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**Proceedings of the Standing Committee on
Social Services**

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Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Chair: Lisa Dempster, MHA

Vice-Chair: Tracey Perry, MHA

Members: Paul Davis, MHA
Carol Anne Haley, MHA
Paul Lane, MHA
Betty Parsley, MHA
Scott Reid, MHA
Gerry Rogers, MHA

Clerk of the Committee: Elizabeth Murphy

Appearing:

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Hon. Dale Kirby, MHA, Minister

Ingrid Clarke, Assistant Deputy Minister, Infrastructure

Kara Connors, Executive Assistant

Mary Goss-Prowse, Director, Family and Child Development Division

Blair Medd, Director, Communications

Tracy Stamp, Manager, Budgeting

Don Stapleton, Director, Financial Services

Janet Vivian-Walsh, Deputy Minister

Ed Walsh, Assistant Deputy Minister, K-12 and Early Childhood Development

Also Present

David Brazil, MHA

Lorraine Michael, MHA

Kevin Parsons, MHA

Sandy Collins, Researcher, Official Opposition Office

Susan Williams, Researcher, NDP Office

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, David Brazil, MHA for Conception Bay East – Bell Island, substitutes for Tracey Perry, MHA for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Kevin Parsons, MHA for Cape St. Francis, substitutes for Paul Davis, MHA for Topsail – Paradise.

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

CHAIR (Dempster): Good morning everyone.

We'll get started; a couple of minutes late. I'll start by letting the minister introduce himself and introduce his team, or allow them to do the same. You guys can introduce yourself and then we can get started with, if you want to do a few opening remarks.

MR. KIRBY: Sure. I don't have anything extensive to say at the outset. We're a little late starting so I don't want to cut into people's time to ask questions.

We'll just go down the line here and people can introduce themselves. We have quite a number of people from the department here.

MS. VIVIAN-WALSH: Janet Vivian-Walsh, Deputy Minister.

MR. STAPLETON: Don Stapleton, Departmental Controller.

MS. CLARKE: Ingrid Clarke, ADM, Infrastructure.

MR. MEDD: Blair Medd, Director of Communications.

MR. WALSH: Ed Walsh, ADM, K-12 and Early Childhood Development.

MS. GOSS-PROWSE: Mary Goss-Prowse, Director of Family and Child Development Division.

MS. STAMP: Tracy Stamp, Manager of Budgeting.

MS. CONNORS: Kara Connors, Minister's EA.

MR. BRAZIL: David Brazil, MHA, Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. COLLINS: Sandy Collins, Office of the Opposition.

MR. REID: Scott Reid, MHA, St. George's – Humber.

MS. MICHAEL: Lorraine Michael, MHA, St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

MS. WILLIAMS: Susan Williams, Researcher, Third Party.

MS. HALEY: Carol Anne Haley, MHA, Burin – Grand Bank.

MS. PARSLEY: Betty Parsley, MHA, Harbour Main.

MR. LANE: Paul Lane, MHA, Mount Pearl – Southlands.

CHAIR: Okay.

I'll ask the Clerk to call the first subhead, and maybe what we'll do is run through each section instead of subhead by subhead and move on that way.

CLERK (Ms. Murphy): 1.1.01.

CHAIR: 1.1.01.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I really am not ready to ask any questions until we get to 2.2.01. I'm quite comfortable with the outline numbers in the Minister's Office.

CHAIR: Okay.

Ms. Michael.

MS. MICHAEL: I don't have any questions for 1.1.01.

CHAIR: Okay.

1.2.01.

No? We'll keep moving.

2.1.01.

2.1.02.

MS. MICHAEL: I want to just ask – last year it was \$1.8 million, approximately, for the Grants and Subsidies and it's going up this year. So could we just have a breakdown of the Grants and Subsidies?

MR. KIRBY: There's an additional \$100,000 in there for the T.I. Murphy Centre. That explains the –

MS. MICHAEL: I'm just going to have to do an adjustment here. I'm not hearing well, so I'll be one second.

Okay. If I could just have that again, please, Minister?

MR. KIRBY: In the revised there's an additional \$100,000 for the T.I. Murphy Centre.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

Thank you very much.

MR. KIRBY: Then in the budget there's additional funding for the T.I. Murphy Centre.

MS. MICHAEL: I just want to check out the Chair with the minister. We've been receiving the Estimates booklets afterwards, so we'll be getting that again from the minister.

MR. KIRBY: Sure.

MS. MICHAEL: Great. So then I won't go through the whole list because we'll see that list, but I just wanted to see what the extra was.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Okay.

2.1.02.

Mr. Brazil?

MR. BRAZIL: No, I'm still good until 2.2.01.

CHAIR: Okay.

2.1.03, did either of you – no.

MS. MICHAEL: Yes, 2.1.03; looking again, this is Policy and Planning, and looking at Professional Services, there is quite a jump in Professional Services from the revised last year of \$156,000 up to \$427,000. So if we could have an explanation please, Minister, of the big increase in Professional Services.

MR. KIRBY: Yes. The increase in the budget is Professional Services related to the new teachers' payroll system, and the other part of it is the funding for the Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes, \$277,000.

MS. MICHAEL: So \$277,000 for the task force, and how much for the new payroll system?

MR. KIRBY: No, \$70,000 for the teachers' payroll system.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

CHAIR: Okay.

Now I'm going to ask, shall 1.1.01 inclusive to 2.1.03 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 2.1.03 carried.

CHAIR: Now we'll move to subhead –

CLERK: 2.2.01.

CHAIR: 2.2.01.

Mr. Brazil.

MR. BRAZIL: A question there; the \$75,000 difference in Salaries under the first heading 01. Can you explain? Is that a new position? Is it added salary costs?

MR. KIRBY: Are you looking at the revised or the Estimates?

MR. BRAZIL: We're looking at the Estimates from the revised.

MR. KIRBY: There's a position that was transferred from Child, Youth and Family Services for information management related to the ISM system. So it's \$47,000. I think there's much more to it than that.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay. Yes, fair enough.

We can move now to 3.1.01. Madam Chair, do you want to –?

MR. KIRBY: Do you want to call that head there?

CHAIR: Can we just finish up Corporate? It was my mistake in procedure. I didn't turn the page and I thought I had covered it off.

MR. KIRBY: Okay, yes.

CHAIR: So is it okay if I just ask Ms. Michael on the 2.2.01?

MR. KIRBY: Yes, Ms. Michael.

MS. MICHAEL: I don't have any questions under there, Chair.

No, I do have one. Under Purchased Services, the budget last year was \$14,900, only \$1,600 was spent and now it's \$2,000. So I guess I'd like to know why was the budget \$14,900 last year and very little money is needed there now?

MR. KIRBY: Well, I wasn't sitting here when it was made to be \$14,900, but we save \$13,300. It was discretionary spending we rolled in, and then we're just going to continue to restrain the spending to keep it down to \$2,000.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay. So it was nothing in particular, just discretionary at the very beginning.

MR. KIRBY: Just trying to keep expenses down.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

Thank you very much.

CLERK: 2.2.01.

CHAIR: Shall 2.2.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subhead 2.2.01 carried.

CLERK: 3.1.01.

CHAIR: 3.1.01.

Mr. Brazil.

MR. BRAZIL: The \$6 million difference under the Grants and Subsidies for the School Boards; can you explain where that money is going to be invested? What programs it will cover, please?

MR. KIRBY: The funding is based on payroll expenditures for 2015-16. It's the annualization of the NLTA increase that was negotiated in the collective agreements of 3 per cent. It also reflects the step increases.

Let's see what else is here; full-day kindergarten, approximately \$6.5 million for Salaries for the positions for that. There were a number of positions that were going to leave the system just through declining enrolment. We're retaining 27 teaching units to support inclusive education, instead of letting them just go as they normally would. So that's almost \$1.3 million.

There are changes in there associated with the increase in the class-size caps that were announced in the budget and the combined grades, the move to the combined grades. There's support for teachers, district support for curriculum, literacy and numeracy support for teachers. So there were a number of initiatives that were taken out that basically resulted in a reduction in 10 teaching units.

What's gone on is there were initiatives that were ongoing in the different regions, if you

will, as sort of legacy programming from when we had the four previous boards. We're not in a budgetary position to harmonize that programming across the system. So those legacy programs that were not in place across the system have been taken out. That's about 10 teaching units for those initiatives.

Then there was also a move by the school district to limit Intensive Core French where it could be offered within the existing teaching allocation. As you're aware, French immersion is an optional program that's offered by the school district. It's not available across the whole school system. It's only where it can be offered. The district will now just offer Intensive Core French where it can be done within the existing allocation.

There was another district program, an optional program that was eliminated. It was called Learning in Technological Environments, LITE.

To make a long story short – you can have the binder afterwards – it's netted out a number of increases in spending for, like I said, the NLTA collective bargaining and step increases and so on. Addition of the positions for full-day kindergarten versus the reductions that are a result of the change in the class-size caps, the combined grades and the elimination of those legacy programs that weren't harmonized across the system.

Does that answer your question?

MR. BRAZIL: Yes. So I'm clear here and I can take precise notes. There are some positions leaving, due to cap size. The savings then being realized there and the additional monies are invested back into the all-day kindergarten costing, the salary increases, as part of it, some of the other investments around numeracy and literacy, to offset that, and some of the French immersion programs.

MR. KIRBY: And the retention of the 27 teaching units that would have gone due to declining enrolment.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay, thank you.

I want to move down to 3.1.02, 10, Grants and Subsidies, the operating grants there for Regular

Operating Grant, a \$2 million difference. Can you explain where the cuts there are or the increases, I should say, where (inaudible)?

MR. KIRBY: Did you skip a page there?

MR. BRAZIL: No, 3.1.02, School Board Operations.

MR. KIRBY: Okay.

3.1.02, so you skipped down to – I got ya.

MR. BRAZIL: Number 10, Grants and Subsidies, a \$2 million increase, roughly \$2 million, \$1.5 million. What will that go to cover?

MR. KIRBY: Grants and Subsidies, that's the line for the \$113 million. Is that what you are looking at?

MR. BRAZIL: Under 10, Grants and Subsidies, Regular Operating Grant.

MR. KIRBY: Yes, I got you there.

Well, there's the JES. The implementation of the JES is getting close to \$1.6 million. There are a variety of other smaller things in there. There are school board elections in there: \$400,000.

MR. BRAZIL: Can you give me a little bit more clarification of what Grants and Subsidies would include? Is it special training for professional days? Is it to offset another partnership within the school system?

MR. KIRBY: The Grants and Subsidies for School Board Operations?

MR. BRAZIL: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: That's the operation of the school district, if you will, because the teacher salaries are captured in a different line. So you can imagine the operations of schools being based on two things, two major things at least. One of them is school board operations, so all the things, mostly, except teacher salaries.

