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**Proceedings of the Standing Committee on
Resources**

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Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills

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Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

RESOURCE COMMITTEE

Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills

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: Bobbi Russell

Appearing:

Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills

Hon. Gerry Byrne, MHA, Minister

Katie Norman, Assistant Deputy Minister, Immigration and Population Growth

Debbie Dunphy, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services and Policy

Heather Craniford, Director, Employment and Training

John Tompkins, Director of Communications

Steve French, Department Controller

Also Present

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

Hon. John Haggie, MHA, Minister of Health and Community Services

Scott Reid, MHA (via video conference)

Chris Tibbs, MHA

James Dinn, MHA

Dave Hamlyn, Government Members' Caucus Office

Steven Kent, Third Party Caucus Office

Bradley Russell, Official Opposition Caucus Office

Mark Jerrett, Policy, Planning and Research Analyst

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, John Abbott, MHA for Signal Hill - Quidi Vidi, substitutes for Brian Warr, MHA for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

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

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Scott Reid, MHA for St. George's - Humber, 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.

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

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

CHAIR (Stoyles): Good morning, I would like to call the meeting to order.

The first thing we need to do is announce the substitutes. We have Minister John Haggie replacing Sherry Gambin-Walsh.

My name is Lucy Stoyles and I am going to be chairing the meeting, substituting for Brian Warr.

We have John Abbott substituting for MHA Brian Warr. We have Scott Reid attending virtually and substituting for MHA Pike. We have Chris Tibbs substituting for MHA Forsey and we have Jim Dinn substituting for MHA Brown.

And again, welcome.

We don't have any unaffiliated Members attending, but if we do, we would like to give them 10 minutes at the end if they do show up. I need approval for that to happen.

So can I ask for agreement?

Agreement, MHA Reid.

Okay. Thank you, Mr. Reid.

Also, about taking a break if we need one, probably around 10:15 a.m. or 10:30 a.m. We will decide that as we're going through the morning.

There is a few official information, I guess. Always identify yourself when you are talking so it can be recorded. Your mask, staff is asked to wear at all times in the Chamber. Except when you are speaking, of course, you can take your mask off. And we ask that you not adjust your seats and the water coolers are located just behind me. As I indicated before, MHA Reid is attending virtually. I hope you're feeling good, MHA Reid, and I look forward to seeing you come back later on the week.

And as I said, hon. Members of the Committee, now we're going to ask the Committee Members to introduce themselves first. So we'll start right here.

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

C. TIBBS: Chris Tibbs, MHA for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

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

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

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

J. ABBOTT: John Abbott, MHA, Signal Hill - Quidi Vidi.

D. HAMLYN: Dave Hamlyn, Sessional Support, Government Members' Office.

CHAIR: Okay, Minister, could you introduce your staff?

Oh, sorry.

J. HAGGIE: John Haggie, MHA for the District of Gander, crossroads of the world.

CHAIR: You're on my blind side, MHA Haggie, sorry about that.

Minister, could you introduce your staff, please?

G. BYRNE: Yes, I certainly will. Thank you, Chair.

Gerry Byrne, Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills. I'm delighted to be here.

I'll ask my assistant deputy minister Katie Norman to kick off with self-introduction, and introduce the team.

K. NORMAN: Good morning everyone, my name is Katie Norman, Assistant Deputy Minister for Immigration and Population Growth.

D. DUNPHY: Hi, Debbie Dunphy, I'm the Assistant Deputy Minister of Corporate Services and Policy.

J. TOMPKINS: Hi, John Tompkins, Director of Communications for Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

H. CRANIFORD: Heather Craniford, Director of Employment and Training Programs.

S. FRENCH: Steve French, Departmental Controller for Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

CHAIR: Okay, I think we have everybody. So the next item on the agenda are the minutes, which were from May 5, 2022. And can I ask for a mover for those minutes? They should be on your desk.

Moved by MHA Tibbs.

C. TIBBS: Sure.

CHAIR: Second?

MHA Dinn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: So moved.

MHA Reid, as I said, will be voting virtually, so the motion is carried for the minutes.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

CHAIR: Now I ask the Clerk to read the first headings.

CLERK (Russell): For Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, Executive and Support Services, 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 inclusive.

CHAIR: 1.1.01 to 1.2.03.

And the first speaker is MHA Tibbs. No, the minister speaks first. Sorry.

Minister, would you like to have some opening remarks?

G. BYRNE: You are very kind, Chair.

Thanks, colleagues. Good morning. I really appreciate being here.

I want to lead off by saying how much I value this exercise. We'll be able to provide a briefing binder immediately following the Estimates session this morning. Normally, I would have liked to have done that earlier, but I will preface by saying that today is a culmination of an incredibly busy day for the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, but in particular the Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism. Our team, without any training manual or without any reference material, have embarked on a grand journey, an important journey and an essential journey, which is to bring Ukrainian refugees to Newfoundland and Labrador.

This has been quite a fulfilling exercise but a demanding one, so much of our energies of the last several weeks have not only been in support of our team on the ground in Warsaw, Poland, but working with employers and community organizations, faith community, service

organizations in preparing for what is today a very important day. Today, an airlift of Ukrainian refugees will have left Katowice, Poland, or will be soon leaving Katowice, Poland, en route to St. John's, to Torbay, and we have done much preparation for that.

And so I appreciate any latitude that may be provided on certain questions, but as we fulfill the manifest and when we get more details on the ground, final numbers and the final circumstances, we'll be able to convey those immediately. I will be providing the House with further details today, but I just want to say how much I appreciated the general support and generosity of the House in bringing this to this point.

I say this without any reservation, is that this is not the first time that the people of our province and this Legislature have stood tall on the world stage. We did so quite inadvertently, quite unexpectedly, in the hours and days and weeks that followed September 11, 2001, when multiple aircraft were diverted to our province. It was unexpected. We were unprepared, nor could we ever be prepared for something like that, but we rallied and showed who we are as a province.

Well, today is somewhat different, but still in keeping with the original ideas, the philosophies of who we are. Instead of receiving a diverted plane, an unexpectedly diverted plane, today, we are directing a plane to Newfoundland and Labrador with those who are in harm's way. So today is a great day and an important day. I want to say to the Legislature, it's all of our day. With that said, thank you very much.

We have a small but mighty team, the same as we did in Warsaw, Poland, but it's an effective team. I want to really salute, in particular, the team led by my assistant deputy minister, Katie Norman, who sits to my left. There was no manual. There was no training guide. This was an exercise where we had to learn, adapt, establish best practices where we could, but innovate. Today is really just a remarkable achievement considering that we did it on our own. So hats off to Katie Norman and to her team at the Office of Immigration and

Multiculturalism and all the team that were in support from, generally and broadly, across government.

We had people on the ground in Poland that had the capacity to speak English, French, German, Russian, Polish and working knowledge of Ukrainian. So it's quite a feat. It speaks very well of the civil service, the public service of Newfoundland and Labrador.

With that said, I will conclude by simply saying thank you. There are no errors or omissions that are evident or that I'm aware in the Estimates. We'll be able to supply additional materials as requested by Committee Members.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister Byrne.

We will move now to the Official Opposition, MHA Tibbs will get 15 minutes.

C. TIBBS: Thank you very much, Chair.

We in the Official Opposition share with the minister's remarks just now. It is a great day for Newfoundland and Labrador, but it's an even greater day for a portion of the people of the Ukraine, to come over and get out of harm's way, like you said. I also caught your interview yesterday on the CBC national news. Well done, Minister, I have to say, I'm sure they're going to feel welcome, so well done.

If we can just start off with some general questions.

First of all, Minister, can we obtain two copies of your minister's briefing binders?

G. BYRNE: Of course, you can.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Sir.

Are you still applying zero-based budgeting?

G. BYRNE: We examine budgets perennially from a view of cost effectiveness and efficiency, so that would be the model.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

Are there any errors in the published Estimates book? I think you touched on –

G. BYRNE: We are not aware of any errors.

C. TIBBS: Excellent.

Is the attrition plan still being followed? If so, what are the changes for last year and this year? How is it being measured?

G. BYRNE: Yes, the attrition plan is still being followed. That's a very in-depth question which has many tentacles, so I will ask Assistant Deputy Minister Debbie Dunphy to reply.

D. DUNPHY: Yes, we still are reviewing all positions as they become vacant as part of attrition management. Over the past year, we did eliminate four positions with regard to a review of attrition. Two of those positions would've been ones that were actually transferred during the reorganization last year. But because we had them identified in our plan, they gave us the credit. So there were four.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

How many people are employed in the department altogether?

D. DUNPHY: Minister, do you want me to carry on?

G. BYRNE: (Inaudible.)

D. DUNPHY: Sure. We have 312 as of March 31.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

And how many retirements have occurred in the past year?

D. DUNPHY: Thirteen.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

How many vacancies are not filled in the department?

D. DUNPHY: At March 31, there were 57.

C. TIBBS: Okay.

How many positions have been eliminated and what were they?

D. DUNPHY: So throughout the year, the 2021-2022 fiscal year, we did eliminate 20 positions. Six of those related to secretariats that the department had been hosting that our turn was completed. There were two eliminated that were actually created in error. We had the four attrition that I mentioned. We had six that we looked – they were vacancies that we traded off to assist with the expansion of the Immigration office.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

And how many layoffs have occurred in the department last year?

D. DUNPHY: We didn't have any layoffs.

C. TIBBS: Excellent.

How many new hires took place this past year?

D. DUNPHY: So it's kind of a bit of a mixed question. I guess what I'll say is we did have 126 recruitment RSA actions and we had 211 payroll actions. Now, some of those are just extensions of staff and such. So I don't have a number for actual new hires, but that'll give you an indication of the amount of turnover and activity.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

How many contractual and short-term employees are in the department?

