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

May 2, 2016 - Issue 5

Department of Child, Youth and Family Services

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## **SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE**

Department of Child, Youth and Family Services

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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

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Appearing:

### **Department of Child, Youth and Family Services**

Hon. Sherry Gambin-Walsh, MHA, Minister  
Rachelle Cochrane, Deputy Minister  
Derek Bennett, Parliamentary Secretary  
Gina Eisenhaur, Director, Community Corrections  
Steve French, Manager, Budgeting  
Rick Healey, Assistant Deputy Minister, Policies and Programs  
Paul Grandy, Departmental Controller  
Melony O'Neill, Director, Communications  
Christine Osmond, Director, Adoptions  
Susan Pereira, Manager, HR Planning  
Michelle Shallow, Director, Child Protection and In-Care  
Kelly White, Executive Assistant

### **Also Present**

David Brazil, MHA  
Mark Browne, MHA  
Neil King, MHA  
Veronica Hayden, Executive Assistant

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, Mark Browne, MHA for Placentia West – Bellevue, substitutes for Betty Parsley, MHA for Harbour Main.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Neil King, MHA for Bonavista, substitutes for Carol Anne Haley, MHA for Burin – Grand Bank.

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

**CHAIR (Dempster):** Good morning, Minister, let's try this again.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Sherry Gambin-Walsh, Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

**MR. BENNETT:** Good morning.

Derek Bennett, MHA for Lewisporte – Twillingate District and Parliamentary Secretary.

**MS. COCHRANE:** Good morning.

I'm Rachelle Cochrane. I'm Deputy Minister of CYFS.

**MR. HEALEY:** Good Morning.

I'm Rick Healey. I'm the Assistant Deputy Minister with Policies and Programs at CYFS.

**MS. O'NEILL:** Good morning.

I'm Melony O'Neill, Director of Communications.

**MS. OSMOND:** Good morning.

Christine Osmond, Director of Adoptions.

**MR. GRANDY:** Hi, Paul Grandy, Departmental Controller.

**MS. WHITE:** Kelly White, EA to the minister.

**MS. PEREIRA:** Susan Pereira, Manager of Human Resources.

**MR. FRENCH:** Good morning.

I'm Steve French, Manager of Budgeting.

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

**MS. HAYDEN:** Veronica Hayden, Executive Assistant to Paul Davis.

**MS. ROGERS:** I'm Gerry Rogers. I work for the good people of St. John's Centre.

Susan Williams is a researcher with our caucus. She just had to step out to get something.

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

**MR. KING:** Neil King, MHA for the historic District of Bonavista. I'm filling in for Carol Anne Haley.

**MR. BROWNE:** Mark Browne, MHA, Placentia West – Bellevue and Parliamentary Assistant to the Premier, filling in for Ms. Parsley from Harbour Main.

**CHAIR:** Continuing on subbing, we also have the hon. Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island replacing the hon. Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune for this morning.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yes, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR:** Good.

We'll have the minister open with a few words and then we'll start with Mr. Brazil.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Good morning.

Thank you all for being here this morning to participate in the Estimates for the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services.

Through Budget 2016-17, our government is reiterating its commitment to ensuring the protection and well-being of our province's most vulnerable children and youth. We are continuing to move forward with a focus on

further enhancing child and youth care through the provision and development of programs, policies, standards and services and with an investment of approximately \$150 million for child protection.

We also remain committed to the approved organizational structure of 1-20 ratios and team structures. The department's organizational model for service delivery provides our front-line team with one supervisor for a team of every six social workers, one social worker for every 20 cases, one social work assistant for every team and one clerical for every team.

We have made every effort to maintain our front-line services as we navigate through these difficult financial times. That is why we have chosen to amalgamate some Child, Youth and Family Services sites where there will be no impact on our staffing model and client services.

As of March 31, 2016 there were a total of 52 offices. After closures and consolidation in the coming months, we will have a total of 47 offices located throughout the province. It is our belief that through this amalgamation we will be able to further enhance effectiveness of child protection services by strengthening our teams through case management.

Currently, there are a total of 554 front-line positions, of which 89 – 12 per cent – are vacant with no incumbent. Our department continues its ongoing recruitment to fill these vacancies on a temporary and permanent basis. Just last month, April, we posted a new ad for the 2016 social workers eligibility list on the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's job portal. Our recruitment efforts for Labrador continue to be very challenging but we remain focussed in our efforts to fill vacancies and improve caseloads in this region.

As the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services continues to succeed in laying a strong foundation to address the systemic issues in child protection services in our province, it is important to understand the context in which these services are delivered.

While our province's population continues to decline, the number of children entering into care is actually on the rise. At this point, we

have approximately 1,000 children in our care, with another approximately 5,000 children involved with the department's protective intervention services.

The department has made significant progress since it was created in 2009. Some of most recent successes we are especially pleased with include: the development and implementation of 12 new provincial policies and procedures for the Protective Intervention Program which include a range of policy areas such as child care, behavioral aid and transportation; the establishment of two new pilot projects: Waypoints Foster Family Support Pilot Project which is a partnership between Child, Youth and Family Services, the Newfoundland and Labrador Foster Families Association and Waypoints. Through this project, Waypoints works with participating foster parents in their homes and communities to provide wraparound services.

A specialized Family-Based Care Pilot Project which is a partnerships between Child, Youth and Family Services and Key Assets; through this project Key Assets provides Level 3 care and services to children and youth with complex needs. The signing of a new working-relationship agreement between Child, Youth and Family Services and the Sheshatshiu and Mushuau First Nations; this agreement focuses on improving services, co-ordination and information sharing as it pertains to the protection in the communities of Sheshatshiu and Natuashish and the ongoing work of the Nunatsiavut Government to ensure more Level 4 placements are available in Labrador for Inuit children.

Despite the difficult fiscal realities facing the province, Budget 2016-17 will continue to provide the necessary supports so the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services will be able to further enhance the services and care provided to our province's children, youth and their families.

Now, I'd like to take the opportunity to address any questions you may have.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

I'll now ask the Clerk to call the first subhead.

**CLERK (Ms. Murphy):** 1.1.01.

**CHAIR:** Shall 1.1.01 carry?

Mr. Brazil.

**MR. BRAZIL:** I have no questions on that section.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Well, we're going to – if it's okay with yourself and Ms. Rogers – work down through the ones, then we'll call that inclusive at the end.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Sure. Okay.

**MS. ROGERS:** David, you have –

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yes, I'm going into 1.2. So I'm good to go there?

**CHAIR:** Yes, you can continue on through, right down to 1.2.04.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay, we'll go on right through.

Under Transportation and Communications, I noticed from the large \$96,400 that was originally budgeted to the revised at \$10,000, now budgeted this year for \$30,000. Can you clarify a little bit what that will cover through Transportation and Communications, the difference from what was originally needed?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Okay, so Budget '16-'17 has decreased as a result of the detailed line-by-line expenditure review of dropped balances over several years.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Even though we budgeted higher amounts, it was deemed that it wasn't necessary because of the expenditure last year.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Fair enough.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** So there was a review done over several years and it was deemed it wasn't necessary.

