. DAVIS: I think we can do that. We probably don't have that here, but we can get that for you.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

B. DAVIS: Good question.

L. EVANS: Would it be possible to either get the total number of people working in those industries in the province as well?

B. DAVIS: You can have any bit of information like that, that we have available to us, like the number of people that are on it from industry breakdown, how many people are in those industries that workplace would have. That's not a problem.

L. EVANS: Okay. You used finished answering the other questions there that I had.

Is there a review planned to update how medical reporting is done on occupational disease claims? How does the list of occupational diseases recognized by government get amended, like adding and changing?

B. DAVIS: That's part of the statutory review process. In those 48 recommendations, there is a recommendation in there to expand some of the cancers with respect to firefighters, as an example. Those things are working through the process now from a fiscal responsibility perspective, from their end, what the cost would be from an actuarial perspective and then we'll determine what needs to be changed with respect to if it's a legislative change or a policy change at WorkplaceNL.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

Is there any review planned on how medical reporting is done on the disease claims?

B. DAVIS: I would think there's always a review at WorkplaceNL but we can take that question, MHA Evans, and go directly to the CEO of WorkplaceNL for that. That's a valid question and no problem for us to get the answer for you on that.

L. EVANS: Okay.

Looking at the line item there, under Salaries, the spending on Salaries was lower than expected. You did briefly mention that earlier with my fellow colleague, but are there currently any vacancies there?

B. DAVIS: No, there are no vacancies now. That was a vacancy at the time that was filled.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

I have a general question that sort of is brought up to me. There are times that you've probably experienced – I'm talking to your departmental staff here – where somebody is working in an industry, and they have insurance coverage to be off on medical and they're not being covered because the insurance provider is saying they believe it's work related. The worker is waiting on medical documentation to clarify whether it's a workplace injury or disease. I'm talking about diseases now.

What happens is the individual does not have coverage. They're basically there and they actually are entitled to wage compensation, either from the insurance provider or from workers' compensation. But because of this gap and waiting on the medical documentation and then decision on their claim, they could be months without any wage.

Is there anything that can be done to actually prevent this from happening, where the worker is the one that actually is harmed by this gap, such as having an agreement between the insurance provider to provide the coverage, and then if it's ruled that it's a workplace illness or disease, then workers' compensation can compensate them back. That seems like a logical thing.

B. DAVIS: That is a very good question. I worked on a case like that that reached out to me as an MHA before, and I forwarded it off to WorkplaceNL to look at. They had their processes in place. They had worker representatives and employer representatives that they can talk to, and then they tend to try to work out those individual cases. So what I will say to you, MHA Evans, is that if there are any

of those cases that come up, please do reach out to us, and I say that to any of my colleagues.

Because some of those cases sometimes do slip through the cracks, and we want to try to reduce those issues that are common sense in nature, like you just detailed, is a perfect example of how we can try to fix those things. Sometimes it's just an individual ask, in the right way, to say that this is something that has been overlooked. Because sometimes there's a communication error that breaks down and we just want to try to limit those. I know WorkplaceNL is interested in trying to move those files that may be in those situations on many cases.

L. EVANS: Well, I've dealt with it at the MHA level, with workers' compensation and the insurance provider, and now I'm aware that I could reach out to your department. But what about other people who don't have that link with their MHA that is going to – we have to start looking at changing the way things are done where people are there. People who have bills and family responsibilities who are there and entitled to compensation, but are not getting it. It is very destructive.

I would prefer that, actually, maybe your department could work on finding some solution. Because there are a lot of people out there that don't have a direct line to their MHA or don't have a direct line to somebody that can call your department and your department would actually be quite effective I'm sure but, like I said, I am more interested in a permanent change where this just doesn't happen.

B. DAVIS: Just to expand on that question and hopefully give you a little bit more clarity. One of the recommendations in the most current stat review is to expand worker representatives with WorkplaceNL. That is one of the recommendations that are being evaluated, so I am very hopeful that we'll be able to move on that. That will increase the number of people that workers can reach out to when they have questions or concern, just like you highlighted, that can help navigate, sometimes, a very complex system.

So I think that could be one of the fixes, but we will take that away from today and I think that is a valid concern that you raised here today.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

That's the end of my questions.

CHAIR: Thank you, MHA Evans.

So if the Committee is ready for the question, shall 6.1.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subhead 6.1.01 carried.

CHAIR: Before we continue, I certainly want to welcome my colleague, Chris Tibbs, for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans to our Committee meeting and Chris will be looking after our next set of subheads.

So if I can have the Clerk call our next set of subheads, please.

CLERK: Labour, 4.1.01 to 4.1.03.

CHAIR: Shall 4.1.01 to 4.1.03 carry?

MHA Tibbs.

C. TIBBS: Thank you very much, Mr. Warr, and good morning to my buddy, Minister Davis

–

B. DAVIS: Good morning to you.

C. TIBBS: – and the team behind you. Thank you for all the work you do, the work behind the scenes; we all know is the real work that is done. I know Minister Davis does a lot of hard work but no person is without their team.

So we'll start off at 4.1.01, Labour Relations. Minister, can you provide us with the amount of conciliation, preventative mediation and arbitration processes that were undertaken and

the results of these processes? And how many employees are in the division themselves.

B. DAVIS: We can provide you with the document for that, for sure. I don't know if we have the information right here in front of us – Tara?

T. KELLY: Yeah, I have that.

For staffing perspective there are six positions: director, two industrial relation specialists, two senior mediators and one clerk. Then as far as the numbers go: conciliation request, we had 36 new ones in this past year; 22 that we're carrying over from last year, so that is a total of 58 people that we're working on; 36 appointment of arbitrators; preventative mediation requests was 51; and first collective agreement mediator was one.

I don't have the result at this time but you could follow up on that if you wanted.

C. TIBBS: Perfect. Thank you, Ms. Kelly.

We'll switch over to Salaries. There are \$38,300 more budgeted this year compared to what was spent. What is the reason for this, Minister?

B. DAVIS: The deference is a little step increase – it is actually lower than it was budgeted for last year but what was actually spent on revised last year was based on lower staff – vacancy rates at staff there. So now the staff is full complement and that would be the \$471,800; that would be the full complement there.

C. TIBBS: Perfect.

For the Transportation and Communications cost, there was \$10,000 less spent compared to what was budgeted. What was the reason for this one?

B. DAVIS: As I said to MHA Forsey, you're going to see in T and C most of those things will be COVID related; less meetings, less travel with respect to meetings and things. So you're going to see in T and C right across the board is going to be, as I say, cause COVID.

C. TIBBS: Hopefully we are away from that, finally.

B. DAVIS: Yes, hopefully.

C. TIBBS: 4.1.02, Standing Fish Price Setting Panel.

B. DAVIS: Yes.

C. TIBBS: What is the remuneration for the members of this panel?

B. DAVIS: I don't have that number right in front of me but I think we may be able to get that. We can get that for you. I don't know offhand what the remuneration is. I know they are remunerated for it; I think the total for Salaries would be \$107,500 so there is a three-person panel and two alternates as well –

C. TIBBS: Perfect, thank you.

B. DAVIS: – that would be involved in that process. We can get that for you, MHA Tibbs.

C. TIBBS: I appreciate it.

For Professional Services, there was \$8,000 more spent last year compared to what was budgeted this year. What would be the reason for that?

B. DAVIS: The higher was due to increased hearings and anticipated costs for an independent consultant.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Sir.

4.1.03, are there any reviews planned for the *Labour Standards Act* and, if so, when should this be completed and will there be any new legislation brought in?

B. DAVIS: As I said many times in the House whenever I'm asked a question about Labour Standards is we look to the public, if there are concerns people have, we look at legislation. Legislation is living document that can be changed when it needs to be done, but we also have to look at the balance that exists within labour. You have to look at the balance of the employer and the employee with those standards. So that's what we always juggle with.

Obviously, there is a minimum wage review that would be coming into that and Truth and

Reconciliation Day that will all have to feed into that when that work is done.

C. TIBBS: Sure.

Nothing slated as of right now, though, in concrete?

B. DAVIS: No.

C. TIBBS: Okay, perfect, thank you.

Moving to Salaries, there's \$31,100 more budgeted this year compared to what was spent last year. What would be the reason for this, Minister?

B. DAVIS: Yes, we're actually down on what was actually budgeted the previous year, but the difference is obviously there was a vacancy in the revised of last year so the Salaries are a little lower than they were in last year's budget.

C. TIBBS: Great.

Of course, Transportation and Communications, there was \$11,400 more budgeted this year compared to what was last year. What was the reason for this?

B. DAVIS: That's the same thing that would be there. It was down last year because of COVID and we're bringing it back up to the level that it would be normal, as you said, post-COVID, hopefully.

C. TIBBS: Hopefully.

Professional Services, there was \$10,000 spent last year that wasn't budgeted. Can you explain this figure?

B. DAVIS: Yes, that is board fees. We decided as a government that the individuals that sit on the Minimum Wage Review Committee should be compensated to sit on that. It used to be a volunteer committee. Those five individuals that sit on that Committee are compensated for their –

C. TIBBS: So like a remuneration or something?

B. DAVIS: Remuneration, yeah.

C. TIBBS: Perfect. Thank you, Sir.

Revenue there was \$3,000 spent less revenue last year compared to what was collected. What was the reason for this?

B. DAVIS: Yes, so the decrease in revenue is due to clearance certificates that come out of this department.

C. TIBBS: Sorry what was that?

B. DAVIS: Clearance certificates for downturn in the real estate activity. That would be ensuring that you're in good standing with the *Labour Standards Act*. There was less of that required. We anticipate that will come back a little bit more over time, right.

C. TIBBS: That's all for me.

Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Team.

B. DAVIS: Perfect.

CHAIR: Thank you.

MHA Evans, 4.1.01 to 4.1.03 inclusive.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Chair.

4.1.01, under Labour Relations: Have there been any new unions who are bargaining units that have been certified in the past year? How many first collective agreements have been successfully negotiated?

B. DAVIS: Very good question. I don't know. Tara, do you have the numbers for ...?

T. KELLY: We had one request.

B. DAVIS: We had one request and I think it was certified. So I can check that, MHA Evans, from the Labour Relations Board. They're sort of arm's length on that stuff; we don't get into that, but I can get that information for you.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

What were the total number of strikes and lockouts in this province in the previous year? Do they represent an increase or demand from the previous year, 2020?

B. DAVIS: That is a very good question. I can get that through our Labour Relations Division and have it forwarded to your office.

L. EVANS: Okay. And everybody?

B. DAVIS: And everybody. When I send it to you, it is going to be for everybody. Just like Lay's chips, I give one to you; I got to give one to everyone.

L. EVANS: I had a cat who loved Lay's chips, by the way.

B. DAVIS: I have a dog that loves them.

L. EVANS: Have any changes been considered to the union certification processes and what arguments have been raised against reinstating card certification?

B. DAVIS: Very good question. We are always, as I said to MHA Tibbs, looking at ways we can improve the legislation that exists and the processes that we do. We haven't heard much outcry with respect to what you're asking for now. The system, although we always look for ways to improve it, the Labour Relations Board as well as Labour Relations in general, we look from not only our own staff to look at ways to improve it but also the general public and our trade unions that will be operating in the province.

If there are concerns that come forward with respect to that, we'll definitely look at that and see what can be done. But I know there are changes that were made for a reason, back before even our mandate – before 2015 – and we're always looking for ways to improve when we need to.

L. EVANS: So you're not really considering any changes right now to –

B. DAVIS: No. That was a long answer for saying no.

L. EVANS: Yeah. Okay, thank you.

Now that the federal government is implementing anti-replacement worker legislation, will the department consider tabling similar legislation in this province?

B. DAVIS: As I have said to your colleague, I think it was the day before yesterday in the House with a question of similar nature; we always look to the federal government when they bring forward things like that. We always look and evaluate the need for that.

We understand that labour relations and any changes that we make to labour standards; we've got to look at both the employer and the employee side of that.

In this province, I guess we've been blessed that we haven't had major long-term strikes, and I know that when we do have long-term strikes, we're looking at ways to find solutions. Sometimes that could be our conciliation officers that comes in, or a conciliation board that we've had constituted when we had some opportunities for negotiation that weren't moving as fast.

