

# **HANSARD**

**NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**COMMITTEE**

**ON**

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

**Wednesday, February 7, 2018**

**Legislative Chamber**

**Service Modernization and Access Centres**

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## **Public Accounts Committee**

Mr. Allan MacMaster (Chairman)  
Mr. Gordon Wilson (Vice-Chairman)  
Mr. Ben Jessome  
Ms. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft  
Mr. Brendan Maguire  
Mr. Hugh MacKay  
Mr. Tim Houston  
Hon. David Wilson  
Ms. Lisa Roberts

[Mr. Ben Jessome was replaced by Ms. Rafah DiCostanzo.]

In Attendance:

Ms. Kim Langille  
Legislative Committee Clerk

Mr. Gordon Hebb,  
Chief Legislative Counsel

Ms. Nicole Arsenault,  
Assistant Clerk, Office of the Speaker

### **WITNESSES**

#### Office of Service Nova Scotia

Ms. Joanne Munro -  
CEO

Ms. Gillian Latham -  
Executive Director, In-Person Services

Mr. Paul Benoit -  
Director, Client Relations & Operations Support

Ms. Natasha Clarke -  
Executive Director, Digital Services

Ms. Darlene O'Neill -  
Director, Financial Services



House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2018**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

9:00 A.M.

CHAIRMAN

Mr. Allan MacMaster

VICE-CHAIRMAN

Mr. Gordon Wilson

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good morning. I call this meeting of the Public Accounts Committee to order. This morning, we have the Office of Service Nova Scotia with us to discuss service modernization and access centres.

I'd like to remind everyone to make sure your phones are on silent. We'll start with introductions, beginning with Mr. MacKay.

[The committee members and witnesses introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Munro, you can start with opening comments.

MS. JOANNE MUNRO: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee. It's a pleasure to join you today to talk about our Access Nova Scotia Centres and service modernization.

Before continuing, I'd like to talk a little bit further about my colleagues. Gillian Latham is the Executive Director for In-Person Service Delivery, Paul Benoit is the Director of Operations and Client Support within the In-Person Service Delivery, Natasha Clarke is the Executive Director of Digital Services and Darlene O'Neill, our Director of Finance. Together we'll work to answer your questions. If there is any information we don't have, we commit to provide it to you as soon as possible.

Service Nova Scotia is in a unique position when you compare us to other government departments. Not only are we responsible for and provide a diverse suite of programs and services to Nova Scotians, we're also a service provider. We have a critical role helping other government departments provide services to their clients. As a result, we touch every citizen and business in the province.

Our mission is to design and deliver programs and services to meet our clients' needs through a culture of excellence. Our vision is to be a recognized leader in service excellence and public protection that delivers trusted, accessible, modern programs and contributes to Nova Scotia as a safe and desirable place to live, work and do business.

We want to make services more convenient and efficient, the status quo is not an option. We recognize that client service across government is important to Nova Scotians and we've got the right team in place at Service Nova Scotia to deliver the level of service they expect and deserve.

In April 2016 we announced our plan to transform how we work to be more client-focused and efficient so we can improve service to Nova Scotians and modernize the programs and services we deliver. Today is a welcomed opportunity to share our successes to date.

To set the stage for the breadth of work we do, we're responsible for more than 40 pieces of legislation, ranging from the Solemnization of Marriage Act and the Land Registration Act to the Consumer Protection Act. We issue birth, death, and marriage certificates. Our compliance officers work with the RCMP to reduce contraband tobacco. We administer the popular Heating Assistance Rebate Program, and respond to concerns from landlords and tenants protected through the Residential Tenancies Act. We also manage three of the four registries, Joint Stock Companies, Land, and Vital Statistics and we work with our partnered department, the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, to manage the Registry of Motor Vehicles.

We also have a critical role in moving Nova Scotia to a digital government. There are 13 Access Centres and seven Registry of Motor Vehicle Offices, five Land Registry Offices across the province with more than 320 employees. This past year, staff served close to 1 million clients at our Access Centres and Registry of Motor Vehicles. Staff working at the Government Contact Centre answered 350,000 calls. There were more than 37,000 birth, marriage and death certificates issued through Vital Statistics and there were 8,600 new business registrations.

The team at Service Nova Scotia is constantly looking to see how they can become more client-focused and efficient to improve service to Nova Scotians. Staff are committed to service excellence across all channels, improving our programs while being fiscally responsible. They are fully engaged, creative, innovative and collaborative. In fact in the recent employee engagement survey, 82 per cent of staff working in the In-Person Services

Division said they were inspired to give their very best; in Service Nova Scotia broadly, we had 80 per cent of employees saying that. This is a significant improvement from the engagement survey completed in 2015.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all our Access employees for what they do each and every day. Thanks to their passion and commitment, they are consistently meeting our formal service standard to serve 80 per cent of our clients within 20 minutes or less.

Here are a few examples of things we have done to meet our service target and improve the overall client experience within our Access Centres. We expanded knowledge test hours, increasing the hours to write learner's tests; 6,500 additional hours added across the network. We arranged for seasonal staff to help with peak volumes in the Spring and summer, leading to more consistent wait times throughout the year. We added an accessibility service line to the ticketing system we use in our Access Centres. We introduced name badges for employees, reflecting that we are a professional service organization.

We increased the availability of staff to serve clients by 3,800 hours across the network by implementing an improved cash-balancing process. We have increased the availability of staff to serve clients by 26 hours across the network by moving from pre-printed inventory control numbers to print-on-demand inventory control numbers for vehicle permits. We have supplied all our Access Centres with tablets for language translation. And there is more.

In support of our mandate to deliver service excellence to our clients, we introduced a client experience commitment this Fall. It's our team's commitment to put the client at the forefront of everything we do. The key words are respectful, fair, responsive, and inclusive. We're working to continually improve our performance. We want to be innovative and client-focused, all the while maintaining a strong focus on employee engagement and well-being.

With the remaining time that I have for my opening remarks, I would also like to talk about our work to modernize the services we offer. As we announced some time ago, we are modernizing the registries to allow us to fulfill our commitment to become a leader in service and program modernization. The four registries - Joint Stock, Land, Vital Statistics, and RMV - conduct about 2.6 million transactions per year and bring in more than \$150 million annually in revenue.

New IT systems are required. We are starting with the Registry of Joint Stock Companies. It's the oldest of the system applications, approximately 20 years old. It's outdated and difficult to maintain. Imagine if you were still using the computer software you used 20 years ago. I'm very pleased to advise that we will soon be in a position to announce the vendor who was successful in the competitive selection process.

Some of the client benefits will be that transactions will be available online 24/7, no need to mail in or deliver in person, and smart forms and online help to let the user know if anything is missing before they submit, thus avoiding further back-and-forth delays. The new registry system, I know, will be providing a lot more client benefit when implemented. We're very excited about this initiative and what it means to businesses across the province.

For the Motor Vehicles, Vital Statistics, and Land Registries, we're developing a multi-year plan to modernize these registries. We will do this with staff involvement and engaged stakeholders. We will continue to foster an enhanced client service culture. Modernizing the four registries is expected to take another five to six years to complete, with benefits being fully realized within eight to 10.

Service Nova Scotia is recognized as a leader in helping the province becoming a digital government. This means we will work toward a province where government services are available digitally and designed to meet citizen and business needs. Our digital services division is working with partners across government to make things simpler and easier, allowing clients to interact on their own terms and reducing unnecessarily duplication of effort.

Digital services improve the efficiency of government in processing transactions. This reduces the administrative burden on program areas, allowing staff to focus on the more important business of reviewing and adjudicating applications and transactions. We are transforming the way government services are delivered through client-centric digital service options that provide easy and convenient access to many programs and services.

The key to success is working with people who use and need the services, the actual users, throughout the entire process. The result is providing a service people will actually prefer to use.

Our commitment to client service excellence anchors all that we do at Service Nova Scotia. The strength of our talented, professional, and innovative team is key to our success. We are excited about the work we're doing and the positive impact we are making. I am pleased now to welcome your questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ms. Munro. We'll start with Mr. Houston of the PC caucus for 20 minutes.

MR. TIM HOUSTON: Thank you for the introductory comments. I will say that I now would prefer to go to the Registry of Motor Vehicles than the dentist, so that's a good thing. It used to be the other way around. (Laughter)

In terms of the modernization of the IT systems, there was talk not that long ago about outsourcing, privatizing all of those databases and all of that system. Is that still an option that the government is looking at?