D. DUNPHY: Again, at the end of March, we had three, what we would call 13-weekers, the temporary employment and we have six contractual positions. Three of those contractuales are actually in our Office of Immigration. We're just going through the process of getting the actual positions created through the structure. We have one in Apprenticeship, one in our Policy division and one in our Executive division, which is our media relations manager.

C. TIBBS: Great. Thank you.

How many employees are working from home versus in the government office?

D. DUNPHY: We currently have a pilot that has been approved through the Treasury Board that we have approximately 23 people approved to work from home on a pilot, which is somewhat of a hybrid because they are in the office one or two days a week. Then there are some individual circumstances where we may have disability accommodation plans where we have some people who are working from home for medical reasons and that is probably about 15 of those.

C. TIBBS: In addition to the 23.

D. DUNPHY: In addition to the 23, yeah.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

Did your department receive any funds from the contingency fund? If so, how much and what was it used for?

D. DUNPHY: No, not in '21-'22.

C. TIBBS: Nothing. Great, Thank you.

It is great to see our Ukrainian friends are arriving today. I understand that there are 175 today. Can the minister provide any information on how many he expects to arrive in the province in the future?

G. BYRNE: Thank you very much for the question. It really is an important one and hopefully it will be a significant number.

So as we know, there are already Ukrainians in Newfoundland and Labrador, those that have been patriated with family members have already arrived by their own means. This is an airlift that was conducted based on our seeking of awareness on the ground in Poland.

We found that in order to establish a strong Ukrainian community within a community here in Newfoundland and Labrador and to draw further interest and participation in coming to Newfoundland and Labrador, the most effective tool we could deploy is to develop a personal relationship with Ukrainians.

This cannot be achieved by a pamphlet. This would be the advice that I would give to other state actors, other governments. It is one thing for Ukrainians to come where family members

may exist, where family members may be and that would be the case in many provinces of Western Canada, but we have a small diaspora of Ukrainians here in the province.

We took a decision to establish a personal relationship with Ukrainians to best meet their needs in resettlement, to best give them an opportunity for an informed choice. There are Ukrainians that were already here.

The airlift accomplishes many objectives. One is to provide immediate relief, but also to establish a community of Ukrainians within the community, which will draw more Ukrainians. We anticipate, with the federal government's assistance and through the Aeroplan program that the federal government is working with to try to draw more Ukrainians to Canada, but, as well, federal charters that may be on the horizon in the near future. We have already given notice to the federal government that we would like seats on any federal airlift to come to Newfoundland and Labrador because, quite frankly, we have people ready to do so.

For today, what you will find is that while the aircraft will be able to accommodate up to 175 – that's the estimate – there are some confounding factors such as – and we're finalizing the manifest as we speak – there are those with acute medical, public health issues, medical issues that were intended to be on the aircraft, that unfortunately will not be able to be today. We will find other routes and other mechanisms to get them there.

We are providing every accommodation that we possibly can, but what is complicating this as well is that the aircraft will not be taking off from Warsaw, Poland, as originally anticipated. The Government of Poland has put in regulations, requirements that no refugee airlift shall, on a chartered basis, occur from Warsaw international airport. So we've moved the airlift – and this is again where there is no training manual. There is no guidance. You have to do this and do it on the ground and do it quickly. We are taking off from Katowice, Poland, which is located four hours away from Warsaw and that is just an accommodation.

So we will have further information as to exactly the manifest later on today, but we will be

actively engaged in promoting Newfoundland and Labrador as a great place for Ukrainians.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Minister.

What types of supports are provided once they arrive today?

G. BYRNE: The Association for New Canadians, our golden partner, our key partner, is working directly with the Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism to provide ongoing supports in short, medium and long term.

One of the things that I take particular pride in and which was a direct, intended result was in that relationship building exercise. We, basically, effectively married Newfoundland and Labrador employers who came forward – we solicited Newfoundland and Labrador employers who had job vacancies, skill deficiencies, advised them that we would like to work with them to recruit Ukrainians with those skill sets that they require and there will be people arriving from Ukraine, from Poland today who effectively could start work in Newfoundland and Labrador tomorrow.

C. TIBBS: Excellent.

Do you expect that all of them will be able to find a family doctor? What are we doing with their health care?

G. BYRNE: We do. One of the things that we take a certain amount of pride in is with our MCP coverage, we are relatively unique in the country. There are other provinces now joining with us in recognizing the need for publicly funded medical care. We do not anticipate – we've already connected directly with Health and Community Services and the regional health authorities, we do not see a problem in that regard.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

It will be important to keep them here when the time comes.

For the individuals that can, how long do you expect it will take each of them to get access to

collaborative care clinic or family doctor, like immediate or ...?

G. BYRNE: That's a question that maybe the regional health authorities might be best able to answer, but our collaboration thus far with both Health and Community Services and with the RHAs has been stellar. They've been at our working group table for the full duration of our planning.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

Definitely takes a team, there's no doubt about that.

Are employment positions arranged for all working-age people arriving today?

G. BYRNE: No, there are some that are not necessarily work ready. Some will have language barriers. The proficiency in English is quite high amongst many, but there will be some additional supports that will be required to become employment ready. That's where we're already working with our service agencies and, in particular, the Association of New Canadians to be able to provide all those necessary services.

But with the manifest that we already have, we're very much aware of the individuals within the group that are coming to us.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Minister.

Some of our friends arriving today are likely dealing with trauma. Will they all have access to counselling services and a psychologist upon arrival?

G. BYRNE: There will be counselling services that will be provided. That will be part of the assessment as to the extent of those requirements. We will act accordingly based on the clinical needs of our newcomers.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Minister.

Will our friends that are arriving today be provided funding for accommodations, food and other essentials? If so, how much and for how long?

G. BYRNE: Yes, the answer is in partnership with the Association for New Canadians, short-term accommodations will be provided for all. As well, we are working directly – you may be aware that the federal government has – the prime minister announced, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, announced, with Minister Sean Fraser, a program to provide up to two weeks of temporary accommodation and up to six weeks of income support.

It's one of the reasons why, colleagues, it was so important for us to establish opportunities for employment. One of the considerations that one would naturally make if you or I were in this identical situation – God forbid – we would not move 3,000 miles on the basis of an offer of a bed-sitting room or a basement apartment. Notwithstanding the fact that that is incredibly generous and essential. But the totality of the situation must be addressed by those who are facing insecurity. They will need to know, and you and I would want to know if we were in this situation, not only where will it be that we will live, where can we earn an income to be able to support ourselves and where we can get access to other services, where will we go to school, will we have publicly funded health care. Those are the questions that, in earnest, we've actively answered wherever possible.

On the issue of supports, again, the federal government has introduced a program that we have directly inquired of Minister Fraser and our ministerial colleagues, Minister O'Regan and Minister Hutchings here in Newfoundland and Labrador, to make sure that occurs for us.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Minister.

I think more importantly the community is going to come together. I hope so, anyway, I'm sure they will.

G. BYRNE: Absolutely.

C. TIBBS: Minister, what language supports will be available for them? In particular, what language supports will be available for children in schools and college or university?

G. BYRNE: The Department of Education has received supports in the past to be able to provide additional services to refugees and to

newcomers, in particular those who have language barriers and potential other learning requirements. So we have that in place, we'll continue to assess that.

In terms of translation supports, language supports, for example, there is a Ukrainian proficient translator that's on the manifest that will be coming here and joining us as a newcomer. So one of the individuals that we attracted to come to Newfoundland and Labrador was a professionally trained translator. They will be making a home and one of the first jobs that they will have is providing translation services to their countrymen.

C. TIBBS: Excellent.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, MHA Tibbs, your time is up.

Now we will go to the Third Party, MHA Dinn, please.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, thank you for certainly bringing the Ukrainian people to this province. I hope we can make it work so that they will make this their home for sure. I certainly join my colleague in offering thanks for that.

I do want to start with just to follow up on a few questions that my counterpart asked, which was basically, you mentioned that there are supports in place. You're going to be working with the Association for New Canadians and Immigration and Multiculturalism, and there was a marrying of NL employers with the Ukrainians. I'm just wondering are the people who are coming then, would they be professional skilled labour? I'm just wondering what their work experience or their background would be as far as employment goes.

G. BYRNE: Thank you very much for the question.

The short answer is they are a reflection of Ukrainian society. There are caregivers that will be caring for family members that may or may not enter the workforce in the short or medium term. We'll certainly be offering them assistance if they so choose to do so. But the bulk have

labour market-ready skills, some from a technical perspective and some from a hospitality service perspective.

One of the things on that plane and the relationships that we've developed is that there have already been job offers made in just about every – I say this cautiously, but in reflection of my own view of the manifest, just about every labour market sector of the province, within our province there will be individuals on that plane who can participate in the labour market here.

J. DINN: I guess where I'm going with this as well, in terms of if you have – I don't know where we're going to go with this, but if we have people who are professionals – for example, let's say a nurse, or skilled trades – I'm just wondering in terms of the transfer of the accreditation. Because if they're coming in to work – let's say nurses – they may not be able to work here.

I'm just wondering is there a plan in place that if we do bring in people who have skills, that we're going to try to not only marry them to an employer, but also expedite the process where they can maybe have those skills transferred or recognized. Is there anything around that area?

G. BYRNE: Thank you very much for the question.

The work has already begun. Last week or the week before – in the last number of weeks – I met with the registrar of the college of nurses Newfoundland and Labrador, Lynn Power, specifically, on the accreditation, the acceptance of credentials of Ukrainian nurses. As well, I met with the registrar of the Licensed Practical Nurses to find ways to maintain the high standards of the profession here at home, but effectively making inroads into accepting those credentials.

One of the things, as I reflected on this very issue, colleagues, I came to a realization that just as our health care professionals are incredibly dedicated to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador so, too, are the health professionals of the Ukraine. Those with health backgrounds, in particular physicians and nurses, many of them are staying in the war zone. That's where they feel they are needed. So while there will be – we

take no judgments ever, whatsoever, all individual circumstances are unique to the individual in question.

