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

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Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

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Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA

## **SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE**

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

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Chair: Lisa Dempster, MHA

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Members: Paul Davis, MHA  
Carol Anne Haley, MHA  
Betty Parsley, MHA  
Scott Reid, MHA  
Brian Warr, MHA

Clerk of the Committee: Elizabeth Murphy

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Appearing:

### **Department of Education and Early Childhood Development**

Hon. Dale Kirby, MHA, Minister

Kara Connors, Executive Assistant

Mary Goss-Prowse, Director, Early Learning and Childhood Development

Christopher Pickard, Director of Communications

Paul Smith, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate and School Infrastructure

Tracy Stamp, Manager, Budgeting

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

### **Also Present**

David Brazil, MHA

Mark Browne, MHA

Lorraine Michael, MHA

James Sheppard, Researcher, Official Opposition Office

Susan Williams, Researcher, Third Party 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, Mark Browne, MHA for Placentia West – Bellevue, substitutes for Carol Anne Haley, MHA for Burin – Grand Bank.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Lorraine Michael, MHA for St. John’s East – Quidi Vidi, substitutes for Gerry Rogers, MHA for St. John’s Centre.

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

**CHAIR (Dempster):** (Inaudible) to my colleagues after, I’m sure it was 17 busy days in our districts, mine certainly was.

We’re four minutes late starting. We have Broadcast tuned in.

First, I want to make note for the minutes of some substitutions. Today, we have Ms. Michael substituting for Ms. Rogers. We have Mr. Brazil substituting for Ms. Perry, and we have Mr. Browne sitting in for Ms. Haley.

We have minutes here from the last meeting that I’ll just ask for a motion to move. They are under the Social Services Committee, the Department of Justice and Public Safety. That meeting took place on April 10.

Can I have someone to make a motion to adopt those minutes?

**MR. WARR:** So moved.

**CHAIR:** Mr. Warr.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

**CHAIR:** I’ll ask the minister if he would like to take a moment to introduce his staff and then we’ll get started; if you want to say a few words at the beginning.

**MR. KIRBY:** Sure.

**CHAIR:** I would just remind everybody, when you speak this morning, for the purposes of Broadcast, to say your name.

Thank you.

Minister.

**MR. KIRBY:** Thanks.

Why don’t we do introduction and then I’ll do a very brief overview. We’ll start with Ed and then go all around the circle, around that way.

**MR. WALSH:** Good morning. Ed Walsh, Assistant Deputy Minister for K to 12 Education and Early Childhood Development.

**MS. CONNORS:** Kara Connors, Executive Assistant to the minister.

**MS. GOSS-PROWSE:** Mary Goss-Prowse, Director of Early Learning and Childhood Development Division.

**MR. PICKARD:** Christopher Pickard, Director of Communications.

**MR. SMITH:** Paul Smith, Assistant Deputy Minister of Corporate Services.

**MS. STAMP:** Tracy Stamp, Manager of Budgeting.

**MR. KIRBY:** Thanks.

I just want to thank all the staff for being here today. Just very, very briefly, with respect to spending for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development this year, I guess the main message here is that capital is down because many of the building projects we have ongoing are getting close to completion or complete.

People are probably aware that the middle school in Torbay, for example, opened last Tuesday and other projects are getting close to completion. Capital infrastructure has moved where it ought to be over in Transportation and Works.

With respect to operating, it’s up slightly. So that’s really the overarching direction in this

year's Estimates. That's about all I would say. I'll answer any questions folks have.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

We'll start with Mr. Brazil, 10 minutes, and then we'll alternate to Ms. Michael.

I'll ask the Clerk to – if it's okay with everybody, this is a fairly lengthy section, can we just go subtitles? If that's okay with – yes? Okay.

**MR. BRAZIL:** In the sense of after each title, you'll ask for adoption?

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**MR. BRAZIL:** If I can have leave from the minister, if there's something else that comes up that we could go back and ask questions.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yes.

**MR. BRAZIL:** I have no problem with that.

**MR. KIRBY:** No problem.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you.

**CLERK (Murphy):** 1.1.01 to 2.2.01.

**CHAIR:** Shall 1.1.01 to 2.2.01 carry?

Mr. Brazil.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you.

I'm going to start, I guess, with the elephant-in-the-room question: Are there any anticipated teacher reductions or teacher allocation reductions in this year's budget? If so, based on what process or what formula to address, and particularly what impact they may have or, from a regional point of view, where they might be more prevalently noted?

**MR. KIRBY:** The teacher allocation formula is the same as it was last year.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Based on – can you explain exactly which formula?

**MR. KIRBY:** Based on what?

**MR. BRAZIL:** The ratio of – I'm hearing some conversations from various administrators that there was a 1-27 ratio. There's going to be a 1-29 implemented this year for schools over 500. Is that just hearsay or –?

**MR. KIRBY:** There is no change in the teacher allocation formula since last year. It hasn't changed.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Can you explain to me what that is, just for the people listening?

**MR. KIRBY:** What is the teacher allocation formula?

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yeah.

**MR. KIRBY:** The teacher allocation formula is on the Department of Education's website. I'm not going to get into explaining it for you here today. It's pretty complicated. It's not something that I've memorized.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay, I would think and hope that because this is recorded for the general population that people would understand exactly what that means, if it's a ratio from 1-20 or 1-29 or 1-25. Is it based on formulas of how many special-needs children that may be available? Are there counselling services?

**MR. KIRBY:** Do you need information about what the teacher allocation formula is?

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yes.

**MR. KIRBY:** Well, we'll provide that information for you today.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay, I appreciate that.

**MR. KIRBY:** It's available on the department's website.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Let's go right to under the Minister's Office. I noticed the minister has been doing some additional travelling of late, but I noticed last year the budget to the revised was down by nearly \$10,000 and now it's back up.

Is it you're getting back into regular travelling to visit schools to get an understanding of what's

happening out there, or is there something changed of extra staff accompanying when you travel for the additional monies that has been put back in?

**MR. KIRBY:** There was less travel last year.

**MR. BRAZIL:** That's under line 1.1.01 under Transportation and Communications.

**MR. KIRBY:** Well, this covers not just my travel but I guess the deputy minister's travel as well. Yeah, that's correct, right?

**OFFICIAL:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. KIRBY:** It's in Executive Support, is it?

A whole bunch of that is communications. Let me see here, so there was about \$9,200 less travel. Last year, I went to fed-prov. meeting in Toronto. I didn't take any staff with me to that. I went to one Atlantic ministers' meeting. I took two staff to that meeting because it was a meeting regarding child care. Actually, that's not the case; the deputy minister went to the fed-prov. meeting. I went to Labrador; didn't take any staff with me to that. There's no other out-of-province travel outside of those two meetings and then there's no other off-the-Island travel, other than one visit to Labrador.

I guess this year it's my intent to try to visit more schools. Last week, I visited eight schools. I've been to probably about 25 of the 40 districts now. We're doing that relatively cheaply; very few of those really involve airfare. I guess the one thing I haven't included is travel to the Cabinet meeting in Corner Brook that happens annually.

My intention is to continue to do school visits and that's going to require some funding for travel. I think, really, it's important while I have travelled far less than my predecessor ministers – because I think if you go back to this line in the previous Estimates, I think it was probably in the order \$40-something thousand.

It's important not to cut this right back to the bone altogether because (a) there may be travel that arises because of sort of one-offs. For example, I believe some time in the next couple of months, hopefully the next month, we'll be

going to Ottawa or Toronto to sign the bilateral arrangement on child care. That will be additional travel and we will want to bring officials to that meeting. That will be out of the province.

The other thing is I serve at the pleasure of the Premier. So that means there could be somebody else in this position whenever. I live within 10 minutes of the Confederation Building and there could be a minister in this department tomorrow who lives in Labrador or somewhere else. So I think we have to be reasonable in terms of what we can reduce this by.

I guess it could have been reduced by \$9,200, reflecting my reduced travel, but I think it's better to have a reasonable auger for what we want to put in here. Does that make sense?

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yeah, and don't get me wrong, I'm not criticizing travel, just for clarification purposes. I know you put it back in which, in this case, I see a real need, as a former minister, for travelling particularly around sights and engagement with professionals in certain areas. Just for clarification purposes, if there was a specific plan for something.

**MR. KIRBY:** In terms of inside the province travel, in the last year I've probably done more travel in terms of travel for the purposes of visiting districts or schools than either of my three predecessor ministers. I guess the difference for them was that Darin King, Clyde Jackman and Susan Sullivan didn't live within 10 minutes of the Confederation Building so they had to travel to come to St. John's. So that's really the differences there.

**MR. BRAZIL:** I see the merits of it, and just for clarification there. I didn't know if there was a specific conference coming up or a special national meeting or something like that.

**MR. KIRBY:** Hopefully, like I said, there will be a meeting in the next month or two, hopefully a month, in Ottawa or Toronto, I expect, for the bilateral child care, early learning and care framework. So I think that will be the only thing.

The only fed-prov meeting our department is really involved in is in PEI in July, and then there is the APSEA, that's the regional

ministers, Atlantic ministers. That's in, I believe, September or October in Nova Scotia. We hosted that this year, too. So I guess that was an additional element. Last fall we hosted it here, so we had to travel to The Rooms as opposed to Nova Scotia.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yeah, that's fair enough. I appreciate that.

**MR. KIRBY:** As you can imagine, this stuff sort of fluctuates up and down.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yeah, and there could be special meetings called. I've been there, so I understand it.

Okay. I'm going to move on to Executive Support, 1.2.01, under Salaries. I've noticed that \$919,000 was originally budgeted, and then it was \$983,000, now it's down to \$818,000. I'm assuming there's a position there that doesn't exist. Is there somebody out of the org chart that is different now or are there two positions engulfed in one, or did somebody retire and not filled or won't be filled this year?

**MR. KIRBY:** I think largely that's because the ADM infrastructure position was eliminated.

**MR. BRAZIL:** So that was an ADM position that doesn't exist.

**MR. KIRBY:** And a secretary position.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Will it exist in your organizational chart in the future? So the position is gone?

**MR. KIRBY:** No, there are a couple of things that have gone on there. The ADM infrastructure position was eliminated but then the infrastructure unit, that's moved to TW as well now. So there have been changes with respect to infrastructure, but I guess the thinking is that infrastructure function is better suited to be located in Transportation and Works. That was sort of the initial phase of that, if you will, eliminating the ADM position and then subsequently, which is reflected in these Estimates now, the unit has moved on. So, no, there's no anticipation that – we're not going backwards, let's put it that way.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay, I appreciate that.

Can I also ask, maybe for both of us, if we could have an organizational chart with the new changes – when you get a chance to share that with us, please.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah, we should also – I was looking at the org chart on the Internet, for some reason, last Friday. I think we should make sure the org chart is updated on the website, because it's –

**MR. BRAZIL:** I appreciate that. If you could share it, I guess myself and my colleague would like to have copies of that if we could.

Okay. Madam Chair, I'll move on.

**CHAIR:** Mr. Brazil, we made a mistake on the clock because the first speaker in response to the minister does actually get 15 minutes. So you have another five if you'd like to take them now.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay. I just want to try to finish off this part on this section here.

Under Transportation and Communications, I noted it sort of stayed at the same level but it's down a couple of thousand dollars there as part of that process. Anything different that changed?

**MR. KIRBY:** Less travel than required.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay, fair enough on that section.

I'll let Ms. Michael go to that section and then I'll come back to do section two.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Ms. Michael.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

It's my understanding that anything that is requested by either person goes out to everybody. We all know that.

Minister, could I ask you a bit more with regard to the move of the infrastructure section or division over to Trans Works. I can see a lot of

logic for that happening, but what has moved to Trans Works in terms of the overall role and management? Will they also be making – I'm assuming not, but I just want for clarification.

Who will continue to make the decisions about the need for infrastructure? You know new schools, schools being replaced or additions, all of that issue. Is that also moved over to Trans Works?

**MR. KIRBY:** No. The Transportation and Works manages infrastructure projects for whichever department, whether it's Education or Health or Municipalities. The process that was in place and continues to be in place for determination of new infrastructure builds is every year the francophone and the English districts submit their asks – it is relatively comprehensive.

On that ask, that list, they would have new school buildings, extensions, modulars. Then, everything from that to windows, roofs, things that schools have submitted around – it could be the replacement of gym floors, changes in classroom divisions, all sorts of things – science lab rehabilitations, all these different things, they submit on the list.

Of course, we have a finite amount of resources for dealing with that. So if it's a major new infrastructure ask like a new building construction or an extension, the department would look at the ask, would evaluate using our internal processes whether or not we deem that to be necessary as well. Through the budgeting process, it would go to the infrastructure committee, go to Treasury Board and then go to Cabinet. So that's really the process for that.

In terms of, say, if it's not a major infrastructure project, we would prioritize it again internally, probably with some collaboration with the district and pay for it out of the annual repairs and maintenance budget, like if it's roofs and windows and that sort of thing. That's generally how it works, and that will continue to be that way.

I guess one of the things that I encountered as minister, observed as minister, is that if you look at the Torbay Middle School, it was a case of our staff asking Transportation and Works if it

was going to be open on time anyways. So that's really the way that it was.

The thinking of having an infrastructure unit and an infrastructure ADM in the department was that there was a significant number of building projects going on previously. Octagon Pond in Paradise is open now, Torbay Middle School is open now and there are a number of others that are getting close to completion, like the one in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's and Gander.