MS. MUNRO: April 2016 was the month that we announced the decision not to go down the route of alternate service delivery that it was called. The government made the decision to drive forward with a government-led transformation. That work is well under way, and as I said in my opening remarks, the Registry of Joint Stocks was the first registry to actually be focused on, so most energy has been there because of the dated nature of that registry. Not only is it an IT system, which we hope to be in a position very soon to announce that process - the RFP was actually issued last December so we are imminent there.

The transformation incorporates process improvement, program modernization, a culture, data governance, as well as the IT system itself. These transformations are multi-dimensional and complex. We actually work with Internal Services, ourselves as program owner, ourselves as the service delivery arm, and as well as Department of Justice and stakeholders - there are complex processes. We are well under way and we actually have work started as well on the Registry of Motor Vehicles with our partner department, TIR, and Vital Statistics, and Land, but our first one off the mark is the Registry of Joint Stocks.

Yes, that work is well under way and the team and the governance is put in place to move those forward.

MR. HOUSTON: So the government-led initiative is a multi-year initiative obviously.

MS. MUNRO: Yes.

MR. HOUSTON: Is there a dollar amount on how much you think - I'm going to be specific on the IT portion. I know you are going to release a competitive bid soon on one of them so I don't want to kind of prejudice that, but if you look at all the databases, how much do you expect it will cost?

MS. MUNRO: I'd go back to the work we did, which has all been very valuable to use as we parcel out each one of these registries and focus on the transformation for each because they are independent. Going back to that work, we had targeted somewhere around \$35 million to \$40 million for all four registries. As the work begins in earnest, it's about understanding what the market is and what the vendors come forward with, our business problems and the solutions we need. Through the procurement process, we'll see where that ends up.

MR. HOUSTON: Would these mostly be off-the-shelf type systems, with some modification? Or do they have to be built from scratch?

MS. MUNRO: We work very closely obviously with our IT expert in Internal Services. We work with them to identify what the best technology solution might be, as part of the transformation for the registries. Certainly technology has advanced. There's

custom build, there's Cloud - there are many things that we have as part of the deliberation process. Again I would refer to my colleagues in Internal Services to determine what is the best technology, based on our architecture and business requirements.

MR. HOUSTON: Thank you. There was some consolidation of the Land Registration Offices over the last few years - I'm thinking specifically of the one that was in Pictou. Now Pictou County residents in that area of Nova Scotia have to go to - I think it's in Amherst now. Have you heard much feedback on that? Is it working or is it not working? What's your sense of that?

[9:15 a.m.]

MS. MUNRO: Yes, that initiative a number of years ago consolidated 18 Land Registry Offices down to five regional offices. The business rationale and reason for that was that 75 per cent of land transactions are completed online and are submitted online and 20 per cent are sent in via mail or courier, and 5 per cent were walk-in traffic. The opportunity that presented ourselves was a model that really evolved with consumer demand or the demand of the business itself.

Since that time - and I'll let my colleagues chime in as well - it has been working very well. Yes, there are areas where the convenience of going into the Land Registry for that 5 per cent is not comfortable and we understand that. As part of the Land transformation which would be the last one on the list because it is the most modern, if you will - yes, there need to be upgrades - that would be something that we would be looking for a pay-per-use option so that people could actually do it from their homes. That's not available now with the system we have. It's just too costly and it would be a throw-away if there's any work done on the Land Registry to allow that functionality.

On that front, we don't get a lot of complaints. There's certain pockets across the province - genealogists and that kind of thing that would like to use it but it's not our main user group. I do not get a lot of complaints at all about the Land Registry. There is an inconvenience there, but I know that it's a stopgap until we get to the new system where a pay-per-use option for accessing the property online system will be available and will be a requirement.

Maybe I could defer to my colleague, Ms. Latham, to respond since she manages the Access and the Land Registry office staff.

MS. GILLIAN LATHAM: I would just add that going from 18 to five obviously was a significant effort, but in the entire time since then we have consistently met our service levels. We have certain turnaround targets, et cetera, to our clients, in particular the Nova Scotia Barristers Society, and we haven't really missed a beat in meeting our service levels to those clients. All five offices are fully staffed and fully functioning, and they're doing a fantastic job for our clients.



MR. HOUSTON: The 75 per cent online, 20 per cent mail, and 5 per cent - that's what the stats were at the time. What do they look like now? Is it still 5 per cent walk-in?

MS. MUNRO: The work of the Registry staff is to provide more and more services online so I don't have the stat right now. I do believe it's still fairly close to 75 per cent to 77 per cent for online transactions. But again, in working with our Registry's team and digital services, there's more that we can do there to enhance. Those are really the key users, the lawyers.

I'd like to add, too, that the savings have been about \$500,000 a year since we started - bottom-line savings.

MR. HOUSTON: For those people who like to walk in and probably live in an area of the province where they don't have Internet, could you set up a kiosk at one of the other Service Nova Scotia offices where they could go in and do some online stuff?

MS. MUNRO: In fact, we're looking at piloting - it's really a terminal and it's about training our staff within the Access Centres to be able to manage and support that service offering.

At the time of the consolidation, and really over the last two years, we have really been focused on getting our core business in hand, which is the RMV and info services transactional work within the Access Centres. Most recently we thought to look at a pilot option to bring in a terminal computer into our Digby Access Centre to see whether or not volumes warranted, what's the capacity on staff, can they handle it, what technology issues might we have that we didn't think of. We're looking to say this is a stopgap, we will fix it when the Land Registry system gets modernized, but at this point that's going to be a pilot to see if that makes sense, so we'll see where that might go.

MR. HOUSTON: How did you pick Digby?

MS. MUNRO: Actually, that has been the one area where we had conversations with MLA Wilson and the municipal office there. Norman Hill, our Executive Director of Registries, has been in contact with that group. I'm not sure what the community is down there, what the need is on the genealogy side or the walk-in traffic, but that seems to be where we heard most people coming in and asking, is there anything we can do, is there anything we can do?

Of course, we want to hear and listen. We haven't had complaints elsewhere, and so we'll try this. Really, the Digby office is in good shape from a staffing perspective and volume and meeting its service levels. To introduce something new won't take them off their game.

MR. HOUSTON: A lot of people in Nova Scotia have utility trailers. Utility trailers have to be registered once a year. That's different than vehicles now, which have moved to multiple years. Is there any thought about moving a utility trailer licence away from once a year to some multi-year process?

MS. MUNRO: The decision around the frequency of licences and fees is with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. I don't wish to not answer the question, but I have no ability to make the decision. We're the service delivery arm for that registry. I would agree that there could be some opportunity on frequency for the licence plates.

MR. HOUSTON: Okay, I was just checking. In terms of the move to driver licences with the facial recognition, at some point in time when that goes live - I don't think it's live yet. (Interruption) It is live, okay.

When you get your licence, it comes in the mail from Ontario, I guess. That's for improved security reasons, yes? I'm wondering, is there a security problem with the licence that I have in my pocket? What's the push for that?

MS. MUNRO: We call it central issuance, the photo licensing. We have just completed the rollout of that across the province at the end of January. So we are now fully functional in all Access Centres. That went extremely well, and clients are getting used to it. This will be over five years because people have a renewal process for the licence over five years, so it's the start of it to come.

Mr. Benoit is very involved in the photo licensing ID. We did it in concert with our other jurisdictions - New Brunswick, P.E.I., and Newfoundland. It is to bring us into the security world with fraud out there. I would say that we are not at risk although there are enhancements that will allow us to do more things I think as well with the card. If I could, I would like to defer and have my colleague Mr. Benoit provide further detail on that particular program.

MR. HOUSTON: I guess what I would ask is, do I still need a passport? Are we kind of jacking up the licences so much that we don't need anything else?

MR. PAUL BENOIT: Yes, you still would require a passport. There are driver's licences that are driver's licences, and then there are driver's licences in some jurisdictions that are called an enhanced driver's licence. Those have the ability to cross borders. That's really not about the security features on the driver's licence itself but that the enrolment process is much like the enrolment process of a passport. That's where the added security comes in for that type of licence. Nova Scotia doesn't offer that type of licence.

MR. HOUSTON: What was the driving force, then? If there's no real security threat with the licence that we were already issuing, why are we pushing to this new system?