There will be some with health care credentials that will be coming to Newfoundland and Labrador, if not on this particular airlift but in the future. Those circumstances should not be in any way, shape or form judged. There will be men on that charter. While we understand that Ukraine created a duty for fighting-age males to remain in Ukraine, Ukraine itself has also made provisions for exceptionalities – for exceptions to be offered.

So when we greet these Ukrainians, we do so with open arms and in no way should there be any judgment. I know that is not a reflection of this room, but as the faces disembark from that aircraft, there will be many people with many different life circumstances and we should respect them all.

J. DINN: Perfect.

There are a number of stories and I've talked to one or two people who are professionals. They may have medical backgrounds, but they are unable to practice here or they're unable to because of the regulations. So it would be nice to see that.

Accommodations: You mentioned that we're looking at – by the way, with regard to the employer piece, was the same done for the Afghan refugees who came here in the fall, in terms of marrying them with employers and putting the supports in place?

G. BYRNE: Short answer, yes, but short answer, no. The reason why is because in the Syrian and Afghan situation, which was very unique, it was the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that, working with the federal government, selected or identified the refugees in question that would come to Canada. We do not have – and this is with all federally assisted refugees – as a province, an opportunity to develop a relationship with refugees when they are federally assisted, when they are federally established, federally designated government-assisted refugees.

In that particular case, with Syria and Afghan and all events prior to, where Newfoundland and Labrador opened its welcome to refugees, they were working with the United Nations; they were brought to Canada by the federal government. They were then sent by Canada to Newfoundland and Labrador and then we began an active relationship upon their arrival. That is the system or that is the norm throughout all of Canada and has been for many, many decades.

This is a unique situation in that these are technically – the Ukrainians are not federally designated government-assisted refugees. The UN High Commissioner has not so designated because under the Dublin Convention they do not meet, what I would say with my tongue in my cheek, the classical definition and interpretation of a refugee, which is creating somewhat of a difference in their respective treatments.

So with that said, whereas the federal government offers to Syrian and Afghan refugees automatically, the refugee is transported, airlifted to Canada and immediately upon arrival is given papers for permanent residency by Canada. Then an airlift occurs or a distribution occurs – if I can say so; it's such a clinical word. Then they are parsed out to various provinces.

There is relatively little advance notice as to exactly how many and, in particular, what the skill sets would be. Then, of course, the active participation begins in settlement supports. In those particular cases, the federal government provides up to and a potentially further one full year of income support, housing supports and other supports.

In the Ukrainian situation, which is very, very different, the federal government is not offering permanent residency, it's offering a three-year open work and travel permit, visitor permit. That's why the relationship. Why did we establish a desk in Warsaw? Uniquely so, because we knew right from the get-go that relationship building was absolutely essential for their success.

J. DINN: Thank you.

So with regard to this, just a few quick questions on that. How many children are coming with the Ukrainian refugees? I am wondering how many are going to be in the school system? The other part of it is how many of the Afghan refugees who came here are actually now employed, have a job? The other one I'd ask is how many of the Afghan refugees who came here in the fall are now permanently housed – they're not in temporary shelters or hotels or anything like that but have actually moved into permanent accommodations. So there are three parts to that. I'm trying to get it in before the time ends.

G. BYRNE: No, thank you for the question.

I'll answer the latter first: 100 per cent. What may be confusing to some is that there's a sense that's being somewhat exaggerated and becoming normalized that our Afghan neighbours and friends that arrived as refugees are now occupying public housing, social housing, to the consequence of those others that would otherwise utilize that public housing. There are no Afghan refugees in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

J. DINN: No, I'm not asking – not in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, temporary shelters. I'm fine if they're in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, but are they all permanent, not in hotels or temporary shelters, but actually permanently housed?

G. BYRNE: One hundred per cent are in permanent, non-temporary housing.

CHAIR: MHA Dinn, your time has expired.

We'll go back to the Official Opposition, MHA Tibbs.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Chair.

I think MHA Dinn just talked about – sorry, I'll stick with this first. What information were our friends provided about life in Canada, in particular Newfoundland and Labrador?

G. BYRNE: We have a unique advantage in that from a climate point of view, Ukraine and

Newfoundland and Labrador are not necessarily dissimilar in many respects. Ukraine, like Canada, is a huge country. Newfoundland and Labrador, one of the questions that I would ask is what is life like? That's why, Colleague, I say this – we learned as we went. But you cannot do this by a pamphlet, by way of just simply handing out a pamphlet with a reference to a YouTube video. It is that face-to-face communication. We did not oversell what Newfoundland and Labrador is. We didn't suggest this is like Tampa or some tropical climate. This is Newfoundland and Labrador. It was described as it was, and it was described beautifully and accepted. Many people actually were drawn to the facts that we provided.

We did describe what the labour market was. They were astounded how proactive we were in helping them identify job opportunities. Again – I said this earlier – if we were to repeat this exercise or if other governments were to repeat this exercise, do not put up a web portal or hand out pamphlets at the embassy and expect to have success. The measure of success is in these personal relationships that develop.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

My colleague MHA Dinn touched on it, but do you have a breakdown of gender and approximate ages of our friends that are arriving today?

G. BYRNE: We will have all of that. Like I indicated earlier, we want to be clear and factual on the final manifest. The complicating factors in this have been Public Health assessments for acute issues before embarking on the plane. I can tell you that we've already had some families – some individuals within families – that were impacted by that; that caused them to miss the plane. That is unfortunate, but we had no choice – they had no choice – in following Public Health orders, with following good public health practices. So we'll be making accommodations for those individuals in the future. We're finalizing the manifest as we speak and we'll have further details to come.

C. TIBBS: Sure. With an operation this size, we can appreciate that it is not cut and dry at all.

We can move on to 1.1.01, Salaries, if that is possible.

G. BYRNE: Sure.

C. TIBBS: There is \$5,600 more budgeted this year compared to what was spent last year. Can this be explained, Minister, please?

G. BYRNE: We did have some staffing – I'll ask Assistant Deputy Minister Debbie Dunphy to get into details.

D. DUNPHY: With staffing, we had a new EA start with the Minister's Office this year, so their salary was at a different level than the previous. As we do every year, we do a salary plan for the department based on the incumbents in the various positions, so the salary that is budgeted in the Minister's Office reflects the actual requirements we are anticipating for '22-'23.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

Transportation and Communications, there was \$15,000 less spent compared to what was budgeted. Can you explain this and give us a breakdown of what didn't get spent due to COVID last year?

D. DUNPHY: Again, of course, most of the reason for, I guess, a reduced expenditure is COVID. We do budget for the minister to be able to attend FPT meetings that are normally done through travel. But this year, of course, they were still being done virtually; however, we do anticipate that some of these meetings will occur again in person. Of course, our minister is from Corner Brook, so the travel, of course, reflects those trips back to his district when the House is not in session.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

If we can move on to 1.2.01, Salaries. Budgeted salaries are \$163,000 more this year than what was spent last year. Can this be explained, please?

D. DUNPHY: So we did have some savings this past year. Our deputy is responsible for two departments so we're only paying half the salary, and we did have some delays in filling some of our administrative positions throughout

the year. But again for '22-'23, all of our positions are now filled, and that's what we anticipate being the requirement for that office.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Ms. Dunphy.

There was \$16,100 less spent compared to what was budgeted – this is for Transportation and Communications – can this be explained, and could we get a breakdown of what didn't get spent due to COVID?

D. DUNPHY: Right. Again, it would be the anticipated or budgeted travel relating to FPT meetings that this year have occurred virtually. But again, we are planning that some of this is going to resume again in '22-'23.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

1.2.02, Administrative Support, Salaries. There was \$206,600 more budgeted this year compared to what was spent last year. Can this be explained, please?

D. DUNPHY: Yes, again, during the year we did have some vacancies in our finance area. Well, actually we still have a couple of vacancies but we're working on getting those filled. As well, this particular heading also supports are our information management area. There were negotiated salary increases this year, so they're reflected in the new '22-'23 numbers as well.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Ms. Dunphy.

Employee Benefits, there was \$16,000 more spent compared to what was budgeted. Can this be explained, please?

D. DUNPHY: Certainly. The majority of that head is for the workers' compensation costs of the department. We did have an invoice related to the prior year that related to 2020-21 that was paid in '21-'22, which is why it was higher. But we are budgeting the same amount again.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

For Purchased Services, there is \$15,800 less budgeted compared to what was spent last year. Can this be explained, please?

D. DUNPHY: Certainly. Again, as the minister stated at the beginning, we do a zero-based approach and a review of all of our accounts. We've looked at the historical expenditures in this account and felt that we could reduce that activity by approximately \$15,000. This mostly relates to copiers, file storage, file retrieval, those sorts of expenditures, our banking fees, those sorts of things for the department.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

And for revenue for the province, there was \$210,000 less revenue last year compared to what was budgeted. Can this be explained, please?

D. DUNPHY: Sure. Part of that, in '21-'22, there was \$160,000 of revenue that was included in our budget last year but should've been transferred with the reorganization to CSSD. So that's been looked after this year. That's the main reason for the decrease.

I guess, overall, we did have a reduction in our miscellaneous revenue related to prior years. But, again, it's something that we just look and manage annually. It often relates to a prior year refund whether it's one of our labour market partnerships that hasn't been fully expended. That's where that money would be deposited.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

For 1.2.03, Salaries, there's \$145,600 more budgeted this year compared to what was spent last year. Can this be explained, please?

D. DUNPHY: Again, it's mostly related to a couple of vacancies we've had in that division. We actually had, I think, three positions that we had a retirement and someone else moved on. So it's just a delay basically related to recruitment. So, again, we've looked at our complement now this year and all positions have been filled so we're good to go.