We have fewer new builds and sort of lesser pressure, from my perspective, but I guess you can have a whole debate about whether that should have existed at all. But I think this process won't be a whole lot different because again we're always calling them asking them – if I went and did a tour of a new building that was close to completion, when we went to the site there would always be Transportation and Works folks meeting us on site because their primary responsibility is to provide oversight for construction.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Basically, just so I have it clear, when it comes to making decisions about new schools or additions and that kind of thing from the educational needs of our children, that's still in your department, always was and would remain. It's the management of the building or whatever that's in Trans Works and that's not a change.

**MR. KIRBY:** Sure. Yeah, the budget submission would continue to come from Education based on what the ask is from the school district.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right.

**MR. KIRBY:** It would still come in that way.

Like everything else, I suppose, other ministers would have a perspective or advise on different projects. Oftentimes, in that dynamic the Minister of Transportation and Works is providing some more technical detail around what – the input on the committee – the project would entail and that sort of thing.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

Thank you very much.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Will I go on to the next one?

**CHAIR:** I'll need to call it first.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

That's all the questions I have on 1.2.01.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Shall 1.1.01 to 2.1.01 carry?

All those in favour?

**MS. MICHAEL:** Wait now, 2.1.01?

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**MS. MICHAEL:** I haven't asked questions on 2.1.01.

**CHAIR:** Okay. That was what I called in the beginning.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Oh, I'm sorry.

**CHAIR:** My apologies.

**MS. MICHAEL:** I thought I was picking up from David on 1.2.01. That's what I was speaking to.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay, so I'll go on to 2 or David go on to 2.1.01. Neither one of us have spoken to that one.

**MR. BRAZIL:** (Inaudible.)

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay, well, I'll start 2.1.01.

Thank you.

Looking at the Salaries, Minister, in 2016 – so 2.1.01, Salaries – there was \$98,000 over budget and now, in 2017, it's going down under budget, there is some variation. If you could just explain what happened in that area.

**MR. KIRBY:** Those are retirement costs for three positions.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay, great.

**MR. KIRBY:** That's why it went up. Then I guess the \$49,000ish-and-change there is because of the flatter, leaner, combining of two management positions into one.

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

Basically, the other changes, Transportation and Communications, there was a slight variation last year down by \$13,000 and this year it's going to be down by \$8,700. I presume you think that there are some savings that can be made there. Can you explain what that line means?

**MR. KIRBY:** It was postage and courier savings and then just through the zero-based process, we put it at a lower level to reflect the expectation and continue to hold the line on it.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Thank you.

Under provincial revenue, where does that revenue come from?

**MR. KIRBY:** According to my note here, it's repayments for prior year expenses: payroll, recovery of payroll overpayments, overpayments in other grant programs that we provide for child care –for example, the centres. So if somebody was overpaid an amount, it's what they would repay, and then the repayments of grants for travel that didn't occur for various reasons. These are anticipated repayments that would need to be made and, in this particular instance, the repayments were lower than what was budgeted.

**MS. MICHAEL:** It seems to be a large amount. It's basically almost \$2 million.

**MR. KIRBY:** Sorry, I'm looking at 2.1.01.02; is that what you're looking at?

**MS. MICHAEL:** No, 01, the Revenue – so it's 02, provincial revenue.

**MR. KIRBY:** 02? Is this Assistance To ...?



**MS. MICHAEL:** Oh, no – I’m sorry; it’s the \$80,000 and the \$45,000.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yes.

**MS. MICHAEL:** My eye was looking at the line above. I was getting shocked, so you can understand why.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yes.

**MS. MICHAEL:** With your explanation, it makes sense.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yes, okay.

Thanks.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Thank you.

That’s all the questions I have, Madam Chair, for that section. My time is up anyway.

**CHAIR:** Okay. Thank you, Ms. Michael.

Mr. Brazil, do you have more questions on 2.1.01?

**MR. BRAZIL:** No, Ms. Michael has outlined the ones that I would have, so I am fine with that.

**CHAIR:** Okay, so I would call those.

Shall the Estimates for 1.1.01 to 2.1.01 carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 2.1.01 carried.

**CHAIR:** Now, to avoid confusion, going forward, we’re going to go with subheadings, and my apologies.

I will ask the Clerk to call those.

**CLERK:** 2.1.02 –

**CHAIR:** Shall 2.1.02 to 2.1.03 carry?

Mr. Brazil.

**MR. BRAZIL:** I’d like to ask the minister if he could explain – under Grants and Subsidies, there was X number of dollars – \$1.9 million budgeted, \$1.5 million was revised and then a little over \$2 million was budgeted for this year. Can you outline exactly the variance there, what was the difference from last year to this year and, under that, what grants and subsidies are we talking about, please?

**MR. KIRBY:** For the revised, there was about \$487,000 that was transferred to School Supplies activity to provide fine arts equipment and other curriculum resources. That’s why that went down.

**MR. BRAZIL:** That’s the increase from last year to this year?

**MR. KIRBY:** No, that’s the decrease.

**MR. BRAZIL:** That’s the decrease from the budget to the revised.

**MR. KIRBY:** That’s right, yes. The amount was transferred to another line.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Transferred to another division, okay.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yes.

Then the grants that are in here are Council of Ministers of Education, CMEC; CAMET, that’s the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training; the Federation of School Councils; Cultural Connections; Murphy Centre; Encounters with Canada; and the Learning Disabilities Association. That’s all of them.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Can I request, when you get a chance over the next number of days, could you get us a list of those, please?

**MR. KIRBY:** Yes.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Just so I’m clear, what was transferred from the School Supplies, where would that sit now? Does that still sit in the

budget and it was just a one-time or is it somewhere else now?

**MR. KIRBY:** I think once we go on, you'll see where it is, yes.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

If I miss it, I'd appreciate you reminding me of that, as part of that.

**MR. KIRBY:** Sure, yes. It will pick up later on.

**MR. BRAZIL:** There's nothing in there relevant to the Premier's Task Force from Grants and Subsidies?

**MR. KIRBY:** No.

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

Under 2.1.03, Policy and Planning, the salary bases, dramatic difference between what was budgeted last year to what we're budgeting again this year. Can you explain exactly what positions are eliminated there, or was it contractual work, or what part of it shows the decrease there?

**MR. KIRBY:** You're wondering about the budgeted '16-'17 versus the '17-'18 Estimate figure, the \$421,000 against the \$256,000, right?

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yes, the \$421,000 was budgeted, then down to \$385,000 spending.

**MR. KIRBY:** There was the Flatter, Leaner, there were two positions eliminated and there were two director positions combined. That accounts for the difference. There were two director functions combined and there were two positions eliminated.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Can you outline exactly what positions were combined? What was their normal policy –?

**MR. KIRBY:** Director of Policy, Planning and Accountability was combined with director of Information Management. That required one less position.

**MR. BRAZIL:** One less employee, yeah.

**MR. KIRBY:** Then there was a human resources consultant position eliminated altogether.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Is that being absorbed by somebody else or are there numbers there that dictate you need it? Just totally gone altogether?

**MR. KIRBY:** We have sufficient management resources to cover all of it.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

I'm going to move down to Professional Services; budgeted at \$427,000, revised at \$263,000 and now at \$250,000. Can you outline exactly what was budgeted last year that wasn't spent and where and what professional services you'll be contracting this year?

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah, that's largely as a result of the Premier's Task Force not getting underway as expeditiously as I had hoped. They were appointed in October, I believe.

Originally, I had hoped maybe to get them going around the end of July, early August. A lot of that had to do with, you remember, we passed Bill 1 around the Independent Appointments Commission and then we needed to – you know, you have to put all of the infrastructure in place to support that.

That all had to be done before or had to be finalized – I guess a lot of the work was underway at the Public Service Commission, but that all had to be finalized before we could solicit for resumes. Then we decided to do interviews with a short list and they had to sort of confirm everyone's availability. These things seem fairly straightforward when you're planning them, but you can always count on there being some period of delay. So that's basically what happened, the various expenses associated with that.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

The \$250,000 that's allocated now; how much of that is for the Premier's Task Force?

**MR. KIRBY:** I think in the budget we had – it was \$100,000 in this budget, right? Yeah, so that's what we approved.

**MR. BRAZIL:** In this fiscal –

**MR. KIRBY:** Sorry, what we approved. This is what's in the current Estimates is \$100,000, to allow them to finish their work basically.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay; and that will complete that.

The other \$150,000, what types of services are we talking there that would be used in this fiscal?

**MR. KIRBY:** Somebody else can answer that, but I figure it's just a lot of the other stuff that we would have done previously.

**MR. SMITH:** Mr. Brazil, the \$150,000 is for some ongoing professional support for our teachers' payroll unit. Some time ago, a couple of years ago that basically converted to a new piece of software, PeopleSoft, and some significant support was required to get things up and running and stabilized in the teachers' payroll function. That won't be ongoing cost. I would anticipate this may be the last year for that.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay. I appreciate that.

Can I just step back a bit? On the assistant education there when I talked about getting a list of the funding last year that was received, is there a particular criteria set out?

**MR. KIRBY:** Sorry?

**MR. BRAZIL:** Assistance to education agencies and advisory committees.

**MR. KIRBY:** Sorry? Which one are we on?

**MR. BRAZIL:** That would have been –

**MR. KIRBY:** Oh, 2.1 –

**MR. BRAZIL:** 2.1.02, yes.

**MR. KIRBY:** Is there a certain criteria?

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yeah, under the Grants and Subsidies.

**MR. KIRBY:** Well, mostly it's sort of – all of these things we've funded, there's no reduction here. We're a part of the Council of Ministers of Education Canada and we pay a certain amount to be part of that. CAMET the same thing.

Last year, the allowance for Federation of School Councils was reduced by a small percentage. Cultural Connections is as it was. We haven't made any changes to that during our time in office. There was a reduction in 2013, I believe.

Again, the Murphy Centre, it's the grant that we provide to the Murphy Centre every year. I think this year there's a slight increase in the amount of funds for the Murphy Centre for a GED initiative, \$75,000. So they had an increase.

We provide funds every year for Encounters with Canada to enable kids to go to the Terry Fox Canadian Youth Centre in Ottawa and do all the things that are associated with that. That grant to the Learning Disabilities Association wouldn't have changed since you folks were in government.

It's not something that we're expanding or decreasing very much in a year. It would be based on a case-by-case basis if we were to consider any increases.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

**MR. KIRBY:** I'm not aware of any explicit criteria under that. I mean these are the groups that have traditionally been funded under that line basically.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Would they be considered core funding, as we've been in a debate about the definition of core funding for agencies and groups.

**MR. KIRBY:** Maybe according to your definition.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Well, I would hope and think a lot of them would have been. I would think by their own definition that they would have –

**MR. KIRBY:** I would never have thought they were core funding. I can't imagine that we would consider ourselves to paying core funding

to the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.

**MR. BRAZIL:** No, but the T.I. Murphy Centre and the School Councils –

**MR. KIRBY:** It's not terminology that's ever been used in any conversations with me.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

So there hasn't been a discussion about if they fit under the core funding application process. Or will they have to go through that same process as a number of other organizations that we understand will?

**MR. KIRBY:** What is the core funding application process?

**MR. BRAZIL:** And they will have to fill it out.

**MR. KIRBY:** What is the core funding application process?

**MR. BRAZIL:** That's the million-dollar question that we've been asking for the last number of months. What will be the criteria for the core funding application process for agencies who felt core funding was part and parcel of what they've received for years, to where they are right now in their funding cuts or funding allocations?

**MR. KIRBY:** I've never heard anybody refer to any of this as core funding for anything. If you can provide me with information about what that is, I can tell you whether it is or it isn't.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Sure. I can provide you with minutes from the agencies who feel their core funding from government is part and parcel of that. So obviously I take it that this is not considered core funding.

**MR. KIRBY:** I've never heard that word used to describe this. These are the organizations and activities that are funded under this line and were under the previous administration.

**MR. BRAZIL:** So the answer is no.

Thank you.

**MR. KIRBY:** Okay –

**MR. BRAZIL:** Well, it's not. My time is done.

**MR. KIRBY:** It isn't no, it's just I've never heard that term used. Unless you're able to define what it is you're talking about, I really –

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

**MR. KIRBY:** I'm at sort of a loss now.

**MR. BRAZIL:** I'll ask the minister to explain: If one of these agencies would like to apply for additional monies, how would they go about doing it?

**MR. KIRBY:** Like the T.I. Murphy Centre basically identified a need for, that they could provide a GED service. So the department agreed and we put forward a submission to the budget process to Treasury Board. That was approved by Treasury Board, went to Cabinet and was approved there. So that's, you know ...

**MR. BRAZIL:** Would that continue as their core funding for next year?

**MR. KIRBY:** Again, I've never heard the term core funding used in relation to any of these organizations on here.

**MR. BRAZIL:** My understanding from the budget debate, core funding would be for all agencies who receive money from government to determine which category they'd fit within, but I guess that's a debate we'll have further in the House of Assembly.

**MR. KIRBY:** I don't know; if you can provide the documentation to that effect, I'd be happy to tell you whether it is or it isn't but it's never been a term used to describe this.

**MR. BRAZIL:** I will dig out the conversations I've had with agencies or minutes of their meetings where they talk about their core funding for this year from government.

**MR. KIRBY:** Sure.

**MR. BRAZIL:** So it's their understanding, it may be different from the departments but right

now I can only say as we look at this, you don't consider this core funding?

**MR. KIRBY:** I would like to see the definition you're using. In my experience, being in the House of Assembly over the period of time that I've been here, I'm not aware that external organizations set the criteria for government funding. I think it's really the other way around, isn't it?

**CHAIR:** Mr. Brazil, I've been a little bit lenient here. I just want to be –

**MR. BRAZIL:** No, it's okay. You can let go, yes.

**CHAIR:** I want to keep things flowing in the manner they're set out in Estimates. So if it's okay with you –

**MR. BRAZIL:** I respect that.

**CHAIR:** – I'll move and give Ms. Michael here 10 and then we can come back.

Ms. Michael.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Thank you very much.