But, as I've said to your colleague, we're always looking at ways to improve it. There is nothing on the horizon that says we're moving in that direction, other than what you've highlighted as the federal government. So we're always looking at that.

L. EVANS: So when the federal government implements their anti-replacement worker legislation, will you actually have a review and look at it?

B. DAVIS: We will have a consultation with our stakeholders that are involved in that area as well. As I said, maybe I wasn't clear enough on that. When the federal government implements anything, whether it be from a labour relation standpoint or a labour standards standpoint, we're going to be evaluating that as well, and part of that evaluation is going to be a consultation that we will do with our stakeholders, both labour unions, as well as our employers.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

4.1.03, Labour Standards: Is there any move to bring in paid sick leave for all employees in the province, and are there any hesitations on the – sorry, I'll just do the first one. Is there any move to bring in paid sick leave for all employees in the province?

B. DAVIS: Again, the federal government mentioned that through the federal minister of Labour, just before Christmas brought in legislation. Obviously, we've had conversations at our FTP table with respect to that. All of us at the table, all of us ministers, agree that's a positive move forward, but we're going to need some support from the federal government who's instituting this, to support our businesses that would be impacted by something like this.

That's not a cost that the federal government have to bear. We've given options as ministers to the federal government, similar to the employment insurance benefits that can be done, that already exists. It is not creating a new pool of money, but it's an opportunity to create flexibility in that fund to allow workers and businesses to avail of that to provide that benefit to employees.

L. EVANS: Okay.

B. DAVIS: So the answer is yes, we're looking at it, and that's something that we're working on at our FTP table.

L. EVANS: And you say you're working on it, but just to be clear, what would some of the major stumbling blocks be for you that you'd actually have to overcome to be able to bring in full paid sick leave?

B. DAVIS: Well, if you were to add one day of sick leave to every person in the province that's working, it's up to \$48 million a day that would be borne by businesses and government agencies and the like. Most of it borne by businesses and small businesses, so we are trying to navigate a very challenging situation that we want to provide that – as ministers, we want to provide that across the country and support that, but we have to find a mechanism first for us to be able to do that.

Part of that is through working with the federal government on funds that they currently have that they put in place for COVID that they can extend and/or allow flexibility within the EI program, which is one aspect that us ministers have floated with the federal minister. We do have another meeting scheduled in June and I look forward to having a conversation with the federal minister on that.

L. EVANS: I wonder, have your department actually looked at the cost of people who can't afford to be off, bringing sickness – let's say contagious sickness like the flu into their companies and then have that ripple effect in terms of the cost of loss of productivity?

B. DAVIS: Yeah, so that is something that the federal table is looking at, not just from a provincial side, from national and there are some positive numbers that say that moving in that direction helps businesses just as much as it helps the employees too. So that is sort of what we're working on at the federal table and hopefully we'll be able to move that forward in the near future through conversation with the federal government and were very helpful.

The conversations with Minister O'Regan at the time when we had that meeting, I'm going to say, six or eight weeks ago maybe, were very positive from all of us at the FPT table and we have another meeting follow-up in about another three or four weeks.

We're looking forward to having those conversations; we're open to looking at all options, especially – but we all understand how important it is to have the federal government provide some financial leadership on this file. For the businesses coming out of COVID and all that stuff, to allow them the flexibility to get to where they need to be because I think they want to be there too.

L. EVANS: Yes.

B. DAVIS: Oh, sorry, I think our deputy minister can jump in as well.

V. SNOW: Thank you.

Just to add to what the minister is saying. I think this federal table is a very good opportunity for us to learn, not just from the federal government and what they're doing in terms of the costs and the benefits of the paid leave, but also some different provinces are also moving in this direction and they have made significant progress.

British Columbia is already offering five paid leave days and, in that, they have done a lot of research in terms of the cost to the government

but also the cost of things you were talking about, like going to work when you are sick. All of that information that has been gathered and lessons learned from other jurisdictions is going to be very helpful as we look at this issue.

L. EVANS: Yes, thank you.

Looking at that cost per day is huge, but is that a true cost when you look at the loss of productivity and the impacts through the whole communities and businesses and things like that. A lot of times we look at the cost and it seems insurmountable, but when you look at the benefits that would negate most of those costs, then it's something that would actually be very positive for the communities.

B. DAVIS: And I full agree with you. That's why that table is looking at those options, as our deputy minister just said too. We look forward to having conversations about that, for sure.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Has the government considered increasing minimum wage above and beyond any increases tied to inflation, to the \$15 an hour, for example?

B. DAVIS: Very good question. As I mentioned in my rather lengthy intro, we have a Minimum Wage Review Committee that has been constituted. They've got their work completed. My understanding is they're going to be doing a presentation to me later this month of that report.

I look forward to receiving it. I don't want to prejudge what's going to come in, but obviously we're going to take that advice, look at it, do some work on what impacts that would be, and hopefully it's something that we can move on quickly, because we all understand how important it is for minimum wage to be where it needs to be.

CHAIR: Thank you.

MHA Evans, do you have much left in this section?

L. EVANS: No, I don't.

CHAIR: Are you finished?

L. EVANS: Yes, actually I am. I was thinking –

B. DAVIS: Great timing.

CHAIR: Thank you.

If the Committee is ready for the question, shall 4.1.01 to 4.1.03 carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

On motion, subheads 4.1.01 to 4.1.03 carried.

CHAIR: Can I have the Clerk call the next subhead, please?

CLERK: Labour Relations Board, 5.1.01.

CHAIR: Shall 5.1.01 carry?

MHA Tibbs.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

Just a couple of general questions here, Minister. How many employees are currently employed, and how many vacancies are there?

B. DAVIS: At the Labour Relations Board?

C. TIBBS: Yes, Sir.

B. DAVIS: Susan, do you have the exact numbers there?

S. SQUIRES: There are six positions on the board, as past positions, and one is currently vacant.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

And there were \$13,000 less spent last year compared to what was budgeted. What was the reason for this, Minister?

B. DAVIS: Vacancies.

C. TIBBS: Vacancies, it is.

B. DAVIS: Yes.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Sir.

B. DAVIS: And delays in the recruitment process.

C. TIBBS: Sure.

Just one final question: Do we have an update on the privacy breach that effected the Grieg hatchery some time ago?

B. DAVIS: No, I don’t have one here, but I can get that for you. The previous chair has finished her term. There’s a new chair put in place, I think as of about a month ago, maybe, Susan? (Inaudible) I know that the chair change that happened since then, but they’re working on that stuff.

Susan.

S. SQUIRES: Yes, a new chair came in in early March, but the board has circulated a number of policies, one of which was the receipt and retention of union membership information. They did do that and that happened in the fall. I understand they circulated and had a webinar with stakeholders. As a result of that incident, they did review their processes and they have tabled some new policy processes as a result.

C. TIBBS: Okay. We look forward to that because we know how important it is.

That’s it for me.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

5.1.01, MHA Evans.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

How many hearings went before the board in the previous year? Do these numbers represent the increase over the previous year? What kind of disputes did they involve?

B. DAVIS: Susan.

S. SQUIRES: The Labour Relations Board actually received, this past year, 62 applications, which was a 40 per cent increase from the year before of 44 applications. They currently have 45 active files that they're considering. That was of April 6, so it might be slightly different now, but the beginning of the fiscal year, they had 45 active files.

L. EVANS: Okay. The type of disputes?

S. SQUIRES: I don't have a breakdown of the number of active files and what they pertain to, but I know that in 2021-2022, for example, they went through seven certifications. They had a number of hearings. So there is certainly a mix between union certifications, hearings. I guess there are typical things that they hear before the board.

L. EVANS: Okay.

S. SQUIRES: But we certainly can ask if there's a breakdown of those 45 active cases.

L. EVANS: Okay.

B. DAVIS: We also have regular stakeholder meetings with respect to, not just the board, but the stakeholders that meet with the board and have requested the services of the board. So when we do find out there are issues or anything that comes up, something is taking longer than it should, or in their mind it should be faster, or hasn't got the result that they would like, then we can bring that forward to the board as well. Obviously, they're arm's length from us, but we can say that someone has expressed a concern and encourage them to go to the right people on the board and have those concerns heard.

But one of the benefits of having good stakeholder engagement with your people is that you find those concerns earlier, so hopefully they don't fester and they don't have longer term problems.

L. EVANS: Okay. Thank you.

If there is a breakdown, you will be sharing it with everybody?

B. DAVIS: Yes.

L. EVANS: Okay. Thank you.

Is there currently a backlog in the number of cases to be heard and if so how many?

S. SQUIRES: So there are 45 active cases and that was as of April 6. So that's what we would define as the current number that needs to go through whether that I guess could be defined as a backlog.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

That is my questions for this section.

CHAIR: Thank you.

If the Committee is ready for the question.

Shall 5.1.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Those against.

Carried.

On motion, subhead 5.1.01 carried.

CHAIR: Can I ask the Clerk to call the next set of subheads, please?

CLERK: Executive and Support Services, 1.1.01 to 1.2.01.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 to 1.2.01 inclusive carry?

MHA Parly, we are on 1.1.01 to 1.2.01 inclusive.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Chair.

A new portfolio for me so I ask for your patience as I forge ahead through this very important section. Just before we start, just going to the minister's preamble and his address at the start, just three quick questions in relation to that.

When you had your program that offered the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador to switch from oil to electric, you had stated that you had 100 applications on the first go around. This time there are 140. Have you done an analysis of what the household income of those 140 would be?

I'm just curious now because I know you have got a discrepancy on the peninsula that I serve and whether it's the upper part or the lower part, there is significance in that.

B. DAVIS: Yeah. So there is no need for them to disclose income levels for the program, it doesn't matter what income level they have for this particular program. There is income-tested programs that are in other – the oil change program. The HESP, I think it is, has increased the threshold from \$32,500 to \$52,500. That one would have an income test, obviously, but this one, the one we have announced in the budget, doesn't have an income test so there is no reason for us to collect that information. I may be wrong on that but there is no reason to collect any information.

I think Mr. Michael Harvey would have a problem if we were collecting information we didn't need to.

C. PARDY: Yeah.

Here is the genesis of why I ask that and the rationale being that if you've got everybody that's \$100,000 and above or \$80,000 household income that is availing of this, then you know that below \$80,000 you've got an area that they just can't afford it.

B. DAVIS: Right.

C. PARDY: Then \$5,000 doesn't cover it. But as any money that is necessary in order for them to retrofit, they just don't have.

That was the genesis of my question. I know the Privacy Commission, I know that there is a danger in that, but it would still be nice to know what clientele we're serving. We can talk about it, then you can talk about a great initiative, but if you have a portion of the population, like on

the Bonavista Peninsula, the lower part that got \$47,000 household income that can't look at it, which is what I hear, then – that was the genesis of my question.

B. DAVIS: So just to answer that very quickly. There are three programs that can work for an individual that would be in a similar situation to you and work in varying levels of success, of course. You've got, obviously the HESP with oil, that is for anyone that has \$52,500 or less; that is a \$5,000 non-repayable grant. Then you can bookend our program as well with that, so that is an additional \$5,000 for that individual as well, non-repayable grant. Then you have the Greener Homes program from the federal government, that is an additional \$5,000 to that for particular – they have more threshold programs that are a little different than that. So that is essentially \$15,000.

Now, the federal program you have to pay in advance to receive that money. But at the end of the day, I know there are going to be gaps and when we find gaps – if you've identified any – have them reach out to our office so we can try to make those changes to the programs that are required to make them better suit the needs of people from all parts of the province.

We get the breakdown of what type of heat they have installed after; where they're happening in the province. The Central region there was 20 of those 140 or so that have received that and there is another 88 on the Avalon. So right across the province there are applications and approvals, albeit there is more on the Avalon because there is more population here.

C. PARDY: That's good there are other options. I wasn't totally aware of that but I will do my homework on that as well.

B. DAVIS: No problem; we're here to help.

C. PARDY: Indeed you are; that's good.

You mentioned about the net-zero council. Are they listed? I'm assuming your office would appoint them.

B. DAVIS: Yes, they were appointed. They are listed on our website. There are eight people with varying backgrounds. I can forward you a

list of that, no problem, and I'll forward it to everyone at the Estimates here today.

C. PARDY: That's good.

The third point on your message was you mentioned that you're doing the waste water testing.