**MR. BRAZIL:** No, I understand.

Purchased Services; \$20,000 budgeted, \$7,000 used. I know it's a small amount, \$13,000, but just curious to see what services there. This is more for my own information here, if I could, please.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** It's advertising.

**MR. BRAZIL:** For which program, the whole department or the foster parents program?

**MS. COCHRANE:** Mr. Brazil, could you tell me which –

**CHAIR:** Can you just state your name please?

**MS. COCHRANE:** Oh, sorry. I'm Rachelle Cochrane.

Could you tell us which account number you're using?

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yes, Rachelle, under 1.2.01, Purchased Services.

**MS. COCHRANE:** Could I ask, just a point of clarification, have we concluded with 1.1.01?

**CHAIR:** No. Actually what I'm doing – and I don't mean to confuse you because we've done it a number of ways since we've been chairing – we're just going to Mr. Brazil's time on the clock. He's going to work up to 1.2.04.

Would you prefer if we just went subhead for subhead? Because when I look at the whole thing we're not going to run out of time this morning, I don't think.

**MR. BRAZIL:** No.

**CHAIR:** I do this because I really want to be fair to both parties on the clock. But let's go back and stick with 1.1.01. If you have no questions, I'll move to Ms. Rogers.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yes, fair enough. That's a better way to do it.

**CHAIR:** Go ahead.

**MS. ROGERS:** Thank you.

If we go back to 1.1.01.

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**MS. ROGERS:** Thanks.

Under Transportation and Communications – I know that David Brazil had already asked about this – there was a drop from '15-'16 budget and revised by \$26,000. Can you tell me what had been planned and what was not completed?

**MS. COCHRANE:** That budget line has been budgeted for much more substantive travel than we actually do. So for example, five trips to Labrador could result in those costs. On a historical basis, the Minister's Office traditionally makes one trip. When we looked at our line by line we determined we haven't been spending that money, so it was prudent for us to reduce the budget.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay. Thank you.

And under Supplies – that's okay, we can pass through that.

Purchased Services; what you may have anticipated purchasing and decided not to?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yeah. Advertising, media monitoring, printing, meeting costs, entertainment: a number of things like that.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay. Thank you.

And 1.2.01 –

**CHAIR:** No, we'll call that now.

We established that we'll go point for point.

**MS. ROGERS:** Oh, you're going to call each little sub-line.

**CHAIR:** Yes. Is that okay?

**MS. ROGERS:** Sure.

**CHAIR:** All right.

Shall 1.1.01 carry?

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against?

Carried.

On motion, subhead 1.1.01 carried.

**CLERK:** 1.2.01.

**CHAIR:** 1.2.01.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay.

Also, I want to say thank you very much for your time here this morning and thank you for your incredible work. I know how difficult and complex the work in this particular department can be, but how so very, very vital.

And I know how difficult it is under the particular financial circumstances that we find ourselves, the fiscal reality of the province, and which probably, more than likely, places extra strain on families around the province. I want to thank you so very, very much for your passion and compassion which is what is really needed in this kind of work, and thank you for being here this morning.

Under General Administration, Executive Support, in Transportation and Communications again we see a big drop from the budgeted and revised amount in '15-'16.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** The amount of travel to regions was lower again than anticipated and the department reduced discretionary spending.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay.

I wonder, again, with the particular fiscal realities that we're seeing, also the fact that we see such an increase in the number of kids in care when one would hope we'd see the actual opposite, you don't see a need for more travel to meet with in different regions to see what's going on.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Okay.

Some of the work has been online through links. Also, since I've started, the Aboriginal population – they have come and met with us. So that has also happened, the Aboriginal governments.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay, because that's such a significant reduction.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yeah. That was an evaluation over a number of years and then the dropped balances.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay. Thank you.

Professional Services; what kinds of Professional Services had you anticipated in '15-'16? We see that none of that was spent, and now there's also a significant reduction.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Okay, so it would have been to hire outside expertise, consultants, to advise and/or assist with special projects which may arise from time to time.

**MS. ROGERS:** The evaluation of the Level 4 placements that's coming up now this year, would that come out of this budget?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** It's completed.

**MS. ROGERS:** It's completed?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** The evaluation is completed. We've completed it.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay, and will that be made available?

**MS. COCHRANE:** We have done the evaluation internally. We have had extensive discussions with each of our four service providers. We've required them to file an action plan on any deficiencies that were noted, and we have had regular monitoring done of that plan. So we're more than confident that the results of that evaluation have been addressed and that our new services going into '16-'17 are as per our policy.

In terms of making it public, we have asked. We sought advice from our legal counsel and they have advised us that the evaluation would be not in keeping with our CYCP Act, and that we would be violating our own act if we made it public.

We've shared it with the Child and Youth Advocate. She has been involved with our meetings with our service providers. She is – I

can't speak for her, I shouldn't go that far. But I could go as far as to say she has been very pleased with the process and how we've addressed all the issues that have been identified.

**MS. ROGERS:** Rachele, can you tell us who did the evaluation?

**MS. COCHRANE:** It was done by our fabulous policy and research folks within the department. The work that's required on this evaluation involves a fairly extensive assessment of whether or not the service providers were meeting with our 87 policies that are under child protection.

In order to do that evaluation, we required expertise in social work and those who had 20-plus years of experience. So to reach out into the professional community we were of the opinion that we had the experts in our department, upon which this review could be done most efficiently to respond to the needs of our children that are in our In Care program.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay. Thank you.

Can you tell us what some of the key concerns may have been?

**MS. COCHRANE:** The number one key concern was related to the turnover of staffing. Our kids require a very –we would like to see a more stable staffing model. That issue did come up and each provider has filed a plan upon which they are going to improve their HR practices to ensure that stability. So we were quite satisfied with the responses and with the outcomes.

**MS. ROGERS:** And what about the issue of training and of staff?

**MS. COCHRANE:** Yes, we were certainly pleased with some of our findings with respect to the training. Again, where there were deficiencies, we've asked the providers, in the plan that they file with us, to remedy any areas. Training was part of that plan and they are on that as we speak.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay.

And how is the oversight of how the homes are operated? How is that done?

**MS. COCHRANE:** Our social workers visit the homes and the children in those homes monthly. They come back and they discuss – this is a regular business for us; it’s part of our operation. They come back and they meet with the clinical program supervisor and the zone manager and they determine what actions are necessary.

In addition our Corporate Services – Rick Healey’s branch – are involved with a daily contact with the service providers from a corporate perspective, again, for the HR issues, for the financial administration to ensure that those homes are operating according to provincial law.

So we have it coming from the front line on a monthly basis and regular reporting, and then we have it as well from corporate office.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay, thank you very much.

Purchased Services, we see that there was budget in ’15-’16 of \$20,000 and \$7,000 was spent. What kinds of purchased services would those include?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** That was primarily for advertising and meeting room rentals, some printing, photocopier lease costs, repairs and maintenance of equipment.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay, thanks.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** I also wanted to add that I’m very confident with the Level 4 evaluation that has occurred. And, as the minister, I must say there’s been some fantastic advancement in the last couple of months.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay, in terms of improvements and –

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay, thank you.

I know that there were some challenges. And we still have the same number of houses in the same communities?

