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Resources**

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Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation

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Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

## RESOURCE COMMITTEE

Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation

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Chair: Brian Warr, MHA

Vice-Chair: Jordan Brown, MHA

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

Clerk of the Committee: Kimberley Hammond

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Appearing:

### **Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation**

Hon. Steve Crocker, MHA, Minister  
Jamie O'Dea, Deputy Minister  
Ben Gardner, Assistant Deputy Minister, Film, Television and Recreation  
Carol-Ann Gilliard, Assistant Deputy Minister, Tourism  
Gerry Osmond, Assistant Deputy Minister, Arts and Culture  
Bonnie Steele, Departmental Controller  
Adrienne Luther, Director of Communications  
Matt Worthman, Executive Assistant

### **Also Present**

Hon. Elvis Loveless, MHA, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure  
Hon. Sarah Stoodley, MHA, Minister of Digital Government and Service NL  
Jeff Dwyer, MHA  
Christine Baldwin, Government Members' Caucus  
Steven Kent, Third Party Caucus  
Glenn Littlejohn, Official Opposition Caucus

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Elvis Loveless, MHA for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, substitutes for Paul Pike, MHA for Burin - Grand Bank.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Sarah Stoodley, MHA for Mount Scio, substitutes for Sherry Gambin-Walsh, MHA for Placentia - St. Mary's.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Jeff Dwyer, MHA for Placentia West - Bellevue, substitutes for Pleaman Forsey, MHA for Exploits.

**CHAIR (Warr):** Good morning.

Just a few technical difficulties but we'll get under way. Welcome to the Estimates of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

I'll signal the substitutions before we start. Substituting for the Member for Burin - Grand Bank is Minister Loveless; substituting for the Member for Exploits is MHA Dwyer; and substituting for the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's is Minister Stoodley.

Again, good morning to you all. I don't see any of the Independents here this morning but if they do arrive, the same thing, with 10 minutes each at the end.

Perhaps at around 10:30 we'll look at taking a break, just see where we are with the agenda. With regard to the Committee and the department, you're in seats that are set for the MHAs, so we'll just ask you not to fool with the seats. With regard to the tally lights, just make sure that you identify yourself if someone in the department is scheduled to speak. Identify yourself, wait for your tally light and go ahead and address the questions.

Anyway, I will first ask for a mover for the adoption of the minutes.

Moved by MHA Lucy Stoyles; seconded by Minister Loveless.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

**CHAIR:** Starting off, we'll do some introductions this morning. I'll start off with Minister Stoodley.

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

**L. STOYLES:** Lucy Stoyles, MHA, Mount Pearl North.

**E. LOVELESS:** Elvis Loveless, MHA, Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

**C. PARDY:** Craig Pardy, historic District of Bonavista.

**C. BALDWIN:** Christine Baldwin, GMO.

**S. KENT:** Steven Kent, Sessional Assistant for the Third Party.

**J. BROWN:** Jordan Brown, Member for Labrador West.

**G. LITTLEJOHN:** Glenn Littlejohn, Researcher, Official Opposition.

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

**G. OSMOND:** Gerry Osmond, Assistant Deputy Minister for Arts and Culture.

**C. GILLIARD:** Carol-Ann Gilliard, Assistant Deputy Minister for Tourism.

**S. CROCKER:** Steve Crocker, Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

**J. O'DEA:** Jamie O'Dea, Deputy Minister, TCAR.

**B. STEELE:** Bonnie Steele, Departmental Controller.

**B. GARDNER:** Ben Gardner, Assistant Deputy Minister, Film, Television, Support and Recreation.

**A. LUTHER:** Adrienne Luther, Director of Communications, TCAR.

**M. WORTHMAN:** Matthew Worthman, Executive Assistant to Minister Crocker

**CHAIR:** Okay, good morning.

My name is Brian Warr, I'm the MHA for Baie Verte - Green Bay and joining me at the table today is Kim Hammond.

I will ask the Clerk to call the first set of subheads, please.

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

**CHAIR:** Shall 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 inclusive carry?

Minister Crocker, some opening remarks.

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Chair.

I won't get too deep into opening remarks out of respect for time, but first of all I want to thank the staff for the hard work that have gone into these Estimates and look forward to a morning of great discussion and try and provide the answers that I can provide.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister Crocker.

Shall 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 inclusive carry?

MHA Dwyer.

**J. DWYER:** Can you please outline the department's attrition plan?

**S. CROCKER:** I'll let the controller –

**B. STEELE:** The attrition plan, as it stands, with targets and monetary and number of positions have been met for everything that has been assigned to the department. Currently, as we review any vacant positions or people that retire, the department does a review of the position to determine if it can be allocated to other positions within the staffing, the current staff, before any position is filled.

There's ongoing analysis at the time of vacancies. So, with that in mind, the department keeps attrition in plan.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

How many positions have been removed this year through attrition and what is the strategy for this year?

**S. CROCKER:** The total resignations this year, end of employment have been 71, and total retirements have been eight, new hires have been 10. So, again, as the controller just outlined, every time there becomes a vacancy, we re-evaluate. Like most industries, we are having – I guess in some regard – hiring challenges in some of our more seasonal positions, but there hasn't been any reduction in those positions. It's just that the number of vacancies has trended higher over the last little while.

**J. DWYER:** How many people are employed in the department? How many contractual and how many temporary?

**S. CROCKER:** So right now the number is 298 people. There are 20 people who are currently on 13-week positions, vacant positions right now are 32, vacant seasonal positions are 142 and we'll bring those back shortly. I'm not sure if I answered your question.

**J. DWYER:** Yeah.

The contractual is the only one that wasn't.

**S. CROCKER:** Sorry, four.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

Just on the last question, what was the target for this year on attrition?

**S. CROCKER:** There isn't a set target.

**J. DWYER:** Oh, okay.

That's good for me, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

1.1.01 to 1.2.03 inclusive.

MHA Brown.

**J. BROWN:** Thank you, Minister.

Just a general question there when it comes to the department. All the pandemic measures and stuff that was brought in to the department there, has all that work been completed at this point and what was the final result on – like, you had the programs and stuff put in for pandemic, is all that completed and everything at this point in time?

**S. CROCKER:** Yes. So, if you recall back to last year's budget, there was an additional \$20 million. If you go back to the previous budget of that, there was \$40 million. So we've transitioned our way now from COVID and recovery funds. So, yes, we completed our programs last year as outlined. There was some movement within those as we found areas that needed a little more attention or areas where we weren't able to actually allocate the funding. So we were able to utilize the \$20 million last year in recovery money.

**J. BROWN:** On all that money, did the entirety of that go out the door or was there any surplus left of those pandemic funds?

**S. CROCKER:** Of the \$20 million last year, I'm confident in saying we pretty much spent every single cent.

**J. BROWN:** All right.

For the money that was used for airline attraction, was all that money spent or went out the door or did any of that –

**S. CROCKER:** Yeah, that money, the \$1.5 million last year that was put in for air access, it would've been utilized, because I think we used some of it for our enhancement program. But we weren't able last year to use those funds for what we had planned, which was air access. There weren't, unfortunately, any opportunities that were presented to us. We did allocate \$1.5 million again this year for air access.

Air access continues to be very much a challenge, not only in our jurisdiction, but in every jurisdiction around the globe.

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

Can I get an update on *Vision 2026* and how that is going ahead there now?

**S. CROCKER:** Yeah, so we launched *Vision 2026* in November. There's an implementation group led by the assistant deputy minister here to my right. It's going quite well with other pieces of work we have done.

As we transition out of COVID, this industry still has a ways to come. Quite honestly, it was the industry that was probably most impacted from COVID and it will be the last industry to recover. But I'm confident in saying we're getting there, there's still some road ahead of us. But yeah, we're getting there.

**J. BROWN:** Perfect. Thank you, Minister.

With the Celebrate NL and the setting up of that, how's that going along? Can you give an update on that?

**S. CROCKER:** Yeah, absolutely. I would say it's been quite successful, if you think back to Come Home Year and some of the events that we were able to do last year. Last year, I think we invested in cultural funding about \$4.2 million for cultural activities; \$2.1 million of that actually went directly into the pockets for professional fees for artists. If you think to your previous question about how we rebuild this industry coming out of COVID, that was extremely important. We had events in 170 communities.

Celebrate NL continues to do work on its other mandate. Special celebrations is one part of its mandate, the other is event attraction. We've had some success in that and I think you'll hear more on that in the coming weeks on the successes that we've had.

But yeah, it's doing what it was set out to do. It's still early days. The corporation is about a year old and a lot of the things that it was set out to do when it comes to event traction, they are in cycles. So actually being able to nail down this stuff will take time, but it's a long-term vision in a lot of ways, if you're not planning now, you're not going to get there in the future.

**J. BROWN:** Yes. That's right. Perfect.

That's all the general questions I have for this section.

Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Did you have anything further?

Okay, MHA Dwyer.

**J. DWYER:** On 1.1.01 were there minimal increases in this section? Can we assume these increases are wage increases to the salaries?

**S. CROCKER:** MHA Dwyer, yes, for the negotiated wage increases.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

Just in General Administration in 1.2.01, Executive Support, why the variances in Salaries under General Administration? Was there a retirement or have you eliminated the position? Why were you over budget in '22-'23 in Salaries?

**S. CROCKER:** There was a contractual position in there related to the Canada Games. There was also a circumstance last year, we had to backfill our director of communications and the other increases are around the negotiated salary increases.

**J. DWYER:** Why the reduction in Transportation and Communications when you're over budget in '22-'23?

**S. CROCKER:** You know, '22-'23 was unique because we started to move again for the first time and you can see that we did go from \$46,000 in budget last year, back to \$61,000. So I think this reflects what we feel will be the proper amount to reflect the necessary travel needed this coming fiscal.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

Minister, last year had a contractual position in Administration Support. Does this position still exist and what is its title?

**S. CROCKER:** Sorry, what line is that, MHA Dwyer?

**J. DWYER:** Under 1.2.01, under Executive Support.

**S. CROCKER:** Okay, that was an ATIPP coordinator.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

In 1.2.02, Corporate Services, why is there a \$232,000 increase in Salaries and it's revised to estimate \$231,500? Have you

added any new positions, either permanent or contractual?

**S. CROCKER:** Sorry, can you repeat the line number?

**J. DWYER:** Corporate Services, 1.2.02.

**S. CROCKER:** Okay, the Salaries line?

**J. DWYER:** Yeah.

**S. CROCKER:** So that was the step increases. Yeah, there was a vacancy factor that brought it down and then it was your normal, then it goes back up because of the negotiated wage increases, but the decrease was due to vacancies throughout the year.

**J. DWYER:** Minister, in reviewing past Estimates, are we seeing a return to normal spending patterns in the various headings like Tourism, Culture, Supplies and Purchased Services?

**S. CROCKER:** Yeah, I think we are. I think as we get back to the new normal, we are seeing things readjust, you would have seen it and you will see it throughout. I think in Transportation and Communications, you will see that we are under performing, I guess, in a lot of ways. But yeah, we're seeing a more traditional annual – the department's work is getting back to normal.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

That's good for me, Chair, on this section.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

If the Committee is ready for the question, shall 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 1.2.03 carried.

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

**CLERK:** 2.1.01 to 2.2.02 inclusive, Tourism.

**CHAIR:** Shall 2.1.01 to 2.2.02 inclusive carry?

MHA Dwyer.

**J. DWYER:** Under 2.1.01, Tourism, based on previous years, we overspent on Supplies and the department continues to underfund. Why is that?

**S. CROCKER:** Yeah, so this year, the increase is due to replenishment of supplies at the Visitor Information Centre. After several years of low activity, I think the number that we're putting forward is reflective, but you do raise a good point and that's always a challenge for the department itself to stay within those numbers. But obviously we're working with a set budget so it's quite challenging to actually put it in a line.

Typically what we'll do is, like any department I would think, find ways throughout the year and when you see a number like that one where the budgeted and the revised goes up, obviously we're finding somewhere else within the department with savings to actually move it there. So we're working within our budget. That's the job that staff do, and a good job at that, is finding opportunities to move. I think it's important that we allow the department flexibility to do this, as a year evolves, because it's continuously changing.

**J. DWYER:** Can you explain the \$3-million decrease in Purchased Services?

**S. CROCKER:** Yes. As we go forward here, I think you will see quite a bit of that. As I outlined, I think, earlier to MHA Brown, we had an additional \$20 million last year in COVID recovery money. That was one-time funding that was the stimulus in the budget and a new bilateral agreement on tourism.

**J. DWYER:** Can you explain the federal and provincial revenue and is that the Atlantic Canada Tourism Agreement or something else?

**S. CROCKER:** Yes, it is. That's the Atlantic Canada Tourism Agreement. Carol-Ann, the decrease was due to ...?

**C. GILLIARD:** The amount had been budgeted to the end of the calendar, year but it actually extended over into this fiscal, a portion of it, which was rightsized.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

Can we have a list of the \$221,000 in Grants and Subsidies and who is this exactly?

**S. CROCKER:** Yes, we can certainly get you a list, but that would be everything from our DMOs to our Visitor Information Centres. There are a number of Visitor Information Centres around the province that, actually, we don't run, that we provide a grant to. But yes, we can certainly get you that list.

**J. DWYER:** In Revenue - Federal, why only \$630,000 of \$945,000 received last year? Will the remainder come this year?

**S. CROCKER:** That's the timing issue that the assistant deputy minister just alluded to, so, yes, we're able to use that but it was a timing issue.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

On to 2.1.02, why the nearly \$300,000 reduction in Purchased Services?

**S. CROCKER:** That was the funding that was provided for the vision evaluation. So the vision evaluation, as we chatted about earlier, has been completed.

**J. DWYER:** Thank you.

How come the \$20,000 in Grants and Subsidies wasn't spent?

**S. CROCKER:** So that was a decrease due to fewer industry association research-related grants being required during 2022-2023.

**OFFICIAL:** Can you repeat that (inaudible)?

**S. CROCKER:** It was a decrease due to fewer industry association research-related grants in the last fiscal.

**CHAIR:** 2.1.01 to 2.2.02.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

Under 2.1.03, can you explain the enormous increase in Purchased Services?

**S. CROCKER:** Yes, the decrease is due to tourism and hospitality stimulus funding and it was reprofiled from air access to festivals and events and programmed to the Tourism Experience Enhancement Fund. The decrease is the expiration of the \$2.7 million in one-time funding from stimulus.

**J. DWYER:** In Purchased Services, we're looking at \$334,200 and then the budget went to \$2.9 million.

**S. CROCKER:** That was a reallocation. Some of that was reallocated to the Tourism Experience Enhancement Fund.

Thank you, Sarah – yes, go ahead, Deputy.

**J. O'DEA:** So out of the \$2.99 million there, only \$334,000 was spent. And then the rest was reprofiled down to the Grants and Subsidies line. We'll see \$4.984 million. It was reprofiled down there and then we used



that for the Tourism Experience Enhancement Fund and to support some sports and rec for Canada Games.

**S. CROCKER:** The Tourism Experience Enhancement Fund, when we announced it, we announced it as a \$3-million fund. We received closer to \$6 million in applications and we were able to, actually, reprofile some funding back into that to get it up to almost, I think, \$4.8 million.

So that program was well oversubscribed and I think, quite frankly, a program that was well received by industry considering the tough times that they been through.

**J. DWYER:** Can we have a list of the organizations that you provided grants and subsidies to? Why were you over budget in 2023? Is this money you used to partner with Industry, Energy and Technology recently to support some businesses?

**J. O'DEA:** What line?

**J. DWYER:** 2.1.03, Grants and Subsidies line.

**J. O'DEA:** So that's the \$4.9 million?

**J. DWYER:** Yes.

**J. O'DEA:** Money was reprofiled from Purchased Services and put down in that line and went to the Tourism Experience Enhancement but we could certainly get you some information around the Tourism Experience Enhancement grants that went out if you like.

**J. DWYER:** Was any of that used in partnering with IET?

**S. CROCKER:** No, IET has the tourism funding program in their business development support fund. But we typically do not leverage into that. That's an IET-ran program.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

Moving on to the Marble Mountain Development Corporation; what repairs will be done to Marble this year?

**S. CROCKER:** Sorry?

**J. DWYER:** What repairs will be done to Marble Mountain this year?

**S. CROCKER:** So obviously, there's work being done currently around the Black Mariah, which has had continuous problems for the last number of years, but very hopeful that we're getting to the end of that. There will be some decking repairs done at Marble this year, on the large deck. There will be some repairs done to the Marble Villa this year. I think we're going to replace the shingles on Marble Villa. There will be continued to be some work done around – the Lightning Express returns, right?

**OFFICIAL:** Yes.

**S. CROCKER:** So there was some work done with the Lightning Express to actually use it as a return lift. Up until last year, it didn't have the ability to bring somebody down the hill. It now has the ability to bring someone down the hill and we're actually going to be using that this season, along with the cruise ship industry on the West Coast. So there's some work being done on top of the hill with an observation deck.

I guess the rest of the Marble Mountain work will be around the continuing maintenance and the challenges that obviously Marble Mountain faces, but Marble Mountain had a very, extremely good year, revenue-wise and we're seeing some strength in the four seasons activity at Marble and that's driving the revenues.

**J. DWYER:** It's nice to have a shoulder season for a big asset like that.

What is the future of Marble? Is it up for sale?