C. TIBBS: Great, thank you.

And just one last question for this subsection. Grants and Subsidies, last year there was \$500 less spent compared to what was budgeted. Can this be explained, please?

D. DUNPHY: So we have an allocation for departmental service grants that when organizations apply for – they don't normally fit our regular – any of our programs throughout the department. So this is for mandate-related – I'll call them – projects or opportunities that the minister or the department may be able to provide some small amount of support.

So during this year we had about five organizations that requested that we support it. But, again, we've kept the funding whole to have it available if the requests do come in.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, MHA Tibbs.

Now we're going to go to Third Party, MHA Dinn.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

The question I didn't get an answer to had to do with the number of Afghan refugees who came here in the fall and how many of them have found work or have been transitioned into the workforce. I guess I'm looking at even a percentage of that: those who are employable, those who are seeking work and how many have actually found work.

G. BYRNE: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, colleague.

A number of supports were put in place to be able to act on this. The situation with Afghan refugees was somewhat different in that language proficiency was more intensively required, but we're making inroads there. There are many, many that – notable inclusions in terms of employment, but I will ask Assistant Deputy Minister Katie Norman to provide some additional details. She may have to get back with a further follow-up, but Katie I'm not sure if you can add some additional overlay to that.

K. NORMAN: To answer your question, I don't have the most recent figure but we can certainly get that for you.

One piece of context I would give is family composition is quite different and language

proficiency varied depending on gender. There are definitely men who are working and have been working since shortly after arrival, but we can get you the final number on that.

J. DINN: And what I'm looking at is, I understand the composition might be different, but I am looking for the number of those who are seeking employment or employable and those who are actually employed and we have found work for them.

K. NORMAN: Understood. We'll get that and bring it back to you.

Thank you.

J. DINN: Excellent.

I will pick up on a comment, Minister, that you made and one that I wanted to bring up. You touched on an important issue, actually, in reference to the number of people that are in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. I am just wondering here, and I will put this in context, what are the plans for, I guess, an education piece for the population. Because I'll tell you here is the issue I've run into in the election and it reflects the tough times on people. People see refugees or People of Colour and they say do you know what? All these immigrants are getting the housing and we're not.

My concern is that there is an element – racism has always been here in Newfoundland and Labrador, there is no getting around that. I'm just wondering in here, in terms of the education piece, because you just don't dump people in. You have to find a way to educate the population and realize, as I would constantly say, the people are not to blame; it is maybe the fact that we don't have enough of the resources we need to accommodate everyone or to take care of all the needs.

But my concern is that, as we become more diverse and multicultural, we have got to – there is an education piece there. I know that what we did with Quacoec with the Sharing Our Cultures, and there are groups that do a wonderful job in this, but I'm just wondering when it comes to the provincial government are there any plans, more or less, either in the curriculum or the communications to start emphasizing the fact

that, do you know what? The people who come here make this their home. This is their home. We need people to come to this province to add the vibrancy, the diversity and the wealth to our province.

I'm just wondering if that is something (a) that you've run across and, if it is, what are the plans to deal with it? It's a concern of mine for sure and I do see it

G. BYRNE: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, colleague.

One of the most important commitments that we can make is to speak truth to the reality instead of voicing stereotypes or preconceived notions. This has to be fact based. It has to be evidence based when we draw concerns. It would be always helpful, of course, to sort of ask questions. If there is uncertainty as to what the answer, the reality or circumstances are, feel free, all colleagues can ask privately and join with us all in reinforcing real messages, truthful messages as to exactly what the circumstances are with refugees.

For example, the Afghan refugee situation, all eligible school-aged children are enrolled in school, 100 per cent. With the exception of two social housing units provided by the city of St. John's, all Afghan refugees are in private sector housing in housing units readily available to each and every one of us.

In fact, it's one of the drawing cards of Newfoundland and Labrador. British Columbia, for example, my own conversations with colleagues and those aware of the situation, British Columbia, because of their particular housing market, are facing difficulties, have choices to make as to whether or not they can realistically adopt and support refugees.

We have one of the best housing markets, relatively speaking, in Canada. It is tightening up everywhere but we do have stock that is available. So it's one of the things that we can use as a positive. The housing stock, the housing market in other places is much, much, much

tighter. We always have to just sort of re-emphasize the truth which is Newfoundland and Labrador, on a percentage or per capita basis; we actually accept more refugees in this province and accept them successfully, than, in terms of '20-'21, Nova Scotia and PEI combined.

We are national leaders in this and we should not ever suggest that we're doing a bad job. We're doing an incredible job and that's something that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, I think, takes pride in. We should not lay low to those who may be less than informed or would be driven by opinions that may not necessarily be reflected in the reality.

I don't feel any need or fear from saying the truth, which is we are welcoming refugees to Newfoundland and Labrador along with other newcomers, racialized and non-racialized. We are a welcoming place and we are going to continue to grow with our strengths. Newcomers bring with them jobs and economic growth. They bring with them skills and they fill unfilled jobs with those skills and those talents. We're going to continue to do so and those sort of sometimes reflect on who will provide health care.

We have had decades of positive experience. Who have been some of the leading health care leaders in our province? Foreign-trained health care professionals. That has been the situation for decades and we will continue to nurture that for years to come while we train our own.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Minister, can you provide an update on the work completed by the Ministerial Committee on Anti-Racism?

G. BYRNE: I can. We'll provide further details with – our intention is to provide a what-we-heard submission but we've met with – I challenge myself to recall – over 30 groups, well over 30 groups at this point in time. We've also received written submissions, both via letter, email, but also as well through our portal. That has been very successful. It has been very much welcomed, the work of the committee itself has been very much welcomed by so many racialized groups and those advocating and

supporting and representing racialized groups but as well from those from the community at large, whether it be the Community Sector Council or others.

This is an exercise which is fluid and ongoing. It's not meant, as we said earlier, to produce a final report because it was a living exercise. It was never intended, and we communicated this very early, that we would hear from groups, we would act immediately on any intervention that we heard that required, deserved immediate attention, we'd act on it with urgency. We did that and we'll continue on with this work. It's organic and it never dies.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Can we have a breakdown of the Job Creation Partnership funding, please?

G. BYRNE: I'll ask Heather Craniford to answer that question, but we certainly can provide those details.

Heather Craniford.

H. CRANIFORD: In '21-'22, we provided 138 agreements to 540 individuals to get work.

J. DINN: Thank you.

CHAIR: Your time has expired, MHA Dinn.

MHA Tibbs, do you have any further questions under these headings?

C. TIBBS: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: MHA Dinn, did you have any further questions?

J. DINN: Please, yes.

How many applications has the department received for projects to support the economic advancement of newcomers in Newfoundland and Labrador after its call for applications in December? And how many of the applications are selected for stage two of the selection process?

G. BYRNE: So one of the issues I think the hon. Member will identify with is that in order

to be a participant in a Job Creation Partnership, one has to be EI eligible or EI reach-back eligible. So, of course, obviously, those who are newcomers, by being permanent residents they would gain access to funding and supports under the Labour Market Development Agreement and the Workforce Development Agreement, the Job Creation Partnerships in many respects may not necessarily be an ideal vehicle for support of those activities.

But I'll ask Heather Craniford if she may have any other additional details of any organizations that support newcomers or if you're aware of any organizations or projects that support newcomers within your list.

H. CRANIFORD: Thank you.

There are a number of programs and services that we offer, as well as we provide funding through the Association for New Canadians and other community groups to support individuals who may need employment and training types of supports and services. Any individuals who are non-EI eligible residents of the province and are on appropriate work permits, we're able to support through different programs internally. Such as we may be able to provide some employers with wage subsidies to hire those individuals.

J. DINN: I was just looking for a number of applications and how many of the applications have been selected for stage two. So have there been any applications received for the projects to support economic advancement? And, I guess, how many of those have been selected for stage two? If you can get me that information later, that would be great. That's the number I'm looking for.

What was the total amount allocated to the Multicultural Grant Program and was the department able to distribute all of the 2020-2021 funding for this grant?

G. BYRNE: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, colleague.

This is a program that we're particularly pleased with. It's been incredibly successful, garners public support and newcomer benefit.

So with that said, I'll ask Assistant Deputy Minister Katie Norman if you might be able to offer some additional perspective.

K. NORMAN: I don't have the final total there on what was spent for settlement grants. There's about \$30,000 allocated. It was not fully expended this year, but we have launched a new program that Minister Byrne announced earlier this spring focused on increasing the engagement with settlement programming, which is closing soon, which is a Come Home Year initiative aiming to reach community organizations and really spread the multicultural activities throughout the year, as opposed to just focusing specifically on Multiculturalism Month in March.

J. DINN: Okay. Can we get maybe the amount spent up to now, for example, if that's possible?

K. NORMAN: Certainly, we'll provide that to you.

J. DINN: I appreciate it.

Can we have an update on the progress of setting up the economic immigration ideas lab in Corner Brook?

G. BYRNE: This is through the Workforce Innovation Centre, colleague?

J. DINN: Yeah.

G. BYRNE: We've worked very effectively with the Workforce Innovation Centre. I'm particularly pleased with this initiative. This was something that I approved back in my former days as minister of this department when it was Advanced Education, Skills and Labour. And it's to utilize a program, an element of the LMMA that we had not previously utilized in the past, which was the research and development component of the agreement. So we sought ways to innovate within the research of labour market.

The Workforce Innovation Centre went and had community engagement session throughout the entire province. I'm very pleased to report that we have followed up with phase two of that initiative to begin regional sessions in all areas of our province.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Can the minister give us an update on the number of individuals who received assistance from the autism employment program and is this program being maintained in the new budget?

G. BYRNE: I will ask Heather Craniford to follow up with that answer.

H. CRANIFORD: I don't have the current stats of how many individuals but I can certainly get that for you. We are planning to continue the autism pilot for '22-'23.