**MS. COCHRANE:** Depending on the demand, wherever the children are that’s where we intend to provide housing and supports for those children. So from time to time one may close, it’s just regular business, but others may open. Historically, in metro, that’s kind of our growth area, St. John’s – I shouldn’t say our growth area. That is not a great word.

**MS. ROGERS:** Increased.

**MS. COCHRANE:** Increased, yes, let’s call it that. That’s where our greatest demand is and that’s where we may move, not move the child, but we may open a home in a different area of St. John’s or close in another area. So it is a very movable target. It depends on the needs of the child.

**MS. ROGERS:** So what’s happening? Why are we having an increase in the number of kids going into care? Do we have a handle on that?

**MS. COCHRANE:** That is a million-dollar question. We have had experts here from away who are doing our structured decision-making model and we have asked them for some advice on that. That is a complex issue. It’s so vast it’s very challenging to be able to give you a definite answer. So to say that we actually know for sure, with a great degree of certainty, that’s not something I can answer today.

**MS. ROGERS:** What about, though, some inkling? You must have some sense of what maybe some of the contributing factors are.

**MS. COCHRANE:** From our front line, we’ve heard concern with increased use of drug and alcohol abuse and that, of course, creates a certain degree of volatility within families. That’s what our front line has told us.

**MS. ROGERS:** In the families or with the kids, or both?

**MS. COCHRANE:** In the families, with the parents.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay. It’s tough.

Anything else? Any other, in terms of why –



**MS. COCHRANE:** We continue to have a challenge with some of our really remote communities. That is certainly some work that we have underway. The minister mentioned a few things we're doing with the Aboriginal governments. We're quite proud of the advancements we've made in that area and our improvements in our relationships with the Aboriginal governments and our goal to try to maintain the children in their communities.

That is going to take us quite a bit of time because we're actually trying to build capacity in Labrador, capacity that hasn't existed, ever. We want to maintain the standard of care for our children, as other children in the province receive.

I must say the work that's being done with the Aboriginal governments, through our Innu round table and with the Inuit government, is quite extensive and it's very positive.

**MS. ROGERS:** With the issue of increased drug and alcohol use in families, I imagine then one of the problems is accessing help for families, whether it be rehabilitation or prevention or –

**MS. COCHRANE:** Well, we haven't heard that access is a challenge, from our perspective. Once our family care action plans go into effect, then the remediation occurs with the family and the members who need it.

I can't say that we've seen a wait-list issue. That's not something I've heard from our front line, that our families or the parents of the children we have in care are waiting on wait-lists. I haven't heard that. That's what the staff are advising is the number one issue is the increased use of substance abuse.

**MS. ROGERS:** We have to figure out why that's happening.

Okay, thanks.

**MS. COCHRANE:** If I could, Minister, can I just continue on?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes.

**MS. COCHRANE:** I've asked that question many times with our regional directors and our management team. Income levels affect that as well. Our whole way we live, people who are mobile, flying in and out, things like that, are leading to a bunch of new social problems that we, as a province, historically, haven't had a lot of experience with.

In some of our rural regions, they have said that some of that fly in and fly out that we've seen, historically, into Alberta. We're not sure where the trend is going to take us in the out-years, but I can promise you it is an active discussion with our management team all the time.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay, thank you very much.

**CHAIR:** Is that it for you, Ms. Rogers, on 1.2.01.

**MS. ROGERS:** It is.

Thank you very much.

**CHAIR:** Mr. Brazil didn't have anything else on that?

**MR. BRAZIL:** I'm good on that section.

**CHAIR:** So we'll call that one.

Shall 1.2.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subhead 1.2.01 carried.

**CHAIR:** Time is pretty much out, so I'll go back to Mr. Brazil on the clock.

I'll ask the Clerk to call the next subhead.

**CLERK:** 1.2.02.

**CHAIR:** Shall 1.2.02 carry?

Mr. Brazil.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Under Salaries in Corporate Services there, I'm just curious to see the major decrease from what was budgeted to what was revised, to now what's being put as the Estimates for this year. I know you mentioned, Minister – and I can appreciate the challenges of recruiting staff, particularly in some of the remote places. Can you explain exactly the difference there in the salary base?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** There were 60 PCNs. That's 38 permanent and 22 temporary in Corporate Services. There were eight in the area for the ISM project. We no longer needed those positions as that project progresses. So that has decreased.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Those positions, have they been encompassed, the service they provided, in another way? I know the project is completed as such.

**MS. COCHRANE:** OCIO is managing that project for us, on our behalf, because it's a major IT system and that's kind of not where our expertise is. So those positions are no longer with CYFS. OCIO is funding them. So it's really a wash for us.

**MR. BRAZIL:** A transfer, yes.

**MS. COCHRANE:** It's in and out for us.

**MS. ROGERS:** It's all about (inaudible).

**MS. COCHRANE:** It's all a wash. It's over with OCIO.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Has there been any other decrease in actual salary units that are directly linked to providing the services of Child, Youth and Family Services on the ground itself? And I do know there are other headings that we'll get into later.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** No, definitely not.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay, fair enough. That clarifies that.

If I can have your indulgence, I just want to ask a couple of general questions. I'm trying to stay away from direct policy-oriented ones, but there

are some that will clarify some of the other line programs here.

The foster child program, has funding decreased in that program this year?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** No.

**MR. BRAZIL:** So we're a steady line on that. Okay, great.

The enhanced youth program itself, allowances for youth who mainly receive services. Is any funding cuts to those?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** No.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Have there been no cuts to direct service delivery?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** That's right, no cuts.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay, that's good to hear. That's one of the things I wanted to have and out of the way.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes, no front line cuts.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yes, perfect.

Still under Corporate Services, Transportation and Communications is down from originally budgeted, but up somewhat from the revised. Just clarify some of the thoughts around that. Is it the travel –?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Continuing to use technology, using Microsoft Lync to reduce travel expenditure, and a decrease as a result of the line-by-line expenditure review. That's primarily what – we've been using Lync a fair bit with our managers.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay, great.

I do have another general concept question, just for clarification. The mentoring program in Sheshatshiu, is that still continuing?

**MS. COCHRANE:** The program is still in place; and, if I can say, we haven't had the success with that program as we had hoped. What we've done is we put a – I think it's a

clinical program supervisor, a position. So we've taken it from a direct mentoring role and we put a supervisor who is now in Happy Valley, and they mentor all of Labrador. We wanted to get the maximum use of that program. They are still doing some work in Sheshatshiu, but it's not the same direct mentoring. It's broader than that. It's right throughout Labrador. So we're hoping with that, we'll have better success.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Any idea of what some of the challenges are? I know there are some unique challenges in Labrador, obviously, but –

**MS. COCHRANE:** Our greatest challenge in Labrador is retention of staff. As soon as we put them in, within a year or two, it's difficult for us to keep them there.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yes, I can understand that challenge, as somebody who worked in Sheshatshiu in a previous life. So there are some challenges there.

Madam Chair, I'm good on that section, 1.2.02.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Are you okay if we move to Ms. Rogers now on that section?

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yes, sure.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Ms. Rogers, 1.2.02.

**MS. ROGERS:** Yes, I have no further questions here.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Okay. So we'll call that subhead.

Shall 1.2.02 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subhead 1.2.02 carried.