**S. CROCKER:** Currently, there's some work being done by an independent firm, an evaluation of what Marble would look like as a four-season resort. Once that work is done, we will take a step back, review that with the intention of going out to try and identify or find an operator for Marble Mountain. We don't use the words "for sale" because, quite frankly, we want to make sure that if we are – Marble Mountain believe they have the capital to do what needs to be done and government, quite frankly, doesn't need to be in the business of running ski hills.

But, with that being said, Marble Mountain provides a tremendous economic spinoff to the West Coast. It has tremendous opportunities. We've seen the abilities recently to do stuff year-round.

Would we like to see Marble in private hands or some sort of arrangement? Absolutely, but it won't be a garage sale.

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

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

2.1.01 to 2.1.02 inclusive.

I'm recognizing MHA Brown.

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

2.1.05 under Marble Mountain, Capital, last year, \$1.3 million was spent, this year there's nothing budgeted for Capital but you did outline some work. Is the bill going to come in after the work is done, because there's nothing right here now budgeted for Capital?

**S. CROCKER:** Yeah, so we're working with Marble – I met with Marble last week on a capital plan. There are monies available to Marble once they come in with that plan. But as I said earlier, Marble's revenues have increased substantially and Marble has the ability now to do things that maybe it hadn't been able to do in the past. But there is

funding available once Marble comes in and we identify what those improvements would cost. For example, some of these improvements that I outlined aren't really substantial dollar figures, but important repairs at that.

**J. BROWN:** All right, perfect. Thank you so much, Minister.

2.2.01, Pippy Park Commission, there's an increase in their Grants and Subsidies. Is that for –?

**S. CROCKER:** That's just wage increases.

**J. BROWN:** Wage increases, okay, perfect.

2.2.02, Park Operations, the last couple of years you mentioned a lot of work that was being done in the parks. Can you outline some of the work that's going to be done in the parks across the province this year?

**S. CROCKER:** This year?

**J. BROWN:** Yeah.

**S. CROCKER:** This budget includes half a million dollars for park infrastructure, something that we've been long, long looking for. This year's investment will include things like there are some electrical repairs to be done – I'm right down into the weeds now – a new propane furnace at Butter Pot; new generators at Butter Pot, Barachois, Sir Richard Squires; the removal of the diesel because we have all the parks now off diesel, so removal and remediation of tanks, diesel tanks; installation of new water filtration system; repairs and boardwalk work at Sandbanks, which Fiona impacted. Quite a bit of this will actually happen on the West Coast this year because we're still working with repairs from Fiona and the removal of the Main Gut Trestle is one of our big, big projects for this summer because, as anybody would know, in the Stephenville region that trestle needs to get out of there.

**J. BROWN:** Yes, I know because last year we talked about all the removal of diesel and everything from our parks and that. So most of that work is completed I guess.

**S. CROCKER:** It is, it's still just to clean up, just to get the remediation done and get the removal of the diesel generator tanks and stuff out of there.

**J. BROWN:** Okay, perfect.

Year over year, has there been an increase in use of the parks, visitor use?

**S. CROCKER:** Yes, the park's numbers were extremely strong during COVID. Yeah, 233,000 visitors last year. I'm not quickly seeing what that would be year over year.

Yeah, that's up substantially. If you go back to 2019, which would have been pre-pandemic, there were 156,000 visitors, last year there were 233,000 visitors. COVID has revitalized camping in a lot of ways and we're actually starting to see an uptick in non-residents who are starting to use the parks in a different way than we have seen in the past. I think there's a bit more back to nature or back – COVID has exposed opportunities there for sure.

**J. BROWN:** With the online booking system, has the services been well received in that or has there still been some issues with the online booking system?

**S. CROCKER:** I can't speak to a lot of issues. I haven't seen a lot of issues or heard a lot of issues and usually if there are issues, we hear about those issues. I don't know if Carol-Ann has anything to add to that. It's pretty much seamless, I think. I haven't heard a lot from it. As you can see, the numbers are strong so obviously people are managing to get on and get it done.

**J. BROWN:** Perfect, thank you so much.

Can we get an update on the review of public memorials, statues and stuff that was supposed to have been carried out?

**S. CROCKER:** Yes, that review is ongoing. I will defer to Gerry on that one, if he wouldn't mind taking it.

**G. OSMOND:** Thank you, Minister.

We have a working group across the department that meets regularly and we were tasked initially with four elements in that scope. One was the coat of arms review, which is completed, as you know. The second was renaming of the former Mary March museum in Grand Falls-Windsor, which was completed. The third piece was the June holiday renaming, which is ongoing. The fourth piece is the Corte-Real statue, which is also ongoing.

**J. BROWN:** Under Action 82 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it calls for all provinces to collaborate with residential school survivors and their organizations to commission and install a publicly accessible, highly visible Residential Schools Monument in the provincial capital. I was just wondering if the department is undertaking this action.

**G. OSMOND:** That was not part of our original remit of the working group. It's in our view plane. But, certainly, we are partnering with other departments on that initial initiative. I really can't speak to where we are right now but, certainly, it's in the view plane.

**J. BROWN:** Perfect. Thank you so much for that.

Can we get an update on the Eagle River Waterway Provincial Park in Labrador and where that's to right now?

**S. CROCKER:** It is certainly work that's ongoing but, again, I'll defer to Carol-Ann as I know it's a file that she spends a considerable amount of time working on.

**C. GILLIARD:** Thank you.

We have done some work to have the Waterway Provincial Park established. Right now, we are in the process of consultations with our Indigenous organizations, so that continues at this time.

**J. BROWN:** Perfect. Thank you so much.

One last thing there now while I'm there. With the provincial parks, is the province looking at any more land to be designated as a provincial park, both RV versus or just protected lands right now, other than the waterway?

**S. CROCKER:** Not at the moment, no. The piece of work that is ahead of us for Eagle River is substantial and that's our focus right now.

**J. BROWN:** Perfect. That's my final question there.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Anything further?

**J. DWYER:** 2.1.05 on Marble Mountain, is there a list that the corporation would like to see completed when we talked about different work that's going on out there?

**S. CROCKER:** Yes, I met with the CEO on Thursday, I think, and we went through that, but there were some things that I outlined, priorities for this year were around the decking. Anyone familiar with the facility knows the decking is quite expansive and quite expensive. The work around, obviously, getting the Black Mariah back up – it's been down for a number of years. The cable is installed; the testing is done.

One the challenges with that lift and work that's still ongoing with that is the age of the lift and getting the parts that are required. We always have the brush cutting issues. The roofing, again, at the villa. The villa has been quite successful actually since it's

reopened and the observation deck on the top of the hill.

**J. DWYER:** Recently, one of the lifts stopped working and skiers needed to be evacuated from the lift. Will the monies allotted for this year be enough to cover planned upgrades and what are these and the cost to fix the damaged lift?

**S. CROCKER:** Yeah, unfortunately that was a pretty minor fix. What actually happened there was a switch I think.

**OFFICIAL:** It was shut down.

**S. CROCKER:** It was shut down out of abundance of caution. Obviously, any time you're using lifts – and Minister Stoodley's department carry out inspections on that all the time that they're required and quite frankly we're comfortable with that. Again, safety is always of the utmost importance and we work with Service NL and others to make sure that the lifts are operating safely. They undergo quite an extensive safety regime, I guess, but again it's an ongoing challenge, but always err on the side of caution. So if you see it shut down, it's because of caution.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

Moving on to 2.2.01, C.A. Pippy Park Commission. Last year we were told that there were negotiated wage increases, therefore, the rise in the Grants and Subsidies. Is this the case for the increase this year?

**S. CROCKER:** It is.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

We're getting through it.

**S. CROCKER:** Oh yes, no worries, we're all good.

**J. DWYER:** 2.2.02, Park Operations: There is a reduction of nearly \$300,000 in Salaries; why is this?

**S. CROCKER:** That was some overtime, additional funding, obviously the step increases were there. There was an increase due to additional need for students and overtime to ensure parks are fully staffed at peak. There was a decrease in some of the Eagle River funding sunsetted last year as well.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

Why is Transportation and Communications doubling this year when you never spent the allocation from last year? How is this savings achieved?

**S. CROCKER:** The decrease reflects the expiration of funding for anticipated travel associated with the Eagle River and the revised was a decrease with respect to lower travel costs for staff throughout the year and fewer helicopter hours required.

**J. DWYER:** Can you explain the significant reduction in Supplies for this year? It was even less than was budgeted last year and you still overspent the \$76,000.

**S. CROCKER:** Again, it's Eagle River related and the increase last year was due to maintenance required in the parks. Obviously, increases as we seen in everything on these projects, just general cost-of-living changes.

**J. DWYER:** Why is Purchased Services over budget?

**S. CROCKER:** There's work in here due to Fiona. Last year, we did the solar project at Butter Pot which is now gone, done. There was \$660,000 for one-time infrastructure funding and repairs.

