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Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

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Honourable Perry Trimper, MHA

SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

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Kevin Parsons, MHA
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Appearing:

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Hon. Dale Kirby, MHA, Minister
Bob Gardiner, Deputy Minister
Paul Smith, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate & School Construction
Tracy Stamp, Manager of Budgeting
Kara Connors, Executive Assistant
Mary Goss-Prowse, Director, Early Learning & Childhood Development
Christopher Pickard, Director of Communications
Elizabeth Churchill, Assistant Deputy Minister, K-12 Education & Early Childhood Development

Also Present

Paul Lane, MHA
Lorraine Michael, MHA
Tracey Perry, MHA
Susan Williams, Researcher, Third Party Office
James Sheppard, Researcher, Official Opposition Office

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

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 9:05 a.m. in the Assembly Chamber.

CHAIR (Haley): Good morning, everyone.

We're here for Estimates for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. We're going to take about two hours to run through this.

If we could start with having the Committee introduce themselves.

MS. PERRY: Tracey Perry, Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MR. SHEPPARD: James Sheppard, Researcher, Opposition Office.

MS. MICHAEL: Lorraine Michael, MHA, St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, and, Chair, I'd like to point out that Susan will be sitting next to me when she comes. She's our researcher and she had to run back upstairs.

CHAIR: Okay.

MS. MICHAEL: Susan Williams.

MR. WARR: Brian Warr, Baie Verte - Green Bay.

MS. PARSLEY: Betty Parsley, Harbour Main.

MR. DEAN: Jerry Dean, MHA, Exploits.

CHAIR: What we're going to do this morning, I'll ask the minister to give his remarks and introduce his officials as well.

MR. KIRBY: I don't have any remarks, but I'm Dale Kirby. I'll just let folks introduce themselves.

CHAIR: Okay.

MR. GARDINER: Bob Gardiner, Deputy Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

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

MS. STAMP: Tracy Stamp, Manager of Budgeting.

MS. CHURCHILL: Elizabeth Churchill, ADM.

MR. PICKARD: Christopher Pickard, Director of Communications.

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

MS. CONNORS: Kara Connors, the minister's EA.

CLERK (Hawley George): Subhead 1.1.01.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 carry?

The first responder, of course, will have 15 minutes and then we'll alternate 10 minutes back and forth.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Minister, and everyone for joining us this morning.

My first question I'd like to ask is if I could get a copy of the minister's binder from today.

MR. KIRBY: Uh-huh.

MS. PERRY: The other statistic I was looking for in terms of general numbers would be the total number of students enrolled in the province for 2017 and 2018. Is that figure readily available?

MR. KIRBY: For which year?

MS. PERRY: 2017 and 2018.

MR. KIRBY: 65,398.

MS. PERRY: For 2017 or 2018?

MR. KIRBY: 2017-2018. That's the school year, September 2017 to June 2018.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

And can we get 2016 to 2017 as well?

MR. KIRBY: 66,323.

MS. PERRY: Okay. Thank you, Minister.

In 1.1.01, I don't see any significant changes there in terms overall operating but when we look at 1.2.01, the budgeted amount for 2017-18 for Salaries was \$818,000, but the actual expenditure was \$1,847,000. Can you explain that variance?

MR. KIRBY: For Salaries?

MS. PERRY: Executive Support, 1.2.01.01.

MR. KIRBY: Severance.

MS. PERRY: Severance?

MR. KIRBY: The former deputy minister, the former assistant deputy minister, secretary to the ADM.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: Redundancy, leave and severance payments.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

Minister, my apologies, but there was a question I had there in 1.1.01. Under Salaries for the Minister's Office as well, there was a slight increase in the amount allocated from last year to this year of \$3,500.

Can the minister explain this difference?

MR. KIRBY: Step increases.

MS. PERRY: Can the minister provide details regarding what the Transportation and Communications for his office would be?

MR. KIRBY: What's in it?

MS. PERRY: Yeah. What type of expenditures do you foresee the Minister's Office incurring regarding –?

MR. KIRBY: Well, it was significantly reduced in prior years. Basically we're not predicting a whole lot of change, more or less school visits. I've been to 168 unique schools. I mean I've been to a lot of schools and that's counting the ones I've been to 10 times over and so on.

So I try to get out to as many schools as possible, and that's largely the case. It's a small amount of interprovincial meetings that the minister in this department goes to annually. That would be the council of ministers of education Canada and, more or less, the Atlantic equivalent, CAMET.

MS. PERRY: Okay, Pan-Canadian meetings and stuff.

MR. KIRBY: Yeah.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

Back to 1.2.01, under the Salaries what positions make up that salary total for \$883,900?

MR. KIRBY: What positions are there?

MS. PERRY: Yeah.

MR. KIRBY: It's the ADM. One ADM, two ADMs, director of communications, media relations manager, secretary to the deputy minister, secretary to the ADM and public relations specialist. So two ADMS, three comms, two secretaries.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: Oh sorry, and the associate deputy minister who's on for a three-year period for the task force implementation.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

How many employees provided executive support in 2016, how many in 2017 and what is the expected number for the coming year?

MR. KIRBY: I don't think there's any change in that – it's the same in '17 and '18. So in '16,

there was a unit moved to Transportation and Works, and an ADM position was eliminated. There were some other, I guess, associated reductions with the flatter, leaner. But there's no change from last year to this year in terms of positions.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

And how many communications staff are there?

MR. KIRBY: There are three. There were three prior to my joining the department, and there are still three.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

And is three more than most departments would have?

MR. KIRBY: No, I don't think so; I think that's pretty well standard.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

Are we still on 1.1.01, or can I go to 2.1?

CHAIR: Keep going.

MS. PERRY: I can keep going?

CHAIR: Sure.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

Under 2.1.01, Administrative Support, under 01, Salaries, this amount was under spent by \$133,000 last year, and is \$59,800 lower for the coming year. So can you explain the difference?

MR. KIRBY: Savings due to co-op student position not being filled for two semesters, delayed recruitment, vacancies, lower overtime, positions replaced at lower levels – partially offset by redundancy payments for manager, finance and general operations.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: Attrition management – so that's the other one, yeah.

OFFICIAL: (Inaudible.)

MR. KIRBY: Yeah, gotcha.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

So what positions make up the salary total overall?

MR. KIRBY: For Administrative Support?

Is that broken out anywhere in this salary report? Is it here?

OFFICIAL: (Inaudible.)

MR. KIRBY: Okay. It's a departmental controller, manager of finance and busing, the manager of budgeting, financial analyst, organizational budget analyst, word processing equipment operator I, finance officer – those are all permanent – temporary clerk typist III, departmental program coordinator, summer students, co-op students, manager of human resources, supervisor of teacher payroll services, five payroll clerks III – that's teachers' payroll – payroll clerk II – they're all permanent – temporary administrative officer, functional support, department program coordinator – two of them – training specialist, three payroll clerk III's and one payroll clerk II. That's all.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

So have any positions been removed or added?

MR. KIRBY: Pardon me?

MS. PERRY: Have any positions been eliminated or added in this section?

MR. KIRBY: There were positions that were removed in the flatter, leaner exercise that took place prior to last year's budget and there's been no – has there been any attrition or anything?

OFFICIAL: (Inaudible.)

MR. KIRBY: No, I don't think so.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

What purchased services made up the \$49,200?

MR. KIRBY: \$49,200?

MS. PERRY: Yes, Purchased Services, 2.1.01. It was the actual expenditures versus the budgeted amount of \$62,700.

MR. KIRBY: The reason why the number is lower is we reduced the number of photocopiers that we have in the department. Lower budgeting for lower expenditures than budgeted for, for shredding, for banking fees, for media monitoring, and that would be what we would attribute the savings to.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

Can the minister advise what the grants and subsidies are?

MR. KIRBY: Those are for small grants for schools, for example, for one-offs for playground equipment or IT or –

MS. PERRY: Like the \$1,000 grants and \$1,500 here and there.

MR. KIRBY: Yes, small grants, discretionary.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: That amount was also larger prior to my coming to office. I believe that used to be \$48,000 or something like that.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

Moving on to 2.1.02, Assistance to Educational Agencies, can the minister advise what agencies and committees receive funding under Grants and Subsidies?

MR. KIRBY: Yes, they're all the same as prior years. So it's the T.I. Murphy Centre, Cultural Connections, the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, Learning Disabilities Association, Encounters with Canada and the Federation of School Councils.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

You spent \$366,700 less than you had budgeted. Can you explain why that variance was there?

MR. KIRBY: Yes, it was the rightsizing. So the funding for the arts and cultural strategy was

transferred to another area of the department, to Supplies and Curriculum Development, for the purchase of fine arts equipment and cultural resources. So that basically explains the difference. It was a transfer.

MS. PERRY: Okay, so that's going to pop up somewhere else is it?

MR. KIRBY: Yes, in School Supplies and Curriculum Development.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

What accounts for the reduction of \$438,500 in funding from this year's budget allocation to last year's? This year you're only budgeting \$1,588,000.

MR. KIRBY: Yes, that's the transfer of that amount from arts and culture strategy for K-12 to School Supplies and Curriculum Development.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

Would there be any group that received funding last year that's not going to receive it this year?