MR. BENOIT: The real driving force was the fact that the licence in your pocket is based on 10-year-old security, so it is a 10-year-old licence. The contract came to an end, so the four jurisdictions again went out to tender and wanted to meet the industry standards that are out there today, which are used by 40 of the U.S. states and all other Canadian provinces with the exception of Nunavut.

Going to a central issuance adds the ability to enhance the security features on the card to prevent counterfeiting - things like laser engraving, which you can't do in an in-person environment, and also the use of facial recognition technology. Its best use is within a central issuance process because that allows you to do the identity verification prior to issuing you a card.

MR. HOUSTON: Does the province take on some additional legal liability? Drivers' licences have a purpose - it's for driving. It gets used for other purposes - proof of age and stuff. I think the more we kind of enhance it, don't we give the people who are looking at it kind of a false sense of security as to what it is? Aren't we just kind of taking on a little more with promoting it as more secure? I think I'm trying to struggle with, for what reason do we need a more secure licence?

MS. MUNRO: I think when we look at our identity, which is identity generally across the country as something that all jurisdictions are working with, digital identity as well, so a driver's licence is a foundational piece of identity. In looking at where that world of identity is going and security requirements, we need to evolve because we need to stay ahead of, or try to stay ahead of fraud.

We do not know that there's any large issue but when we know that we can work with our jurisdictions and go through a procurement process to further enhance our security - it was an opportunity that all four jurisdictions agreed was the right thing to do. I would say we're behind in this space so this will actually bring us to a space of central issuance and the card would be - I'd look to my colleague, Ms. Clarke - foundational for further identity and transaction work on the go-forward with a services card and how we build that strategy out. I think it's a foundational piece and from our perspective it's an area that we needed to increase our security and access through the driver's licence.

MR. HOUSTON: Do you have any sense of how many kind of fake drivers' licences, let's call them, are issued? When I was coming up, you used to go get your liquor licence and some people would get fake ones - they'd actually go in with somebody else's birth certificate and stuff. Is that happening with our drivers' licences as we sit here today?

MS. MUNRO: We don't have the data on that because our system doesn't track that, nor do we have an ability to do that, but we will on the go-forward obviously with the Gemalto system with our other jurisdictions, so we'll be able to actually detect.

MR. HOUSTON: Is it a concern that that's happening with the existing system?

MS. MUNRO: I would think that it is a concern but not one that has come to the forefront in any great . . .

MR. HOUSTON: Would it be a concern with the new system as well then? If we're holding up these new licences as a higher standard, it puts much more onus on your front-line worker to make sure that if somebody goes in with false ID that now they have everything.

MS. MUNRO: I'll defer that to Mr. Benoit because in fact the system is much more secure and it takes away the stress and pressure of that on our front line.

MR. BENOIT: Again, that would be the benefit of the facial recognition, so that's assisting staff in the verification of identity to ensure that we have greater success in ensuring that the card gets into the hand of the rightful licence holder.

MR. HOUSTON: I'm in the system so they could see my old ID, I guess - my old picture - but if somebody were to take somebody's birth certificate and stuff, they could go and get this. What would the system say? Would it flag that it has already been issued?

MS. BENOIT: What the system would do is if they took my picture for your record, the theory is my picture is somewhere on my record so the system would scan, from a mathematical perspective, the calculations associated with facial recognition to find that same photo in a different file. Then that would lead our TIR partners within the program to do an investigation with humans.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You still have a few seconds left.

MR. HOUSTON: The system has the ability to put RFID chips in the licences. Are we doing that - RFID chips?

MS. MUNRO: If I could defer to my colleague, Ms. Clarke.

MS. NATASHA CLARKE: Certainly, the requirement has been put in place to enable that type of enhancement or feature in cards. The reason we wanted to ensure that requirement was in place is part of our overall planning around digital identity.

Government is in the identity business today. Whether we agree or not, our driver's licence is considered at least a secondary - if not a foundational - identity document, in terms of citizens' use. If I want to create a bank account, I typically show that at a bank. It's the first piece of ID that I'm typically showing to prove my identity, so government has an obligation to ensure that we are thinking about the protection of citizens' interests when they are interacting digitally. This card, having those types of requirements in place . . .

[9:30 a.m.]

MR. HOUSTON: So it has the chip in it?

MS. CLARKE: It does not today, but the requirement . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order. I'm sorry to interrupt. I was letting it go beyond the time a little bit. We'll move to Ms. Roberts of the NDP caucus.

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Thank you very much. I represent very much a downtown, urban constituency and, as such, I was one of the people who years ago railed on social media when Access Nova Scotia moved out to Bayers Lake, which many of us feel is not very accessible. It's great to have a 20-minute wait time there but of course you can't get there in 20 minutes from many places and certainly if people are taking public transit, it is a very long journey. I'm wondering if those are concerns that you hear at the front line. I don't know if you are regularly kind of surveying staff to hear what kind of feedback they get from clients but I'd be interested to hear if those concerns are still being expressed.

MS. MUNRO: I'm glad you asked the question. In fact just a little bit of history, I guess. When the tender went out back in 2010, initially they had the boundaries on the peninsula and there were no bidders who met the requirements of the bid, so they went out a second time and extended the boundaries. Then through that procurement process that was where the location was. It serves about 170,000 to 180,000 clients annually and there's about 65 staff there.

We have ongoing conversations with HRM about the business park and accessibility. I will defer because I know Ms. Latham and Paul Benoit have been part of this ongoing conversation. Yes, there are complaints of clients having to get to Bayers Lake. Recently we were part of the Halifax Connects for the first time and we arranged through Halifax Connects - actually with Halifax Transit - to actually open up the shop on Sunday and bring a busload of people who needed their IDs who could not get there.

As you know, Halifax Connects is focused on an expo of low-income or marginalized individuals and we were able to transact about 200 IDs at that time. So we understand how you get there and the bus-to-bus route. Yes, we do have complaints but we also have likes on the other side, where people say they don't have to go into the city, so it's both ways.

On that front, if I could lean on my colleague, Ms. Latham, to respond in a little bit more detail.

MS. LATHAM: Thank you for the question. Just to reiterate what Ms. Munro said, we have worked with HRM to try and do some things to make it more feasible for citizens who do need to travel from the peninsula out to Bayers Lake. For example, we were able

to work with them in getting a bus shelter built out there. The bus routes do go fairly close to where the Access Centre is so it's a fairly short distance.

In addition, although it is further for residents of course of the peninsula, there's a large group of citizens, just as large, who live close to the Bayers Lake facility. The lease for that facility comes due in October 2020. At that time, we will revisit and go through the tendering and RFP process again and certainly take into account all of those considerations.

MS. ROBERTS: I appreciate that history and I'm wondering if anyone on your team recalls sort of what the details were of the bid and of the RFP in 2010 that might have made it difficult for bids to come not just from the peninsula but from a more built out, already connected, part of HRM.

In connection to the recent decision to build an outpatient clinic out in Bayers Lake, we pointed out that it's not just the peninsula. It could also be close to a transit terminal. It could be at Cobequid. There are multiple nodes where having not just services that are essential to pretty much every member of the public but also places where people are going to go to work every day.

What do your staff do? Basically, if any of your staff come to work by bus, they had better be packing their lunch because it would take your entire lunch hour to go to Montana's. How does that make any sense in terms of economic development or just quality of life for those people who are going to work every day?

I would be interested to know what was written into the RFP at the time that might have made it challenging for other bidders to come forward.

MS. MUNRO: I wasn't here when that happened. I would say that I get what you say. I would say that as we move forward with the new process, when it's time to go back to the street, we need to take those considerations in as part of our requirements.

On that note, Mr. Benoit, do you have anything further to add?

MR. BENOIT: From my perspective, I suspect the biggest challenge on the peninsula might have been the element of parking for clients and having a facility that could accommodate the parking needs of a client base such as ours. However, that's simply a guess. I don't know why there were no bids, but I suspect that might have been the most significant barrier to somebody being able to bid.

MS. ROBERTS: Interesting. Was there anything further to add?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Latham.

MS. LATHAM: The only thing I will add is that it's interesting that you bring up the notion of being located near a central hub of transit, et cetera. We have recently had some discussions with the new executive director of accessibility about that very thing. It's definitely an interesting concept. All of these considerations will definitely be on our radar, and we're going to be starting very soon. With the expiry of 2020, we're starting very soon in the planning process for Halifax Access.