The increase is a result of required repairs from damage from Fiona – no, sorry, pre-Fiona. The Southwest Coast rain event.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

You're answering two and three questions at a time. I'm crossing out questions as we're going.

Why did you receive \$331,000 of the \$741,000 allocated?

**S. CROCKER:** Is that the federal revenue?

**J. DWYER:** Yes.

**S. CROCKER:** Yeah, that's a timing issue again.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

Would that be common?

**S. CROCKER:** Yeah, because I think the challenge here, any time that we have storm damages and TI, I guess, makes the claims – I'll turn it over to Bonnie.

**B. STEELE:** The revenue here is coming from a federal-provincial program. So at the end of the projects we have to submit our documentation for reimbursement. Sometimes it takes a little bit of a longer period in order to have the fund and the revenue approved. We have been in touch with the appropriate party here and it is being worked on and should be finalized soon. So we'll receive that money. Next year you'll see that money bumped up according to the budget.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

Last year we had significant discussion around Main River. Can you provide any update on the situation and what is being done to resolve and protect these pristine areas of our province?

**S. CROCKER:** Quite frankly, I haven't seen much discussion around Main River, recently. I think the work that we had done around that and our commitment to make sure that we don't find ourselves in these

situations again was very clear. So I think that the challenges around Main River have relaxed in a lot of ways.

**J. DWYER:** The T’Railway continues to be a challenge. Any plan to solve some of the band-aid solutions you referred to last year in Estimates?

**S. CROCKER:** Yes, I am very pleased this year in the budget that there was \$500,000 allocated for provincial parks infrastructure; something that we hadn’t had for – I don’t know if we ever had it before. So we have that infrastructure money now to do some of that and there’s been great work done with the Newfoundland and Labrador T’Railway association, IET and ourselves to get an emphasis back on that. There is work, obviously, that we will bill back to the Fiona disaster relief application that will be forwarded or has been or would be forwarded to Ottawa.

So, yes, we see the role of the work that has been done. There has been some tremendous work done, I think, in the Bishop’s Falls area with regard to re-decking of the trestle. Just last week, there was an announcement in CBS of some work that’s being done in the T’Railway in that region. Again, working with ACOA and IET and ourselves. We have some funding available to us now that we wouldn’t have had before to, actually, help with leveraging ACOA, T’Railway association and work with IET as well.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

The trail system across the province is kept up well, but I think it is Clarendville basically going eastward, it has had some challenges. I’m just wondering if there is any money allocated to upgrade this trail system on the East Coast.

**S. CROCKER:** Yeah, absolutely. IET provided some funding last year to the Newfoundland and Labrador T’Railways Association to do a plan to actually look at

short-term, medium-term and long-term maintenance of the T’Railway. Because, obviously, as you can appreciate, a 900-kilometre trail in the wilderness in Newfoundland and Labrador and the climate change challenges that we have, it becomes very challenging to say the least.

But, again, working with IET, ACOA and the T’Railway, I think you will see those improvements, as I mentioned we saw an announcement as recently as Friday in CBS of that relationship working.

**J. DWYER:** My last question in this section. Is Lockston Path still under a boil order?

You didn’t see that one coming.

**S. CROCKER:** I didn’t see that one coming.

Carol-Ann?

We’ll get back to you on that one.

**J. DWYER:** Yeah, that’s fine, I have no problem with that.

**CHAIR:** MHA Brown, are you okay with that section?

**J. BROWN:** Yeah.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

If the Committee’s ready for the question, shall 2.1.01 to 2.2.02 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.1.01 through 2.1.02 carried.

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

**CLERK:** 3.1.01 to 3.1.07 inclusive, Arts and Culture.

**CHAIR:** Shall 3.1.01 to 3.1.07 inclusive carry?

MHA Dwyer.

**CLERK:** I believe it's Mr. Brown.

**CHAIR:** Yeah, I was looking because he hadn't come back. I'll go to MHA Brown.

**J. DWYER:** Okay, that's fine.

**J. BROWN:** Thank you so much, Chair.

Under 3.1.01, I'll start with Purchased Services. It was budgeted last year for \$10.3 million and only \$5.5 million was spent. This year it's budgeted for \$4.7 million. Is this carryover work that wasn't completed in the last budget?

**S. CROCKER:** There was an anticipation, I think, last year in Purchased Services because, at this point in time when we were in Estimates last year, we weren't sure of the arrangement that we were going to come to with *Come From Away*. There was an allocation there actually for the way we thought the plan would go at that point in time. But we were able to come to a different arrangement with *Come From Away*.

The decrease is a result of a \$2.8-million portion of the one time *Come From Away* not being required; \$1.6 million being utilized under Property, Furnishings and Equipment; and \$275,000 used to support park operations and repairs to the T'Railway from the Southwest Coast rain event.

Obviously, it's moving funding within the flexibility within the department when we didn't need it, for example, for *Come From Away*, we were able to reallocate it into the T'Railway.

**J. BROWN:** To another project, okay.

Perfect, thank you, Minister.

I know right now, I'll take the Arts and Culture Centre, is maintenance coming out of your budget or does TI take care of maintenance of the Arts and Culture Centres?

**S. CROCKER:** TI takes care of the maintenance, the major maintenance at the Arts and Culture Centres. Last year, we did have some funding allocated in the \$20 million to do some work.

There's always ongoing work. I know right now TI is in the process of putting new air handling, new air conditioning in Gander in anticipation of what would be a very busy summer there. So, yeah, that work is handled by TI.

**J. BROWN:** Okay.

**S. CROCKER:** Has he got his Estimates done yet?

**J. BROWN:** No, but I got some questions about the Arts and Culture Centre in Lab West.

**S. CROCKER:** Save them for TI Estimates.

**J. BROWN:** Yeah, okay.

Thank you so much, Minister.

**S. CROCKER:** He's taking cheat notes over there this morning.

**J. BROWN:** I know, that's fine. He'll answer my questions, he always does.

3.1.02, Arts, Heritage and Historic Development, under Purchased Services, it was budgeted for \$2.2 million, \$2.1 million was spent and it's only budgeting for \$193,000 going forward. What was the reason for such under budgeting for that section?

**S. CROCKER:** That was the *Come From Away* money, the one-time money. Sorry, Come Home Year, so it was one-time money that was from the allocations last year in the \$20-million stimulus.

**J. BROWN:** Okay, perfect. Thank you.

Under Grants and Subsidies, it was \$4.6 million. You spent the \$4.6 million and now we're budgeting \$3.66 million. What's the reason for the decrease in Grants and Subsidies under Arts, Heritage and Historic Development?

**S. CROCKER:** Again, there was a \$1 million additional one-time funding from the stimulus program and it was partially offset by increases to community-based grants as per the initiative.

**J. BROWN:** Okay.

So that was just a one-time kind of thing?

**S. CROCKER:** That was that \$20 million that we had for stimulus last year. It would have been, I think, the numbers that I quoted earlier around money going to artists and other areas, but, yes, it's that money that was one time.

**J. BROWN:** Perfect.

Just a general question since we're on Arts and Heritage. With the reopening of the Colonial Building as a historic site now, what was visitor numbers for this past season and what are you projecting for this coming season?

**S. CROCKER:** I'm going to defer to Gerry. I know the numbers were very strong, but obviously if you think about when we opened it was really in the shoulder season, but Gerry –

**G. OSMOND:** Are we referring to the Colonial Building specifically or sites in general?

**J. BROWN:** Colonial Building and then overall.

**G. OSMOND:** The Colonial Building, we opened for 80 days last fall and we saw over 2,500 visitors in that time period.

**J. BROWN:** Overall, what was the historic site visitation like this past season?

**G. OSMOND:** We were up 248 per cent over 2021.

**J. BROWN:** Okay. If you don't mind me asking, is that like more of a return to normal pre-pandemic numbers or is this like an increase even from 2019?

**G. OSMOND:** Our numbers for 2022 actually surpassed our benchmark for 2019.

**J. BROWN:** Okay.

**G. OSMOND:** So we were trending up in 2018, 2019, we both had record years and then the pandemic, obviously, 2020 and 2021 but '22 numbers exceeded 2019 numbers. So we are still on the upward trajectory for numbers.

**J. BROWN:** Oh, excellent. Thank you so much.

Under 3.1.03, the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council, there's no increase from last budget to this budget but is there any anticipation of increasing the funding to the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council or this is the end of the increase agreement?

**S. CROCKER:** I think, obviously, the commitment was to get the Arts Council to \$5 million, which has obviously happened. There are always conversations happening around further increases, what would they look like? But, obviously, you know we work within our budgets. We have a very strong relationship with the Council. I think it's fair to say they're very comfortable right now, coming quickly from \$2 million a year to \$5



million a year in what were tough economic times.