MR. KIRBY: No.

Part of that was always a purchase of material, so it was just moved to a more appropriate line.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

2.1.03 now, under Salaries again, what positions make up these salaries?

MR. KIRBY: Manager, clerk typist III, information management analyst, manager of IM, senior policy planning and research analyst, program and policy development specialist – two of them – two information management analysts, two information management technicians and one industrial development officer.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

Can the Minister explain what professional services are included in the allocation? What professional services were purchased and, as

well, why there's a decrease from last year to this year.

MR. KIRBY: The Premier's Task Force was put in there.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: That would be the removal of funding for professional services for the members of the Premier's Task Force. That would be the largest part of that reduction and then savings from the contract to implement the new teachers' payroll system.

MS. PERRY: Okay, so of the \$113,000 that remains budgeted, what is that being allocated for?

MR. KIRBY: I think it's a contract. It would be outside expertise on policy, strategy, planning and evaluation.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: Occasionally we would have need for specific expertise that we don't have and we would consult for that. It happens fairly rarely so that's why the number is so small.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

CHAIR: Ms. Michael.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, before I ask any questions, first of all thank you and your staff for being here.

I'm going to assume that your binder will have details like the list of staff in the various salary lines, for example. I'll probably only ask are there any changes in staff from last year, rather than have you list everything out when I need to.

MR. KIRBY: The only staff change that's really significant over the past year has been the addition of the associate deputy minister to oversee the task force implementation. There are a small number of positions – research, I believe – supporting that function. Then, there will be an addition of staff this year as outlined in the task force for those functions recommended by the

task force report; for example, for multicultural education, reading and so on.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you.

MR. KIRBY: There will be additional positions added because, as you can imagine, sort of a cascading level of responsibility with personnel required at the departmental level, at the district level and then within schools themselves. It's all sort of supporting the same agenda.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you.

I'm also going to assume that the binder as usual – where there are grants and subsidies – will include the lists so we don't need to go through the list each time.

MR. KIRBY: Yes.

MS. MICHAEL: Then, added to that, one more assumption – just testing all my assumptions – if, after we get the binder we have some questions, we can always get in touch with your deputy minister.

Thank you very much.

Having said all that, I would like to go back to 1.2.01, Professional Services. There was no budget line for Professional Services but there was a revision up to \$700.

Can you explain why that was added in? What was the expenditure that was needed and, now, there is money continuing in Professional Services. There was nothing budgeted initially.

MR. KIRBY: There was \$700 required to complete a redundancy exercise for an employee recommended by the Human Resource Secretariat.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay. Thank you.

You're trying to keep that line open with \$200.

MR. KIRBY: I guess. Changes resulting from zero-based budgeting, it says.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay. Thank you very much.

I think Ms. Perry has covered all my questions up to 2.1.03, so I'll move to 2.2.01, Youth Interns. Last year, there was \$414,000 budgeted in Salaries, but it looks like nothing was expended. Then, this year, it's \$391,500. Could you explain all that?

MR. KIRBY: Sure.

The amount of money, the \$414,000, was budgeted in anticipation of the continuation of the former Youth Internship Program. That's a program that doesn't exist anymore that the department was delivering. The program has been changed to a federal program; obviously, you can see the transfer in. It's a federal program that's been changed to something now called the Digital Skills for Youth Program. It has significantly different eligibility criteria than the former Youth Internship Program.

Because of that, because it falls outside of the mandate of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development as a result the eligibility changes, we decided we would not be participating in it. We advised Advanced Education, Skills and Labour that it's something they ought to look into because that new federal initiative is something that would, in our opinion, enhance their lines of work. It's more consistent with what they're doing.

While we're not participating in the program directly, funding is included for 2018-19 in the event that AESL receives funding approval for the federal government. At some point we'll have to do an exercise where we hand the money from here to their pages in the event that they do, or otherwise the money will go off the pages altogether.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

Okay. Thank you very much.

MR. KIRBY: I'm not sure what the minister's intention is at this point.

MS. MICHAEL: Right. Thank you so much. That's helpful.

I have a couple of general questions, Minister. I'm glad to see there's going to be implementation of – and you've already started

– task force recommendations, 82 of them. I understand there will be \$6.9 million to implement some of that in this year's budget.

Could you give us some of the highlights of the expenditures that are going to occur around that?

MR. KIRBY: Sure.

The plan is to implement the recommendations across the school system over a three-year period beginning this year. In the Education Action Plan that will be released before the end of the school year – sometime in June we anticipate – we'll provide a greater level of detail than we've been able to provide to date because they're still hashing out specifics on numbers of positions and where and so on.

What we can say is that we are making a number of changes in personnel. In the schools that will have fully implemented the task force policies – for example, I think the learning resource teacher allocation was reduced in 2013 from one LRT per 750 students down to one LRT per 1,000 students. In schools that come under the ambit of the task force implementation phase I, II and III, they will now have one LRT at a ratio that's closer to one per six or 650. It will be a significant improvement. As a result, we will be adding more LRTs or in the common parlance, teacher librarians to the system.

We'll also be adding, as per the recommendations of the task force, two new functions, two new roles in schools. One being reading specialists. These are people who will work with children with early reading intervention, specifically grades kindergarten to grade six, to ensure that kids are reading at grade level or above.

We're also adding – with a view to not changing the special services model in schools – a new position called teaching and learning assistant. You'll see in some of the budget documents it says instructional assistant, which is sort of a bit of a fluid use of language, but teaching and learning assistants will be provided to schools. They will be basically in between – the best way to describe it would be in between a student assistant and a teacher.

A teaching and learning assistant is much like what other jurisdictions have by way of – they call them educational assistants or teaching assistants, or teachers' aids in the UK. They are somebody who has a certain amount of professional expertise, either provided through their post-secondary training or through professional development through the department or district in pedagogic instruction, evaluation and assessment. They will be able to perform a number of functions with teachers to give them that extra set of hands.

We're also providing new funds for the purchase of reading intervention material. For example, Leveled Literacy Intervention kits or LLIs, or reading recovery materials that enable reading specialists and teachers, for example, instructional resource teachers or learning resource teachers to work with children to bring their reading levels up to where they ought to be or better. We also have additional funds for school library materials as well.

In addition to that, everywhere the task force model will be implemented, everybody in the school will participate in professional development on the new model of special services intervention and reading intervention. There is significant new funding in there for that because we often heard from teachers that we keep increasing the expectation level when it comes to delivery of services but – I've been teaching for 20 years and we didn't have that back when I graduated from MUN 20 years ago. So there needs to be a continuous improvement process that goes on with teachers to bring them up to the level of knowledge that exists in education today.

Another task force recommendation we're fulfilling in this is the provision of bursaries for mathematics teachers to get a bursary to do mathematics courses from Memorial University of Newfoundland. That's something that was recommended as far back, I believe, as one of the royal commissions on education when Judy Foote was Minister of Education, which wasn't yesterday. I'm sure she wouldn't take some exception of me saying it like that. So that's another recommendation that's being fulfilled.

Those are sort of the high level – it's a high-level overview of what we're doing and you'll see more as that rolls out.

With the Education Action Plan – at least since the 2015 election, we've always said that you had the task force and then our response to that will be the Education Action Plan. It mightn't be titled the education action plan, but when you see another document with more detail from the department that's what it'll be. We want to do that before the end of the school year so teachers and administrations and the district, everybody, parents, are aware of what's going to happen where in September and how.

MS. MICHAEL: Could I ask the minister to clarify one point of what he has said?

Minister, I don't have the head in front of me, but you mentioned teaching and learning assistants, that new role, and I remember that recommendation. It seems to me that in the head – I'll say it now because you've talked about it now. It looks to me like money has been taken from the Student Assistants line to go into the line for the teaching and learning assistance. It doesn't look like new money, because the Student Assistants budget has gone down and money has gone in. So –

MR. KIRBY: Where's the line you're reading?

MS. MICHAEL: Susan may have it. 3.1.02 is the –

MR. KIRBY: 3.1.02, where does it say Student Assistants?

MS. MICHAEL: Yeah, under Student Assistants, under Grants and Subsidies.

CHAIR: 3.1.01 –

MS. MICHAEL: 3.1. –

MR. KIRBY: Yeah, you can see there that it's sort of a right-sizing if you will. You can see that for 2017-18 we budgeted \$23,536,600 for Student Assistants. The district only required \$22,000. It was about a million dollars under-spending for Student Assistants.

This line has gone up very quickly over the past, say, eight years. In order to better reflect what it is the district is spending or spent last year, we reduced it not by the full amount that was underspent, which has been a million dollars, by \$300,000.

So it's more of a right-sizing exercise than anything else. The amount of money for the teaching and learning assistants would be significantly higher than \$300,000.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay. You're right.

Thank you very much. Since you brought it up there I thought it was good to get it clarified then.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

MS. PERRY: I want to go back to 2.1.03. I just had one more question, two more questions on that.

In terms of the payroll accounting system, what is this and why was it implemented?

MR. KIRBY: Where is that written?