B. DAVIS: Correct.

C. PARDY: You mentioned the significance of doing so, the early warning signs. How extensive is your testing of waste water? I don't think it's on the Bonavista Peninsula.

B. DAVIS: We've got by far the best person in this province, probably this country, to assess that, through Haseen here. We have not expanded right across the province, but we are expanding that process and working with the federal government, but Haseen you can jump in and –

H. KHAN: Currently, we are monitoring 17 locations throughout the province. We intend to extend that to cover the entire province to about 70, 80 locations, slowly and gradually. In terms of cost, an analysis is done, free of cost by federal government national lab in Winnipeg. So testing is costing nothing to the province, but if you go to the private sector, each sample will cost us about \$300. At this point in time, it is costing us nothing.

C. PARDY: Obviously, we'll use the national lab when possible. We'll stay clear of the private labs.

B. DAVIS: Absolutely.

C. PARDY: So we can move across the province, really, at no cost other than I guess the –

B. DAVIS: The collections.

C. PARDY: Yeah, the collections. Okay, good to know. Thank you for those answers.

I'm assuming in the binder we'll receive the employment status of the vacancies – we'll have all that there, so we don't need to waste time with that.

B. DAVIS: All of that.

C. PARDY: Did the minister or the Department of Finance give you any attrition fiscal targets?

B. DAVIS: Every department, every agency would have attrition targets. I can go to Bonnie and Bonnie can give the attrition, but I'm fairly confident that – let me just check to see if I've got it right here in front of me.

C. PARDY: I just want to chime in, Minister, I just left the – oh my God, I'm losing track of time now. That was Tuesday was the Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture but they had received nothing from the Department of Finance for attrition for this year. They did in the past two years, but –

B. DAVIS: So our attrition target, I think, \$69,166. Both positions happened to be vacant that were there – a data entry operator and an environmental monitoring specialist.

C. PARDY: Okay, good.

B. DAVIS: And Bonnie –

B. STEELE: There is no new target for this fiscal. The numbers that we just gave were for the past two fiscals.

C. PARDY: Okay.

B. STEELE: Just to confirm that that was the target that we did have for fiscals 2020-2021 to '21-'22. We haven't been given a new target.

C. PARDY: I am glad you clarified that. I didn't want to create any division between Environment and Climate Change and FFA.

B. STEELE: Just confirming.

C. PARDY: That's good. So nothing this year in attritions.

Just in my time I will stick – an academic study of young people worldwide found that most suffer from eco-anxiety. I listen to my children, and rightfully so. When I was the administrator of a school, our mission in environment was

picking up litter. But I think, at this point in time, our children are certainly focused on the economy and climate change because it is such a big statement in our society and what we have.

But what was concerning was two-thirds are scared and sad is what this academic study stated, while almost half say their worries impact their daily lives. I just ask for a comment on that as we go about making changes and reducing emissions in our society.

B. DAVIS: No, I get it. You are correct. I hear it from my nieces, nephews and students when I go visit classrooms and things. There is no doubt people are worried about what the future holds from a climate change perspective. That is why we have put in place our Climate Change Action Plan with 45 actions. You know, 67 per cent of them are already completed.

It is not enough. It is definitely not enough. We are working hard to try to do even more. Some of the things that are required from a carbon-capture perspective for our future haven't even been created yet that we are going to have to use as a world. But there are thousands and thousands of people in this global community that are working on these targets to try to make sure all of us, as a global community, can hit it. I am hopeful that every jurisdiction around the world is working as hard as we are trying to work in this department to make our difference to our 1 per cent of Canada's 1 per cent of the world.

We are doing our part to do that and we are going to work, everybody together, to try to achieve those goals, but burying our head in the sand and not talking about it is not an option. Young people have really brought that forward with Fridays For Future and many other initiatives that they're pushing.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

I just remind the hon. Member that his speaking time has expired.

1.1.01 to 1.2.01 inclusive, MHA Evans.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Just some general questions to start off with. Although Industry, Energy and Technology released an outline for the transition to a green economy last December, we did notice that there was relatively little regarding supports for workers as they moved from one industry to another. Especially for workers in the oil and gas sector.

So is this department filling that piece of the puzzle and looking at ways to make this truly a just transition where workers come out of it more prosperous and lucrative jobs with better job security than before? So the just transition really.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, MHA Evans.

Obviously, it's going to be an all-of-government approach on helping spur economic development, not just in the green economy, which is our focus, and IET's focus but in every aspect. Whether it be in education or in immigration, we're all trying to spur economic development so that people have opportunities to have the jobs they want to, whether it be in oil and gas, obviously moving from there to – whether it's lifting the ban on wind, the moratorium that was on wind.

Those are the future of how we see our province moving. I don't think anyone can disagree that our province is one of the windiest ones. I think we took the title from Chicago recently. Lifting that moratorium is going to help spur another industry and, hopefully, one that's going to be able to be high-paying jobs and numerous jobs for people to transition as we move through that oil to the greener economy as we transition to there.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

The reason why we brought that up is because, as the oil industry and a lot of the supports for the oil industry ween off, there's going to be a displacement of workers. So it's important for us to be able to help those workers, especially at the larger salary levels because it has such a direct impact to our economy. So we are looking for more information. I guess as you develop it,

it would be good to see that, exactly how we're going to support workers.

Moving on to the next question: How much work has been done thus far by the Net-Zero Advisory Council? I know it was brought up earlier, but how much work has been done and what types of work are they going to be doing in the upcoming year?

B. DAVIS: Very good question. Thank you for the ability to be able to talk about the Net-Zero Advisory Council.

So they are going to be looking at providing recommendations – they haven't provided any yet, I expect that will – they have done, I don't know how many meetings. Susan, three? Three. There is another one on the horizon as well.

So they are looking at getting established themselves. Over this year, I fully expect that they will be providing some advice and recommendations on some of the things that we can do to improve, using other jurisdictions as a measuring stick, I guess, and other jurisdiction, not just in this country but in the global community on best practices and things that will get us the best bang for our investment to get greenhouse gas emissions reduced.

I think that is where they'll go. I'm going to be as anxious as you are to see what they come forward with and don't worry, it will be shared with everybody.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Has there been any consideration given to creating new mechanisms for incorporating the cost of pollution into the price of the products to reflect the true cost of their production and their consumption?

B. DAVIS: We have legislation in place for industry emitters and stringent requirements that they have to meet. I will say that they have exceeded all of the targets that we have set recently, in the past couple of years, and those targets are going to get harder each and every year for them, too. But they are working hard. Our staff meets with them on a regular basis to see what they are going to be doing in the future

to better address those emissions that they do have.

The federal government has also come forward with initiatives and stringent requirements that people have to meet as well. So we are always working to ensure the big emitters are covering the cost of their emissions.

But in addition to that, if you just look on a more granular level down to the MMSB level where we're looking at EPR programs that exist, you know Extended Producer Responsibility programs. We're looking at one now; there was public consultation on what we call PPP, packaging and paper products. Industry players, when they produce a cereal box, have to come forward and pay for the disposal of that cereal box.

In this province, that's what we need these Extended Producer Responsibility processes in place for. That's one of the ones we're working on now. We have several in the province now and those will cover the cost of recycling that product, or at least alleviate some of the cost for it. Because recycling is very expensive in this province and anything we can cover the cost of and reuse is going to be better for us in the longer term.

L. EVANS: Thank you for that answer.

Actually, that kind of goes to what we were getting at, because when you look at the cost of pollution in producing something and consuming it, we normally think of things like big oil or mining, but common things. The cost of a plastic container in the restaurant industry or the cost of some of the products that people use as household items that actually creates a lot of pollution to produce it. Then, of course, people don't really realize it. So like I said, it would be really good if we could look at some of those things, even in the forms of mid – you talk about big companies but I'm talking about mid-companies as well.

It's something that we've all got to get on board with. I think it's something that the province should be looking at. Something as symbolic as the sugar tax, if we could start looking at ways to actually identify products that take so much energy to produce and then of course create

pollution in their consumption or their inability to be consumed.

Sorry, my mind is just kind of rushing ahead, so I'm sorry.

Moving on to line items now, 1.2.01, Executive Support. What was the one-time expense – oh you already did that, I do apologize for that.

I'm going to move right on over to the provincial revenue in that line item. What was the source of the provincial revenue listed here?

B. DAVIS: Which section are you talking about, sorry?

L. EVANS: 1.2.01, Executive Support, provincial revenue.

B. DAVIS: Oh the revenue.

L. EVANS: Yes.

B. DAVIS: Okay, so that's similar to what we had come through with respect to the review division from WorkplaceNL. That is money that comes through from the MMSB to the department to pay for the CEO of MMSB. It's a cost-recovery model. The increased revenue would be the cost recovery for the CEO of MMSB.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

That's the end of my questions for that section.

CHAIR: Thank you.

MHA Pardy, do you have anything left in 1.1.01 to 1.2.01?

C. PARDY: Yes, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

C. PARDY: Just before I continue on, the last note and I'll leave our conversation for the climate change section, but just to follow up when I talked about the youth and the concern and the anxiety that this academic study had. One thing that the article references talks about the UN Climate Panel finds that even if we do nothing to mitigate climate change, the impact

by the end of the century will be a reduction of an average income increase from 450 per cent to 438 per cent. And keep in mind, I'm in favour, and I think we are in favour of reducing greenhouse gases and emissions. I, we, would be in favour of our renewables wind energy and doing all that. So we're on board. The only questions we would have sometimes is the pace and the concern that would be around that.

You mentioned in your intro, as well, the Fish Price Setting Panel. Recently, we created a little stir in my other portfolio with the Fisheries, a little stir I think that went about the province when we looked at the appointee. The appointments of the Fish Price Setting Panel are done from the Independent Appointments Commission.

Can you share with me: This Commission will give you a candidate or will they you give you a choice of three candidates and your office will select which one? Just curious because I don't know when I ask.

B. DAVIS: So I guess it depends on the number of applicants that come in and how many comes through. I can't remember exactly how many were recommended in that case. There was multiple, but there was multiple positions to be filled. In that case, I think there was a regular member and two alternates that needed to be filled and I think we received three or four names in total and varying backgrounds.

With respect to the Fish Price Setting Panel, you have backgrounds with harvesting and processing. So they try to map so you don't have positions dictated for that. They're supposed to be outside of that realm, but they have to have experience in that. The Independent Appointments Commission brings forward the names and then it comes forward to LGIC.

C. PARDY: So you had three or four vacancies?

B. DAVIS: That's correct.

C. PARDY: So just enough appointments or names to fill the vacancies that you had?

B. DAVIS: Correct.

C. PARDY: No more?

B. DAVIS: No more.

C. PARDY: Okay.

When it comes to this panel, and fisheries-wise, I know David Vardy was the one who headed up a panel. I think the eminent fish-pricing panel back in 2000, around that time. The latest appointee to the panel was on that as well, part of that study.

B. DAVIS: Yes.

C. PARDY: But one thing that I gleaned, in reading that study, was the fact that that panel needed to make sure that it was neutral. I could read, throughout the document, that it needs to be perceived as neutral and it needs to be neutral. I would think then, so we don't have people staking claim or a power struggle between the panel, if all of the panel are perceived as being neutral.

That was the gist of my question when I asked. I knew it wasn't the Fisheries who selected the panel, but at least for going forward, it's a thought and a consideration when you do select this panel for the fishers out there, if they perceive it to be independent, then I think you have much better chance that they're going to adhere and believe in what is happening.

If I can move on, before the Chair pushes me on, 1.1.01. If I can go through a few line items now quickly. We've got in 1.1.01, Minister's Office, the Salaries. We had \$25,000 less last year in the Salaries in the Minister's Office compared to what was budgeted. If you can explain that.

B. DAVIS: Yes, so there was a vacancy with respect to the departmental secretary to the minister for a period of time. During that period, where we had just constituted the new office, we were sharing some resources. So we were able to do that for the short term while we were getting that position filled.

C. PARDY: Thank you.

I'm assuming Transportation and Communications here and through the other items will be COVID related?

B. DAVIS: Correct.

C. PARDY: So we don't need – just assume.

1.2.01, Executive Support.