MS. ROBERTS: As part of the research package, there was a map that shows where all the Access Nova Scotia centres are. How many of them are located in relative proximity? How many are walkable? How many of them could your staff, for example, leave work on their lunch hour and get to a place to eat or shop or what have you and return on their lunch hour without necessarily requiring a car?

MS. MUNRO: I don't have that off the top of my head. I could go through each one because I visit every one of them to let you know where that is.

MS. ROBERTS: Sure.

MS. MUNRO: Yarmouth is in town. Digby is in town. Lawrencetown is in town. Middleton is in town. Shelburne is in town. Liverpool is in town. Bridgewater is in town but a little bit on the periphery. Halifax, you know. Lower Sackville is in town on the strip. Kentville is in town. Windsor is in the mall. Dartmouth is on Baker Drive, a bit of a new community. Sheet Harbour is in Sheet Harbour. Guysborough as well is in town. Truro is a little bit up on the hill, so that's not quite in the centre of the town. Amherst is pretty much in town. Stellarton is a little bit on the outside but fairly close. Antigonish is in town. Port Hawkesbury is in town. Baddeck is in town, and Sydney is in town.

MS. ROBERTS: Thanks, I appreciate that. As you move forward towards 2020, and particularly in the case of the Halifax Access Nova Scotia office, is there a process of actually discussing with municipalities - okay, I'm going to back myself up. As you look at siting, are there ongoing conversations with municipalities across the province, in terms of co-locating services?

One thing I've heard is, for example, from the Acadian Federation how great it would be to have Service Nova Scotia, Service Canada and municipal services co-located where people would know that, for example, they could get French-language services. Are those the kinds of conversations that you are even able to have? Is there that intentional sort of collaborative relationship?

MS. MUNRO: I'm co-chair of the National Service Collaboration Table, with my deputy colleagues across the country; I co-chair it with the Deputy Minister of Service Canada. This is on our agenda, in fact, and Ms. Clarke is actually our secretary for that particular table and discussion.

There is work around co-location. It actually is being led by our deputy colleague Alan Roy out of New Brunswick. So the conversation is happening at the federal level with our colleagues, as well as here in our province. We're actually building out information services for different levels of government to be able to understand where everyone is located and might there be opportunities as we come up with lease opportunities or change of footprint or what have you.

It's definitely on the minds of all of us in the service business and how we can possibly do that. In fact we are looking as well in Shelburne, I think they are building a new municipal office and we've had conversations with the municipality down there around how we might be able to partner up. I would say yes, those conversations are happening. It's about where you can find the opportunity, the low-hanging fruit, to actually make it happen.

As well, Ms. Latham has had some conversations with our New Brunswick colleagues so maybe if there's anything further to add, Ms. Latham.

MS. LATHAM: Thank you for the question. I was just going to add, because you did mention that it would give the ability to offer French services - I did want to mention that in some of our Access Centres, we do have dedicated bilingual resources who can certainly provide services in French.

Just recently, and Ms. Munro mentioned this in her opening remarks, we did give iPads to everybody in our centres as well for that very reason, so that we could actually use them for translation services, whether it's French or any other language, that our service reps can communicate with our clients in the language of their choice.

MS. ROBERTS: In 2016 my Party, the NDP, tabled legislation to remove indicators of sex, gender identity and gender expression from Nova Scotia ID cards, including health cards and driver licences. I'm just wondering, as we move forward with the new licence infrastructure, will the redesign of the licences allow for such a change to happen?

MS. MUNRO: That is a conversation that is happening right across the country around gender identification. In fact, our Registrar of Vital Statistics, Ms. Dewey, is at the centre of a lot of those conversations right across the country. Consultation is happening at the federal level and with her counterparts across the country.

We have also just recently established a community of practice on identity because not one department can solve this for all. We're kind of connecting as a community of practice - the Departments of Health and Wellness, Justice, Education and Early Childhood Development, and Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal - to ensure we're coordinated, and we understand the dependencies around our programs and services when it comes to gender.



As well, we have had recently and we'll continue to have ongoing consultation in this space with the LGBTQ-plus community because it's really important to hear the voices of the community as to what is best for them and that's happening as well. We'll also be looking for written feedback. There's a consultation process. We want to make sure we get this right, and that has started. So yes, we want to make sure we move in a coordinated fashion.

[9:45 a.m.]

Because this is a moving target right across the country, you don't want to move down a path where not all definitions have been understood, or we haven't heard from a community in a fulsome way. So yes, that definitely has to be part of our agenda. Identity within the gender space is certainly a high priority and one our registrar is very, very heavily involved in, across the country as well as here in the province.

MS. ROBERTS: In terms of the actual new driver's licences, there's flexibility there in the production and software and what all to allow a change to happen as you arrive at a decision?

MS. MUNRO: Our requirements would ensure that we have flexibility when it comes to that space. But I think it would be advantageous to have Ms. Clarke just elaborate a little bit further on the identity and the gender question when it comes to the digital space.

MS. CLARKE: Yes, obviously, digital identity and gender identity are priority topics. With digital identity, really gender will be irrelevant in terms of that path. It's really about ensuring that we have the ability and policies in place to identify who you are, enroll you, and make sure that we can validate who you are.

That's a lot of policy work, so in terms of technology and making those changes, I think that's sort of the easy part. What will be most important is making sure that we engage communities and engage citizens on this journey so that everybody understands what's needed, but also that we're respecting privacy and everyone's requirements.

MS. ROBERTS: Between April 1, 2015 and February 23, 2017, Service Nova Scotia spent almost \$1 million - \$867,795 - on temp services. That's more than any other department or agency in government. Can you explain why the department spent so much on temporary staffing?

MS. MUNRO: Yes, I can. The temporary services or the temporary help that was brought in helped to deliver some seasonal programs that we had, the senior property rebate and the heating assistance rebate program. As well, there was a data project at the time that needed some help, and temp help was it.

Certainly, I put an effort on understanding the need for temps and then trying to reduce that. We have done that through a threefold approach. I will pass it over to Ms. O'Neill to let you know where we are tracking. We have done some cross-training so that people can step into some of the seasonal work. There has been some work on process improvement to help kind of be smarter as to how to process those programs. Third, there are practices around workforce management that we brought into place.

I had a focus last summer to say, let's look at this and see how we can do better. For our business and the fact that we do have seasonal programs, there are needs in operational business sometimes - it will never be zero. But I think we're much more in the realm of \$70,000 to \$80,000 for temp services as needed. I would agree with you that it's an opportunity for us to look at it and say, how did we do that? It has been successful in that regard. Can I forward it over to Ms. O'Neill?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. O'Neill.

MS. DARLENE O'NEILL: I would just like to elaborate on what Ms. Munro has said. What we have in our estimate this year has been reduced to about \$80,000, and that's really just for when we're short of staffing, that there is not any capacity within our current civil servants to provide that.

We have moved to greater use of summer students and seasonal workforce to make up for that use of temp agency staffing that we had. So I think that really is about it. We've pretty much eliminated the use of temp agencies, it's really for temporary replacement of a civil servant who is not able to be there with us and we can't get somebody in fast enough.

MS. ROBERTS: Thank you very much. I think my time is up.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Your time has just expired. We'll move to the Liberal caucus and we're going with Mr. MacKay.

MR. HUGH MACKAY: Very good information you have been sharing with us and I congratulate you on a job that is being well done as we go through this transformational stage of the services being provided by Service Nova Scotia.

Ms. Munro, I understand that you were brought in as a CEO to address service excellence within Service Nova Scotia. Could you expand on why this is important and can you give us some further examples of some of the initiatives that are underway?

MS. MUNRO: From a service perspective and service excellence perspective, I think that the mandate given to me at the time I came in was that, plus program modernization. Citizens and customer-client expectations are only getting more and more. There's an expectation of service. We are compared to your services when you go down

the street for a glass of wine or a haircut, but service is service and there is an opportunity there to deliver more for the citizens of this province.

We really have set out on a - we call it our excellence journey. That excellence journey takes into account innovation, engagement and wellness. For me it's an absolute dream job to be able to come and work with the team that we have to move together on a collective journey and know where we're going, so it's exciting.

We want to be demonstrating better value to the citizens of the province each and every day, what can we do tomorrow that was better than today? That's where I can say the team has really made a mark. Examples of this, they live it through the commitment that we have rolled out but I believe it has been in their hearts - around being responsive, inclusive, fair and respectful when they enter into an interaction. We really are the service delivery arm of government so we are front-facing and we take it very seriously to build trust and confidence in the services we provide.