You have all the operations of the board office, all the SEOs, consultants, itinerants and then

everything from keeping the lights on in schools to snow clearing, et cetera.

MR. BRAZIL: All the standard operation things of the school –

MR. KIRBY: The operations of the school district, yes, except teacher salaries, which are another major line item.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay, fair enough. Thank you.

I'm going to move over to 3.1.04, School Supplies. Under Operating Accounts, Supplies, there's a \$900,000 increase. A little explanation as to what that increase incurs, please.

MR. KIRBY: Full-day kindergarten is the bulk of it.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: Yes, it's full-day kindergarten and there was a reduction in the Government Renewal Initiative. I think it was sort of misinterpreted with the media; they said, oh, you're reducing the budget for school supplies. Actually, what it was is just a delayed implementation of a new course or a new curriculum. That's basically that.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay. So the bulk of this is all-day kindergarten?

MR. KIRBY: Is full-day kindergarten, yes.

MR. BRAZIL: Fair enough.

I'm going to move to 3.2.02.

CHAIR: Can we just stop there and keep it under the subheadings? Is that okay?

MR. BRAZIL: Sure enough. We can go to Ms. Michael.

CHAIR: (Inaudible) on the clock and then I'll move to Ms. Michael. We'll finish off Financial Assistance and come back.

MR. KIRBY: Do you want to go back there, Lorraine?

MS. MICHAEL: Yes, please. I do have some questions.

3.1.01, Minister, do you have in your notes, when we get them, the exact numbers of the different positions that will be gone from LITE and the Intensive Core French, the various areas where there are reductions in teacher numbers? Will you have the exact numbers in your notes, or can we get those if you don't?

MR. KIRBY: I have the numbers. The teacher numbers aren't in here, but we do have them. The amounts of money are in here, but if you want to follow up with me I can give you the sort of ballpark figures. There's sort of the budgeting we do, which are based on Estimates, and then there's the reality of what happens when they try to balance these numbers through the school system. You have to understand that there are probably teachers out there that their full-time position is made up of portions of the allocations, and teachers who could be anywhere from 0.1 up to 100.

I'll just take the example of a learning resource teacher, depending on the size of the school, the portion of the allocation that goes towards their salary as a learning resource teacher could be 0.75. Well if the principal wants that person to be full time, they have to make up the 0.25 elsewhere.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

MR. KIRBY: So when there are budgetary reductions that cause teacher redundancies, all of that stuff needs to work its way through the system and then somebody with far greater expertise than me at the board level and at the school level is balancing out of those 0.25 and 0.3's and all of that. So I can give you the estimated number – because it's not in here – of what the class-size cap changes and the combined-grade changes are according to what we've estimated with the district. But whether that's exactly the impact, now that's another questions too – it's pretty close, but it may not be 100 per cent exactly because of those nuances and partial positions.

MS. MICHAEL: Well, given that understanding, which I totally understand, if we just could have your estimation with the

understanding that it's not going to be 100 per cent (inaudible).

MR. KIRBY: Janet just handed it to me. We went over this with the media in the budget lockup, so this is the same document. Like I said, it's not in here. Basically the overall reduction in the numbers of teaching units is 61.25, but that figure is made up of a number of different things. So the class-size cap changes result in a reduction of 97.75 units.

MS. MICHAEL: It is 97.75, and these are units?

MR. KIRBY: Yes. That's the changes for grades four to six, seven to nine and the changes in the high school allocation ratio. So the 97.75 is there. There's a further reduction of minus 69 associated with the combined grades, so it is minus 69 there. Then there's a minus 32.5 due to declining enrolment.

The district initiatives, like you reference there, the LITE program and so on, and what I was saying about harmonizing, removing those district-specific initiatives that would have been in place in Western, Nova Central, they're initiatives through the Government Renewal Initiative and is a further reduction of 31.5 units.

So you have all of that then you sort of – where we're getting the 61.25 is the addition of 142.5 positions for full-day kindergarten, and then the 27 that I mentioned that we were going to retain for inclusive education. So that gets us to the 61.25.

MS. MICHAEL: And, Dale, the numbers for inclusion, do they have extra numbers there over this year or is it static?

MR. KIRBY: None of the ratios have changed for any of those positions like instructional resource teachers or any of the teacher specialist positions, guidance, all of those specialist positions, the ratios are all the same. So the changes are coming about due to the cap changes, the combined grades and the changes that the district is making in their programming in addition to the declining enrolment.

We'll have the same number of IRTs, special education teachers, as we had last year, plus the

27. We haven't really fully determined how the 27 are going to be utilized. We'll work with the district on trying to figure that out. We've talked about possibly having more itinerants. We have 27 to work with that will be in addition to what we have now.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much. That's really helpful, all of that detail. I really appreciate it.

MR. KIRBY: Thanks.

MS. MICHAEL: Is there anything else you wanted to add? You looked like you were –

MR. KIRBY: No.

MS. MICHAEL: There were two others under 3.1.01 that I'd like to ask about. This may not be something that can be easily answered, but I'd like to just get an idea of the existence of autism in terms of are there parts of the province, ratio-wise, where we have more children in the school with autism than others, or do we find children with autism in every part of the province.

MR. KIRBY: I haven't been given any information to indicate that it's concentrated in any particular area, but that's about all I can tell you about it.

We know the prevalence is increasing and there's debate about the preciseness of some of the statistics. We're often dealing with American statistics or national statistics, but beyond that, I couldn't tell you. No one has suggested that in a particular region or school that the prevalence is concentrated on.

MS. MICHAEL: Right. I guess then more specific – and again, you may not have this answer here but you could probably locate it – is the school board having to deal with having services for children with autism everywhere in the whole province? How widely spread is the need for them to come up with the services for children with autism?

MR. KIRBY: Well, the resources are all dedicated based on the allocation formula. There's a needs-based portion of the allocation formula as well. There is a joint committee – it's been sort of stalled at the moment, but there is a

joint committee on inclusive education that was formed at the cessation of collective bargaining, the last round of bargaining with the NLTA. There's a draft report that's waiting to be released by the joint committee. They've looked at a variety of things in the system.

One of the things they did was a survey of teachers around inclusive education, questions about it and so on. There is really nothing that I can recall in the findings of that which would indicate that it's anything less than really uniform. There's definitely a need. And you can certainly make a valid argument that there's a need for additional resources to address things that are becoming more clear to us.

I'm not an expert in this area, but I'd go so far as to say that autism is probably not something that's new. What's new is our understanding of the disorder and how it is we can help kids with autism succeed better in school. So we're learning as we go along, the education system is, but there's nothing that's been suggested to me that would say that the problems are concentrated or that the district is having an easy time dealing with it. Everybody understands that it's a complicated problem and that additional resources are going to be required.

MS. MICHAEL: Actually, I do have a copy of the information note that was done by the Inclusive Education Committee signed by, I think, members of your staff included in the preparation. And I do see that the survey report that they're working on, the final report of that survey will be coming in the spring. So I guess after that, you would have a better idea of the inclusion. This is bigger than autism.

MR. KIRBY: Yes. In the interest of transparency – I think this was reported by the media some time back – the joint committee has not agreed on the final report; 19 out of 21 recommendations have been agreed to by the committee. There was some disagreement about how to finalize the process. It's stalled now as a result of two grievances that have been filed by the NLTA: one by a member of the committee; the other by the association itself. The grievances are associated with the process. So until we can get those grievances ironed out, it's more or less at an impasse, I guess I would say.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

CHAIR: Looking at the clock, Ms. Michael, I'm going to come back to Mr. Brazil in a moment, but I didn't know if you had anything else under that subhead before we –

MS. MICHAEL: Under the subhead –

CHAIR: Under Financial Assistance, if you got a few things then maybe we can –

MS. MICHAEL: I do, just probably two particular ones.

CHAIR: Do you want (inaudible) is that okay with you or do you want to get moving on the next one?

MR. BRAZIL: I just have a quick question, if I could ask for clarification.

Can I ask the minister if he could have his officials put together a spreadsheet for us just outlining what positions are cap losses, which ones are enrolment losses, which ones are additional ones, for myself and Ms. Michael? I think that would make it easier for them so we'd know exact information.

MR. KIRBY: That would be pretty straightforward (inaudible).

MR. BRAZIL: Yes, just so we'd know exactly which ones are in and out.

MR. KIRBY: Sort of what's coming out and what's going in.

MR. BRAZIL: And the additional on what's going in, please.

MR. KIRBY: Yes, that's no problem.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay. I'm good on that.

CHAIR: You're good on that?

MR. BRAZIL: Yes.

CHAIR: So I think Ms. Michael just had another question on that.

MS. MICHAEL: Two, Madam Chair.

One has to do with Supports for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students; how many teachers are working with them right now? Dale, do you have the retention rates for the students – do you have information on that?

MR. KIRBY: I don't have either one. I'm sure maybe Janet can enlighten us. I don't have that in front of me.

MS. VIVIAN-WALSH: You asked about the Supports for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the number of teachers –

MS. MICHAEL: Yes.

MS. VIVIAN-WALSH: The particular line that you're referring to there regarding the teachers, technically right now there are four teachers that are specific to the deaf and hard of hearing that would have been designated to the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District. There are other teachers as well but those are specific ones under that category.

Regarding, you asked about the numbers –

MS. MICHAEL: The retention rates for the students; do you have information on that?

MS. VIVIAN-WALSH: The retention rates specifically are quite good – in terms of in general, our retention rates are quite good. I will say that number-wise, in terms of the number of deaf and hard of hearing that we have in the system, our database would give 326 as identified with hearing loss.

MS. MICHAEL: Really?

MS. VIVIAN-WALSH: And we do avail of APSEA as you are aware, the Atlantic provinces, regarding supports for the blind and visually impaired, as well as some speciality training regarding the deaf and hard of hearing and specialized assessments.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

I'll ask you, actually, more detail on the Atlantic services when we get to that line; I do have a couple of questions. Then coming right back up to 3.1.01, there is a cut in the money for substitute teachers. It's sort of static with what

the revision was last year, but it is a cut from what the budget was last year. And you don't anticipate needing more than that?

MR. KIRBY: That is a reduction that's based on the actual payroll expenditures from a previous year. So it's just anticipating a comparable need.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

That's all I have for that subhead, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: I'll ask the Clerk to call those inclusively –

MS. MICHAEL: (Inaudible) I do have a question there as well.

CHAIR: Oh, I am sorry.

MS. MICHAEL: Under 3.1.02.10. Grants and Subsidies, Student Assistants, the amount has gone up by \$2.6 million; if we could just have an explanation of that, where that money is going.

MR. KIRBY: There was a previously announced increase in the number of student assistant hours. I think it's 115 hours a day, so we're going to have extra for student assistant hours. That's about \$730,000 of it. Then there is that JES again.