B. DAVIS: 1.2.01, okay.

C. PARDY: We look at Salaries there, Minister.

B. DAVIS: Yes.

C. PARDY: So we had \$129,700 more – I think that might be the right math – budgeted this year compared to what was spent last year.

B. DAVIS: That, last year, didn't include a communications director position. That has to be included now, so we're working through vacancy factor to fill that position.

C. PARDY: Okay, so communications director being added.

B. DAVIS: Correct.

C. PARDY: 2.1.02 – Chair, we are moving right along. 2.1.02, that's environmental. If I were –

CHAIR: We are not there yet.

B. DAVIS: You're too quick.

C. PARDY: Well, I am good with that section.

CHAIR: So if the Committee is ready for the question, shall 1.1.01 to 1.2.01 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 to 1.2.01 carried.

CHAIR: Can I get the Clerk to call the next set of subheads?

CLERK: Environment, 2.1.01 to 2.3.01 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 to 2.3.01 inclusive carry?

MHA Pardy.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Chair.

Environmental – if I were to ask on carbon tax this year, anything to do with that, I am better off waiting for the carbon section?

B. DAVIS: Carbon tax is held through Finance but if you want to ask us the questions, that is fine. You don't necessarily need to do it in Pollution Prevention. You can do it in Climate Change and the other sections.

C. PARDY: Okay. I will wait until that time.

Looking at some of the line items here. Professional Services – significant difference in Professional Services from what was budgeted to what was spent last year and certainly to what is budgeted this year.

B. DAVIS: Yes. So you are going to see – sorry, I didn't mean to jump in there quickly.

C. PARDY: No, that's good.

B. DAVIS: You are going to see that in a couple of line items here where you are going to see in and outs coming in. Generally, that's to do with the former US military sites in Labrador project. We moved the money back because we couldn't spend it last year. So now that had to be removed and brought back into this year's budget, with the hopes of spending some of it.

We are in the process of consultations with Indigenous governments and the federal government to go forward on what the ask is going to be for that. So we put some money in there as a starting point, but there is definitely going to be more spent over the next subsequent years. But it is just essentially a push out, moving into the next years.

C. PARDY: Okay.

If I can go back to the Salaries in the same section, 2.1.01, Minister? \$24,600 more

budgeted this year than was spent last year. If you can explain that.

B. DAVIS: Just higher due to forecasted salary increases.

C. PARDY: Okay.

B. DAVIS: And what was spent last year was down a little bit based on the fact that there were vacant positions, similar to what happens in the divisions.

C. PARDY: Yes.

Purchased Services, in the same section, there were \$283,000 more budgeted this year compared to what was spent last year. If you can give us a breakdown of what those expenses were for. That is Purchased Services under 2.1.01.01.

B. DAVIS: So that deals directly with the US military sites in Labrador as well. So that is in two separate sections there and you'll see it come through in, I guess, four sections. If Bonnie wants to jump in, she can clarify it. But the way it is accounted for in the public accounting systems is the way we're doing it. It is not the easiest to understand but that is the way it is.

So that \$283,000 is a reduction in what we put in place for US military sites. It is just going to be carried forward in future years.

C. PARDY: Okay.

Grants and Subsidies, in that section as well, I know we are back to the \$2 million budgeted; would the list of those be in the binder that we've received?

B. DAVIS: We can get you a list of the grants that were passed out. That's no problem, for that section.

The Grants and Subsidies decrease over last year was based on the provincial waste management projects and unused funding because of COVID, not closing down landfills and things like that. That is essentially where that would be a reduction in. That money is still going to be

spent; it is just going to be moved out to a subsequent year.

C. PARDY: Okay.

You had the revenue section, Minister.

B. DAVIS: Yes.

C. PARDY: There was \$2 million in revenue budgeted last year but nothing was collected, if you can explain that, and the \$25,000 expected to be collected this year.

B. DAVIS: Right, so that \$2 million is, again, to do with the US former military sites. It's the money that we didn't receive from the federal contribution for it because we didn't do the work. We're still in that process of meeting with the federal government.

They've got a budget line there, through their treasury board process, but now we're in the consultations with Indigenous organizations and governments to figure out what the actual extent of the cleanup is, what the cost of that will be and then we will both be going back to the federal government to determine what the actual cost is. This is money that was budgeted for but we didn't spend.

C. PARDY: And they're paying fully for the cleanup? Will they pay fully—?

B. DAVIS: I'm going to say hopefully. But I don't expect that will be the case. Maybe, Bonnie, do you want to jump in on that one a little bit?

B. STEELE: Actually, I think we'll get Rob to speak to that because he is ...

R. LOCKE: The former military sites are potentially going to be funded through a 50/50 cost-shared agreement with the federal government. As the minister said, while we are consulting with Indigenous governments and organizations, we can't put a fixed number on that to finalize consultations until we have the final cost of what the cleanups could cost. We don't want to go in, for example, with an ask of \$20 million only to find out that the cleanups could actually cost \$30 million. Certainly, doing

due diligence now, speaking with those groups in trying to build consensus toward a cost.

The revenue that you're seeing, the difference is that until we finalize a cost-shared agreement with federal government, there will be no anticipated revenue, until we actually start to do the work, invoice the federal government and then receive revenue back in return.

The framework we have initially worked out is that there would be an anticipated revenue, roughly 50 per cent of what the province could spend. That is reflected in the \$4 million you've seen pushed out to future years in Professional Services and Purchased Services. Similarly, then, the removal of the \$2 million that will come back from the federal government. So all of that has been pushed now to future years until we can finalize that agreement.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Locke.

I remind the hon. Member that his speaking time has expired.

2.1.01 to 2.3.01 inclusive.

MHA Evans.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Chair.

2.1.01, Pollution Prevention: How many estimated liabilities for contaminated sites are currently calculated and how will the estimated process unfold in the future, for example, for Come By Chance Refinery?

B. DAVIS: I think we can get you that list. I don't know if we have it here today.

Robert, do you have a list of contaminated sites? We can get it for you.

R. LOCKE: We can certainly get that, yeah.

B. DAVIS: We don't have it here, I don't think, but obviously the liability would be pretty high in certain areas, of course.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

Would you have an update on the Impacted Sites Liability Assessment Program and what cleanup plans are in the works for this upcoming year?

B. DAVIS: Yes, we're just the, I guess, the holder of the list. We're not necessarily the ones that – Transportation and Infrastructure would be more of the ones that would determine what gets cleaned and when and the budget associated with that. We're just the holder of the list. I won't say this to diminish it, but more of an accounting of what we have out there and what the potential liabilities could be. Until you actually get in there and dig into what the site would look like after it has started to be cleaned up, it's hard to say exactly what would be there.

But we can get you the information we have on the registry, is probably the best word to describe it. But I think your question about what order in which it will be done and the magnitude in which it will be done, would be better served to Transportation and Infrastructure.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

B. DAVIS: I think you have an opportunity tonight, though, for that.

L. EVANS: I was just thinking that.

Looking at greenhouse gas emissions: What are we currently doing to date for implementing the 45 actions that were to take place by 2024 to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions?

B. DAVIS: Thank you for the question.

Currently, of the 45 recommendations, we have 67 per cent of them fully completed; 33 per cent of them are in progress, at varying degrees of progress, but we're continuing to know that's definitely not going to be enough to reach our 2030 or 2050 targets. We're going to have to do more. That's going to be why we're starting to look at the next plan, but that's a part of the reason why we put in place the Net-Zero Advisory Council to provide some insight into that.

The federal government has really doubled down on this. It's truly doubled down on the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund, because, in this past budget, they announced

\$2.2 billion for that fund again, which will give us a similar number, we hope, to what we did the last five years, which was about \$90 million to change out buildings and electrification and putting things in place for our transportation and heating of buildings, which are big pillars of – they account for 30 per cent of our greenhouse gas emissions now in the province.

If we can tackle the transportation network, not just from a personal vehicle standpoint, which we're trying to attack, but also where the next levels go for public transit, what we can do for shipping and things like that.

Those technologies are moving on and I know the federal government put also another \$9.2 billion into the green economy and green tech and all those things that are going to try to help us hit those targets about carbon capture and other things to go along with that. But it is a moving target as we speak and we're doing everything we can to hold industry accountable but also help individuals transition to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

Can we get that update, the 67 actions that are completed and the 33 that are in progress?

B. DAVIS: Absolutely.

L. EVANS: Can we just get, like, a written report summarizing the progress?

B. DAVIS: Absolutely.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Has there been any progress made in the last year to improve or specify the policies and procedures for calculating the liability of a given site, as per the Auditor General's report in 2020?

B. DAVIS: We'll throw it back to our resident expert, Robert.

R. LOCKE: Yes, so in response to the Auditor General's report, my division staff have – we've revised the guidance document that departments and agencies follow with respect to calculating liabilities for those sites. One of the main improvements is that there is now a cost for

inflation that gets added to the liabilities. We're still in the process of finalizing this year's report, but once it's available we can certainly make those calculations and numbers available.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

I'm not sure if this is the right place to ask it but just another question here that just came up: Has the government started calculating its corporate carbon footprint?

B. DAVIS: I'm going to say yes, we do that, through Susan's shop.

Susan, would you like to make a comment on that as well?

S. SQUIRES: All of our GHG emissions in the province are calculated and we participate in the national reporting inventory for all our GHG emissions. That's broken down by sector, so we would report into those just like industry, manufacturing, residential use, all of it. We have initiatives over this Climate Change Action Plan about greening government and different departments have done different things, so there is, I guess, a multitude of areas in which we're working on that.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

Moving to 2.2.01, Water Resources Management. It's good to see you, Dr. Khan. I've worked with you in the past.

So 2.2.01, Water Resources Management: How many municipalities have been on a boil-water advisory for more than a month, one year and how many residents do such long-term advisories currently impact?

B. DAVIS: Yeah, so as of April 28 – we can get you more up-to-date information but that's not that long ago – there was 188 boil-water advisories in place. There are 146 communities affected by those boil-water advisories, serving a population of about 43,000 people, so just a little over almost 10 per cent of the population, a little less.

But 174 of those, which is the interesting part of this, which is something that I know the

previous minister – Minister Bragg – when he was with MAPA, or whatever the iteration was before, was really firm on when we give funding to municipalities and organizations like that, instead of building a recreation complex in a community, we should be really focusing on giving clean drinking water to the constituencies there. It is not, as they say, the big, shiny building that is sitting in a community, but it is something that is going to make a big impact.

But the point of that statement was that 174 of those are non-microbiological reasons so they can be fixed – I won't say easy, but there are systems in place. There is funding available within the government to fix these things. We just need the communities to apply, and I never miss an opportunity to encourage individuals, municipalities, LSDs to apply to clean their drinking water.

The ones that are very challenging, those ones are the ones we will all try to step up and try to find solutions for. But they are very small numbers, the ones that are more challenging to fix. The rest, you know, it could be that they have a system already in place and they are not putting chlorine in it or chemicals in it that needs to be put into it, because some people don't like the taste of the chlorine. Those are the things that we can fix and try to find ways to work together on. So a very good question, MHA Evans.

L. EVANS: And will be able to get a breakdown of the ones that have been on the boil-water advisory for more than a month, more than a year?

B. DAVIS: Yeah, we can do that.

L. EVANS: You can just send it over.

B. DAVIS: They are online, but we can get you a copy. That is no problem.

L. EVANS: Okay.

I guess about tying the boil-water advisories to access to funding is one of the things you are doing, but what are you doing to address the

boil-water advisories that have been in place for a long time?

B. DAVIS: Well, that is a very good question. We have reduced that number. That was well over 200 not too long ago. I think it was 240 or 235. So we have reduced that over the last couple of years by putting in place, as I mentioned in my intro, the water operator program, to help those smaller communities that don't have the experience and/or skilled staff – they have skilled staff but not necessarily in that particular area.

These individuals are someone they can call to help those communities and they have helped a number of communities get their systems back up and running, helped them maintain them when they do have a faulty part or something like that. So those are things that we're doing, tangible, that can help them. But we're encouraging people – like, in this House of Assembly, I encourage every MHA to talk to their district communities that don't have clean drinking water to reach out to us. We want this fixed; we want to support it. It is a priority for not just our provincial government, but our federal government as well.