An example of that - why it's important, that I think it's expected, and we need to move on - is the fact that we have adopted the national standard for serving 80 per cent of our clients in 20 minutes or less. We started tracking this in August 2015 and we've made substantial inroads over the course of the last two and a half years. We track it on a weekly basis, we call it the Green Days. When we have a Green Week, we know by Access Centre where the Qmatic systems are in place and there's days when it's yellow and there's days when it's red.

What encourages me and makes me so proud is that the staff are very excited to understand where they are in any given week. If it's red, it's red. What they are doing is having conversations about what can we do better, what happened, how can we prevent it going forward. It's about their dialogue within the Access Centres to say, how can we be better? They know and we treat them and they are a professional service organization and they take pride in that.

The tracking of their performance is they can actually celebrate their performance and that's what Ms. Latham and team do - they celebrate the work they are doing. They also have a voice in that, a voice in how we get better and better. We've done road shows, we go out, I go out with Gillian every Fall and we sit down, we have town halls with all and we get their feedback as to what we can do better.

We actually have a list of inventory of things we can do to make things better for them and for clients. My mantra is, happy employees, happy clients. So we continue to knock off that list and things that are better for them and better for our clients. From an engagement perspective, a continuous improvement perspective, it all is about outcomes for citizens and how we can do better on service.

The work we've done has been cultural over the last two and a half years, as well as some really practical things like introducing the iPads for Google Translate, like piloting welcome desks, we call, so people understand when they come in that someone is going to greet them and do you have your proper paperwork, like the seasonal workforce which we knew we had real bumps and it was not a pleasant place to be when I came in and Ms. Latham lived it as well. Those waiting rooms were full and staff members were there overtime, late into the evening, on a Friday evening in the summer and their personal plans were put aside.

We are now in a place where we're actually able to manage our work flow that is not chaotic and people are excited to come to work and deliver what they can deliver, but yet we clear our waiting rooms and we are consistently meeting the 80/20 service standard, which is a national standard from the Institute for Citizen-Centred Service.

On that note, if I could just defer to Ms. Latham just to add to that. This is a very passionate topic for us and we are really engaging our team members to live it and breathe it through the client commitment.

MS. LATHAM: I would agree with Ms. Munro's comments, we get really excited being able to talk about some of the changes and enhancements we've made. Certainly, a huge reduction in wait times over the past three years, going from 67 per cent of the time serving clients in 20 minutes or less to 80 per cent of the time the following year and we're tracking about 87 per cent of the time serving clients in 20 minutes or less. That's across all 13 Access Centres across the province.

Other enhancements: for example, the name badges which I think Ms. Munro talked about, and little things like our numbering system when you come in and pick a number and decide what service you are there for. It can be confusing, so we took some time to really look at that and say how can we make this more plain language, how can we make it easy for clients to understand? We also now offer it in English and French, and I think it was mentioned as well that you are prompted right off the bat on whether or not you want an accessible work station. We've followed that through in our processes and operationalized that so that if you do indeed say yes, I do need an accessible work station, then you will be served as such.

Visible leadership is key, so ensuring our leaders are in the centres on a constant basis really drives the engagement of the employees, and at the end of the day, that is really the number one driver of good client service. I could go on and on but maybe I'll leave it at that and put it back to you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, I thought you were going back to the question.

MR. MACKAY: Ms. Munro, did you have something you wanted to add to that? I can see that this is certainly a very passionate thing at Service Nova Scotia - excellence in

service delivery. I'm very pleased to hear that, very pleased, because I agree with Mr. Houston that it's far more pleasant than going to the dentist. If you wanted to expand, please do.

MS. MUNRO: I'd also like to add that our front-line customer service reps deliver the registry programs and they've been trained on those programs and they're not easy programs. What we're also embarking on is service training and to help our customer service reps feel confident in their service conversations. It has to go hand in hand and we're looking to do that through online service training, observational coaching that happens when they're actually interacting on the front line so there's lots of supports around them to make them the best that they can be. That's key.

[10:00 a.m.]

They need the tools to be able to do the job and that's what Ms. Latham and team are doing to ensure that we've got the right supports and the right training to help deliver that experience that we all want. It's about raising the bar in service within our organization.

MR. MACKAY: I think that having trained front-line service staff for 25 years in a previous position, I recognize the importance of training and how if you don't train your staff they are not going to be happy staff. They're not going to deliver. They're not going to give the customer experience that they want to provide and that the clients wish to receive. I was wondering, do you track in any statistical manner - I get hung up on statistics. It's just my thing. Do you track in some manner that sort of response by your staff, how they feel about the culture you have created or that you have transformed there?

MS. MUNRO: Yes we do. The Public Service Commission issues their employee engagement survey every two years. Coming into the organization, I said that's not enough for us because we're in transformation mode, and we need to hear from our employees regularly. So we have actually instituted an annual survey that translates and we can compare to the Public Service Commission. We actually hear from our team on a regular basis, annually in that more formal way. I would say there's an ongoing floodgate into Ms. Latham and her directors on feedback.

We also have something called employee insights. They are surveys as to what we can do better on our processes and opportunities to raise the bar for clients as well. We all have an open door policy, so they can come to me with anything and everything. I am excited about the fact that we have a blog. If they want to blog, we can blog. We're a very open and dynamic organization, and the more feedback we get, the better.

Certainly our road shows - I call them road shows. It's when we go around and we talk to folks and have these fireside chats, if you will. There's lots of good stuff that comes out of that. I do it once a year, and yes, I'll pop in on occasion if I'm in a community. But

Ms. Latham and her team are there and present and ready to have feedback on an ongoing basis. This is for broad Service Nova Scotia, not just the in-person services. We live that in all our divisions across the organization. Employee feedback is very, very important, and we listen. I think that has been one of our keys, that their voice is heard. We action their voice, and they see that action. They're trusting us, and we work together collaboratively to make our workplace better and to deliver better services.

MR. MACKAY: Representing a constituency that is probably one foot in suburban HRM and one foot in the adjacent Municipality of Chester, I hear from my constituents how pleased they are to hear of services not being strictly on peninsular Halifax, be they health services or be the Access Nova Scotia and so forth.

Not wanting in any way to impinge on the access of peninsular residents, I can certainly say from the growing communities along the South Shore that there is indeed great enthusiasm and appreciation for the fact that we are putting services such as Access Nova Scotia, the new health care services that will be provided, at Bayers Lake. These are good things, as long as we're working with our partners such as HRM and Halifax Transit to ensure that there is readily accessible service provided to the residents of the peninsula and the growing population as we see it moving out from Clayton Park and so forth towards Bayers Lake.

Your work to address the rural populations is appreciated. I guess where I'm going with this is, how do you track that as far as how you're balancing rural versus urbanized residents of the province?

MS. MUNRO: I think it's important to understand our strategy as well is the physical footprint but also the real desire to have convenience around our digital transactions and how we can give convenience so that people are transacting in their homes or wherever they want to transact.

It's important to have the physical footprint. I'm from that space where I want our citizens to choose which channel they interact with us on. Our job is to build out digital services where they prefer to use them rather than going into the physical footprint. Those channels are available and I'm very strong on being able to interact with all our citizens in whatever channel they decide. Our job is to make all three efficient.

Balancing rural and urban, I think collectively we've got the 13 Access Centres across the province, but on the go-forward, our growth channel is digital. We will continue to be in the communities that we are serving now and hopefully have more accessibility through our digital work.

MR. MACKAY: Thank you for that. I certainly am very pleased to hear that there's a greater move towards digital and that will be the key. Obviously, we are working hard to improve and up our game in rural Nova Scotia as far as access to Internet and so forth. Our

government is committed to that. On the technology side, certainly I see spending on technology to be an investment and not a cost to government. It's going to improve service and streamline more efficient service.

On the technology side of things, does Service Nova Scotia take a lead in this or is it more of the Internal Services Department that would do it? I'm thinking of such things as I know some jurisdictions are introducing blockchain technology for various things such as land registries and so forth. Would it be Internal Services where they would make those investigations as to adaption of technologies?

MS. MUNRO: It's actually a real partnership. We work with our technology experts at Internal Services. We, as program owner, know our business and what is needed and engaging with the users of the services and stakeholders and so forth; we're kind of like the front lead. But yes, those decisions around the best technology to solve the problems we have or to deliver the services that are identified through our discovery work; we work with our partners in ISD on that. They would be the ones to say there is a solution that might work that includes blockchain. Obviously, they are experts, and we would defer to their judgment as part of our partner on the technology side of any business decision or registry decision that we would have to make.