The thing that people should understand is that the net impact of the JES was about a 3 per cent increase in the average wage across the public sector. So as you're going through the Estimates, for whatever department, you'll see a recurring theme that there are increases in the budget for salaries that are associated with the JES.

So there's that. Additional student assistant hours now required as a result of full-day kindergarten: \$370,000. Then as an adjustment due to the discontinuation of lunchtime busing it is \$200,000. So there were buses going back and forth lunchtime because kids were leaving the school for half-day kindergarten, morning shift coming out and afternoon shift coming in, that's no longer required. That's less netted out there as well.

MS. MICHAEL: We no longer require it because of the full-day kindergarten.

MR. KIRBY: That's right.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay, so that's what that is all about.

MR. KIRBY: That's was the sole purpose of that.

MS. MICHAEL: That was one of my questions about the lunchtime busing. Thank you very much, that's helpful.

Again still under the Grants and Subsidies there, the decrease in the Administration Grant, do you anticipate an impact on the school board? That's a fairly hefty decrease.

MR. KIRBY: No, that's a good news story there because we're moving the school district office out of Atlantic Place.

MS. MICHAEL: Oh, that's what that's for. Right.

MR. KIRBY: It's something they wanted to do for a long time. Then there's also JES funding in there for adjustments to board salary as a result of that. That's the bulk of it there.

MS. MICHAEL: Great, thank you very much.

Okay, Madam Chair, I think you can call now.

CHAIR: Good?

MS. MICHAEL: Yes, I think so.

CHAIR: What I might do going forward, just in fairness to both parties, I'm going to let one move on if they need to and then call the subheads for that area when the second one finishes.

Now, I'll ask the Clerk to call –

CLERK: 3.1.01 to 3.1.05.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 to 3.1.05 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.1.01 through 3.1.05 carried.

CLERK: 3.2.01.

CHAIR: 3.2.01.

Mr. Brazil.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

A couple of quick questions here under 3.2.01, Curriculum Development. Professional Services and Purchased Services, while they're down slightly, I'd just like clarification on is there a program that's no longer there or is there a particular type of initiative that's already been enough training done, or is there a better way, a more efficient way, you're doing it to save the small amounts of money there?

MR. KIRBY: In Professional Services there are savings related to the incentive-based approach to energy efficiency. So there's that. Then the budgeted amount for the Energy Efficiency Initiative ended in 2015-16. The Purchased Services is the same thing. It's the cessation of that program which ended in 2015-16, energy efficiency. That's all of it in fact.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay, that's fine.

MR. KIRBY: Those three things, there are savings and then the discontinuation of the program.

MR. BRAZIL: Perfect.

Under 3.2.02, Language Programs, the Allowances and Assistance is down somewhat and the Grants and Subsidies. Can you explain the issues here? The allowances are up a little bit from what was actually spent, what that would include as part of the language programs there; and the drop of \$200,000 that was in the revised last year, what that would include.

MR. KIRBY: The requests for funding that came in were lower than in the previous years. The reduction is just to rightsize it to better reflect what the actual need is.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay, thank you.

So, Madam Chair, just so I'm clear, that's it for me on 3.2.02.

CHAIR: Okay.

Are you okay if I just click over?

MR. BRAZIL: You can go to Ms. Michael on that part.

CHAIR: Okay, great. Thank you.

Ms. Michael.

MS. MICHAEL: Yes, I may have missed this, but I don't think it was asked. Under 3.2.02, the Professional Services, there was a big jump last year from what was budgeted and what was revised, so what caused that to happen? Obviously, it's still a need because we still have it in the budget.

MR. KIRBY: The increase was due to course translations required for French immersion and French as first-language students. So that was the increase of \$168,500.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

MR. KIRBY: And then the revised figure for this year is just to reflect that so that we don't get caught under budgeting again.

MS. MICHAEL: Great.

This would be going back prior to 2015, but I'm curious then about the fact that only \$10,000 had been budgeted last year for that service. Did we just only start in 2015 to do the translation, or was it that there was new curricular that needed to be translated?

MR. KIRBY: Yes, it's just that there were a larger number. I don't know what it was before –

MS. MICHAEL: Probably new materials.

MR. KIRBY: – 2015-2016. I think that would help inform your question and I don't have it here.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

And coming to Purchased Services, \$192,000 had been budgeted and obviously what was expected either didn't happen or whatever, but you're maintaining it down low again this year. So what was expected?

MR. KIRBY: You're answering your own question there because that amount in the previous line is shifted up so there was, I guess, officials in the department who felt that number is better captured by Professional Services than it is – so if you think about translation being more of a professional service.

MS. MICHAEL: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: That, more or less, has been flipped up there. So you see the increase there reflects the decrease there. Does that make any sense?

MS. MICHAEL: Yes, it does. It actually answers the question about the Professional Services prior to 2015.

MR. KIRBY: No, I'm sorry, I was having a –

MS. MICHAEL: That's the answer to the question, yeah.

MR. KIRBY: – delayed reaction to your question. I should have read the next line here.

MS. MICHAEL: It becomes clear.

MR. KIRBY: Yes, that's what it is.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay. They're all my questions for that subhead, Chair.

CHAIR: Okay, we can call that.

CLERK: 3.2.01 and 3.2.02.

CHAIR: Shall 3.2.01 and 3.2.02 carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.2.01 and 3.2.02 carried.

CLERK: 3.3.01.

CHAIR: 3.3.01.

Mr. Brazil.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm just going to go down to Purchased Services under 3.3.01, Student Support Services. The Purchased Services were budgeted at \$69,000, \$55,500 and they've increased to \$95,000. Can you tell me what services we purchase under that, please?

MR. KIRBY: In the revised the reduction is due to a vacant position. There was a vacant position for a period of time. The reason why there's an increase is part of it's for copyright. The note I have is copyright for articles and best practices is \$5,000; \$90,000 – oh yes, so the \$90,000 is associated with the filling of that position. It was an occupational mobility consultant. That's a person who works with blind and visually impaired students. We don't have an option to not fill that position –

MR. BRAZIL: Move that somewhere else.

MR. KIRBY: We have to do it.

MR. BRAZIL: Fair enough, that explains that. Thank you.

Going to 3.3.03, under the Supports for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students, the total investment here of \$292,900, down from was budgeted, \$369,800, but up from what was revised. Is there something; is it similar to the previous one, a position not filled or a new position coming into play for this year under the totals here?

MR. KIRBY: Well, there are a bunch of things going on there. If you look in Transportation and Communications, there was – again, we reigned in discretionary spending to the tune of about \$68,000, then more or less continuing on with that. So that's a big chunk of it.

For the Supplies line, there was a need for some additional support for students with auditory limitations. I asked about what the stuff was all about when I came in and one was for Hushh-ups. I didn't know what that was, but it's something better than a tennis ball –

MR. BRAZIL: A tennis ball on the bottom of your chair.

MR. KIRBY: – you put on the bottom of your chair so it doesn't squeak. Some Professional Services, a reduction there due to, again, reining in discretionary spending. We're going to continue to do that.

We've got, sort of, a fluctuation in the Purchased Services there. Again, it's a fluctuation in the required costs for repair and maintenance for FM systems for students who are deaf and hard of hearing. We have anticipated savings that are associated with that. So if you're spending money one year, you don't have to spend the same money next year.

For the Property, Furnishing and Equipment, again, there's a reduction there where we spent nothing because of a discretionary spending freeze or trying to rein it in. We're just going to continue to do that and save a thousand dollars on that one.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay, I appreciate that. That explains that.

Madam Chair, I'm good on 3.3.

CHAIR: Okay.

Ms. Michael, do you have anything there?

MS. MICHAEL: Yes, a couple of questions.

Under 3.3.02, the money that is given to the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority; I am aware, of course, of that and just wondering at the moment – the deputy minister did make reference to this earlier. At the moment what exactly do we get for that money in terms of how many students do we actually have needing services from there and what are the services that are provided from there?

MR. KIRBY: Janet can chime in here, but they are a good source of information. I've observed, in terms of consultations, around what's required. And they do provide us with other, sort of, more material services, if you will, in the form of translating materials if we have children who have visual limitations and they're doing exams or what have you. So putting examinations in a format that's more easy for them to use.

Janet, if you want to add to some of the other things they do.

MS. VIVIAN-WALSH: APSEA, being a coordination or a collaboration of all the Atlantic provinces, gives us a great advantage for combined professional development for our hearing itinerants and the blind and visually impaired itinerants. It does help with some challenging assessments for the children we have here.

We do have itinerants who work out of the school districts. For the DHH, we have 18; for the blind and visually impaired, we have nine. But the kind of professional development that you can get from a combined collaboration through APSEA is much more rich.

Also, as the minister indicated, Braille services; there are many times that the APSEA together will do some professional papers that are assistance to our teachers. I should mention the Autism in Education project, which has really been a wonderful project for us as the Atlantic provinces, which was a combined piece with CAMET. We came up with the online training program which is for teachers and student assistants as well.

So we've benefited greatly from APSEA and we continue to find ways to enrich that, I think, in terms of the summer camps, those kinds of things as well. As I said, the autism has been an additional piece in the last few years, but we do feel we greatly benefit from APSEA.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay, thank you very much.

When you mentioned summer camps, would they be completely subsidized, any children going to them, if they go to them?

MS. VIVIAN-WALSH: I know we do subsidize them. I can get you the amount. I certainly know we support them financially.

Also, I should mention the alternate format materials which the minister mentioned. Not just Braille, but they have a library there that we can access that is of great benefit to us in terms of the types of alternate format materials needed for those students with exceptionalities.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much.

I think I had one other question – maybe I didn't – under 3.3.03. Oh Yes – I'm assuming this, but the appropriations, the supports, for example, in ASL, is that within the classroom, within the school setting only?

MR. KIRBY: Is there a –

MS. MICHAEL: The American Sign Language. It's one of the areas that are covered under 3.3.03 in the Supports for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students. Is that referring to the use of the supports totally within the school system?

MR. KIRBY: Yeah, I believe that's the case.

MS. VIVIAN-WALSH: The monies for that were transferred to the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District for the interpreters.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

Thank you very much.

MS. VIVIAN-WALSH: It's through the school system.

MS. MICHAEL: Great.

Thank you, Chair. They're all my questions.

CHAIR: Okay.

Shall 3.3.01 to 3.3.03 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.3.01 through 3.3.03 carried.

CLERK: 3.4.01.

CHAIR: 3.4.01.

Mr. Brazil.

MR. BRAZIL: I just want to go straight down to Purchased Services under 3.4.01, Student Testing and Evaluation. The \$116,600 that's allocated now, down from \$198,600 that was the budget from \$155,000; can you tell us what the cut was in Purchased Services would be in that case for Student Testing and Evaluation?