We've supported artists over the last number of years through many different initiatives within the department and through the Arts Council. I think you will see a very strong relationship with the Arts Council continue.

**J. BROWN:** Okay, perfect. Thank you so much, Minister.

3.1.04, Rooms Corporation and there I think it's \$6.3 million. This year they're getting \$6.5 million. Is there any reason for this current increase or is this wages again?

**S. CROCKER:** That's the wages again through collective bargaining.

**J. BROWN:** Okay, perfect. Thank you so much.

The Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador, I think it's \$400,000 and change. This year they're getting \$424,000. Has the Heritage Foundation asked for an increase for their operating grant?

**S. CROCKER:** I think all organizations ask every year for an increase to their grant. We would really like to be able to give all organizations an increase to their grants, but obviously we work with the envelope that we're able to provide. But these organizations have done a great job in providing their services, no different than the department, within the fiscal framework that we have to work with.

**J. BROWN:** Okay. Yeah, because –

**S. CROCKER:** I don't think you would find any organization that wouldn't want additional funding, including government departments. But again, we have to work within the financial parameters that we find ourselves.

**J. BROWN:** Oh yeah, I know. I was a member of the Museum Association when I was with tourism in Lab West and we always asked, especially with the Heritage Foundation and stuff like that. Soft spot for them, right?

Like you said, less than half a million dollars and the amount of actual heritage structures and stuff that are in this province and the different tangible and non-tangible heritage, I was just wondering has there been an increase warranted or anything like that. Because you just said you're up 200 per cent to historic sites and, at the same time, we're giving the Heritage Foundation less than a million dollars. We're seeing tourists actually want to see this aspect of our province, yet it's only less than half a million dollars.

In 3.1.06, Celebrate NL, last year they got a million; this year they're getting a hundred bucks. What's going on there?

**S. CROCKER:** That's a placeholder for future initiatives. That's not uncommon throughout Estimates. They're comfortable with their \$100 dollars. But that is a placeholder.

**J. BROWN:** I know they were budgeted last year, I'm just curious on where they're going to get the rest of their funding for their operation now that – is it just (inaudible)?

**S. CROCKER:** Last year, because of the timelines on the establishment of the organization, the Come Home Year funding didn't actually flow out of Celebrate NL. The funding actually flowed from whether it would have been the Arts and Heritage Division or other divisions. We'll provide the necessary funding to Celebrate NL as initiatives are announced and we'll take it from there. But I would suspect that we'll see some activity around Celebrate NL in the very near future.

**J. BROWN:** Okay, perfect.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

3.1.01 to 3.1.07 inclusive.

MHA Dwyer.

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

In 3.1.01, Arts and Culture Centres, are all our Arts and Culture Centres open now with full capacity and are bookings and revenue back to pre-COVID levels?

**S. CROCKER:** I would say yes. Arts and Culture Centres, by their very nature of being around the province, we see peaks and valleys; some outperforming others. I'm just going to grab the numbers here. Again, I don't have in front of me the pre-COVID numbers but the recovery from '21, '22 to '23 has been quite significant. For example, ticket sales in '21-'22 were \$75,000. Ticket sales in '22-'23 were \$140,000. So we seen almost a doubling of ticket sales from '21-'22 up to 2023. That is pretty consistent across the organization but, again, it varies from region of the province.

**J. DWYER:** Just an outlier question, I guess, kind of thing. Is there any propensity to put an Arts and Culture Centre on the Burin Peninsula? It seems to be the largest area that really doesn't have an Arts and Culture Centre.

**S. CROCKER:** Yeah, quite frankly, there are not plans right now to expand the Arts and Culture Centre network. What I would like to see happen is work closer with the regional theatres. So in your case it would be the –

**J. DWYER:** Grand Bank.

**S. CROCKER:** Grand Bank, and there is theatre in Marystown, too – no, that's Bonavista.

I think about this because I have a theatre in my own constituency, I think we need to work closer with the regional theatres

throughout the province. Use the Arts and Culture Centre and their abilities to spread that a little greater. But no, we wouldn't be looking at expanding the Arts and Culture Centre network at this time.

**J. DWYER:** One of the things I did notice for the Grand Bank Regional Theatre last year was that they took their show on the road and they done a couple of shows in Marystown, which was very beneficial to bring it to people who wouldn't have the propensity to drive to Grand Bank because obviously the shows are in the evening and you have to drive back in the dark.

**S. CROCKER:** Yeah.

**J. DWYER:** So moving on to 3.1.02, Arts, Heritage and Historic Development, why is Transportation and Communications over budget in '22-'23?

**S. CROCKER:** This increase is due to travel and expenditures related to mandated provincial historic sites employee health and safety training, hosting of our FPT last year and required provincial historic site building maintenance.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

Why is Supplies over budget in '22-'23?

**S. CROCKER:** Increased requirement for provincial historic site maintenance and global supply issues and price for materials required for the infrastructure work that we undertook last year

**J. DWYER:** What was the total cost of the Colonial Building refurbishments?

**S. CROCKER:** It was \$21 million. How close was I, Gerry? It was 21 million, correct?

**G. OSMOND:** We were in that ballpark.

**S. CROCKER:** We can get you the exact figure, but it was in that –

**J. DWYER:** Thank you.

**S. CROCKER:** The guy behind you might actually have that. Not with him now but –

**J. DWYER:** Why in Revenue - Provincial did we only receive \$3,800 of the \$150,000 budgeted last year?

**S. CROCKER:** Last year as a Come Home Year Initiative, we didn't charge to get into our provincial historic sites, so that was revenue that we didn't take in last year.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

Moving on to 3.1.03, Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council. Can we have a list of the funds allocated here and any additional funds that they may have received?

**S. CROCKER:** Of who they funded?

**J. DWYER:** Yes.

**S. CROCKER:** Absolutely, we can provide that or it's also available on their website. They list all of their programs and how the money is expended.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Yeah, but we can certainly provide that for you.

**J. DWYER:** 3.1.04, The Rooms Corporation of Newfoundland and Labrador: Can you explain the \$200,000 increase in Grants and Subsidies to The Rooms?

**S. CROCKER:** That's negotiated wage increases.

**J. DWYER:** How many employees are presently working at The Rooms and are there any vacancies or new hires?

**S. CROCKER:** I don't have that number, MHA Dwyer, but we can certainly get it for you.

**J. DWYER:** Thank you.

Can we have the visitor stats for The Rooms from last year?

**S. CROCKER:** Yeah, again, we can get those numbers for you. It would follow the trend that we've seen throughout the entire industry.

**J. DWYER:** So last year would have been considered a full year for The Rooms as opposed to a hiccup COVID year type thing?

**S. CROCKER:** I think so. My recollection on The Rooms numbers is they were extremely strong. If you look at the fiscal year versus the calendar year, because we often forget, if you go back to the calendar year of 2022, the first quarter of 2022 was practically that COVID shutdown. But I know The Rooms had a very strong summer. They took part in some initiatives around Come Home Year with the free Fridays. I think it was free Fridays and The Rooms has been quite busy and quite active.

**J. DWYER:** Moving on to 3.1.05, Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador. Are built heritages still evaporating and, once again, no increase to their budget, why is that?

**S. CROCKER:** Again, as I outlined to our colleague, we work within our fiscal frameworks to do what we do. If we lived in an ideal world, obviously, we would be increasing the funding available but, again, we have to work within the financial parameters that we're dealt.

**J. DWYER:** Can we have a list of those receiving grants and subsidies?

**S. CROCKER:** You sure can.

**OFFICIAL:** Are they online, Sir?

**S. CROCKER:** Pardon?

**OFFICIAL:** Would they be online as well?

**S. CROCKER:** Are they online, Gerry? No, we'll get those, MHA Dwyer.

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

3.1.06, Celebrate NL Inc.: Can we have a list of the grants that have been given out under this program last year? Can you include all expenditures from this program?

**S. CROCKER:** Yes, we'll have to get you that. They're not due to file their first annual report until this fall. Is that right, Bonnie?

**B. STEELE:** Yes.

**S. CROCKER:** So they're due to file their first annual report this fall, but we can get you the information that is available until we get to that stage.

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

3.1.07, Arts and Culture Centres Infrastructure: In the Property, Furnishings and Equipment, nothing was budgeted last year but \$69,900 was required. Why was that?

**S. CROCKER:** That was a new chiller for the Arts and Culture Centre in Corner Brook.

**J. DWYER:** Is there a facility's report for each Arts and Culture Centre showing the need for maintenance and repairs? If yes, can we have a copy of that?

**S. CROCKER:** I don't think that we have that. I know we would submit any requests that we have for Arts and Culture Centre work through TI and TI would do building maintenance. But over the last number of years, I think, through COVID and again last year through the stimulus one-time funding, we were able to get a lot of work done at the Arts and Culture Centres. More of an infrastructure investment than they had seen for quite some time. Obviously, there's

always need but right now the Arts and Culture Centres are in relatively good shape.

