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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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(Night Sitting)

The House resumed at 6 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank everybody for their punctuality; it is 6 right on the dot.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, that this House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Supply to consider the Estimates of the Executive Council.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the said bills.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, the Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Trimper): Order, please!

We are now considering the Estimates of the Lieutenant-Governor's Establishment and that's subheading 1.1.01.

CLERK (Barnes): The Lieutenant-Governor's Establishment, 1.1.01.

CHAIR: I now turn to the Leader of the Official Opposition.

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's good to be back. This year first time asking questions on Estimates, which is relatively new

for me, because after 11 years of chairing – five years of the Committees and then Estimates for two and three departments sometimes – it's a welcome rest, but now I'm looking forward to a few questions tonight and getting some answers.

Just a couple of quick things under 1.1.01, Government House. Last year, the Salaries went over by a little over \$36,000. Can you just explain what that was for?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It's great to have you back, to my hon. colleague. I will say that the Cabinet Secretariat supports the Premier and the work of Cabinet and its Committees, as well as the effective operation of departments and agencies. I want to thank them for their efforts and the contribution that they make.

1.1.01 is Government House; we're on Salaries. There was a slight overrun in that category due to some step increases and temporary positions. There are 15 positions overall: 10 permanent, two temporary and three contractual. The contractual was moved in and some step increases.

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

D. BRAZIL: Perfect. I thank the minister for that. That clarifies that.

My only other question under that subhead is the planned budget increase of \$30,000. Can you explain what that would be used for?

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: The planned budget increase? I'm sorry; I'm not quite following.

D. BRAZIL: There's a planned budget increase – Purchased Services. Sorry, I didn't clarify.

S. COADY: Oh, Purchased Services.

D. BRAZIL: Purchased Services, yeah.

S. COADY: Yeah.

D. BRAZIL: From \$42,500 to \$72,500.

S. COADY: Yes, thank you very much. Now I understand. It's under Purchased Services.

That is related to costs for the bravery awards. As you can appreciate, every few years you have to replenish the medals and the trophies. So we've moved money from another activity into this activity to fund that.

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That it for me for 1.1.01.

CHAIR: Okay, thank you.

The Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have no questions. They've been answered.

CHAIR: Okay, thank you.

Any further questions from the floor?

Shall 1.1.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subhead 1.1.01 carried.

CHAIR: I'll ask the Clerk to call the next heading.

CLERK: Office of the Executive Council, 2.1.01 through 2.8.03 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 through 2.8.03 carry?

First of all, did the minister want to speak first before we started questions? No, okay.

I'll start right off with the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Under 2.1.01, Premier's Office, Salaries: Last year, Salaries went up by \$47,000. Could you explain that, please?

S. COADY: Certainly. It was an overrun, mainly due to a retirement and related costs. I can say even the budget from 2019-20 is still within that same general category: \$1.505 million to \$1.548 million. It is still within the same general category. Where the increase was is due to a retirement and related costs.

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

D. BRAZIL: Perfect. Thank you, Minister.

Also, under Purchased Services, when you get a chance could you just provide us with the breakdown of all the invoices consolidated under the Purchased services. It doesn't have to be a breakdown now, but if you could share what they were with us in the future.

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

I'm certainly happy to do that. We'll give you that breakdown. The Purchased Services in general were below the required amount. It's only \$14,900, but happy to get that description for you.

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you again to the minister.

Under 2.2.01, Executive Support, the Salaries last year went above budget by \$1,184,500. Can you please explain why? Were there new positions included or were some transfers from other areas?

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Certainly. This is 2.2.01, right? Executive Support?

Allow me to say that it was predominantly retirement. \$1 million of that was retirement. We had a number of people who retired from Cabinet Secretariat with long-standing annual leave and severance costs.

There was \$213,000 related to the Premier's Economic Recovery Team. There will be a number of categories where the Premier's Economic Recovery Team shows up here, so I'll be happy to speak to them as we move through. Just so you have it, predominantly I think it was almost \$1 million from the three retirements that I talked about and there was \$213,000 related to the Premier's Economic Recovery Team.

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

D. BRAZIL: Yeah, under Professional Services, last year \$2.6 million was spent. Could you please outline what this was for?

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Certainly. Happy to do so.

There was approximately \$2.5 million – almost \$2.6 million – that was for legal and financial services and support related to Muskrat Falls. You would have seen that moved from Treasury Board into this expenditure allocation, but that was all related to Muskrat Falls.

There was some small amount for the Premier's Economic Recovery Team. Let me just look at what that was so that – I have it here under Professional Services. It's easier to pull out this one. I'll be happy to provide this. Under Purchased Services, there was a small amount of money for things like printers, some shredding services and editing and copying services that were required for the Premier's Economic Recovery Team.

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you.

I appreciate that. I think you did offer to give us a copy of the expenditures relevant to that. As part of that, too, what type of approval process was used for the PERT itself to spend money?

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: I'm just going to allow my officials to come back to me on that. When you say what approval process, are you meaning ...?

D. BRAZIL: Was it purchase orders? Was it in advance?

S. COADY: Oh, it would have been the same process as within government. But allow me to get a proper answer for you and I'll be right with you.

D. BRAZIL: Okay. Yeah, I appreciate that.

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

D. BRAZIL: Under 2.3.01, Communications Branch, Salaries last year: Salaries went over budget by \$136,000. Can you just outline what that was for?

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you.

Certainly, I do have an answer already. It's all of the normal purchasing rules applied to government. That means purchase orders and the government procurement rules applied, so, as I said, all of the normal processes within government.

The \$136,000 reflects contractual positions. Really, that was focused on the social media expansion. That is now absorbed into the actual original budget. A lot more is being put towards, obviously, social media, as we move forward; we needed some external expertise to assist us with that.

From a communications perspective, you can appreciate with COVID there was a requirement for more social media. A lot of information was going out through social media so we brought in

some contractual expertise. That's why you had an increase last year, but now it's absorbed into the original budget.

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

D. BRAZIL: I thank the minister for that answer. Under Professional Services, can you outline the variance in this line item here? Can you also provide a detailed breakdown of the \$111,400 that was spent, where the money was spent, in which firm and for which projects or campaigns?

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Certainly. So that's the \$111,000 – just let me look here. It's really because of lower cost for marketing and related services than anticipated. This is not an unusual drop balance. It depends, because you have to budget for particular campaigns and things that may have come up. So there's a fairly significant drop balance here.

A couple of ones that are of note that we did do was a COVID marketing campaign aimed at 18 to 35 year olds. We did hire an agency. Obviously, we wanted to get the message out to 18 to 35 year olds. They had a campaign. I can tell you it didn't target me as a demographic because I wasn't even aware of it. There is also in that – news services are under that Professional Service, as well as research writing. So, again, a lot of it was COVID-related under that Professional Services.

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

D. BRAZIL: Yeah, I thank the minister. I'm just curious to see: Was that additional monies from the COVID fund?

S. COADY: No.

D. BRAZIL: That would've been the normal Purchased Services or Professional Services within the line? Okay, got it.

S. COADY: Correct.

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Correct, because if you look at the original budget, it was \$288,000 and the department spent \$111,000. It was actually below what they had anticipated because they didn't have to do as many different types of campaigns.

But for that particular Professional Service was that particular – I wanted to draw your attention to that marketing campaign for 18 to 35 year olds, as well as some news services and research writing. So we're below what we anticipated spending, but it was important money to have there.

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

D. BRAZIL: I appreciate that. If you could outline under Purchased Services the same process there, the variance and then what programs were covered, please.

S. COADY: Yeah, happy to do so.

The original budget was \$228,000 and we actually spent \$50,000. We're well under on Purchased Services. It's mostly lower costs for marketing and other related work.

Sometimes you need to have money in case you need a marketing campaign or anything done. There was some flu campaign collateral done out of that \$50,000. There was a small media buy. I think a lot of that would've been the audio-visual. You can appreciate there was so much need for audio-visual, as well as media subscriptions.

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Under 2.3.02, Public Engagement, can you outline the efforts of the division to gather as much feedback on the possibility of the PERT report?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Well, certainly. As you can appreciate, the PERT report is in this year's budget, so I wouldn't speak to what was revised from last year's budget. I can tell you there's very much a significant requirement today for ensuring that we have proper consultations for PERT. If you give me two seconds, I can look up the total number of people that have already been engaged.

We're also doing town halls and we're also doing stakeholder engagement. There is a significant amount of effort towards ensuring that we have a very robust consultation process. There are already 1,200 people, through engageNL, who have participated to date.

I will also say, because there has been some confusion, that the public does not need to register to complete the survey at all. They do not need to register to complete the survey. Only stakeholders do, so that we could have that stakeholder interaction. The public doesn't need to do that. There are multiple ways. You can do it through your email at engageNL@gov.nl.ca. You can also do it through the 1-800; 1-833-607-2639 is the phone number. We're trying to encourage people to engage as much as possible.

Allow me to tell you that we had a tremendous – we had 39 engagement and consultation projects in 2021. We've completed 19 with a scoping on 11 and five are in production. A very significant effort to ensure that we have as many people as possible interacting with government and giving us their advice.

CHAIR: The Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

With regard to 2.2.01 – and I know this has been put on hold – with regard to the review on the provincial emblem, when can we expect to see results for this?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: The provincial emblem?

J. DINN: I guess coat of arms.

S. COADY: Oh, okay. I would have to defer to my colleague for Municipal Affairs, actually, to determine where that process is. I'll endeavour to get the information and present it to you. How's that?

J. DINN: No problem.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: I was just wondering when we can expect to see the results on the review of the provincial emblem. I know that's been postponed.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

K. HOWELL: Very soon. I know that's not the answer you were looking for but ...

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: That beats I don't know or anything else. Very soon is good. I'll take that.

K. HOWELL: (Inaudible.)

J. DINN: That's even better again.

2.3.02, Public Engagement: The minister was just taking us through some of the projects. I'm wondering if it's possible to have how many have submitted contributions to engageNL in the past year.

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: There have been 2,210 participants through the engagement sessions, in person, virtually or online in the last year. That's the 2021 fiscal year. As I just indicated to our colleague, there have been 1,200 already through engageNL for the PERT report. Last year, it was 2,210 participants in 2021 and, this year, it's already 1,200 just on that one particular engagement.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Of the 2,210 last year, how many were in person and online? My apologies if you've already answered that.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

S. COADY: I'm terribly sorry; I don't have a breakdown, but I'll certainly ask engageNL to provide it to us.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: The same thing for PERT too, if that's possible to have that breakdown as well.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

S. COADY: Thank you.

PERT would all be online. Because, of course, with COVID – we have to maintain the rules around COVID – I would think that last year it was mostly online as well. But as I said, we're trying to have multiple channels so people if they don't have a computer, if they want to mail in their information, if they want to phone in their information, their responses, they can certainly do that as well.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you.

That's where I was going with that, Minister, with regard to PERT. There is that option. Online is one thing but even those who are comfortable with online, especially if you have to fill in a little box and the text and there's a limit on it, I'm hoping you are looking at all venues and avenues.

I'm just wondering: Will it follow then the process that the Health Accord NL has found? They have a pretty robust process in terms of doing a *What We Heard* document. They're taking some deliberate consultation processes. I'm wondering if it's your intention to follow that.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

Through Public Engagement, they have outlined a pretty robust process. As I said, multiple channels of ways in which you can provide your information either online, through telephone, through mail, through email. There are also consultations, town halls underway. I think from June 15 to 17 there is going to be a virtual town hall. Then, of course, they'll be holding stakeholder sessions as well.

EngageNL normally does an incredible job, I think, of pulling together the information and having it available. That is the process. It might be slightly different than what the Health Accord is undertaking, but the Health Accord is doing their own consultations. I just present to you what the Government of NL is doing through Public Engagement.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Under 2.3.01, I noticed there with regard to the Communications Branch, it talks about government-wide communications activities. I think when you are looking at – they explain in the budget line, the communications process – one thing in every department so far there is Transportation and Communications. I'm assuming in just about every department there is a person or team of people dedicated to communications.

With that in mind, what's the purpose of this? Is this about coordinating the different departments for communication purposes?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

S. COADY: Thank you.

Yes, most departments have one communications person. Some because of size may have two. This is more coordination of the Executive Council, coordination across all agencies, all government, making sure the management of the communications vehicles including news releases, media advisories, public advisories, setting up various different communications vehicles for the Premier. For example, there were 140 virtual press

conferences in the last year due to COVID – 140 of them.

Certainly they are very, very busy, small team. I think there are 13 permanent positions, some contractual and some temporary, for a total of 19 or 20 people. They are, I can tell you, very, very busy. This is really providing counsel and support to the Premier and to Cabinet and then working across all of government.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Just to go back for a minute to PERT, the engageNL, with regard to the questions and that, who would have been responsible for developing those and I guess –?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

You're talking about the online process? It would have come through engagement through engageNL, through the Public Engagement team.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

S. COADY: But if I may just provide a more fulsome answer: If people want to go outside of those questions, they're certainly able to do so. They can, as I said, mail, call, email or if they're using the online service they can certainly put more information on there. It doesn't necessarily have to fall into the category.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Back to communications, just out of curiosity, I think it said there are 19 or 20 people in this branch. Across government, all departments, do you have an idea of just how many communications people we're looking at?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

S. COADY: I can check with officials and see if I can get a full listing, but I wouldn't have that off the top of my head.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you.

2.3.03, Policy, Planning and Coordination: Is it possible to have an update on the work and activities of PolicyNL. Has this initiative been successful in what it's done? Gathered information, borne fruit, as it were, in terms of policy proposals submitted and integrated into public policy?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

S. COADY: Unfortunately, I'm not familiar robustly enough with PolicyNL. I can tell you that this particular division, Policy, Planning and Coordination, is the coordination and administration of policy, planning and strategic support for the division, the Executive Council. They work closely with the Public Engagement unit to monitor public engagement. This is where you'd also see expenditures for the Premier's Youth Council.

I'm not quite sure what the direction of your question is.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: I'll follow up on that. So it goes to support the various – as it says there (inaudible) talks about the implementation of requirements of transparency. Should we be concerned that when I look at that that the budget line for this, Salaries, is so – well, actually so limited – much smaller than let's say the Communications Branch and the Public Engagement piece? I'm just wondering if that says something about priorities.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

S. COADY: No, I don't think it says anything about priorities. I think it says that this particular section is under Public Engagement, and they

work hand in hand. This is where the funding for the Premier's Youth Council is. Plans and reports are developed, actually, within departments and agencies, and this is where Executive Council supports the policy capacity across all of the provincial government. So it's a central review that occurs at this particular group.

So in a department, for example, you would develop your plans and reports, and this would be the central group to which it is referred. Then they coordinate across government and do the central review. These are the same numbers as has been in past; there's been no change in this.