MR. KIRBY: The revised amount of \$155,000 was just savings achieved because of reductions in discretionary spending. There's nothing specific I can tell you. We just spent \$43,600 less. Then we're going to continue to save that amount of money, I mean these are administrative costs. There's a small amount of money there, \$9,000, re-profiled to Employee Benefits. It was taken out of there and put into a different area.

We anticipate we're going to spend less in that area based on the reduction that was achieved in the previous year.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay. That's great. Thank you.

Under 3.4.02, Professional Development, \$3.7 million was in line with the original budget amount but it's substantially up over \$400,000 from the revised.

Is there something we're going back to that was budgeted now or is there some new allocation in Allowances and Assistance?

MR. KIRBY: The reduction there is due to lower-than-anticipated use of leave, teacher education leave. That's when people go and take a period of time out to do whatever training. So there was lower-than-anticipated use of that. I guess there's some rightsizing going on here, but there are also collective bargaining increases that are in there, 3 per cent.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay, fair enough.

Grants and Subsidies, it's a small amount but down from what was originally budgeted. Is this just the realized savings through the exercise or is there some change in the Grants and Subsidies that are being provided?

MR. KIRBY: There were some activities that were curtailed due to the discretionary spending. So if you think about travel and that sort of – funding associated with meetings and what have you. That was curtailed due to the discretionary spending initiative.

There is also, in the budget, if you look at the reduced amount there, the \$2.8 million, it also has the 3 per cent again. The NLTA salary increases are in there. There's a reduction in the expenditure for professional development in there for \$485,000.

That's basically what it is. There's a reduction in spending on professional development. That's the bulk of it.

MR. BRAZIL: I have more under this heading here, under Transportation and Communications, \$593,000. It's up nearly \$100,000 from the revised but down \$700,000 from the budgeted.

Can you outline the change there from the budget to the revised and then from the revised up to this year's allocations for Transportation and Communications?

MR. KIRBY: There are various network and Internet services that are connected to the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation. Those costs are now going to be borne by the school district rather than the department.

That amount has been moved to a different line to School Board Operations because we're paying it out that way.

MR. BRAZIL: So the money has still been allocated to the department?

MR. KIRBY: It's still there in the budget overall but it's in a different line.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: Then there's this small difference that you'll see in all the Estimates, probably across all departments, which is we're trying to save some money related to land lines across government.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay.

Madam Chair, that's good for me in that section, 3.4.

CHAIR: Ms. Michael.

MS. MICHAEL: Yes, a couple of questions.

Looking at 3.4.03, just wondering, Dale, is there a breakdown – I'm sure there is – of the number of students who benefit from this and the number of schools involved.

MR. KIRBY: Janet has it. She'll give you the information.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

MS. VIVIAN-WALSH: This year, Ms. Michael, there are 115 schools availing of CDLI. There are about approximately 40 courses and almost a thousand students – between 950 and 1,000 students – availing of CDLI.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

And everywhere that we want to have this happen now in the province, they have the access that they need, do they, to benefit from it, in terms of access to getting online and being able to be part of the program? Is there any place that is requesting it that the systems aren't in place at the moment to make it happen?

MR. KIRBY: Not that I'm aware of. Are there any schools that are requesting CDLI that don't have the necessary connectivity? Is that what you're wondering?

MS. MICHAEL: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: Are there?

MS. VIVIAN-WALSH: No. My understanding is those that have requested, have it. There have been some upgrades, however, with satellites this year which would be included in the cost

there that you have in the equipment. There were some challenges in some rural areas where we added some additional satellites this year.

MS. MICHAEL: Oh great.

MS. VIVIAN-WALSH: But I'm not aware of any place right now which has requested, that we haven't been able to provide. But there has been an improvement in some of the current ones with satellites.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay, great.

And are you aware of needed improvements anywhere else or do you think that at the moment things are fairly stable?

MR. KIRBY: Yes, there are no requests that I'm aware of. The issue of rural connectivity is something that's incrementally being addressed by government, but we still have quite a number of communities, I guess, that don't have the same level of service that we have in the Northeast Avalon. You only need to go to Coastal Labrador to experience that.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you.

Under Professional Development, 3.4.02, that's a fairly big drop when it comes to professional development. Has there been discussion with the NLTA – and it's not a leading question because I don't know; really, I'm asking it. Has there been discussion with the NLTA of the implications for teachers of such a big drop for Professional Development?

MR. KIRBY: There hasn't. I would suggest that this is not pleasing to advocates for teacher professional development. To be frank, it's a significant reduction. It's associated with trying to curtail those expenditures as we're trying to weather the budgetary situation that we're in.

As we went through the Government Renewal Initiative, you remember back in January all departments and ABCs were asked for ideas about where to save money. And this is associated with that government renewal exercise.

MS. MICHAEL: Is professional development – again I really don't know the answer. Is the

whole issue of professional development, does that come up under the negotiations as well, or is it totally outside of negotiations, collective bargaining.

MR. KIRBY: What are our obligations under the collective agreement? That's a good question.

MS. VIVIAN-WALSH: There would be some obligations as well under the collective agreement. That particular amount, though it is definitely for teachers, was within the department's initiatives. So it was really more ones that we would have initiated, but it still would be for professional development for teachers.

MR. KIRBY: I think that when it comes to the language in the collective agreement, it's not prescriptive. So I would say – I mean if I were a union negotiator I would love for it to say you shall spend \$3 million a year on Professional Development. It isn't that specific. It's more general for obvious reasons so that it can be adjusted when times are good or bad. But it's not that prescriptive, I guess, is really the simple answer.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay. Thank you very much.

That's all I have.

CHAIR: Okay, so we'll call –

CLERK: 3.4.01 to 3.4.03 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 3.4.01 to 3.4.03 inclusive carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.4.01 through 3.4.03 carried.

CHAIR: Now I'm going to suggest – because we've been going about one hour, we only have three subheadings left – that we take a five-minute break. Is that okay?

Good. Thank you.

Recess

CHAIR: Okay, 3.5.04.

Mr. Brazil.

MR. BRAZIL: Under Early Childhood Learning, 3.5.01, Salaries.

CHAIR: My apologies.

MR. BRAZIL: That's why when you said four, I went: did I miss something? But I noted that I had it. Fair enough, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: I was doing okay until we took a break.

MR. BRAZIL: No problem.

Just for clarification there, it's up from the budgeted and substantially up from the revised. Is this a new position or is it a position that wasn't filled at the time, just some clarification.

CHAIR: For the purpose of the broadcast, can we just call that?

MR. BRAZIL: Okay.

CHAIR: My apologies; just do it procedurally proper.

CLERK: 3.5.01.

CHAIR: 3.5.01.

Go ahead, Minister – sorry.

MR. KIRBY: Yes, there was a vacant position for a period of time. There are salary increases in there, step changes. So there's nothing really new going on there, it's just an adjustment.

MR. BRAZIL: It's just catching up for what was allocated.

MR. KIRBY: I just wanted to go back to something earlier too. Janet and I were having a conversation at the break. The 61.25 net reduction in teachers, that figure does not include the subsequent decision to close five

schools. There are an additional 11.75 positions that will be removed as a result of the closure decision. That brings the net reduction up to minus 73. So that's important to have that.

MR. BRAZIL: Can we have that noted on that spreadsheet I asked for?

MR. KIRBY: We can put that in the table for you.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay. Thank you.

Under 3.5.01, Professional Services, the \$360,000 went from \$380,000 that was budgeted, \$148,200 revised and \$360,000. Is there a program that we're now implementing that we didn't during the process for services that we're offering?

MR. KIRBY: It's the \$380,000 down to the \$148,000 –

MR. BRAZIL: Up to (inaudible).

MR. KIRBY: – up to the \$360,000?

MR. BRAZIL: Yes, Sir.

MR. KIRBY: Okay, let me see. There was a delay in some of the initiatives that were planned. That's where the reduction is coming from, it's a delayed implementation.

MR. BRAZIL: Can you give me a little bit more clarification. Do you have noted which program or service?

MR. KIRBY: Maybe Mary can address that specifically. So basically you have delays in early childhood learning initiatives. That's the reduction. Then, if you look at the budgeted amount – well, basically, the amount is still in there. But there's funding related to full-day kindergarten in there, and then there's a reduction because we're taking \$60,000 away from the Power of Play media campaign.

Mary, do you want to – or Ed?

MR. WALSH: Some of the delays that have been noted there are associated with the early learning framework. We have drafts of that document that are available, but we're waiting

on some continued feedback to update that particular initiative.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay. Thank you.

That clarifies that. I want to move to 3.5.02, under Salaries there, the \$675,100 change from a budget of \$728,500 to \$534,000. Can you explain? Are there new salaries? Are there vacant salaries? Are the top-ups on the JES or the salary increases?

MR. KIRBY: Sure. One of the things about the department that you should be aware of is we inherited a whole lot of – I'll call it – regulatory responsibility and other activities from Child, Youth and Family Services; so all these field activities and so on. There's quite a lot going on in that department. It's not just people in the Confederation Building.

There were three vacant positions for a period of time there. That's why you see that reduction from the \$728,000 to the \$534,000.

I have a note here on the 2016-17 Estimates; there was a Northern Allowance under there that wasn't required. A Northern Allowance to be paid out to a staff person just wasn't needed.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay. Thank you.

My last question, I think, on that section – oh no, sorry. I'm going to ask: Operating Accounts went from \$186,500 to revised \$12,700 to \$33,700. Is there something we didn't use, didn't implement, didn't purchase at the time?

MR. KIRBY: So you're looking at the \$186,500 to \$33,700?

MR. BRAZIL: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: That's funding that's not cut, if you will. It's been moved to – if you look to the Regional Operations, that's what I was referring to earlier. Funding has been shifted out from the Policy and Programs over to the Regional Operations. So the reduction loss there is captured in the next line.

MR. BRAZIL: In the next line.

Okay. Thank you.

Under 3.5.03, the salary differences there from \$3.8 million in the budget to \$3.481 million to \$3.824 million, just some clarification on the differences there.

MR. KIRBY: Again, like I was saying about this sort of spiderweb of positions that we have out there all around the province, regulatory and other responsibilities associated with child care operations. There were seven positions that were vacant for various periods of time that resulted in \$338,000ish worth of savings.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay, fair enough.

Would there be any new positions attached with that?

MR. KIRBY: No.

MR. BRAZIL: Or just the continuation of existing ones that were in the system?

MR. KIRBY: There are no new hires reflected there, no, just the back filling of vacant positions.

MR. BRAZIL: Under Allowances and Grants, the difference from \$22 million budgeted to \$19 million revised to a little less than \$18 million there now; what changes, what cuts would be there that would make up that million dollars?