Minister, in relation to that discussion you were just having, just for clarification, when we get the list of the grants and subsidies, I assume that will include how much money is going to each of the bodies?

**MR. KIRBY:** Yes, and that would reflect this increase in funding for the Murphy Centre this year.

**MS. MICHAEL:** That's right. So we'll get that specific information.

**MR. KIRBY:** It's a pretty short list. Like I said, largely it's unchanged from previous years. The only difference would have been the change with the Murphy Centre and the change with the reduction with the Federation of School Councils that happened last year.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right. Yeah, we have our notes from last year and it's exactly the same as last year, but just to get the amount of money.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah. It's pretty well the same.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Just that clarification.

Thank you.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yes.

**MS. MICHAEL:** I have a general question, but I'll ask one more specific one under 2.1.03. That has to do with the Purchased Services. Last year \$1,000 was budgeted under Purchased Services but there was an extra \$7,000 spent. I'm just curious about what that was.

**MR. KIRBY:** That's still under 2.1.01?

**MS. MICHAEL:** No, 03.

**MR. KIRBY:** So it's the \$1,000 to the \$8,000?

**MS. MICHAEL:** That's correct.

**MR. KIRBY:** The Premier's Task Force.

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

I have a general question. In this section you've talked about positions being eliminated and positions combined. Then when we talk about the Trans and Works ADM, the infrastructure ADM gone, I'm just wondering how you, as minister, have made the adjustments for point persons to make sure those things – the ADM in infrastructure was your point person there, so who would be the point person now so that none of the work they were doing is lost in terms of communication straight to the minister.

**MR. KIRBY:** It would fall under Paul's shop.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay, great.

Thank you very much.

Those are all the questions that I have up to the end of where we are.

**CHAIR:** Okay, so I'll call those.

Shall the Estimates from 2.1.01 to 2.1.03 carry?

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against?

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.1.01 through 2.1.03 carried.

**CLERK:** 2.2.01.

**CHAIR:** Shall 2.2.01 carry?

I'll go back to Ms. Michael to use your remaining time on the clock.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Thank you.

2.2.01; first of all just a specific question, it's not a lot of money involved in the Salaries line, but there is a small increase over last year's budget, \$94,000. If we could just have an explanation of that small increase.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah, that was a new position that was created here.

**MS. MICHAEL:** What was the new position?

**MR. KIRBY:** Manager of Information Management.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

Who would have done that work before?

**MR. KIRBY:** The director of Information Management.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay, so this is an extra position going in there.

Could we have just a short description of what that entails?

**MR. SMITH:** Information management, the first thing that comes to mind, obviously, is the department's ATIPPA response capacity which again is a fairly big department, a lot of issues which is fairly extensive. As well, it's the department: like any line departments are responsibilities under the *Management of Information Act* and so forth, staff as well for managing the ongoing information capacity

within the department, making sure that we have proper policies around information retention, electronic paper copies, et cetera. Certainly, ATIPP response and coordination is a big part of that.

**MS. MICHAEL:** May I ask of your assistant, has there been a big increase in ATIPP requests?

**MR. SMITH:** I think overall, Ms. Michael, it's been probably recently, yes. Probably over the last month or so there's been certainly a significant increase, probably a little less over the last week or so with respect to requests. I think that's sort of the experience in the different departments I've been in that it's always a lot of files but it tends to go up and down a little bit throughout the year.

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

Just to say it's important that that is taken care of because legislatively –

**MR. SMITH:** Absolutely.

**MS. MICHAEL:** – you have to meet requirements, so this is helping you meet timelines and all that kind of thing, I assume.

**MR. SMITH:** We certainly approach it very seriously, yes.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right, thank you very much.

Still under 2.2.01, with regard to the CAP sites, how many youth internships for CAP sites were there in 2016 and how many will there be in 2017?

**MR. SMITH:** I just got a summary (inaudible). It basically is about 420 hours per placement. I can make sure I give you a certain number on it, but it's probably 30 to 40 positions each year.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Well, if we could receive the exact numbers afterwards, that would be great.

**MR. SMITH:** Absolutely. So you want the exact ones –?

**MS. MICHAEL:** Please.

**MR. SMITH:** More recent –

**MS. MICHAEL:** The numbers of last year and the numbers of this year.

**MR. SMITH:** Absolutely.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Thank you very much.

With regard to the federal revenue, still under 2.2.01 – and this is where the money comes from I think for the internships. That money dropped by \$32,000 last year; now it's back up to \$414,000 this year. What was the reason or the \$32,000 drop last year?

**MR. SMITH:** That would be actually a reduced take-up on the program. There was a small marginal – we weren't able to get it fully engaged –

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right.

**MR. SMITH:** – and fully topped up.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

**MR. SMITH:** Again, it's one of the challenges of the program is to try to get the maximum (inaudible).

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right, thank you.

They're all the questions I have on 2.2.01.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Is it okay with you if I just move to Mr. Brazil?

**MS. MICHAEL:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Start the clock again.

**MR. BRAZIL:** (Inaudible) and I know the same list that the Member for the Third Party is asking for that I get a copy of that particularly on the Internship Program.

**CHAIR:** So you have no questions on that?

**MR. BRAZIL:** No. I'm good on that section.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Shall the Estimates for the 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 to 3.1.05 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall the Estimates for 3.1.01 to 3.1.05 inclusive carry?

Mr. Brazil.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Obviously, there's a big discrepancy there on the teacher allocations and Regular Teachers, Grants and Subsidies. Can the minister explain the roughly \$20 million difference there from a payroll point of view?

**MR. KIRBY:** Well, basically, according to the collective agreement with the NLTA, teachers are paid biweekly in 26 equal installments. That assumes then that there are only 364 days in every year.

Every three or four years, there's an adjustment to reflect that. There ends up being a gap, basically a reduction of one pay period to sort of net out that amount. If you want to read more about this, I encourage you to look at the current edition of the NLTA Bulletin which explains why this occurs.

The NLTA is well aware that this happens. It happens every three or four years to reflect the fact that there are 365 days in a year. What happens is in the summer, I guess the last paycheque – like I say it's probably better, Ed, that you explain the intricacies of this, but there's a perfectly logical explanation for it in any case.

**MR. WALSH:** Sure.

Every four to five years, as the minister indicated, there is a pay gap every summer. Essentially what it means is that at the end of August, prior to the start of the new school year, teachers will go three weeks without receiving a paycheque as opposed to the standard two. As a

result of that, there is a savings associated with the Teaching Services budget.

**MR. KIRBY:** That works out to \$17 million.

**MR. BRAZIL:** So the other \$3.5 million, what's the account for that, the reduction?

**MR. KIRBY:** That's the annualization of all of the decisions that were made last year. All of the changes in the teacher allocation formula that were made last year and programming decisions made by the English School District, that's just catching up with that. Because as you can appreciate, our fiscal year is different than the school year and how monies are paid out for that. The adjustment is a reflection of last year's budget decisions.

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

**MR. KIRBY:** They weren't fully captured in last year's Estimates.

**MR. BRAZIL:** I'm just curious. The number of teachers in the system in 2017 versus 2016, do we have a number that we know of?

**MR. WALSH:** Approximately 5,300, minus the 1,500 that are due to come out as a result of this year's budget decisions and declining enrolment.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Retirements; the notices on retirements.

**MR. KIRBY:** That's approximately 150. The English School District has indicated to the department that later this month they'll be posting an advertisement for about 500 positions. Those are retirements, contractuels, fill-in positions where people are on maternity leave, personal leave, educational leave and away for some period of time. I'll make sure that's widely advertised at the time. That's basically where that is.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay, thank you for that.

Under the Centre for Distance Education, I notice it's fairly stable across the board. I'm just curious, has there been an uptake, a new renewal on that process? Is it being used in rural areas? Have we changed the types of courses we offer there? I'm just curious to know whether or not

we're still the mainstream of where we were when we started a number of years ago.

**MR. KIRBY:** Growth and demand for courses in 2016-17, that would have required additional teaching services. So it is going up.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yeah.

**MR. KIRBY:** As you can imagine, it is really difficult to offer specialized curriculum for high school graduation requirements with shrinking class sizes in rural communities. Obviously, that's why CDLI was instituted in the very beginning, but as the population of the province continues to change over time, that's one of the outcomes of it.

**MR. BRAZIL:** What are the allocations? Is it the same as the regular classroom process for CDLI instructor versus a classroom instructor?

**MR. KIRBY:** Any idea how that works?

**MR. WALSH:** The allocation for CDLI is not done in the same manner as the broad teacher allocation for the regular school system just simply because of the context of the distance education classroom. In some situations you may have a small number of students in a particular community who are interested in a program and those numbers get rolled up into a broader provincial number because the teacher is not actually located in that school.

Because there might be 16 students province wide – I just use that as an example – interested in mathematics 3200, those 16 students will still require a teacher, regardless of whether there are 16 or, by example, even if there were 22 or 23. So the allocation process for CDLI is not similar at all to the allocation to the regular school system.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

Thank you.

I just want to move to a question there about substitute teachers and the leave process and that. I noticed it's a variation from what was spent last year to what's been allocated, similar to what was originally budgeted. Has anything changed on the criteria for leave for substitute



teachers or the amount of leave that can be taken?

**MR. KIRBY:** That's the same as the first question you asked about the three week – about the 365 versus 364 day, 26.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yeah, but my question is has there been any change on the approach to what substitute teachers are entitled to or what regular classroom teachers are entitled to, to determine whether or not there are going to be more substitute days necessary or not?

**MR. KIRBY:** There's no change –

**MR. BRAZIL:** To know whether or not that budget line –

**MR. KIRBY:** No change –

**MR. BRAZIL:** – fits well within the education system.

**MR. KIRBY:** No change with the substitute teacher policy. If there was any change in those things, it would have to be negotiated with the NLTA. The change in the funding here has to do with the adjustment that happens every – I said three to four, Ed says four to five – four or so years because of the issue with the collective agreement, the 26 equal pay periods for the NLTA.

**MR. BRAZIL:** So the allocated amount will stay as normal for the policy.

**MR. KIRBY:** The policy stays the same, yes. There's a slight savings this year as a result of the three-week pay gap.

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

I'll go to 3.1.04, if I could, under School Supplies. I'll talk under the supply process there; \$6.6 million originally, revised to \$7.4 million down to \$5.8 million. Can you tell me the variation there, why there was more spent in 2016-'17 and why we're back to less in 2017-'18.

**MR. KIRBY:** Well, remember I told you about the money that was transferred that would pick up somewhere else? That's where that is.

**MR. BRAZIL:** That's \$450,000.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah. Then, also, there were monies for math PD that was transferred from Professional Development to purchase curriculum resources, \$350,000. There was some savings there, \$39,000 in savings, associated postage and so on. So there was a transfer in to –

**MR. BRAZIL:** Does that include additional textbooks or any of those resources?

**MR. KIRBY:** Student-to-teacher curriculum resources, texts, resource manuals and those sorts of things.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Is there an in-house government tax on the textbooks at this time with the tax on books? Is that built into your budget lines?

**MR. KIRBY:** I'll have to get back to you on that.

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

I want to go to School Services, under Salaries: \$542,000 originally, \$575,000, down to \$430,000. I'm assuming that there's a position or two, or some change there. Can you verify or clarify that for me, please?

**MR. KIRBY:** There was again the Flatter, Leaner. There were retirement costs that are in that. Then there was a position that was eliminated and a new position created, effectively.

**MR. BRAZIL:** What position was eliminated, which one created?

**MR. KIRBY:** Director of School Services and that became manager of School Services.

**MR. BRAZIL:** So the savings there would be at the pay scale level, I'm assuming –

**MR. KIRBY:** Yes.

**MR. BRAZIL:** – and the other position was eliminated?

**MR. KIRBY:** It's a classification difference, yeah.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay, Madam Chair, I'll pass it over to my colleague.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Ms. Michael.

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

I'll have to back up, of course. Just a couple of questions under 3.1.01; I won't repeat any of the questions that were asked already. Minister, how many deaf and hard of hearing teachers do we have now in the system?

**MR. WALSH:** Ms. Michael, there are four deaf and hard of hearing teachers allocated to the English School District in the same manner as last year.

**MS. MICHAEL:** And are there any in the French-speaking school district?

**MR. WALSH:** No, there aren't.

**MS. MICHAEL:** They don't have any requirement for that?

**MR. WALSH:** No.

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

And I'm just curious why this year's budget shows a separation: Substitute Teachers – the cost of leave, and Substitute Teachers – Professional Development. Why two different lines for that?

**MR. SMITH:** That was a decision taken to improve the presentation. I think the concept was that Teaching Services would more completely reflect the cost of teachers in the system, including substitute teachers. I think in prior years that was reflected in a separate activity in the Estimates under professional development, but again it was considered an improvement in disclosure to provide it under Teaching Services.

**MR. KIRBY:** I believe that was in response to the Auditor General's commentary on teacher PD there some previous (inaudible) –

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay. I think I have a vague memory actually of the Auditor General saying that.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah.

**MS. MICHAEL:** I had forgotten that.

Thank you very much.

I can't remember if Mr. Brazil asked this or not, under the provincial revenue line, again in 3.1.01, it's usually \$100,000 and last year it was \$398,600. What exactly is the source of that revenue and why was it so much higher last year?

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah, it was funding. It was basically an invoice for teaching units for the francophone school district. It was an invoice for 2015-'16 that was paid out in '16-'17.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah.

**MS. MICHAEL:** I know it doesn't fit totally under here, but since we've mentioned the francophone school district a couple of times, where are you right now, Minister, in terms of discussions with them over their identified needs for a new school?