Under Transportation and Communications is where you'd find the Youth Council. It's coordinating for policy and planning across government.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Under Public Engagement, Minister, I just have a quick clarification. Will the division be sending out surveys on specific recommendations or just relying on the citizens to generally respond on the PERT?

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: There is kind of what I am going to call an engagement document online. It does prompt a few questions online. It's certainly encouraging. Then, of course, when we get into the town halls there will be another process of trying to gain – to look at information that is contained in the document. It is a pretty robust process but people could go outside of that. If they wanted to talk about anything in particular, they certainly may.

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

D. BRAZIL: Fair enough. I appreciate that.

Under 2.3.03, Policy, Planning and Coordination: In Estimates last year we talked about how this division of Executive Council did some work on shared services. How did the work of the division feed into some of the recommendations of the PERT report and the actions announced in this year's budget?

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Shared services division is now within the operations of Digital Government and OCIO – I'm just trying to remember the name: Digital Government and Service Newfoundland and Labrador. The responsibility for shared services is there because, of course, the interaction on digitalization. There has been some great work done on this to help facilitate us moving toward a more coordinated integrated Corporate Services.

Some work has been done and has been implemented on shared services; for example, for procurement. Procurement under the health boards is now being coordinated out of Grand Falls. There's been some work that's been done; they've been working very readily towards this. We are just taking that next step.

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Minister, for that answer.

In previous years, there was a pot of money in Executive Council that went to grants for youth organizations, which in a previous life was one of my responsibilities, one of the budget lines. I don't seem to find the funding line anywhere in the Estimates this year. Has it been moved to another department? If so, where?

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you.

I'm asking officials now to determine that. It's moved to CCSD. See how fast it is? It's moved to CCSD

D. BRAZIL: I appreciate that.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

D. BRAZIL: Under 2.4.01, Financial Administration, Salaries: Could you please outline each and every position which is contained in this Salaries line item, the main heading?

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Under Financial Administration, 2.4.01?

D. BRAZIL: Yeah.

S. COADY: There are 10 positions: six permanent positions, three temporary and one contractual. Fairly stable. This is where they coordinate the financial services across Executive Council, including Treasury Board, Labrador Affairs, Women and Gender Equality and OCIO. They coordinate the financial administration. There is a slight increase this year because of salary increases.

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that.

Revenues: Just curious, the \$15,800 under Revenue - Provincial, what was that generated from?

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you.

The \$15,800 is really miscellaneous revenue. I actually asked for a bit of detail over that. That's basically if you had an overpayment in your salary, if you had a travel payment and you needed to reimburse it. If there are miscellaneous recoveries, that's where it would fall. We had to have a heading for that and that's where it would fall. It's just a generalized catchment across the division.

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Minister.

Under 2.5.01, Executive Support, Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat, Salaries last year went over budget by \$171,000. Can you outline what that was for?

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Yes, we had to have some additional work from trade negotiations as we had multiple international discussions. There was some CETA work that was being done and Canada-US work that was being done. The work is now being absorbed in the original budget.

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate it.

Purchased Services: Could you provide a detailed listing of what services are purchased and included in that heading?

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: I just got some more information on that. It was also an unfunded position that was no longer required. I'm just trying to find if I have all the breakdown on – I don't seem to have it in my hands. Allow me a moment to see if I can get you the detail on the Purchased Services and a full description of that.

You can ask me another question while I just see if I can find something really quick.

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Under Grants and Subsidies, I believe the funding is for the Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat. Could you provide some details about the work of the secretariat?

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Okay, I'm going to get you the information for Purchased Services, because I can't seem to put my hand on the full description. I'll certainly get that for you. You're asking right now on the Grants and Subsidies, the \$35,000?

D. BRAZIL: Yeah.

S. COADY: That is the Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat. I'm just getting a detailed response for you. It'll be here with me in two seconds.

D. BRAZIL: Okay, not a problem.

S. COADY: It is the Council of the Federation and the council – and the CAP membership fees, is what it is. It provides support to all intergovernmental.

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you.

Under 2.5.02, Intergovernmental Affairs, Salaries: Last year, the Salaries were a savings of \$111,000. Could you please outline was there any position that was vacated or were they just people off at that particular time?

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you.

We're actively recruiting for two positions in that area. That's why you'll see the original budget is back again. There have been some salary changes – the removal of the 27th pay period, of course – but we're looking to get to full complement. They're actively recruiting for two positions in the Intergovernmental Affairs area.

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Under Professional Services, there was an overrun of \$73,000 of the \$188,000. Can we get an outline of why the overrun. Also, if you could provide an outline of the detailed list of what the \$188,000 went for, please.

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Certainly. I'll be happy to do that.

We had a higher than anticipated legal cost with trade policy. As you can appreciate, we had a specialized legal firm that provided trade advice. Also, last year, the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador was chair of the Council of the Federation, and also chair of the cannabis subcommittee. That was where the funding is, so it's basically trade legal expenses.

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the minister for that answer.

The last question I have in that heading there, Grants and Subsidies: Can you provide an explanation of where the grant money goes for under the accounts and the variance there? I notice there is \$3,000 unspent.

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: That reflects savings due to a lower than anticipated cost for the Internal Trade Secretariat fees. That's why the \$3,000. The Grants and Subsidies is Newfoundland and Labrador's contribution to the Internal Trade Secretariat of \$5,900, but the costs were down in 2020-21 due to COVID so there was lower than anticipated fees for the Internal Trade Secretariat.

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the minister, as we have a tag team going on our side of it, and my colleagues who are better qualified to ask in some of the other headings will take it from there. I want to thank

the minister for sharing the information and any particular piece of information that we may have requested, if you could share that with us down the road I would appreciate that.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you very much.

The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

With regard to 2.3.03, how many staff are covered by the Salaries?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: 2.3.03, there are six positions.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: And they are all filled at this point in time?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: That is what I understand; there was some saving last year due to vacancies. They are also kind of looking at a reorganization of the way that Policy, Planning division is undertaken. I think that there is going to be some change and some movement around in that particular division, but there are six positions accounted for.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: So just to clarify, these six people would be responsible for coordinating across all departments?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: That is correct. The Policy, Planning and Coordination unit works very closely with Public Engagement unit to monitor both public engagement activities and develop options for process improvement. They also

assist departments in integrating engagement results in the decision-making. It also looks at, as I said before, the coordination of the strategic plans and so forth within government.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you.

And 2.3.02, how many staff would be covered under those Salaries?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Sorry, I just have to find it in my book. We're rapid fire here today. The Salaries of \$877,500, there are 12 positions in that division.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Our Public Engagement and Policy, Planning and Coordination, are they housed in the same area or are they two separate and distinct bodies?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: No, they're housed all under Cabinet Secretariat.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Okay, but they would be two separate, distinct bodies then, I take it, right?

S. COADY: I think they –

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: – interact with one another. I'll certainly ask my official for that information.

J. DINN: Okay.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

S. COADY: Oh, excuse me, I've just got it.

CHAIR: I'm just trying to keep – Broadcast –

S. COADY: It's just very rapid-fire.

CHAIR: We're trying to help out Broadcast here. They're pretty quick on the draw here.

J. DINN: I think they're pretty good. By the tally light, they know who's speaking.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: If I may, they're in the same space and under the same administration. I do have the answer on the communications people across government. Across government there are 24, with six in the Communications Branch within Executive Council.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: So 24 in total, and six are within the Communications Branch here.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thirty total, correct.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thirty total.

I have an idea where I'm going with this, but I'll save it for another time.

AN HON. MEMBER: No time like the present.

J. DINN: If someone's going to say no time like the present I'm quite willing to move right ahead, but I'm just saying. Trust me.

Okay, I will move ahead, 2.5.01, Purchased Services. They would be used for what, Minister?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: The Purchased Services as I said, under 2.5.01, is memberships to support the Council of the Federation Secretariat. There's also the Council of Atlantic Premiers, as well as the New England governors and East Coast premiers.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you. I don't know who to thank anymore.

Are there any new efforts – I'm not sure if this fits under the 2.5.01, but I'll ask it – in the works to build on existing relationships with Indigenous governments and organizations, or would that be better asked somewhere else?

S. COADY: Thank you very much for the question.

May I suggest that the department responsible for Indigenous Affairs, that would be the best department to ask that policy question.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Okay.

Under 2.5.02, the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island asked a number of questions I was going to ask. However, is there any work currently being done to lobby the federal government for changes related to the equalization formula? I know we've talked about this ad nauseam at times but nevertheless.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: The short answer is yes. I can tell you in the Department of Finance as well as, I'm sure, in Intergovernmental Affairs there is always ongoing discussion with the Department of Finance as well as with the prime minister's office. There are many discussions with the federal government on this issue.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: If it's okay, I will add to that. The program doesn't come up for review until 2024. As you know, they run in five-year cycles. It is a federal government program so they set the parameters, but we are lobbying, discussing and talking to the federal government about changes that would assist Newfoundland and Labrador.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Under 2.6.02 –

S. COADY: 2.6?

J. DINN: Yes, 2.6.02.

S. COADY: That's in the next section, though.

J. DINN: Okay, I thought we were doing all of section 2.

S. COADY: I understood the Clerk called to 2.5.02. You're going to go on to the next section because that is Indigenous.

CLERK: Yes, the subhead is all under Office of the Executive Council.

CHAIR: It was called.

CLERK: So all he has to ask then is who is the responsible for it.

S. COADY: Okay, great. Thank you.

Then I will turn it to my colleague.

J. DINN: Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

J. DINN: Then I'll go back to the other one.

2.5.01: Are there any new efforts to build on –

CHAIR: Excuse me, were you seeking an answer or ...?

J. DINN: The question I was asking before was about building on existing relations with Indigenous governments. I'm going back to that question.

CHAIR: Okay, she's here. She's ready to answer.

J. DINN: Good.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: Mr. Chair, I'm sorry. I wasn't following my colleague in Estimates. Can I ask the –?

J. DINN: Gladly.

L. DEMPSTER: Can you repeat the question again?

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: The Chair is having a hard time keeping up with us.

CHAIR: No, he's not, no. He's doing just fine.

The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Are there any new efforts in the works to build on existing relations with Indigenous governments and organizations?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm happy to say that I think we have a number of things in play to build on our positive relations with Indigenous governments, one being open communication. As most folks in the House here have heard me say a number of times, every single week, myself and the Premier meet with Indigenous leadership. I would say that's historic. I doubt that's ever been done before.

Just today, Mr. Chair, \$4.2 million was in the budget to advance the Inquiry into the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes. It was a commitment that was made back in 2017 by this Liberal government. Today, we saw the announcement of the commissioners for that inquiry. That's just one of numerous things that are ongoing as we continue on this road to reconciliation, working very closely with our Indigenous leadership in this province.

CHAIR: The Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Under 2.6.02, this is probably a multi-department question, but we can ask it here. If the minister can provide the information, great.

Is it possible to provide us with an update on the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: That one is not as simple or clear to answer, Mr. Chair.

Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, we're working closely with my colleague in Justice and Public Safety and my colleague in Women and Gender Equality. There are regular meetings that happen with our counterparts in Ottawa. We've been part of federal-provincial-territorial meetings, looking to our counterparts as each province puts together their plan and then it rolls up into the federal plan.

I can tell you, as a provincial government, we're certainly committed to continuing on the road to reconciliation.

CHAIR: Thank you very much.

Now the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My questions are for the Minister of Finance. They're general questions, not line by lines; I'll let my colleagues take care of that.

I'm just wondering, you were asked about the equalization. I understand that's happening in 2024. Whether we agree with it or not – and most of us don't, I would say – it is what it is until 2024, seemingly. I don't think they're going to open it up earlier. But just because we're not in receipt of equalization doesn't mean there are not other things that the federal government could and should be doing to assist us. I'm not saying they haven't done anything, because we've seen money that's come through COVID and even for the oil and gas, that one-time fund.

Has the government approached Ottawa on Terra Nova, in terms of potentially taking some kind of an equity stake or something? We were prepared to take 15 per cent. I know it might be a different department to some degree but it's still the government, it's still the Cabinet, it's still Intergovernmental Affairs, I would suggest. Were there any discussions or are there any discussions about the feds getting involved in Terra Nova to try to salvage it?

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

I can tell you that almost daily there are discussions. I did hear in Question Period today that the Premier has had discussions with Minister O'Regan today. I can tell you when I was minister of Natural Resources there were ongoing discussions for support from the federal government, specifically around oil and gas. We've requested that on many, many occasions for their involvement. That's how the \$320 million came into being.

As you have indicated, all of us would like to – I think every person in the province would appreciate receiving equalization. We do know, and I have reported to this House, about 22 per cent of the revenues of the provincial government currently come from the federal government. That represents about \$1.9 billion. If you go back to the times when we did receive equalization, back to 2007-2008, about 25 per cent of our revenues, I think it was \$1.78 billion.

I do know that the operators have been in touch with the federal government as well, themselves,

directly. In addition to whatever the province would have had conversation with the federal government, I know some of the operators have also had conversations with the federal government.

CHAIR: The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you.

I appreciate the answer, Minister. Again, I was sort of thinking specifically about Terra Nova. Given the impact it's going to have and today's announcement, is there any intent to have further discussions or – I know you say we've reached out to Minister O'Regan. Well, what's his answer? Is he going to do anything for the Terra Nova Project or has he said he's not going to do anything for the Terra Nova Project? Are you able to give us some insight into that?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you very much for the question.

I think the question would be better directed to the minister responsible for the oil and gas industry or the Premier himself. They did have a discussion today; I heard that in Question Period, as did you. I wouldn't want to speak out of turn about anything that I would know, but I do know that a very regular and a very sincere effort has been made to present the federal government with the requirements of this province with regard to oil and gas and how important it is to this province.

CHAIR: The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Minister.

I'll certainly, when I get the opportunity, be asking about that. As has been pointed out by my colleagues over on this side, the minister responsible for the oil and gas industry is a Newfoundlander – the federal minister. I would have hoped that we would have seen more involvement by Ottawa. It's very disappointing that we haven't seen that yet.

Minister, on the working-from-home policy that we were kind of forced into, I guess, to a great degree because of COVID-19, I see it as an opportunity. I think the government has sort of indicated it as well. I think there could be opportunity there to save money. Having employees working from home decreases the need for office space and so on. There could be other savings accrued as well.

I'm just wondering, has there been any kind of analysis done as to what savings, if any, could be achieved by having as many employees as possible working from home?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you for the question.

We're in the process of doing the policy work around the work from home: talking to labour, talking to the officials within the various departments and determining who can work from home, how we can unravel it, looking at the lessons learned through COVID, doing assessment of how we can accommodate and facilitate how many people will want to take it up on that. Until we have that understanding, I think this is a multi-phase. First of all, we have to get the policy and prepare for the policy, make sure that we have the right balance here for people who wish to work from home versus those that would wish to work within the building.