We're pushing hard to try to get this stuff, but it is going to take all of us, the municipalities, our MHAs on both sides of the aisle here, to work together to try to get these communities fixed because that is the only way that it is going to work. Communities, like all of us, like to see the big infrastructure that's above ground so that every person can go in and visit. They don't necessarily worry as much about infrastructure that lies underneath the ground. That is something that is really important for the livelihoods of individuals. It is part of the Health Accord. It is something that we are committed to and we have been committed to well before the Health Accord as well. So very good question.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister, and thank you, MHA Evans.

Just before we go back to MHA Pardy, out of respect for our friends down at the Broadcast Centre, I'm asking for five minutes. So we'll reconvene at 11:30 a.m.

B. DAVIS: Perfect.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Recess

CHAIR: Okay. If we can just gather our seats again, please.

So we are back on 2.1.01 to 2.3.01.

MHA Pardy.

C. PARDY: A question on the remediation of the old dump sites: What would be the estimated cost of remediation of a dump site? I know outside of St. John's, here in Robin Hood Bay, I think you can get probably a handle on what those dump sites would be.

B. DAVIS: I guess that is the million-dollar, probably billion-dollar question. I don't know if we could ever get a handle on what the full remediation will be of sites. I don't have it off the top of my head, but what I do know is that we're working with some of the sites like Discovery region in Coast of Bays to try to find some ways to have them move in their garbage so we can get rid of those sites. That's what that money that was carried over – that \$2 million was it – for sites. That's where we need to go.

So when we get those deals done, like with your region down there in Discovery, once we get that worked out, that'll help us close out those dump sites and then transition people to the landfill that's closest to them, whether it be Eastern, Central or Western.

C. PARDY: We're struggling in our district with our dump site capacity –

B. DAVIS: Absolutely.

C. PARDY: – as you well know.

B. DAVIS: Absolutely.

C. PARDY: I keep telling the residents and the councils that my understanding was the year before last and then it was last year, so I'm assuming, surely, we wouldn't be too far off.

B. DAVIS: Well, the whole thing is we're waiting for the Discovery region, right, that's where we're working through. It's not just on our end; we're waiting for – what's the best word – Robert, you can sort of jump in there

R. LOCKE: MHA Pardy, as it happens, we actually have a meeting that we're arranging now with representatives from Discovery region. The whole purpose would be to advance the strategy in that area, to work with them, to consolidate closed sites and to move into the modern waste management system for the Eastern region.

C. PARDY: So the rubber is hitting the road now?

R. LOCKE: Yes, it is indeed. Our staff are actually – I think, they have a meeting planned, if it's not, within the next week or two, I think it's very imminent.

C. PARDY: Perfect.

Last, before I move on to another topic, the US military bases, we must have an estimate – even though when I ask that question I know how precarious that is and tough job to get an estimate because you don't know what's lying beneath. But do we have an estimate that we're working on that we're going to go 50/50 on with the feds?

B. DAVIS: We'll let Robert jump in there because he's been working intimately with the file.

R. LOCKE: Yes, so the latest estimate we have is approximately \$25 million, \$27 million. As I said, that number is not finalized and we don't want it to be finalized until we fully consulted with the Indigenous governments and organizations, the people who use the land. We need to know what the proposed land use will be. There's historical knowledge in those communities that previous assessments may not have picked up. So we are looking to potentially have sessions actually in each of the communities with the Indigenous organizations to gather knowledge and basically for both of us to work together to build consensus on what is there and how best to remediate in order to meet the needs and improve these sites going forward.

C. PARDY: Okay, good. Good, good, good.

One quick point on the ATV tires, and I know you're not MMSB. It fails me when we look at the environment that a small business in Clarendville can change tires, they don't sell the tires but they can change someone's tire on the ATVs, four tires. What MMSB has really expected them to do is to give that back to them to take with them and to dispose of themselves.

Sometimes that's problematic. Sometimes it doesn't get where it ought to be. So what the business owner opted to do was he would save the tires and he would bring them out. So at one point in time he brought it out in his business truck and you know that didn't work. So they didn't take them. The only thing being was that if he went home and changed his truck and brought them back out, they would be taken.

What our goal would be environmentally was to take those tires out of the circulation that don't end up on streets or in waking trails that we would have, but once we put that barrier up – and we have it – and once those leave his business and bring those ATV tires out, if there's even 20 per cent that don't make it to the transfer station, then that's 20 per cent too much.

There might be a little tweaking or another analysis that I would see. I know it's not for discussion here, but it's probably something we should look at with that.

I had a fisherman that brought a net up. He had a net in the back and only to get to the transfer station in Clarendville and they don't take nets. So he called: Well, what do I do with that? They don't take it. It's Robin Hood Bay.

If you think most fishermen are going to transfer it, that would be living in the District of Bonavista and make the track for there, then I said, not going to happen.

B. DAVIS: (Inaudible) I tend to agree with you on that.

The MMSB has put an RFP out for tires. I know that's clued up now, or very close to cluing up. I think that's going to be an opportunity for us to look at a local options, hopefully, that will deal with the tires. Because normally you can't deal

with the ATV tires anyway because of the mud and stuff, based on where we were bringing them to, which was in Quebec, they couldn't cross borders because of the potato bug and all that stuff could potentially come in.

We're working on things. It's not lost on me, because anything we can take out of the landfill and recycle is going to be better for us for the longer term, not just from a greenhouse gas emission and a waste management position, but anything we can divert out of those landfills to increase better than 50 per cent of the diversion is where we need to be, as, not just the government, as a people.

C. PARDY: Now, I'm not going to raise about how shipping our tires out of the – because I think you had stated in Estimates last year, the fact that we just don't have the volume. It's just for us to do something with it, but I don't know what the carbon footprint would be using the concrete plant in Quebec. I'm assuming –

B. DAVIS: Yes, obviously, we're looking at options. Hopefully – stay tuned – there'll be an option that would be better than that forth coming.

I can't speak to that yet at this point because I don't know if it's finalized or if it's even clued up that way, so stay tuned. Obviously, it's not falling on deaf ears, I agree with you 100 per cent on let's divert as much as we possibly can and use it if we can.

The problem that I've always heard is that we have an awful lot of tires, but nowhere near what it needs to be in industry. But that doesn't negate the fact that we can't use something for it. So stay tuned, we're working on some things. Hopefully, when you ask me next year in Estimates, you won't even ask me, you'll say congratulations, Minister, on the great program that you've put in place for these tires.

C. PARDY: Good.

Keep in mind the debate that we had about the all-terrain vehicles and helmets in Side By Sides.

B. DAVIS: Yes.

C. PARDY: Remember, the stats would tell you that we have got double the ATVs per capita. We have got the highest in Canada. So once we look at our per capita, we are not normal as far as in Newfoundland and Labrador thinking that we haven't –

B. DAVIS: I would think we definitely are normal.

C. PARDY: No, we are not normal, I don't think.

B. DAVIS: I think the people would think differently if you had said they were abnormal.

C. PARDY: Definitely not abnormal. But we are not the normal breed.

If I can go to Water Resources Management, you had stated there – and I commend you on that – the onus is on MHAs to make safe drinking water available and for us to be all a part of it. Let me give you a scenario and you tell me what you would think.

So we have got a community that has been on a boil-water order – 66, 70 households. They just got a Municipal Capital Works Project last year for \$250,000 because they figured that is what they could afford to pay. They have been on a boil-water advisory. So this is the second one they have got. The first one they got, they paid it off. Now they have got another one for \$250,000. Well, they have probably got another three to go, but they can't afford that one million to pay it off in what the lending institutions would provide for them for six or seven years.

We have got a community with a boil order since 1985 and, at a public meeting, they were wondering if government can say we will grant you enough to do a job that your drinking water will be safe to drink and you will come off the boil-water advisory. The only thing being is we need to be able to have a longer borrowing term.

Is there something that government can do that would help communities like Newman's Cove to be able to get there much sooner than having to

wait for another decade and go through the trickles of the \$250,000?

B. DAVIS: Well, before I throw it to Haseen, I just want to say, yes, would be what I would like to say, but I haven't specifically had a conversation with them to see what their requirements are as you described them. I would be more than happy to sit down with them to try to find solutions on what we can do.

Haseen is probably more intimately involved in this, obviously, than I have. But if there is anything we can do with respect to gas tax, federal government and provincial government to work towards getting that there – we are all in this together to try and get them there. Let's figure out how we can do it and Haseen –

H. KHAN: Thank you, Minister, and MHA Pardy.

As the minister said, there are two options. For these type of communities, we have launched a special program that every year we will select four or five such communities. We will work with them one on one – what is the cause of this problem, how the problem can be fixed and these are the options. So this is one option.

The second option is, as the minister mentioned, drinking water safety is our priority. We can also provide these communities with a small potable water dispensing unit, which will provide them with clean and safe water for drinking purposes.

We have done that for a number of such communities, and there are 32 potable water dispensing units operating throughout the province. So yes, there are options to respond to these types of special situations, MHA Pardy.

CHAIR: Thank you.

We'll go back to MHA Evans, 2.1.01 to 2.3.01 inclusive.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Chair.

Just going back to 2.1.01, under Pollution Prevention for waste management there. Given the large carbon footprint associated with solid

waste, is the department giving any consideration to diverting organics from the regional waste management sites?

B. DAVIS: The short answer is yes, we've given consideration – it is a costly venture, so we're looking at options on smaller sites that we could do it in. I'll give you one example and I'll let Robert jump in on this after I give this one. I was in Deer Lake. They do some composting in their site, for their own – I guess they have a municipal site but the residents can come get the product. It's a fenced-in yard, they'll open it up when it's ready to go and they can take it out.

There's a program that smaller communities can use together for regional sites, where they can actually get tumblers from MMSB and that's one of the options that we're using for smaller scale to try to reach across the Island to get some people moving in that diversion point. Robert, if you want to jump in on that one, that'd be great.

R. LOCKE: Sure, thank you, Minister.

Certainly a recognition that organic waste going to landfill is an issue. Overall, from a provincial perspective, that is certainly recognized that we would be working toward a provincial solution for organic waste management from the municipal side.

From the industrial side, there are a number of companies that have approached us over the last while with solutions that they're certainly looking at implementing and we're supporting, where possible, to divert organic waste from landfill. Things like sewage waste treatment, enhanced treatment or processing of aquaculture waste, things like that. So it is certainly something the department is working with stakeholders to address.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Moving back to 2.2.01, Water Resources Management. Just looking for an update. How far along is the work now on the Drinking Water Safety Action Plan?

B. DAVIS: Good question. I mentioned earlier that we have already done a public consultation and that has been clued up. The department is working on the report from there. I would say, as

I said to MHA Pardy, stay tuned, it is not going to be very far and we'll have that released.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

Could we get an update on the monitoring of methylmercury levels downstream? I know you are monitoring the methylmercury in the water, but also I am looking at bioaccumulation in the food chain. In addition to the water methylmercury monitoring you're doing, are you testing any organisms, such as fish and also waterfowl that feed on the aquatic vegetation and the insects and organisms in the water?

This monitoring that you're going to talk to me about now, are there reports available to residents that would actually show the methylmercury levels in water and also in the food chain?

B. DAVIS: I think it is available on our website for the levels. I will let Haseen jump in here on this one because he can talk about it a little bit more in detail from scientist to scientist more than MHA to scientist.

L. EVANS: Just to clarify, we're looking at what testing is going on, on what and where are the reports.

H. KHAN: Thanks, MHA.

Methylmercury monitoring has been going on in three mediums: water, sediment and biota. Water data is available on the Department of Environment and Climate Change website. It is updated on a regular basis, as and when data is provided to us by the lab.

Sediment and biota monitoring is undertaken by Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro as a part of EA release requirements. They submit annual reports to the department on their findings. We post those reports also on our web page. So there is a one-point contact to the public for all information on methylmercury, which has been collected to date. We, as the departmental, are lead on methylmercury monitoring in water. To date, monitoring has not shown any increase in methylmercury levels.

L. EVANS: Okay.

So where did you say the other reports are? Is that available to the public?

B. DAVIS: The Newfoundland (inaudible) is public as well on our website.

L. EVANS: On the website.

Thank you.

H. KHAN: We can send you the link.

L. EVANS: No, that's good.

Are there any priorities for flood-risk mapping to be conducted this coming year?