**CLERK:** 1.2.03.

**CHAIR:** Shall 1.2.03 carry?

Do you want to finish your time on the clock?

**MR. BRAZIL:** Under Salaries, from \$1.9 million that was budgeted to \$1.572 million to \$1.584 million. Can you tell me the difference? I know there's not a big difference from the revised to estimates for this year, but going back nearly \$350,000. Are there some salaries we don't need, we can't fill? Are they still on the books?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Vacancies, delays in filling positions, and I'll give you some examples. Vacancies during the year included four program and policy development specialists, one clerk typist and one social worker. We had a long-term vacancy.

**MR. BRAZIL:** I do realize – you've mentioned it and I can appreciate it – challenges in rural Newfoundland being able to fill those positions. Is there any thought process or any new creative way of trying to recruit?

I know years ago there would be additional incentives, depending on where you were. There were incentives out of the School of Social Work as part of that. Have we been talking to the school to talk about how we approach that?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** There were additional incentives in place. We just cannot keep the social workers in Labrador.

**MR. BRAZIL:** So everything is still in place there?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Turnover is really large.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Out of curiosity – and I hope somebody would know it – the number of social workers that graduate these days, are they in line with what they were for the last number of years?

**MS. COCHRANE:** There has been no change in our ability to access social workers.

Obviously, our faculty of social workers is our number one source of recruitment, and we get them from many other provinces as well, which is a good thing for us. So we have broad-based social workers.

It's not the issue of supply; it's the issue of whether or not they want to remain in those communities long term. We have provided all the benefits, the Northern Allowances, the travel, we even provide housing. There's not one benefit that's in the toolbox that we don't use in Labrador. I guess recruitment is not a problem in all our communities in Labrador, but there are some pockets, some different communities that cause us considerable challenge for recruitment.

We have engaged the Aboriginal government's minister on the recruitment and they're working with us constantly to try to get – if there are people who are of Aboriginal decent, if we could get them hired, we absolutely do.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Exactly, it makes sense.

Just out of clarification, are the graduates leaving the province? Are they going in the private sector, keeping in mind social work is a very oriented, specific skill set?

**MS. COCHRANE:** We've met with the Association of Social Workers on that issue, and we are the number two recruiter of social workers. The health boards are the number one. Certainly, there is still a fair bit of work, we understand, for social workers in Newfoundland. We're number two, so we were pretty pleased with that.

We meet with the association as well on a regular basis, just to collaborate and see if there are ways we can enhance our recruitment in Labrador.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Perfect. Thank you.

Transportation and Communications, I notice from what was budgeted, \$141,300 to \$24,000 – and that may be relevant to the fact of having less social workers in the field – to \$47,000. I have a concern, particularly in some of these remote areas, of getting people there to assess exactly how you'd better address some of the particular needs with the social workers. Your

assessment on that, is that enough to cover what you anticipate?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes. Again, it was the continued use of technology has proven to be very successful. That's the mode we have been using a fair bit. So I'm satisfied that these numbers will meet our needs.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay, fair enough.

Under Professional Services, you clarified the \$442,000, which was a substantial amount, to \$29,400 down to \$49,800. What's the variance there, please?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** The Professional Services budget is primarily for the completion of the structured decision-making project and other consultants' contracts; no expenditure related to SDM in 2015-'16, since SDM implementation is delayed. We're waiting on the development of the ISM. So it's all technology, and it's one of the recommendations we're trying to put in place.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay, fair enough.

Another general one, if you could answer. The fly-in, fly-out process, is that still in the budget, still at the same rate of support?

**MS. COCHRANE:** We use that program. That is our number one tool right now of getting full-time social workers in the region. It is very expensive but it's the number one tool, and we will continue to use it to service those communities. We have our supervisors on a fly-in, fly-out and we have our social workers on a fly-in, fly-out.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Fair enough. I'm glad to see that still exists because I see it as a tool for being able to track and retain.

Madam Chair, I'm good on 1.2.03.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

So I'll move to Ms. Rogers on 1.2.03.

**MS. ROGERS:** I'm fine with that.

**CHAIR:** You're fine.

Okay, we'll call that.

**CLERK:** 1.2.03.

**CHAIR:** Shall 1.2.03 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subhead 1.2.03 carried.

**CLERK:** 1.2.04.

**CHAIR:** Shall 1.2.04 carry?

**MR. BRAZIL:** I'm just going to ask one quick question.

**CHAIR:** One quick one, then we'll move to Ms. Rogers.

Okay.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yes, clarification there and it may answer both of our questions, for Gerry also.

Operating: Property, Furnishings and Equipment, what are we talking about in that one purchase there?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Side by sides.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yes, I thought so.

I'm good on that section.

**CHAIR:** Ms. Rogers, did you have anything on 1.2.04.

**MS. ROGERS:** I just have some general questions, but I'm fine with the actual numbers there.

Will there still be a review of the act, including the youth services, this year?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes, there will still be a review. It has to be started by June and we are started.

**MS. ROGERS:** Great.

So it's already started?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes.

**MS. ROGERS:** Great. Thank you.

Is the department reviewing home intervention services to determine additional supports to keep children in the home, such as more counselling, parent coaching, financial support?

**MS. COCHRANE:** This is another thing we're pretty proud of. It's a great (inaudible) so I'm going to push it now while I can.

Our Protective Intervention Program; we inherited policies that came from all the RHAs, regional health authorities. Last year – and this took us about six months – we reviewed, with our front line, policy in every region, and we developed provincial policies that would help standardize our practices, including our counselling for families, our drug addiction, things that we help with all the time to help families be better families.

Those programs were finalized, I would think, within the last four or five months. So we have standard policies. Our front line has been trained and our supervisors are actively encouraging the use of those programs.

We have not cut any of the funding for that Protective Intervention Program.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay. So we know there has been an increase in the number of kids coming into care. What's the plan to address that?

**MS. COCHRANE:** We released, on our website, the minister's transition book this year. On our website you will see it's noted as a very serious problem for us. During our leg. review that the minister mentioned is coming up, we flagged that as our number one concern.

We will be asking all our stakeholders, and we have reached out to – anyway I apologize, I

can't recall the name. There's a group in the province who have come to us and said: if we had to help you with anything, what could it be? We said could you please help us with the number of the increase in our children coming into care. We think it's a huge problem; the government wants to deal with this issue.

They are having a symposium towards the end of May and we're presenting. It's all about the number of kids in care and what we as a province – sorry, community – could do to help advance that. CYFS can't deal with that issue on its own. This is a whole social issue for all this province and they're taking this on. So we're hopeful, if we put all community – and I mean all; all police forces, everybody. Everybody will be invited to this symposium, and at least we'll start to at least have a public discussion as to the ways we can help to change that number.

**MS. ROGERS:** Yes.

I have a great school; I have a great junior high school in St. John's Centre called Holy Cross Junior High, which has just been slated to close now. It's very interesting because there are about 108 students there right now, but that's because the feeder system has changed, which diminishes the population of the kids in that school.

Thirty-eight per cent of those kids have exceptionalities. Those kids walk to school, and it's been really interesting to see how their marks have increased and gotten better over the past few years with some of the extra programs that the school is doing by involving the community, by volunteer work from teachers. They have a basketball program that anybody can play basketball. So these kids walk to school, they have after-school tutoring, they have leadership programs. Now, they're all going to be bused to a different school.