MS. PERRY: When you gave me an answer just then on the Operating Accounts –

MR. KIRBY: Oh, okay.

MS. PERRY: – you talked about the payroll system.

MR. KIRBY: This was something the previous administration initiated, this PeopleSoft.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: Maybe somebody who knows what it is can tell us. It has something to do with payroll and management employees' information. Is that right?

MR. SMITH: PeopleSoft replaced the older Genesis base. That was the name of the software from years and years ago. That was several years back when there was a big initiative to replace government's core payroll system. In addition to that, obviously, teachers' pay was brought into scope on that project.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

MR. SMITH: A huge project, and there are still little pieces being, tweaks made to the system now as you would big systems.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

Can the minister or his officials provide some insight into the role of Information Management in the department?

MR. KIRBY: I don't know if somebody else wants to take that.

When I came to the department there was as a director of Information Management and a number of positions underneath. In the flatter, leaner exercise we eliminated or merged the director of Information Management with another director. So it created one position where there were two, and then – yeah, but I don't know.

What does – manages – puts binders together. Not to diminish their work, but it's – they do manage the flow of paper and – ATIPP is another thing.

MR. SMITH: ATIPP, obviously, is a big part of it, but every department's has a certain information management methodology approach it needs to follow based on the standard of government.

So management of information, information systems, insuring that it meets all their requirements: privacy, security controls and proper storage. There are information retention rules that we have to follow. We have a very small, concise group of individuals that manage that.

MR. KIRBY: For protection of privacy and all of that. For example, when somebody ATIPPs my email and they have to go in and search through all my email. So they do all that. Like I said, there's obviously protection of privacy and everything that we do has to be recorded in whatever way, everything that's filed, I suppose, right?

MS. PERRY: Yeah.

MR. KIRBY: It's an important part of – I guess what you say – modern workplace. I don't know who did the job. I would expect that prior to this era it would have been a lot more people doing what they're doing, but by virtue of technology it's downsized the number of people required to do those tasks. Probably what we have now is more highly-trained people versus a whole bunch of, sort of, people with a lesser degree of training, right?

MS. PERRY: Okay.

Moving into 3.1.01, under section 09, Allowances and Assistance. This amount was not allocated in last year. So what is the purpose of the \$40,000?

MR. KIRBY: Allowances and Assistance, implementation of the task force. That's the bursaries for teachers to do math courses at MUN.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

Under Grants and Subsidies, can the minister advise the number of teachers who are entering the education system this year?

MR. KIRBY: No, couldn't tell you.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: In any given year, at least, since my couple of years here, there have been several hundred teachers eligible to retire, but not all of them retire.

MS. PERRY: Right.

MR. KIRBY: It's funny, I had somebody say to me yesterday: I'm finally going to retire this year, I'm a senior citizen. So that person was eligible to retire five years ago, but continued to teach. So it's hard to say.

What I can say, though, is that between 2013 and 2017, when there were significant reductions in the allocation formula, there would have been very few current practicing teachers who would have, sort of, lost their employment.

I think the net effect of reducing the allocation figures, increasing class-size caps and the other

changes that were made in prior years to administration and LRTs and so on, the net effect of that has really been that there have been fewer opportunities for new teachers.

Not that there haven't been any, because there have literally been hundreds because there are sort of the brass ring, which is the full-time permanent position, but there are also always contractual, replacement positions due to maternity leave, sick leave, family leave, voluntary leave and then more sessional-type openings, smaller teachers who are doing a 0.3 or a 0.5 allocation. Some teachers teach in different parts of the city, for example, where they have 0.7 somewhere and a 0.2 somewhere else.

Anyways, I'm just sort of meandering here. So it's difficult to say how many new – ask in September and we'll know.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: But at this time of the year it's really hard because it's only within the next 30 days or so that schools will be fully informed of what their preliminary allocation will be for September. Then they'll make some decisions and so on based on that, and then they'll be staffing up, right up until August. Then more or less the final allocations will be known because we have people moving back from Fort McMurray, or out to Fort McMurray, so there's always a certain amount of fluctuation in school populations. When you bring it right down to the micro level, that's where you make the final decisions before the beginning of the school year.

So there's always a little bit of flexibility, but not a whole lot beyond what will be known in the next month or so.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: They're getting allocations now, right? Yeah.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

Can the Minister advise the number of teaching positions, currently, for the province?

MR. KIRBY: What's the number of teachers at the moment? I was going to say 6000, 5500.

OFFICIAL: Fifty-two hundred.

MR. KIRBY: Around 5,200.

MS. PERRY: Fifty-two hundred, okay.

Will there be any teaching positions added to the system this year?

MR. KIRBY: Well, there definitely will be the reading specialists.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: And the additional learning resources teachers.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

Can you provide us with some background on Innovation teachers?

MR. KIRBY: Innovation teachers?

MS. PERRY: Bear with me because I'm filling in.

MR. KIRBY: Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation Teachers.

MS. PERRY: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: CDLI teachers.

MS. PERRY: CDLI, yes.

MR. KIRBY: Those are the teachers who are attached to the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: So when you're down in Hermitage –

MS. PERRY: Yeah.

MR. KIRBY: – and you're doing your Math 32-whatever –

MS. PERRY: Yeah.

MR. KIRBY: – and you're looking at the screen. That's a –

MS. PERRY: I actually have a CDLI teacher who lives in my community, and teaches CDLI.

MR. KIRBY: Yeah, so as a part of the Flatter, Leaner exercise we agreed to one of the prior GRI submissions from a school district was to take over CDLI. The vast majority of the CDLI instruction is in English, or the use of the system is in English, so we devolved CDLI to the school district, so transferred over to them, which was, I would argue, the appropriate thing to do now because, first of all, we don't do instruction, that's school districts. That's their mandate as per the Schools Act.

It might have made a little bit of sense in terms of the nature of organizations to have CDLI in the department when we had five or more English school districts. Now, where there's only one big one, it sort of made sense to devolve that out and then, of course, reduce the amount of administration within our department as a result of moving that over.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

My time's up again, Lorraine. That goes fast.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you.

Well, I'll just continue on in that section, Minister, 3.1.01, and I'll probably be a bit more specific.

Under the Grants and Subsidies, you've indicated that there will be an increase in the number of regular teachers, the reading specialists and some other of the positions. So I'm assuming it's that increase that mainly accounts for the \$22 million?

MR. KIRBY: No.

MS. MICHAEL: No?

MR. KIRBY: No. Remember last year there was a significant reduction in the amount of money for teaching services in the order of \$22 million –

MS. MICHAEL: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: – because of the way teachers are paid.

MS. MICHAEL: Oh, right.

MR. KIRBY: In 2017-18 there were 25 pay periods but in '18-'19 there are 26.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: Teachers are paid – the way that they're paid there needs to be an adjustment every five or six years. I know this because it certainly impacted my household; my wife is a teacher. In that fifth or sixth year there's a three-week pay gap between your pay instead of two. That's to correct for the fact that there are 365 days in a year. So it doesn't work out nicely to whatever – seven times, whatever.

That is a significant change. In five or six years you'll see that go back down again and then the adjustment will happen again.

MS. MICHAEL: That's right. I forgot this was an adjustment year.

Under the CDLI there is an increase of \$104,000. Do we have more teachers coming in there or more services?

MR. KIRBY: CDLI; yes, that's where the teachers' salaries are there. The teachers' salaries for CDLI are taken into that line.

MS. MICHAEL: Of course.

MR. KIRBY: They had the same issue with the pay gap.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay. Thank you very much.

The substitute teacher's income has gone up but that wouldn't be part of the pay gap, would it? The pay gap would refer to those who would be in permanent positions I would imagine.

MR. KIRBY: For the Substitute Teachers – Leave or the Substitute Teachers – Professional Development?

MS. MICHAEL: Both have gone up. The first one is by \$2.2 million.

MR. KIRBY: The first one is associated with the pay gap. The second one is associated with the task force implementation.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay. Thank you very much.

I can't remember. Under Teaching Services, what does Employee Benefits refer to here? It's different in different departments?

MR. KIRBY: You want to know what the benefits are.

MS. MICHAEL: Yes, because it's a significant line.

MR. KIRBY: The Employee Benefits would be the CPP, the EI, the pension and I guess the health plans.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: Severance expenses were transferred, so that's part of transferred to consolidated funds.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

Is that part of the reason why that figure has gone down by \$4 million?

MR. KIRBY: Yeah, exactly.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: Every year there's a reduction in the number of active teachers or teaching units allocated as a result of the declining population, declining enrolment.

MS. MICHAEL: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: So then there would need to be a commensurate correction in what we're budgeting for severance.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

MR. KIRBY: If in a given year the number of teachers is 50 fewer because we have X number of hundred fewer children then down the road we're going to pay X amount less in severance costs, because there are fewer people exiting the system down the road.

MS. MICHAEL: Yes.

Okay. Thank you very much.

I think those are all the questions I had about that. They've all been answered. Thank you.

3.1.02, School Board Operations; the Regular Operating Grant, I notice, has gone down from what was budgeted last year by almost \$500,000.