MR. KIRBY: Are you looking at 09 or at 10?

MR. BRAZIL: Under 09, yes, Allowances and Assistance.

MR. KIRBY: It's the subsidy program and the supplement, savings from both of those programs. That's in the revised. So that's the 09. You're talking about the \$22 million down to the \$19 million, right?

MR. BRAZIL: Yes, and then now at \$18 million, just a little less than \$18 million for this budget.

MR. KIRBY: That's associated with both of them. And then, I guess, that savings is reflected in the new budget.

Ed, is there anything I'm missing out of that?

The savings related to the Child Care Services Subsidy and the Early Learning and Child Care Supplement, is that because we budgeted a larger amount than was spent?

MR. WALSH: Yes, that would be correct.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: Because we budgeted more than was used, there's an effort there to rightsize it, if you will.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay. Thank you for that.

One last question in this section; under Grants and Subsidies, similarly there, budgeted \$22.6 million. We went to \$9 million to a little over \$20 million. Is there something we didn't get done in the revised that is now part and parcel of the original budget lines for 2015-16, for now 2016-17?

MR. KIRBY: Yes, the major change is associated with the Operating Grant Program. I heard lots of commentary on that.

The Operating Grant Program, the intention is to restrain, through a voluntary program, the daily cost of child care. The issue is that it's a private industry and a lot of the operators don't like being restrained. They are accustomed to doing what it is they're doing.

If you look across the province, I don't think – I keep joking with one of our staff, I keep saying are we up to 50 per cent yet? That's what I've sort of set as a goal to try and get it up to 50 per cent, but we aren't at 50 per cent uptake of operators or spaces in the province on the Operating Grant Program. So it's not gone according to plan.

The previous administration in October did make some adjustments to the program which involved increasing the operating grant subsidy by 15 per cent where operators could sufficiently articulate to a department that their expenses are so much that they require 15 per cent. But even with that incentive there's a reluctance to come along.

I think in part it's sort of residual because people weren't entirely happy with it initially. We hope

that as time goes on, people will get more accustomed to – there'll be success in the program and it will be observable. I think the thing you have to realize is we have a private system so we will always have, I would argue – 10 years from now you can tell me if I'm wrong or not – we'll always have the \$50-a-day operators, the sort of operators who want to have a higher end, more expensive, whatever (inaudible) interim service, child care service.

If we're going to have this system then we're always going to have operators who don't want to participate in the Operating Grant Program. It's a program that – this is sort of me observing, this is not the position of the department – sort of has a bad rap now as a result of what the Opposition had said about it.

MR. BRAZIL: Fair enough.

MR. KIRBY: I'm poking fun at myself.

Things will level out over time, I hope.

MR. BRAZIL: And clarification will be seen once the users start availing of the program. Fair enough.

MR. KIRBY: Well, I don't know – I mean if we come back again next year and that's sort of down again, I wouldn't be surprised because there are no guarantees. Despite all the efforts of staff in the department working like dogs trying to sit down with individual operators and convince them that this is the right way to go – despite all that effort, it's about private operators wanting to change which involves restraining their costs.

It's private industry, and they don't like the long arm of government trying to tell them how to operate their business because it is, in a lot of instances, a for-profit industry, right.

MR. BRAZIL: Fair enough.

Madam Chair, I'm good on 3.5.

CHAIR: Okay.

Ms. Michael.

MS. MICHAEL: I'm going to stay with 3.5.03 since I have a couple of questions there. I understand what you're saying about the Operating Grant Program, Minister, but just to get a specific; according to your department's note on December 7, the 2015–16 budget line for the Operating Grant Program was \$10.7 million. So what is the budget line this year specifically for the Operating Grant Program?

MR. KIRBY: I don't have that here. Is there a particular line you're looking at for that there? Is it 09 or 10?

MS. MICHAEL: Yes, line 10, Grants and Subsidies of 3.5.03. That's the total amounts, but the specifics around the Operating Grant Program – I have the specifics for 2015–16 from the department, your December 7 note, that it was \$10.7 million in last year's budget for that specific program. I'm wondering what it is this year. I'm assuming that maybe a fair bit of the drop might be the Operating Grant Program in that line, but that's an assumption.

MR. KIRBY: I'll defer to people who know more specifics.

Mary.

MS. GOSS-PROWSE: The actual line now this year is \$10,518,538. That includes the announcement we made in October to reinstate and increase the equipment grants. That will also come out of that budget line now because there wasn't a budget line for it as of this year.

MS. MICHAEL: So it will come out of the Operating Grant Program line?

MS. GOSS-PROWSE: Yeah.

MS. MICHAEL: So what was that again, Mary, please?

MS. GOSS-PROWSE: It's \$10,518,538.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay. Thank you very much.

MR. KIRBY: I have a note here that in the revised there's savings in the full-day kindergarten funding component of that due to delays in filling positions.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: And in the budgeted amount we're projecting an amount of money that is, again, based on anticipated increase and uptake in the programs under the 10-Year Child Care Strategy. There was funding that was re-profiled to Allowances and Assistance. That was \$3.5 million, so that's a big part of that. There was a million dollars that was taken out during the line-by-line process that we did with Treasury Board and officials. Then there's elimination of the development of the workplace training program, a half a million dollars.

MS. MICHAEL: Have you looked at the implications of the elimination of that. That was something that I thought was a good initiative, but it didn't get started is my understanding.

MR. KIRBY: Mary.

MS. GOSS-PROWSE: (Inaudible) had not gotten developed. It is an additional way for people to upgrade but they have a number of other ways as well.

The full diploma is available through distance education at the College of the North Atlantic. We provide bursaries to students who are upgrading for that program, and a \$5,000 bursary at the end of the program for those who agree to work in the province for two years. There are a number of ways they can access that, in person and by distance. This was another way to access it.

Also, at this point in time there isn't an increase to the requirement for people to upgrade, so it wasn't seen as a priority for this budget.

MS. MICHAEL: Minister, would there be a long-term plan that might hopefully see bringing that back in again? Or has it just been totally eliminated, or is it still a part of discussion for future planning?

MR. KIRBY: We haven't had any discussion about bringing it back.

MS. MICHAEL: I don't mean in this year's budget, I mean (inaudible).

MR. KIRBY: No, I hear you. There's been no discussion of that.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay. Thank you.

Still under 3.5.03.09, Allowances and Assistance, just to get a specific answer here. Again, I'm looking at the December 7 departmental note with regard to the Child Care Services Subsidy Program.

A review had been done and completed. The budget last year in 2015-16 was \$17.4 million. The review and revision of the program policies were in final stages. The review includes determination of a new net income threshold for a full subsidy.

So I'm wondering was there a new net income threshold set? Is that reflected in the budget? Is the new net income threshold lower or higher or does it remaining the same?

MR. KIRBY: How do I put this quite honestly? We want to change the thresholds. We don't feel they truly reflect the current cost of child care.

MS. MICHAEL: That's right.

MR. KIRBY: We decided not to proceed with that this year. It would have cost about \$3 million to proceed with the adjustment to the subsidy.

I say this frankly, I warned Treasury Board, which I sit on, that I would be back in the process this coming year to look for that so that it could be put into the budget for next year. In addition to the \$2.2 million we're going to need to increase the supplement which is part of our platform.

So there's \$5.2 million-ish that will be going to Treasury Board for – so you can take my word for that – next year to increase both the subsidy and the supplement.

It was something that we considered. We actually had a debate about it in Treasury Board during the line-by-line meetings. We decided to defer the decision to next year, but it's evident that we need to adjust those figures because they're 2007 figures, I think, right?

MS. MICHAEL: Yes.

I won't get political; I really won't, but with all the other restraints from the budget that we are now under, it certainly would have helped them to have done this. Thank you.

Just coming backwards then, I think I may have a couple of other questions under 3.5.02. No, I think I'm okay there.

3.5.01, Supplies, there's a fair drop in the amount of money for Supplies, \$106,100. Could we have an explanation of that?

MR. KIRBY: The revised is a cost savings achieved due to the 24 and 36 month Parent Resource Kits being piloted for the full fiscal year rather than a full implementation in the last two quarters of the fiscal year. There's that. Other cost savings anticipated based on just getting a better deal on what goes into those Parent Resource Kits.

The piloting is being done over an extended period of time, over the full fiscal year instead of half. Then the other part is just trying to get a better deal, better pricing on the Parent Resource Kits contents.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: Oh, sorry. The budgeted amount, it's basically an overall reduction in the kits, reducing the number of items in the kits. So just limiting the expenditure on the kits in terms of the frequency that they're provided and then what goes in them.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

Is there a hope that by next year you'd be past the pilot stage? When you get into next year's budget, is that part of your long-term plan?

MR. KIRBY: I anticipate that.

A lot of this stuff is part of the 10-Year Child Care Strategy. We're approaching a point where we're going to have to – next year is the year we'll review it. It's part of that plan, the previous administration's plan we're going to follow through on because it's a good idea when you get to the halfway point to review it and see

what we've done, what we need to do and what sort of adjustments we need to make. So that's what that is.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you.

Again, still 3.5.01, the Grants and Subsidies, could we have an idea of what these cuts are about? Were there fixed Grants and Subsidies that got cut?

MR. KIRBY: Okay.

The first one is the reduction from \$746,100 to the \$535,700.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

MR. KIRBY: Staffing is part of it.

MS. MICHAEL: What would that staffing be, please?

MR. KIRBY: A vacant program development specialist position – I don't understand this note here – inability to reassign work for early literacy work at the department.

Janet, do you –

MS. MICHAEL: Was the Early Literacy Foundations cut? Was that affected by this?

MS. VIVIAN-WALSH: Sorry, Ms. Michael, could you said that again?

MS. MICHAEL: Pardon?

MS. VIVIAN-WALSH: Could you repeat that, sorry?

MS. MICHAEL: The cut that the minister is speaking about, does that relate to cuts in the Early Literacy Foundations cut?

MS. VIVIAN-WALSH: The revised amount was – we've had a really difficult time recruiting the literacy facilitators for this program. It's been an ongoing problem for several years, actually.

We have continued on with the Every Child Ready to Read program and provided monies to the public libraries for that one, but we were

really struggling and thus the savings were due to recruitment and retention of that.

The other comment the minister mentioned, we had a vacant program development specialist and thus there was an inability to keep moving the work through the department in that area. So the savings were in the revised, about \$210,000.

We really have struggled with finding appropriate facilitators for that second program.

MS. MICHAEL: May I assume from the reasoning that it's still \$535,000. You don't expect to be spending money on that this year?

MR. KIRBY: It was an effort to rightsize it again based on that. The most of it is associated with an effort to have that better reflect – it's interesting that we do have this problem recruiting people for these positions because my immediate response, when I was told of this was, wouldn't we have aspiring teachers who are out there looking to get experience and so on. Anyways, it's a pre-existing problem that we expect to continue.