A lot of these kids come from very economically challenged families, extremely economically challenged families. They're going to a school where in the English stream there are a high number of exceptionalities, they're going to Brother Rice; whereas, in the French stream in Brother Rice, they don't have the same level of exceptionalities.

Some of these kids are late for school, but then the teachers and the principal can call home and the kids can get to school. If these kids miss the bus in the morning, they're not going to get to school that day.

I would hope that maybe in your symposium and the research that you do, that you look at the impact on the children's lives of schools, and whether – and again, any kind of after-school program these kids won't be able to go to because they have to get on the bus and go home. A lot of their families don't have cars. So I would hope, then, that some of those factors are explored.

These kids had a great breakfast program and a great lunch program, and I believe this move will impact truancy, a kid's confidence, their exposure to all kinds of support systems. So I would think that what that school was able to do is prevent some problems that – and we know volatile that time is in a children's life, particularly if there are problems at home.

We see that there was a real problem in adoptions, in the backlog of adoptions as well, that there was a commitment to have assessments done over a certain period of time. Can someone please address what was happening there in adoptions?

**MS. COCHRANE:** We asked Christine Osmond. She's our Director of Adoptions, she's with us today. She'll speak to what we've done on the adoptions program.

**MS. OSMOND:** We have certainly been working very closely from provincial office with the regional teams who are responsible for the assessment work and Donna O'Brien, who is the assistant deputy minister. She isn't here today, but she's working very closely with our RDs and our managers and tracking very closely some of those child profiles that need to be completed in order for children to be matched with prospective adoptive families, and also working, putting a real push on getting assessments completed for families who have applied to adopt.

I would also like to add of course we're very challenged in many areas in child welfare. Another place we are challenged is finding

families who of course will be able to adopt some of our, what we would consider, kind of harder-to-place children. It's quite challenging. They're older, there are larger sibling groups; very complicated decisions in regard to when children have to leave communities or do you separate siblings, which we try never to do unless there's some sort of an extraordinary circumstance.

**MS. ROGERS:** Right.

**MS. OSMOND:** But as you mention, Ms. Rogers, some of the challenges these children face can be quite extensive too, and just trying to find families to match is one of our ongoing pieces of work as well.

**MS. ROGERS:** Christine, can you talk to me a little bit about the backlog in child profiles. It seems, from the report of the department that the backup was considerable in terms of – I can't remember – what was the expected time to have a profile completed and what was actually happening. Can you talk to me a little bit about that?

**MS. OSMOND:** It's always intended that your quickest time frame, once a child is actually available. So, first of all, you have to have a child who's legally available for adoption. Just because they're in care, as you know, doesn't necessarily mean they're available. So we have to have a continuous custody on a child before that could happen. So then you move through the court process on that one. And then it's the actual planning for the child in regard to looking at the full child's circumstances and getting all their information together.

So the social workers have been very much tasked with getting these adoption profiles completed in the most timely of fashions, particularly for younger children in regard to where they aren't going to be staying in their placements. We work very hard with our foster parents, who've been a fabulous resource for us. They do a lot, particularly of our older child adoptions and children with more complex needs. They've been fabulous.

So every success we have in foster care also often helps the adoptions program. We've been quite good with our adoption subsidy program in

trying to support foster families to be able to move towards the legal relationship with children, and keeping all their resources in place as well. I think there's a real conversation that occurs in this department in regard to knowing the impermanency that has to happen for these children and recognizing their attachments, their relationships and their age. The work is quite intensive.

**MS. ROGERS:** Is there a staff shortage issue for doing that work?

**MS. COCHRANE:** Not that I'm aware of; that hasn't been raised. Of course, it's busy times in all the caseloads. We certainly task social workers with trying to be able to prioritize the order of their work and respond to it as they can, yes.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay, thank you.

The wonderful ratios that everyone is working towards in terms of a social worker with 20 cases, a team led by six social workers and a clinic program supervisor, how are all those ratios doing?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** We're maintaining the ratios pretty good. Of course it's very fluid as the cases go up and the cases come down. By moving and closing Child, Youth and Family Services offices, we're not affecting the ratios. The place where we have the biggest issue with ratios again is Labrador and, of course, that's simply because we can't keep social workers in Labrador. It's difficult to maintain the 1-20 in Labrador.

**MS. ROGERS:** But in terms of the six social workers and a supervisor team, that's good?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes, that's good.

**MS. ROGERS:** Management specialists?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes.

**MS. ROGERS:** Life skill coordinators? All that's good?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay great.

I have run into a situation with some of my constituents about the issue of whether files are open or closed or gone. It seems it's easier to get your pardon from convictions for major crimes than it is to have a file closed from CYFS. Can you talk to me a little bit about that?

**CHAIR:** Right after this, Ms. Rogers, we'll move back, given the time on the clock.

**MS. ROGERS:** Sure, thank you.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** We're very cautious in closing files. There are thorough assessments done prior to and it does take time.

**MS. ROGERS:** I guess the issue, for instance, I've had with a few constituents is that if a grandmother is taking care of a grandchild and there's been no problem with that grandmother but there's a file open because that grand mom is taking care of the child and then she goes to apply for a job where she needs a clearance it's just flags in saying yes, there's a file.

**MS. COCHRANE:** Certainly a grand mom would not flag on a clearance if she is taking care of her grandchild. I can only speak from policy; the flags that are on files are if people have previous history with CYFS, not if you're a foster parent or grand mom who is taking care of the child. The flags are related to whether or not – it's called our child protection records check program and that's used quite extensively, maybe 1,200 to 1,500 per year.

And CYFS requires it, as we require it from all our service providers, that everyone has a clearance before they work with children. I think that's the flags – people call them flags, but it's a clearance certificate saying that you had no previous issue related to child protection in order to work with children.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay, so we have an increase of – oh sorry, I'll come back to this.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

You're finished specifically with 1.2.04?

**MS. ROGERS:** Yes, thank you.

**CHAIR:** Shall 1.2.04 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subhead 1.2.04 carried.

**CHAIR:** Now, we'll start with Mr. Brazil on 2.1.01.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

For clarification on the \$5.3 million decrease in Salaries, is that attributed to the 12 per cent vacancy we have with social workers?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** The reduction was a result of a detailed line-by-line expenditure review taken by the budgeting division, so it was slippage, primarily.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Obviously it's a decrease in budget, but is it a decrease in the number of positions that are available in the field?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** No.

**MS. COCHRANE:** We've looked at our historical budget. When we went through this line-by-line review process with Treasury, we historically looked back over how much had we spent over the last four or five years annually. We have a fair degree of churn in our caseload because our social workers are fairly mobile; they're young and they move from time to time. We have other areas, particularly in Labrador, where it is hard to recruit, so we have found that we've had a little bit over \$5 million on an annual basis that we haven't been spending in our salary budgets just because of our churn in our caseload. It is just it is what it is.

So the salary money that we have going into '16-'17, the \$44.8 million, we know that's what we've been spending over the last four or five years annually. There won't be any change in our front line because of that reduction.