MR. KIRBY: Yeah, so if you look again at the amount that was budgeted in '17-'18, it was in the order of \$114 million.

MS. MICHAEL: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: Then, their actual expenditure is about \$111 million. We adjusted the figure somewhat but not down to the bare bone, if you will.

MS. MICHAEL: I find this interesting. You budget \$114 million. The school board doesn't get what you've budgeted, they get what they spend. Is that what happens?

MR. KIRBY: To get into the details of it, there was a rebate of \$3 million from Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro. Remember everybody got their Hydro rebates?

MS. MICHAEL: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: They got \$3 million, so there was \$3 million worth of savings.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: And then –

MS. MICHAEL: They didn't get it as extra money.

MR. KIRBY: No, they didn't get extra money because there isn't any extra.

The \$113 million; there's funding in there for the professional learning for teachers for the task force. There's funding in there for the documentation and case management system for children with special education needs, some funding in there for resources for our school

libraries and transfer of school software licensing from school supplies.

There's sort of a rightsizing exercise going on in the midst of all of this to monies taken out and put in another line area in the overall budget. There's also \$655,200 to help with the cost of implementing the task force and then there's a reduction in the school board operating grant.

All those things make up the \$113,760,700. They are being budgeted for slightly less than they were in the previous year, but some of the additional things that we're providing are very specific related to the task force, professional learning and so on.

MS. MICHAEL: Right. Thank you very much for that detail.

Under the Administration Grant, that's down by \$650,600 from both the Budget and Revised line, which didn't have any change in it last year. What is that reduction?

MR. KIRBY: That's savings due to hiring in-house legal counsel, something they have been discussing with the government for some time. If they have in-house counsel as opposed to going with contracting it out, it should be cheaper. There's about \$400,000 in there for attrition.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

Would that in-house counsel be within your department or within government, like in the Department of Justice?

MR. KIRBY: Within the district.

MS. MICHAEL: Within the district? Okay.

MR. KIRBY: The district is, as you can imagine, dealing with legal inquires of various types.

MR. GARDINER: A person starts on May 7.

MR. KIRBY: May 7, Bob says, the new lawyer for the school district comes in.

They got 268 schools, or 262 schools, and they have 5,200 teachers. Those are just teachers, so

they have several thousand personnel, so you can expect there's a need for legal advice on a fairly regular basis.

MS. MICHAEL: Yes, I understand.

We have answer on the SA and IA.

Under Transportation of School Children, could we have the number of board-owned buses, private buses, private vehicles and alternate transportation? We've been told in the past to look for this information from the board. The board has not provided this information. We've requested it, but you do have a manager of the transportation system, so I'm wondering if you have that information.

MR. KIRBY: We don't have it here, but we can look into it for you.

MS. MICHAEL: You can provide it?

MR. KIRBY: Yeah.

MS. MICHAEL: Please.

Thank you very much.

MR. KIRBY: Did the school district say why they weren't able to provide the information?

MS. MICHAEL: I just don't think they responded. Did they, Susan? They just didn't respond to our request.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Ms. Perry.

MS. PERRY: Thank you.

Going back, I guess, to – I'm just trying to cover my question now because Lorraine has covered a few of them. Can the minister provide us with information on classroom caps?

MR. KIRBY: I think they're all on the public website. There are no changes since 2016.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

Under Revenue up in 3.1.01, provincial revenue, there would be a loss of \$100,000; there was

actually \$600,000 – no, a budgeted amount of \$100,000; you actually had revenue of \$600,000. Can you explain that variance and what is it?

MR. KIRBY: It's an invoice issue. It's more or less a delay in when we're getting invoices for services. Let's say an outside agency wants a teacher for a specific reason, then the teaching service is provided, but we don't receive the invoice until after the March 31 date or whatever, so it's booked at a later date. So that's what happened there. There was a delay in getting invoices for about \$500,000 worth of teaching services that were –

MS. PERRY: Seconded.

MR. KIRBY: Yes, that were provided outside of the norm which we would provide teaching services, I guess. The standard way would be through the district.

MS. PERRY: What kind of circumstance would ...?

MR. KIRBY: MUN for example. The Faculty of Education might say we require two teachers for some particular research project or something. That would be provided for, say, under a grant that some faculty member would have, so we would help facilitate that. Then they would pay us for the teaching service.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

\$1.3 million is allocated for the instructional assistants. Now, we talked about that a little bit, but can you provide us with some additional details, like on these instructional assistants – is there going to be any increase?

MR. KIRBY: No, they don't exist right now.

MS. PERRY: They don't exist. So that's the whole new – can you tell us a little bit more about what they're going to be doing?

MR. KIRBY: Well, like I said before, their function is going to be in between a teacher and a student assistant. Whereas sort of a student assistant right now is really restricted to three different functions around safety, feeding, portering, mobility – teaching and learning assistants, they will either have post-secondary

education or be provided with professional learning by the district or department that will enable them to do more of the functions that a teacher would.

So a teacher would design the instruction and lead the instruction, but a teaching and learning assistant – oftentimes, for example, in a class you might have two different ability levels. Those, say, children who are reading at grade level versus children who are not. Then you could split the grade and the teacher could lead one, and the teaching and learning assistant could provide remedial support to the other; or vice versa, the teaching and learning assistant could take the more capable group and then the teacher could focus more on remedial attention to the group that needs more individualized instruction or just more support.

That will be the shape of that. More details of that will be provided in the Education Action Plan. Grading will be another area that this person – folks will be able to help teachers with, report cards, if you need to go to the washroom. My experience, speaking with teachers, had been that oftentimes they just require an extra set of hands to get the job done. As the system is currently structured, they don't have that support that a lot of other education systems in Canada currently has.

That was one of the recommendations that came out of the task force report. So we're going to proceed and, over the course of the next three years, then these functions will be introduced to schools.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

What are the credentials for this position going to be?

MR. KIRBY: At this point, we're saying at least two years of post-secondary instruction but more of it, like I said, will be spelled out in the Education Action Plan.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: Let's say there might be a variety of different kinds of post-secondary credentials that are accepted. For example, if a teaching and learning assistant is going to work primarily

with grade kindergartens and grade ones, say, then a teaching and learning assistant could conceivably be somebody who has a two-year diploma in early childhood education –

MS. PERRY: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: – as a minimum level of qualification. We're still working on that end of it, but that's the sort of thing that we're entertaining at this point. Once the positions are advertised for, obviously it'll be all worked out.

MS. PERRY: Right.

MR. KIRBY: But that work is currently underway.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

What's the pay scale for this position and will existing student assistants be able to qualify if they wanted to apply?

MR. KIRBY: I guess if existing student assistants have the commensurate qualifications then there wouldn't be any problem. But it's sort of like saying would a student assistant be able to apply to be principal? I mean if a student assistant's qualified then sure they can.

The details on the pay scale and so on are currently being worked out.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

How will it be determined which schools get the instructional assistance?

MR. KIRBY: So the schools are going to be based on two different matrices. One is Labrador, Western, Central Eastern. Those are the four zones of the existing Newfoundland and Labrador English School District. Then it will be small, medium and large; small being fewer than 51 students, medium being between 51 and 200 students, and then large being above 200.

The initial phase, I'm hesitant to call it a pilot because if it's a pilot it'll be the largest pilot we've ever seen. But in the initial phase, because of the small, medium and large deployment, there'll be different models of the new model of special services, if you will, in

terms of allocation. The first year we will learn from the initial deployment, with a view to improving it for the second year and then the third year.

So this is all new to the system. If we need to make changes in any of the functions or any of the funding or any of the parameters on this, it'll be revised as we go along.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

Under the Transportation section and those figures – and my apologies if we went there a little while ago with Lorraine, I'm not sure. What has changed in Transportation to warrant a change in those figures?

MR. KIRBY: The increase you mean?

MS. PERRY: Yeah.

MR. KIRBY: Annualization of student transportation costs. There's an additional \$88,000 which would reflect the annualization of contracts. So there's a difference between the school year and, say, a contract year, as there's a difference between a school year and a fiscal year.

MS. PERRY: Right.

MR. KIRBY: It's the full annualization then of the cost.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

I'm going to move into School Board Operations. I've got a minute on the clock here.

Can the minister detail what is included in Purchased Services for the school board?

MR. KIRBY: Purchased Services under 3.1.02?

MS. PERRY: Yeah.

MR. KIRBY: I know the minister can't. Can anybody else?

MS. PERRY: It's under Operating Accounts, 3.1.02, just under the –

MR. KIRBY: Operating Accounts?

MS. PERRY: Yeah. Purchased Services, \$1.526 million?

MR. KIRBY: There's a change there associated with insurance premiums but – Purchased Services, insurance premiums on school properties.

MS. PERRY: Like, what's –

MR. KIRBY: School properties, school liabilities, boiler and machinery and bonding. So it's all around insurance, and there's been a lower-than-anticipated premium. So \$90,000 lower.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

Since we're on insurance – I'm on 02. We'll come back here, or can I ask one more question? Lorraine, can I ask one more question since we're on insurance?

MS. MICHAEL: I don't mind.

MS. PERRY: The \$13 million that became available for the school that burned down, Bay d'Espoir Academy. What happened to it?