J. DINN: Thank you.

And is the position of private sponsorship coordinator continued under this budget?

H. CRANIFORD: All current budgets would be maintained in '22-'23.

J. DINN: With regards to 1.2.02, with regards to Salaries. Last year's budget, 2021, in this book was written as \$978,500 and last year's Estimate book the Estimate for 2021-2022 was written as \$1,230,700. That is a discrepancy of \$252,200. I'm just wondering if that can be explained.

G. BYRNE: Deputy Minister Debbie Dunphy would you be able to field that question?

D. DUNPHY: Yes. So during the 2021 fiscal year there was reorganization where a portion of the department was transferred to Children, Seniors and Social Development as well as Environment and Climate Change. So there were financial staff that were transferred as well. Then during this year there was a transfer of staff to Digital Government and Service NL relating to the collection's function. So what was reflected last year compared to this year, for '21-'22, is a result of that reorganization. So it's a restatement.

J. DINN: So that occurs a few times in this. That would be similar. There are a few other times we have noted that.

D. DUNPHY: Mainly under Administrative Support, but also probably under Client Services.

J. DINN: Yeah.

I think that's the bit there that I had. Everything else has been more or less answered in the past by my colleague, but I do have one in the last few minutes, just an issue, and maybe you can explain this to me.

I have two immigrant families who are seeking permanent – or one family seeking permanent residency. Both have work permits. Both fully employed here in the province. One of their children was born here, has coverage I guess while they have the work visa, but two of the children do not have MCP coverage at all.

Now, they moved from Saskatchewan where they had coverage for the full family, but somehow it seems while they're here in this province, they're working gainfully, the child who was born in Canada has it, but the two children who weren't born here – they were from Nigeria originally – are not covered. That seems to be a gap in – it's an MCP issue.

I'm just wondering in terms of encouraging people to stay, has this been encountered before? Is this part of the policy and, if it is, if there's a way of closing this because you have people who are looking to settle here who might just end up moving somewhere else.

I'm just wondering if there's a way of addressing this, if you heard of this issue before. And I can certainly bring up the details later, but I'm just curious.

G. BYRNE: Indeed. Thank you for that.

The clock is running down, but I'll ask Katie to examine and get back to you. If you could provide specific details, because that is very much an outlier to what we would be aware of. But notwithstanding that, there must be consideration as to who exactly does receive MCP coverage; it must be intended for those who seek full-time residency and permanent residency in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I can say Canada has one of the most generous publicly funded medical care programs in all of the world, and Newfoundland and Labrador has probably the most generous within the Canadian federation. You know, it's remarkable that international students that go to study in Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, from the moment they arrive as an international, they receive no publicly funded medicare – none. They have to take out private insurance. Newfoundland and Labrador not only provides publicly funded medicare, but we extend that for post-graduation. In British Columbia, all international students have to pay \$75 a month for access to the British Columbia medical care plan.

So when we think of the importance of medical care, of having the safety and security of medical care from the state, Newfoundland and Labrador is often seen as well, there are many, we're just not pulling our weight. Just about 70 per cent – close to 80 per cent of all students that come from foreign countries to study in Canada do so without any medical care coverage. But we, in Newfoundland and Labrador, provide that.

So while we are always anxious and ready to address gaps, we take no fear from addressing gaps, we always want to make sure that the services that are funded by the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador are directed towards those that are actively seeking permanent residency in our province.

Katie, I'll let you follow up. I will ask the hon. Member to follow up –

J. DINN: I will.

G. BYRNE: – with some specifics and we will get back to him on any details that we may be able to offer.

J. DINN: That will be great.

L. STOYLES: Thank you.

With no further questions, I ask the Clerk to recall the headings.

CLERK: For the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, Executive and Support Services, 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 carry?

I ask MHA Reid how he would like to vote.

S. REID: I vote in favour.

CHAIR: All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 1.2.03 carried.

CHAIR: We are going to take a five-minute break now and we will be back.

Recess

CHAIR: We are ready to get going again.

I'm going to ask the Clerk to call the next set of headings.

CLERK: For the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, Employment and Skills Development, 2.1.01 to 2.1.07 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 to 2.1.07 inclusive carry?

MHA Tibbs.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Chair.

I'll start off with Employment and Training Programs, 2.1.01, Transportation and Communications. There was \$11,200 less spent compared to what was budgeted.

Can this be explained? Give us a breakdown, please, of what didn't get spent due to COVID.

G. BYRNE: I'm going to ask Debbie while I just reorient myself here.

Debbie, would you mind?

D. DUNPHY: Yeah, so just the normal staff travelling to various offices and the day to day. We had an increase, again, due mainly to the COVID restrictions. We did take some of that money in '21-'22 and move it down to Professional Services for another purpose. But then again, for '22-'23 we are hoping that some of our regular office visits and in-person travel will be occurring again.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Ms. Dunphy.

For Professional Services there was \$10,000 spent but not budgeted last year. Can you explain this, please?

D. DUNPHY: So we had planned to do a review, a program evaluation on two of our programs in the Employment and Training basket of programs: our Linkages and Transitions to Work programs.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

For 2.1.02, Employment Development Programs, Allowances and Assistance, can you give us a breakdown of how many clients were funded in each program?

G. BYRNE: Heather Craniford, you may be able to provide answers to those questions.

H. CRANIFORD: I do have a list here but I'd prefer to take it away and get that to you so that they're accurate.

C. TIBBS: I appreciate that. Thank you.

For Grants and Subsidies there is \$250,000 less budgeted this year compared to what was spent last year. Can this be explained, please?

G. BYRNE: So in the Grants and Subsidies, which are down by \$250,000 in this year's budget – they're down from \$6.9 million to \$6.65 million – this reduction was based on historical spending over the last four years. Historically, we spent anywhere between \$6.3 million to \$6.5 million annually. So this was part of the zero-based budgeting exercise.

We transferred that funding, that \$250,000, to the Office of Immigration for settlements in integration programming.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Minister.

Can you give us a list of each organization that received funding and how much, please?

G. BYRNE: We can. Heather, I'll ask you if you would commit to that.

H. CRANIFORD: Yes. We can certainly provide that after for you.

C. TIBBS: Thank you very much.

We will move on to Labour Market Development Agreement, 2.1.03. Under Professional Services there was \$15,900 more spent compared to what was budgeted. Can this be explained, please?

G. BYRNE: Go ahead, Heather.

H. CRANIFORD: I'll just pass that to Debbie Dunphy, sorry

D. DUNPHY: Sorry, Mr. Tibbs, you asked about the –

C. TIBBS: The \$15,900 more spent at the Professional Services.

D. DUNPHY: Okay.

We did have a higher expenditure this year relating to a number of factors: our LMDA audit, our client employability assessments, our program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies and, again, we mentioned the evaluation of Linkages and the Transitions to Work. So we have increased our budget based on last year's budget, although it is not up to the projections for '21-'22. But, again, we looked at some system upgrades and related delivery of programs.

What I'll also note is the operating budget under the LMDA; we have just over \$8.9 million that goes towards the administration of the

agreement. We have the flexibility to move that around in the operating accounts and the salary account as necessary, but we can't go over the \$8.9 million.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Ms. Dunphy.

Property Furnishings and Equipment: There was \$33,600 more spent compared to what was budgeted last year. What was this for?

D. DUNPHY: That was for getting some additional laptops, again, to enable the people to work from home during COVID. We did the bulk purchase in 2021 but this was to enable the remaining staff, to ensure all staff had laptops.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

And under Allowances and Assistance, there was \$14 million less spent compared to what was budgeted last year. Can this be explained?

D. DUNPHY: Minister, shall I carry on?

G. BYRNE: You go right ahead.

D. DUNPHY: Okay.

So we had about \$10 million less spent in Skills Development and an additional \$4 million less through our JCP, the Job Creation Partnership program. Again, this is mainly due to the labour market conditions as a result of the pandemic. However, as part of the federal government's assistance to help us come out of this pandemic they once again, this year, have allowed a carry over under the LMDA agreement. Money not spent this year we will be looking to advance that this year to ensure additional supports are provided where possible.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

And can you give us a break down of how the funding in this line item is spent?

D. DUNPHY: Under Allowance?

C. TIBBS: Yeah.

D. DUNPHY: Certainly.

C. TIBBS: Please.

D. DUNPHY: So, notionally we do an allocation. We have about \$45.5 million for skills development, which are usually the individual supports; we have \$2 million for apprenticeship supports; \$7 million for Job Creation Partnerships; \$5 million for Self-Employment Assistance; \$2.2 million for ABE for the college and another \$400,000 for some other costs. This is included in the binder. You don't need to catch it all; it is included in the binder that will be provided.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

Can you give us a break down of Job Creation Partnerships for the last year, including dollar amounts, group names or provincial electoral districts and how many were employed, please?

D. DUNPHY: Certainly. We will have to provide that after.

C. TIBBS: I am sure it is quite detailed. Thank you.

Can you also give us a breakdown of Self-Employment Assistance recipients, including dollar amounts and business names?

D. DUNPHY: Yes, so all of the grants – anything through Grants and Subsidies we will provide a detailed list in any of the program areas. Allowances and Assistance is a little different because that's often been paid to individuals. But we can certainly get anything that has an organization or the number of clients we can provide.

C. TIBBS: Could you also include the ABE college payments by institution as well?

D. DUNPHY: Sure.

C. TIBBS: Okay, thank you so much.

Move on to Grants and Subsidies. There was \$29,220,600 less spent compared to what was

budgeted last year. Can this be explained, please?

D. DUNPHY: Yes, certainly. So, again, most of this was under Job Creation Partnerships, Wage Subsidies, Apprenticeship and Trades Certification and Labour Market Partnerships. Again, this is going to be part of the carry-over for 2021 and it's pandemic and labour market conditions.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

There is \$30,368,700 more budgeted this year compared to what was budgeted last year. Can this be explained, please?