**J. DWYER:** Are there any plans for upgrades to any of these facilities this year?

**S. CROCKER:** Yeah, there's ongoing work always at the Arts and Culture Centres. I mentioned earlier, right now one of our focuses and the biggest projects that's ongoing is the new air handling, air conditioning at Gander because there were significant challenges around that. But we'll work with TI and identify opportunities to get work done, always.

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

**S. CROCKER:** If investment is needed, we'll certainly follow up with TI to make sure that we're getting the necessary investment.

**J. DWYER:** Perfect.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, MHA Dwyer.

MHA Brown, anything further on this section?

**J. BROWN:** No, that was my last questions for – oh no, there's one question, sorry. My apologies, one question.

Can we get an update on the Heart's Content UNESCO World Heritage Site MOU and how that's going along?

**S. CROCKER:** Now, do you want me to give you the 10-minute version or the one-hour version, because I could talk about Heart's Content all day.

**J. BROWN:** I know, I figured this was what was going to happen.

**S. CROCKER:** Hold on there, Jordan.

**J. BROWN:** Okay, you get a glass of water.

**S. CROCKER:** It's going along quite well. It's in the next phase. It's right now working on the proper documentation. If there's one person as equally interested in this project as I am, it's Gerry. But we're very confident. The Irish co-operation on this right now is at a very stable level. We'll get the necessary documentation in place and we'll make sure that we're ready when that application is approved.

We'll have work to do in the coming years to get ready for that, but we're very confident that we can certainly get there – '26 would be our goal right now. Obviously, that's a target. We don't dictate that, but very excited to actually get that designation.

**J. BROWN:** Perfect.

Thank you, that's my final question for this section.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

If the Committee's ready for the question, shall 3.1.01 to 3.1.07 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.1.01 through 3.1.07 carried.

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

**CLERK:** 4.1.01 to 4.2.02 inclusive, Film, Television and Recreation.

**CHAIR:** Shall 4.1.01 to 4.2.02 inclusive carry?

MHA Dwyer.

**J. DWYER:** Under 4.1.01, Newfoundland and Labrador Film Development Corporation, are there any new marketing initiatives planned for this year?

**S. CROCKER:** You'll see there last year, actually, in the Grants and Subsidies there was a bump up of approximately \$400,000. That was actually for market development and continued awareness activities. The corporation finds itself right now in a position that the industry is extremely strong at the moment and we want to capitalize on that. I think you will see some of these initiatives in the coming weeks of what it is that they want to do in a matter of our rebranding. But absolutely, the industry has doubled and there's tremendous opportunity on the horizon.

**J. DWYER:** I was in a conference, actually, yesterday, and it was commented that a lot of our commercials you see clothes blowing on the clothesline. That was the segue into the fact that we're going into generating wind power and stuff like that. So just tremendous how it's kind of crossed over a little bit.

Why was the Newfoundland Film Development Corporation over budget last year?

**S. CROCKER:** In Grants and Subsidies there was the \$400,000 that we were able to reallocate to them in the fiscal year to do the work around the marketing development and awareness activities. So that's the reason they are over budget last year. The budget increase this year reflects the addition of two new positions because obviously, as we've seen the growth in the industry, we went from an equity investment of \$2 million a year budgeted to \$10 million a year. The amount of activity that they're seeing right now necessitated some growth in positions at the Development Corporation.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

Under 4.1.02, Newfoundland and Labrador Film Development Corporation again, last year we talked about how hard it was to (inaudible) the value in TV and film, yet we see growing numbers all the time to support further investment. Can we see the analysis of how government calculates its value?

**S. CROCKER:** Sure, yeah.

The value of the industry?

**J. DWYER:** The return on investment, I guess, more than anything. We're saying that there's a need for further investment so what are we basing that on really? That's what I'm saying. Is there a certain kind of analysis or a calculation that you do with project over project or anything like that?

**S. CROCKER:** Yeah, project by project is not handled by the department. Project by project is handled by the Development Corporation itself. I don't sit on their board, so I'm not sure exactly what criteria they use, but we can see what information we can provide to you from them.

**J. DWYER:** I appreciate that.

Can we have a list of all the companies that benefited from this program?

**S. CROCKER:** The investments we would've made in the equity program last year?

**J. DWYER:** Yeah.

**S. CROCKER:** Yeah, that's not an issue.

**J. DWYER:** Last year we highlighted that many of these productions were delinquent in terms of their payments as per these agreements. Have we received these payments and is government doing anything to recoup this money?

**OFFICIAL:** That all came out of the Greene report, Sir.

**S. CROCKER:** Yeah, we could talk about the Greene report all day and I won't agree with that section of the Greene report. We're quite confident with what we're doing with our equity investments in this industry right now. We did see a return on investment last year in equity, I think, from *Hudson & Rex*, which is not something that we've always seen throughout history.

When you look at the new programs when it comes to the tax credit, this program is very much different, because obviously it's based on what you spend. There's always the untold or unmeasurable effect of film and television when you think about tourism and marketing of our place. There are still people coming to this province and go to the Duck of Duckworth, which is a spinoff from

—

**J. DWYER:** *Republic of Doyle*.

**S. CROCKER:** — *Republic of Doyle* 10 years ago. You would've seen first-hand last night what the spinoff on Disney is going to be, I would think, for the Bonavista region. You have a full-length film right now that millions and millions of people are going to see and they're going to see that absolute beauty of that part of our province.

For us right now it's finding a way to make sure people know that here's a Disney production, but that's actually Bonavista, Newfoundland and Labrador, and make sure that we can find a way to connect that. You look to other jurisdictions, they do some work around that with marketing their film locations. There's an unmeasurable piece as well of the value of film.

**J. DWYER:** Moving on to 4.2.01, Sport and Recreation, why are Salaries increased from \$960,000 to \$1.1 million this year?

**S. CROCKER:** Again, step increases. This increase is due to absorbing negotiated wage increases and recognition bonus.

**J. DWYER:** Transportation and Communications are over budget; why is this?

**S. CROCKER:** This reflects the requirements of having two Canada Games in one calendar year, which doesn't happen – well, doesn't happen, but it did happen – and there are requirements right now around preparation for 2025.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

There were savings in Supplies; why was that?

**S. CROCKER:** This was utilization of current inventory and minimization of purchases.

**J. DWYER:** In Grants and Subsidies, can you please indicate which programs are included in this line?

**S. CROCKER:** Grants and Subsidies would be Canada Games. So would the Athletic Excellence Fund, Canada Games Grants, National Championship Travel Subsidy, World Championship Travel subsidy, annual operating to our PSOs and Active NL.

**J. DWYER:** Can you explain the federal contribution of \$378,000?

**OFFICIAL:** Is that the federal revenue?

**J. DWYER:** Yes, please.

**S. CROCKER:** That's a bilateral agreement with the feds on sports participation.

**J. DWYER:** Why did we only receive \$179,000 of a budgeted \$337,000 in the provincial revenue?

**S. CROCKER:** That's a reflection of lower activity at our two provincial pools in Gander and Corner Brook.

**J. DWYER:** Can we have a list for the grants and subsidies of who received the

grants and subsidies and why the \$3-million reduction?

**S. CROCKER:** The decrease is due to completion of our agreement with the Canada Games hosting society. So our agreement with the Canada Games hosting society was \$11 million over three years, I think, and they now have their operating funding that the province was to provide to them for 2025. This year's budget includes an \$800,000 increase to Active NL.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

Then 4.2.02, Newfoundland and Labrador Sports Centre Inc., the Sports Centre is an important facility in the city and our province for sports competitions. Are there any plans for upgrades to this facility?

**S. CROCKER:** This facility is operating, to your point, very well. They've very much been involved in our planning around the new track and field facility. I think they will have role to play when that facility is complete. I think that facility will offset or bring some of the things that they've been looking for over the last number of years, because one of the pieces of that new facility will be an excellence training centre. So not only will we have a new physical track facility, but we'll have a new excellence facility as well.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

MHA Brown.

4.1.01 to 4.2.02 inclusive.

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

Just one question from the film and television side of it. What role does the department have with setting up the new Film and Media Production Centre at the College of the North Atlantic? Are you guys involved directly with that or indirectly?

**S. CROCKER:** Indirectly. We would I guess be an advisor. That is being done through the Department of Education and CNA. Obviously we're very interested and keeping a keen eye on that program because I think what we hear the most from the film and television industry now that we have very competitive incentive programs is labour force development and finding the labour force to actually do these shows because we're running two and three. In peak season right now, we're running two and three productions concurrently. That's challenging on the workforce. So I'm very interested in seeing that facility completed. So we're not directly involved but very keen on seeing it up and running.