MR. KIRBY: I think you'd probably be better off asking either the Minister of Finance about that because the insurance comes under the Minister of Finance and construction comes under the Department of Transportation and Works. All I can tell you is that I know the insurance was \$13 million.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

In terms of insurance then, just in general questions, is it like a blanket insurance policy?

MR. KIRBY: The government has an insurance with a deductible in it. That's about all I can tell you, and that part of our deductible was eaten up in the last year because there was a school that was burnt and prior to that there was a depot that burned.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

When you're talking about the school that burnt, you're referring to our school?

MR. KIRBY: Yeah. Your school burnt but there was also a depot that burned down, \$725,000 replacement cost, or – yeah.

Anyways, there was another structure that burnt last year as well. So that eats into the deductible of the insurance, is my understanding.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: But I would say Minister Osborne would be the best person because that falls under his department.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Ms. Michael.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you.

Minister, I'm going to ask you a question that the Minister of Transportation and Works said he'd love the answer to as well. He said to ask you, and you may send me on to the Minister of Finance.

MR. KIRBY: Yeah, yeah.

MS. MICHAEL: The sale of schools; where does the money go from the sale of schools when the –

MR. KIRBY: The school district.

MS. MICHAEL: It goes to the school district.

MR. KIRBY: Yeah, for the provision of education services, effectively. Yeah.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

Would the same thing happen with that has happened, for example, with the \$3 million rebate they got? That they would –

MR. KIRBY: In the past – just a second.

MS. MICHAEL: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: In the past, the practice has been to allow the school districts to hang on to the money for issues that arise.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

MR. KIRBY: I haven't been given any direction that will be different this time. It may be subject to change.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: I haven't been told anything about clawing any funds back.

The school district does have money in their own bank account as per their audited financial statements. In 2016, we reduced their budget by \$25 million and they subsequently drew that \$25 million from their contingency, I'll call it.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: So there's no immediate funds. At present I would say the funds would be – at least for now – held by the school district in their contingency.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

Well, out of self-interest as MHA for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, I'm going to ask a for instance question.

MR. KIRBY: Yeah.

MS. MICHAEL: You have said that in your – according to you, Bishop Field school is not going to be torn down and replaced. They will be going back there.

So if the school board found the corrections that have to be made because of the damage is a little bit more than their budget line, this could be a contingency. A fund they could use?

MR. KIRBY: Well, in normal course of affairs –

MS. MICHAEL: Or would they have to come to you?

MR. KIRBY: – the Department of Transportation and Works would fund infrastructure, upgrades, repairs, replacements for schools.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay. So it's not the school board budget line.

MR. KIRBY: We haven't made any direction to that effect but I think there would have to be some balancing of budgets. Like, take from here and give to there in order for – but my understanding of how things work is that the Department of Transportation and Works would provide that funding.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

Thank you very much.

Just one more question, under 3.1.02, with regard to the student assistants. Now there was the recommendation from the task force that student assistants be assigned to schools rather than to the individual students. Are you moving with that recommendation, and what would be the implications of that recommendation in terms of budget line?

MR. KIRBY: Well, it's more of a collective bargaining issue than anything else.

MS. MICHAEL: Is it?

MR. KIRBY: There's been no movement on that recommendation. We just concluded negotiations with NAPE and that was not part of the negotiations. The task force report wasn't produced until July 25 and the negotiations with NAPE were well underway at that point.

I don't want to get into the collective bargaining because I'm not privy to a lot of the information, but I guess I can say most accurately that at no point in time when I was asked about negotiations issues did I say recommendation X of the task force says this, because when I was asked about that was well in advance of the task force report being produced. I would say accurately that this is a collective bargaining issue, in addition to everything else, because they work on a seniority list at the present as opposed to

MR. GARDINER: I can just expand a little bit on that.

The school district will tell us that the student assistants are currently assigned to schools as

opposed to individual students, generally speaking. The other part – that's recommendation 6(a) and (b).

MS. MICHAEL: Yes.

MR. GARDINER: I can't remember which is which now, but they are assigned to schools versus students, generally speaking.

The other piece in terms of the call-in would be reflected in the collective agreement, and that would be something that we may float the next time the agreement has been negotiated.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay. So that part of it has to wait until the next time there are negotiations.

MR. GARDINER: Correct.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay, thank you very much. That's helpful.

All right, moving on then to 3.1.04, School Supplies. In '17-'18 there was an expenditure of \$450,000 more than what was budgeted.

Could we have an explanation of that, please?

MR. KIRBY: Yeah, so remember back when Ms. Perry was asking about the grants to external agencies and I said that there was –

MS. MICHAEL: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: – funding transferred from the Arts and Cultural Strategy. That's the –

MS. MICHAEL: This is it?

MR. KIRBY: Yeah, \$450,000.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay. Thank you very much.

And what is the increase for this year reflecting? So it's \$167,100 more than last year's budget line.

MR. KIRBY: There is that which I just mentioned as well as – let me see if I can find the number that fits that best. Task force, a regular replacement of school supplies for full-day kindergarten.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

MR. KIRBY: And that's offset by a number of things, including software licensing for school board operations and changes resulting from the zero-based budgeting.

MS. MICHAEL: Right. Thank you.

Minister, is the total amount for Cultural Connections split between the former Grants and Subsidies and here, because in 2017 the amount for them under the Grants and Subsidies was \$872,900.

Has all of that been transferred over to School Supplies or just part of it?

MR. KIRBY: I think the functions of Cultural Connections that involve the school visits and that sort of thing is still in the former line.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

MR. KIRBY: The part that involves the purchase of supplies and materials –

MS. MICHAEL: That's what I figured.

MR. KIRBY: – to support that would be there.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay, so it's sort of almost 50/50 maybe? You're not sure.

MR. KIRBY: Is it half and half? I think it's more like –

OFFICIAL: (Inaudible.)

MR. KIRBY: Yeah, it's about 50/50.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

MR. KIRBY: Yeah, Cultural Connections strategy and then versus the School Supplies, so about 50/50.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay. Thank you very much.

And the provincial revenue, I presume that must be for school books, is it? And it went up last year. We got \$38,000 more than expected.

MR. KIRBY: Mm-hmm. That's right.

MS. MICHAEL: Was there a new curriculum that created that, or just some books needed to be replaced? Oh no, this would be revenue though.

MR. KIRBY: What's the number specifically?

MS. MICHAEL: It's the revenue line, 02 under the School Supplies, under 3.1.04?

MR. KIRBY: Sale of textbooks to private schools and to individuals, and that varies from year to year.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay. Thank you very much.

How am I doing? See if I have any more general questions under that – the coding announcement, I know you gave more details yesterday. I don't have all of them. So my understanding is it more like a project that's going in or will it be based right in the curriculum?

MR. KIRBY: It'll be coincident with the curriculum. So it's an integration of coding, computational skills and maker education with the K to 12 curriculum. The funding is coming from a variety of different sources. There's over a million dollars' worth of funding now for that; some from CanCode federally, some from the Department of TCII, some from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, some of that's for itinerant teachers which would come from the Teaching Services allocation, there's also a portion that comes from the Excellence in Mathematics strategy that's particular to grades six to nine.

So there are just a bunch of pieces of our budget that are sort of being directed towards that.

MS. MICHAEL: And will there have to be training of teachers involved with that? And you have –

MR. KIRBY: Absolutely. A big part of it is professional development –

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

MR. KIRBY: – because again, like I said, with math our experience has been if you're not comfortable teaching it, it's pretty obvious to the

kids and it's hard to have good outcomes when you're not comfortable with the subject matter.

So the way Brilliant Labs works is that they provide professional development teachers. In fact they have already hired one person here locally to oversee their work under this. They also provide professional development at the same time that they're in a school with the Brilliant Labs team with the materials, the maker materials, and the robotics and the sensors and all the things that they bring with them on makerbots to teach kids.

So it'll be integrated with the curriculum in other ways to teach, whether it's reading or mathematics, or geometry or science, earth science, other – I've seen all sorts of applications with our existing curriculum, whether that's kindergarten or whether that's high school graduation courses.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

Will there be any thought given to perhaps actually having courses in the curriculum?

MR. KIRBY: Well, we already have courses in –

MS. MICHAEL: I know there are some.

MR. KIRBY: – computer science and technology education, and robotics –

MS. MICHAEL: But not specifically in coding.

MR. KIRBY: Coding is part of those courses.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

MR. KIRBY: When it comes to the curriculum that's outside of that, then the whole idea with Brilliant Labs is to bring coding into a lot of the courses right now that don't have any coding or, it's more ad hoc. So some teachers have been working with coding, with Scratch and Tynker and all these other things for a number of years now and others haven't.

This will provide a greater opportunity and then as we do greater curricular reform down the road, we can see more of this becoming part of the curriculum, more officially – more and more.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay, thank you very much.

CHAIR: You're welcome.

MS. MICHAEL: I know I went over my time a bit there.

CHAIR: Ms. Perry.

MS. PERRY: Thank you.

All of this is wonderful to hear about what kids are going to be availing of and very depressing for me because my kids don't even have a science lab.