MR. MACKAY: I'd like to move a little bit more maybe into red tape reduction; I know my colleague, the member for Clayton Park West has some questions there. I'd like to ask, is part of the red tape reduction that your organization will be involved in going to include harmonizing of any of your requirements with other Maritime or Atlantic Provinces? Is there any harmonizing occurring?

MS. MUNRO: We actually work very closely with Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness - that's the Fred Crooks' business that's driving out and announced our goal of \$25 million in burden reduction this year, so we work very closely with them. As a shop that has 40-plus pieces of legislation, there's an opportunity for us and we're a big contributor to that. We're very focused on red tape reduction.

Regarding collaboration with our partner jurisdictions, our neighbouring jurisdictions, we really let Mr. Crooks take the lead on that in our partnership but we do identify and work closely with our neighbouring jurisdictions to identify where that might make sense.

Nothing comes off the top of my head that has been announced. We just have ongoing conversations, whether it be in Land Registry or Vital Statistics - I know Vital Statistics is very much a community in that regard. If we find an opportunity, we'll definitely go down it because we want to collaborate with our neighbours.

MR. MACKAY: Thank you for that. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to maybe pass to my colleague, the member for Clayton Park West.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Dicostanzo, you have just one minute remaining in this round.

MS. RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I can start and then we will finish it when Suzanne gets up. My riding is actually a very good example of how many new businesses we have here. We have a lot of entrepreneurs. It's really exciting to see how many new businesses are arriving. I remember 20 years - my husband is also a business lawyer so he deals with a lot of businesses and we always heard how red tape was such an obstacle for a lot of the new entrepreneurs, the new immigrants that are coming. I'm hearing so little of it and I'm very happy and excited.

I actually have a meeting with a group of my business leaders in my riding at the end of the month. I know you are trying to reduce red tape, but it is obvious that you have done something. Give me some examples that I can bring up in the meeting and also, what do you have in the future for them?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order, I'm sorry there won't be time for that in this round but perhaps in the next round they can answer that question.

We'll move back to Mr. Houston of the PC caucus. The second round will be for 10 minutes.

MR. HOUSTON: My colleague Mr. Wilson and I were listening to your reductions in wait times and he was wondering if maybe you could move as a unit over to the Department of Health and Wellness and reduce some wait times there as well. They could use your help there.

You've talked a lot about the staff engagement and some of the things happening there. I did notice in the package that the senior leadership score for engagement was 100 per cent but the employee score was like 68 per cent. I wonder if you can kind of try to explain the spread between those two numbers.

MS. MUNRO: Yes, in looking at the report I guess the strategy or the approach that I took when I came in, knowing that we are on a transformational change agenda, was to get the leadership team in place and have the leadership team drive out the change required.

When we talk about senior leadership, that's director level and above. We meet three times a year and we talk about our challenges, what we need to do to do better and strategically building out where we're going as part of our journey. I think there has been a lot of engagement with that team and they've been given real accountability to drive out the change that is required. I think it's part of the process. Overall our scores are - we've seen a 20-point gain, a 15-point gain since the last surveys. I think it's about the parade analogy, the people at the front of the parade might know more than the people at the back part of the parade but the intent is to get through the entire organization and feel engaged.



I'm very confident with our work around continuous improvement, and actually having the front-line employees at the table telling us how we can improve things has engaged them in ways that just makes me really proud. So yes, it's 68, that's only the start. If we did it again, I am confident that we'd continue to see improvement. I think it's just part of the journey so we have a very engaged leadership team and they are accountable and excited to do their work and in time we're going to see that number come up.

Coming from 61 to 71 points in an engagement score of 750-plus employees is an unprecedented jump in engagement, so it is the work of the leaders who are driving that type of engagement across our organization.

MR. HOUSTON: Thank you for that. The leadership scores at 100 but the staff, I guess when asked about the leadership, scored at 59. I'm picking that up from *The Lighthouse*. I'm seeing a lot of lighthouses these days but in this particular one it said that the staff scores the leadership out of 59, I just wonder if you can comment on that.

[10:15 a.m.]

MS. MUNRO: The questions under senior leadership: "Senior Leadership in my department provides clear direction. Senior leadership in my department makes timely decisions. Essential information flows effectively from senior leadership to staff. I have confidence in the senior leadership of my department." Again, that cohort is director level and above.

I would say that we are ongoing in helping communications. Communications has been probably the biggest area of opportunity, and we have certainly made some great strides. Staff are just telling us, this is a yellow code - we call it yellow, meaning that we're not there yet. It's not red; it's not like the wheels are falling off. But there's an area of opportunity for improvement.

What we do as our team is, we will engage our employees and say, how might we do better? Each of the divisions is responsible for building out their own individual engagement plans. Then we as a team make sure that they're actioned. From our perspective, we have made big gains from 2015. Actually, in almost all of them, I can see 20-point gains from where we were in 2015. For us, it's about continuous improvement. We're not there yet. We'll just continue to work at it.

MR. HOUSTON: I do want to go back to the RFID chips in the licences. We do have that capability, I guess, with the new licence, but it's not being implemented yet. Is there a plan to implement it?

MS. MUNRO: I would say we need the functionality available to us when we're ready to implement it. I think it's part of the larger digital strategy and identity strategy that

we will have for government. At this point, I'm not aware of any direction to turn that on if you will . . .

MR. HOUSTON: It's pretty controversial, right?

MS. MUNRO: Pardon?

MR. HOUSTON: It's controversial, isn't it? If I had a new licence and it had this RFID chip in it, government would know where I was when I was there. You could track me, right? As long as my licence was on my body, you could track me.

MS. MUNRO: If I could defer to my colleague Ms. Clarke to comment.

MR. HOUSTON: I think that's what that chip enables, right?

MS. CLARKE: No, the intent of the chip is to essentially enable near-field communications so that you can use it as a tap. Essentially then, what that will allow us to do with digital identity is you would have not just a user name and a password but also something that you have - a multiple-factor way to be able to identify you. The intent would never be for Big Brother to happen, for government to track where you are. Our role is about protecting the safety of citizens.

MR. HOUSTON: So the tap would be if I go to the NSLC, and they want to see my ID, they don't even look at it, I just tap it?

MS. CLARKE: Ideally, if you think about the world today, if I'm a 19-year-old woman, and I present at the NSLC today, I have to show my driver's licence with my photo, my address, and a number of other pieces of information about me to prove my age. In future, what it would allow us to do is, you would see my photo, you would be able to validate that my face looks the same, and you would get a green check mark or a red X. That cashier or that other individual wouldn't actually need to see as much information about me, which really has nothing to do with that transaction.

MR. HOUSTON: Okay, so it's maybe down the road, but there's no real plan as of yet. In the end, I guess for the cannabis retail, we're still going to use the same ID systems that we do for NSLC. Has there been any talk of how we would manage ID for cannabis sales? I guess it would be part of the age verification, would it? The same as NSLC, when cannabis becomes legal.

MS. MUNRO: I'm not aware of or privy to those conversations, so I really can't answer specifically around NSLC and identity and the cannabis file. I wouldn't feel comfortable speaking.

MR. HOUSTON: I was certain everything wasn't worked out on cannabis. I guess that's one of the other things that's maybe not worked out.

Just in the last little bit of time, I did notice that there's quite a bit of money paid out to different computer companies. Unisys is one. Unisys Canada was paid \$3.6 million last year. Is that for computer upgrades? What's happening there with those big bills for Unisys?

MS. MUNRO: I'll defer to my colleague, Ms. Clarke, to answer that question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Clarke, you just have 20 seconds.

MS. CLARKE: Perfect. Unisys Canada has had some long-standing contracts with the government as a service provider. They provide a number of services for us, the largest service probably being our generic payment service, which is a digital payment platform. This would be one component of a number of the services they provide to us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order, thank you. We will move to the NDP caucus and the Honourable David Wilson.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Thank you for being here today. I want to continue on around the information held by these new cards and of course our licences and with the outsourcing or the contract going to a company outside the province, where is that information held? Is the company out of Ontario, if I'm not mistaken, that oversees the issuing of the licences or creating the licences themselves? Is that correct?