Then, once we have that in place, I would think that we'll do a full analysis and scope as to what kind of savings there might be in terms of office space and perhaps shedding some of the leasehold space and bringing them in within government. That would be, I would anticipate, even sometime this year being able to do that analysis.

First, we have to speak with labour, we have to speak with the individuals and determine who and how they can work from home. Then, we'll see if people will need some time to adjust, to determine if they'll need an office here or do they share an office here when they go back and forth between home.

There's a fair amount of work to be done before we get to that stage, but I will say – and I mentioned in the House recently – I understand that we've been able to relinquish about 20,000 square feet, and that's saving about \$5 million a year. If we can do the same, that would be outstanding to assist the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador with being able to balance their budget.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Minister.

I absolutely agree 100 per cent. I certainly encourage government to continue going down that road. It is a way we can save some more money and so on.

Minister, just wondering on that sort of same vein of COVID-19, one of the other things that sort of happened as a result of that is that a lot of meetings and so on being done via Zoom. Now, I understand and I'll be the first one to say that I don't think we can go on for the rest of our lives having every single discussion, every single meeting that would be had over Zoom. There are advantages; there are also some disadvantages.

I think sometimes it can easily be done and would be appropriate and there are other times I think you need that face-to-face interaction depending on the circumstance, the situation and what you're doing. But I do think there, again, is an opportunity when it relates to employees travelling and so on, especially for meetings on, I'll say, somewhat minor issues that could easily be done on Zoom.

In a post-pandemic world, I guess, is it government's intent to utilize Zoom and other technology as much as possible to eliminate some of the travel and so on that would otherwise occur, thus saving taxpayers money once again?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

I think absolutely. I think the world has now adjusted to doing more online, more types of Zoom meetings. We use Zoom but it could be Webex, which the House of Assembly would use, or it could be any of the other platforms as well.

I think there would be an attempt to ensure that we do as much online as possible through connectivity. But I think you did make an important point that we don't want to forget that creating relationships is also important. I would think that there will be a balance here and I think it will save government money over time. We spend millions of dollars across all of government, tens of millions of dollars across government, in transportation and travel. I think there will be additional savings there as we move forward, there's no doubt. I think we will be encouraging people, where possible, to utilize these online platforms.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Minister.

I'm glad to see we're on the same page on that one as well.

I guess the last question I have, given I never got an answer in the in the last round: The Democratic Reform Committee, is it happening? Yes or no –

CHAIR: I'll let you finish. Please finish.

P. LANE: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

I would have to refer to the House Leader for the answer to that question. I don't know what Committees may be able to be presented. It would be better directed to the House Leader and I'll certainly take it up with him for you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Back to the Official Opposition.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm starting off with the heading 2.6.01.

First off, I would like to say the level of comfort is not the best here. I'm froze, and I notice my counterpart is over there with her flashlight trying to read. So either we're getting old or they're trying to get rid of us.

AN HON. MEMBER: The hours, yeah.

L. EVANS: Right. Yes, the hours.

So 2.6.01, Minister's Office, I note that this is a new subheading. Can you please outline how the budgeted amounts have been determined?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Yes, I had several emails wondering why my flashlight was on, but even with trifocals it's hard to see here this late at night and it is quite cold. Nonetheless, we persevere and do the people's work with the Estimates process.

As my colleague just asked, this is a new office that was created and shared between Labrador Affairs Secretariat and Indigenous Affairs. I believe she asked for a breakdown – I'm not sure I'm following – but, basically, in the Minister's Office there is salary for three positions; there's a budget there for Transportation and Communications; some money for Supplies, Purchased Services; and just \$500 there for Property, Furnishings and Equipment.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

2.6.02, just looking at the line there for Salaries. Last year there was a Salaries savings of \$100,700; could you please outline what positions were vacant and how this impacted operations?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: So that was savings due to vacancies. It was one position that was vacant, but I'm not aware that there has been any impact on operations as a result of that.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Okay.

Before I move on, I'm just wondering which position was vacant.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: I believe it was a senior analyst position.

I'm going to look to put in my earbud because the Member speaks low, so I can hear her well.

L. EVANS: Just moving on to Grants and Subsidies.

CHAIR: Still with the minister to respond.

L. DEMPSTER: It's not working, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Did you hear the question, Minister?

L. DEMPSTER: Okay, we're in business.

CHAIR: Back to the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Okay, so you can hear me.

Just looking at the Grants and Subsidies, the Grants and Subsidies line item is being decreased to \$604,800. Could you please outline why? I also note that not all last year's grant funding was awarded. Would you be able to please outline why as well?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: Certainly.

You will see, I say to the hon. Member, that last year there was \$200,000 that was set aside for an Indigenous project. That didn't happen and the money was took out and back into Treasury, but there was also \$115,000 that was added for Tornjat boards.

I'll also say to the Member that we set some money aside to go to a bid process for a statue. If you see my mandate letter, you'll see some of that included. We were not able to get the expression of interest done before the fiscal year ran out so that's why you're seeing a little bit of a difference there, but we're certainly committed to still doing that. You'll be seeing some more details on that very soon.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Tornjat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Last year, there was extra money added for Indigenous projects. In Estimates, we had lengthy conversations and it was said that these projects would be carried out in accordance with the wishes of Indigenous leadership; \$200,000 was set aside for these projects. How much of the \$200,000 was spent and on what projects were these spent?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: Mr. Chair, that was what I just spoke to: \$200,000 had been set aside. We sort of parked that there. We weren't sure how much the statue would cost, but we were unable to get that done before the fiscal year ran out. We are still committed and that process is still moving forward. We will find the money as we continue.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Tornjat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Yeah, so you're talking about the statue. I just wanted to make sure I wasn't missing something.

What work was done to support the upcoming apology to the Newfoundland and Labrador residential school survivors and the families that were impacted? Is there a timeline for such an

apology? Are there any funds set aside to support such an apology?

CHAIR: The Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: Mr. Chair, back to the Member's earlier question on the savings position. I understand it was a senior negotiator that had retired and there wasn't any impact in operations.

Regarding the apology, I say to the Member we're certainly still committed to carrying out the apology to residential school survivors. The recent findings in BC have certainly reminded us again of a terrible, painful history and the need to continue on the road to reconciliation.

In March of 2020, when our province's first Public Health state of emergency was declared, the Indigenous communities, as the Member would be very aware of – for safety reasons, things were halted. It did not proceed. As we now get our vaccine rates up to, I think, soon to be 75 per cent, we will resume talks and we will go into those communities.

What that looks like and when, will be done in very close consultation with the Indigenous leaders, certainly working closely with them and following their wishes. As a government, we're certainly committed to carrying out the apologies.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Tornjat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you for that answer.

Along the lines with what my fellow colleague with the Third Party was asking about, is there any money in this budget to implement the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

CHAIR: The Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: Mr. Chair, I had flashbacks when the Third Party asked me about it because I remember standing out front with my colleague's predecessor at that time, MHA Edmunds, when the 94 Calls to Action came out.

That was a very powerful, emotional day as well.

Since that time, we have been working, where possible, with our federal counterparts. In 2018, a table was sent on all calls for input. Since that time, we are considering the input and working on an updated table and analyzing feedback, Mr. Chair, in 2019. I know we say it all the time, but it is a fact that COVID, the pandemic, certainly slowed down some of this progress.

I'd be remiss if I didn't add that some of these Calls to Action lie in other departments as well. As the Member would be familiar, some of these would rest with CSSD, where we have child welfare housed in that shop. One of the things, I guess, we could point to in 2018 was the new *Children, Youth and Families Act* that was brought into the House and put into action in June '19, once regulations were sorted and carried out. A number of other things could be like the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. Some of the calls rest in Health, Education, et cetera.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: I was just wondering, is there any money set aside in this budget to implement any of the calls? I know you discussed the work that's being done, but is there any money in this budget that's going to be dedicated across the board in your department or CSSD's department that would actually implement some of the specific calls that are outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I alluded to earlier, some of these calls sit across a number of departments. I can't speak to what CSSD is carrying out or what's happening in Health or Education, but I can speak to things like – there are a whole host of things that were in this budget for Labrador in particular that would fall under some of what the Truth and Reconciliation is calling for. Things, Mr. Chair, like the \$4.8 million toward the completion of a mental health unit right there in Labrador.

Myself and Mr. Chair were at that site last Saturday morning.

The \$4.2 million to advance the Inquiry into the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu children in care. It's almost \$8 million that we are spending in Labrador to prevent homelessness through the Supportive Living Program. There are a whole host of things that I would say fit within some of these Calls to Action, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: My time is expired.

CHAIR: Oh, thank you.

Looking for a speaker from – she's a very honest Member for Torngat Mountains.

Looking to the Third Party, do we have a speaker there?

The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Yes. 2.6.02, under Indigenous Affairs: Minister, the Nunatsiavut Government and the NunatuKavut Community Council have both expressed a desire to be involved in the ongoing methylmercury monitoring process in the Lake Melville region. Has government taken any steps to help integrate these communities into the process?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: Mr. Chair, the whole methylmercury is housed in another department. I'm not sure that it would be fair for me to attempt to speak to what is happening right now with that. We could endeavour to get some answers for the hon. Member.

J. DINN: Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Yes, it's a priority to ensure the health of local residents is protected. Thank you, the hon. Member for the question. The terms of reference are out there and released. We're working in partnership with the Indigenous organizations.

We've just sent a letter to our federal counterparts requesting a representative from the federal government to sit on this group. I expect in the coming period of time, hopefully very short, we'll be able to announce those memberships.

Thank you for the question.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Under 2.7.02, Labrador Affairs, does the department plan to reopen the Labrador Affairs office in Labrador West?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank my hon. colleague for that question.

I can tell you that Labrador West is very important to us. There are a lot of good things happening in Labrador West and we're very, very committed.

There's a reason why we call Labrador the Big Land. Our population is spread over a very large land mass, from L'Anse au Clair in the south to Nain in the north. We have a hub office situated in your district, Mr. Chair, in Lake Melville. The staff there work very hard to provide a service right across Labrador. It is unfortunate; we would love to have a suboffice maybe in every district in Labrador, but in these fiscal times that's just not able to happen.

We do provide regular outreach. The staff on the ground proactively reach out to the leadership in Wabush and Labrador City and, myself, the door is open and we do calls, et cetera. We go there fairly regularly and we do our best to keep them engaged.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: So to be clear, there are no plans to reopen the office and that the current set-up – you're keeping in touch with the people in that area, but there is no plan to reopen the actual physical office in that area.

CHAIR: The Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: I'm not aware of any discussion, Mr. Chair, that has happened about reopening the office to date. Every day we come in and we have discussion in this House about the \$2-billion deficit that we're facing, that we're grappling with, as we try to provide services to the people of the province. As we have moved since the pandemic in March of '20 and moved more into a virtual world, many of the meetings that we are having across the province and with our counterparts across other provinces and territories is certainly virtual and we've been doing some of that with other areas outside of where the Labrador Affairs office is housed in Lake Melville, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

With regard to 2.7.02, Grants and Subsidies, would the minister be able to tell us about the \$500,000 increase in this year's Estimate?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: Mr. Chair, that really excites me to talk about the \$500,000 in Grants and Subsidies because, as somebody born and raised on the Coast, we had our first Labrador Winter Games in 1983 and '23 will be the 40th year. Every three years the games are held in Labrador. They're very steep, very rich in our culture and our heritage.

They were scheduled again for March of '22, but due to COVID I sat down with the board in Goose Bay, I believe it was last Friday or Saturday and they decided, in the interest of needing time to properly plan, et cetera, that the games would be postponed until March 2023.

But if there's one thing that brings Labradorians together and galvanizes us is the Labrador Winter Games.

I invite the hon. Member to put us in your calendar. Come to Labrador in March of '23 and participate in the Labrador Winter Games.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Minister, maybe I will.

I have been up to Labrador in the dead of winter and it's the only time I've seen ice build up on the inside of a double-pane glass.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. DINN: No, no salmon fishing in winter.

Under 2.8, Women and Gender Equality, is it possible, Minister – what actions are being taken to advance pay equity?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just give me a moment now. It was pay equity?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Pay equity.

I just have to bring up my – okay, here we go. Just one moment, bear with me. There we go.

I'll simply read what I have here. These are notes prepared by the staff, of course, and I will say I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the staff tonight. Of course, we don't get the luxury of a true Estimates session to have our officials and staff here, so I certainly will try my very best and so I ask you all to bear with me.

On the International Women's Day, as we know, it was stated here in the House on March 8, 2017, government supported a private Member's motion to start the process to explore potential ways to achieve pay equity in Newfoundland and Labrador. A pay equity interdepartmental

committee consisting of membership from the Treasury Board Secretariat; Immigration, Population Growth and Skills; Justice and Public Safety; and Labour was established to undertake research on the feasibility of such legislation in both the public and private spheres. While this committee is coordinated by the Office of Women and Gender Equality, the development and the drafting of any subsequent legislation would fall under the responsibility of other departments.

What I can say, I guess in ad lib, is that it's something that we certainly are committed to do within the fiscal reality of what we can do to implement ways on how we can advance this project.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

With regard to the interdepartmental committee and looking into this, when – and I think you mentioned we're looking at the feasibility of such legislation and committed to work within the fiscal reality, if I heard it correctly. When can we expect, I guess, some direction on this as to where we are going with it?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just recently there's been extensive work done by staff in the Office of Women and Gender Equality. We had some briefings recently with prospective ministers. It's something that's ongoing. As I said in the House earlier this week, it's something that has been talked about for decades, back as far as the cod moratorium in the '90s and, of course, we all know back – and I'll use a quote – when our province was flushed with cash, it was visited then as well. But it's still on the table.

Again, we are committed to exploring and doing everything that we can. As I said, there have been recent briefings, there are ongoing conversations. When we have any further updates I will be happy to inform this hon. House.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I guess the concern there is that it has been talked about for decades. All I can tell you is that we're going to have to move a little bit faster because we talk about the fiscal envelope and the fiscal realities; I would just say that pay equity is a fiscal reality for those who live it.

What I'd be looking for is something more concrete, in terms of are we going to have, by the fall, for example, some further direction as to where we're going, as opposed to when updates are available.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the concern. I think we all share this concern. I think every Member in this hon. House knows the importance of gender equity and pay equity, but I'd be telling you a lie if I said something otherwise that we have something. All I can do is the work that has been done. It's a priority. We're certainly committed to doing everything that we can within our fiscal reality. That is the honourable truth.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

(Technical difficulties.)

But then I've also heard my colleague from St. John's Centre talk about the fact: Oh, teachers' pension, they have a surplus. I know that former Premier Tom Marshall, at the time, before he left, they reformed the pension plans and it was all put under Provident10 and so on. There was a deal reached with the unions and everything else.