**J. BROWN:** Perfect. Thank you so much, Minister.

A question from Recreation there now. With the games coming in in 2025, is the department looking at any travel grants, especially leading into that 2025 Canada Games, a lot of the athletes have to come from a lot of rural areas in this province into the city.

**S. CROCKER:** Yeah, so that's something that we budget for every year. So we have a portion of our budget every year for Canada Games preparation. There is a fund. I think it's a \$1-million fund that's sort of Newfoundland and Labrador's own version of Own the Podium. So that program would intensify as we get towards 2025.

There's an independent process and a formula that's used to actually rank our sports teams and where we consider them to be as we get closer. So that work is ongoing continually.

**J. BROWN:** All right, perfect.

Anyway, that's my last question for that section.

Thank you so much.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

MHA Dwyer, anything further?

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

I just have some general questions for the minister, if you will indulge me.

**S. CROCKER:** Absolutely.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

Minister, air access continues to plague our province. We don't get accidental tourists with fewer flights, higher costs and recently WestJet pulling its direct flights from St. John's. What is the government doing to solve this issue?

**S. CROCKER:** We're doing absolutely everything that we can. It's extremely challenging. We've knocked on every door just a week and a half ago. We joined our airport authorities in Montreal to sit down with Air Canada, I think the first time in many, many decades that there were three of our airport authorities in attendance. Typically, airport authorities from this province or any jurisdiction don't usually share the same table because it's a very competitive nature of that, but to impress upon them – Air Canada is still plagued with challenges coming out of COVID. Every time we see a challenge, for example, at Pearson, that dribbles down. We've met with all the major airlines. We'll continue to do so. We've made them aware of the fact that we do have assistance available to them.

But, again, we've had airlines quite frankly look at us and say, right now, money is not the problem. Unfortunately, all Canadian airports are still struggling. The ones in Atlantic Canada are struggling more than others in the country. A lot of that is due to the pull out of WestJet. They made a business decision to actually leave Atlantic Canada. I spoke to the CEO back in November and expressed our displeasure in



that. But, obviously, they've made the conscious decision to go back to Western Canada and, unfortunately, I don't see them returning in the near future.

We've made some inroads with some of the low-cost carriers. You would have seen last year an increase in the presence of – well, we've seen Swoop come for the first time. We've seen Flair and we see Lynx. Just recently, you would have seen a partnership between PAL and Air Canada, which I think is encouraging as well, because the regional market in Atlantic Canada right now is severely challenged, but we'll keep the dialogue going with the airlines. But every airline that we've talked to, and we've talked to most that would have an interest in Eastern Canada, they are still eyeing '25-'26 for full recovery.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

Why don't government have a representative on the Air Access Committee? We don't have a government representative on the Air Access Committee.

**OFFICIAL:** (Inaudible) Air Access Committee (inaudible).

**S. CROCKER:** With HNL?

**OFFICIAL:** Yeah.

**S. CROCKER:** No, we would have a representation on that. HNL was actually in Montreal with us two weeks ago. We work closely with Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador on the plan that they formulated during COVID, but, quite frankly, it was only last week we talked about the need or the necessity, right now, to refresh that plan because the road map has changed so much.

We wrote a plan during the pandemic, I guess, not fully abreast of the changes that we were going to see and not fully recognizing – and there was no way that we

could recognize, I guess, the challenges that we would see at Canada's major airports and the passenger restrictions that we're seeing.

It's tremendously difficult to get back to where we were in 2019 when we have our major hub in Canada saying we're going to cap the number of passengers that are going to fly through our airport in a given season.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

You alluded to the Maritimes and just last week Halifax was starting direct flights to Europe, United States and throughout North America. Our people can barely get a direct flight to Halifax.

So why is air travel in this province so deplorable? What marketing initiatives is the province taking to attract better routes and accessibility for our residents? Can we expect European routes in 2024?

**S. CROCKER:** So I would disagree with your comment that air travel in the province is deplorable. I have a lot of respect for our airport authorities and they do a lot of hard work, so I think they'd be disappointed to hear you use the word "deplorable" as well. They put a lot of time and effort into attracting airlines from around the world and we've worked very well with our airport authorities. We've offered them assistance. We've given them assistance. Quite frankly, last year, we invested, I think with St. John's, \$500,000 through IET and Gander and Deer Lake as well, \$250,000.

But they face the challenges. When they go to connectivity meetings, Routes America, as an example, it's a very competitive nature. Quite frankly, what you're seeing in Halifax, as much as we would want to be the hub, the reality is that Air Canada recognizes Halifax as the regional hub.

We've pursued the routes of European – one of our main things, and myself and

Minister Parsons in IET talk about this on a regular basis, is getting direct access back to Europe. We lost air access to Europe with the Max 8 challenges back pre-pandemic. We will not see direct activity this year, again, to Europe. We had the discussion again two weeks ago with Air Canada.

There is a glimmer that they would get there, but right now they're challenged with a direct connection to Europe, from the Air Canada standpoint is aircraft availability. They're waiting on some new aircraft that they would need before you would see direct connectivity back to Europe.

But it is a major priority of ours and, quite frankly, I think if you were to sit down with the St. John's Airport Authority, it's their number one priority. But that being said, while we're waiting for that time to come, because I would never, ever not advocate first and foremost for direct connectivity anywhere because obviously people want to fly direct, but it's also important, until that day comes, that we work with the airlines to make sure that connectivity meets the threshold as well.

So if you're flying from New York directly into Halifax or London directly into Halifax, when you get off that flight, you have the proper connectivity to get you here. Because, quite frankly, if you think about the Newfoundland and Labrador tourism market, a lot of the destinations in our province, other than the capital city, will never have direct connectivity. If you think about Gros Morne, Deer Lake, the West Coast, they're not going to have direct connectivity to Europe or to the US. So it's important that we obviously always want direct connectivity but connectivity in itself is a challenge.

**J. DWYER:** And in deplorable, I didn't allude that to the people that are in our airport authorities. It's just the network itself that I'm alluding to.

**S. CROCKER:** Yeah, fair.

It's challenging when you have a carrier leave a market. There's no doubt about that. WestJet leaves in a time when Air Canada's capacity is challenged and you have an airline retreat. That certainly brings forward a challenge. Quite frankly, Air Canada itself has to get back to their capacity numbers, let alone eat up that capacity that WestJet has abandoned.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

You recently announced new Airbnb regulations. What has been the feedback from HNL, municipalities and Airbnb owners?

**S. CROCKER:** The feedback from HNL has been – you know, we've crafted these regulations hand in hand and took quite some time to actually get there because HNL wanted strong regulations and I think that we were able to achieve that. So the reaction from HNL has been really good. We'll work with them as we continue to get to March 2024 on full implementation.

The other group, sorry, MNL?

**J. DWYER:** Municipalities.

**S. CROCKER:** Yeah, on Friday, I was in Old Perlican and had a conversation with the town council there. I think the response that I'm hearing from municipalities in my own district and around the province is they're relieved that they finally have something to point to, some structure. In most jurisdictions, these regulations are primarily municipal regulations.

You would see recently in, I think, Twillingate and Bonavista where the councils have gone ahead and implemented some of their own regulations to actually control the number of accommodators. Not only control, but to ensure that when somebody puts their head to rest on a bed in Newfoundland and Labrador, they should

do so with the comfort knowing that life and fire safety has been taken into consideration. We've seen incidents just recently, unfortunately, in Quebec where that wasn't the case.

To the final part of the question about B & Bs themselves. The industries that are been operating on the side of regulation previously are very pleased with this. Obviously, there are some over here that aren't quite so please, but, quite frankly, they need to come over here and be part of the regulated industry.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

MHA Brown, do you have anything further?

**J. BROWN:** That's fine.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**J. DWYER:** I only have a couple of more questions. I know that we were going to break at 10:30, but I only have probably seven or eight questions and we can finish, if that's okay with the staff?

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

Is there a long-term strategic tourism plan which includes marketing, attraction, development and accommodations?

**S. CROCKER:** Yeah, that's the vision and working with what will come out of the implementation in the vision. We have done work. We haven't shied away from trying to understand what the visitor economy looks like post-COVID, because the visitor economy of 2019 will not be the visitor economy of 2025, 2026, 2027. The world has changed and trying to understand that.

Last year, we did a partial exit survey here in the province. This year we'll be doing an exit survey and we're also going to do increased research in the coming years,

because understanding what that market is post-COVID is extremely important and understanding how we position our marketing investments.

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

I know you alluded earlier to the revenues of Marble Mountain and I know that they exceeded expectations this past winter. What direct evidence does the department have to reaffirm these comments from the general manager?