MS. MICHAEL: Due to what you just said, would the remuneration be equivalent, though, to aspiring teachers who may have their degrees already – if they were actually teaching – would be getting a certain amount of money. Would the money in this program be equivalent?

MR. KIRBY: I think the pay is pretty reasonable for this? I can't tell you what it is exactly but I did ask that same question myself. It may not be up to a level of say what the mean income is for a salaried teacher but I think the remuneration is fairly reasonable.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay, thank you.

They are all my questions for that section, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you, Ms. Michael.

We'll call the subheading.

CLERK: 3.5.01 to 3.5.04.

CHAIR: Shall 3.5.01 to 3.5.04 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.5.01 through 3.5.04 carried.

CLERK: 3.6.01

CHAIR: 3.6.01

Mr. Brazil.

MR. BRAZIL: Madam Chair, just one quick question there around the Grants and Subsidies, obviously the change in the amounts.

Can you explain, Minister, exactly what that incurs there? Why the decrease?

MR. KIRBY: So from the \$11.293 million to the \$10.722 million we've got \$59,000 for JES again. We've got costs for the CBS library move that are not going to be needed; savings from the lease payment delayed opening. I'm waiting to get a question about that lease in the House of Assembly for the CBS library. There's a big savings as a result of that, and then a further reduction of \$300,000. So it's JES, moving costs, savings from the lease and an additional reduction.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay.

That's the only question I have for that budget subhead.

CHAIR: If you want, it's just libraries and the infrastructure, do you want to continue on and use your 10 minutes?

MR. BRAZIL: Yeah, I ask the indulgence of the Third Party. I have to leave at 11 o'clock so there are only a couple of quick headings there.

CHAIR: And then we can still come back and call the subheads separately.

MR. BRAZIL: Yes, we'll come back and call for those after.

Under 4.1.01, Infrastructure, the Salaries difference there of a little over \$2 million from the revised; can you explain the additional costing there on Salaries?

MR. KIRBY: The additional cost due to salaries – increases in pay, 3 per cent; step changes; planned savings weren't what they were anticipated to be; increased funding for co-op students; and there was no allowance for attrition management the previous year.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: So that's the bulk, that's all of it there.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay. Thank you.

Purchased Services; the difference from what was budgeted to revised, but then they revised up to the \$200,000.

MR. KIRBY: So the savings in Purchased Services were associated with fewer insurance claims. So there's repair and maintenance savings of \$1.5 million or a reduction, if you will. Then there was an increase associated with full-day kindergarten, a little over \$400,000.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay. Thank you on that.

I just have a couple of quick questions on 4.1.02, Infrastructure.

MR. KIRBY: Yes.

MR. BRAZIL: Some clarification there on the major differences between Professional Services and Purchased Services from the revised budgets to the estimated budget for 2016-17.

MR. KIRBY: You're talking about, sort of, the leap from \$11 million down to \$3 million, right?

MR. BRAZIL: Yes, and then from \$3 million to \$14 million.

MR. KIRBY: I'm going to go to Ingrid maybe, but I think this might be associated with my commentary the other day about aggressive schedules, but let me see if I'm right about that.

CHAIR: Excuse me. Can you just introduce yourself first for the purpose of the Broadcast Centre downstairs? Just say your name before you speak.

MS. CLARKE: Ingrid Clarke.

CHAIR: Thank you. Sorry.

MS. CLARKE: So the reduction from \$11 million down to \$3.5 million; the difference is \$9.5 million. It's cash flow changes on major capital projects following a review of realistic cash flow requirements for '15-'16 by Transportation and Works and Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay, that clarifies that one.

That additional cash flow would be added in to the services for '16-'17 to reflect –

MR. KIRBY: To put it in layman's terms that stuff is still being built, but it is, sort of, more slowly being built –

MR. BRAZIL: The money is moved.

MR. KIRBY: – than we had hoped.

MR. BRAZIL: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: Because if all those schools were open for September, then obviously –

MR. BRAZIL: That cash out would be in and out.

MR. KIRBY: It's just an adjustment of cash flow.

It has nothing to do with the projects that were deferred and so on because, remember, a lot of the things like Coley's Point and whatever, the cash flows for those were really further out anyway, right. So you think about the Riverside extension and those things. Those cash flows are really further out in a lot of cases.

MR. BRAZIL: So that would cover Professional Services and Purchased Services, I assume?

MR. KIRBY: Well, the Purchased Services here, I've got a long list of what those things are, like additional modular classrooms there's a million dollars; there's the rebuild, so that's sort of the transiting out of the William Gillett in Labrador; Conception Bay South, the new K to seven; capital for full-day kindergarten is \$4.8 million.

We have the Gander Academy. That's the one where there's sort of this partial demolition and reconstruction project, sort of small money now. We have a new four to six in Gander and the major extension going on at St. Peter's in Mount Pearl. The Witless Bay-Mobile situation; remember the plan was to build a new school. Now we're going to build an extension on to Mobile Central High instead of building a new school.

The Extension to Elizabeth Park Elementary; that's sort of transitioning out of cash flows for that one. A new K to six in Paradise, the Octagon Pond area school; I figure they're going to come up with a more creative name than that. Planning for future CBS capacity, there's money in there for that.

Transitioning out for Bayside Academy, which is quite a nice school; a new five to nine in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, \$15 million; Roncalli Elementary redevelopment is \$316,000; Waterford Valley High, again sort of transitioning out on that one; Virginia Park Elementary, sort of good news there, that project is still moving along. There have been probably more snafus with that one than any other school project in the history of building schools, but eventually it will get done. There's \$8.1 million, almost \$8.2 million. We have St. Peter's Elementary, \$3.7 million; then the new one for Torbay, et cetera, almost \$13 million.

There has been a call for a new school, like in the interest of transparency, for the French first language community here in St. John's. They want a new school built. That's not even in the previous administration's long-term infrastructure plan. So instead of that we're doing the modular classroom addition to École des Grands-Vents up on Ridge Road just to try and deal with capacity issues there. We have constitutional obligations to the Francophone right holders, so we're trying as hard as we can

to stay out of court, if you will, because if we violate their charter rights then we would rightly be before a judge. So in an effort to mitigate that, we're adding a modular now. That's not to say down the road we might come to some other solution and that is everything from building a new school, down to other solutions.

I think we all have to be very cognizant of the fact that we do have legal obligations to French-as-a-first-language right holders, both on the West Coast where there's a significant concentration on the Port au Port Peninsula and then here in St. John's.

We'll have to see, I don't know if there's going to – it's been argued in part that some of the increases we've seen in St. John's and area are associated with economics. People coming here who are French-as-a-first-language speakers, who come from other provinces or countries associated with oil or mineral development. What we're seeing is sort of a winding down of mega projects. Whether that's going to have an impact or not, we'll have to see.

There are three really different stakeholder groups that we're dealing with, with these residents of the province. There's the board itself, the school board, then there's the francophone association, then the Federation of Francophones and the federation of francophone parents. So there are a lot of stakeholders here that we've been meeting with trying to find solutions to the problems that we have in that side of schooling.

It's only five schools, but it's a huge responsibility for the government, really.

MR. BRAZIL: Fair enough.

I appreciate the indulgence of the Table and the Third Party. I'm good on the questions. I've covered off all the headings.

I thank the minister and his staff for their co-operation. I look forward to some of the information that we've asked for, being shared with us.

MR. KIRBY: What I'll do is I'll give you – I've got some other materials not associated, specifically, with the Estimates but I'll give you

this section so you can see the notes that I'm (inaudible).

MR. BRAZIL: I appreciate that. We'll get a copy for the Third Party, also. We'll take care of that.

Okay. I appreciate that.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Okay.

Ms Michael.

MS. MICHAEL: I'm going to start where we just stopped. Might as well go backward again, 4.1.02.

CHAIR: 3.6.01.

Oh, sorry. Say that again.

MS. MICHAEL: 4.1.02, where we just ended. I'll start there and go backwards. Is that okay?

CHAIR: Okay.

MS. MICHAEL: Just to keep the same thought going.

I probably should know the answer to this, Minister, but is there any federal money at all with regard to provinces maintaining the constitutional right of French speaking in the country or is the cost totally on the shoulder of the province?

MR. KIRBY: We get money through the Official Languages Agreements –heritage Canada.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

MR. KIRBY: It's negotiated periodically for a number of years.

This is a subject of consternation for some of the francophone organizations because the funding comes to the provincial government and then we administrate it on their behalf. We have to pay out for the five schools, but you've got to look at board operations. There has to be monies for that.

There's a program, say, for people who are studying French at the university. They'd go and immerse in a cultural milieu or whatever. They go to Quebec for programs. We have an obligation to provide some level of service in French, say, at the university, beyond that, then in the rest of the post-secondary system and child care. So we administrate it.

They'd like nothing more for us to sort of get a cheque and then write a cheque for them for the same amount. Well, I don't know, they'd have to figure out which of the three organizations would administrate the money too. So there's a whole lot to it.

We are getting money. It's not all of it because the federal government provides us money in recognition of their obligation, but under all of the court decisions that we've seen come down, there's a whole lot of responsibility on the province.

If we got sued and were dinged pretty hard, we couldn't just pass it over to the federal government because, in the end, it's the province's responsibility.

MS. MICHAEL: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: That's a long answer to that, I know, but I've found this to be one of the more complicated issues in the department, to be frank, because most people don't even understand FFL. Everybody thinks it's almost like French immersion or something like that. But this is not at all that. This is people have a right, in Canada, to be educated in their own language.

MS. MICHAEL: That's correct.

MR. KIRBY: In the instances of these people, their language is not English. We're not a predominantly French-speaking province so it's something that's relatively new, I think, trying to accommodate people properly in terms of the history of the province, if you will, and something that I just think is extremely challenging.

MS. MICHAEL: Right. Thank you.

So no money for capital, but for programs?

MR. KIRBY: No. I mean in terms of capital for us, there may be capital funding from the federal government at some point for child care because, as everybody remembers, Trudeau's campaign included money for child care. He talked a lot about it being associated with infrastructure spending.

I'm meeting – I think it's this Sunday – in Halifax with other provincial ministers with responsibility for early learning and care around our combined strategy for dealing with the federal minister. I've spoken with federal Minister Duclos three times now about that. So we may be able to get funding for child care infrastructure in the next 12 months or so from the federal government, but that's not –

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: Janet is giving me a note here.

There was federal money provided for École des Grands-Vents. As you're probably aware, the facility up on Ridge Road is not only a school, there's a community space aspect of it as well.

MS. MICHAEL: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: Part of their argument has been that the population of students has encroached on some of that community space, and there's some debate about whether or not that's actually the case.

MS. MICHAEL: Right. Thank you.