So I was of the impression, and perhaps wrongly so, that when all that happened, that kind of took care of the pension issues. I was also under the impression, again, listening to my colleague from St. John's Centre, he's saying teachers have a surplus. So which is it? Are there liabilities or aren't there liabilities? We will start with the Teachers' Pension, as an example. Is there a surplus or a liability?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

It's a very important question. I will say to you that that's a Department of Finance question. I don't have officials with me to help with the answer, so if I don't give you a fulsome-enough answer, I can certainly refer to them.

I will tell you that under the summary financial statements, notes to the consolidated financial statements, you will see a Teachers' Pension Plan as an unfunded liability related to that plan of \$1.759 billion. For the Public Service Pension Plan, it's \$2.445 billion. That shows on our consolidated financial statements as being an unfunded liability related to those.

I'll explain it this way: When the discussions around the change of direction for the pensions were untaken, there was a liability that was taken by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. While the funds may be doing well in the markets today, the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador still has on its books a promissory note for this amount of money.

It still reflects on the consolidated financial statements that we have an unfunded liability. If the promissory note were called, we'd have to pay that money toward those plans. I'll say that and I'm happy to provide the summary of financial statement to the Member opposite of those two plans.

Then, as you may have heard, there is also the Uniformed Services Pension Plan, which is the pension plan for Uniformed Services as well as for MHAs. That carries an unfunded liability as well.

CHAIR (Warr): The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Minister, for that.

I would appreciate getting that information, because you're kind of getting some mixed messages and so on. Sometimes it can get pretty confusing. I would like to see those numbers and, as you say, that summary to sort of get a sense – go ahead.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

If I may, I'll just add a little bit of colour. We're happy to do a briefing with you on this because it is a very important matter.

Based on that change in pension plans back in 2014 – and you'll perhaps recall this – every April 1 the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, for the next 30 years, has to make a \$300-million payment. We're on the hook for the next 30 years of a \$300-million payment every single year. That was based on the plan changes back in 2014.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Minister, I really do appreciate that because, like I say, some of this stuff you're getting mixed messages and it can be confusing. I didn't realize that and I'm sure there are a lot of people in the province who didn't realize that we're paying \$300 million a year –

S. COADY: For 30 years.

P. LANE: – for 30 years.

Now, of course, the other side of that is that it was an agreement that was made in good faith. I think it was made based on the fact that, certainly, I know constituents of mine at the time who had worked for government pointed out – and rightfully so – that governments of the past had taken pension money and spent it on roads and other projects. Then there were a whole bunch of people that were added to the pension plan who never did pay into the pension plan.

There were a lot of reasons why the pensions got in the mess they were in that, arguably, was not the fault of the employees themselves. I guess as part of that deal they were trying to make things right. Nonetheless, we do carry that liability and I didn't realize that – I thought that once the pensions all came together I thought we made some sort of one-time contribution to get everything on an even keel and then we would be self-sustaining. I'm hearing that's not the case, which I did not realize.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Just to go back to the summary of financial statements, I'd be happy to provide you a copy of the notes of the consolidated financial statements. Net unfunded liability for 2020 was \$4.889 billion. Even though we have made some gains in the market of late for the Teachers' Pension Plan – for all plans, really – there still is this unfunded liability on the books of Newfoundland and Labrador to which we make that payment for the next 30 years.

CHAIR: The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: I would imagine it would have to be quite a few gains to make up that amount so that we wouldn't have to pay that \$300 million a year, every year.

Mr. Chair, this is just for section 2. This is not Government House; this is not included here, right?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. LANE: No. That's going to be a separate one.

CHAIR: Government House has already been approved.

P. LANE: Oh, was it? Oh, okay.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, any further questions?

P. LANE: I have no more questions then.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: I'd be happy to meet with you at any time tonight to go over any questions you may have on that Estimate. I'd be happy to meet with you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Before I leave Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, I just want to mention that I did ask some questions on methylmercury, but it was last night in the Estimates for Environment and Climate Change. I really appreciate the minister being available here to answer again. I also appreciate seeing the Minister of CSSD stay as well to make himself available and the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

Anyway, just moving on now to the Labrador Affairs Secretariat, 2.7.01, Executive Support, looking at the Salaries –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

L. EVANS: Looking at the Salaries, there's a decrease of \$163,000 there. I'm assuming the position has either moved or become vacant. I was just wondering if you would be able to give an accounting of that and what other positions remain with the department.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank the Member for the question.

There are several things that are happening in that one little salary pot. You might have heard running right through Estimates in various departments that last year we had the 27 pay periods, so the removal of the 27th pay period,

\$18,000 – she's right; there was a reprofile to balance salary. That was the executive director position. There was actually \$8,600 there in salary increases.

Staffing complement, Mr. Chair, in the department: We have a total of 13 positions. I know the next question is going to be what vacancies do you have. Our staffing complement is 13. We have 11 filled. We are down right now one analyst that we are in the middle of recruiting.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: I'm just wondering, in terms of positions, the Labrador Affairs staff, where are they located? Are they all in Goose Bay or are they spread out throughout the region?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: No, that's right. The staffing complement is housed in the Labrador Affairs Secretariat office in Goose Bay. The communications staff for Labrador Affairs and Indigenous Affairs is housed in Goose Bay as well.

CHAIR: The Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

The Budget Speech noted there were monies allocated this year for the feasibility study on the new Nain airstrip. I was just wondering: What's the timeline for the completion of the feasibility study? Do you have a timeline for the actual final completion of the Nain airstrip?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: I'm going to start and then I may turn to my colleague in Transportation and Infrastructure to finish that.

I will say to my hon. colleague we were pretty excited in this fiscal climate to find the funding to come up with \$3.5 million towards a prefeasibility. It was last November, I believe, that myself and the Premier were in Nain and sat

down with Nunatsiavut and AngajukKâk leadership in the community and were reminded again, afresh, of the necessity for that airport being able to operate beyond daylight hours. I do hope, Mr. Chair, that my hon. colleague will be supporting the budget when she sees these wonderful benefits that are there for Labrador. This is a great start.

Regarding the timeline of when that's starting and rolling out, I'm going to look to my colleague in Transportation and Infrastructure to answer that part.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

E. LOVELESS: If I can ask, I think the Member was asking about the prefeasibility study and the time frames around that. Is that what you're asking?

L. EVANS: I was asking the timeline for the start of the feasibility study and the completion of the feasibility study. Also, do you have a timeline for the actual completion of the construction of the Nain airstrip?

E. LOVELESS: Well, the prefeasibility study is going to determine the steps for the construction process, which I don't have. I chatted with a group from Labrador on the prefeasibility, but in terms of the time frames I don't have that in terms of a completion right now. The prefeasibility study will be beginning soon.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: I think this is the perfect time to actually ask this: For the new Nain airstrip, \$6 million, \$3 million from the provincial government, is it actually going to be a feasibility study or is it a prefeasibility study?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

E. LOVELESS: Well, actually it's \$3.5 million from two levels of government. It is a prefeasibility study.

L. EVANS: So what we have is a prefeasibility study, and after the prefeasibility study is done,

then will there need to be a second step of a feasibility study or will they go right into construction?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

E. LOVELESS: I don't have the answer to that question at this time.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Okay.

Also, too, the \$200,000 that was put in last year's budget for the prefeasibility study for the road to the North Coast, do you have a timeline for the start and finish of this prefeasibility study?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

E. LOVELESS: I think you just asked that a couple of questions back. I think you did.

L. EVANS: No, I didn't. This is for the road because –

E. LOVELESS: A \$200,000 prefeasibility study is what you asked before in terms of time frame, correct?

L. EVANS: No.

The first question I asked was about the actual Nain airstrip. The reason why I'm actually very concerned right now is everybody is calling it a prefeasibility study for the Nain airstrip, and it was my understanding that the feasibility study was actually going to be done, which is why it was actually scheduled for two years and why it was costed at \$6 million-plus. That's for the Nain airstrip.

The other thing I was talking about was the prefeasibility study for the road to the North Coast that was already approved in last year's budget, which is a totally separate thing. Now, if you want to give us the road within two years, that would be fine. Like I said, I'll take what I can get. You're not going to get it for \$200,000; I know that.

I was just wondering: When are you going to start the prefeasibility study for the road that was approved last year? Now another budget has gone by and maybe next year we'll get to talk about it again, but then that will be two budgets ago. I just want to make sure that money is spent and things progress.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

E. LOVELESS: Well, what the Member is asking for is precise timelines and I'll attempt to get that for her.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the Member for Torngat Mountains for passing the torch on so I can continue with Women and Gender Equality.

2.8.01, under Minister's Office. Minister, under Salaries, could you please outline whose salaries are included here?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to my colleague.

I'm just going to give an outline on the background of Salaries, what we have here.

Salaries for 2020, there were savings in Salaries in the 2020-2021 fiscal year. One administrative position in the office is vacant and has been for some time. There are five policy staff: three senior policy and program development specialists and two senior policy, planning and research analysts. Last year, we saw three senior policy and program specialists all take leave for various lengths of time. To fill these duties, the senior policy, planning and research analysts were moved into those roles on an acting basis.

COVID-19 and the extended writ period made filling a senior policy analyst role on a

temporary basis more difficult, but one position was filled for a period of time before that person could move to another job within government. As well, funding for the intimate partner violence, that falls under the RNC, but I think I'll just defer now back to you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you for that information, Minister.

Under Minister's Office, continuing, for the last two years in Estimates we spoke about hosting a women's leadership conference in Labrador. Could you please provide an update on this?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you again to my hon. colleague.

Yes, an update now on the leadership event in Labrador. The Office of Women and Gender Equality held three successful women's leadership events across the province – St. John's, Corner Brook and Marystown, just for your background. Women's equality-seeking organizations in both Stephenville and Labrador have expressly requested similar events to be held in their regions. The onset of COVID-19, as we all know, has led to travel and gathering restrictions across the province at varying points over the course of the past year and a half. These restrictions, Mr. Chair, have impacted the office's planning of events in any region of the province at this time.

That's where we are there for that. That's the update there for that one.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Minister.

Are you planning on hosting a women's leadership conference at all in the present year?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to my colleague.

An update on that, of course, obviously we are taking the guidance of the chief medical officer of health regarding the travel gatherings. Once it's safe to do so, to host large events, we will revisit the idea of hosting women's leadership events in areas identified, should the events continue to meet the needs of the women and women's equality-seeking organizations.

I would certainly like to say yes off the cuff. It's something, certainly, I'm interested in doing. Again, we will take all those considerations into consideration before moving forward.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Minister, can you provide an update on the intimate partner violence prevention program, please?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you again to my colleague.

The intimate partner violence program: The Office of Women and Gender Equality provides a combined total of \$434,100 in funding per annum to the RNC and RCMP to allow for an enhanced collaborative, coordinated and consistent province-wide law enforcement response to the intimate partner violence. Funding for one police officer and a crime analyst at each police service is dedicated to provide guidance and oversight on intimate partner violence investigations.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Minister.

Has the intimate partner violence prevention program seen an increase in activity during COVID-19?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you again to my colleague.

I think I would have to consult maybe with my colleague, as well, from Justice and Public Safety on that. As we know, there was a need for a Domestic Violence Help Line – as we're all aware, of course – which was implemented. We know that there has been uptake on that. We know it's been successful in getting help where it's needed across our province. That number which I'm happy to say or proud to say that it is available for text option as well as calling. That number is 1-888-709-7090. Any further updates, I can defer to my staff and provide you with that information.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Minister, we would appreciate perhaps an update on whether there have been increases. That would be helpful.

Minister, can you provide an update on the Indigenous Women's conference? Was this held virtually?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Just one moment; bear with me now. What was it, the Indigenous Women's Gathering?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Women's conference, yes.

P. PARSONS: Is that right?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The conference, yes.

P. PARSONS: Just one moment now.

Did I give you this answer already for the past 13 years? No, I don't think I have, have I?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: No.

P. PARSONS: For the past 13 years the office, Women and Gender Equality, has provided funding for the provincial Indigenous Women's Gathering. Pending approval of budget 2021-2022, we'll provide a total of \$25,000 to support this year's gathering.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So was there a conference held virtually?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Because of COVID restrictions, I don't think there was. To be certain, I will defer back to staff. In consultation with my colleague for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, we don't think so, given the COVID restrictions. Just to be certain, we do have staff, of course, that are actually watching from the office. They are taking notes, so anything that we can't provide here we will provide for you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Last year in Estimates the minister noted that the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program was working very well on the Avalon and that expansion into the West Coast and then Labrador was being considered. Any progress on this?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you again to my colleague.

This is a very important priority that we heard in the House this past week. I'm happy to say that in *Budget 2020* \$425,000 was allocated to the office. We do know that that commitment has been reinforced again and, yes, we do know that

it is working currently in Stephenville, Corner Brook and St. John's.

We all heard, of course, and learned about the story that the cases in Labrador are four times the national average in Labrador alone. We know, and working in consultation with my colleague from Health and Community Services, the money has been allocated through this Department of Women and Gender Equality to Health and Community Services. It is my understanding, of course, that that work has begun to extend those very needed services in those regions, in particular in Labrador and Central Health.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That is great to hear. Thank you.

Last year in Estimates we spoke about Gender-based Analysis Plus training. Could you please provide an update on the training? Is training offered to agencies, boards and commissions in addition to the core public service?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, another very important priority that I am happy to talk about. The GBA+, as we know, the Premier has made that mandatory across every department in Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. That would include every extension of government with regard to boards and agencies.

I am happy to say that staff in the Department of Women and Gender Equality, they are very passionate about this and very elaborate about this. I am happy to say that training is offered to every department. Every public servant can avail of this.

Yes, it is mandatory and every policy, program, everything produced by Government of Newfoundland and Labrador will have a mandatory GBA+ lens. I want to reiterate that

anybody who wants training, that certainly can be made available. By all means, contact the department and the staff there are happy to do what they can.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

That is also great to hear.

Under subhead 2.8.02, Women and Gender Equality, under Salaries, could you please explain the variance in the Salaries line item? Last year there was a salary savings of \$169,800 and this year the budget is being increased to \$1 million. I am wondering if you could please give an account of that, please.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: I would ask if the Member could repeat the first part of the question; I didn't hear that.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Sure.

P. PARSONS: And what subheading was that exactly?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That's under 2.8.02, Women and Gender Equality, under Salaries. Could you please explain the variance in the Salaries line item? Last year we saw salary savings of \$169,800 and this year the budget is being increased to over \$1 million. If you could please give us an explanation for that.

P. PARSONS: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Reflections in saving due to vacancies and COVID-19 also played a role in that. Just to be safe, I am going to defer to staff to get you the specifics on that. I can assure the hon. Member that nothing fishy or underhanded happened but, just to be safe, we will get those specific details for you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, I appreciate that.