D. DUNPHY: That's the carry forward.

C. TIBBS: That's the carry forward.

Thank you.

Can you give us a breakdown of how the funding in this line item is spent?

D. DUNPHY: The Grants and Subsidies?

C. TIBBS: Yes, please.

D. DUNPHY: Certainly. Again, it's included, but we have a notional allocation of \$3.5 million for Job Creation Partnerships; \$2.1 million for the Self-Employment Assistance community coordinator; \$10 million for the JobsNL Wage Subsidy; \$3 million for the Apprenticeship Wage Subsidy; \$120,000 for Opening Doors Program; \$1.5 million for a Wage Subsidy community coordinator; \$35.8 million for Labour Market Partnerships; \$14 million for employment assistance services and \$2 million for research and innovation. Under this line as well is the \$23.2 million we provide to College of the North Atlantic and \$1 million to the Marine Institute.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

Can you also give us a list of employers that receive funding through the JobsNL wage subsidies, how many jobs were created by each employer and how much funding was received?

D. DUNPHY: Certainly.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

And also can you give us a breakdown of the Labour Market Partnership?

D. DUNPHY: Certainly.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

Can you give us a breakdown, please, of the JCP for last year, including dollar amounts, group names, their provincial electoral districts and how many were employed, different than the Allowances and Assistance section?

D. DUNPHY: Yes, we'll provide all of that.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

Can you also give us a breakdown of how research and innovation monies were spent, please?

D. DUNPHY: Yes, we can provide that as well.

C. TIBBS: Okay, thank you.

I see my time is running out. We can come on back before I get into ...

CHAIR: We'll come back.

Thank you.

MHA Dinn.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

In 2.1.03 – again, it's probably the same explanation but I'll ask it. In last year's budget, 2020-21, in this book it is written as \$94,938,300. In last year's Estimate book, the Estimate for 2021-22 was written as \$95,150,700. That is a discrepancy of minus \$212,400.

There also appears to be a similar discrepancy under 2.1.05, EAP for Persons with Disabilities. Grants and Subsidies were, I think, plus \$212,400. I'm assuming that they are – it looks like some of the grants were shifted around. Would that be the case?

G. BYRNE: Debbie, I don't know if you or Heather might be able to ...

Debbie, go ahead.

D. DUNPHY: Yes, so we did a restatement. The \$212,400, that's part of the Employment Assistance Programs for Persons with Disabilities that we provide to College of the North Atlantic. When we did the reorganization last year – the year before now – with education, that piece was put back under the larger Labour Market Development heading. It should have been under the Employment Assistance Programs for Persons with Disabilities so it was a restatement.

J. DINN: Thank you.

In 2.1.04, Workforce Development Agreement, Transportation and Communications, this year has zero dollars estimated expense. Any reason for that?

D. DUNPHY: Under that heading, again as part of the administration under Workforce Development, what we had budgeted previously related to the telephone landlines. That cost is now under the Regional Operations budget.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Also, under there, Allowances and Assistance, last year's actuals were \$120,000 under budget.

D. DUNPHY: So we did have some savings related to educational assessments, apprenticeship supports and the block training. Again, it is mainly due to labour market conditions as a result of the pandemic.

Also, similar to the carry forward provided by the federal government for the Labour Market Development Agreement, there's also been a carry forward provided for the Workforce Development Agreement. So any monies not spent this year we have the ability to carry some of that forward for next year.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Also, in 2.1.04, Grants and Subsidies, last year's actuals were \$2,495,000 under budget. This

year's Estimate has decreased by some \$8,816,400.

D. DUNPHY: So the change for this budget year, again, last year there was a carry forward from the previous year because of the pandemic. That carry forward from 2021 has been removed and that's why it's down by the \$2.5 million.

J. DINN: Okay. Thank you.

In 2.1.05, Employment Assistance Programs for Persons with Disabilities, Allowances and Assistance, last year's actuals were \$600,000 under budget. This year's Estimate has decreased by some \$1,679,900 down to \$8,130,100. This is the same as the 2021 budget. Was there a one-time allowance?

D. DUNPHY: Yes, that is correct. It was part of the carry forward from 2021.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Grants and Subsidies: This year's Estimate has been decreased by \$96,400. What's the reason for that?

D. DUNPHY: It's the same; it was part of the carry forward. So that's a one-time removal.

J. DINN: Thank you.

In 2.1.06, Youth and Student Services, Allowances and Assistance, last year's actuals were \$80,000 under budget.

D. DUNPHY: This line item relates to the tuition voucher program. So it's based on what has actually been submitted by the students to be cashed at the post-secondary institution. The expenditure is just lower than anticipated. We did do a budget reduction for next year to reflect that based on, again, what we're seeing.

J. DINN: Thank you.

In Grants and Subsidies in that same section, what's the reason for the decrease in your Estimates this year for some \$185,000?

D. DUNPHY: This was one of the areas, again, that we had a look at as part of our zero base. This is provincial dollars and we felt that we would be able to better utilize our federal agreement, LMDA and WDA, in terms of our Wage Subsidy program. So we've reduced the budget here on the provincial line and we're going to optimize our federal agreements for this purpose.

J. DINN: Okay.

In 2.1.07, Apprenticeship and Trades Certification, Salaries: Last year's actuals were some \$357,300 under budget. This year's Estimate has decreased by a further \$157,300. What's the reason for that, please?

D. DUNPHY: So, again, the projection is based on several vacancies we had; we had some retirements and some vacancies in the division. Annually, we review all of our positions and prepare a salary plan based on what we anticipate spending and filling during the 2022-23 year.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Professional Services, last year's actuals were \$35,000 under budget. What was the reason for that?

D. DUNPHY: The savings there related mainly to completing the site visits to the training institutions. This is not our staff, but this is the per diems for the various Provincial Trade Advisory Committees. But again, we are hoping that a lot of that will resume again this year.

J. DINN: Purchased Services, last years actuals were some \$1,215,000 under budget. What was the reason for that?

D. DUNPHY: That relates, again, to the Labour Market Development program for industrial training. So this reduction is overall for demand skilled trades training. That can be included as part of the carry forward under the LMDA.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Grants and Subsidies, this year's estimate has decreased by over \$155,000. What was the reason for that?

D. DUNPHY: So that was the completion of a federal project; we had federal funding for advancing women in apprenticeship and that project was completed.

J. DINN: Okay.

Federal revenue, last year's actuals revenue was some \$1,200,000 under expected. What was the reason for that?

D. DUNPHY: That is the federal revenue related to the \$1.2 million in the Purchased Services under the LMDA.

J. DINN: Okay. And it was under then –

D. DUNPHY: Pardon me?

J. DINN: It seems to have been under what had expected.

D. DUNPHY: Yes, we didn't spend the \$1.2 million in Purchased so then we don't collect – well, we don't recognize the revenue under the same heading but it is carried forward.

J. DINN: Okay, perfect. Thank you.

In 3.1.02 – sorry, 3.1 – no, I'm out of it altogether.

I will ask a question, though. In Skills Development – I guess Employment and Training Programs, I'm assuming here, but with the Skills Development Program, I think there is federal funding for that. I brought this issue up with regard to people who go back to do a post-secondary and lose their drug coverage. Is that a federal requirement or policy if they receive funding under this program or is that provincial?

G. BYRNE: Could I ask the hon. Member to restate his question again?

J. DINN: With regard to the cases I brought forward of a person who went through the Skills Development Program, the funding that is administered by your department but it is federally funded – in this case, as with anyone

who pursues post-secondary education and skills upgrade, they lose drug coverage, the NLPDP. I am just wondering if they apply for this, is that a policy or a requirement of the federal funding that they not receive or is that a provincial policy that they would lose their drug coverage?

G. BYRNE: I will ask Heather.

H. CRANIFORD: The NLPDP is a provincial program but under the Skills Development, we provide any of the incremental costs of training for the individuals. So individuals can be funded for health plans. If there is a plan offered through one of the public training institutions, we would indeed support them for that. We would also provide anything that would be cost shared for the individual as part of the NLPDP under that program.

J. DINN: And I was just trying to think – so their loss of the drug coverage, that's a policy – but the fact that these individuals lose their drug coverage, that's entirely within the province or is that a requirement of the plan itself?

H. CRANIFORD: From the NLPDP perspective, that would be our Department of Health and Community Services. We would support any of the costs for either the NLPDP or part of their training institution's drug coverage.

CHAIR: Thank you, MHA Dinn. Your time has expired.

MHA Tibbs.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Chair.

Just some general questions here for 2.1.07, Apprenticeship and Trades Certification. How many active and newly registered apprentices are there?

G. BYRNE: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, colleague.

We can get that information to you. Debbie –

OFFICIAL: (Inaudible.)

G. BYRNE: Well now, this is the binder that we all need.

So active apprentices as of March of 2022, we have 3,547 – I think someone anticipated this question. Newly registered apprentices, 596. Block exams administered to date is 692. Red seal exams administered, 760. Apprenticeship training classes conducted to date, 128.

Apprentices who received in-school training, 1,024. Apprentices who received journeypersons' certification, 306. Journeypersons who received specialized training to acquire new skills, 47. Trade Advisory Committee meetings were 52 in number and the average age of journeypersons, just in case you might ask, for all trades, is 55 years. The average age of active apprentices for all trades was 34 years old.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Minister.

G. BYRNE: I can certainly get to you in a written form.

C. TIBBS: No, that's great.

We understand that the NLPNP applications are approved in a fairly timely manner, but we are hearing about longer delays with the federal component. Can you give any insight on this? We are hearing from professionals that work with employers to bring in international workers that the delays with the feds have increased substantially. Can you elaborate on this, please?