I'm just wondering how kids like my kids, who don't even have a computer lab – will we be left behind on this as well?

MR. KIRBY: Well, you don't need a computer lab for this, because the way that this model works is the materials are brought to a classroom, regardless of what the classroom is. Like, the classroom we were in yesterday, that I was in last November for the Hour of Code, is just a regular classroom. You bring all the tablets and the robots and all the other tools into the classroom, where there's a 3D printer and so on. The idea is to infuse it into the curriculum, not to do it over there.

In terms of school library resources, you know –

MS. PERRY: We don't have one of them, either.

MR. KIRBY: Well, your new school is certainly going to have them.

MS. PERRY: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: But you'll have a learning commons that has maker spaces in the learning commons. We've got lots of good examples of that because we've been, over the course of the last year, doing pilots on new learning commons models in about two dozen schools across the province. So there are schools all across the province that are already engaged with the development of learning commons.

I think we're working on a fix, temporarily, that you and I have discussed for your school for

September. I feel quite positively towards getting a resolution so that you do have a science lab for –

MS. PERRY: That would be much greatly –

MR. KIRBY: We're continuing to work on that, but I understand what you're saying.

I was in Hopedale last Friday morning and there's no question that – or I'll give you an even better example. I was in Postville last Thursday afternoon. There's no question there are differing level of resources in Postville where they have 30-odd students versus Holy Heart, which has over a thousand. A lot of it's by nature of geography.

I was in one class that had kindergarten to grade four, what I would call extreme multigrading, but that's not unusual in the province where you have smaller numbers of residents in a community. So it's difficult to provide the same level of resourcing. Like I said, if you look at Holy Heart, what they have, it's hard to provide that uniformly.

What we do deliver, I believe, is the basic requirements of the curriculum everywhere and we try as hard as we can. It's been very difficult down in St. Alban's, there's no doubt about it, but we've got to find a way to transition to your new state-of-the-art facility that we're going to build down there.

MS. PERRY: Yes, and that leads perfectly into my next question. I was just wondering, if the minister can confirm on the record, when the people of my district can expect to have their school replaced? If you could just sort of outline that process.

MR. KIRBY: I believe it's about a four-year process, myself. I'm not sure how much flexibility there is within that window. My experience, because when I came in to office there were five new school facilities that were underway – well, actually there were six. What had been committed to was not possible to adhere to.

Some of those schools were committed to – there was one committed to on less than a three-year schedule. It's just not possible to do it

because there has to be site selection, which is done by the school district. Then there has to be the design. Increasingly we're working towards design-build. So that might have some economy of time built into it because there's one contractor responsible for the design and the building.

The building phase takes about two years. You can get more detailed information from Transportation and Works, but that's sort of me as a layman in my experience of fielding questions about when schools are going to be completed. It's about a four-year process.

When I was down in St. Alban's and Bay d'Espoir I was very clear with the school council, the principal, teachers, the mayors that it would take about four years from the time the money was approved. I know that's cold comfort for everybody who has kids in grade nine and up, but unfortunately that's the situation we're in now.

MS. PERRY: Certainly, if we could at least get them access to a science lab and have them ready to go to university that –

MR. KIRBY: I think that's pretty necessary, yeah.

MS. PERRY: – that would be monumental for us at this juncture.

MR. KIRBY: Yeah. I think that's pretty necessary myself.

MS. PERRY: It's crucial.

MR. KIRBY: Yeah.

MS. PERRY: Yeah. We can't have a portion of the province not availing of science –

MR. KIRBY: No, exactly. Yeah.

MS. PERRY: – especially when we're all into aquaculture down there, and science hooks a lot of them in terms of marine biology and that type of thing.

MR. KIRBY: Yeah.

MS. PERRY: Can the minister or officials provide insight on the Mobile school scheduled to open this fall? The extension has not been started. Is this on target?

MR. KIRBY: My understanding from Minister Crocker is it's on target and under budget. The tender was recently awarded for the construction, but beyond that you'd have to talk to the minister. He'd be able to provide you with better information.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

Thank you, Minister.

Now, I think I can move past this section, and over into 3.2.01.

Can the minister advise the number of employees that work in Curriculum Development?

MR. KIRBY: It would vary.

Any idea how many people are currently working in Curriculum Development? It depends on what courses we're working on to some extent.

There is something there isn't it? Curriculum Development? Does anybody know what page?

MR. GARDINER: Page eight.

MR. KIRBY: Okay, let me see if I can tell you. Right now in Curriculum Development: director of programs; clerk typist III – four of them, these are permanent; manager of curriculum; we have program and policy development specialist, one of them; then there are five program development specialists; a senior policy, planning and research analyst; oh, a clerk IV – those are all permanent; then temporary. I believe some of these would be secondees would they, the temporary?

MR. GARDINER: Some of them would be, yeah. Probably six to eight seconded teachers are not included in that.

MR. KIRBY: Okay.

So temporary: there's an education consultant, four program development specialists and a clerk typist III. Those are temporary positions. On top of that, six to eight seconded teachers from the school districts, which their salaries would be captured under Teaching Services.

MS. PERRY: What would cause the Transportation and Communications budget to increase by \$99,000?

MR. KIRBY: I'm going to say task force, but let me see if I'm right.

MS. PERRY: It's a hundred – oh, okay.

MR. KIRBY: Yeah. Funding for the implementation of the recommendations, travel for expenses for teachers and presenters for professional learning.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: Again, the whole premise with the task force, the same as with the coding, is we need to provide greater professional learning for the implementation of the new model of special services, because that's really what we're talking about.

It's far more accelerated than what we've done in the past. For example, inclusive education was more like a ten-year process. This is going to be a three-year process. So it's far more condensed. It's more of a need really for professional development, if you will, right?

MS. PERRY: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: Which, by the way, teachers are – a lesson for everybody in the room that teachers are really excited about, because while we might hear people griping – certain Open Line hosts, I'll leave that there – about professional development days, like, they're extremely important. So when teachers see that, they feel like they're being supported. Whoever the political party is in government is irrelevant.

I think that's really an important thing for all of us to know is that teachers can't do stuff, we can't expect them to do things, carry out functions, deliver curriculum if they don't have

any – and I’ve met teachers who are teaching themselves stuff that they’ve never had any professional learning on, and to expect that across the system is not acceptable, right, whether it’s special needs or reading, or what have you. We really have to make sure we do a better job of that.

MS. PERRY: Okay. And I’m out of time.

CHAIR: (Inaudible.)

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Chair.

I can continue then doing some line questions there. Just to add to what the minister said, as a former teacher and school administrator, I support everything you say about ongoing professional development. It’s absolutely essential, and I hope parents realize that.

Under Professional Services we do have an increase in budget – I’m assuming, does that have to do with the task force as well – an increase of \$80,500.

MR. KIRBY: Yes.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

There is also, for the line Property Furnishings and Equipment, a big increase there of \$21,500.

MR. KIRBY: Property Furnishings and Equipment: Equipment required for professional learning, \$20,000.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: And that’s task force related.

MS. MICHAEL: That’s task force related.

MR. KIRBY: Yeah.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much.

Under Grants and Subsidies, still 3.2.01, we have an increase there as well of \$112,900 over last year’s budget and revised figure.

MR. KIRBY: Yeah, that’s task force related again.

MS. MICHAEL: Task force related, okay.

And will your binder have details in these cases? Yes, okay fine –

MR. KIRBY: It will have some, and it seems like I’m kind of passing the buck down the road, but the Education Action Plan will have a greater level of detail and that’s more of a staff exercise; we’re making the decisions up here and they’re trying to make it all operational, so that’s ...

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

And, Minister, you probably have already said this but just to refresh my memory, when do you hope to have the action plan or –?

MR. KIRBY: Before the end of the school year, so I hope mid-June.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

MR. KIRBY: I’ve been promising teachers that face to face so I better –

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

MR. KIRBY: – better make sure it happens – Bob.

MS. MICHAEL: Giving your DM the warning there. That will, I assume, would also be a living document.

MR. KIRBY: Well yeah, like I said I don’t like to use the term pilot because it seems like it’s a question mark of continuation.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

MR. KIRBY: But the first year of implementation in particular will be a number of new things for us. So we want to have the option to change things as we go into years two and three and probably beyond.

MS. MICHAEL: Right. Thank you very much. That’s all the questions I have under that head.

Coming down to the Language Programs, 3.2.02, I don’t have any questions per se. But under Revenue - Federal could we have an

explanation of that line? I think I know the answer of why it was up by \$3,948,900 in the revision but –

MR. KIRBY: It's just a question of –

MS. MICHAEL: Delayed payment?

MR. KIRBY: Delayed payment from federal government, yeah.

MS. MICHAEL: Right. That's what I figured. And none of the other figures are significant enough for me to put questions to you.

3.3.01, Student Support Services.

MR. KIRBY: Yeah, so the increase is in Salaries; two new program development specialist positions for the implementation of the task force.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

MR. KIRBY: That's the largest part of it there, yeah.

MS. MICHAEL: Yes, it is. The largest part of the increase, you mean.