Still under 4.1.02, I don't know if you have there in your notes, what are the schools that are scheduled to be renovated for the full-day kindergarten?

MR. KIRBY: I'll have to get that for you. I've misspoke on this in the past, but there are about 100 renovations. Not 100 schools, but there have been, basically, 100 renovations.

If you look at the press release the department sent out in January indicating we were continuing with the plan for full-day kindergarten, there's a list there, I believe.

MS. MICHAEL: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: I think there are eight schools – somebody can correct me if I'm wrong – that had extensions and eight schools that got modulars. Is that what it was?

OFFICIAL: There are four schools that got extensions.

MR. KIRBY: Sorry, four schools that got extensions – I told you I misspoke on this before; four schools that got the extensions done and eight that had the modulars.

MS. MICHAEL: That's the figure that still holds. I remember your press release and I remember the details.

OFFICIAL: Nine.

MR. KIRBY: Sorry, nine now.

There's been no serious change in any of the infrastructure planning that the previous administration had put in place. The class-size cap changes in the budget don't affect that grade level. The combined-grades initiative does not apply to kindergarten.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

MR. KIRBY: So it's not impacted by that. The only challenge continues to be the team teaching; the 28 students and the two teachers.

If you think about how the combined grades and the class-size caps, as that filters out through the system you're going to see probably freeing up of some classroom space, potentially. Then when we get the new schools built in Torbay, Portugal Cove-St. Philip's and Octagon Pond, you're going to see freeing up of space in Beachy Cove Elementary, Holy Trinity and so on. The problem is going to be largely resolved once we can get these new schools built and get the students shifted into them.

In fact, schools like Beachy Cove and Holy Trinity will then have surplus space because of the modulars that are piled up behind the schools. Then there'll be a debate about whether or not we should move them somewhere else. It's a temporary problem that is not lost on anybody, that we have these space limitations and we want the new program.

This school year will be the challenge, but once we get into those new schools and the year after that, it's going to be night and day for these kindergarten teachers and for a lot of other elementary school teachers on the Northeast Avalon. It's going to be quite a change for them and cause for celebration, and I take no credit for it at all because it was the previous administration's initiative.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay, thank you.

I don't have any questions on 4.1.01, because I think you answered the questions for Mr. Brazil and I had the same queries.

Under 3.6.01 – you don't really need to look at the line because my question is a general question. Obviously, I do have concerns about the cuts to libraries. I'm wondering could you outline your proposed plan for the closing of the libraries and maintaining regional ones?

MR. KIRBY: In the government renewal process the provincial libraries board came forward with four different recommendations of varying degrees of impact. Some of the problems we have in the library system today is that it's been tinkered around the edges with a lot, which has caused significant curtailment in the numbers of hours of operation, where we have libraries in some communities being open for as little as twelve hours a week. I think the average is 24 hours a week. So we have that problem. We have collections that have not been significantly invested in just because of the inability to do it for the 95 libraries that we have.

On top of that, we have significant pressures as it relates to new leases. The CBS lease and the Corner Brook lease, I mean these are leases that we're locked in to for – in the case of CBS – 25 years for \$250,000 a year, which is ironic considering we contributed millions of dollars to the construction of the new municipal building in CBS, yet there's no space for the library. So we're actually helping to build a new building. We have those pressures and other issues associated with it.

Officials in the department have been working with the administration of the libraries board to come to an agreement on what the changes should be to move to a regional provision of

library services, as opposed to the community-level services we have now. So they're discussing that.

I don't anticipate any – we'll have to see how soon the decision is made. They're considering sort of the counter proposal that has come from the department. There may be changes to that, but what we're hoping to do is to have a system that has more access, has more hours or a minimum number of hours of operation per week, more investment in library collections, more access to e-books and to books by mail for people who are, obviously, beyond access to the libraries. Because there are lots of communities, isolated communities that currently have no library and have no access to them at all, even within the current model.

That's basically it in broad strokes. They'll be libraries affected by whatever decision the board makes. We're going to work with them to try and transition to the new model, if that's something they decide to do but at this point, they haven't made any decision.

MS. MICHAEL: But it's a decision that has been made as you continue discussing with one another, I would assume.

MR. KIRBY: The decision will be made in the next couple of months, I anticipate, the final decision.

Like I said, the board submitted four proposals to the department as part of the Government Renewal Initiative process that started in January. They've been working with the Economics and Statistics Branch in Finance.

We're largely relying on recommendations and the expertise of the board administration at this point. If they make changes to the proposal that the department has made to them, we'll have to work with them to ensure that it's implemented.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay. Thank you.

MR. KIRBY: We'll see. I think it's far from done, but we'll have to see what happens. We'll see what they decide.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you.

That ends my questions, Chair.

CHAIR: Okay.

MS. MICHAEL: Before you do that, just to thank the staff because they've been very helpful in their response to my questions.

CHAIR: Before we move to two or three other procedural things here, I believe Mr. Parsons has a question.

MR. K. PARSONS: (Inaudible) just a couple. Minister, if they were asked before, I apologize, okay?

MR. KIRBY: That's okay. I'm accustomed to repeating myself.

MR. K. PARSONS: I have a question. I'll go to this one first on the provincial library board. I know the reduction there is about \$600,000 this year. I had some great workings in the last couple of months with the library board and had some good results in my area.

What the reductions are going to mean to –

MR. KIRBY: It's \$300,000.

MR. K. PARSONS: Three hundred?

MR. KIRBY: I think so, yeah.

MR. K. PARSONS: Oh, the resources board is included in that, okay.

So that's not going to mean any – I know there was a commitment made to the library in my area that the regular money that was funded there beforehand would stay. Are they all staying with the –

MR. KIRBY: I don't anticipate any changes to the Torbay library.

MR. K. PARSONS: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: Because if you look at it, it's a population-growth centre.

One of the things we heard, continually, during the Government Renewal Initiative consultations

was that people had an openness to the provision of regional services.

MR. K. PARSONS: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: One of the challenges we're struggling with right now, whether it's libraries or schooling or other government services, is that we've had a significant shift in population to the Northeast Avalon. People who have moved in here, whether they've come by way of Alberta or what have you. Those people live in Kenmount Terrance. They live in your community. They live all around the City of St. John's. They expect the same level of service, and better, than people have in rural parts of the province. Then you have people who continue to choose to live in rural Newfoundland, who want the same level of service that they've become accustomed to and, in fact, as good as the people in town have.

So the challenge is trying to deliver that service. We're sort of stretched. This is no one government's fault. This is a demographic issue. We're being stretched in that we're trying to deliver the same level of service to people who have moved in here, while maintaining the same level of service out there. It's very, very difficult to do.

MR. K. PARSONS: I understand that. I also understand the library itself, when I looked at it and looked at the report, where there are 26 that are in municipal buildings. There are so many that are in provincial buildings and stuff like that and then there are so many on their own. So, obviously, the costs of running these libraries vary.

MR. KIRBY: We've got 95 of them. As I said, government has not, in the past, revitalized them. If you look at what's going on in other provinces, by and large if you do an interjurisdictional scan you'll find that libraries are oftentimes municipal operations rather than provincial.

But we're being left behind the rest of the Western world when it comes to libraries. The new one they have in Halifax or the metro Toronto Reference Library, they have things like makerspaces where you can go in and you can do sewing or you can use 3-D printers or you

can use AutoCAD. You can use things associated with technology or automotive. There are all kinds of things going on, but we're not doing that.

A lot of our libraries are basically boiled down to a place where people go in and check their email. I think we have to make a decision about whether or not what we're offering is a library which is a multi-resource. It's like a multi-functional resource for communities or regions or towns or cities or what have you, or are we offering a service where people can go in and do their banking online.

A library is a place where you go to use a computer. There's no doubt about that, but increasingly – and people will tell this who work in the system – increasingly the service is diminished so much by the reduction in hours, the reduction in investment in services, the shift to digital access, the text, all the people reading, who can afford to, read on here instead of in a book. All of that is creating incredible pressure.

So if we don't reduce the numbers of libraries – I'm being very frank with you – in communities, the only other alternative is to further reduce investment in collections – it's pretty bad as it is – and to further reduce hours because a lot of the cost is associated with human resources. So do we want robust libraries that have all the things that other jurisdictions have, or do we want a place that's open five hours a week so people can go do their online banking? That's basically what we're facing.

With Torbay and places like CBS, they will have libraries because there's a significant population around them, but I don't think all 95 of them are going to survive in the long term. A lot of it has to do with what I talked about initially, it's a population shift.

MR. K. PARSONS: I agree with you 100 per cent, but today it seems like – just getting involved, how I got involved the last little while, I didn't realize have many people needed it and used it. They use it for different things, whether it's a household that's noisy and they need to go study somewhere that's quiet or a senior that needs access to a computer that doesn't have it at home. There are all kinds of different usages like that and programs that are offered that help

children before going to school, whether it's a reading class or something like that.

They do provide a huge benefit to the community. I believe – and I know you made the statement earlier – municipalities should be involved because it is a service they're offering their residents in their towns, but we have to work together with them to make sure that it stays afloat.

MR. KIRBY: Sure. I think the other thing about it – you're right, one of the, I guess, critical issues as it relates to potential library closures is the provision of those services, like early literacy programs. But we have family resource centres scattered all across the province. If the issue is the delivery of early literacy programs or book clubs or what have you for children – that's something I agree we need to have and probably should have more of – then can we deliver that service through family resource centres rather than through libraries? So that's an alternative. It's something we need to explore.

MR. K. PARSONS: Okay.

I'm getting down on my time now. I want to ask a question. I know you spoke there – and probably this question, again, I apologize, Minister, if this was asked already – relating to full-day kindergarten. You said there were nine modular classrooms and four schools that got extension. Will we be ready for all those schools in September?

MR. KIRBY: We'll be ready, there's no doubt about that. We'll have the right numbers of teachers. We'll have people who have received professional development. We've been doing a lot of communication to parents. Everybody who's taken part in KinderStart knows what's going to happen.

Do we have enough space? I would say barely. I mean that's the fact of the matter. The biggest issue with full-day kindergarten is accommodating the space. Where people have said, oh, there are too many children in a classroom, officials from the department have gone out and looked at it. As far as we're concerned we have enough space, barely.

Are the classrooms the same size as the classrooms in the new schools we're building? Certainly not, but we're designing schools now based on the 21st century as opposed to the previous designs and so on. Places like Coley's Point are 60 years old. We've got a dozen schools in the province that are of similar age as Coley's Point, so the infrastructure is different because it was built at a different time when we had a different understanding. We're not breaking any rules; there are no fire ordinances that we're violating or anything like that.