G. BYRNE: No, I'm just going to ask for the acronym.

C. TIBBS: Provincial Nominee Program.

G. BYRNE: The Provincial Nominee, okay. Well yes, it is correct. With the addition of our complement of new staff, which we spoke of last year, we're very proud of the expansion of the Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism team. We put in, I think, Katie, 18 new positions in the department.

That has been a phenomenal success in advancing. We have a service delivery time now

of just about 60 to 80 days in terms of processing of provincial – I think actually it's even better than that now. Why don't I just ask Katie to answer this question, because she has brought it down 25 days –

C. TIBBS: Wow.

G. BYRNE: – for provincial processing.

You're quite right, the federal side of the processing has gone to 27 to 36 months. The federal government transferred some staff from processing immigration applications to processing CERB applications. It's one of the reasons why there's a significant backlog. But I think Katie should take the floor now, because she deserves some accolades in really how much we've mastered this process.

K. NORMAN: Thank you, Minister, and thank you for the question, MHA Tibbs.

So you're very right that there's quite a difference from a processing perspective. We process the nominations and the endorsements under the Provincial Nominee Program and Atlantic Immigration Program. After that time, an individual has to submit their application to the Government of Canada, and there can be a period of time because there are additional documents that they require. So that can add a few weeks just on the individual side. But once the application goes in, there have been significant delays, and many of them have to do with yes, the reallocation of staff to other initiatives, like the Afghan resettlement, and now more recently Ukraine, within the Government of Canada.

But in addition, there have been COVID-related impacts to the closure of visa processing centres internationally and the processing issues related to actually landing permanent residents. So actually having family members be able to enter Canada. We've been actively engaged with the Government of Canada to stress the impacts of that on individuals.

I think there are significant federal efforts and the federal minister has made a number of announcements related to digitizing applications, hiring additional staff to address that. But I think the most recent number is the Government of

Canada has over two million applications in queue for permanent residency. So it is a significant issue for that government.

C. TIBBS: I bet. Thank you very much.

Just one final question and forgive me if I am mistaken or correct me if I am mistaken but when the Afghan refugees arrived, I was under the understanding that the federal government would pay for their housing for one year. That year will be up soon, I assume. What happens after that? Does the province then pick up the tab for what is left over or do we transition something else through the federal government?

G. BYRNE: All Afghan refugees do become permanent residents of Canada, so therefore are eligible under law and good, best practice to be able to receive the supports as any other citizen or any other resident would be able to receive. Really, the premise of the question is are they at a point where they would continue to need offsetting supports. Many have gone to work and we will be able to answer that question shortly just in terms of the actual numbers.

We work with the Association for New Canadians who really case manage each and every one of those files. So we will get that information to you but the answer is our efforts are to fully integrate and to bring them into self-sufficiency within the workforce. If required, yes, they would be the same as you or I; we would be able to receive benefits under permanent residency programming.

C. TIBBS: Great.

Thank you, Minister. That is all I have for that heading.

CHAIR: Thank you.

MHA Dinn.

J. DINN: Just one quick question, if I can, just with regard to the overall vacancies that were brought up here as well. I think there was mentioned that there are 57 vacancies within the department. Does the 312 that you have

employed take into account those vacancies or the 312 plus the vacancies would bring it up to 367?

D. DUNPHY: No, 312 were the number of employees –

J. DINN: Right.

D. DUNPHY: The 57 would be in addition. Now that was at the end of March.

J. DINN: Right.

D. DUNPHY: So that number today would likely be a little different as recruitment continues.

J. DINN: Every Estimates Committee I have sat in on, and others, there seems to be an awful lot of vacancies across the government departments. Any reason for that, especially here in a department where you are primarily to help with immigration and help newcomers settle here?

D. DUNPHY: Minister, if I could, I think some of this is just natural, I guess, turnover. The immigration office, we did do a very large recruitment effort for that office last year and it is continuing. We do have a few vacancies there and there is actually interviews going on this morning, so we're working to try to keep those filled.

In our regional offices, we've done considerable work to ensure we maintain a sustainable level of service to all of our clients. Again, I think it is just a little bit of a delay in terms of trying to get some recruitment done, but I will say that the Public Service Commission and the Strategic Staffing Division have certainly stepped up their efforts over the past few months and the past year, and we've been very successful in getting some of our vacancies filled and some of our vacancies that were our long-standing ones have now been filled. So I think if we were to pull that number today, you would see some of those numbers decrease.

J. DINN: So would it be possible to have the updated numbers, as of today –

D. DUNPHY: Certainly.

J. DINN: – that are actually filled? And a breakdown as to what the vacancies are – I guess what the jobs are.

D. DUNPHY: Certainly, we can provide it.

J. DINN: Thank you.

That is it for me on that section.

CHAIR: Thank you.

No further questions, I ask the Clerk to recall the heading, please.

CLERK: For the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, Employment and Skills Development, 2.1.01 to 2.1.07 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 to 2.1.07 carry?

I call the question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.1.01 through 2.1.07 carried.

CHAIR: I ask the Clerk to call the next set of headings, please.

CLERK: For the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, Regional Service Delivery, 3.1.01.

CHAIR: 3.1.01.

I ask the Opposition, MHA Tibbs, questions, please.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Chair.

We'll start off with Regional Operations and Salaries. There is \$212,700 more budgeted than what was spent last year. Can this be explained, please?

D. DUNPHY: The increase mainly results in the negotiated salary increases, as I mentioned earlier. Under the LMDA, again, as I mentioned

earlier, we have a percentage that we can use for administration. So in order to maximize that, sometimes we'll apply some of the administrative funding to the client services in order to reduce the provincial contribution.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

Under Transportation and Communications, there was \$100,000 more budgeted this year compared to what was spent last year. Can this be explained for this year, please?

D. DUNPHY: Again, pandemic-related travel to various job and project sites is the main reason for the decrease.

C. TIBBS: Well, let's hope that's over with.

D. DUNPHY: Yes.

C. TIBBS: I think we can all agree on that.

Purchased Services, there is \$62,500 more budgeted this year compared to what was spent last year. Can this be explained, please?

D. DUNPHY: So if you recall, for a portion of this year, we did have some of our offices closed because of the pandemic, and so some of the costs are lower. Copier costs, paper costs, those sorts of things were lower. But we do have all of our offices open again now and people back at work in the office.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

For Property, Furnishings and Equipment, there was \$12,000 more budgeted this year compared to what was spent last year. Can this be explained, please?

D. DUNPHY: So, recognizing that we have a big portion of our staff, over 250 of our staff are in various regional offices. I think that increase is to recognize that what is required for those folks in terms of desks, new chairs, those sorts of things, we thought it would be prudent to increase that budget to reflect the requirement.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

That concludes my questions for this heading, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

MHA Dinn, please.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

With regard to Salaries, last year's actuals were over \$60,000 under budget. What was the reason for that?

D. DUNPHY: So, as I guess I explained, we used a portion of the LMDA to reduce the provincial contribution there.

J. DINN: Okay, good.

And last year's budget in this book for '20-'21 is written as \$4,570,000. Last year's Estimates book, the Estimate for '21-'22 was written as \$5,189,800. And that's a discrepancy down by about \$600,000. Am I assuming then that's the same thing as we've heard? A restatement of the budget?

D. DUNPHY: Yes.

J. DINN: Okay. That's it for me.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

I ask the Clerk now to call the heading.

CLERK: For the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, Regional Service Delivery, 3.1.01.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, subhead 3.1.01 carried.

CHAIR: I ask the Clerk to call the next set of headings, please.

CLERK: For the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, Immigration and

Workforce Development, 4.1.01 to 4.1.02 inclusive.

CHAIR: 4.1.01 to 4.1.02.

MHA Tibbs.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Chair.

We'll start off with some general questions, Minister.

Can you provide a breakdown of the Provincial Nominee Program numbers and the Atlantic Immigration Pilot endorsements, please?

G. BYRNE: Yes, I certainly can. I'll ask Katie to forward some additional information which you may have that at hand. We are performing now better than we ever have in our history. So I'm very pleased with that.

K. NORMAN: So the minister is correct. In 2021, we had the highest ever usage of the Provincial Nominee Program with 1,420 people supported to permanent residency through that program. Five hundred and ninety-six of those – and this will all be in the binder – were principal applicants, and 824 were family members.

Under the Atlantic Immigration Program in 2021, we had full utilization of that program for the first time in the province's history. So full utilization was 442 primary applicants, joined by 322 of their family members, for a total of 764 individuals supported.

Which means that in 2021 – and immigration runs on a calendar year, so not as neat and tidy with the Estimates book but from January to December almost 2,200 people – 2,184 – were supported to permanent residency through those two provincial programs.

C. TIBBS: Great, thank you.

Can you provide a breakdown of retention rates by immigration class, with a comparison to the Atlantic provinces by landing year?

K. NORMAN: Certainly. Thank you for the question.

So for the most recent data we have is for individuals from 2019, which is Statistics Canada information. For individuals at one year – so those that arrived in 2018 – in the 2019 tax year, the overall retention rate for Newfoundland and Labrador was a 61 per cent retention rate. And that varies by group. For economic class, it was 57 per cent; Provincial Nominee Program, 60 per cent; family class, so family reunification, 73 per cent; and for refugees, 69 per cent.

For individuals who arrived in the 2016 landing year and the 2019 tax year – so three years after arrival – the retention rate was 50 per cent. Refugees were the highest at 61 per cent. Followed by family reunification at 59 per cent; provincial nominees at 46 per cent; and economic class at 42 per cent.

And then finally five years after arriving, so those arriving in 2014 landing year, in 2019, 46 per cent of individuals arriving to this province remained here. I will note that while that is maybe a less than ideal number, I think we can all agree there's room for improvement there. It is the second highest in Atlantic Canada. So 44 per cent of federal economic class immigrants were remaining; 45 per cent of provincial nominees; family reunification, 62 per cent; and refugees, 41 per cent.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Ms. Norman.