B. DAVIS: Yes, good question.

We were pleased to put in \$1.2 million in this budget for flood-risk mapping, \$600,000 from the federal government and \$600,000 for the province. In 2022, just so we know, we conducted flood-risk mapping in Ferryland, Brigus and other places. In 2023, it's looking at the Codroy Valley where we've had some issues as of recent with respect to flooding in the fall.

So we're looking at those areas of highest priority where we have issues that can provide information to the municipality and the community groups to ensure that those areas are not impacted in infrastructure and the costs come forward.

But I will throw it back to Haseen again on flood-risk mapping, if there is anything he'd like to add, because I think it's not known widely, but it's a very big service that's provided by the department, that's used by many other departments and agencies across the province.

Haseen.

H. KHAN: Thank you, Minister.

The province has been involved in flood-risk mapping since the 1980s under various federal-provincial cost-shared programs. We, as a province, have developed flood-risk maps for about 46 communities. We maintain that information on our web page. Every year we try to select four or five communities from our priority list, which is available on the web page.

As of today, there are about 22 communities which are on the priority list. So either the maps have to be updated – our maps have to be done right from scratch. So, as the minister mentioned, it is an ongoing process and we will continue to update flood-risk maps as prepared maps for those areas for which we have no information.

For the information of Members, there are 50 communities in the province which are kind of prone to flooding from time to time.

B. DAVIS: One of the things that I think is novel about ours is that we factor in climate change numbers and initiatives that come forward that some other jurisdictions don't do but we do that because I think it's important to factor that in.

Thank you, MHA Evans.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Is it possible to get an update on the implementation of the Regional Water and Wastewater Operator Pilot Program?

B. DAVIS: Yes, good question.

Myself and Minister Howell were in Gander at the Water Operators Provincial Conference – I think that's what it was called – where we announced \$240,000, almost \$250,000, to maintain that program to ensure that communities that don't have the readily available skill sets have the ability to utilize those trained professionals to learn how to operate their system or maintain their systems. I look at it as almost like you call a friend thing, when you have a problem it gives you an opportunity to call someone who knows and walks you through that system and knows your system well.

L. EVANS: Just looking at weather forecasts now. When you are actually predicting the impacts from weather emergencies such as blizzards and hurricanes, where do you get your information to make such forecasts?

B. DAVIS: I get it from Haseen, but I'm going to throw it back to Haseen to say where Haseen gets it.

So thank you, Haseen, for providing that information to me and everybody else.

H. KHAN: We do lots of work in this area. We kind of compile our own information in consultation with communities as well as through our own ongoing monitoring programs, because we cannot make informed decision making until we know what is happening out in the field. So we have a very strong network and partnership with communities, as well as with operators and that is how we get information.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Khan, and thank you, MHA Evans.

2.1.01 to 2.3.01, MHA Parady.

C. PARDY: Just a couple of more points to finish up there.

On the Newman's Cove situation, which I just mentioned, we can discuss that –

B. DAVIS: Absolutely.

C. PARDY: – and have a look, that's something that we can explore. In the response on number two, where it mentioned that we had drinking water safety, small water dispensing program, I'm assuming that would be under the special assistance grant through municipalities?

B. DAVIS: For those PWDU systems?

C. PARDY: Or would it be through your department?

H. KHAN: It goes through the Capital Works program.

C. PARDY: Okay, Capital Works program.

B. DAVIS: We're more than happy to sit down with you, MHA, just like any other MHA, if there are issues within your district, we want to try to support those as best we can. I mean, the answer may not be exactly what you want or the

time frame you want, but we're going to try to do it as fast as we possibly can, given the resources that we have.

C. PARDY: Thank you. That's good.

I was the mayor of George's Brook-Milton prior to offering myself and running in the election. At that point in time, we had a very, very poor water infrastructure system. In fact, our supply dried up. We are adjacent to a rather large municipality; we had asked for water from their municipality, which I would assume the millions that were spent to develop their system was probably based on us anyhow, as a regional system, is what was our understanding, but we couldn't get water.

So we contacted the government. I think last year's Estimates, Mr. Michielsen was part and he did yeoman work in trying to broker. What I thought strange was, as gallant an attempt as it was for him to broker for us to get water, it didn't happen. And the sad part was that it was on an 80/20 split that we, as taxpayers, contribute 80 per cent of the \$10 million, \$12 million water treatment plant that exists. To think that we could not, or the government could not – I hate to say dictate – but to direct to supply water.

Well, after four or five days of us begging and paying the highest price in Newfoundland and Labrador for water to come into our community – higher than St. John's, the highest level – that was one of the things that I said, well, I wouldn't mind running in the next election, just based on some of those principles.

I would say right now in George's Brook-Milton where we are, well, we're having a parallel system that we get government funding to enhance our water system. I would say when we look at efficiencies, that when we farm out the monies in these water projects that you would do under your department, we have to make sure that there are conditions involved that if there was a neighbouring community that needs that water, then the neighbouring community can access that water that would be available.

I know a lot depends on the amount of usage that they have. But I just wanted to slip that in, because it was very significant to us at the time.

I would think that by me stating to you, going forward in the discussions that you have, it may come up some point in time that in future that we do have control that if we put in 80 per cent of our funds, then the contract and the agreement that is signed we know that if it's a neighbouring community that's in need, then the water ought to go to them. Because financially it makes sense for us to do so.

B. DAVIS: Are you sure you're not speaking for Minister Howell on regionalization there? Just wondering – I'll make sure I send that message to her, too.

C. PARDY: I am a fan of regionalization.

B. DAVIS: Absolutely.

C. PARDY: If it works for the people, it works for me.

B. DAVIS: Absolutely.

C. PARDY: On the assessment, the 2.3.01 – and I know that we haven't gone through a lot of the lines.

B. DAVIS: Okay, 2.3.01, you said?

C. PARDY: Yes.

B. DAVIS: Okay, sorry, I'm there.

C. PARDY: Again, I'm learning, and I know you're not here to impart your knowledge on to me. But the only thing I would say is that when you do an environmental assessment, I'm assuming that you look at the environment, but you also look at what the magnitude or what the potential would be of what you're assessing – potential for the province.

You might say, well, I wonder what is he referring to right now. I would say if we look at Tors Cove, the sealing that would be in your department right now and looking at an environmental assessment. I would look at on a bigger picture as to how significant – and we had a good discussion in the House on sealing and where we ought to be and what we think the benefits would be.

Trinity train loop, I've had businesspeople looking at that, but I think that's tied up in an environmental assessment. And probably all valuable – it's all significant, but the only thing being is that we have people who are out there waiting to invest money to turn it over to something that we can create an economic return on.

B. DAVIS: It's the first I heard of that one, by the way.

C. PARDY: I state that because that's what I understand is that there's an environmental component of Trinity train loop before it's ever divested from the provincial government.

CHAIR: Thank you.

MHA Evans, did you have anything left in 2.1.01 to 2.3.01?

L. EVANS: Yes, I did.

CHAIR: Okay.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Under 2.2.01, Water Resources Management: Looking at the Supplies and Professional Services, spending went over budget last year; what was the extra money spent on?

B. DAVIS: Could you say that again? Which section again, 2.3.01?

L. EVANS: Water Resources Management.

B. DAVIS: Okay, sorry. Let me get back there.

Say that question again, please.

L. EVANS: Supplies and Professional Services went over budget last year; what was the extra money spent on?

B. DAVIS: Higher field supplies to the drinking water program equipment and supplies. Hydrometric and Climate Program equipment as well.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

Federal revenue was much higher than expected last year.

B. DAVIS: Cost shared on climate change adaptation flood risk mapping, the \$600,000. That was put in the budget.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Moving to 2.2.02, Water Quality Agreement. Under Supplies, what accounts for the budget increase?

B. DAVIS: The same thing from previous. Supplies for field equipment budgeted for the program expansion related to real time water quality agreements.

L. EVANS: Okay.

2.3.01, Environmental Assessment and Sustainable Development.

B. DAVIS: Okay.

L. EVANS: Just moving down the page.

B. DAVIS: Moving right along.

L. EVANS: What recommendations have been implemented as a result of the waste management review and which ones will be put in place in the next year?

B. DAVIS: Okay. So the waste management review was received, I think, in 2020. We're working through those. I always use the example that we're knocking the low-hanging fruit that is there available for us to make changes to and then the larger discussions will come with the municipalities and the organizations that would have concerns with doing some of the things that were in the report.

Not that we're going to implement everything that was in the report, but we're working towards the things that make sense for municipalities and organizations. That is what we're working on. The things that don't make sense are going to be conversations with them to see what is a better use of resources or whatnot. Similar to the discussion we had with Discovery with MHA Pardy a second ago.

L. EVANS: So would we be able to get an overview of the recommendations though?

B. DAVIS: Yeah, we can give you a full copy of the recommendation. I can also give you an update of where we are to with some of the changes that have already been made and implemented.

L. EVANS: Yes, those are the ones I am looking for. Just an update on those ones.

B. DAVIS: No problem.

L. EVANS: Would we be able to have an update on the environmental assessment process review?

B. DAVIS: Yeah. I can sort of give you a treetops one. Right now, we are in the process of doing that. I encourage individuals that have some concerns expressed, similar to what MHA Parly had mentioned just earlier, if they have those concerns please forward them to our director who is in the process of doing that as we speak.

It is a legislatively governed process that I believe takes into account all of the things highlighted earlier here today as well. It is a solid process but there are always opportunities to make improvements, and that is why we are doing an evaluation on the process.

That is the update I have right now. I don't know a timeline when it will be completed but, as I have always said, I would sooner the work be done correctly and right than fast and wrong. We have seen those things happen before.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

Has there been any progress made in combatting illegal dumping, as my fellow colleague was talking about the issue with tires and things like that? Do we have any means of measuring the problem, first off, and like the volume of garbage that is being dumped in a given year?

B. DAVIS: So the short answer is yes, there has been progress made. We have put in place, I

think – it was Estimates last year – 140 or 160 positions in FFA or thereabouts that would be doing evaluations as they are doing their regular job of dump sites that would be in the province. Obviously the MMSB has a fantastic role in trying to educate the public that if it appears in the woods on your trail system, it started in somebody's hand to get there.

I think that is an important piece that all of us should be doing. I think those type of community cleanups like we have with the Come Home Year Cleanup and cleanups, like in my own area, the Outer Ring Road as an example, send a message to others that this is not something we should be doing and have to do every year. It is something that you can control yourself.

So the short answer is yes, there has been extra money put in enforcement. The other side that I mentioned earlier about ERP programs – any time you make it more cost effective to dispose of waste, more people will do it to make it easier for them. Because landfills can expand their hours, they can accept more things. If you can drop off your fishing net in location X and save yourself a drive for 100 kilometres, well then that's good for recycling and it's good for your environment, it's good for you from a cost perspective, so we're always looking at ways we can improve on that.

But point well taken about cleaning up our dump sites that exist. I know that the hon. Member for Ferryland last year, I went in and we had some sites cleaned up by volunteers and we were able to find some money to help dispose of that, tipping fees, to help him get rid of buses and stuff that were in the woods at campgrounds.

So, you know, those are things that, when we hear about them, we'll try our best to work to find solutions.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

Under Professional Services, what was the \$11,500 used for last year?

B. DAVIS: Legal costs for the Northern Harvest versus the Salmonid Association of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

Under provincial revenue, why was this far less than expected last year, than was budgeted?

B. DAVIS: Okay, so that was because there was a delay in the revenue to come from Grieg NL project, based on the environmental assessment and the condition of release, was they had to hire a monitor. We had to hire a monitor, they were paying for it, but it never needed to be implemented because they weren't at that stage of the development that they are now. So that monitor is in the process of being hired now.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

I missed an item up here, just going back, 2.2.02.

B. DAVIS: 2.2.02, give me one second.

L. EVANS: Water Quality Agreement.

B. DAVIS: Yes.

L. EVANS: Purchased Services came in under budget last year. Why was that?

B. DAVIS: Lower costs due to decreased water testing related to COVID-19 restrictions during the field season and decreased maintenance costs for repairs needed for the equipment.

L. EVANS: Okay.

B. DAVIS: One of the few things that decreased during COVID.

L. EVANS: Just going back to page 99, I think it is, under 2.2.01, Water Resources Management on page 99.

B. DAVIS: Okay.

L. EVANS: It's not a line item, but I know you want to find it in the book.

How many inspectors are there now for monitoring aquaculture sites and how often are the sites inspected?