One of the things that we're finding is that teachers have a lot of stuff – teachers have a lot of stuff. They have a lot of – we send out books and it may be something we ought to look at too. We send out materials from the department to teachers so they keep it in the classroom. They have their own bookshelves and they have their own – you think about primary grades, the smallest kids, there's a lot more stuff because it's play-based learning.

So you have a place where you can do a puppet show or a place you can do whatever, a playhouse. All these different things are a lot of stuff. If you're going from a half-day program to a full-day program, you're trying to accommodate all these things that teachers have. That's really the challenge. The challenge isn't having enough seats in the classroom; it's having enough space to fit all the stuff.

MR. K. PARSONS: I know in my district the school in Pouch Cove was built in the '90s which was built for a declining population at the time. The classroom sizes are to accommodate 20 children, so it's a real struggle when you put a little bit more than 20 children in classrooms that are that small.

My question is basically with the nine modular classrooms and the extensions, will they be ready?

MR. KIRBY: Yeah, I haven't had any indication that there is any delay. Is there a delay?

OFFICIAL: They'll be ready

MR. K. PARSONS: They'll be ready. Okay, it's just a question because you talk to parents

and they want to know whether the school is going to be.

MR. KIRBY: Those things are all going to be done but, again, we know there are going to be challenges, right.

MR. K. PARSONS: I have a question; it's the last question I'll ask you now. I was looking at the budget and I was just trying to figure out how you figure out whether you're going to defer it or delay it until three years, or you cancel the school altogether. How is the decision made on something like that? I was looking at some of the schools –

MR. KIRBY: The one about Paradise is interesting because there was over \$100 million worth of new schools promised for Paradise. Well, the one thing is we have the use for the School for the Deaf, and the board calls it swing space because right now the Octagon Pond area school is a School for the Deaf. The School for the Deaf is an excellent facility. It's got a theatre, which parents love. It's got a huge gym. I can't say enough good about it. Everyone wants it, too, by the way. The French crowd want it; the College of the North Atlantic want it. Everybody wants to get their hands on that school. Transportation and Works, it will be the last thing they are going to give up.

So that school is going to be used in the place of the intermediate. What I said earlier about the class-size caps and the combined grades that might free up some space. We have to look at whether – maybe there are other alternatives. Like one thing you think about, well, instead of having a K-6 school you could have a K-7 school, but that might involve having an extension on one of the existing schools.

I think the other thing that I thought was most interesting when I came into the position was the whole business of the senior high school in Paradise. So I said why do we need a senior high school in Paradise? Because aren't the kids currently going to whatever school, like Mount Pearl. They said, yes, the thinking was – I don't know whose thinking it was, I'm not going to blame anybody. Somebody's thinking was, well, the students out in Galway have to go to school somewhere. Well, maybe they'll go to school in

Mount Pearl. So there won't be any room anymore for the students from Paradise.

I thought, sure, nobody lives in Galway. I'm not convinced yet that there's going to be a whole lot of people out there. How soon, is the other question? Not only that, don't you think the people out in Galway, once they get out there, will want their own school too? So making decisions about, well maybe there won't be enough room in Mount Pearl because the people in Galway will be there; there's no evidence to suggest we need to build a \$60 million senior high school because of that.

We don't see any enrolment pressures that we can't manage with the existing – at least in the intermediate term, there's nothing we can't manage with the School for the Deaf and the way children are already accommodated.

MR. K. PARSONS: Can I ask one last question?

MR. KIRBY: You said that last one was the last question.

CHAIR: He should have come at 9 o'clock.

MR. KIRBY: Go ahead.

MR. K. PARSONS: I'm just concerned with – I know there's a lot of new school construction on the go and some have been told when they're going to be opening. I heard you answer some questions in the House on it also.

MR. KIRBY: I was asking to be asked the questions.

MR. K. PARSONS: I know.

I'm pretty involved in talking to parents and whatnot and it's so important that we be upfront with the parents to know when things are going to be. So do we have a plan for the schools that are under construction now for –?

MR. KIRBY: When I came into the department, one of the first things I realized was these new schools: Octagon Pond, Portugal Cove-St. Philip's and Torbay, that there had been commitments made that suggested they would

be open for September. It became obvious to me that was not going to be the case.

Octagon Pond, there's a possibility –

OFFICIAL: It'll be ready.

MR. KIRBY: Octagon Pond is going to be ready. As I say that, I made sure there was communication sent out to all parents from the district and there were meetings held with school councils to advise them of delays or potential delays.

When it comes to the new school in Torbay, I think we're looking at delayed until basically after Christmas because you can't be shifting children in the middle of, say, a semester if you will. If the school is ready in November, that would be an awful lot of chaos to create. It's just as well to wait until January.

Now, unless something has changed, Portugal Cove-St. Philip's is the one that's really behind. We're looking at winter 2017, right?

OFFICIAL: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: My take on it, to be quite honest with you, it'll have to boil down to, we'll have to discuss it with the school community whether or not the disruption, at that point in the school year – let's say it's this time in the 2016-17 school year, so it's April 2017, that's potentially what we're looking at. Is it worth the disruption to your children, your teachers et cetera, to move them now?

So that's the way I've chalked it up. The district will have to decide. We'll have input into it, but they'll have to decide what they're going to do because it's a significant disruption most of the way through the school year. Is it worth the disruption for two months? Some parents might say yes. I don't think we're having a vote on it or anything but we're certainly going to have to consult people.

MR. K. PARSONS: I just believe that as long as you let the parents know and give them proper communication –

MR. KIRBY: Yes.

MR. K. PARSONS: It's the unknown and stuff like this that's the problem. So if it is the point of the school going to open in the middle of the year, if they know that, then they'll feel a whole lot better about it, rather than – and that's just what I'm (inaudible).

MR. KIRBY: We even sent a notification out to the Octagon Pond area parents to tell them there might be a delay. Now, it's looking like that's not going to happen, but this is the sort of stuff that keeps me awake at night. People are out there anticipating one thing – and we have information.

We were elected on a pledge of openness and transparency. If you have the information, give it to them because there are a lot of problems created if you don't do that.

MR. K. PARSONS: Anyway, Madam Chair, that's my questions for the day.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Okay. Thank you very much.

So we'll call the subheading.

CLERK: 3.6.01 to –

CHAIR: Oh, I'm sorry.

MR. REID: I just had a question on libraries (inaudible).

CHAIR: Sure. Do you want to just state your name?

MR. REID: Scott Reid.

I just wanted to look at the total expenditures for libraries last year. It was \$11,483,000. That was an increase of about a million dollars from the previous year, 2014-15.

I'm just wondering how that extra money was spent and why the over expenditure there?

MR. KIRBY: The extra money was spent on things like expensive leases that we have. There were additional costs associated with – there was some damage to the Port aux Basques library. There was a flood. That was \$222,000, almost

\$223,000. There are always HR costs. As you know, there's fairly generous severance paid out to people and they build up unused vacation and so on. So we had retirement costs of almost \$300,000.

That's why there were additional costs. That's what the over expenditure was. You can't anticipate things like the flooding.

MR. REID: Yes, but there was also an increase from the 2014-15, a planned increase. What was the purpose of that increase and how –

MR. KIRBY: I think it was to accommodate things like the new leases. In the instance of the CBS library, the moving costs and the new building construction is somewhere in the order of \$330,000. The lease for the Corner Brook library is about \$200,000. That's over half of it there.

MR. REID: Yeah.

I listened to your comments about the changing needs and roles of libraries, the sort of idea of regional libraries and that. I just offer a comment in caution.

In terms of best practices, we also have to be just as vigilant in looking at best practices in small rural libraries. We're in a situation where one of the main principles in the strategic plan of the library and also the library annual reports from the Library Association is universality.

I think we need to look at what are the possibilities for excellence in rural libraries, as much as we have to look at excellence in regional libraries as well. Because I think the nature of rural Newfoundland is we have to have a made-in-Newfoundland system of regional libraries.

When we compare ourselves to other jurisdictions, they have different sort of governance models. A lot of areas in rural Newfoundland don't have municipal governments that can take on the role of the libraries. So I think we have to be cautious about how we proceed with any changes to libraries.

We have to keep in mind this principle of universality. We can't have libraries, regionally,

and expect people to travel an hour and a half to visit it because it just won't happen.

MR. KIRBY: The work that's been done with Economics and Statistics, the officials in the department and with the libraries board administration is modeled on the community clinics model.

They have a model that they use for health care, in particular, but this is something that was also utilized when they were doing the redrawing of the electoral districts. They have this community clinics model. It models commuter patterns. Where people go to access health services, where they go to the dentist, they do their banking, they get their groceries and so on.

I actually think this particular information is also used in market research. When somebody is talking about investing in a new shopping centre or if you are building a new child care centre. That same information they're using is utilized for that. So it's: Where are people going?

So I guess the whole idea of having a number of regional libraries is that if somebody goes to the doctor or they go to the dentist, they go to pick up their groceries, they go to work, that they would access library services the same as they would access health services or other services.

MR. REID: Yes, I'm familiar with the functional regions research that's been done and the usage of it, but to apply market research and population patterns from one situation to looking at libraries, I think, is a leap. I don't think the research has been done in terms of how far people would travel to use a library.

MR. KIRBY: Sure.

MR. REID: Although we've looked at how far people would travel to go to work and how far people would travel to go to a hospital and things like that, I think to use that same research, that same Stats Canada information to make a decision about how far children would be able to travel to use a library would be a bit of a leap. I think we should be cautious about applying that model to this situation.

MR. KIRBY: Yeah.

MR. REID: I would ask the minister and the department to use caution.

MR. KIRBY: I understand. I don't think that's the policy discussion that we would have at the Estimates Committee though. I understand. I take your point.

MR. REID: Yes.

CHAIR: Okay, so now everybody is good with questions?

CLERK: 3.6.01 to 4.1.02 inclusive.

CHAIR: 3.6.01 to 4.1.02 inclusive.

Shall it carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.6.01 through 4.1.02 carried.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, total heads, carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the Estimates of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development carried without amendment?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development carried without amendment.

CHAIR: A couple of quick things we'll do before I call for a motion to adjourn, just to read into the record, because I didn't do this at the beginning. The Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island, Mr. Brazil, replaced the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, Ms. Perry. The Member for Cape St. Francis, Mr. Kevin Parsons, replaced the Member for Topsail – Paradise, Mr. Davis.

Some minutes were circulated right before we started. I'm just wondering if I could have a mover to adopt the minutes from April 20, Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Ms. Michael if you're not a Committee member, I'll just move to the Member for Harbour Main. Is that okay?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Thank you very much.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

CHAIR: The time and date for the next Estimates meeting is 5:30 on Wednesday, tomorrow night, and that is Justice and Public Safety.

I will now ask for a motion to adjourn.

MR. LANE: So moved.

CHAIR: So moved.

Thank you very much everybody for your co-operation in Estimates.

On motion, the Committee adjourned.