



Brian Crawford [REDACTED]

Summary of Remarks of Brian Crawford to the Legislative Review Committee of the 2024 Nova Scotia Budget

1 message

Brian Crawford [REDACTED]

Sun, Mar 24, 2024 at 10:54 PM

To: Brian Crawford [REDACTED]

Dear Legislative Committee member ;

I was employed as a social worker with the Department of Community Services in their Child and Wellbeing Division (I retired 2 years ago) . This is the wing of Community Services that is responsible for the provision of Child Protection , Children in Permanent Care , Foster Care and Adoption programs . I was employed for over 35 years and for the bulk of my time I was responsible for a caseload of children in permanent care ; the Minister of Community Services is their legal guardian as parental rights had been terminated by a Family Court court order .

I am sure others will speak to you about the inadequacy of Income Assistance rates being frozen in the current budget and the negative cost this will have on Nova Scotian society . I am here to note that the Child and Wellbeing division of Community Services only accounts for about 10% of the Departments' 2024/2025 budget . This is woefully inadequate and has very real negative consequences for the Department of Community Services and the vulnerable families and youth that it is mandated to serve .

Some of these negative consequences include ;

- 1) A very negative and stressful work environment where a lack of clerical support means professional social workers spend an inordinate amount of time doing admin/clerical tasks and less and less time doing social work with the clients they are meant to serve . The ability to have the time to foster relationships with clients is crucial in child protection social work . The losers in this scenario are the vulnerable families and children that the Department is mandated to serve .
- 2) Staff turnover is at an all time high . Working conditions are so poor that the Department can not recruit or retain staff . There is no one in the Department's hiring pool . Some offices are at a 50% staff complement due to this staffing shortage . In some cases offices have asked retirees to return for brief periods to help ease the strain . In some offices a worker with only 2 or 3 years experience may be the senior worker in that office . Again the losers in this scenario are the vulnerable families and children that the Department is mandated to serve .
- 3) The Department does not have the resources it requires to meet the high needs of many of the youth that are in its permanent care . The Department has chosen as a consequence to enter into agreements with private entities who provide unlicensed placements to some of our most vulnerable and traumatised youth . The Department refers to these unlicensed placements as Temporary Emergency Arrangements (TEA) . The fact that these placements are unlicensed means that the staffing education and training qualifications for employment are much lower than would be the expectation in a licensed child caring facility . These unlicensed placements are very costly . When I worked at one point there were 70 such placements province wide , each caring for one child , at a cost in excess of \$40,000 per month .The Department intends that these be temporary emergency placements but due to a lack of resources to meet these youth's complex needs I have known of youth who have been in these temporary placements for 2 , 3 and 4 years . Again the loser in this scenario is Nova Scotia's most vulnerable and traumatized youth . Youth that are ill served by their legal guardian , The Minister of Community Services ! Clearly Child Protection Services are not a government priority . The costs to Nova Scotian society are high as these youth tend to do poorly in school and make up a disproportionate number of youth involved in the Youth Criminal Justice system .

Thank-you

Brian Crawford