B. DAVIS: Good question.

I don't know off the top of my head. I'm going to look to staff. How many monitors? Can you say that again, if you don't mind, MHA Evans?

L. EVANS: How many inspectors are there now monitoring the aquaculture sites?

OFFICIAL: Fisheries.

B. DAVIS: Oh that would be in Fisheries, wouldn't it?

So that would be in FFA. Sorry about that.

L. EVANS: And I skipped over it intentionally because I knew we asked it and I had a couple of questions there but I didn't think we asked all of them.

B. DAVIS: And I think we sparked that question in your mind because we talked about the monitor that was there for Grieg and that was – it's just a condition of release that it sits in our department. Sometimes conditions of release, it would be in FFA because it is more reflective of the management that FFA would do of it.

L. EVANS: Exactly.

Where I have got four seconds, I will take this time to – no, thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

So if the Committee is ready for the question.

Shall 2.1.01 to 2.3.01 inclusive carry?

CHAIR: All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.1.01 through 2.3.01 carried.

CHAIR: Before I get the last set of subheads called, I just want to remind everybody that we are scheduled to finish at 12:30 p.m. So we will see where it goes and we will make a decision by then.

So if I can have the Clerk call the next set of subheads, please.

CLERK: Climate Change, 3.1.01 to 3.2.01 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 to 3.2.01 inclusive carry?

MHA Parody.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Chair.

I'm going to do my best to be very expeditious here.

CHAIR: Thank you.

C. PARDY: I'm not known to be every expeditious but I'm going to try my best.

Back to the questions. The average household – I know you didn't get that but does the department have a cost of what the average household in Newfoundland and Labrador will pay as a result of the carbon tax this year? Do we have that?

B. DAVIS: We will throw it back to Susan there.

S. SQUIRES: So it obviously depends on how much you use fuel because the carbon tax is based on fuel. So if you have one vehicle versus multiple vehicles and Ski-Doo and whatnot, you are obviously (inaudible).

The carbon tax is known as a cost per litre and so people kind of judge that. So it's a bit harder to judge when you are talking about transportation but certainly easy to calculate if you have your own numbers. We don't, at this point, pay a carbon tax on home heating fuel, but

we do know if that proceeds to be added as a cost, you are looking at upwards of hundreds of dollars on home heating fuel. And, again, people can calculate that depending – they know their own home heating fuel usage per year and can calculate that.

C. PARDY: I state that just out of knowing that I come from a rural district, as things get more centralized you find that you have to travel to and from more.

I mentioned about the all-terrain vehicles. I mean, in rural Newfoundland, it's not uncommon that they have a couple of all-terrain vehicles that they would have. Amazing, really, because they use those quite a bit. I would think the carbon, we'll say, impact on them is fairly significant in rural Newfoundland, to travel. Probably even more so than what it may be in urban. And, again, you know better than I.

I just know that from my district to know that medically they'll have to travel to St. John's. If they can't get the service in Bonavista, they'll travel to Clarendville. There is so much travel up Route 230 and all that is impacting.

But I just ask, I didn't know if we had an estimated cost. I know how taxing and how difficult that is to get. But I didn't know if you had one that you had in your department that you were using as the impact on us. No.

B. DAVIS: As Susan said, it's all individual based on that. You gave the exact example why it's impossible or close to impossible to determine why. You could have two snow machines, two trikes or two bikes, three cars, whatever, right. And those things, depending on what you use for that, would be a challenge.

C. PARDY: We do estimations, though, all the time.

B. DAVIS: Yeah, absolutely.

C. PARDY: And I know that if the parliamentary budget office can do it for Alberta, Ontario and Manitoba, then surely there is a way out there that we can certainly do it for Newfoundland and Labrador.

So in the budget they had stated \$117 million to be collected in carbon tax this year, this fiscal. That's a significant amount. So I'm saying, even based on that \$117 million and you just work with that totally linearly, you can get an estimate as to what the impact would be. And I know that it's only an estimate and a very large ballpark figure.

B. DAVIS: Right.

C. PARDY: We can do it. But if you don't have it, you don't have it.

The parliamentary budget office for carbon cost, what they're predicting it will be now in Alberta is \$2,282. And they have a rebate program. We don't have a rebate program in Newfoundland and Labrador. Instead of listing out the other ones, well, they were there. And that was the basis of which I asked the question, knowing that they had done their estimation on that.

Newfoundland, I understand and read, emits about 11 million tons of greenhouse gases per year and the world was 35 billion. So I think you might have referenced earlier on that we're only a miniscule part of the bigger picture. I think you had mentioned earlier that it was 36 or 39 per cent of the carbon was based on transportation.

B. DAVIS: In the 30s.

C. PARDY: In the 30s, okay, generally 36.

If I had a business that was interested in having an EV charging station in the District of Bonavista, is there a process or have they been selected?

B. DAVIS: There is an application-based process through Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro that people can apply for. I think there was a subsidy for putting in level 2 charging stations at businesses. I'll use an example like a hotel or something like that. I don't know if there was as much uptake as we would have liked, but we're going to continue to push on that and maybe Susan can jump in and go through some of that with you.

S. SQUIRES: The fast-charging locations were picked and they were picked based on an

understanding of trying to get 65 kilometres between fast chargers to get commuters from across the Island and then Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro and Newfoundland Power are working on additional sites that will get us up and down the Bonavista Peninsula, Burin Peninsula, Northern Peninsula, whatnot.

So those sites were picked on a recommended standard on how far they should be apart. The level 2 chargers, which take longer to charge a vehicle, are what people would put in their home; they also might put them at their place of business. It is what we have here, for example, at the Confederation Building to charge fleet vehicles. Those can be installed by anybody but Newfoundland Power and Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro have a program where someone can apply and get some federal cost-shared support for that. I believe that is open right now but we certainly can get you more of that information.

C. PARDY: If you could, that would be wonderful. Especially when you have someone seeking to have one in Trinity Bay North, down in the tip of the peninsula –

S. SQUIRES: I should clarify: They have room in that for a few fast chargers but those are much more expensive, so the uptake on those is a little bit harder, I think, for some businesses to take on.

C. PARDY: And just one thing for clarification; I would think that our population down there during this tourist season is probably tenfold. I say that minimally because it is quite possible it is even more so than that.

B. DAVIS: I would say even more.

C. PARDY: Yes.

B. DAVIS: I think even more of a concern than that is we want to make sure that infrastructure outpaces vehicles themselves. So that there's never a thought of range anxiety from individuals. Because that's one of the concerns; that's a barrier to someone wanting – on the Bonavista Peninsula, just like it is in St. John's – to purchase an EV.

When the supply chain starts to solidify and be stronger now, you're going to see hundreds of these EVs coming into this province, just like across Canada. We're hopeful that we'll be able to get people to move to those quicker, because of many of the reasons you identified – for greenhouse gas emissions, to put savings in your own pocket – these are pennies in relation to most of your charging is done at home, off-peak times, which is beneficial.

So there's no doubt that we need to increase the network; that's why we've got 14 fast-charging across the Island, another 19 that are coming this summer, with an additional 10 or 14 possible that they're going to try to do that – and that doesn't even equate to the ones that we're looking at in the budget, for the million dollars we've put into the budget for charging infrastructure.

So it's known on us how important that is, so we will continue to stay focused on it.

C. PARDY: Good.

Federal government, we're going to move from \$50 per ton to \$170 per ton. If I'm not mistaken, at \$170 per ton, generally the carbon tax will be 30-something cents? Thirty-three, 35 cents? So if that's where we are, is that really sustainable? Are we going to be able to do that, where we're talking about in rural Newfoundland where they have what they utilize now?

We know that the pace is not going to have – we're not going to electrify these vehicles, what they certainly use out now, whether it be in their fishing vessels or on their ATVs or in their vehicles. Is it really ...?

B. DAVIS: I think the answer to your question is a challenging one. Obviously, it's not something that we can control. We, like every other province and territory right across this country, have been thrust into this debate, right here and in every other House, just like you're having it with me, about carbon tax. It's a federal government initiative that's been put forward by them, and enforced by them from the Supreme Court of Canada.

People that fought it have lost. So we can stand here and debate whether we should be doing it,

but it's already a moot point. It's here, and we've got to try to find the best way to move people from internal combustion engines to electrification of anything. Sorry for

C. PARDY: No, no, that's good. Thank you, I was just trying to make sure I got out a final comment before I pass it over. I was out of time.

B. DAVIS: Yes, you'll get another one, for sure.

C. PARDY: The only thing I would say is that we collect the carbon tax; you've got \$117 million now. And all I would say is that we've heard that we're unique; we're unique geography. We're more like a territory than – so if we got to think about, I come into St. John's here and I guarantee you, I don't burn much gas from my location where I live to back and forth. I don't. A different story when you have got to go out in rural Newfoundland and you are going for your amenities or you are going for your health appointments. There is much more distance travel involved.

So it is not all the same. As a government and as a governance we do have an expectation to make sure that we are as equitable as we possibly can for those that have a greater need for it or a greater expenditure then there has to be something – the same doesn't fit for everybody. So that is the last note before I pass it on.

CHAIR: Thank you, MHA Parady.

MHA Evans, we are into Climate change.

L. EVANS: 3.1.01, Climate Change: Could we have an update on the work done as a result of the Climate Change Action Plan? Now, just looking at the time and the sections we have, we will gladly accept a written summary as well, mailed to us, rather than take the time to – the minutes.

B. DAVIS: Okay. Very quickly, we can get the update on the 45 recommendations that came out of the Climate Change Action Plan. We can get that to you and I won't speak any further. I will let you guys try to get your questions in.

L. EVANS: Yeah, exactly.

Under Grants and Subsidies there is a steep increase to the budget. What will the funding be going towards?

B. DAVIS: So that deals directly with the electrical vehicle program and the transition for the oil to electric program. So that is the grant that is going out for Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro to administer those two programs for us.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

Under federal revenue budgeted for this year, what is the source of the million dollars?

B. DAVIS: Electric vehicle program for infrastructure.

L. EVANS: Okay. So that is it.

Continuing on there. We understand carbon taxes are governed by Department of Finance, but can the minister comment on where the revenue from the carbon tax is going?

B. DAVIS: The short answer is general revenues but there is, as you have just seen, line items that come directly from, you know, electric vehicles, oil program. Obviously there is \$40 million in Environment and Climate Change just in our department alone that deals with that. But there are other departments that have wings that deal with climate change and greenhouse gas reductions.

In the interest of time, I am trying to be as short as I can but if you need more, I can try to give you more, even on a sidebar if you would like in the future.

L. EVANS: That would be good.

Has the department begun estimating the cost of adaptation yet, the transition, particularly the coastal risks to provincial roads and infrastructure?

B. DAVIS: Yeah, so that's part of, I guess, the flood-risk mapping part. Obviously, there are coastal erosion costs. We, as a government,

don't look at the coastal erosion as much as the feds do from a financial perspective, but we're always looking and lobbying our colleagues federally to try to come up with a program because we understand it's important to try to address some of those concerns that you highlighted. Obviously, that's something that's changing with respect to climate change.

L. EVANS: Also, is there financial support available for the municipalities to write proposals, to access the low-carbon economy funding? There's a lot of funding out there, but many of the municipalities don't have the expertise. Every single municipality in my district can't, actually.

B. DAVIS: So, very quickly, reach out to us. We'll help you; we have no problem trying to help municipalities if they have an idea; tell them if it's functional, if it can work, if we can try to navigate through that complex system as I've said before.

The biggest thing I can recommend to anybody is just reach out to us and we'll tell you if we're able to help you with it but that's one that we definitely will. We want money all over this province to go and support municipalities, reduce their costs and, in turn, reduce the cost to residents.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

3.1.02, Low Carbon Economy, just looking at the number of grant applications now: How many were made last year for the Climate Change Challenge Fund? What type of projects were funded? Could we get an approximation of how much carbon they kept from entering the atmosphere?

B. DAVIS: So we can give you, in the interest of time, rather than go through the list, I have it, we can give it to you and we'll add to that how much reduction it did in greenhouse gas emissions. I know when we get it fully implemented it will be 830,000 tons of reduction when we get it fully implemented.