**MR. BRAZIL:** Even with that encased, you can still maintain your ratios without any challenges, other than the recruitment challenges that are there?

**MS. COCHRANE:** Absolutely. That budget reflects our current staffing model of 1-20 and our 1-6 social workers.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Would you have the flexibility where you've given up some of the money there after reassessment if there was deemed a need somewhere else to be able to recalculate bringing some of that back?

**MS. COCHRANE:** We've asked Treasury Board and they've indicated that if we have any trouble in our salary budget or anything else for that matter, because our caseload is fluid, as you know – we've indicated our in-care caseload has been growing by about 58 children a year. Of course, they're the most expensive model. We have a commitment from Treasury Board that if we need that additional money, there is a reserve set aside for us and we can get access to that money. We are quite satisfied that we will get it if we need it.

**MR. BRAZIL:** That is good to hear.

A question, knowing that one of the bigger expenses and overhead is children that we have to put in hotels and efficiency units – how many do we have in that in comparison to the numbers that we have in our caseloads on a given (inaudible) I know it fluctuates.

**MS. COCHRANE:** We have no hotels right now.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** We don't have any hotels now; we're not using the hotel model.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

Our whole foster parent program is still moving forward?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** It is.

**MR. BRAZIL:** It's still very successful. I mean hats off, it's a good program. There seems to be a fair bit of uptake relevant to that.

Under Supplies, a dramatic decrease from what was budgeted. What's not necessary now or what's being covered that's not an issue?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Again, the department reduced discretionary spending where possible.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay, so it's a budget exercise –

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** It was a budget exercise, yes.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Not expected to have any impact on the delivery of services, I would anticipate.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** No, not at all.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay, good.

I am curious again, how many children are outside in care, out of the province?

**MS. COCHRANE:** That's a number we look at weekly and it changes on a frequency basis. On average it's about 30 to 35 on a weekly basis, if I can recall just from the charts I see. Sometimes it's up two and three and it's down, as they come home or as we send away. Sometimes we also have multiple children in a family who have to go to out-of-province treatment and again that could be two or three in any one family. That's why the number deviates a couple from week to week.

**MR. BRAZIL:** How successful have we been in bringing some of the kids back into the province with the new programs and the new sites that we've put in place?

**MS. COCHRANE:** There is a case plan put around every child that returns. For example, on Friday we had two workers who flew to Manitoba. We are bringing back four children and we have foster homes or, in some cases, grandparents are accepting children. So as they come back, we have a case plan for every child when they get discharged from an out-of-province treatment facility.

**MR. BRAZIL:** When they're sent out of the province is it because we can't find a proper setting here, or are there some special needs that

these individuals may have that we can't provide right now?

**MS. COCHRANE:** Historically, it's special needs. It's been determined that the needs of that child can be best addressed in that treatment facility outside the province.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay. Fair enough.

I have just one other and it's more policy – and I do understand it's been challenged – the Child and Youth Advocate and critical incidents. So there's still a good working relationship with the advocate's office to ensure that reports are done in a timely fashion within the time frames?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes, we are moving ahead on the reporting of critical incidents and deaths, and there's a fair bit of work that's been done.

As you know, there are six years of work done on it prior to us taking the file over in December. It is moving ahead.

**MR. BRAZIL:** I'm good on that section, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR:** Okay, we'll move to Ms. Rogers on 2.1.01.

**MS. ROGERS:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I can't remember now if all the offices that are closing, have all those locations been announced?

**MS. COCHRANE:** In '15-'16 we closed three offices: Piccadilly, Stephenville Crossing and Burgeo. In '16-'17 we're closing Gambo and Port Saunders.

**MS. ROGERS:** Those were announced.

**MS. COCHRANE:** For us as a department, operationally – I have to use that word because we closed in '15-'16 and then we've closed a few more in '16-'17. Operationally, we are trying to maintain offices whereby we can keep a caseload of social workers of one in 20 and a supervisor ratio of one in six. We think that is the best model for decision making for the children that need to come into care.

From time to time, we have offices – caseloads are falling in some communities as the population is aging and it's becoming regionalized or urbanized, if I can say that.

As the permanent administrators of the department, we always look at those ratios. It's a regular item. We have our manager of HR with us because she produces a report every week. So if we see, historically, that there are files in our caseload that we cannot maintain a sufficient caseload and the professionalism that we need to maintain for the decisions that we make, we will be recommending further closures on an annual basis.

But at this point in time, we are looking at other offices. We will always do that. If we find there is not a sufficient caseload in an office that would warrant keeping a full-time social worker – just, one for money, but the other thing would be for clinical program decision making. It needs a broader lens when we're making decisions on children.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay. Thank you.

Again, the issue of the increase of the number of kids coming into care or needing services is quite alarming, considering that I don't think our population growth is as high. So it is troubling what's really happening.

I've always found that the mandate of the department, which is right up front in all documents, is – I always feel quite curious about it. Child, Youth and Family Services is mandated to protect children and youth from maltreatment by their parents, and support their healthy development and well-being through programs and services. I've always found it to be such a negative way to position really what the department is and what it should be doing.

I would think that the approach would be to support families and that if there's a problem, then that's what would be dealt with as well. It's just something that has always kind of stopped me when I've read that. And it's right up front in all the documentation about the department.

**MS. COCHRANE:** Ms. Rogers, if I could, I guess part of our – I'll just address the increase in the number of kids coming into care. We've

also heard from the front line that it's likely our historical caseload may not be a strong enough indicator, because now with a ratio of 1 in 20, maybe our social workers are getting out and identifying issues that probably may not have been in the past. Again, it's anecdotal, but we've heard that as well.

You talk about the prevention. Our number one goal is to keep children with their families. Trust us; we don't want to take any child into care that doesn't need to come into care. It's very disturbing to us on a daily basis when we see that happening.

That's why we put an aggressive – and I mean we were six months, we had a regional team and we had a provincial office team. There must have been 10 or 15 of us on a daily basis on our protective intervention policies. We wanted to standardize provincial policies so that every social worker was operating with the same tools.

We now have that. That became effective, I think in January – fully operational as of January. So every social worker now has the same counselling tools. Any drug prevention things that we need to give a family, everyone now is aware of what the benefits are that we can give to every family.

So we're hopeful. Again, this is not an exact science. This is not engineering, this is a very social science area. So we're hoping, with the new protective intervention policies standardized right across the province, that we would start to help all of our social workers provide better supports to the families.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay. Thank you.

**MR. HEALEY:** If I could add to that.

We're also implementing, in the coming weeks, standardized policies and procedures for our intervention service model, which I think is kind of one of the areas that you're going towards. It's basically providing hands-on support to families, to provide support for families so they can better deal with behavioural issues with their children. As opposed to children coming out, we're going to be supporting the children in their family. Giving the parents the tools and the skills to better be able to deal with the

challenges they face. Those policies are going to be rolled out within the next couple of weeks; another example of standardizing right across the provinces.

**MS. ROGERS:** They will be announcement of that, I'm sure.

Minister, was the department consulted vis-à-vis some of the extra financial stressors on families that the budget will present? Was your department consulted on what that impact might be on families, the extra stressors due to the levy, increased taxes and drops in some of the services?