**MR. KIRBY:** Last year, following the closure of Holy Cross, I suggested to the then-chair of the Conseil and the CEO – I guess the then-CEO because both of those people have changed since then – I asked them if they'd like to have a discussion about using that as an interim solution for their ask for a new school. They had wanted a new school to be constructed, I believe, in the west end of St. John's for high school grades.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right.

**MR. KIRBY:** They obviously agreed to enter into that discussion. Since that time, we've had discussions with the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of St. John's about using the site. The English School District, obviously, has been involved where they have rights to the property under the section of the act regarding the moving away from denominational education –

prior to that, they would have had rights to the site.

Where it is really right now, I think last week there was a tour of the site by parents; it was an open house. At this point, if they decide to go ahead with it for sure, they give us an indication that they're in agreement to use that facility, then we should be good for September.

**MS. MICHAEL:** That's good.

**MR. KIRBY:** So it's good –

**MS. MICHAEL:** And this will be high school students, will it?

**MR. KIRBY:** That's correct. Yeah.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right.

**MR. KIRBY:** It's good because we have heard a lot of commentary around capacity issues up on Ridge Road.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Yes.

**MR. KIRBY:** So this would be our sixth francophone school in the province. I'm very hopeful at this point that that's where we're going to go.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right.

**MR. KIRBY:** But it really will be up to the board of trustees at the Conseil to decide.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Is this an interim solution? The reason I ask is that it has been presented to me by them that the reason they wanted the west end is because their schools are regional rather than community and they wanted something that was more central to the region.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah. It's a five-year plan as it is.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay. Thank you very much.

Under 3.1.02, my questions are mainly under the Grants and Subsidies, this is the School Board Operations. We have a drop next year from what was budgeted last year under the Regular Operating Grant. I won't go into all of the amounts. We have a big drop under the

Administration Grant. Then under the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation, we have a drop in that grant.

Could I have an explanation of all of the decreases, because there are major decreases?

**MR. KIRBY:** On the Regular Operating Grant, that's the one you're interested in, right?

**MS. MICHAEL:** Yes, that's the first one.

**MR. KIRBY:** There was an amount that transferred to School Supplies and Student Support Services for more or less consistent with the recommendations of the Auditor General. That was more appropriate to include those funds under those areas.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay. So we might pick that up when we get over there and see where that money went. Okay.

**MR. KIRBY:** Effectively, yeah.

The next one was the –

**MS. MICHAEL:** Administration.

**MR. KIRBY:** Administration Grant.

**MS. MICHAEL:** It's down by \$1.6 million.

**MR. KIRBY:** The district office last year moved from the million-dollar view in Atlantic Place –

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right.

**MR. KIRBY:** – to the former site of CSSD it is now, but it was CYFS.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right.

**MR. KIRBY:** So they have relocated their headquarters there. That's the annualization of that. Again, it wasn't captured perfectly in last year's budget, so we picked up \$650,000 there.

Also, the attrition management under that line with the NLESD is another \$281,000. Then, it also reflects the five-year attrition management for the Conseil. That's another \$211,000-or-so. So those are those amounts.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Minister, would it be possible to get the details of the attrition management? Because, obviously, there are positions that are gone that haven't been filled. Just to get those details of what added up to those figures you've just given.

**MR. KIRBY:** I suppose we would have that but you could also get that directly from those agencies –

**MS. MICHAEL:** From the agencies and boards.

**MR. KIRBY:** – because it's their plan, not ours. This was the attrition plan that was prior to this administration.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right.

**MR. KIRBY:** It was requested from them. They would have provided it based on sort of broad parameters given to them.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay. If we have any problems we can come back to it?

**MR. KIRBY:** Sure, if you have any problems getting it directly from them, let me know and I can help facilitate. Yeah.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay. Thank you very much.

Then, my third one was the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation Grant.

**MR. KIRBY:** Various contracts there; a transition to the NLESD. The funding is being transferred to the Regular Operating Grant there in the order of about \$209,000, the elimination of the director position and then the funding – more or less that function is being transferred to the NLESD, Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

**MR. KIRBY:** It will no longer be directly managed by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development; it will be managed by NLESD.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay and that's why there's no director with it.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay. Thank you very much.

Under the Student Assistants, my question is a bit different. I think the budget said there would be an extra \$500,000 going in to student assistants, but the increase over last year's budget is \$1.3 million, which is more than the extra \$500,000.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah, because of the JES step funding.

**MS. MICHAEL:** All right. Okay.

Thank you very much.

**MR. KIRBY:** Again, the full annualization of what was announced in last year's budget. So last year there was an additional \$500,000 allocated for student assistant time.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right.

**MR. KIRBY:** One hundred per cent of that wouldn't have been captured in last year's budget; you need a full budget cycle in order for that to be reflected. Likewise, I anticipate that next year you'll see a bump again, so the full reflection of the \$500,000 that was announced in this year's budget.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay. Thank you.

I think my time is up.

**CLERK:** Okay.

Will I call that or are you –

**MR. BRAZIL:** No, no, I still have some questions there on 3.1.02, School Board Operations.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

**MR. BRAZIL:** And particularly under Purchased Services. Is there a list that is available of what services were purchased under that heading that we could avail of? I'm curious to see what type of services are directly contracted there as part of the School Board Operations. Is that available?

**MR. KIRBY:** For the most part, that's insurance premiums.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay, insurance.

With the additional 15 per cent on insurance rates now, has that had an impact on the budget lines for School Board Operations?

**MR. KIRBY:** Not here. No, that's not anticipated. In fact, the insurance premiums were lower than anticipated.

**MR. BRAZIL:** As a result of the premiums being lower, the budget lines, even though the 15 per cent was there, it still fits within your budget line?

**MR. KIRBY:** The number remains the same, yeah.

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

The grants here, Allowances and Assistance, \$49,000 down to \$26,000; this is for students travelling, isn't it, who have to travel in –

**MR. KIRBY:** Sorry, which one?

**MR. BRAZIL:** From Allowances and Assistance, \$49,000, \$26,000 was used, now it's back up to \$49,000.

**MR. KIRBY:** Just lower take up of bursaries for students who are living away from home to complete high school.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Do you a number of how many students took advantage of that last year?

**MR. WALSH:** There are four students currently accessing bursaries in the province.

**MR. BRAZIL:** What's the maximum we think we can handle with the addition?

**MR. WALSH:** Probably, somewhere in the order of 10 to 15 with the current budget line.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

Because I'm not overly familiar with the process there, if a student had an extreme need cost wise, can we adjust the budget accordingly to meet a

particular need if it's determined that person fits that criteria?

**MR. WALSH:** In the current bursary program, there are a number of criteria that are used to determine the amounts the student would qualify for to help them with living arrangements, which is essentially what the bursary program is for.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Uh-huh.

**MR. WALSH:** Anything that's outside of that or outside of that criterion is not normally captured by this program.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Are there students who get denied for it? Have we had applications where –

**MR. WALSH:** No.

**MR. BRAZIL:** We haven't. Okay.

Just so I'm clear, when they go into this program, what age category or what class category are we talking about? What level?

**MR. WALSH:** It's normally high school.

**MR. BRAZIL:** High school.

I want to go to Transportation; school children there from what was budgeted to, we're into pretty well on the same baseline. Do we anticipate any differences in population, the routes, schools being built closer or further away from existing routes, increases in contract costs or decreases in contract costs? Is this based on the continuum that we have 85 or 90 per cent of our contracts already in play or are there new contracts to be negotiated?

**MR. KIRBY:** It's based on what our most recent experience is with awarding tenders for busing.

**MR. BRAZIL:** What's the normal discrepancy between regions? Is it \$1,000 a month for – is there a big discrepancy? Is it fairly close? I'm only now starting to get my head around the differences between them.

**MR. KIRBY:** Assuming that we can release the information to you, we can release the information we have on tenders but I'm not sure

around the commercial sensitivity of that. I don't know if there is any –

**MR. BRAZIL:** If you can I'd appreciate it.

**MR. KIRBY:** If there isn't, we can provide that information to you in some form.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yeah, even a regional background to know if it's more expensive on the West Coast and the Northern Peninsula.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah, there are different kinds of busing, though, because there's board-owned busing and then there are the private contracts. It's different around the province based on predecessor arrangements, when we had multiple boards versus what we have now.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Is there any discussions of going one route or the other, like all private or all board controlled?

**MR. KIRBY:** No one has brought that to me from the school district.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay. I'm curious to see where we are on that.

Student assistants, obviously we had some discussion on that, the additional money. I know there's some money announced there. Can you outline to me exactly what that may equate to in the number of hours, or is it going to be based on positions, or is it hours or is it for regions? Is it broken down by regions or broken down by particular needs of students? Is it broken down by particular schools? What's the allocation or process of doing that?

**MR. KIRBY:** Student assistant hours are allocated based on need in an hourly amount, basically.

**MR. BRAZIL:** I know there's an application process and it's outlined and it's assessed, but are you breaking it down per region? Because I know in the St. John's region, there's no doubt, they could allocate very quickly the \$500,000.

**MR. KIRBY:** The allocations made by the school district, correct, and we would provide the funds to the school district. They have a

process for allocating student assistant time to schools.

**MR. BRAZIL:** So they would follow the same process they used in the past.

**MR. KIRBY:** They would just have more –

**MR. BRAZIL:** From four hours to six hours where necessary.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah. They would have more student assistant time to allocate.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

Yeah, I'm good on 3.1.02.

**MS. MICHAEL:** (Inaudible.)

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Are you okay with ...?

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yeah, Ms. Michael can go and finish up those.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

What I'd like to do then is we will let Ms. Michael ask a couple of questions, then we'll take a five-six minute break and then come back and start with the new section.

Ms. Michael.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Thank you.

Minister, I don't know if it's you or the school district who gives us this, but we'd like to have a list of the numbers of the board-owned buses, private buses, private vehicles, alternate transportation.

**MR. KIRBY:** It's probably better you just go to the district to get that and, again, like I said before, if you have any problems getting it because – especially when it comes to the individual.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right.

**MR. KIRBY:** If it's, say, somebody is being – it's a one-off sort of thing, then, yeah, they

would be dealing with it. We don't deal with that level of it.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

Thank you. We'll do that.

**MR. KIRBY:** If you have any problems getting that list, we can help facilitate it.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

Minister, in responding to Mr. Brazil with regard to the drop in buses, you did mention differences now because of the one school district and not the four. Is there any intention or do you have intentions of evaluating the impact of having moved from four to one? We really haven't had an evaluation of that done.

**MR. KIRBY:** It's not something that's really a priority at the moment. In terms of evaluating this system at the moment, our priority continues to be the task force and whatever recommendations they come back with.

Governance was not an explicit area for review by the task force; however, if they have a recommendation with respect to governance, I've asked them to provide it. It wasn't explicit, but I have also given them the direction to provide what recommendations to government that they see as vital at this point, if it's beyond the scope of their mandate.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

**MR. KIRBY:** So that's where that is.

**MS. MICHAEL:** And you have made that request to them.

**MR. KIRBY:** We had a conversation with one of them about it yesterday.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right. Good.

Okay then, that's all I have, Madam Chair, to the end of 3.1.02.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

I'll call the Estimates.

Shall 3.1.01 to 3.1.05 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

Ms. Michael.

**MS. MICHAEL:** I'm not finished, because I forgot there were sections that Mr. Brazil skipped over. I haven't asked them on 3.1.03 and the others. So I still have questions under this whole section.

**CHAIR:** You can continue on the clock because we had called to 3.1.05.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay. Yes, I forgot that.

Thank you.

Under 3.1.03, I don't have questions there; 3.1.04, I think we have that answered, yes. I just want to check and make sure I'm not leaving out any questions. I think Mr. Brazil asked about 3.1.05. I think he covered what I wanted to ask. I just wanted to make sure there's nothing that has been left out. No, that's fine.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** You're good?

**MS. MICHAEL:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Mr. Brazil, I understand you're finished up to 3.1.05.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yes, I'm finished right down to 3.2.01.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Shall the subtitle 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.

**CHAIR:** We'll take a break and resume at 10:30. Is that okay with everybody?

All right; we will come back and start at 3.2.01.

**Recess**

**CLERK:** 3.2.01 to 3.2.02.

**CHAIR:** Shall 3.2.01 to 3.2.02 carry?

Mr. Brazil.

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

Under this section here I want to first go to Transportation and Communications there, and see the difference from what was budgeted to what was used to, now, what's allocated.

Can the minister outline, or one of his officials, exactly what that would entail for this year under that particular heading?

**MR. KIRBY:** Which one is it again?

**MR. BRAZIL:** Transportation and Communications, under section 01 Salaries.

**MR. KIRBY:** 3.1.01?

**MR. BRAZIL:** 3.2.01, under 01 Salaries; I'm looking at the Transportation and Communications Estimates line.

**MR. KIRBY:** Under Curriculum Development?

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yes.

**MR. KIRBY:** Less travel required than anticipated, \$45,000. Then based on the zero-based exercise, this is sort of assigning a figure that's more closely fitting to the activity that's required.

**MR. BRAZIL:** What kind of travel would this entail?

**MR. KIRBY:** For Curriculum Development?

**MR. BRAZIL:** In-house, out of province, out of country.

**MR. KIRBY:** It's all within the province travel.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Pardon me?

**MR. KIRBY:** It's all within the province travel.

**MR. BRAZIL:** How many staff would we be talking who would avail of that?

**MR. WALSH:** That would be travel associated with any of our program development specialists as they're out working with groups of teachers in the development of curriculum. In some cases that occurs at the department; in other cases it occurs in regions in the province where it's more efficient to do it in that manner.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

Thank you.