I believe I am out of time.

CHAIR: Oh, sorry. I remind the hon. Member that her speaking time has expired.

Thank you.

The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was so close, so close, and I have just a few other questions, but now I really have to go and talk about pensions. I'm going to say this right now just so that there are some facts on it.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. DINN: No, no. This is a response. I'm not looking for answers. I have the answers.

You can blame it on the MHA for Mount Pearl - Southlands if you want, but it's a good question.

In my entire teaching career, 32 years, the fixed-in pension was always the biggest issue. In 2006, I think it was, the Atlantic Accord money was put into the Teachers' Pension Plan. That was almost \$2 billion into the pension plan. Keep in mind, the plan was owned by government at that time. In 2008, with the stock market crash, that brought the plan almost up – a full fund was wiped out, namely because the asset mix hadn't changed. It wasn't derisked.

By the time I got to be president – and what I know about math is probably why I ended up teaching English and why I think God created calculators. I took it upon myself to get schooled. That was the year we decided we were moving to joint sponsorship. Keep in mind, up until joint sponsorship, government owned all liability – and I'm only going to focus on the Teachers' Pension Plan – at that time. There was a significant risk if we're going to move forward, but we moved forward. That was a significant change for us.

I should point out that the \$2-billion Atlantic Accord money, teachers gave up and made huge concessions on sick leave at that time – huge.

It's affected young teachers since. We got nothing for it in the long run, I guess.

When we began the process, government had reached out at the time, and it was with the PC administration. Just so you know, we had access to the government actuaries. We paid for their service, but the government at the time was good enough; we were going to have it so we were dealing with the same set of facts. We had our own consultant, Robert Blais, who was the top pension expert in the country. Look him up.

At that time, here was the issue, and I need to point this out: If government had converted our plan to a defined contribution plan at that time, government would still have been responsible or liable for all teachers who had retired up to that point, which was about \$1.89 billion, something like that, I think, or a little bit less than that. I forget the exact number.

Keep in mind that all retired teachers – this is the problem: How do you take care of the responsibilities to retired teachers at that time? Part of the deal was that government assumed responsibility for the unfunded liability for retired teachers. If nothing had been changed, that liability is still on the books. That's where the promissory note comes in. It's nothing to do with how the money was spent before that. That had already been settled. This had to do about making sure that those retired teachers were looked after.

Now, we could have said let's do up a brand new plan for all new teachers going forward and let government take care of the retired, or we roll it into one plan. But we still had to find a way to make sure the plan was viable and that the retired teachers at that point, who had no way of making any changes to their income, were looked after.

The promissory note is like a bond. The TPPC, the Teachers' Pension Plan Corporation, held it as an asset I guess, like anyone who purchases a government bond. It's a liability on the government books, but for the plan itself, it was about taking care of the retired teachers. Teachers made significant contributions again. They're paying something like 11.35 per cent on premiums matched by government. They're paying higher service costs.

They also took reduced benefits. They went from a best of five to a best of eight and there were concessions made on deferred salaries. All future liabilities are to be shared by both government and teachers. The plan is at 115 per cent funded. It's at the stage where once it hits 120 it will trigger a review, in which case they're either looking at increasing benefits or reducing premiums.

It's a complicated process, one that I had to explain to teachers at the time. We did our very best to make sure that they understood it because it's not as easy as it looks. Be clear: The pension plan is doing well. The liability, that \$130 million that's paid for 30 years, had to do with the retired teachers at the time. Even if the plan hadn't been changed and we'd gone to defined contribution, it would still have been on the books and still the liability of government to this day.

All I can suggest is that in any discussion on this that we also include representatives from the Teachers' Pension Plan Corporation. It's run by a board of experts right now, half of which are appointed by government and half of which are appointed by the NLTA. I would point out that the government's members are appointed by the Independent Appointments Commission – chosen. The NLTA engaged in the same process. There is no political interference in this. That's the best I can say on the pensions. Just make sure that you bring the Teachers' Pension Plan Corporation in on it. With that, Mr. Chair, here ended the lesson on pensions. So much for that.

Now, with the 2:52 minutes that I have left, to section 2.8, Women and Gender Equality. Since the minister was kind enough to provide me with some more information as to the apparent discrepancy in Grants and Subsidies – this may not be in the book, but I'm just curious here. It does say that there is some – I understand there is some \$293,000 in savings in '20-'21.

If I understand it correctly, the '20-'21 Salaries savings was based on the following: two employees on maternity leave and one employee on personal leave. Were they replaced? If they were on leave, were there people – because it's showing a savings in Salaries. How is that calculated?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you.

I think this will answer my other colleague's question as well, which I actually did state at the beginning. For Salaries 2020: There were savings in Salaries for the 2020-21 fiscal year. One administrative position in the office is vacant and has been for some time.

There are five policy staff: three senior policy and program development specialists and two senior policy, planning and research analysts. Last year, we saw the three senior policy and program specialists all take leave for varying lengths of time. To fill the duties, the senior policy, planning and research analysts were moved into those roles on an acting basis.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: What happened to the files that these three staff then would have been responsible for? Would they have been advanced, the work that they were responsible for?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I said, to fill these duties the senior policy, planning and research analysts were moved into these roles on an acting basis. Just to further explain, COVID and the extended writ period made filling the senior policy analyst role on a temporary basis more difficult, but one position was filled for a period of time before that person moved on to another job within government.

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

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to focus on a difficult subject. There's just been a statement issued by the 12th council of Happy Valley-Goose Bay. It's a video

statement just sent to me and I suspect my colleagues in Labrador have received it. They're pretty frustrated in that community.

Yesterday, I raised a question and I'll just remind the Members the question that I raised. I was speaking about how Happy Valley-Goose Bay is struggling, and frankly now overwhelmed, with the increasing numbers of individuals dealing with addictions and other mental health issues who are moving about the community without shelter and camping in the wooded areas of town. Their lives are at risk, as are the residents of the community who are frustrated and afraid. There have been many moves to provide support; however, the challenges remain.

I asked government for an update from what I believed was still happening, which was the senior officials working group that was searching for solutions. The Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs responded back. She informed me that the group is no longer in place – that was the first I'd heard of that – spoke about some of the efforts that are in place and then also spoke about her recent meeting with the community.

Minister, what I would say to you is in Labrador we are a rainbow of political representation. You are our representative in Cabinet. That's where these key decisions are being made. This council in Happy Valley-Goose Bay is calling on the Premier tonight in the most strong, committed and emotional fashion as I've ever seen. We are a divided group in Labrador.

As you said a few minutes ago, the Labrador Winter Games has always been the true catalyst to pull us all together to support Labrador, but unfortunately political fortunes have us separated. That's not, I would suggest, my intent nor my colleagues' from Labrador West or from Torngat Mountains; we are here to support Labrador and its people, number one. That is our priority.

I guess I'm asking you, Minister, if – and as I said on the weekend, I'm looking for a fresh start. For problems like this that are so complicated, I feel we really need to pull together and work this out. We have to get this right. I think the party politics have to go to the

side and we have to tackle these very difficult problems.

I'll just put that thought out there.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to take a couple of minutes to respond to that. I did just see the statement.

I want to say to my hon. colleague, the Member for Lake Melville, he mentioned party politics; this has absolutely nothing to do with politics. I mentioned yesterday in this House: When you are supporting individuals who are homeless or transiently homeless, you're dealing with many, many things. The situation is very, very complex. There are no quick fixes, but a coordinated approach is under way.

As I mentioned to the Member, there was a working group that was in place, but members themselves said it's ineffective. Then there was a community action group put together. Over the last number of months there have been many, many things that have happened that were not happening a year ago. When we would meet at larger tables in Lake Melville – usually the meetings were – folks were asking for outreach workers. There are now a total, Mr. Chair, of three outreach workers doing different things.

The town has been engaged on this issue. I know in the past, when leadership in the community have come in and met with the minister of Justice – not the current one, the previous one – and asked for more enforcement, that's not always the answer when you're dealing with those individuals with complex issues. We were really pleased that the establishment of a mobile crisis response team by the health authority and the RCMP was put in place.

I did see the statement tonight from the town; I think we all have a role to play here with this vulnerable population, the town, the provincial and the federal governments.

I'll also say, Mr. Chair, that to my knowledge, the town have not reached out in recent weeks or months to request a meeting with the minister

for Labrador Affairs. I know in a previous life, the premier was the minister for Labrador. This particular Premier is not the minister for Labrador, and I know they've been reaching out to him again and again. To my knowledge, they've not reached out to me.

I'm happy to sit down with the Town of Happy Valley-Goose Bay anytime they reach out. I believe I've done so anytime they've reached out in the past. We believe that the community is critical in seeking long-term solutions. We look forward to continuing a partnership with the community.

I know the Hub have moved to a 24-hour service there. Even with 24 hours they're full. My latest information that I got tells me that the Labrador Friendship Centre is considering intake of displaced individuals to alleviate pressures from the Housing Hub.

So no easy solutions, but a number of things – we're going to continue to have a presence there with that vulnerable population.

I did see in the statement tonight, Mr. Chair, that it looks like the town themselves are taking a number of actions upon themselves. Hopefully, that will all help with a positive response as well.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: I guess what I struggle with, we're here in the Legislature and doing the work of the province and our responsibilities and the pleas from home from people who are worried, from people who are battling with addictions and really in a very dangerous place. I think right now what the problem is, is that we don't have a good cohesive group. I just think what of my office could bring to the table. I think what some of the other offices in Labrador at the provincial level could bring to the table; we're not involved.

I guess, again, I will say, I'm here on this floor right now and I'm offering my office, and I'm sure my colleagues would readily do the same. As you say, it's very complicated. We have a lot of people afraid, worried, upset and at risk. I just hope we can figure this out.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: Mr. Chair, I say to the hon. Member, it's not a new problem, when he says things have changed in Labrador and we now have to work together. We have been working together on this issue, all MHAs, I think, in Labrador. It's not new, it's very challenging. I remind the Member again that the town has been engaged on the issue for months.

I had a town councillor that reached out to me some time ago and wanted to be a part of the group. We made sure when I was, then, the minister responsible for Housing that the councillor with the Town of Happy Valley was placed on that committee and accepted there so the town would have a direct link between the community action committee and to report back to the Town of Happy Valley.

I would also say to my colleague – very respectfully, we're going here late into the night and we're tired – if he has any solutions my door is open to sit down with you and to hear them, and I say that sincerely.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: I appreciate that, my friend, the minister, who I have known and worked with for some time, but the closest access I have to your staff is the washroom in that building that I'm in; that's as close as I can get to your team. I'm trying, but the walls are up.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: Just to reiterate, Mr. Chair, I said to my hon. colleague I am happy to sit down with him anytime he reaches out and wants to bring some solutions – propose some solutions to work with me for the betterment of the district he represents on this very complex issue. My door is open and I am very happy to sit down with him as we focus on an approach to try and find ourselves in a better place than we are today.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to return back to subhead 2.8.02, Women and Gender Equality, under Professional Services, Minister, in 2021, \$270,000 was budgeted but only \$128,500 was used. Could you please give some information on this line item, including an outline of how the \$128,500 was spent, please?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

If I'm on the right line, what I have here is it reflects the savings due to reduced travel, which is due to COVID. It reflects the increase related to the reversal of the prior year funding for one-time COVID grant initiative – maybe, I think.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Holyrood.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Holyrood?

CHAIR: Harbour Main, sorry.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

CHAIR: Same district.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That's close. Thank you.

Minister, under Purchased Services, can you please explain where \$36,300 in savings was found last year?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

What I have here is it reflects savings due to reduced requirements. Again, a lot of this is due to the COVID restrictions.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:

Additionally, this year the budget is planned to increase to \$337,000. Could you please outline what is being planned under this expenditure?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: I'm just getting some updates now from staff, Mr. Chair, if you can bear with me. This is saying here the RCMP Professional Services. I'm not sure if that's right. Could you just repeat the question again, I'll ask the Member.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Sure, yes.

This year the budget is planned to increase to \$337,000. Could you please outline what is being planned under this expenditure? That's under Purchased Services.

P. PARSONS: It's not clear to me here in the binder. I will defer and get that for you from staff.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Sure.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That would be great. I appreciate that, Minister.

Under Grants and Subsidies, could you please outline how the \$3 million was allocated last year?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: For Grants and Subsidies, for *Budget 2021* we'll see the following: \$80,000 staying in the Grants line to show an increase in miscellaneous grants available through the Office of Women and Gender Equality. \$70,000 has been moved to the Salaries line to help increase capacity in the office. \$225,000 moved to Purchased Services for continued expansion of the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program. \$50,000 moved to Purchased Services for work related to the Premier's Roundtable on Gender Equity and Daughters of the Vote.

As well, in April 2020, during the initial COVID lockdown, the office issued grants of \$30,000 each to Thrive and the St. John's Status of Women to provide direct supports to sex workers who were not able to access other supports during the pandemic. This was a one-time funding and has been removed from the Grants and Subsidies line for *Budget 2021*.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: This year you're saying the grant amount is being decreased to \$2.8 million. If you could just clarify again why that is happening.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Just bear with me here.

It's not clear to me here based on what staff is telling me, so, again, I apologize but, Mr. Chair, this is my very first time doing this. We will certainly get the information for you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality for your co-operation and your willingness to answer my questions tonight.

Thank you. That concludes my questions for the subheads.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just to go back to where I left off with regard to the staff. This is an issue I've brought up in a few other areas. As I understand it, the work – the three people who were on leave – was redistributed to others. I've talked about this in other departments in terms of attrition. I know this is not attrition in this case, but it still means

that the workload has increased for certain people here.

I use the example at Holy Heart, where I taught, again: Three secretaries reduced to two. The same work had to be done, but it got redistributed, in this case, to the teachers in the school and certain other things weren't done. When it came to, for example, whether it was copying the exams, it now fell to the teachers, which meant that they had less time to do other things such as helping students and so on and so forth.

Here's my concern: I guess in this situation, when we're looking at, especially in some cases, vulnerable populations, how did this not impact the work of this portfolio? That's my concern, that if you're not filling the positions and if the work is redistributed, how could it not but impact the work of that portfolio?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: To my understanding, Mr. Chair, it hasn't impacted negatively at all – to my understanding. Again, I can get more details to you, but from my understanding, it hasn't negatively impacted the office or the staff at all.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: If that's the case, then do we need the three staff?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Well, Mr. Chair, what I will say, and also what's being confirmed to me now from staff, there is no negative impact with work with our community.

I would say absolutely, yes, we certainly do need the staff. I would say we even need more. I'm very proud that the Premier has made this a stand-alone portfolio once again facing issues for women and gender equality all around. As you can appreciate at the scope of the department, the mandate has expanded. Not just for the status of women, but for gender-diverse

individuals as well. The mandate has actually expanded.