Can you provide a breakdown of retention rates of international students and out-of-province domestic Canadian students that have attended our post-secondary institutions, by landing year?

G. BYRNE: We can indeed provide that. I'm going to interject something else as well. There are many who say that we're not doing very well with retention. We are the second highest in Atlantic Canada. New Brunswick and PEI trail behind us.

The five-year data I think is most relevant because of course the intention is for permanent residency. It may be less relevant for the first or third year, it's five years that really show how well we're performing.

But I'll also say this, in terms of retention, it's very important to recognize that this is the first year that we're fully utilizing our economic

immigration pathways. Because in previous years what was happening was – I'll put this is a perspective. In Ontario, the number of nominations that Ontario is able to offer their newcomer community they exceed that within months of the calendar year.

So with Newfoundland and Labrador sort of still retaining unfilled nominations, what you have is you actually have newcomers who targeted or directed themselves to Ontario that have kind of roots in Ontario getting rejected in Ontario. And then employers and themselves coming to Newfoundland and Labrador as a potential safer haven to get their permanent residency and then move back. Because they're not intentionally coming to Newfoundland and Labrador. This is me talking; this my analysis.

When you fill up your own province's nomination, these are people who are deliberately targeting Newfoundland and Labrador. It's their intention to come to Newfoundland and Labrador. They don't have a pre-existing attachment to Ontario or anywhere else. This, I think, is going to be very remarkable in improving our retention.

So we're already second highest in Atlantic Canada, but in the years Nova Scotia has maxed out, some time ago, the number of nominations they're allowed to submit. They maxed out their numbers some time ago. Now that we are at the point where we are actually – and I say this because we want to improve our numbers, we're applying, we're asking, we're expecting higher numbers from Ottawa in future years, but everyone who we nominate was an intentional Newfoundland and Labrador destined newcomer. I think that's going to drive and improve our numbers.

Katie, I don't know if we have the academic data that MHA Tibbs asked for.

K. NORMAN: So some of that data, particularly related to other domestic students, would be housed by Department of Education, but we can certainly –

C. TIBBS: We'll move on to 4.1.01, Salaries. There was \$1,007,300 more spent this year compared to what was spent last year. Can this be explained, please, for Salaries?

K. NORMAN: So the increase in Salaries for the Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism reflects the expansion of the office with the 18 additional positions, noting that the funding that was put in place in last year's budget made the assumption that the positions would be filled only for half of the year, just because there was a recruitment process.

So we have gone through that. We have actively filled all the jobs at one point and have had some departures for positive reasons, I'll just put it to that. So we're still finalizing some of the positions, but we're at almost full capacity within OIM right now, so that should be fully expended this year.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Ms. Norman.

Under Professional Services, there was \$507,600 more budgeted this year compared to what was spent last year. Can this be explained, please?

K. NORMAN: Yes, certainly.

Under Professional Services, you'll be aware that there was a commitment made to putting additional money in place to promote the province last year. Again, that funding was intended to be \$2 million annually. We put \$500,000 of that under Professional Services and the remaining additional million under Purchased Services. Simply because just depending on how you spend your marketing money in some cases, if it's a media buy, it's a purchased service; where if it's a graphic design or a consulting advice, it comes from professional. So that's just the full year amount for that initiative.

C. TIBBS: Under Purchased Services there was \$704,700 more budgeted this year compared to what was spent last year. Can this be explained with a breakdown as well?

K. NORMAN: Yes, certainly.

That is also a result of our funding being annualized. So the full year amount being included there. Under Purchased Services, a large portion of that is dedicated to marketing and promotion but it also includes translation services and fees that we pay to attend

international fairs and immigration promotion initiatives.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

Under Grants and Subsidies, there is a million dollars more budgeted this year compared to what was spent last year. Can this be explained as well, please?

K. NORMAN: So the \$1 million additional, you may recall that on budget day, Minister Coady, the Premier and Minister Byrne announced that there was a million dollars made available to support Ukrainian refugees. That's what that million dollars is for, which is the work we're doing with the Association for New Canadians.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

Under 4.1.02, Workforce Development Secretariat, the Salaries, there is \$18,600 more budgeted this year compared to what was spent last year. Can this be explained, please?

K. NORMAN: Sorry, your question related to Salaries?

C. TIBBS: Yes.

K. NORMAN: The Salaries reflect a negotiated salary increase but have also been offset by a review of salaries within the department. We had some people who were senior move on and more new employees join at a different pay scale.

C. TIBBS: Perfect, thank you.

K. NORMAN: Same pay scale but different step on the pay scale.

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

I just have one last question, and then I'm done.

K. NORMAN: Sure.

C. TIBBS: Professional Services, there was \$65,000 more spent last year compared to what was budgeted this year. Can this be explained, please?

K. NORMAN: Yes.

Under Professional Services, there was a decrease related to savings associated with the Atlantic Workforce Partnership. That is a multilateral group of the four provinces. We required less funding for that initiative for that year, so that's why that's lower.

Then if you look at this year, you'll see a reduction and that's due to the fact that the Council of Atlantic Premiers had a one-time funding increase in the previous year that wasn't required in this year just basing the budget across the four provinces.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Ms. Norman.

CHAIR: MHA Dinn.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

I guess I'll start off with regard to the Provincial Nominee Program. How exactly does that work? So someone either moves to another province or – how would that work, I guess, in broad strokes?

K. NORMAN: Sure, so the Provincial Nominee Program has a range of categories under it. At the most simple level, the way I can describe it, is there is a category for an individual who comes as a skilled worker, there is a category for an individual who is an international graduate and then there are two categories under the entrepreneur screen – one for international graduate entrepreneur and one for international entrepreneur. There are various eligibility criteria under those streams in a program, but all of them require a job offer. So an individual has to be able to demonstrate that they do have a year-round, full-time job offer that meets the criteria of the program.

Effectively, if there is a skills alignment between their education, their work experience and what they are planning to do in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is an individually driven program, so the individual applies for Provincial Nominee Program a little bit different than the Atlantic Immigration Program, which is more employer-driven. But the employer does have to demonstrate that this is indeed a bona fide job

offer and the terms and conditions around that job.

There are also assessments done on the eligibility of the individual related to details around their, sort of, any past criminal record. We do fraud detection. We also look at the financial viability of the individual to ensure that their financial status would allow them to be able to settle in the province. So we do assess that as well.

J. DINN: And if they have family, children, they would come with –?

K. NORMAN: That's right. So you can bring a dependent spouse and children. Under that nomination there is no limit on the number of additional – the minister spoke to the number of spaces that we have, but we don't limit the number of family members who can come. It is only the number of primary applicants that we have a cap on.

J. DINN: Okay. Perfect.

Just to go back. My colleague from Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans asked a few of them, but I just want to talk about the actuals and Salaries. I don't know if he addressed these. Last year's actuals were some \$200,000 under budget. What was the reason for that, in 4.1.01?

K. NORMAN: So under 4.1.01, we established 18 new positions. What I would say about those jobs is that they are very specialized. We had a recruitment effort that involved a number of individuals who were actually recruited from outside of Newfoundland and Labrador into those specialized roles.

So in some cases, unfortunately, we weren't able to get everybody hired with the right credentials that we needed as quickly, maybe, as we would have liked. But I am very pleased to say that we have an extremely strong team. The minister spoke of that in his reference to the team that we sent to Warsaw. The fact that we were able to draw on all of those languages and international competencies, speaks to I think the effort that went into the recruitment there, and that's a

testament also to Debbie and her team on the recruitment side. So that's why.

J. DINN: Excellent.

And under Professional Services, last year's actuals were almost \$62,000 over budget.

K. NORMAN: For Professional Services, what ended up happening there is we had funding actually allocated. You'll notice if you look at the Grants, they were down by just under \$100,000. That's because when we decided how we wanted to roll out the intercultural competency training for the public service, at one point it was thought that that could be done through a grant-based process, but it was actually done through a contracting process with three different organizations. The \$60,000 there over, almost \$62,000, was as a result of contracts that we signed with three organizations to support intercultural competency.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Purchased Services, last year's actuals were almost \$270,000 under budget.

K. NORMAN: So that has largely to do with the fact that I think COVID dragged on longer than we've all wanted. As a result of that, we had fewer requirements related to international marketing associated with international recruitment events. So that's where you see the discrepancy there.

J. DINN: Salaries, 4.1.02, Workforce Development Secretariat, last year's actuals was almost \$128,000 under budget.

K. NORMAN: Those were result of a delay in filling one position, and also a leave of absence for a period of time.

J. DINN: Perfect, thank you.

That's it for me, Chair. I will take a minute just to say thank you to the staff. Any department where you're dealing with people, I don't care how good they are, it's a complicated and taxing job, so thank you for your efforts and certainly anything that brings new people to the province

and increases diversity is welcome. It's going to make this province stronger for sure.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

With no further questions, I ask the Clerk to recall the heading.

CLERK: For the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, Immigration and Workforce Development, 4.1.01 to 4.1.02 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 4.1.01 to 4.1.02 carry?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, subheads 4.1.01 through 4.1.02 carried.

CLERK: Total.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall I report the Estimates of the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills carried?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

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

CHAIR: I ask the minister if he would like to have any closing remarks.

G. BYRNE: Thank you, colleagues, very much for the time spent together and the questions that were received. We will follow up with the additional information as requested. Until next time, thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

As we had no independent Members, there was no time allotted for questions by an independent Member. I ask for a motion to adjourn.

J. HAGGIE: So moved.

CHAIR: So moved by MHA Haggie; seconded by MHA Tibbs.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

The next meeting will be at the Chair of the Committee.

Thank you again to everybody for coming out this morning and taking part, especially to all the staff who took part.

On motion, the Committee adjourned sine die.