**MR. KIRBY:** I just want to go back to 3.1.05, School Services. I had said the director of school services was replaced with a manager of school services, that's not the case.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

**MR. KIRBY:** It was just a position was eliminated outright.

**MR. BRAZIL:** All together.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah. Again, the responsibilities assumed under a different role basically, in the same –

**MR. BRAZIL:** But within the same division.

**MR. KIRBY:** In Ed's department, or division area.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay. Thank you on that.

Just moving down the lines here; under 01 Supplies, it's a minimum amount of money but can you explain what that would include? I see it under Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education and Early Childhood Development, and the Program Development. What would that \$4,000 be for?



**MR. KIRBY:** It's Supplies under Curriculum Development still?

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yes.

**MR. KIRBY:** I don't know what the supplies are specifically. We can provide you with whatever it is but my note just says lower than anticipated. So that's \$1,000 lower.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yeah, I'm just curious because it's such a small amount.

**MR. KIRBY:** It could be photocopying.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yeah, I was going to say, it couldn't be for all the schools because if that's the case it is very minimal.

**MR. KIRBY:** It's within the department, yeah.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay. Yeah, I'm curious just to see what that is.

Under Professional Services, dramatic changes from what was budgeted, to what was revised, to what we're allocating now. Can you just explain under what services would be there and, particularly, what was built into that last year that's different for this year, that's not necessary?

**MR. KIRBY:** There was an additional \$64,000-about because curriculum development expenses were higher than anticipated, obviously. Any comment, Ed, on the activity in particular?

**MR. WALSH:** In that particular category, Professional Services, last year in preparation for combined grades, there was a significant amount of work completed over the summer in order to allow teachers to be prepared when school opened. That activity and that work is captured there.

**MR. BRAZIL:** So that would have been done by an outside agency or contract work?

**MR. WALSH:** It would have been done by teachers working over the summer.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay, outside of the mainstream school year. Okay, fair enough. That was a one-time shot that's completed now, okay.

Under Purchased Services, also again, the discrepancy there, but back up to \$81,000. Meaning that last year \$11,000 versus \$83,000, so \$72,500 wasn't spent. The rationale: What didn't get done or ...?

**MR. KIRBY:** The amounts for the previous line that you asked about were transferred to there to cover that cost.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Properties and furnishings, just explain who avails of that amount of money. I know there's \$4,000 less this year.

**MR. KIRBY:** The increase last year over what was estimated was due to ergonomic assessments and then equipment purchased as a result of the –

**MR. BRAZIL:** For in-house staff.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

**MR. KIRBY:** Office equipment. And then the amount that's there for the coming year is basically the result of zero-based exercise; it's just the amount plus \$1,000 to try to anticipate any coming need.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

I want to move to line 10 there, Grants and Subsidies. From \$65,600, the full \$65,600 was done now up to \$256,000. What are your anticipated grants and subsidies there? What kind of grants are we talking about? Who can avail of them and what the process is if you could.

**MR. KIRBY:** The Grants and Subsidies are associated with expenditures for curriculum development. Basically, the funding was taken from professional development and put under this grant expenditure line. Because in accordance with the recommendations made by the Auditor General some time back, those funds were more appropriately put here rather than in professional development.

That was the same as a couple of the other questions that I responded to, which are moving funds from one line to the other in response to

concerns that the Auditor General had expressed with respect to provision of funding for teacher professional development.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay. Under these Grants and Subsidies, who could avail of them?

**MR. KIRBY:** I think it was the same as what Ed had said but –

**MR. BRAZIL:** Former teachers in the summertime, outside agencies or other professionals?

**MR. WALSH:** It would be for the benefit of the school system, teachers and students.

**MR. BRAZIL:** And solely curriculum-oriented?

**MR. WALSH:** It would be in support of programs like skilled trades and technology. It would be funding to support intra-provincial travel, grants for students and the department support for the provincial immigration strategy.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay, so intra-provincial travel. So there would be an application process in some cases here?

**MR. WALSH:** There would be for the intra-provincial travel.

**MR. BRAZIL:** And that would be the standard way we advertise and promote how we get that message out to schools or regions or agencies that could avail of it. Okay, fair enough.

I want to move on to 3.2.02, Language Programs. Down under Professional Services, a change from \$160,000 to \$110,000 last year, up to \$150,000. Can you clarify what didn't get spent last year and what your anticipated professional services would be this year under the Language Programs?

**MR. KIRBY:** Well, there were fewer translations of curriculum guides performed. The English version wasn't prepared, so couldn't translate it into French because it wasn't available in English. That's basically it. The funds were reallocated to other areas of, I guess, priority areas because we received funding from the federal government under the Official Languages Agreement.

**MR. BRAZIL:** So other areas related to official languages, the second official language (inaudible) –

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah, so it was provided to French Immersion resources instead.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

Just under Purchased Services, the difference from \$10,000 down to \$2,300, now to \$8,800.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yes.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Is there something there that we had anticipated we'd purchase that we haven't purchased that we're now going to purchase in this fiscal?

**MR. KIRBY:** No, it was just training funds that were not required.

**MR. BRAZIL:** As part of the budget.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay, Madam Chair, my time is just about up. I'll pass it on to Ms. Michael, please.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Ms. Michael.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Yes, just going back up to 3.2.01, Curriculum Development, just with regard to curriculum development, could we have an update on what curriculum reviews are happening at the moment and what curriculum was being dealt with over the past year.

**MR. WALSH:** The department has a three- to five-year curriculum development plan. It's pretty fluid simply because the nature of curriculum development can't always be nailed down to specific time frames.

Of course, the work of the Premier's Task Force, when they present their report, is going to inform some of the work that Curriculum Development, I'm guessing, will be doing in the next couple of years. Despite that, we continued to work, in particular, in the areas of science. In September coming we will be implementing

Science 3 and 5, and we also have ready to go Français 3202.

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

I just have one question. If I may, a question, and maybe the task force has heard people speak to this, I don't know. I'm sure the minister and you too, Mr. Walsh, are aware of the call that's been made by people with regard to bringing coding into the educational system. Is that being looked at?

**MR. WALSH:** One of the courses that's in our review cycle is Communications Technology 2104. That is intended to address some of the concerns that are there regarding coding.

Of course, coding by its very nature also occurs in the mathematics curriculum. We would expect and hope, I guess, that when the task force comes with their recommendations, that they're going to have recommendations specific to coding, and where and how much of it should be in the curriculum.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay, so we can keep our eyes open for that and see what happens.

**MR. KIRBY:** We've met with a number of external groups around coding and interested in pursuing that. There's currently some informal instruction going on that's not directly associated with outcomes in a curriculum like the day of code and those sorts of activities that teachers will undertake independently with these sorts of initiatives.

We met with NATI, or NATI met with officials in the department a while back and expressed an interest in working on some individual school-based initiatives for the coming school year. We are attentive to the need to move in that direction but as you can imagine, there are a lot of competing demands for curricular change and curricular reform from yoga to you name it, but coding is something that a lot of provinces have moved towards or have been speaking about moving towards.

I expect a lot of our attention has been, as I said, devoted to the task force and supporting their work and looking forward to structural change, if you will, in the school system, what that might

entail. I expect, or I hope the task force report and recommendations in June will be the trigger to pursue broader curricular reform. As you can imagine again, a lot of stuff will fall out of the broader recommendations they will make.

So that's what I have been trying to communicate to various stakeholder groups in and out of the system, that once we get the task force report and start working on the action plan associated with that, there will be other activities generated by that report.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Thank you.

I know I don't have to say this to you, Minister, I'm sure you know, but just to put on the record, I think coding is something we need to look at in a much larger picture in terms of job opportunities and future economic growth here in our own province and having our students, as they're coming forward, being able to look at issues around IT and all the opportunities that are growing in that area. I'm sure we see coding in a much broader picture.

Thank you.

Under 3.2.02, Language Programs, last year the revenue from the federal government was up by \$3.6 million, almost \$3.7 million. It looks like it was a one-time thing. What was that?

**MR. KIRBY:** It was just a difference in when we received the federal payment and where the fiscal year fell.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Oh, right.

**MR. KIRBY:** So that's just an adjustment because of that.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right, which happens frequently.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yes, it happens every now and then.

**MS. MICHAEL:** That's right.

**MR. KIRBY:** It's really the difference of when the cheques are cut.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right.

Thank you.

That's all I have for those two sections, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR:** Mr. Brazil, were you finished with that section as well?

**MR. BRAZIL:** I'm good (inaudible).

**CHAIR:** Okay. We'll call that and then give Ms. Michael her four minutes left on the clock.

Shall 3.2.01 to 3.2.02 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.2.01 to 3.2.02 carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall 3.3.01 and 3.3.02 carry?

Ms. Michael, I'll let you finish your time on the clock.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Under 3.3.01, Salaries, last year in the 2016-17 budget there was a decrease of \$146,000. Could we have an explanation?

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah, it was two vacant program specialist positions, savings due to vacant positions.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay. And are they now filled?

**MR. KIRBY:** It's in the process of being filled.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay, both of them.

Could we specifically have what those positions are, Minister, please?

**MR. KIRBY:** A program development specialist and I'm not sure if there's – go ahead, Ed.

**MR. WALSH:** The way our program development specialists work in Student Support Services is their duties are somewhat fluid. They may change year to year.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right.

**MR. WALSH:** These two individuals will be working in the areas of Safe and Caring Schools, mental health and data analysis.

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

Under Transportation and Communications, last year there was a drop of \$36,000 from the budget to the revision. This year it's going just up to \$72,800; just a brief explanation of why we have that drop.

**MR. KIRBY:** The reduction was the result of a district professional development initiative that didn't proceed.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay, so that was sort of one time –?

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Thank you.

Under Supplies, major variations here from last year's budget to the revision and now to this year's estimate. Could we have an explanation of that line?

**MR. KIRBY:** The increase was a result of expenditures being transferred from professional development and more appropriately classified under here; assisted technology expenditures relating to ISSPs. Again, yes, transferred from professional development which will be more appropriately reflected here versus in the professional development line, and it's all consistent with the recommendations made by the Auditor General; so moving money around.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay. Thank you.

Under Grants and Subsidies, there's a \$20,000 estimate in there which seems to be something new.

**MR. KIRBY:** Again, the same answer as last time, transferred from professional development,

more appropriately situated under here in accordance with the recommendations made by the Auditor General.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay. Thank you.

I have a couple of general questions with regard to 3.3.01. I understand there has been a restructuring, I think, within the Student Support Services and the position of director is now gone. Could we have an explanation of what's happening there, Minister, please?

**MR. KIRBY:** The position was converted into a manager position. I believe the same person holds that position and is more or less now under the auspices of – it's restructured, basically.

**MS. MICHAEL:** What would the implications of that be now having the position manager rather than director when it comes to representation to the minister around Student Support Services? I know a manager does not sit in the executive role, for example.

**MR. KIRBY:** Directors and managers are management, and in the event that I or other officials in the department require information from anyone on the executive team, then they would request it.

**MS. MICHAEL:** And in the same way, the manager would see the responsibility to let you know of any concerns that he or she may have just as if the position were a director.

**MR. KIRBY:** There has been no change in the way reporting is done in the department.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

**MR. KIRBY:** For the most part, the communication with myself is with the deputy minister. They would exercise their professional judgement as to where in the organization they receive information from. The whole, I guess, intent of the flatter, leaner exercise was to streamline management.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

Is it still considered a division within the department?

**MR. KIRBY:** I'm not sure. It would be a section within the division.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

And what would be the division?

**CHAIR:** Ms. Michael, when the minister answers, then I'm going to move then to Mr. Brazil.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** I've been a little bit lenient with the clock again.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Yeah.

**MR. KIRBY:** It's Programs and Services.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

**CHAIR:** Okay?

**MS. MICHAEL:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR:** You're welcome.

Mr. Brazil.

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

I want to move to 3.3.02, the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority. Can the minister just outline, for the record, the relationship there as part of that partnership, just how that works.

**MR. KIRBY:** We provide an annual amount to APSEA, as government has done for quite a lengthy period of time now. Part of the service that we receive relates to materials in alternate format for students to complete required parts of the curriculum, examinations, those sorts of things, and assistance advice and so on with special education requirements in the school system.

All the provinces are part of this. There are regular meetings involved. This would include travel for staff to – periodic meetings with APSEA would be included under this line. So we pay it out, pay out travel. Travel would be covered under here and a variety of other things.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

Can you just outline the Grants and Subsidies, the process there for someone to avail of those?

**MR. KIRBY:** What do you mean? To APSEA?

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yes.

**MR. KIRBY:** That's the amount paid to APSEA?

**MR. BRAZIL:** Directly to them, yeah.

**MR. KIRBY:** We get a variety. Ed has handed me a list here.

We have 131 students who are blind or visually impaired that are being provided service by an itinerant teacher for the blind or visually impaired. There are nine itinerant teachers who meet with students who are – sorry, where is the APSEA explanation? Here it is.

They have short-term programming from APSEA; like I said, assessment materials, alternate-format materials, library services, assistive technology for some of those blind and visually impaired students. There are two students who receive direct assessment from APSEA; two who receive consultative assessments; 10 students who've travelled to Halifax where APSEA's headquartered for short-term programs. Like I said, alternate format materials, assistive technology, assistance – they've hosted the student database with respect to blind and visually impaired students.

There's professional development that's provided for itinerants. The itinerants attend professional development every year in Halifax. There were two students who attended a summer camp for blind and visually impaired students. There are a whole variety of services that are provided by virtue of that arrangement with APSEA. Much in the same way that we pay a block amount out to the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada or to the Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training; that's the amount that we paid for APSEA and we receive a variety of other things that I just listed.