Again, just to say to the Member, as we talked about last week, there have been no cuts, but I would always argue that more resources to advance women, vulnerable populations and marginalized groups are needed. Would the Member disagree with that?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: I totally agree with that, Chair. No issue with that at all, and that's my point, too, with it. If the salary is down, it is making the work harder for those who are left behind. I can't see in any other way that it would negatively impact. So, to me, yes, put more there. No issue with that. You'll never get me arguing for cutting less staff. In this case if it didn't impact it, then do we need it? I would suggest it did impact.

I'm reading from the sheet now that the minister gave me earlier – I think it was yesterday. Again, I'm going to go to Grants and Subsidies. As I understand this breakdown, there is \$425,000 and the minister used the term "rightsizing" in this to reflect the intended expenditures. Because my issue is with the fact that Grants and Subsidies, if you look at the budget line there from \$3,239,900 down to \$2,834,900 it would suggest by the numbers that there has been a drop of \$405,000.

Now, if I'm looking at this, what I've got here is that actually – I'm assuming here this is what – and I'm trying to make some sense out of it because just in how it's redistributed is confusing. Salaries, an extra \$70,000 allocated to the new policy analyst position, I would take it that that did not come out of the Grants and Subsidies line.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: The Grants and Subsidies line, it certainly was cloudy. As we talked about, again, that seems to be a bit of a bone of contention, I guess, this past week. That said, though, yes, it

certainly was confusing for me, not just the hon. Member.

Again, just to reiterate, for *Budget 2020*, the \$425,000 was allocated to the Office of Women and Gender Equality, and it was from a promise that the Premier made to increase the capacity for the office. The additional funding was earmarked for projects, such as the expansion of the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program, the Premier's Roundtable on Gender Equity, our work on women in leadership and additional grant opportunities, as well as staff funding. Because the allocation of the funding was a late addition it was placed in the Grants line for *Budget 2020*. This year, the funding has been relocated to the budget line where it was more appropriately aligned.

For *Budget 2021*, we'll see the following: \$80,000 staying in the Grants line to show an increase in miscellaneous grants available through the Office of Women and Gender Equality; \$70,000 has been moved to the Salaries line to help increase capacity in the office; \$225,000 moved to Purchased Services for the continued expansion of the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program; \$50,000 moved to Purchased Services for work related to the Premier's Roundtable on Gender Equity and Daughters of the Vote, which I'm happy to say will be happening this coming fall.

I will encourage, of course, all young women and gender-diverse individuals to certainly partake in that. We'll be certainly extending and doing what we can to get the word out to get as much uptake on that as possible.

As well, in April 2020, during the initial COVID lockdown, the office issued two grants of \$30,000 each to THRIVE and St. John's Status of Women to provide direct supports to sex workers who were not able to access other supports during the pandemic. This is a one-time funding and has been removed from the Grants and Subsidies line for *Budget 2021*.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: So just to clarify and make sure I'm understanding it; you may have just said it there and I just want to make sure that I heard it correctly. The \$70,000 that went into salaries did indeed come from the Grants and Subsidies line. I thought that's what you seem to imply there. I want to make sure I heard that correctly.

P. PARSONS: It came out of the \$425,000.

J. DINN: But it did not come from the Grants and Subsidies, correct?

P. PARSONS: I'm going to get that confirmed by staff, just to be accurate. I don't want to mislead, unintentionally.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Just to look at what you've got listed here then with the Operating Accounts, Purchased Services, that this money it comes to \$275,000, I think. That's \$225,000 for the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program, \$25,000 for the Premier's Roundtable on Gender Equity and \$25,000 for Daughters of the Vote. That was rightsized from the Grants and Subsidies line.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Yes, it came from the Grants and Subsidies line.

J. DINN: Okay.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: But another \$80,000 was put back into it. I think you have here Grants and Subsidy, \$80,000 for miscellaneous grants for community organizations.

P. PARSONS: Yes.

J. DINN: With that, even last year, there was \$3,095,300 – that was the actuals for the Grants and we see that it has declined again. So what you're telling me is that none of the groups that would have had grants or subsidies received

less, nor were there any groups that didn't receive anything?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Yes, to the hon. Member. I want to reiterate that nothing has been cut from our budgets. Nothing has been decreased from groups or community partners. There were absolutely no funding cuts and what I am seeing too is the \$80,000 stayed.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

P. PARSONS: Maybe you can clarify this. Would it be possible to have the organization that receives grants and subsidies up to this year, maybe two or three years back as well? Then I can better ask that question or understand what is going on with it.

With that, Chair, thank you very much.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Is the House ready for the question?

Shall 2.1.01 to 2.8.03 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.1.01 through 2.8.03 carried.

CHAIR: Can I have the Clerk call the next set of subheads, please.

CLERK: Office of the Chief Information Officer, 4.1.01 through 4.1.05 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 4.1.01 through 4.1.05 inclusive carry?

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just to let you know I'm in a different seat here.

CHAIR: I noticed.

L. O'DRISCOLL: For the people that need to recognize that, thank you.

I just have a couple of questions. One question to start off: In Estimates for Transportation and Infrastructure, we were told that the Wi-Fi at the government buildings falls under OCIO. Is that correct?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That is absolutely correct. I'm very pleased to be here tonight to speak about OCIO. I have a few introductory remarks to make, if that is okay with the Chair.

The OCIO is a very important part of provincial government, in my opinion. It supports IT, information management and functions of core government and agencies, boards and commissions and entities. We provide essentially all IT for the provincial government, the RNC, the Provincial Courts, the Supreme Courts and the Public Procurement Agency.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

S. STOODLEY: Yes, they do a lot of work.

The OCIO also supports – obviously, we do have the Digital Government mandate as well. This could be anything from Wi-Fi, as the Member asks; infrastructure, like desktop support; all the technology, the laptops, desktops; backup of all government data. Our provincial government, just a fun fact, we have close to one petabyte, which is a billion megabytes, of government data. That's a lot of data we have, and manage and store and maintain.

We provide day-to-day support of over 600 departmental applications, software programs,

which I'm desperately trying to reduce. We have 600 government systems here, which is too many, but that's what we have right now and we support.

We have 308 employees, both permanent and temporary. There are a lot of staff that work very hard to keep all of our devices powered and working and connected to the Internet and all that kind of stuff.

The OCIO handles more than 120,000 departmental requests every year. That could be anything from a change to a service or a program or a password reset. They also do a portfolio of projects. In any given time, we have between 40 and 50 projects going on with various departments. Some are funded from within OCIO; some are funded from the federal government. Some are partnered with other provinces. We have a range of IT projects that we undertake with members of our provincial government.

Our Estimates structure, it has been unchanged in the last five years.

I'll talk about the different areas of the OCIO. We have Corporate Services and Projects, which is current and capital, responsible for all new IT project work for all departments and agencies under the OCIO Corporate Services. We have another division, Application and Information Management Services, responsible for support and maintenance of the 600 applications that are used across government. Then we have the very important Operations and Security area, responsible for the data centres, the technology infrastructure – so all the laptops, network servers – and protection and security. A big piece is security.

Like I mentioned, when we get into it, I'll speak a bit more about this. Just to give you some context, we have over 160 pieces of software that we have to renew every year, so there are a lot of, kind of, software things. When you look at Supplies in our budget, Supplies really includes software. It's not pens and paper. Well, it probably includes pens and paper as well, but we're talking about software that we buy for all the provincial government and all the courts and the RNC and everyone, so a range of things. I look forward to going into detail with you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister, for those opening remarks.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm aware of many line items and budget items in OCIO will change as projects are finished and moved to the next stage. Could you please give an overview of the major projects that are ongoing at OCIO currently?

S. STOODLEY: Absolutely, Mr. Chair.

I'd be happy to give the Member a list of all the projects. We have 28 active projects at this moment in time. Many we work with are on hold, for example, if a department is not ready to execute on something. Just to give you an idea here, there's a shared apprenticeship management system project that's ongoing. We're working with the other Atlantic provinces on that.

Our digital government and MyGovNL portal, we would consider that a project with a project team. Obviously, that's one that's delivering lot of value of taxpayers, I would argue. It's one of my favourite projects.

Another one I really like is the AMANDA program. We've essentially invested in a software program that's going to allow us to put all ticketing and licensing applications online. This includes, if you're a mortgage broker and you apply for a mortgage broker license and you have to submit paperwork every year, they'll be able to do all that online. Right now, it's a paper-based process.

Those are just a few highlights of my favourite ongoing projects, but I'd be happy to give the Member a complete list.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you for that, and hopefully we'll get a list. Certainly appreciate that.

One other question I had: Why don't we have free public Wi-Fi at all government buildings?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you to the hon. Member across the way.

That's not something that I've thought about, honestly. If you're interested in a guest Wi-Fi account, I know the House of Assembly provides five days' worth of access.

As an MHA, if you would like a guest Wi-Fi account, I have one for my – we can give you one with a longer –

L. O'DRISCOLL: No, an MHA doesn't have to worry.

S. STOODLEY: No, for another device, for example.

There are guest Wi-Fi accounts that are given to people. Given our financial situation and our limited budget, maintaining another Wi-Fi infrastructure that doesn't have a username and password associated with it would have, I would argue, significant cost and effort associated with it. I do understand that our current Wi-Fi is quite old. The hardware is quite old and needs investment. I would argue that now is not the time to expand services in that department and that we need to refresh the hardware that we currently have as our next priority for Wi-Fi.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you so much for that.

Just go under subheading 4.1.01, under Salaries. Could you please outline any vacancies which gave the savings in the previous fiscal year, and how did that impact operations?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The \$214,000 savings is due to attrition, employee turnover and HR timing filling these vacancies. A lot of the IT roles that we hire are difficult to fill. Sometimes positions are vacant a bit more than we'd like, but I think you'll find that a factor across all of our departments. We do find that other government entities, even, they pay more than we do, for example. Sometimes we see –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

S. STOODLEY: – IT experts leaving OCIO to go to a job at Nalcor that pays higher.

It is a tricky situation, but we have a strong, hard-working IT team I'm very proud of. It's just delays in hiring.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Under Supplies, last year the budget for Supplies was \$920,700, and less than one-third, \$244,200, was spent. Can you explain that variance?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

As I mentioned in my opening, Supplies for OCIO is mostly software. In this particular instance this is related to the apprenticeship management system project that I alluded. This is a project that's shared across Atlantic provinces. There's a delay in that project because of COVID. As a result, we had planned on spending a lot more on that project this past year, but because of that delay, because of the Atlantic Canadian nature of that project, it's pushed out a bit.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Under Professional Services. Could you please outline the Professional Services that were purchased last year and how does the \$1.5 million break down?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Sure. Thank you very much for the question.

When we talk about Professional Services for OCIO, a lot of that that is contractors. In many instances we can't hire a full-time employee with a particular skill set, so we end up using, for example, one of the local IT consulting companies and they give us a resource that's more expensive. In some cases we absolutely have to have that kind of skill set. The Professional Services is made up of those types of skills.

That would also be aligned with what projects we're doing. We might need a different skill set. For example, our government mainframe, you need COBOL development skills and no one graduating from school now has those type of skills. They're quite rare, so we need specialized consultants to help us with that. The range in Professional Services funding, I guess, just goes along with the different project mix and different skill sets that we need at a particular point in time from a local consulting company.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you for that.

Under Property, Furnishings and Equipment, can you explain the \$312,600 in spending?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The extra money under Property, Furnishings and Equipment is for new laptops for COVID-19. OCIO purchased 70 new laptops for staff to work from home, and when we talk about the RNC funding as well, we also pay for all the laptops that the RNC use. The technology that they have in their cars, they're special laptops essentially and they're about \$5,000 each and we also purchased an additional 20 of those. The increase is primarily made up of the 70 new laptops and the 20 new RNC laptops and then

also a few other legacy system modernization costs.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you.

Under section 4.1.02, under Salaries. Salaries are expected to increase to \$8.45 million. I'm just wondering why.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The increase would be as a result of the government pay increase, and that's the issue I mentioned earlier about employee turnover and delays in hiring. I also, I guess, just want to give a bit more context: Moving forward, we have a \$32,000 decrease from attrition, a \$309,000 decrease for the 27th pay period that I know was common across all departments and then \$452,000 is the salary increase.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: I just wonder one other thing: What major RFPs does OCIO have on the market currently?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: I'll have to get a list for the Member. I only know of one off the top of my head and that's one that I think was mentioned in our Estimates this morning, looking at if there are other options to handle our mainframe because the technology is quite old. We have gone out to see if there are any other options that the private market can bring forward.

I might have an answer in a minute; the experts are sending me some stuff, but that's the one off the top of my head. I'll return and give the Member the additional information.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Perfect.

Still under subsection 4.1.02, Supplies last year went over budget by \$17,500. Can you explain that?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Obviously, I mentioned Supplies is primarily software. But again as a result of COVID-19, we had to buy more webcams and headsets. We had to buy more Webex accounts. You know we all use Webex. The OCIO had to pay for all those accounts, as well as there are certain licences that people needed in order to work from home on their laptops. We had extra funding for that as well.

I just have the answer about the RFIs for the previous question. The mainframe one I mentioned. There's a campsite reservation system replacement currently out, RFI. Then a managed security service, that is out but not yet awarded. I can speak more about that if anyone likes.

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

The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: I'm going to keep mine simple on this one because I've learned, with most of the Purchased Services, it somehow relates to laptops and so on and so forth. I'm just curious – and I'm going to use one catch-all for all of them.

With regard to Professional Services – I know you've already touched on some. In 4.1.01 to 4.1.04, especially when I'm looking at – well, actually Professional Services in just about all, with the exception of maybe Operations and Security, where Purchased Services has increased. Minister, if you could give me just an overview of generally what we're looking at, because that's a significant purchase when you look at outside help where we're not going in-house.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm not sure – I'm just going to see with my team, if they have anything to add.

J. DINN: You can give me a listing specifically – later on, you might have that there. But overall what we getting from outside that we're not getting in-house. If it can't be done now, we can do it – it's a lot of money.

CHAIR: Go ahead, Minister.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I guess I'll touch on that. Purchased Services isn't just outside contractors, but that is a significant portion of it. For projects – like the OCIO does a lot of one-time projects and we need a certain skill set. It might only be for six months, four months or 13 months, so we need a specific developer with that skill set for eight months. It doesn't necessarily always make sense to go out and hire someone with those skills because we only need them for eight months. That's kind of, on a project-by-project basis, why it makes sense to get contractors.

We also get them if, for example, we are unable to hire a cybersecurity expert at the rate that the provincial government would pay a cybersecurity expert. We've tackled that in other ways, which I can speak about, but that's kind of one example.