**S. CROCKER:** I think the numbers speak for themselves. Revenues were up strongly. Bear with me for one second.

**J. DWYER:** Still didn't make enough case to sell it.

**S. CROCKER:** What?

**J. DWYER:** Still didn't make enough case to take it off the market.

**S. CROCKER:** No, no absolutely not, because I think it just shows the opportunities that are there with Marble, quite frankly, for investment.

I don't think government should be in the business of running ski hills. I think there are people out there that know how to run ski hills much better than governments, but, again, we want to ensure – but revenues, and this is revenue up until March 15, and their year-end is not until April 30, but their revenue in 2023 was \$4.1 million compared to \$3.2 million in 2019.

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

The same report that was recently brought to the public eye says it's about offering tours for visiting cruise ship tourists. Can you provide any insight into new offerings or other offerings that Marble are considering in the off-season?

**S. CROCKER:** Yes. So one of the offerings that they have done, they're doing very well with, because obviously with the cruise ship industry tours are presold. So the actual lift to the top of the hill and lift back down has done quite well. They're also looking at opportunities around mountain biking; festivals; they're back into the wedding market, having the accommodations there at the base gets them back into that. All this stuff, it's great because it actually would show a potential investor or investors of the opportunities that actually exist at Marble other than the ski hill opportunity, because that's just one piece of making it a year-round operation.

**J. DWYER:** A return lift maybe to the zip lining might help that out as well.

**S. CROCKER:** Absolutely.

**J. DWYER:** Will Marble truly be profitable as stated by the general manager?

**S. CROCKER:** Yes, I think so. If you think our operating grant to Marble is \$300,000 and I would argue quite frankly that that's a very good return on investment for the province, if you think about the economic activity at Marble, direct revenue of over \$4 million. If you were to look at the other revenue that would be received in the region, whether it's accommodations or food and beverage, Marble is a really strong return on investment for us at a \$300,000 operating grant.

**J. DWYER:** Celebrate NL, that Crown corporation, was incorporated last year and we were told that it would work on attracting large events to the province like the Brier and the JUNOs. Why is there no funding in budget for this? Is there a person in the department responsible for this? What was its success? Is there a list?

**S. CROCKER:** So we'll provide you with the activities then, too. But I think I said to MHA Brown, earlier, you know, these things take time. We have been bidding events.

Obviously, there is some partnership. Any time we bid an event there is typically a partnership with a destination management organization as well. Again, a lot of the work that they do with regards to events is, I guess, proprietary in some matter because, you know, we'd be a piece of it, DSJ, as an example or another one of the organizations, would be a piece of it. I think right now Celebrate NL has five staff people. Yes, so right now it has five staff people and an executive director and other people working on – so we'll provide you with this MHA Dwyer.

Also Stars on Ice. They've done some work with the Film Development Corporation; the Canada Games Athletes Rally; the Labrador Winter Games; a lead role, obviously, in Come Home Year; Toronto International Film Festival. They've been doing a lot of work, right now, currently on *Come From Away* in Gander this summer. They have a role to play there as well. That initiative is actually pretty much across department.

So, yes, and more to come in the very near future.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

Cain's Quest was called off due to weather conditions this past winter. Is government liable in any way for its cancellation or does the organizing committee have any insurance to protect the organization in the event of these cancellations?

**S. CROCKER:** That would be a question better directed, I think, to the MHA – no, their funding primarily would have come from IET, but we're very interested and keen, I know as is the Member for Labrador West, to actually make sure we get Cain's Quest back up and running for 2024. That initiative is taking place. We'll be at that table along, I think, with IET and the MHA. I know he's been very active on it.

It's an important event and hopefully in 2024 we can get back – pardon the pun – on

track. Obviously, climate change plays a significant role.

**J. DWYER:** Absolutely.

Marine Atlantic offered discounts for individuals who booked prior to the end of April and travelled before June last year. Can tourists expect any discounted travel on Marine Atlantic to attract more visitors to our province this year?

**S. CROCKER:** So that incentive is in place again. Marine Atlantic did relaunch, actually I think at a higher value because I think they relaunched at 25 – I think the discount was 25 per cent this shoulder season. We would encourage Marine Atlantic again, because they did in the fall season as well, and certainly would hope that they will continue to do the same thing again this fall.

**J. DWYER:** Okay, so we'll do it in the spring and the fall?

**S. CROCKER:** Yeah, that was how the initiative was laid out last year and we would hope that it would be the same. Obviously, in the peak season, there are always capacity challenges.

**J. DWYER:** I like that proactive thinking.

As we know, we will be hosting the 2025 Canada Summer Games and there have been several significant funding announcements. One is particularly concerning the Aquarena repairs will double to \$20 million and the facility will need to be closed for six months. Who is on the hook for this additional cost?

**S. CROCKER:** So the province is committed to the games. The initial \$9.8 million was provided to the Canada Games Host Society – no, sorry, to Memorial University for the initial repairs to the Aquarena. We've since been able to secure the funding for the additional \$10 million. That gets us to roughly the \$20-million number that you were accurate in quoting.

We're waiting on the Class A estimate. I think it's in, but I haven't seen the final numbers.

But, again, the investment in the Aquarena, yes, we can tie it to the 2025 Canada Games, but the reality is it's the only 50-metre pool in the province. It was built for the 1977 games; it's 50 years old. It was going to require this investment with or without the games, and quite frankly the games bring the investment but it will also revitalize that facility as our provincial, the marquee, provincial aquatics facility in the province. So this investment is much more than just the 2025 games, it's the next decades of the Aquarena.

**J. DWYER:** Is there any estimate on how long the repairs will extend the life of the Aquarena?

**S. CROCKER:** That's not a conversation that I've had. I'm sure it's one Memorial is having with their people.

The Minister of TI, he's not leading this file. This file is being lead by Memorial.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

**S. CROCKER:** So the current monies that have been allocated for this would be allocated to Memorial.

**J. DWYER:** Just two questions left.

Will this be done on time and how bad will this affect the training of our athletes in swimming and particularly diving?

**S. CROCKER:** Yes, so one of the challenges any time you prepare for games and you do infrastructure improvements, no matter where it is, what it is, there are disruptions. We're doing everything we can to minimize the closure, but again it's Memorial and The Works that have to get in and get this project done, because, quite frankly, if this work is not done now, we will sacrifice a lot of time in the future, quite

frankly, where if this work is not done, in the not-too-distant future, we wouldn't have a facility.

**J. DWYER:** Okay.

My last question is that recently we had a shutdown of the departure lounge at the airport in St. John's. Can we get an update on that and was it tied to the construction that's currently going on in that area?

**S. CROCKER:** So, again, the St. John's Airport Authority doesn't – it's a federally regulated body. I can only speak from conversations that I've had with the CEO. I think media reports would be as accurate as anything that I could say. I think the fire was electrical in nature. I think the repairs are ongoing. I think close to completion. But we were extremely fortunate that it wasn't worse than it was, but, yeah, the Airport Authority is looking after that challenge.

**J. DWYER:** Chair, that's it for my questions.

I'd like to say thanks to the minister for providing answers today to our questions and to the staff that have prepared this budget for this year. I thank you for your answers as well. I really appreciate the work that we're doing in TCAR.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

MHA Brown you are okay with –?

**J. BROWN:** I'm okay.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

If the Committee is ready for the question, shall 4.1.01 to 4.2.02 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Those against?

Carried.

On motion, subheads 4.1.01 through 4.2.02 carried.

**CLERK:** The total.

**CHAIR:** Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Those against?

Carried.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** Those against?

Carried.

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

**CHAIR:** MHA Dwyer has had an opportunity to have a few closing remarks.

MHA Brown, would you?

**J. BROWN:** Yeah, I want to thank everybody for being here so bright and early this morning to speak to this. It's a very interesting department. It has some of the most interesting things that people actually physically see outside of the province. So I want to thank you all for the hard work that you've all done in promoting our wonderful place. I want to thank the minister for his

answers and his comments and thanks to the Chair there as well.

So thank you and I hope to see you all back again this time next year.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Minister, a few closing remarks?

**S. CROCKER:** I'll keep it brief.

First, obviously, I did it I think in my opening, but I want to thank the staff of the department for the hard work that goes in to putting together the Estimates every year. It's a process that really begins in October and ends in April or May. I thank everybody for attending this morning. I thank MHA Dwyer and MHA Brown for the questions. I look forward to the rest of the day.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

Just in closing, I, too, want to thank the Committee Members for your indulgence this morning. I certainly thank the minister and his department for their wonderful work. I'd like to thank Kim for her direction this morning and the staff from the Broadcast Centre as well.

With that, I will end –

**CLERK:** The next meeting.

**CHAIR:** Oh, sorry, the meeting.

Our next meeting will be Tuesday, May 2, at 6 p.m. to consider the Estimates of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

I did see a hand up there. I assume that's on adjournment.

MHA Brown.

Thank you everybody.

On motion, the Committee adjourned.