There are also services for students who are deaf and hard of hearing. The database that I mentioned for blind and visually impaired students there, maintained a student database; there's an APSEA-sponsored summer camp for students who are deaf and hard of hearing. There were five students from this province who went last year.

There's a trust fund from APSEA that students can avail of. They are basically done on an individual basis that supports not just academic needs, but social and recreational activities as well. Imagine with students who have particular disabilities of that nature, for them to participate in certain extracurricular recreational activities, there would be some additional needs.

In 2015-16, is the most recent data we have available, there were 37 awards of less than \$500, four awards of more than \$500 for students who are blind and visually impaired and one award of more than \$500 for students who was deaf and hard of hearing. So the whole variety of different services that are provided to support instruction, curriculum, assessment and then a variety of other grants and supports that we receive for teacher professional development and then individually for students.

So we're getting quite a lot from APSEA for what we provide. And it's really sort of a capacity issue because by having all the Atlantic provinces come together and sort of pool our resources, we're able to have greater capacity to support schooling and students than we would otherwise.

**MR. BRAZIL:** How is this amount reached? Is it based on the number of students who have those particular needs? It is a formula on general population? Is it a percentage of what's allocated in inclusive education?

**MR. KIRBY:** This amount has not changed from some time. I'm not sure what the exact criteria are. We can go back and look at that, but it's the same as it was when the previous administration was in power.

**MR. BRAZIL:** So if we have an influx of students who have these particular challenges and need additional services, do we have the

ability to adjust that accordingly to provide those services?

**MR. KIRBY:** I assume it would fluctuate from year to year. The nature of the student population is always changing. There's no reason to assume that we wouldn't be able to accommodate students, though.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Decisions then on which students avail of it, that would come at the board level and integration between –?

**MR. KIRBY:** They have a board, yes, which our deputy minister – it is the deputy, right?

**OFFICIAL:** Yes.

**MR. KIRBY:** – participates in board meetings on a regular basis.

**MR. BRAZIL:** So there'd be a multitude of partners who would be engaged in this to identify particular needs.

**MR. KIRBY:** Basically all the Atlantic deputies would be involved in it.

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

And just so I know, we do have the ability if – fortunate or unfortunate – there was a big demand for it to be able to adjust accordingly the supports that would be necessary?

**MR. KIRBY:** I would expect, yeah. There's no reason to believe there wouldn't be.

**MR. BRAZIL:** And again the determination is based on – so they're the professionals in the field because they specify particularly in those areas.

**MR. KIRBY:** Well, they would really be supporting our professionals and the APSEA office and the APSEA board would be making recommendations for service provision based on what we see in, sort of, our combined student populations.

**MR. BRAZIL:** What would be the ratios in comparison with the other Atlantic provinces, the number of students who have to avail of it,

the money we put into it – is there a comparable?

**MR. KIRBY:** I'm not sure if the data is available. We can look into it.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay, I appreciate that. I'm curious to see where we are. Particularly, if we could have a list of who avails of what type of programs?

What you've outlined there sounds very engaging. I'd like to know if it's three students, 200, and more particularly what regions they come from. Is there a particular need in a particular area that we're missing here as part of that whole process.

I'd like to now also, if I could, move over to 3.4.01 under Salaries, and the difference of \$125,000 from what was spent –

**CHAIR:** We have to call that, Mr. Brazil.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Oh, sorry, I apologize. Oh yes, sorry, I thought that was a part of that one.

**CHAIR:** Ms. Michael, you're just about out on the clock, but did you have more questions up to 3.3.02?

**MS. MICHAEL:** Yes, I have two more.

**CHAIR:** Are you okay if we –

**OFFICIAL:** (Inaudible.)

**CHAIR:** Okay.

All right, Ms. Michael.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay. Thank you very much.

Again, under 3.3.01, Minister, I know you talked about the move in general of certain expenses from other areas into this area. Is 3.3.01 now where we would find, for example, the supports for deaf and hard-of-hearing students?

Last year, there was a budget of \$292,000 for the supports for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, but that line item is no longer in the budget. Would that be part of that general move that was

made in services, well especially in Supplies, but also somewhere else?

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah, so those amounts are – there’s \$243,000 that’s in these particular lines that are associated with the deaf and hard of hearing.

**MS. MICHAEL:** So that’s a small drop from last year?

**MR. KIRBY:** \$243,000. Yeah, that’s one position, is it?

There was one position that was eliminated due to the attrition management plan: \$49,000.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay, and that’s what the supports for deaf and hard of hearing is related to.

With regard to Supplies, again, with regard to the deaf and hard-of-hearing students, as we know, there are some things they require to help them in the classroom. The Supplies previously, in the section previously, 3.3.03 which is not this year, there was \$145,000 for the Supplies. Is that included now under that new Supplies line?

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah, it’s still the same.

**MS. MICHAEL:** It’s still the same amount?

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah, still the same, \$145,000.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

Thank you very much. That’s good news.

The one last thing is the PASS program, Positive Action for Student Success. Is that still in place?

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah, it’s still being offered at schools. Some of it is – I guess it’s largely district driven. They will provide allocations for continuation of the program where it exists. I visited a number of schools where they have it, yes.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Is it still being categorized as a pilot project, or do you –?

**MR. KIRBY:** No.

**MS. MICHAEL:** No?

**MR. KIRBY:** No.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Thank you.

**MR. KIRBY:** Now the other thing, you’d be surprised when you go to schools, the extent to which they have PASS-like programs that are not really – wouldn’t necessarily be on my radar because they are – oftentimes you think about teachers going above and beyond the call of duty, oftentimes they are using their existing resources to provide that sort of academic remediation. I’ve just seen some really, really amazing things going on.

It’s not been an easy time in terms of resources for schools, if you think about the expenditure reductions we’ve had. Just there are some really, really impressive things going on around credit rescue sorts of activities, helping kids avoid that level 4 situation that a lot of them end up in.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right.

Minister, could we have an up-to-date list of the schools that do come under the budget line for PASS?

**MR. KIRBY:** We can get that for you.

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

That’s it, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Shall 3.3.01 to 3.3.02 carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

On motion, 3.3.01 to 3.3.02 carried.

**CLERK:** 3.4.01.

**CHAIR:** Shall 3.4.01 carry?



So I guess we'll go back, and Ms. Michael you can finish out the clock.

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

I don't have a lot here. Under Salaries, there was a jump last year from \$1.3 million to \$1.4 million, approximately. Can you explain that, Minister, please?

**MR. KIRBY:** Retirement costs associated with a person retiring in the department.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay, and then that's why it's back down to more or less the same this year –

**MR. KIRBY:** Yes.

**MS. MICHAEL:** – \$1.3 million, yes.

Thank you very much.

There is nothing else really outstanding there. Just under 09, Allowances and Assistance, can you just explain what that line is? Not so much in terms of money because that's constant, but what it actually is.

**MR. KIRBY:** Allowances and Assistance; so we've got the secondary school scholarships that are in there and there are a variety of them. You'll hear about these from time to time in Ministerial Statements and the news media.

There's the Junior Jubilee Scholarship, the Electoral District Scholarships, the Centenary of Responsible Government Scholarships in there, Constable W. C. Moss Scholarship, the Pearson Scholarships.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Could we have that list, Minister, please?

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Great. Thank you.

Under Property, Furnishings and Equipment, going back up to 01, Salaries, there was an expenditure that wasn't expected, \$17,000 last year.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah. There were no expenses anticipated, but we had one of those optical

scanners that scan public exams and criterion reference tests that broke.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

**MR. KIRBY:** We had to fix it.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay. Thank you very much.

Down under federal revenue, nothing was anticipated but there was a \$25,000 piece of money coming in. What was that about?

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah. That was the National Autism Surveillance System that we announced last year.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

Could you just talk about that a bit?

**MR. KIRBY:** Well, we hear oftentimes about autism and its prevalence, but you notice that they're always using, almost inevitably, American statistics. So you hear people talking about it and they'll say the incidence of autism is up by a certain amount. By and large, they're using American data that's from the US statistics agency.

The national Public Health Agency of Canada, there was a decision made to have bilateral agreements with all the provinces to institute this National Autism Surveillance System so that we would share whatever data we have available with them, with Health Canada, in order to get a better sense of this. The data we would have through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, whatever we have, we would have arrangement for sharing. Likewise, the Department of Health, Dr. Haggie, they would also be participating in this as well.

**MS. MICHAEL:** That's good news actually.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Is that in operation now? The data has been –

**MR. KIRBY:** Yes, we signed the arrangement last September with them. I think we made an announcement at the time but you know the way things are the beginning of the school year –

**MS. MICHAEL:** Yes, easy to lose.

**MR. KIRBY:** – it sort of gets lost in lots of other news.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right.

**MR. KIRBY:** The process is underway now. Now we'll have to wait and see what the end result is, but that \$25,000 was provided in recognition of whatever sort of labour and whatever costs we would be incurring to co-operate in the data collection sharing.

**MS. MICHAEL:** So we can be confident now that if we ask for data for Canada, data for our province, we'd get relevant data?

**MR. KIRBY:** I'm not sure where they are in the process yet.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

**MR. KIRBY:** If you think about how this works, provinces are different in the way that they collect information, so they would have a pretty significant piece of work ahead of them trying to line everything up – apples and oranges, pears and tomatoes.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right, okay. Thank you very much.

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

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Mr. Brazil.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yes, I just want to go through 3.4.01 there and have a little discussion where it talks about student testing and that. I'm glad the minister had outlined about some of the other partnerships that are being developed, some of the new approaches that are a part of it.

The process that we have now in play for students with exceptionalities, particularly around testing, assessment and all this, where would that best fit here? Is it broken down into different sections or does it fit under one clean, neat one, or is it all part of a different inclusive process when we do that?

I know you talked about the data being collected, which is ideal to have that, to have an understanding of exactly what students fit under which categories and what supports we may need for those. The testing under this section here, is that solely for the mainstream school system, or is it for those with some exceptionalities also?

**MR. KIRBY:** Student Support Services wouldn't be captured under here I don't think, would it?

**OFFICIAL:** No.

**MR. KIRBY:** No. Any service that would be provided for students with special education needs wouldn't necessarily be captured here, no.

**MR. BRAZIL:** It still would be captured under the –

**MR. KIRBY:** I guess part of it would be under Student Support Services and then anything provided by the district, you'd have to have their budget ahead of them in front of you to break out what the district is doing, or the districts –

**MR. BRAZIL:** Fair enough.

**MR. KIRBY:** – in terms of accommodation. I think that's what you're asking about, right?

**MR. BRAZIL:** What are our time frames on students who have exceptionalities coming into the system to be able to adjust your needs for the following school year? I know there are some parents who have come to me that they've applied for a student assistant and they won't know until June or later whether or not they'll have that service in September and if they don't, what impact (inaudible).

**MR. KIRBY:** The final allocations for teachers and student assistants and other services are not made by the school districts until sometime in August. People would have to wait until the district does its final determinations. Even then, they're not necessarily final because if you think about students transferring in from other countries, other provinces, other towns within the province, the composition of classes is a very fluid thing.

You wouldn't get that information right now in terms of finality of it. You would have to be waiting. I know it's frustrating but, practically, the districts have to wait until the latter part of August to really make all their final decisions around resourcing so they have a better sense – because if you think about it if you're trying to make those determinations now based on what we think the classes are going to look like, all kinds of things can happen between now and September.

So that's really why there's a delay in getting that solid information. Then, as the year goes on, there's an appeals process that principals participate in, if there needs to be other adjustments beyond that. So it is arduous, it's time consuming and it's frustrating. All those things are certainly true.

**MR. BRAZIL:** No, and I agree because I've had a number of parents and, as I got more familiar with the process, realizing that there's a gap there between when they know whether or not they have the service and if they don't get that service, how they adjust their family life and their child's education as part of it.

What's the working relationship from the – and it's perfect that it's under the one department – early childhood development process and resources versus identifying for those kids who may move into the kindergarten school system and beyond?

**MR. KIRBY:** Well, I think one of the good things we have going for us now is that with full-day kindergarten there's a better opportunity to do assessment, to observe a child in a full day rather than that really compressed portion of the day. So we have that.

There are real differences in the system when it comes to providing documentation of children with special needs when they are in regulated child care spaces. Some children are not in regulated child care; others are. I don't know, Mary, if you want to comment on that at all?

**MS. GOSS-PROWSE:** You have to remember that it's not 100 per cent take up in regulated child care for a variety of reasons, and we're seeing actually many spaces open right now in regulated child care because of a number of

factors, like not all parents are working the way they were; we've got a lower birth rate. There are a number of things happening. In certain pockets of the province we still have a need for child care, but in other spots it may not be quite as high.

We do have an Inclusion Supports Program in the early childhood piece, in regulated child care. That basically assesses when a child is seen as needing some extra support to partake in the child care program.

The issue with evaluating it to a point where we could identify what the school system might need is a bigger piece of work, because many of the things that we're looking at, at a later point, are not identifiable 100 per cent or diagnosable in those very early years. It's a bit of a balancing act to figure that piece out.

We do some work in the KinderStart program related to the KinderStart program but really, other than that, we don't see all of the children in regulated child care. Where we can make links, we're making them, but it's not always 100 per cent.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

Is there discrepancy between rural and urban? Have you noticed the uptake on the spaces?

**MS. GOSS-PROWSE:** In terms of the child care services side?

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yes.

**MS. GOSS-PROWSE:** No, it's actually occurring in most regions now. We found that licensees are becoming more creative in how they license their homeroom so that they can maximize their enrolment.