**MS. COCHRANE:** We accessed all and we were asked for feedback into all the Government Renewal Initiative proposals. We provided that feedback. We were quite engaged. We had the list. They asked us to select which ones we want. We did our review and provided comments to the respective departments.

**MS. ROGERS:** Does the department have any concern about the extra financial stressors on families, particularly families with low-income, medium-income?

**MS. COCHRANE:** The increase in our caseload was not just happening last year or this year. It has been happening and the question is: Why? It happened during a time of economic growth. We can't just say because of this it's going to affect our caseload.

I was really disturbed, and everybody in our department, the ministers, and the previous ministers before them, have been quite disturbed with the increase in our caseload, irrespective of the economy.

There are stressors out there within families and that will always exist. No disrespect to those families because I'm sure they, like all families, work very hard to keep their children but we, as a community, as a society in this province, need to look at this broader. It's not just CYFS. It's not just a Justice issue. It's not just a mental health issue. It spans throughout the whole province.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay. Thank you.

Can we also have a breakdown by region of the number and ages of children and youth in kinship arrangements and in care?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Yes, we can provide that.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay, great. Thank you.

**MS. COCHRANE:** If I could, Ms. Rogers. For privacy reasons, we will give you that data by region, where their numbers are greater than five.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay. I can appreciate that. Thank you.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Could you also share that with us?

**MS. COCHRANE:** Oh, absolutely.

**CHAIR:** Is that it for 2.1.01?

**MS. ROGERS:** I just have one more question.

Are there any new in-home supports being offered to help keep children in the home, for instance, extra transportation, respite work, behaviour aid, child care, infant safety?

**MR. HEALEY:** As Rachelle mentioned we did an extensive review of our protection programs and policies in the last four to five months. One of the – not necessarily a new program but certainly a new policies has been the intervention services. We're very proud of our Intervention Services. We feel this is going to be a direct service to go into the home to help our families on protective intervention.

While the Department of Health has had that program for quite some time, it's a relatively new program to CYFS. We're really optimistic this is going to provide some real strength and support to families on protection intervention.

**MS. ROGERS:** That's the new policies that you're going to be rolling out in a few weeks.

**MR. HEALEY:** Yes, within probably the new three to four weeks.

**MS. ROGERS:** Perfect. Great. Thank you very much.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Any further questions on 2.1.01 that I'll need to come back to for Ms. Rogers or shall we call that now?

**MR. REID:** (Inaudible.)

Mr. Reid, just one moment now.

Do we need to come back to that section for you, Ms. Rogers?

**MS. ROGERS:** One (inaudible).

**CHAIR:** One. Okay. I'll go to –

**MS. ROGERS:** Go ahead? Okay.

What is the agreement with Key Assets and Nunavut to provide Level 4 residential services? How is that going?

**MR. HEALEY:** That's a unique agreement whereby it's a three-part agreement between the Inuit, Key Assets and CYFS. Basically, it is part capacity building and it also recognizes the rights of the being able to find housing on Inuit land. If we go through our traditional processes of a request for proposals, we'd basically be imposing that on this Aboriginal group.

So what we've done, and we've worked with the Aboriginal group, they have identified Key Assets as a partner they want to work with. What we did was we signed an agreement with Key Assets, the Inuit government and CYFS, to provide very similar services that we have in the province that's going to be provided in that particular area.

We're still working through it. We're still optimistic. I think we're on the cusp of developing some new placements there now which we haven't had, ever, in this particular area. People are very, very excited about it. It's a unique opportunity to get that co-operation and coordination.

**MS. ROGERS:** Great. So that's instead of pulling the kids out of the community.

**MR. HEALEY:** Yes, it was real exciting to be able to – they weren't part of the original RFP for staff residential placements, so this was an opportunity to develop something unique, specific, for this particular population.

**MS. ROGERS:** Great.

**CHAIR:** Okay. Ms. Rogers, I have been lenient and I want to be fair.

**MS. ROGERS:** You have, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much.

**CHAIR:** So we'll alternate back now and Mr. Reid has a question.

**MR. REID:** Yes, just a query about social workers and the turnover in the positions. I'm just wondering in terms of throughout the province are there certain areas – for example, in Labrador we have a high turnover. Has any research or any sort of conclusions been drawn as to why the turnover rate is so high, overall, but particularly in areas like Labrador?

**MS. COCHRANE:** We haven't done it specifically. We do have regular meetings with our regional management team in Labrador. Our turnover rate on the Island is not a problem. We have maternity leaves because we have a young workforce. So on the Island, our turnover rate is really related to maternity leaves or spousal transfer, things like that. So we don't have a turnover rate on the Island. It's fairly stable for the age of our workforce.

In Labrador, we have regular sessions with our management team and they come forward all the time with ways that could enhance recruitment. Our fly-in, fly-out policy is certainly working in Natuashish. We're quite happy with that. We would prefer to have full-time, live-in social workers in community but where that's not possible, our fly in, fly out certainly does us a very big favour.

**MR. REID:** (Inaudible) Labrador and places like that.

**MS. COCHRANE:** Our recruitment is a Labrador issue. The other things are natural recruitment challenges.

**MR. REID:** Okay, thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Mr. Brazil, did you have anything else on 2.1.01?

**MR. BRAZIL:** No. I'm good.

**CHAIR:** Ms. Rogers is good on 2.1.01.

Shall 2.1.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subhead 2.1.01 carried.

**CLERK:** 3.1.01.

**CHAIR:** Shall 3.1.01 carry?

We'll start the clock for Mr. Brazil.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Just a couple of quick questions there. Obviously there is an increase on Allowances and Assistance, and it may have already been answered in the discussion here of some of the incentives for families as part of that, but can you just give me a little bit of a general idea of is it the standard across the board that we have upped everything by 3, 4 or 5 per cent? Are there any new programs in there that there is some uptake on for the additional \$2 million? I think it's a good investment.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** It's just the increase in in-care, the Level 4.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay, fair enough.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Very expensive.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Is that budgeted on a percentage basis across the board, or is it based on the number of cases that were in Level 4s?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Number of cases.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

Grants and Subsidies are up from what was budgeted but down a million dollars from the revised. The rationale for there, is it uptake, is it leveling itself out from what was originally budgeted? Is there a change in one of the categories?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Grants and Subsidies is providing funding to the agencies to deliver the programs and services on behalf of the department, and we're providing grants to a number of organizations to provide direct services to clients or to provide support with the delivery of client services. It's client support services that we're paying for here.

**MR. BRAZIL:** So it's based on the number of cases at any given time and the severity or the input or the intervention that's necessary?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** The number of children, yes.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

I am curious, the revenues, federal, from \$13,544,000 and the same are budgeted; I'm assuming that's a direct grant. The \$18 million that came last year what was the difference there?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** What actually happened here is we were spending more money provincially on the Aboriginal population. We went to the federal government and negotiated, and they agreed to fill the gap and pay back the money the province was using.

**MR. BRAZIL:** From the previous owed amount, but it was a one-time shot?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** No, they're going to work with us on a continuing basis.

**MR. BRAZIL:** For continuation?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** That's right, yes, because we are spending a larger amount than the province is allocated.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay, great.