I'll also, I guess, speak to some other Purchased Services. If we look under, for example, 4.1.02, Purchased Services, that includes training as well. We obviously have a lot of IT software, and those programs require training. For example, that's Oracle financial database training; the HPRM workflow training, so the financial services software that we use, the IT training around that for staff. It makes a range of things.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Sorry, Chair.

When it comes to the IT training, trust me, I get that totally. This would be an outside agency or an organization doing it, or would there be an in-house – and I'm going back to my school days; there was always a teacher or two who were the IT experts, I guess. That's where I'm going.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: I'll just use this from my past life experience in terms of IT training, not necessarily from my – I'm not intimately involved in the OCIO training.

Generally, for example, if you're using a specialized piece of software and you need to be trained on that, there might only be three people that need to be trained in it once every four years, for example. There would be an expert at that company that would come and you would probably do virtual training, because it's highly specialized. We're not talking about how to use Excel; we're talking about a piece of software that maybe is used in five other provinces in Canada. I guess it's quite rare and not something that we would be training hundreds and hundreds of people on.

I also just want to add, though, to Purchased Services, because I guess you asked overall. If I move on to, for example, 4.1.03, Purchased Services also includes our mainframe and data centre contract costs. We run a data centre for provincial government, NLCHI, RNC, so we have a lot of costs around that. Maintenance for some of those major infrastructure things. Then, also, our cybersecurity contract that is out currently for RFI.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: The only thing I'll close with, I am just wondering when we talk about the government budget – and I'm not just referring to the minister's department here now. When you go through the budget lines, there is an awful lot of money that goes out in Purchased Services that really is nothing to do with the public servants, more or less, but it money that is going out to other organizations.

Just looking here, maybe it is just a small department and technology is extremely expensive, but I am just curious: Has there ever been a cost-benefit analysis done of hiring someone in-house who could be responsible for all departments to do that training? I don't know if it is the same for all other departments, but I am just curious: Has any analysis of that been done as to whether it would be cheaper to have one person in-house?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: I'm not sure that analysis has been done but from my general knowledge of IT systems, for example, in a lot of instances it is not appropriate for someone internally to do this training. For example, Cisco – I'm familiar with this because someone in my immediate family works with a lot of networking equipment. Cisco is a provider of networking equipment. To get training at Cisco, it is thousands of dollars and you have to get trained by a Cisco expert and then you get a certification and that gives you permission to work on the Cisco-branded equipment.

There might be two staff that have to do three weeks worth of Cisco training, just using Cisco as an example. I don't even know if we use Cisco here in the provincial government. It is usually very specific, highly specialized to that software, and it also provides a qualification. You get a certificate that you could move from business to business with.

As we have 600 applications, which are way too many, I'm not sure if it would be feasible to have training teams – there wouldn't be enough time for them to keep up on everything.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm done, in more ways than one.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

A couple of questions. First of all, I just want to say, Mr. Chair, that I appreciate the minister's enthusiasm and it is nice to see. I hope her colleagues are watching. A couple of questions here, very briefly.

I'm just wondering, Minister, over the past year have there been any issues at OCIO that have occurred as it relates to security threats, hacking or anything like that? If something like that were to happen, is that something that is automatically reported to the Privacy Commissioner's office? How would that work?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I guess there are a few points I'll touch on there because I think that's a very big question. There are attacks on our network and on any big institution's network all day and every day – thousands.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

S. STOODLEY: It happens a lot, yes.

I'm not a cybersecurity expert, but when you look at the range of the different types of attacks, there's automated, a computer in a faraway country is trying to infiltrate our network. Then there are the emails that I'm sure you get and many of my colleagues get that look like they're from Sarah Stoodley, but they're not really from Sarah Stoodley. They say: Oh, can you call me? Are you there? I need you to do something really quickly. So that's more of the social engineering cyberattack where they're getting me to do something. That happens a lot.

We also have a lot of people sending the provincial government spam email and a big part of that would be malicious. Just to give you some context – I know we all get some spam emails – the provincial government blocks 88 per cent of the emails. Eighty-eight per cent of the emails don't even get in the system. That's how much junk, spam and malicious emails. For example, just last week I got an email that was malicious and that the team ran some analysis. They determined this is a potential threat and so

they removed it from everyone's email inbox, because they have that power.

I am aware of some potential security issues. I'm not sure it's appropriate to announce them in a public setting because that also could – I won't say issues, but there have been different kinds of attempts and I wouldn't want to talk about those publicly in a public forum. There has not been any kind of breaches, or data losses or anything like that.

What else can I say? Oh, so my team tells me that Newfoundland and Labrador has the best scorecard out of the provinces over the last four reports. We also have an agreement with the federal government to share cybersecurity information and information about attacks. If we get an attack, then we take that aggregate information and we share it with the federal government. They share that across the provinces so that we can all try to protect each other.

It is a big risk, though. I believe the government of Nunatsiavut fell victim to quite a significant attack a few years ago. I'm not sure what the outcome was, but I think they had to rebuild everything from scratch. It is a significant risk, one that we mitigate as much as we can. There's kind of a multi-faceted way.

A new thing I'll just talk about that we've done recently: Because, for example, we're unable to hire a cybersecurity expert at the rates that the provincial government would pay, we have this RFI for a managed cybersecurity service. It's kind of a new model where we're paying someone, I believe, a few hundred thousand dollars over a few years. I'm not sure about the contractual sensitivity, so I don't want to be too specific there.

They essentially put some stuff on our networks that monitor everything for malicious activity. We're trying to derisk as much as possible, but it is a reasonable threat. It keeps some of our teams up at night.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you for that very extensive answer, Minister.

One part that you didn't mention that I asked, so I'll ask this part again: What interaction would there be between OCIO and the Privacy Commissioner? Given the fact that the Privacy Commissioner obviously has a role to make sure that public information is protected, I would think that there would be some interaction there where he would get some kinds of reports or assurances or something – whatever it is. Or if there is a potential breach, he is notified that he understands that OCIO is indeed protecting the public's information.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just wanted to correct something I just said. I said Nunatsiavut Government; it was the Nunavut government. Apologies for that. It was my mistake.

In terms of the Member's question about the Privacy Commissioner, I guess the OCIO would have its own privacy controls in place. It would do its own privacy analysis on different levels of projects. My team are telling me that whenever there is a breach or a potential breach, they would engage the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Every time there's a new system or a new piece of technology is released that's resident-facing, they do a privacy impact assessment with the Privacy Commissioner.

For example, MyGovNL. Everything that is available to the public has been vetted and discussed with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner. My understanding is there are no outstanding concerns or anything. I did meet with the Privacy Commissioner from that perspective just before Christmas. I believe they have an excellent working relationship.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you for that, Minister.

I guess my final question: Are there any plans that you're able to share in terms of any potential expansion of OCIO? As an example, in the Budget Speech they're talking about basically getting rid of the English School

District. We're talking about consolidation of backroom office functions with health care authorities. We're talking about some sort of a reorganization of Nalcor.

You just said, I think, in answer to maybe one of our colleagues – I'm not sure; I heard you mention it at some point – that sometimes it's hard for us to keep employees because they go somewhere like Nalcor where they're making more money, paying people more. Is there any bigger plan, if you will, to try to bring more, whether it be ABCs and so on, under the auspices of OCIO as opposed to where they currently exist?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As we look at the things announced in the budget – for example, the NLESD – I haven't had a discussion yet with the teams, but my expectation would be that the IT portion would come in to OCIO. NLCHI, I think, is a bit different; they have a lot of specialized skills. For example, if you work in NLCHI, the OCIO certainly would be doing the desktop support and setting up your laptop and your cellphone. Yes, while OCIO will have to expand, as we take on more organizations, I imagine that's where some of the savings can come as well because there's a lot of duplication.

I know in terms of shared services, which I'm responsible for, that's also an area where there are a lot of efficiencies that we can gain, obviously, from IT help desk. We already do the RNC, the Supreme Court and the provincial government. We certainly are ready. We're working now on how do we kind of give these new organizations a hug and bring them in.

CHAIR: The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Yes, that's basically all I had, Mr. Chair.

I would just say to the minister, yes, I think in an effort to achieve savings for government from an overall perspective, I would certainly see this division, your department, playing a very

significant role through the use of technology and through the use of bringing things together. You say giving them all a big hug. Whatever you want to call it, I think there are efficiencies to be found and I think that this division and your department is going to be one of the key pieces in that.

I wish you all the success in the world with that, because as I've said many times – and I think we all agree – we need to find ways to become more efficient and save money to get ourselves out of this absolute hole that we're in.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll go back to 4.1.02 under Professional Services. Can the minister explain how money was spent in Professional Services last year and where the money is planned to be spent this year?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I kind of mentioned, Professional Services covers a range of things from training. Also, it captures when we need experts to come in and work on specific systems or for specific projects. The reduction in costs – I'm just looking here now, sorry. This past year, the reduction in costs was as a result of COVID-19 delays. Vendors were adjusting to COVID-19. Some of the staff had less work to do. The contractors had less work to do because things were moving slower from COVID-19, so that resulted in lower costs.

Then, if we look forward, the increase here is a result of we're moving to a new mainframe contract, so there's transition work associated with that, in addition to all the things I mentioned already that are under Professional Services.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you.

Under Property, Furnishings and Equipment, can you explain the \$11,300 in expenditure?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That \$11,300 for this past year is an increase because we bought extra laptops and equipment for employees so that they could work from home during COVID-19 under this division. Then next year, the \$8,000, we're doing a reallocation from Purchased Services to address the deficiencies in this budget line item.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Under Revenue - Provincial, could you please outline how this revenue is generated and what accounts for the variance? I note that last year \$72,700 was expected, that \$26,200 was received, and this year you're anticipating \$52,000 in revenue.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

If we look at this past year, the decrease in revenue is because the OCIO did not provide support to Provident10 and the Teachers' Pension Plan IT systems, as they have in the past – for example, payroll systems. When they do work, they collect revenue from them, from the pension corporations, the Newfoundland and Labrador Municipal Financing Corporation and the Legal Aid Commission. That was a reduction because we didn't need to do any work for Provident10 and the Teachers' Pension Plan.

Then in terms of moving forward, the reduction is because we're not anticipating doing work for the same, Provident10 and the Teachers' Pension Plan, so we're expecting less revenue.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Can the minister provide a list of embedded contractors – position titles are fine – and the length that they have been with OCIO?

S. STOODLEY: Could you repeat the question, sorry?

L. O'DRISCOLL: Can the minister provide a list of embedded contractors – position titles are fine – and the length that they have been with OCIO?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Yes, Mr. Chair, we can certainly provide that to the Member.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Under section 4.1.03, under Salaries, could you please outline the variance in the salary line item? I note that last fiscal year there was a savings of \$529,000.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Under Salaries of 4.1.03, this past year savings were a result of attrition, employee turnover and the HR timeline associated with hiring staff.

Then we look at the budget amount for next year. There was a \$16,000 decrease from attrition, a \$307,000 decrease for the 27th pay period funding and then \$200,000 for the government salary increase.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Under Transportation and Communications, can you please outline what this expenditure of \$1.5 million was for?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In terms of this past year, we had higher costs for software licensing, maintenance and

subscriptions. This includes the 160 software programs that the government pays for the renewals. Sometimes the vendors will put up the fees and there's nothing we can do about it. We have to pay those costs, essentially. Those are the software costs.

Then, moving forward, we are anticipating increased software renewal costs. We have to pay extra costs to Oracle for our financial and HR management systems.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you for that.

Under Supplies, can you outline the types of supplies purchased last year and why the budget is increasing to \$8.5 million?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Oh, I'm sorry, Mr. Chair, for that last answer I just read out the Supplies information, sorry. Before that you asked about Transportation and Communications?

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yes.

S. STOODLEY: Okay. I just answered the second question. I'll go back to your previous question if that is okay.

For Transportation, the reduction in costs was lower travel as a result of COVID-19 and we didn't have to ship as much. Sorry.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The question on Supplies, the \$8.5 million, did you just answer that?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: For Supplies, the bulk of the Supplies is software costs. We have 160 government applications that we pay software costs for and these are increasing and they have increased. The biggest increase that we are anticipating, moving forward, is an increase in

what Oracle is charging us for their financial and HR systems. The biggest one is Oracle. They just increase the fees and we have to pay it.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Under Professional Services, I note that last year Professional Services went over by \$92,200. I'm just wondering why.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Professional Services were increased, and that was \$92,000. We needed some critical network security expertise, so we had to bring that in. That's what the extra money was for.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Under Property, Furnishings and Equipment, can you please outline what was purchased for \$873,500, the purchasing total?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This is another line item where we bought a lot of laptops and equipment for staff so that they could work from home during COVID-19.

Just on laptops during COVID, one of the things I have made sure is that staff, when they get a laptop, they don't get to keep their desktop. They decommission the desktop so we're not incrementally adding – we're going to maintain the same number of computers. They don't get to have two. I just want to be clear about that.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Under Revenue - Provincial, could you please outline where this revenue comes from and provide an explanation why the full amount was not raised?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We get revenue from NLCHI, the Municipal Assessment Agency and Legal Aid for general IT support and data centre services. This is relating to a timing delay due to financial year cut-off for software and hardware and salary that we recover from those organizations.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Under 4.1.04, under Salaries, last year there was a salary savings of \$346,000. Can you explain that and outline the impact they had on projects?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Under 4.1.04, these are primarily Corporate Services and Projects. This is a big kind of project bucket. The difference is project requirements and as the projects are delayed the mix of people that we need to work on them changes. It's just we didn't need to have those people working on those projects.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Under Professional Services, could you please outline why the budget has been increased to \$6.6 million?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

So this is again because this is a big project budget, we have projects that were delayed. So we anticipate them ramping up. When we look at all the projects, which I'll give you on this list that we're anticipating completing this year, this is the cost of essentially getting those done, which we're kind of moving money around to support.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: One more question there.

The minister talked about some savings in bringing in the IT for the ABCs in with OCIO. Does the minister have an estimate of the savings or the number of positions impacted?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I think that's an excellent question. We don't have that information at this time. I think that will happen while the teams are planning the integration and everything. So, hopefully, the next time we have Estimates, we'll have more information on that.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Is the House ready for the question?

Shall 4.1.01 to 4.1.05 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 4.1.01 through 4.1.05 carried.

CLERK: The totals.

CHAIR: Shall the totals carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Executive Council, total heads, carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the Estimates of Executive Council carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of Executive Council carried without amendment.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report having passed without amendment the Estimates of Executive Council.

CHAIR: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, the Speaker returned to the Chair.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay and Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

B. WARR: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have passed without amendment the Estimates of Executive Council.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report that they have passed without amendment the Estimates of Executive Council.

When shall the report be received?

S. CROCKER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

CLERK: (Inaudible.)