L. EVANS: Okay, no, that's perfect.

Line item under Grants and Subsidies: Why was so little money actually given out last year and

why is the budget item for this item cut about \$3 million this year?

B. DAVIS: So I guess the easiest answer to say is the flow of money. So whether it comes in from the federal government, it's based on – invoice driven. If the work is not completed, some of these projects – I'll use an example like Memorial University, changing out the boilers is an 18- to 24-month project. So we've announced it; it's not going to flow this budget. Some may, but it's not going to flow a lot this budget, but the lion's share of that will come in the 2023-2024 budget. So you are going to see that number move because as these projects are done – now, some are smaller. It could be the City of Mount Pearl or we have an announcement in Labrador coming up at some point very soon and that money may not flow until 2023. The announcement will be done. The work will start, but until they get invoices, we won't be able to flow the money. So it's all about flow.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

Under federal revenue there is a steep decrease. Can you just explain that one?

B. DAVIS: It's all about the invoicing for the – it's exactly that.

L. EVANS: I figured it was that.

B. DAVIS: It's the way this –

L. EVANS: Delay in invoicing.

B. DAVIS: It's just the invoicing of the project being completed.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

I will move on now to 3.2.01.

B. DAVIS: Okay.

L. EVANS: Policy, Planning and Natural Areas.

Just looking at Salaries there. There was an increase: Has there been any new positions created?

B. DAVIS: The salary budget is expanded for three new positions that will be funded by – I'm going to say the federal government to try to move on this. So it's not a cost to the taxpayers of the province. Well, I guess it is indirectly from the federal side, but it's not coming out of our budget. It's coming out of theirs. It has just got to flow through ours.

L. EVANS: Okay.

Looking at the budget numbers in this entire section here, 3.2.01: Is the numbers reflective of the Newfoundland and Labrador government's ambitions around conservation goals?

B. DAVIS: I think that's where the three new positions were coming in. That's our goal of trying to expand those areas and more to come, potentially, if the federal government moves. I had a conversation with the federal minister of ECCC and that was sort of our conversation. They are willing to support, if we are willing to move. We're willing to move so I think that support will be forthcoming.

L. EVANS: Right.

And just looking at the Eagle River protective area now and the establishment of that protective area: Has the government adequately budgeted for achieving it by 2025?

B. DAVIS: So the Eagle River is – and I can only speak to this on the 10,000-view level because that was my previous department. It was TCAR or Tourism, that's where that one sits. That's where the negotiations will be happening and Minister Crocker will be the best to talk to about that. Not to throw him in front of the proverbial Metrobus, but it is his file. I'm not intimately involved in that one. I know it's progressing but I don't know where it's to from a financial perspective.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

Will WERAC be re-established as soon as possible to pick up the work to move the Natural Areas System Plan forward?

B. DAVIS: Yes.

L. EVANS: I said as soon as possible and you said yes. So what's your idea of as soon as possible?

B. DAVIS: Imminently.

L. EVANS: Imminently. Okay.

B. DAVIS: I don't actually know the definition of imminent but it could be – I don't think it's tomorrow but it will be very soon.

L. EVANS: Yeah, okay. Perfect, thank you.

Going back to the line items now. Purchased Services, they came in under budget last year and spending is expected to increase this year. Can you just give us a brief explanation of that?

B. DAVIS: It was down based on repairs and maintenance. That's why it was – no, yeah, sorry. It was down because of reimbursement for fees for Mistaken Point. So the fees to get into the site were down because of COVID. We anticipate that is going to come back up.

L. EVANS: Okay, perfect.

Also, just looking at federal and provincial revenues. We're expecting increases to these this year. Where will the money come from?

B. DAVIS: That's a good question. I think, Susan, it comes from ECCC, I think, right, federally?

S. SQUIRES: Yeah. So the federal revenue you see there is to match some of the expenditures that the minister discussed around new positions. Provincially, we collect revenue there as it relates to fees for Mistaken Point; it's a bit of a flow through of revenue there.

L. EVANS: Okay, thank you.

B. DAVIS: But the lion's share of that would be from the federal government.

L. EVANS: Okay. Right on time.

CHAIR: Thank you.

MHA Parly.

C. PARDY: Very efficient use of time, to my colleague, that's good.

Two to three minutes for a quick ones and if you give me a quick response at least we'll get –

B. DAVIS: Where are we starting to?

C. PARDY: The EV chargers at the Health Sciences complex. I understand they have been out and down for some time. Is there a budget for repair of these charging stations or are they a little outdated and not current? Are there better ones?

B. DAVIS: I can't speak to the exact reason why they're down at the Health Sciences Centre because that would be an RHA thing; they put them in themselves, not through us.

C. PARDY: Okay.

B. DAVIS: But if they are down, that's no problem; we can reach out to our contacts, too, just to see.

You opened up an opportunity here; I want to say to anybody that sees any of these charging infrastructure down anywhere, let us know. They can reach out to me directly or Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, in particular, would be the best one because we want to make sure they're up and running all the time.

C. PARDY: Okay.

Is there a plan for Confederation Building to have more EV chargers?

B. DAVIS: Yes is the short answer, but I can go into more detail if you'd like.

C. PARDY: No. Not necessary, thanks. It's all in the prioritization.

B. DAVIS: Correct.

C. PARDY: Understandable.

The greenhouse gas advisory board, I couldn't find the terms of reference. That doesn't mean

that it's not there, but is there a terms of reference for this board?

B. DAVIS: Susan.

S. SQUIRES: So you're referring to the board, advisory body that would be set up under the *Management of Greenhouse Gas Act*?

C. PARDY: Yes.

S. SQUIRES: So under the *Management of Greenhouse Gas Act*, the compliance measure of last resort is a company has to purchase fund credits from the minister – from the government. When we do that, we collect that fund and it goes in the greenhouse gas fund.

There's a legal advisory body that's being set up now; opportunities are open under the Independent Appointments Commission for people to apply. We will select a group. There's actually quite a bit on how they will have to run, in the legislation itself, and they have to advise to the minister how to spend that money on greenhouse gas reduction projects on a regular cycle.

C. PARDY: Okay, good. Thank you.

So quite possibly you won't select it, but they're going to give you the names and that's the ones you have – quite possibly.

S. SQUIRES: Yeah, we have to go through the Independent Appointments Commission's process to get some (inaudible).

C. PARDY: But they'll give you enough for what you need for your –?

B. DAVIS: That's always the hope.

C. PARDY: Quickly, do you think we'll see a time where we're going to have the carbon footprint of clothing? You can go online now and buy a pair of sneakers that have got a carbon footprint of nine kilograms.

B. DAVIS: That's a very good question; I would love to see that day so people know what they're buying, because there are so many questions that come and people view – I go to these protests sometimes and they talk about,

you know, we've got to stop oil and stop cars, and all this kind of stuff, when they show up with clothes on. And there's a huge carbon footprint to that stuff to, so Susan, maybe you can just jump in from the –

S. SQUIRES: It is a really neat idea, I will say that all manufacturing – whatever they use, whatever fuel they use, is counted in our greenhouse gas emissions. So to your point on the carbon tax, some of that comes from my car, some of it might come from a small manufacturer of a clothing. And they might pay the carbon tax. Large industry has a program; everyone else pays the carbon tax.

So no one's not counting that, but to your point we're not showing it, almost like an ENERGY STAR rating or a litres per kilometre on a car – we don't have a way of sharing to you when you know you're purchasing that. That's a good point. But the actual emissions are captured in our system.

C. PARDY: But that's challenging to do that, really, I can only imagine it.

The last one I have is that *CBC News, Here and Now*, when they interviewed the minister – Peter Cowan – the minister stated: We just signed an agreement with the province to have four areas of ocean deemed protected. I should have had that question, but I had it here in this portfolio. Will you be aware of that, as to – would that come under your department?

B. DAVIS: It would, partially, and one of them we just talked about. I think the –

C. PARDY: But is that online?

B. DAVIS: I think the minister misspoke about four; I think it's three.

C. PARDY: Okay.

B. DAVIS: But I didn't want to say that in that way.

C. PARDY: No, that is fine.

B. DAVIS: But it's not a minister within our House, but it was a minister that misspoke. I

think he meant three. But they are there: two in Labrador, one down in Burgeo.

S. SQUIRES: Yes, there's a press release. There was a commitment to do Eagle River by 2025 and a commitment to sign an MOU for a feasibility study on a marine protected area on the South Coast around Burgeo by the end of this year, and a commitment to advance another opportunity for a marine protected area in Labrador. But the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada could've misspoke. There is a fourth one, but it was already announced. And the Nunatsiavut Government is doing a marine protected area.

C. PARDY: Okay, so that'd be four.

S. SQUIRES: So they're doing that. We are certainly (inaudible) –

B. DAVIS: So it would be three that would be within our purview.

C. PARDY: So there's a press release on that that I probably didn't –

B. DAVIS: Yes.

C. PARDY: Okay, that's out.

B. DAVIS: Yeah.

C. PARDY: Okay, good.

B. DAVIS: We can send it to you.

S. SQUIRES: That's a federal press release.

C. PARDY: Yes, do that.

B. DAVIS: We'll send it to you.

C. PARDY: Yeah, that'd save time.

B. DAVIS: Absolutely.

C. PARDY: Time is everything.

In my closing piece before I pass it on to my colleague, I thank you all very much. I've stated at other Estimates that it's refreshing, it's rewarding when you get a chance to sit down with people who really know their stuff. And not

on my side for it, but at least I ask the questions. But you certainly know when someone answers the question that they know their game and their business.

So I do thank you very much. And what I said at the previous Estimates was the fact that we should never be farming out millions to outside the province to do any work in Newfoundland and Labrador when we have such a public service here and others in Newfoundland and Labrador with the capabilities that we should be doing in-house.

Anyway, thank you so much for engaging us and for your time.

CHAIR: Thank you, MHA Pardy.

MHA Evans, do you have any closing remarks?

L. EVANS: Well, actually, I do. Just briefly there, the help to municipalities that don't have the expertise or even the workforce to be able to do proposal writings for federal dollars, that was a huge thing. I will be personally coming over from my district.

But also just looking at the water resources management there. We addressed the boil-water order. We're working on the boil-water order. In my district we have a problem with organics in the water, chlorination creating the THMs. It's a huge problem, and some of them are facing continuous boil-water orders.

Getting to my point. They don't have the ability in their proposal writings to apply on things that they would actually be able to qualify for funding to reduce the organics.

So what I'm asking is would your department be open to extending that offer to help us with our proposal writing so we could actually get some of that money that would reduce our boil-water orders and solve our THM problem? Because what's happening now is some of the municipalities are applying on other infrastructure that they need and they're being turned down. They're not even being able to access any of moneys for anything in a municipality. So they're damned if they do and

they're damned if they don't and, in actual fact, they can't do it. So that would be great.

B. DAVIS: We can do that. I don't want to speak for Haseen but I think we can manage to help out where we can. That's what we try to do in this department anyway. We have questions and we try to navigate people through the system. So, you know, absolutely, I don't see any issue with that.

L. EVANS: I only became aware of that problem.

I also do want to thank you for your time. This is your second time showing up here and, as my fellow colleague said, the expertise is there and it's good to see some familiar faces. I appreciate your time.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Thank you, MHA Evans.

If the Committee is ready for the call: Shall 3.1.01 to 3.2.01 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.1.01 through 3.2.01 carried.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Department of Environment and Climate Change, total heads, carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the Estimates of the Department of Environment and Climate Change carried?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Department of Environment and Climate Change carried without amendment.

CHAIR: Our next meeting is on Monday, May 9, to consider the Estimates of the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

Just before I finish it off, I'll give Minister Davis a last minute.

B. DAVIS: I will take a couple of seconds.

I just want to say thank you to the Committee on both parties that were here and my colleagues for being here (inaudible) for the work they do. I think it also goes out to the staff in the Broadcast Centre because I tend to jump in pretty quick and the light always chimes on. So just thank you to them. We couldn't do the work we do as ministers without the great, fantastic staff that we have and thank you for both highlighting that here today.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

C. PARDY: And to the Chair and the Table.

B. DAVIS: Yes, absolutely.

CHAIR: Thank you.

I'll entertain a motion for adjournment.

MHA Pardy.

Thank you; enjoy your day.

On motion, the Committee adjourned.