Earlier, the discussion around site locations and reassessing whether or not the offices remain open and how the service would be offered – when you start evaluating that process, do you include stakeholders like the foster parents' association, the social work school, the service groups that may be interested in providing or partnering in services there before you make a decision that the ratio is not there to close an office?

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** I just wanted to start this and I'm going to let Rachelle finish it. This evaluation started with the previous government, so I just wanted to take note of that.

Go ahead, Rachelle.

**MS. COCHRANE:** We do engage the Foster Families Association. We do have regular discussions with Diane Molloy in terms of she understands our caseload and our need to make sure we have the professional office structure upon which to make decisions on these children. So she will work with us to help ensure that the family visitations that our foster families do, we find locations outside, if it's not in our office, we will find other locations within the community upon which to make sure we have those visitations.

So yes, we do some consultation, but that's happening usually with a group of people who are involved in our business. We don't do broad community consultations or anything to that respect, but just within our own community of practice.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay, Madam Chair, I'm good with all the subhead sections there. In 3.1.01, I'm good on the questions that the minister and her staff have answered; I appreciate that.

Right now I don't have any other questions, so I'll pass it on to Ms. Rogers.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr. Brazil.

Ms. Rogers.

**MS. ROGERS:** Thanks, Madam Chair.

The Level 4, so we're seeing an increase (a) in the number of kids coming into care, and then it

appears an increase in the number of kids going to Level 4, or is it just that Level 4 is costing more?

**MS. COCHRANE:** Sorry, when we say there are a number of kids coming into care, those kids go to multiple sources.

**MS. ROGERS:** Yes.

**MS. COCHRANE:** Some go to kinship arrangements, like a grandma.

**MS. ROGERS:** Right, yes.

**MS. COCHRANE:** Then we have another group that go to foster homes. So it's either our Level 1 or Level 2 foster homes.

**MS. ROGERS:** Yes.

**MS. COCHRANE:** We have another group of children who need special services. They go to our Level 3 foster homes, which is the pilot between Key Assets –

**MS. ROGERS:** Key Assets, yes.

**MS. COCHRANE:** – and our department. We've done some really great work with Key Assets this year; the first time we broke that barrier in five years.

So we've done some really good work for our children with high needs in Level 3. Then we have around 150 to 200 – and the numbers deviate, they change from time to time – who go into Level 4. If we can't find 1, 2 or 3, we would move them into Level 4.

**MS. ROGERS:** Yes, I understand that.

Maybe I'm a little bit confused here, because when we look at 3.1.01, under Allowances and Assistance, an increase of \$2 million. I thought it was stated that was an increase for Level 4, is it?

I'm just wondering, is there an increase in the number of kids going into Level 4?

**MS. COCHRANE:** An increase in the number of kids going into level – no, I think we're fairly stable on that. I mean, it deviates again.

**MS. ROGERS:** Yes, I understand that.

**MS. COCHRANE:** If we can't find a foster family, particularly – our problem has been in the last year with Level 3 foster homes. We created this level system back four or five years ago and we did some great work with the Foster Families Association on 1s and 2s. Again, (inaudible) that's a great resource for us, but we haven't made any major gains on Level 3 in five years, and those are our hard to place – they are either sibling groups and it's a real challenge for finding capacity, or they have special needs.

Last year we entered into the agreement with Key Assets and now I think we've placed 13 or 14 more children – 13 or 14 more children have been placed in Level 3 this year than we've had done in the past.

**MS. ROGERS:** And that's in Level 3 foster homes.

**MS. COCHRANE:** Right. It's a pilot.

**MS. ROGERS:** What's the role that Key Assets is playing there?

**MR. HEALEY:** When they developed a level system, Level 1 and Level 2 are our typical foster homes. Level 3, of course, is for our special needs and large sibling groups.

The challenge with Level 3 is that a lot of our children who we can't find a family for are very large sibling groups. As you can imagine, if you have three or four children in a family, there are not many people in Newfoundland who has a home with three or four bedrooms just sitting there waiting to take foster children. So it's not necessarily that – it's a combination. Some are very challenging children, but a lot of times it's just the number of children and it's just not there.

What Key Assets has done is they've helped us go out and find homes specifically for these large sibling groups. That's where we've had the success we've had. I can't recall the numbers right now, but certainly a number of families have taken, like, three children.

We haven't been successful in being able to identify and recruit a foster family, or it would

be very unusual for us to get a foster family that's available to take three children. Not many people have that. So what Key Assets has done is they go out and they assist a family in either renting a house to accommodate these large sibling groups – and that's not in our current model. This is a pilot. What we're trying to do, we're trying to think out of the box. The goal is to get the children with a family. That's our ultimate goal.

What Key Assets has done is working with these families – if they have a house, that's great. If not, perhaps they can assist in renting a house that can accommodate these large sibling groups. That's been some of the big success from that group.

**MS. ROGERS:** Great. Thank you very much.

Youth, who have signed youth services agreements, do we still have youth ending up in unsuitable boarding houses? How is that going?

**MS. COCHRANE:** Our youth services program is relatively new. It has come in with the previous legislative amendments back in 2011. When we do our review – the minister mentioned we were going to do a review this year – that is certainly one of the programs that will be included in our discussion paper.

We haven't seen any change in our numbers in that program but we are putting it out there when we do our legislative review, just to have a deeper discussion with the community on how that's going.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay and we'll look at where kids end up living and what their needs are.

What is the status of the Supporting Youth with Transitions pilot with Choices for Youth?

**MS. COCHRANE:** We are working with Choices on a yearly basis. We've had that pilot now for several years. The numbers under that program, our take-up rate, we had initially hoped to have up to 100 children – sorry, youth. It depends on their age. I call them children but they're actually youth. We were hoping to have up to 100 youth referred to that program.

We haven't had as great of an uptake on that as we had hoped. I think the number of youth may be in the range of 25, in that range. So that's why we're putting this under the legislative review and having a discussion about are we getting value for the money or what's going on with that program.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay.

Are there any other initiatives to work with some of the youth who are doing youth services agreements? There's one with Choices. Anything else?

**MS. COCHRANE:** We have our life skills coordinators outside of the Avalon. Again, we still haven't seen the take up in that program as we had initially planned when we did the legislative review back in 2011. So collectively, that's why we – it's on the list to be reviewed in '16-'17.

**MS. ROGERS:** Okay, great.

Thank you very, very much.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Were there any further questions on 3.1.01 from any of the Committee members? No. Seeing no further questions, shall 3.1.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subhead 3.1.01 carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall the totals carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.



On motion, Department of Child, Youth and Family Services, total heads, carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall I report the Estimates of Child, Youth and Family Services carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services carried without amendment.

**CHAIR:** Now I'll ask somebody – minutes were circulated from the last Estimates meeting and we'll need someone to adopt the minutes from April 27, Department of Justice and Public Safety.

Mr. Reid, thank you.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

**CHAIR:** The next scheduled Estimates meeting is, as I understand it now, 9 a.m. tomorrow in the Chamber, and that will be Labour Relations.

Right now, we did great with time, I'll ask for a motion to adjourn.

**MR. BRAZIL:** So moved.

**CHAIR:** So moved by Mr. Brazil.

Thanks so much everyone for participating in Estimates and have a great day.

On motion, the Committee adjourned.