S. CROCKER: Okay, thank you. Sorry, Mr. Speaker, it's been a long day.

Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're debating the amendment to the budget that was put forward by my colleagues some days ago in the budget process. I had a whole different approach to what I was going to speak to when it came to the budget and that tonight, but I've had to modify that with the sad and confusing day that we've had around the oil and gas industry in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I say sad because the fear is real, and probably to a point now where well over a thousand men and women who rely on the oil industry, or a particular part of the oil industry when it comes to the Terra Nova Project and their work on the FPSO, are directly affected and, as we understand it, would be considered unemployed now and the impact that has on them, their families, the communities they live in and the potentially 5,000 other people who rely on employment that is related to their income.

I know people will say: Where are you getting the other 5,000 jobs related to that? I extract from the Greene report when it talks about our viability and the impact that a certain industry has. Dame Moya Greene outlines that the oil and gas industry has a ratio of 5-1. For every job that's created, particularly well-paying jobs, there are five related jobs in the oil and gas industry.

Right now, this is a devastating day for 5,000 to 6,000 people, their communities, their families, all the related products and services that could be provided, but also for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Because not only will it have a financial impact on our society, but it also demoralizes the fact that we have so much at stake and so much pride in our oil and gas. To take anything away that would have been a benefit and would have put us on the global market and showed the ingenuity and the skill set and the history we have in the oil and gas industry, it's a sad day for Newfoundland and Labrador.

It's confusing, Mr. Speaker, because I'm not quite sure at 1:15 on a Thursday, when the House is due to start at 1:30 and close for its weekly session, that the government decides to have a press conference to outline what they say was an offer to the other partners in this project. Knowing the challenges we've had because of COVID and knowing that this particular project is at the later stages of its development life and knowing that there still was a significant amount of oil in the ground that would benefit the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, to come out – and I say confusing. I'm not saying that the Opposition would have taken one stand one way or the other, because we had asked a multitude of times about various pieces of information or clarification or updates on what was happening and we never got them.

To a certain degree, I'll give the government and I'll give the Premier and the minister credence to the point that you can't negotiate everything you do in public, but there could have been at least some acknowledgement that things were either on the right path or there were challenges on the expectation from the other partners. Or there were things that the government couldn't offer, or there were things that they wanted to offer. But there was no discussion around where we are.

Today, all of a sudden – and I'm going to say this with pure respect – I think there's a curving of exactly how an offer was put on the table. I say curving because at the end of the day – and I said in one of my other speeches – I can take the number six and make it a big number; somebody else can take it and make it a small number. In this case, I get the impression – I'm hoping I'm

wrong. The only way I'm going to know if I'm wrong is to do what we had proposed to do, which I would have thought we would have been in the middle of right now. Knowing the circumstance and impact that this announcement today would have on the oil and gas industry and so many families in this province, we would have been having an open debate, an emergency debate. That happens rarely in the House of Assembly, but does happen when there's a significant event or tragedy or issue that needs to be debated, because it's going to have a major impact on our society, either economically or socially or even politically. Unfortunately, we are not in that opportune time now to do this.

Now, we did manage to convince the government and there is a motion that Monday morning there will be a debate on this particular issue that we're facing now. How long that will last, what form it will take, I guess we'll know over the next period of time. The challenge we have on this side is that it's four days away. It's only hours before the imposed deadline for whether or not this project goes forward and whether or not the billions of dollars that the people in Newfoundland and Labrador who would have been the benefactors from. No doubt, the oil companies would make their money too, but we would have been the benefactors. That could have gone into programs, services and health care, infrastructure, education and seniors. It could have gone to pay down our debt load; it could have gone to look at our financial stability.

Right now, we're on the eve of having that project fail. Unfortunately, the issue that's put forward is that the general public are probably getting a misconception. I think it's all in how you spin the story that you put out. I have my own suspicions as to why at 1:15 they decided to go out pre any of the other partners that they were negotiating with, keeping in mind there's still an open deadline that's still there until Tuesday to whether or not a deal could be made. They came out prematurely, from our perspective, after saying for the last three weeks in this House: We can't share information; we can't negotiate in the public. But now, all of a sudden, at the last minute there's a big press conference that basically paints a very grim picture and starts to put the nails in the coffin of

that particular project and the impact it would have on people.

You have to understand my cynicism here and my skepticism as to why things are going this way. As I only said yesterday in a discussion, I'm a very optimistic individual. I try to be as optimistic as possible, but I can only be optimistic around the information that's shared. I'm, by nature, a suspicious person. Maybe by my previous career you do that because you want to analyze every perspective. I'm suspicious about the intent of how this rolled out today. I know my colleagues on this side of the House will ask a multitude of questions come Monday. We will get a briefing Monday morning and we will dig deeply into what was offered.

I talked to a multitude of people and 95 per cent of them are extremely upset over what's been announced. They're extremely hurt and disappointed about how it unfolded and the impact it may have. I want to clarify the fact that it's being painted that there's nearly \$500 million of taxpayers' money being given to multi-billion-dollar companies. If you spin it, you can make it sound that way if you don't tell all the story and you don't clear the narrative as it should be. I want to clear it for the people who are out there listening and watching right now.

There's a pot of money – and I give credit to Ottawa. I've said it in this House before that under COVID – now, don't get me wrong, other provinces are getting major amounts of money to go into various industries that are sustainable and are very important to their economic viability, based on the fact that COVID took a major hit on what they're doing. Out West it's in the hardwood industry. Some of the others are in manufacturing, some of the other provinces it's their own oil and gas and some other ones it's the farming industry. Every province has gotten a multitude of investments in different federal programs to offset their losses.

In this case, in Newfoundland and Labrador, the biggest part of our economy that took a hit was the oil and gas industry. There was a substantial amount of money; I think \$325 million – substantial. We acknowledge the feds for putting that in there. We would have liked a little bit more parameters on what it could have been

used for. Nonetheless, government, through a process, decided that it would be farmed out to various projects within the oil and gas industry to enhance employment and to ensure that those viable projects would move forward. It would add some sustainability until the bridge into COVID is over and industries get up and running again.

I just want to explain there's \$205 million of that pot. That's federal funding that came from the federal government. Not five cents coming out of anybody's pocket here in Newfoundland and Labrador, out of our coffers here. It doesn't add five cents to our debt load in any way, shape or form. It is money that has to be spent in a specific area. We can't take it and put it into the fishery. We can't take it and put it in education. We can't take it and put it into seniors' programs. I wish we could because there are a lot of things that could go towards enhancing people's quality of life in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We can't do that and that's fine. So we'll put it into an industry that's very viable, gives us a massive return from a tax perspective, employs Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, keeps their quality of life up and it works for people from every corner of this great province of ours, so it is not just isolated to one region and benefit only a certain sector in our society. That's \$205 million.

The rest of the money that is being offered is paper money. I call it paper money because it is all about deferred royalties. For those who may not be familiar, every time we sign a deal in the offshore with an oil company, there is a certain percentage of every barrel that goes out, after certain parts of the contract. It could be after certain expenses. It could be after a certain period of time. It could be after you hit a certain threshold of how many barrels of oil, depending on what the deal was at the time with particular companies and the benefit to our society as part of that. That is the way it is negotiated and, in most cases, they benefit both partners. Nothing wrong with that.

In this case, my understanding as I read it – and this is how it has been explained to me, for those in the industry – is that the deferred royalties is what was put on the table. That's fair enough.

That still may equate, over 10 years, to \$272 million of monies that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians would have gotten. That's fine; I want people to follow me – \$270 million potentially could have been gotten. I say potentially because you don't get five cents if you don't take an ounce of oil out of the ground.

Now, all of a sudden, this is money that we would get if these other companies, who are putting in their billions of dollars, go out and drill the oil while they're employing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians on their rigs, employing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians on their supply vessels and contracting a multitude of other Newfoundland and Labrador companies who employ Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who work to provide those services and goods. But right now, they're making it look like the oil companies are not playing good pool with them. They're saying: At the end of the day, we've offered \$500 million and they're the big, bad, greedy oil companies.

Now I'm not standing here in any way, shape or form, nor is our Opposition, and standing up and saying we 100 per cent support the oil companies. What we're saying here: First, let's get it on the table exactly what it is your offering and let's equate it to economies of scale. Economies of scale means if I'm going to spend \$5, I want to make sure I make back more than \$5. I don't have to make \$500 back, but I need to make something that justifies my investment. It could be I just get \$5 exactly back, but at the end of the day, I have something else that was a benefit to the people around me or to myself.

There's not a half a billion dollars – I wanted to express this to people – there's not a half a billion dollars of any taxpayer's money of Newfoundland and Labrador – there is not a cheque that the Minister of Finance will write to an oil company in the offer they made. Not five cents of it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: We've talked about equity share. We have equity share in some of the other offshore projects. There's an argument whether or not that really benefits you. It depends where it is. There's an argument of whether or not it's

good to be a partner in some of these because of some of the responsibilities you may have. Then there are others who will say: Well, we have a great example: Let's look at what Ottawa has gained from the Hibernia equity share that they bought in to, which was three benefits in it for them: One, they got a sustainable offshore oil industry that was at its infancy stage and nobody was sure if it would flourish to be extremely competitive and put us on the world map.

It got Newfoundlanders and Labradorians so employed that the federal government could write off \$1.3 billion, \$1.2 billion a year for 10 years not having to give any money to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians as part of the equalization. We were proud to say: Thank you. We don't need your money now; we're doing okay. There are other provinces. Our sisters and brothers in this Confederation may need that parcel of money. We thanked the federal governments for the years of giving us money to get us over the threshold. We were in a good place. Now we find ourselves not in a good place again. We don't get our equalization.

As part of this process now we're saying we want to get our oil industry back up and running. We want to make it viable. We need to be able to see what it is we can do. Part of what the government is offering is paper money that actually is, really, lost money. Because if they don't do this investment, not only are they not going to get the \$270 million; they're not going to get potentially another \$500 million to \$1 billion that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians would get or the government would get for doing very little. Signing this partnership that's already in play, that's already been proven to be equitable and beneficial, particularly to the thousands of people who work in the industry.

Let's move to the next level: You cannot lose on something that you don't put in, but you can't gain when you walk away from something that automatically gives you a return. The automatic return here is we know there's anywhere from 100 million barrels there to 500 million barrels. People can argue around, but the C-NLOPB – the agency that we entrust, that we give all the powers to oversee our industry here, from a safety point of view, to an environmental point of view, to a licensing point of view – have said they know it's there. Don't forget Nalcor and the

oil and gas component of that have proven that our seismic says there are a multitude of potential returns there for companies.

Massive, big companies have invested in this. There may be some politics at play why some of the partners want out. But you know what? We have a responsibility here, not only for the employment part of it, but this is an actually good investment, because we will not get five cents in any royalty regime if we don't take any oil out of the ground. People forget that.

Noia and a number of other agencies, 12 municipalities in the Northeast Avalon – including the City of St. John's, who have, obviously, the ability to research and look at things – have put out their own statement saying Terra Nova is very important. It's actually a benefactor to not only this region, but the whole of the province and to our tax regime in Newfoundland and Labrador. Why would we not find a way to invest in that process? I don't know and I'm asking and no doubt we're going to ask this question when we get into the debate.

Maybe there's a ploy here. Maybe there's something at play by the government. If it is, if it's a strategy to try to make this viable and make it work and get the partners to come to the table and come up with an agreement, great, but please do not do what's happening right now. You're frightening the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Those workers now are distraught. We're getting constant inquiries and calls about what this means for those livelihoods. We're getting people now already saying: I'm looking, as soon as COVID is over, to pack up and leave because I have no faith in the oil and gas industry here or the province to be able to make it flourish and put it on solid ground.

We need the government to be honest with people. What is at play? Be honest about what it was you are offering from an investment point of view, because it's misleading to say that there's a half a billion dollars that you're putting upfront that people think that's coming out of the taxpayers' money that could be used for something else in our province. That's not accurate at all.

Is there a benefit to an equity share? That's something that we should be debating. We've asked to have that discussion in this House of Assembly and I guarantee you, we'll have that discussion here come Monday. But we want this government – because it's the House of Assembly that wants to have proper debate, proper discussion. If there's any way possible that we can salvage this deal to make sure our oil industry is still strong and that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador benefit from it, we'll have that discussion. We will not oppose for the sake of opposing. We've said that numerous times and we continue to act that way. We not only speak the game, we walk the game.

This is too valuable now to play politics, so let's not turn the narrative. Let's not skew the numbers. Let's put all of the facts on the table. Let's have an open, transparent dialogue. Let's look at every potential avenue that we could do to move this forward. Let's ensure that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are the benefactors of what's happening here.

This is not about us and them – us being the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and them being the big, bad oil companies – this is about what kind of a deal would work to keep them engaged here and see that there's a profit margin for them, and to see us, as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, gain financially and keep our oil industry moving in the right direction.

We have a viable oil industry. We did have obviously a challenge with a life cycle of one of the oil fields that we had, but there is still a lot of life left in this at the end of the day. The C-NLOPB, one of its own philosophies is that you maximize the return on the resource in the ground. You take it until there is no more there, then you move on to another field because you've maximized your benefit as part of that whole process.

I didn't want to get too political, but I have to do it because I know they're going to have discussions. I know we didn't get the right answers or the upfront answers that we asked for the last couple of weeks. It's ironic that just as we're going into a provincial election, when it was necessary to get the support of the oil industry, the workers and all those people – very diligent Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who

rely on this for their success – that the provincial Liberals at the time stated: We can save this. We have an MOU. We have an MOU with the companies. We're negotiating. We have an offer. We're going to make everything work. There's no risk to this. It's all going to work wonderfully.

But it's ironic, that as it's all over, as we're into the summer when COVID is almost done, when the oil industry is going to boom, there's a bigger risk. I ask the question: Show me your analysis. Particularly, show me your analysis of what the risk change is. The only thing that we can discover that changed: Oil went from \$43 to \$72. If that's the risk, because now you can add a 35 per cent profit margin for all players involved, then I think somebody is skewing the numbers here or somebody has a hidden agenda.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to prolong this tonight, but I will tell you come Monday, me, my colleagues on this side of the House are going to ask for answers. We're going to want dialogue; we're going to want the proper information. We'll come back with suggestions of ways that we can make this deal work for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and all partners involved.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers, shall the amendment carry?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. We have an agreement.

I want to thank everybody for their contribution to the debate today and all the officials involved in the Estimates tonight. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his comments and I certainly look forward to the debate here in the House on Monday morning.

I have to adjourn the debate right now, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, that we now adjourn debate.

SPEAKER: The motion is that we do adjourn debate.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

T. OSBORNE: Nay.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Education has offered to stay here and keep watch for tonight.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

S. CROCKER: Yeah.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I thank everybody for today.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that this House do now adjourn.

SPEAKER: The motion is that this House do stand adjourned until 9 Monday morning.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

This House stands adjourned.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Monday, at 9 a.m.