In the St. John's region, there are a number of centres that are reporting no wait-lists anymore and, in fact, some of them have had to close a homeroom or close an entire centre where they had multiple licences. We had one on the West Coast that had to close one of her centres and combine them all into one because of lower numbers of children looking for child care.

**MR. BRAZIL:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. GOSS-PROWSE:** But for a number of other reasons, we've had some that have looked to open them up. If we look at our Operating Grant Program, one of the people that came on to that program, actually her enrolment increased to the point where she could reopen a centre that she had closed.

Again, where it's a private system and it's not a publicly managed system as the school system is, you're talking about private business, so as with the merchandising system and all others, there's some fluctuation when you deal with a private system.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Have you noticed the cuts to the transportation grants? Has that had any impact on some areas or some providers?

**MS. GOSS-PROWSE:** We haven't seen a direct link. I know the bulk of our transportation piece was in Central, in fact. That seems to have been taken up by the taxi services in Central. They seem to have offered a program that – and we haven't had any complaints directly.

We did put in place a disability-related supports supplement for parents or children who have physical disabilities that prevent them from using regular transportation to get back and forth. So far, we've only had one person apply for that under the subsidy program.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Is there a partnership with AES for Income Support clients whose kids may avail of a daycare or an educational program in one of them for transportation? I've had some inquiries around that. I'm trying to get my head around is it a hindrance, is it something new, is it something lost? That's what I need to figure out.

**MS. GOSS-PROWSE:** Frankly, we haven't heard a lot of anyone coming directly to us. Now whether they're going to AES ...

**MR. KIRBY:** It's probably better to direct that to AES.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yeah. No doubt I will, but I didn't know if there was a discussion, if there had been some complaints or some inquiries as to the impact it was having on numbers in some daycares.

**MR. KIRBY:** We had some concerns expressed by one operator about the elimination of the transportation subsidy and its impact on children with special education needs. So we created a new program, if you will, a policy, that was really directed towards that segment of the population and we've only had one application to date.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Does the application come from the provider or from the parent in these cases?

**MR. KIRBY:** From the parent.

**MR. BRAZIL:** From the parent itself looking for transportation supports?

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

**MR. KIRBY:** Often it would be. It's possible that –

**MR. BRAZIL:** Is there somewhere easy I can look up what the criteria are on those?

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah, we can provide it to you.

**MR. BRAZIL:** If you can provide it, I appreciate that. Perfect.

Madam Chair, I think I'm out of time there now on this section.

**CHAIR:** Are you good?

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yeah.

**CHAIR:** Are both parties okay with – do you want me to come back to 3.4.01?

**MS. MICHAEL:** Yes, I'd just like to –

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Ms. Michael.

**MS. MICHAEL:** – just follow up a bit further on that point that the minister was just making with Mr. Brazil. I want to do it in a general way, although it's based on a particular situation that's been brought to me by a constituent.

Where would the department come in, with regard to student evaluation, when a decision is being made saying that a child can't go on the bus because of the child's behaviour – it's a child on the autism spectrum – yet the parent can't afford to pay for a taxi, is trying to do it, but does not have the resources to do it? Where's the responsibility there for that? Is it with the department, with the –?

**MR. KIRBY:** There's an application process for alternate transportation.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right.

**MR. KIRBY:** I don't know if somebody has the figure there, but it's a significant amount of funding that we're providing on alternate transportation.

Do you want to comment on that?

**MR. SMITH:** I don't have the particular figure, we can get that for you, but the board does avail of the department's policy around alternate transportation.

**MS. MICHAEL:** And the application is made directly to the department, or through the board?

**MR. SMITH:** It would be via the board, that process. We fund it and that's our policy.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right.

**MR. SMITH:** But it would certainly be administered directly by the board.

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

That's all, Chair.

**CHAIR:** That's good? Okay.

Shall 3.4.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subhead 3.4.01 carried.

**CLERK:** 3.5.01 to 3.5.04 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 3.5.01 to 3.5.04 inclusive carry?

Will we continue with Ms. Michael on the clock?

Thank you.

Ms. Michael.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Thank you very much.

Okay, I really don't have many questions here. Under Professional Services, that would be my first key one, it was \$360,000 last year and going down by almost \$128,000 this year. Could we have an explanation of that line?

**MR. KIRBY:** The professional learning resources that were anticipated to be created under there weren't, so we're trying to find a way to do that in-house now. It's going to be done –

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay, and can you describe what those services are, Minister, please?

**MR. KIRBY:** Professional learning resources for early childhood educators for –

**MR. WALSH:** I can answer that.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

**MR. WALSH:** Last year, it has been intended that we were going to develop a video series to help support early learning. After analysis of the proposals that we had, it was decided that we wouldn't go in that direction and that we would look in-house in a similar process to what we do on the K to 12 side, where we developed our own video productions, to look at doing it in that manner because it's more efficient.

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

And you feel confident that the competence is there to do that, obviously?

**MR. KIRBY:** Yes, I do.

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

Under Grants and Subsidies – and this may be related – it was \$535,500 and a decrease of \$215,000, and then this year it’s back up just about par, a little bit extra money. What would that be?

**MR. KIRBY:** Yes, so there was a revision on \$215,000.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Yes.

**MR. KIRBY:** There was some savings related to professional learning travel and travel and early literacy. Some of the professional learning was done primarily through virtual training, so less need for travel for face-to-face interaction.

The early literacy programming with the Family Resource Centres was for three months instead of the projected 12 months. What happened then it didn’t get started until the final quarter, so that accounts for some of it. There’s some deferred funding available from previous years.

Oh yes, one of the challenges that we’ve had is around recruitment and retention of early learning facilitators for Family Resource Centres, just getting people who are qualified to do the work. In part, it probably has a little bit to do with the sort of geographic dispersion of Family Resource Centres across the province. There are a number of them all over the place.

Savings due to – what’s ITA?

**OFFICIAL:** That’s the early years assessment.

**MR. KIRBY:** Early years assessment pilot schools being less than anticipated. So some savings due to the pilot schools for the early years evaluation being less than anticipated, and then that reduced the overall cost for professional development there.

So there are a number of different activities that either occurred virtual versus face-to-face, or didn’t get started, weren’t distributed over the full 12 months, or that they were able to access deferred funds that they were holding. In some instances, agencies like the Public Libraries

Board or the school districts might have some accumulated deferred funding that they could access, and that’s what happened under here

So really those are the – and I guess the scope of the early years evaluation project being less than anticipated. So those are really the four things that make up the \$215,000.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Is the Every Child Ready to Read program funded under this, or has that been moved too?

**MR. KIRBY:** No, that would be under the Public Libraries Board budget.

**MS. MICHAEL:** So that’s been moved to the provincial libraries board.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah.

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

And you don’t know how much is allocated to that, or do you?

**MR. KIRBY:** No, you’d have to inquire with them directly about that, yeah.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay. Thank you very much.

That’s all I have under that section.

Moving to 3.5.02, could we have an explanation of the salary line, please? It looks like there have been major cuts here.

**MR. KIRBY:** Okay. The first reduction there would be due to two vacant positions. Those savings are basically from two vacant positions. Then there was the director of Child and Family Development, that function was, I guess – that position was eliminated and the responsibilities under that combined with Mary’s position as director.

There was elimination of one program and policy development specialist position and then there was a planned removal of two positions in there, and that’s basically the extent of it. There was a previous plan to remove two positions and then the elimination of a director and program policy development specialist under the flatter, leaner.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Are there still specialists in that area on staff?

**MR. KIRBY:** Yes.

**MS. MICHAEL:** So just one was – how many are still there?

**MR. KIRBY:** I think it's –

**MS. GOSS-PROWSE:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. MICHAEL:** I can't hear you.

**MS. GOSS-PROWSE:** We went from four to three.

**MS. MICHAEL:** From four to three, okay.

Thank you very much.

So all positions that are to be filled are now filled in that area, or are they?

**MR. KIRBY:** The flatter, leaner process, all those competitions and all of that, that's all done.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

**MR. KIRBY:** I don't think we have any vacancies in this area but there would be, in any given time, vacant positions in the department at various levels, though, where people are moving on or retiring, or shift into different departments or what have you.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right.

**MR. KIRBY:** We always have some staffing action ongoing. Monthly, there seems to me that we always have some request for staffing action that are, what I would call, routine.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right.

**MR. KIRBY:** But everything associated with the flatter, leaner changes, those are all complete now.

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

Just some general questions with regard to the Child Care Strategy, the 2012-2022 10-year

strategy; the strategy goal was a 35 per cent increase in spaces by year five. We've reached year five, but spaces have only increased by 27 per cent. So it's an 8 per cent difference.

Could we have just some sense of your thinking on this, and will there be a progress report?

**CHAIR:** After the minister answers, I'll come back to Mr. Brazil and start the clock again.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

Thank you.

**MR. KIRBY:** We are required to do a review in year five.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Yeah.

**MR. KIRBY:** So that will be done. We have reviewed some pieces of it already. For example, we did do a review of the Operating Grant Program in the winter, in January or February, and I have recommendations ahead of me now on where we should be going with that.

There have been concerns, complaints about the Operating Grant Program, particularly in metro, based on anecdotal information, discussions with providers. A lot of it has to do really with economies of scale. It's more expensive for rent in metro and lots of other things that you would have to provide versus smaller communities and so on. So there's that element of it.

We're just about to start, I believe next week, a review of this supplement program. That's the increase in the supplement for ECEs. The subsidy change was announced in the budget. We are going to be signing a bilateral agreement soon, I hope, with the federal government that will allow us to access funds. There's a per capita amount available and also there's a fund that's going to be available for innovation that we could also potentially access.

We need to find ways to incent further creation of regulated spaces in areas outside of metro. For example, in Labrador City-Wabush there is a well-known wait-list of over 100 kids for child care there. There's a similar challenge in Happy Valley-Goose Bay; but as Mary had indicated, in

some instances operators have closed down operations due to changes in demand.

In smaller, rural communities, like, say, where I'm originally from, you will inevitably encounter child care being provided in an unregulated setting. So onus is on us to find ways to incent the development of regulated spaces in those instances, and we're going to be having those conversations internally as we move ahead.

What's the other thing I wanted to tell you about that – oh, yes, full-day kindergarten was never part of the 10-Year Child Care Strategy. So I could make a very good argument in Question Period for you that we created a whole bunch of regulated spaces in the form of full-day kindergarten spaces. That wasn't part of the previous administration's plan. So we created all these spaces that weren't part of that plan.

The family child care has also been very, very successful for a variety of reasons, if you talk to family child care providers about why they're doing it. That's been incredibly successful. We've had a lot of regulated spaces created over there, but I would make an argument that we have exceeded that 35 per cent in the form of the full-day kindergarten spaces.

Those things about the wait-lists in larger centres in Labrador and the need to move from unregulated babysitting to regulated family day homes or whatever in smaller rural communities, those are ways going forward with the monies we have existing in the provincial budget and what's coming to us from the federal government. Those are going to be ways that we will try to come up with creative ideas to incent those things.

If anybody over there has any ideas on going forward with that, if you hear anything from people, whether it's people want to have centres, people who want to start family child cares, all of that, we'd really appreciate any help. Because the further we get along with creating regulated spaces, the better off the system will be.

A lot of what we've done to date has really been exhausted. Sorry for eating into your time there, but a lot of what we've been doing is we're sort of getting to the end of the effectiveness of those

things. So I think we need innovations or new things to move things along, right. Does that make sense?

**MS. MICHAEL:** The next time I speak I want to push a little bit further on that.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yes.

**MS. MICHAEL:** But I'll wait for my turn.

**CHAIR:** Yes, I'm going to move to Mr. Brazil, who's been waiting five minutes.

All right, Mr. Brazil.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay, yes.

I'm going to move to 3.5.03. I'm going to go right down to Grants and Subsidies, line 10, and the difference from \$20 million to \$12.5 million last year, now to \$14.3 million. Can the minister outline the discrepancy there and what that entails? The number of applicants we have, the number of positions that are being engaged there, if there have been agencies that have been turned down and based on what criteria. If you could answer those I'd appreciate it.

**MR. KIRBY:** So the reduction there is entirely because of less than anticipated uptake on the operating grant program. The previous administration had assumed this program was going to be a lot more successful than it has been, and that's why we did the review of the operating program this winter. We just heard a lot of complaints about the current criteria.

I think we'll have to modify the criteria in some way to bring more operators online. Where it has been successful, where centres have signed on to it, it's really popular; especially, I would say, in medium-sized centres if you will, outside of metro, but the uptake on that program has not been what was anticipated previously. So that's the entire amount, the \$7.7 million is attributable to that.

There was some funding reprofiled to Allowances and Assistance, to line 09. Some funds were reprofiled to there in order to right size the budgets that happened under zero based. So that was \$3.3 million. It went from line 10 to line 09. Then there were reductions based on



actual expenditures, \$2.3 million. So reductions under zero-based, that would reflect the reality of what we're spending and anticipate to spend.

Then there was a grant funding that was anticipated to change, that was under for full-day Kindergarten. That was almost \$1.85 million that was planned to decline. So that happened there. Yes, that's largely it.

**MR. BRAZIL:** In reference to – obviously, you're hearing from some providers that the criterion is encompassing and they can adjust to it. What's your plan to be able to move that forward so they do have the access?

**MR. KIRBY:** In the winter, we did consultations regionally by invitation to all the operators, centre operators and that's been done. There was an online survey that folks completed. We got a lot of data from that, a lot of responses. Staff have reviewed all of the feedback that came back and now I'm reviewing the recommendations and going to make recommendations to Cabinet to alter the program, the criteria in some way to make it work better, make it – basically, increase the uptake closer to what your administration had anticipated it would be.