MS. MUNRO: Gemalto has the processing centre in Burlington, Ontario, for the central issuance of the drivers' licences.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Any information that Nova Scotia is provided, Access Nova Scotia, does that information stay here or does it go to Ontario? Is it stored in Ontario or is it stored in Nova Scotia?

MS. MUNRO: I'll ask my colleague, Mr. Benoit, to respond.

MR. BENOIT: Obviously, we have to send them data to have their ability to produce the cards, so the data that is on the card. They have strict rules they have to abide by in terms of the timing of the use of the data and the destruction of the data, things like once they receive the data to produce your card and put that data on your card, then there are policies around X number of days after the production of that card that data has to be destroyed.

All of that information went through our process around privacy impact assessment and review by the privacy commissioner to ensure that all the proper standards around the collection and the destruction of that data happens within a timely manner.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I would assume there's a server in Nova Scotia that would keep it on our system, I would assume, right? The use of the card - you're saying that that data is wiped out at a certain time.

Are they a Canadian company or are they an international company? The reason I ask that - I don't know if too many people are familiar with the Patriot Act. That was brought in some time ago - 2001, I think - and it's an Act of Congress that gives wide-sweeping authority for the U.S. Government to look into information from companies in the U.S.

I know we talked about this a little bit around when the Nova Scotia Health Authority was sending some of our pathology tests to Minnesota. Is the company that we have currently - is that an international company? Are there other pieces of legislation like the Patriot Act outside our jurisdiction able to have input or see that information that is provided when we register for our licences and other things?

MS. MUNRO: We've obviously had to work with our partner in Internal Services which owns, along with our privacy departments around use of data. We obviously worked with them to ensure the provider meets all the rules and regs around privacy, holding data within Canada, obviously, and the legislation, so we're confident that's the case because all other three jurisdictions need to follow the same rules at the federal level. We're confident that is the case. If there's any further information that Mr. Benoit would like to share . . .

MR. DAVID WILSON: I'm comfortable with that, as long as to your knowledge that information is staying in Canada. Okay, I'm good with that.

I just want to turn a little bit. You mentioned some 40 pieces of legislation help you provide your services and guide you on the work you do. I believe the Consumer Protection Act falls under your jurisdiction, is that correct?

MS. MUNRO: That's correct.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I know there has been a lot done to that piece of legislation. I think the last change was around cellphone bills and requirements to hopefully alleviate some of the outrageous prices that people were paying to get out of contracts and that. Has there ever been - and I believe it was under the former government - any review on the need to look at improvements to the Consumer Protection Act for cellphone bills, for example, or do you think the changes at that time are meeting the needs of consumers here in the province?

MS. MUNRO: I would say that with each part of our legislative authority, it is incumbent on the team to continually review. On the Consumer Protection Act, yes, there was something that was recently brought in to make it better on these contracts and be able to have early cancellation and that kind of thing.

We do work closely as well with the Better Business Bureau so we are partners there. I can assure you that the team continues to look at opportunities there. At this juncture, I don't have the information off the top of my head around if there's opportunity around consumer protection but we engage with our stakeholders, we get feedback, and when there's opportunity to make enhancements we certainly want to.

At this point, I don't recall any work happening in the Consumer Protection Act.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Recently a lot of people know - I think my wife brought it up to me - about the pricing of bread in the province and that you could apply to get a \$25 gift card from Loblaws or something like that, because of this price fixing scheme happening across the country, I believe. Is there any role in Nova Scotia and for this piece of legislation to protect consumers so that does not happen?

These are billion dollar companies that have taken advantage of Canadians. Yes, it might be on a more national level, a lot of the media attention, but so were cellphone bills and we were able to do something provincially. Is there something we could do so that we wouldn't see that? I think it states in the Consumer Protection Act for the fair disclosure of costs of credit and for the protection of buyers of consumer goods in the province. Is there a role we could play as a province, to make sure that doesn't happen again?

MS. MUNRO: I don't believe there is a role but I would ask if maybe I could take that question away and come back with a more in-depth response around that particular question, that would be helpful.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I'll be asking the caucus if I can ask that question in the Legislature in a couple of weeks, so hopefully the minister will be prepared. If you could provide me the answer, that would be much better because we're limited on the questions in the House.

I just quickly want to talk a little bit - I know we talked about the facial recognition of the licences and that. I know you have to take your glasses off now, but what about head scarves or a turban? Are you able to get your picture taken if you wear one of those symbols of religion in Nova Scotia now?

MS. MUNRO: If I could ask Mr. Benoit to respond to the question.

MR. BENOIT: The only differences associated with facial recognition and how we take a picture is really around the glasses and the facial expression from a smiling

perspective, not showing teeth. We continue to allow headdresses worn for religious reasons.

MR. DAVID WILSON: The hijab is one and I don't know the answer to this. I would assume they would have to show their face. I don't know if that's the case or not, but what's the policy - I know the Access Nova Scotia facility in Sackville - and is there another room that you would go into that would protect the privacy of that individual?

MR. BENOIT: We certainly make every effort to accommodate people who are comfortable in that environment showing their face, if that's their concern. However, the program also has a policy that allows somebody to make application to the registrar to do what we refer to as a valid-without-photo, in that circumstance as well.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Excellent, thank you for that. Maybe the gentleman from Sackville can answer the question, but the Access Nova Scotia facility in Sackville is well-received in the community. When I first entered the Legislature, we had to go to Portland Street or downtown Halifax and the waits were long. I believe they leased the property or leased the building - how long is that contract good for? When is it up for renewal?

[10:30 a.m.]

MS. MUNRO: I'll defer to Mr. Benoit.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Benoit, you have about 30 seconds.

MR. BENOIT: And I am actually going to defer to Ms. Latham.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Lathan, with 25 seconds.

MS. LATHAM: I will have to say that I will have to get back to you on that. I do believe it's in the next three or four years, but I am guessing a bit. I don't have that information at my fingertips.

MR. DAVID WILSON: With that response, is that something that the minister has to approve? Just the approval process of that so that the community knows that facility should be there for much more . . .

MS. LATHAM: The facility itself being in Sackville - no question. That won't change. We're in Sackville, and we intend to stay in Sackville. It's just more logistics around - we lease that building. I thought you were asking when the lease was up.

MR. DAVID WILSON: Oh, yes. I was asking that.

MS. LATHAM: I can get back to you on when, but certainly . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order. I'm sorry, time has expired. We'll move to Ms. DiCostanzo.

MS. DICOSTANZO: I'm just going to wrap up the same question - some examples of red tape that you have eliminated. I know our government has put in a target of a \$25 million reduction in red tape as well. What have you done, and what are you hoping to do? What things can I bring to the table to my business people?

MS. MUNRO: We actually have a target over the last two years of 20 red tape reduction initiatives. We tracked 13 last year, and we have completed three-ish this year with another nine in process. With that tracking, I would be happy to give you a list of what we have done. We're proud of the work.

First, we're working on the online dealer services. That would be for people in the auto industry. Our team members, Ms. Latham and Ms. Clarke, are very much involved in that. That would allow dealers to actually transact from their place of business and register their new sales. There's lots of detail there. It really saves them a trip to the Access Centre. That's a large volume perspective.

As well, in the Residential Tenancies Act, there's a requirement to deliver a printed document of the Act to a tenant. Now we have made it available through the regulations to give them the online address so that they can actually go online, and we don't have to print as many books. People can certainly still get the paper-based one.

As well, in the Alcohol, Gaming, Fuel and Tobacco Division, we recently instituted red tape reduction where restaurants are able to serve two drinks without ordering food. That's really a service for clients. As well, it's very helpful to business. They have seen that as a driver of business for them.

Obviously, the Registry of Joint Stock Companies is going to be a really big contributor around providing better self-serve options for businesses incorporating and doing business in this province.

The other thing that's under way is a pilot, but we hope to roll it out further. That is residential hearings on the telephones versus having to come in person to Access Centres so landlords and tenants can actually have their hearing and their dispute over the phone lines. That has been going very well as a pilot. That helps those folks who have accessibility issues and as well landlords travelling all over the province. It really is helpful both to tenants and to landlords. That has been a burden reduction.

We actually track the burden reduction in dollars through the regulatory and service effectiveness tool that Mr. Crooks' team has put in place. It's great to be able to quantify what the reduction in burden actually means to business, which is key. It's not about the numbers - it's about the actual dollar impact. Lots more, but a number of things.