MR. KIRBY: Of that number. That more or less captures it.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

And under Transportation and Communications – task force-related expense, because it's going up by \$30,000?

MR. KIRBY: Teachers and presenters travel to attend professional learning sessions; and the rest of it is sort of negligible.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

Under Supplies, it's going down by \$33,700. What would be the supplies here, and why is it going down?

MR. KIRBY: Fewer technology resources purchased. Partial funding for an orientation and mobility specialist and an autism consultant, or transferred to Purchased Services to align with the expenditure more accurately.

MS. MICHAEL: Oh, I see that, yes. One goes down by \$53,700, the other goes up by \$53,700.

MR. KIRBY: Yeah, staff have been trying to more or less make the budget more understandable for everybody involved, us and them.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

And under Professional Services there's a big increase there, by \$82,300.

MR. KIRBY: Yeah, again professional implementation of the task force, professional learning – Professional Services, that would be associated with that.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay. Thank you very much.

The task force – there is a recommendation with regard to developing a new special education policy. Where are things with that?

MR. KIRBY: It's underway. Remember – or I guess they wanted you to think about the fact that the early intervention in reading is part of the special services model, as is the teaching and learning assistance and the case-management system that's built into this, built into the new funding. So all that is part of their new model, if you will. So when the Action Plan comes out it'll be more, sort of, a schematic about how it looks, this versus the older inclusive model or what have you.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

Probably related to the Action Plan, the task force also recommended that the provincial health services model for students and the – well the Department of Health and the Department of Education worked closely together in delivery.

MR. KIRBY: What's it called the committee, the executive level committee that we have –

MR. GARDINER: Secretariat.

MR. KIRBY: So there's a secretariat that's been established. We haven't really made any announcement about it. Bob, you would do a better job of explaining what's been done.

MR. GARDINER: So basically, there were two people that formed the secretariat for Health-in-All-Policies. Those two people have actually been assigned to the secretariat for the Education Action Plan as well. On that committee as well, or that secretariat, are the ADMs from Health, CSSD and I'm pretty sure Justice as well.

They're primarily focused on chapters 1 and 2, the inclusive education and student mental health and well-being. The role of that secretariat is to ensure that any recommendations that is spread through more than one department, more than our department, get the proper attention that's needed.

They've been very, very active. They've had several meetings, but we've had some meetings with the Centre for Health Information as well as Privacy Commissioners to make sure that the sharing of information – and it's not going to happen tomorrow, but that's well underway.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

MR. KIRBY: And the chair, I believe, is in our department right, Education?

MR. GARDINER: Yes.

MS. MICHAEL: Minister, do you expect some of their work to be part of the Action Plan by the end of this year?

MR. KIRBY: Oh yeah, we'll spell more of it out. Like there are 15 or 16 of the recommendations that have already been implemented. But again, other than the hiring of Eldred Barnes to be the associate deputy minister to oversee the implementation, I don't think we've made any announcements about what's been implemented. All of that will be clear in the Action Plan.

MS. MICHAEL: But I have to say, it's really good news to hear what's happening –

MR. KIRBY: Yeah, it is good. That stuff is all, what I'll call, back-office operations. It's not sort of out in front where the politicians are, but it's all sort of going on behind the scenes. I think the Health-in-All-Policies, like the mental health exercise that went on has really been timely

because we came after that. So the work was already started.

MS. MICHAEL: Right, good. Thank you very much.

Okay, I'm going to move on to 3.3.02, which is the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority. I just have questions – obviously not the money itself because that's sort of set. We've been told, or I've been told personally, and I've met with parents who tell me that, number one, they didn't even know about APSEA. They didn't know there were services that they could get through APSEA.

It's different things like this which makes me ask: Is our money really going to help parents and children from Newfoundland and Labrador if parents are not even being informed about its presence and what they can gain from it?

MR. KIRBY: Well, I wouldn't be surprised if parents didn't know about APSEA because, really, the onus is on the school administration and the district, and then the department to some extent to ensure that the services that are provided through APSEA end up with students. So I can understand that.

Recently, this year, we had at least one family actually travel to Nova Scotia at taxpayers' expense, or at APSEA's expense and spend a number of days there having an intensive process done. I've been in schools, whether it's deaf and hard of hearing services, or visually impaired services – those are the two that crop up most of the time, I find, where APSEA services have been mentioned to me.

Again, it varies based on geography and so on. We use it a lot. There are regular meetings. I think the deputy minister sits on –

MR. GARDINER: Chair.

MR. KIRBY: Bob is chair of APSEA at the moment, so we do quite a lot of work with them.

MS. MICHAEL: Well, I'd like to ask you to consider the fact I am being told by parents that they aren't being informed within the system, within the district.

MR. KIRBY: I think really what it comes down to it the parents should be looking for the services if they're not being provided, and then if they're not being provided, bringing it to the department's attention, because we're paying for them.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay, well that's something I will do then. One set of parents did go this year, and they did have the two or three days. That's like two years later than they should have known about it. I'll get that reported to you if they haven't reported it themselves already.

MR. KIRBY: Yeah.

Bob.

MR. GARDINER: Just to elaborate, there are a lot of services that APSEA provides. I'm questioning if we're getting as much out of APSEA as we should be. So as a matter –

MS. MICHAEL: We're not.

MR. GARDINER: I'm the chair of the board now, and the superintendent of APSEA actually is making a visit to Newfoundland and Labrador in May, and we've arranged a meeting with the school districts to make sure that they're plugged in and that we will maximize the benefit of APSEA.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much, that's really good to hear. May I share that information with –?

MR. GARDINER: Absolutely.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you.

MR. KIRBY: I have to go to social policy committee for 11. I have three Cabinet papers there. So I just want to make sure that ...

CHAIR: Ms. Perry.

MS. PERRY: Okay. I want to go back for a second to – now I'm getting my papers all fooled up. Where's the grants one? 3.2.01.10, Grants and Subsidies at \$368,900. Could we get a detailed list of the grant and subsidy recipients?

MR. KIRBY: Grant and subsidy recipients for Curriculum Development.

MS. PERRY: We could do that later. You could table it or send it after.

MR. KIRBY: Skills Canada, Provincial Immigration Strategy, Cultural Connections, Excellence in Mathematics strategy, and the task force, specifically the youth apprenticeship co-operative education line. That's what makes it up.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

This is something that you could send to us after in the interests of time, if you prefer. I'm going back to 2.1.01 under the \$35,000 discretionary allocation; could we get a list of the recipients of those as well?

MR. KIRBY: Sure.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

Moving ahead now to 3.5.01, under Salaries, can we get a general list of the staffing or salary changes that occurred last year?

MR. KIRBY: 5.01 – sorry the ...

MS. PERRY: 3.5.01 I've jumped up to now.

MR. KIRBY: 3.5.01.01?

MS. PERRY: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: So the Salaries under Early Learning and Child Development?

MS. PERRY: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: There hasn't been a whole lot of change there.

MS. PERRY: We've gone up by \$422,000 for this year?

MR. KIRBY: Yeah. So you have seven new positions as related to the new bilateral agreement that we have with the federal government. So that's the \$22 million over three years, part of which is that \$7.378 million that

we're receiving in the current year, this budget year.

So that's four child care consultants; two program and policy development specialists; and one senior policy, planning and research analyst. A big part of that is this quality assurance project that's going to be done as part of the bilateral agreement that we have with the federal government, which is to ensure that we have the highest level of quality possible, and then centres will avail of that service from the department.

That's part of it, but we're going to be doing a whole bunch of new work. So it's just not possible to do it with the existing staff, more or less. We've got \$22 million dollars' worth of additional work to do, effectively.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

Can you provide some further details with respect to the Allowances and Assistance funding, and can we get a written list of what groups and where received the amounts as assistance money?

MR. KIRBY: The child care subsidy in there, we wouldn't be able to provide that to you, that's the parents who get a subsidy.

MS. PERRY: Right. Okay.

MR. KIRBY: So just thinking about privacy, I wouldn't be able to tell you that –

MS. PERRY: Right.

MR. KIRBY: – Dale Kirby got \$3,000 for child care subsidy.

So that's a large part of what's in there.

MS. PERRY: So a large component of that budget is child care?

MR. KIRBY: Is a child care subsidy, yeah.

MS. PERRY: All right.

My gosh, I'm on my last page.

Can we get some information on where the funds were spent to review the closure of libraries?

MR. KIRBY: The EY report would have been in last year's budget.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: That's not part of this year's budget.

MS. PERRY: Can we get a written list of the libraries and the grants and subsidies paid to each for the last fiscal year?

MR. KIRBY: You can get that from the provincial libraries board, though, the PILRB.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

And the total amount is a reduction of \$100,000. So what does that reduction entail?

MR. KIRBY: Which line?

MS. PERRY: Under Total: Provincial Information and Library Resources Board, last year it was \$11,392,000, this year it's \$11,292,500.

MR. KIRBY: There was one-time funding for the CBS Library –

MS. PERRY: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: – for furniture, and there is no CBS Library. There's a sign up out there, though.

MS. PERRY: My final question is 3.5.01, under section 10, Grants and Subsidies. Can we get some information on those as well? Because I think I left that one out.