So that's sort of the plan going forward. We did the review; it started the end of January. It's May, so it's moving along as expeditiously as you could hope, right.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Could suppliers or applicants potentially avail of it in this fiscal?

**MR. KIRBY:** Well, that's the hope, yeah. There's some adjustment downward on the grant to reflect what the projected spending would be, but there's a lot of time left in this fiscal. We only just finished one month of it.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

So there's \$2.3 million in reductions made here. What does that account for?

**MR. KIRBY:** Well, that's projected change, I would say – correct me if I'm wrong – in what would be expended through that particular program.

**OFFICIAL:** That's part of the zero-based budgeting.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah, through the zero-based budgeting process it sort of rightsized the budget, if you will. That's the end result.

**MR. BRAZIL:** So that's based solely on the zero-based budgeting process?

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah. Well, the zero-based budgeting process is about saying, how much money do I need for this activity in a given year? If you're not spending whatever amount, you have to make an argument as to why you would continue to have it budgeted if it's not being spent in a given fiscal year.

That's, in essence, the purpose of the zero based. So within that – like I said, there was \$7.7 million lower. If you look under Grants and Subsidies, there was \$20 million budgeted, there was \$12.5 million spent, \$3.3 million went up to Allowances and Assistance, and \$1.8 million of that, \$1.85 million was a planned reduction, and there was an additional zero-based reduction of \$2.25 million based on the zero based. Do you see what I'm saying?

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yeah, I realize and I follow the process, but in this case where you've done due diligence and you've identified there are some good criteria issues that have hindered an uptake on it, wouldn't you still justify in the budget you're moving targets to be able to ensure that people would still have access to it.

**MR. KIRBY:** We have budgeted for what we believe would be the anticipated uptake on this program. I guess in the event that we're wrong, we would go to Treasury Board to get additional allocations from contingency, but based on the experience with the Operating Grant Program since its implementation, or the beginning of its implementation in 2014 – is it, 2013 or 2014?

**OFFICIAL:** 2014.

**MR. KIRBY:** 2014; based on the uptake to date, this is where we see it going. Some centres will simply – I think there was some projection that there would be this enormous number of centres that would come on to this. There are some centres that will never come onto the

Operating Grant because it's their choice not to. So the amount that was budgeted, thinking that whatever number it was, would be availing of this grant was far larger than what the reality has been.

So as part of the zero-based process, we're not going to continue to budget for funds that are simply not being spent, and we can't reasonably project that will be.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yes, I do understand; but, again, there's some hope there that if the criteria changes and it will be implemented, there might be other agencies that can available of it.

**MR. KIRBY:** If you have any ideas about how we might change your criteria to improve the uptake on this program, I'd gladly work with you on it.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay. I'll look forward to that.

Can we move to 3.5.04, Child and Family Development? I want to look at the Grants and Subsidies here under 10.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yes.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Can you give me an outline of exactly what that includes.

**MR. KIRBY:** These are family resource centres.

**MR. BRAZIL:** And that hasn't changed? When I look at their operating going from what was budgeted, revised, and this year it stays fluent across; no intake for added expenditures around insurance cost increases, or rental cost increases, or salary cost increases, or cost of living increases as such.

**MR. KIRBY:** There's been no anticipated change.

Mary, do you have any –

**MS. GOSS-PROWSE:** At this point, we have had that budget for a considerable length of time and there's always been a little bit of extra in there. Last year, we opened a new hub, the St. John's Native Friendship Centre. This budget represents about 31 hubs and over 120 satellites

where they wouldn't be full time, they may be offering a couple of programs in different communities around the province. Their costs and their things like insurance have tended to stay fairly static. They've been able to work within the budgets they've had so far.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Have you had requests for additional monies from these organizations, though?

**MS. GOSS-PROWSE:** Not directly, no.

**MR. BRAZIL:** So the boards haven't come in and said our normal operating is \$194,000, but we're requesting \$260,000 over a period of time?

**MS. GOSS-PROWSE:** Not since I've been director, no.

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

Madam Chair, that was my time.

**CHAIR:** You're good? Do you want a couple of extra minutes? I did shortchange you in the last section.

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

**CHAIR:** I want everybody leaving feeling the process was fair.

**MR. BRAZIL:** No, I'm good on that section there.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Ms. Michael, did you have anything else on that section up to 3.5.04?

**MS. MICHAEL:** Well, 3.5.03.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

**MS. MICHAEL:** I just want to come back. Minister, you did talk about the importance of the Family Child Care Initiative. These are regulated spaces, yet, it's our understanding that the start-up grants have been discontinued. Is that correct? If so, what was the rationale for that?

**MR. KIRBY:** Yes, the program was scheduled to end as of March 31. We decided to maintain the infant portion of it despite the fact that it was ending.

We continued the infant portion of it, right?

**MS. MICHAEL:** You've continued what?

**MR. KIRBY:** The infant portion.

**MS. MICHAEL:** The infant portion.

**MR. KIRBY:** If you look at all the national reports that we've had on child care, one of the sore points, most challenging ends of it has been to find infant spaces. Because of that, we've made an argument to maintain the infant spaces.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right.

**MR. KIRBY:** Or the infant start-up grants.

**MS. MICHAEL:** I don't know if this has been brought to you directly; it has been brought to me directly by one person, anyway. There were some people who were in the process – I'm totally aware of one in particular – of applying for the start-up grant and got caught in the changeover, started putting things in place and then got told there was no grant.

Have you had those situations presented to you? Have you looked at the possibility of grandparenting in people who had started the process?

**MR. KIRBY:** Mary?

**MS. GOSS-PROWSE:** The family child care; the regional offices and the family child care agency – which are the ones that deal directly with the family child care homes and those that are applying to be licensed – were aware of the ending of this program.

Anyone who was ready to be licensed was licensed before the end of March and signed their contracts before the end of March. They will be paid their grant even though it's after the beginning of the fiscal. But if you weren't licensed prior to March 31, it was a pilot program that was introduced in 2011. Under the

strategy, it was given an additional five years of funding to end March 31 of last year.

Really, without developing an entire program and having it funded through the budget process we couldn't continue the start-up grant piece of it. The infant stimulus grant piece is the piece that goes monthly to family child care providers who provide infant-specific spaces. It reduces parent fees in those settings. We provide up to \$200 per space per month so that they will reduce their fees.

I have not heard directly, from either the region or the agency, of anyone who was at the point of signing their contract and couldn't sign it. They may have had some that were in very initial stages of licensing that just couldn't be processed and likely wouldn't be ready to be approved or licensed before the March 31 deadline.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Well, if anybody comes to me or if a person comes back to me, I'm just going to send them to you and you can decide what to do.

Minister, with regard to the full-day kindergarten – and, actually, we had talked about this – that would have an impact on the child care spaces. I'm aware of that and I know that you're aware of this issue too. However, there are problems with after-school programs; they're very expensive.

We still have that issue. You might have more kids in full-day kindergarten, but we will have this issue of after school being very expensive for some parents and really causing real problems.

**MR. KIRBY:** That did come back in the operating grant review.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Pardon?

**MR. KIRBY:** That did come back in the operating grant review.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right.

**MR. KIRBY:** There were concerns expressed about the feasibility of offering after-school programming.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right.

**MR. KIRBY:** It's something that we have to have a deeper dive in. Other jurisdictions in Canada have all sorts of different models where after-school programs are subsidized in different ways. We're going to have a look at how that's done and if we can avail of similar models. But, yeah, that's something that has come back, there's no doubt about it. We have to work on that.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

Thank you.

**MR. KIRBY:** Hopefully, like I said, we have significant new monies that we can access now.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Right.

**MR. KIRBY:** With the federal money, this is something we will go after.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

Thank you very much.

**MR. KIRBY:** That's part of the plan.

**MS. MICHAEL:** I think that's it, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR:** Mr. Brazil, are you ready to move from the section?

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yes, I am.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Shall the titles carry for 3.5.01 to 3.5.04?

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against?

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.5.01 through 3.5.04 carried.

**CLERK:** 3.6.01.

**CHAIR:** Shall 3.6.01 carry?

I will give Ms. Michael the remaining time on the clock.

**MS. MICHAEL:** I just have one question, Madam Chair. The Grants and Subsidies have gone up and that's good.

My question to the minister is: When will the review of the libraries be completed?

**MR. KIRBY:** Your guess is as good as mine at this point. I had hoped to receive it in the winter. We're no longer in the winter. The board of the Public Libraries, the Provincial Information & Libraries Resources Board, will make the determination as to when it's publicly released.

I've not been given any indication as to when that's going to happen. I assume, since it's been worked on since last fall, that it is going to be reasonably soon. I would hope that we would have it before the House of Assembly rises for the summer, but I can't give you any more information than that.

I would encourage you to contact the PILRB office and inquire with them about what the status is. Sooner than later, but that's about all I can tell you. I don't have a date. It's not been provided to me.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

Minister, is it your intent that once you get it, it will become public right away?

**MR. KIRBY:** I'll get it after they make it public.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Oh, you won't get it until they make it public?

**MR. KIRBY:** I don't plan to have any copy of that document prior to its public release.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Okay.

Thank you very much.

Since it's my last time speaking, just thank you very much. This has been very informative and helpful.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Can we expect to get the briefing books? That's been practice.

**MR. KIRBY:** Sure. I don't see any problem with that, yeah.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Thank you very much.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms. Michael.

Mr. Brazil.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Just a couple of quick things around the libraries there.

Minister, do I understand that the status quo right now stays in place for the libraries.

**MR. KIRBY:** Uh-huh.

**MR. BRAZIL:** No closures, no announcements. People don't have to worry about moving furniture or packing up books or anything at this point?

**MR. KIRBY:** That's correct.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

In the review itself, will that have recommendations relevant to closures or it is solely around efficiencies and improvements?

**MR. KIRBY:** I'm not aware of the contents of the report. I don't have any visibility in it at all. I am not a participant in the process.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Well, from what it was contracted. I mean the money came from your department, I assume.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yeah, so the –

**MR. BRAZIL:** So there must have been criteria about what you were funding?

**MR. KIRBY:** The funding for the consultant is provided to provide that consultancy service to the Provincial Information & Libraries and

Board. It's provided to them, not to the department. Government is covering the cost.

**MR. BRAZIL:** What was that amount? Can you share that amount to me?

**MR. KIRBY:** I don't have it. It's publicly available but if you go back to – it's certainly publicly available but we can dig it up. It's been reported in the media.

Those consultancy services are being paid for by government as per the request from the PILRB. I'm not a participant in the process. There's a steering committee that's joint from the department and the public libraries board. They're working on it.

My understanding is that an initial draft was provided to the steering committee. They went back to the consultant looking for additional information to be added. I'm familiar with the way these things work, that they might want emphasis on one place or another. I'm not aware of what recommendations they'll make. I'll find out around the same time you do.

**MR. BRAZIL:** No, fair enough. I'm just curious to know if this was a closed contract or a floating one. Is it still costing the taxpayers more money because it's gone longer and longer as EY do it?

**MR. KIRBY:** No one has come to me looking for additional money for the reviews.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

**MR. KIRBY:** I mean it's more or less done, I guess, with the exception of the final draft. But when that's going to materialize, again, you're free to contact the public libraries board and inquire about the status.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Okay.

When you get back to me with exactly how much the contract was, the number –

**MR. KIRBY:** It's the same number that was reported by CBC, VOXM and *The Telegram*.

**MR. BRAZIL:** It hasn't changed?

**MR. KIRBY:** That's what my understanding is.

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

As you've outlined, when you know, we'll know  
—

**MR. KIRBY:** Basically, yeah.

**MR. BRAZIL:** — what the answer is and that's fine.

Just a couple of last points; again, I want to reiterate, I'd like to have a copy of the minister's binder and as we noted at the beginning, an organizational chart that has outlined exactly the positions there. I'd also request if there's been any change in the number of employees within the department and an outline on that. If we could have that as part of your organizational chart, we'd appreciate it.

I know we touched on it. I've made some notes and certainly you've been open on that. That's fine.

**MR. KIRBY:** I think you would have the number of the employee reductions, or position reductions I guess is probably more appropriate, that are —

**MR. BRAZIL:** But some may have been contractual and these types of things. If you have a clean number that you can share with us.

**MR. KIRBY:** The number of reductions, I think, was tabled in the House of Assembly here prior to the Easter break. Was it one day?

**OFFICIAL:** Yes.

**MR. BRAZIL:** I can look that up, but if you're putting together your organizational chart I would think it's at your fingertips. It would be quicker than mine. If you could add that to it, I'd appreciate it.

**MR. KIRBY:** We'll see. If nothing else, I'll get the document that was tabled here that has outlined that.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yes, okay. I appreciate that.

Thank you, Minister.

Thank you to your staff.

**CHAIR:** Minister, did you have a couple of remarks to make at closing?

**MR. KIRBY:** No, I don't.

**CHAIR:** Okay. A couple of things here — okay, Mr. Reid has a question.

Thank you.

**MR. REID:** Just in relation to the documents that are being provided to the Opposition parties. I'd like that to be also provided to the Government Members of the Committee, if that's possible.

**MR. KIRBY:** Absolutely. That's no problem.

**MR. REID:** Okay.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

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

**CHAIR:** A couple of things before we ask for a motion to adjourn. The next meeting of the Social Services Committee is at 6 p.m. here in the Chamber on May 2, and that will be Municipal Affairs and Environment. If substitutions are required by any of the parties you will need to notify the Government House Leader, and that happens in writing.

I want to thank everybody for their co-operation this morning, and with that I'll call for a motion to adjourn.

**MR. REID:** So called.

**CHAIR:** Mr. Reid.

Thank you everyone. Have a great day.

On motion, the Committee adjourned.