I would like to make a slight correction to something I said regarding our savings in the Land Registry consolidation. The savings for that initiative is actually tracking to \$2 million. I think I was thinking of annual ongoing savings in operating of \$500,000. I just wanted to correct the record.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Lohnes-Croft.

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Ms. Munro, you mentioned when you were talking about customer service, you said you had welcoming desks in your centres now. You mentioned the seasonal workforce - what do you do for the seasonal workforce at Access Nova Scotia? I would have thought that it was an employment centre that would have . . .

MS. MUNRO: In our analysis of our work flow and our customer flow, it was just evident that the big bubble happened between April and September of customer flow coming through our offices. We were really staffed for average transactions, our staffing levels.

What we did was an innovative approach. We actually looked at what DNR does - they bring in a seasonal workforce to staff their parks. We looked at what we could do within the boundaries of our FTE and in the boundaries of our fiscal budget, what could we do to shore up and provide the resources we need in our Access Centres to actually manage that customer flow. Ms. Latham and team are getting pretty good at this; there are lot of benefits.

We start the recruiting process in April/March to bring in a seasonal workforce. It's really a use of 10 FTEs, 26 people who work between the April and September time frame. It has been very beneficial because we augment our front-line staff with people who really only want to work that period of time and people who are seasoned, but people are actually vying to come back, so they know there's a seasonal workforce now within the Access Centre and that works fine for them on a personal basis.

It's actually an augmented workforce that comes in to support our front lines between April and September. It's called the seasonal workforce just because it comes from April to September.

MS. LOHNES-CROFT: Okay, so this has nothing to do with the foreign workers' program or anything like that, okay.

MS. MUNRO: It is simply our terminology. Yes, it could be confusing; we probably should look at that.

MS. LOHNES-CROFT: Well that's what first came to me because we have a lot of seasonal workers, especially in the forestry industry and some farming work.



In your transformation, I know it can always be challenging, especially to your staff. What have you done to help your staff? I know you touched on it with another member here about morale because you have brought your statistics up. What did you do to improve that?

MS. MUNRO: It's a real focus and the key to a high-performing team is to have an engaged team. I think coming from my background, it was really important to improve internal communications, and get the right leadership team in place. I think those are the first two things that we did.

Then really we've engaged everybody in our excellence journey through work around continuous improvement, and as I talked about earlier, their voice is actually very much heard and we have open-door policies. Everybody feels like we are in the boat and we are rowing in the same direction. It's important for me to have fun at work and we bring fun into the workplace. Yes, we have an important job to do, and we provide many services to citizens, but we spend an awful lot of time in our workplace. So it's a combination of accountability, people contributing to make things better, being rewarded and knowing that their voice is heard.

We have recognition programs that we have revamped that include not only service but program modernization, diversity and inclusion, French language services, so there's lots of different ways to recognize. It's not only the formal awards, it's the small pat on the back or card to say thank you for a job well done. It really comes down to leadership, communication, and the employees feeling like they really have a contribution to making our place of business better and our services better.

I'm really all about being proud of the work you do and that's really coming along. Our team in the Access Centres are professional service individuals and committed to doing the best they can. Our job is to give them the tools they need to do that.

MS. LOHNES-CROFT: What do you provide for people with disabilities - people who are challenged literacy-wise, taking a driver's test, for example. I've worked with students whose dream is to get their driver's licence but they can't take a written test because they just don't have those skills. What is done for those people?

MS. MUNRO: I'll actually let Mr. Benoit respond to your question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Benoit, you have about 30 seconds.

MR. BENOIT: In those situations where they have their challenges, the person would have the ability to book an appointment, and they would have the ability to have somebody translate the questions and answers to them. They would orally test the client.

MS. LOHNES-CROFT: So there would be a test of signage, like being able to read the signs, though? Because when you are in a vehicle, you need to be able to read the road signs, right? They're mostly pictures or graphics, right?

MR. BENOIT: Yes.

MS. LOHNES-CROFT: Would that be part of an exam for them, reading the graphics?

MR. BENOIT: Yes, the same as everybody else. It would be the exact same test. It would be the rules of the road and the signs of the road.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The time for questions has expired. Ms. Munro, you can now provide closing comments.

MS. MUNRO: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would just like to say on behalf of our team, thank you for your time and your interest, and we wish you a great day.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for being with us and answering our questions.

We do have some committee business. We received correspondence from the Highway 104 Western Alignment Corporation. That was with respect to speed limits. Are there any questions on that correspondence?

Hearing none, the next few items we have on the agenda are items that we discussed at the subcommittee of this committee. The first one I will go at here is the endorsement of Auditor General recommendations. From time to time, the committee can choose to formally pass a motion to endorse the Auditor General's recommendations. We have made a practice of this in the past. However, I think it's important for the committee to make a conscious decision on this each time that it comes up.

We're only looking at recommendations that have been accepted by departments. There is the odd time when a recommendation may be made, and the department will not accept the recommendation, and they explain why. We're not talking about those instances, just instances where the departments have accepted recommendations.

We have come up with wording with the assistance of our legal counsel to pass these motions in the future as we choose to do so. Mr. Gordon Wilson, perhaps you could put forward a motion for this so that we can use it in the future.

MR. GORDON WILSON: I thank the committee and legal staff for their indulgence in the conversation around it. I would like to make the motion that the following statement be adopted as a revised portion for endorsing the AG recommendations:

“I move that the Public Accounts Committee formally accept and endorse recommendations contained in the” - blank report - “of the Auditor General that have been accepted by the audited departments or agencies and ask that these departments and agencies commit to and take responsibility for full and timely implementation of the recommendations accepted by these departments and agencies.”

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Houston, do you have a comment?

MR. HOUSTON: I think we should fill in the blank. Are we actually endorsing something for the AG today?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Not today, but we will use this format for the motion in the future when we do endorse. It's just to approve the wording of the motion, so it's clear.

MR. HOUSTON: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried. Our clerk will make note of that.

We also discussed the procedure regarding Auditor General Reports. In the month of November, as we know, we had a number of reports where we had meetings with the Auditor General, some in camera, some in public. We discussed that at the subcommittee, and the aim was to tighten up our schedule so that we're not just meeting with the Auditor General but actually meeting with the departments involved in those reports in as timely a way as we can.

We did come to the agreement at the subcommittee level that the Auditor General's Office would table performance audits the day prior to a meeting of the Public Accounts Committee and that our meeting to discuss that audit with the Auditor General would happen the next day, on Wednesday when we typically meet. The subcommittee had agreed that might be the best way so that the information is tabled a day in advance, members have a chance to review it, and then we can meet in public with the Auditor General the next day to ask any questions for clarification.

Does the committee agree with the procedure as set out in that motion? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried. Our clerk will make note of that.

[10:45 a.m.]

We have a similar situation, that is for when the Auditor General issues performance reports. After the performance reports, sometimes months later or maybe even a year or two later, there are follow-up reports with departments that show the progress that those departments have made. Of course, our second piece of business today was endorsing recommendations as a means for this committee to put its weight behind those recommendations.

The follow-up reports are an update from the Auditor General on how well departments are following up with those recommendations, if they are completing them. The same case here, the subcommittee decided it would be best for the Auditor General to table the report on, say, a Tuesday prior to the meeting of Public Accounts and then the following day, on Wednesday, we would meet with the Auditor General - the same process.

Would all those in favour of that process please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

There is agreement from committee members on that as well, so our clerk will make note of that.

We have two other items here. The Canadian Audit and Accountability Foundation has offered training to the committee. The subcommittee has discussed this matter and agreed that no training would be scheduled at this point. However, our clerk is going to look into self-training options for each member here. There are a lot of online training options that members can pursue on their own, so that option will be given to you, but no training will be scheduled for the committee specifically at this time. Are members okay with that?

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Our clerk will make note of that decision that members are in favour of no training at this time.

Meeting agendas - this is a matter in terms of ensuring members are aware of what is going to appear on the agenda in advance of the meeting. We are going to have to have further discussion of this at the subcommittee level, but for the time being, we are going to ensure that the agendas for these meetings are distributed on the Monday of the week that we are meeting so that members have at least a couple of days to be aware of what's on the agenda.

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Our next meeting date is Valentine's Day, February 14<sup>th</sup>, next Wednesday. We will be meeting with the Department of Environment. They will be our witness and we will be discussing the Northern Pulp environmental assessment.

Is there any further business to come before the committee? Hearing none, this meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 10:48 a.m.]