MR. KIRBY: Sorry? Which number again?

MS. PERRY: 3.5.01.10.

MR. KIRBY: Ten, Grants and Subsidies?

MS. PERRY: Yeah.

MR. KIRBY: Yes, that's the federal money. That's the expenditure of the federal money. A large part of that is for the Operating Grant Program, for example.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: It's direct funds to child care centres that we anticipate will come on to the Operating Grant Program as a result of the changes in the amounts and the criteria and so on.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: That's basically the spend of the federal money. A large portion of it is going in there. Some of it is going to other lines for the subsidies (inaudible). There's also money in there for renovations to child care centres that were grandfathered in last summer when we brought in the new regulations subsequent to the new *Child Care Services Act* that passed in the House in 2014.

If, for example, the washroom facilities that were in a child care centre were fine under the old act, were grandfathered in under the new, now we'll provide the funding under this to bring the washroom facilities up to the level there. Then there's also another capacity initiative as well to help – like, for example, the work that the previous administration did in Pasadena but that we've since done in Port aux Basques, here in St. John's with two new not-for-profit centres, and one in Goose Bay.

That sort of model for not-for-profits. Then also introducing a new operating grant program for rural communities so that family child care – the model that works for, say, Elizabeth Avenue, St. John's doesn't work for Elizabeth Avenue, Grand Bank. In Grand Bank you have a smaller centre, like a family child care home, but provide the subsidy for that to incent the creation of more rural spaces.

So those are some of the things we're going to do with the federal money.

MS. PERRY: Okay.

Thank you.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you.

I can ask a couple of more questions in that vein, Minister.

MR. KIRBY: Sure.

MS. MICHAEL: Can you tell us, have we any new community-based centres this year and any additional family resource programs starting up this year?

MR. KIRBY: I don't think there's been any new family resource centres but we have had new centres in Goose Bay – well, they're under construction. Port aux Basques is another one. There are two in St. John's. There's the Native Friendship Centre one on Elizabeth Avenue, and then there's one in the West End. It's a religious institution over on – the Worship Centre. They have a new child care centre attached over there, too.

MS. MICHAEL: Is that up on the Kenmount Road area?

MR. KIRBY: No, it's over on Canada Drive.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

OFFICIAL: Blackmarsh.

MR. KIRBY: No, I think it's Canada Drive.

MS. MICHAEL: Do you have the total number of community-based centres now?

MR. KIRBY: I can't tell you. We can get that for you –

MS. MICHAEL: Please.

MR. KIRBY: – if you follow up. If you just follow up with that. I can't tell you, but it's increased.

MS. MICHAEL: Right. We can follow up if we need more details.

MR. KIRBY: Yeah.

MS. MICHAEL: I'm assuming the binder will have the details about the grants and subsidies –

MR. KIRBY: To some extent, yeah.

MS. MICHAEL: – to the degree that the decisions have been made because I understand there still has to be more allocation decisions.

MR. KIRBY: Yeah.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

If it's not in the binder and we can ask for it directly we can, but could we have the most recent statistics on the numbers: the private centres, the community-based, the family daycare homes and child care spaces by the usual breakdown, region and family versus centre?

MR. KIRBY: We can provide the data insofar as we have it, yeah, because sometimes there's sort of a difference between what we have and what genuinely exists. We might have a centre approved for four rooms and then only three might be in operation or something like that.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

MR. KIRBY: One of the problems I think for centres is HR, is getting qualified ECEs. Until we bring the wages, I think, up to a level that is suitable for retention, it will be – it's getting better. Some ECEs got as high as a \$2.33 cent an hour increase with the increase in the supplement last year, but some would certainly argue that it's still not at a level commensurate with university level qualifications.

MS. MICHAEL: You know I would argue, but I won't get into that.

MR. KIRBY: Yeah. No, I hear you. I think we got to do further work in that area as well.

MS. MICHAEL: Can we have details on that as well, in terms of where things do stand with the ECEs and –

MR. KIRBY: I think what we should provide is the details of the bilateral agreement, I think would be most helpful to you.

MS. MICHAEL: That would be great, if we could have that.

MR. KIRBY: Yeah, what we agreed to with the federal government.

OFFICIAL: (Inaudible) there.

MR. KIRBY: Oh, is it in there?

MS. MICHAEL: It's in there as well?

MR. KIRBY: It's in the binder, yeah.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay, that's wonderful. I think that covers, and if we have any extra questions we can always get in touch.

Thank you very much.

MR. KIRBY: Paul, do you have anything while we got six minutes left?

MR. LANE: Yeah, Madam Chair, with leave of the Committee I do have just one question, really.

About the libraries, Minister, and I guess I'm just wondering – I realize in *Budget 2016* there was a backlash over shutting down, I think it was 54 libraries. There was a subsequent study that was done. I heard you say, I believe in the media at least, that the report is shelved or something to that effect –

MR. KIRBY: No.

MR. LANE: – and we wouldn't be shutting down any libraries and so on.

MR. KIRBY: The report is being used –

MR. LANE: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: – by the Public Libraries Board –

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MR. KIRBY: – to develop their action plan.

MR. LANE: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: So they're taking the recommendations that were in the report –

MR. LANE: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: – to produce their own action plan. For example, the same way that we're taking *The Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes* report and answering it with the Education Action Plan –

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MR. KIRBY: – they're taking the libraries review that was done by EY and more or less producing their own libraries action plan, if you will.

MR. LANE: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: That's what's currently on the – I think some time in the week after the budget, the executive director of the Public Libraries Board, well their headquarters, was quoted in a story by Ashley Fitzpatrick about that. There was like a couple of paragraphs or sentences from him, so that's in the public domain what they're doing.

MR. LANE: Okay. No, I appreciate that. I wouldn't want to see the baby thrown out with the bath water.

MR. KIRBY: Yeah.

MR. LANE: I think it was important points in that report –

MR. KIRBY: Yeah.

MR. LANE: – and things we can do. We shouldn't just abandon the whole idea of trying to make improvements and efficiencies in the library system.

MR. KIRBY: My comments were more around closure versus opening.

MR. LANE: Yeah, I appreciate it.

That's the only question I had because, as I said, I think it's important that we don't abandon the whole –

MR. KIRBY: No, there's work underway to, for example, see if there's a better way we can utilize our existing funding to make improvements, whether that's to hours or what have you.

MR. LANE: Yes.

MR. KIRBY: We're having some conversations at the departmental level and the board is having their own conversation. They met last month, in fact, and discussed this.

MR. LANE: Perfect.

The only other question, Minister – I just want to say first of all I think it was a great initiative on the coding; absolutely support that – is there currently, or will there be any thoughts of introducing the whole concept of entrepreneurship and so on in our curriculum, in K to 12 or what have you, to encourage that activity?

MR. KIRBY: So in response to the task force we're looking at specific curriculum revisions for the senior – there was a report actually done at the end of the last administration's term. There was a report done on senior high school graduation requirements.

We've been talking about making changes, but you got to appreciate that we only have so many resources and a lot of our work – there's a lot of day to day; there's a lot of firefighting. Then there's the whole piece that we did with the bilateral agreement with the feds which ate up – staff put a lot of hours into that. Then the task force as well, coming up with this plan, going through all of the internal processes with the budget.

The normal day-to-day operations – the federal bilateral and the task force has consumed a lot of time and I have to be reasonable about what I'm asking people to do. So I think the next thing we want to get to is this moving on with curriculum reform – and the hair's going to stand up on the back of Bob's head in the minute as I start talking about this – but I'd like to see us going down sort of the route of what, say, Ontario's doing now with STEAM – Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math, and looking at how all of that is in it.

If you look about tradespeople and technology and all of that, so many of them are entrepreneurs, it just all naturally fits together. Hopefully, I will be the minister who starts some of that. I don't know if I'll be the one who ends

it. I think that's a piece of work that has to be done. Once we get things settled away better with reading and the special services model and early learning and care, I think that's the next thing we really got to move on. Again, it's a constantly moving thing.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Minister.

And I'll just end by saying I'm generally pleased in where I see things heading in this department, which is good.

MR. KIRBY: Thanks.

Thanks, everybody. And if there are things that you don't get from us in a reasonable amount of time, just ask and we'll provide it.

CHAIR: Okay, since there are no further questions, I ask the Clerk to recall 1.1.01.

CLERK: 1.101.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 carry?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, subhead 1.1.01 carried.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Sorry.

MR. KIRBY: Andy Wells is chairing the committee there.

All in favour, contra-minded, carried.

CHAIR: Okay.

CLERK: 1.2.01 to 3.6.01 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 1.2.01 to 3.6.01 carry?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.2.01 through 3.6.01 carried.

CLERK: The total.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

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

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

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

CHAIR: I now call for a motion to approve the minutes from March 28.

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

CHAIR: The date of the next meeting for the Social Services Committee is Thursday, April 19 at 9 a.m. That will be the Estimates of Municipal Affairs and Environment.

I now call for a motion to adjourn.

MS. PERRY: I will adjourn.

CHAIR: Thank you.

On motion, the Committee adjourned.