
Children's Services

BUSINESS PLAN 2003-06

ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

The Business Plan for the three years commencing April 1, 2003 was prepared under my direction in accordance with the *Government Accountability Act* and the government's accounting policies. All of the government's policy decisions as of March 19, 2003 with material economic or fiscal implications of which I am aware have been considered in preparing the Business Plan.

The Ministry's priorities outlined in the Business Plan were developed in the context of the government's business and fiscal plans. I am committed to achieving the planned results laid out in this Business Plan.

[Original Signed]

Iris Evans, *Minister of Children's Services*
March 21, 2003

A MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER “OUR KIDS – OUR FUTURE”

Alberta has one of the youngest populations in the nation. Children and youth make up 30% of our social fabric, and they represent 100% of our future. We are re-defining children’s services to better support parents, families, and communities. Albertans believe that by giving children today the caring and encouragement they need, we will ensure the well-being and prosperity of our province for tomorrow.

I thank all our partners for their valuable contributions to our Ministry Business Plan. The Plan presents our agenda to do even more than protect children from neglect and abuse. The Plan outlines directions for prevention and early intervention services to help preserve families and their ability to promote the well-being and development of children. It outlines directions for transforming Child Welfare to improve family-centred practices and outcomes for children and youth. Finally, the Plan outlines Alberta’s Promise and other steps to build community resources that support families and communities in providing children with a healthy start in life, nurturing relationships, safe places to learn and grow, the supports to make a successful passage into adulthood, and opportunities to contribute along the way.

Every single one of us has an interest in making sure our children grow into healthy, capable, and responsible adults with bright futures. We will continue to work with parents, communities, and all our partners in the design and delivery of programs and services so that Alberta’s children will be supported in reaching their potential.

MINISTRY VISION, MISSION AND CORE BUSINESSES

VISION

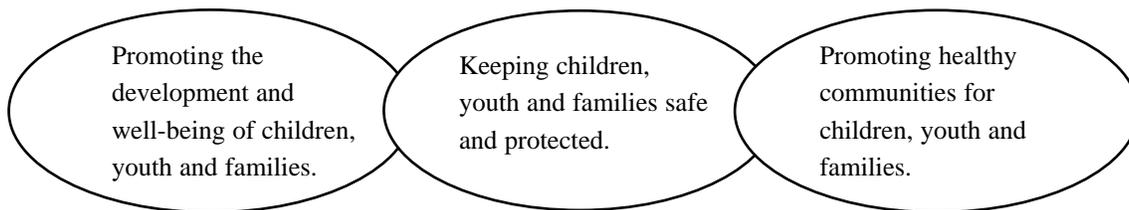
Strong children, families and communities

An Alberta where children and youth are valued, nurtured and loved, and develop to their potential supported by enduring relationships, healthy families, and safe communities. Alberta will be child, youth, and family friendly.

MISSION

Working together to enhance the ability of families and communities to develop nurturing and safe environments for children, youth and individuals.

CORE BUSINESSES



PROGRAM AREAS

Prevention

Early Childhood Development
Child Care Programming
Resources for Children
with Disabilities
Supports for Youth

Preservation and Protection

Early Intervention
Alberta Response Model
Child Welfare, Adoptions,
and Permanency Planning
Prevention of Family Violence
Protection of Children Involved
in Prostitution

Community Resources and Advocacy

Alberta’s Promise
Aboriginal Policy Initiatives
Family and Community
Support Services (FCSS)
Alberta Children and Youth
Initiatives

STRATEGIC ISSUES AND PRIORITIES

The majority of Alberta's 840,000 children and youth today are doing very well. However, some children and youth need our help through the support of families, communities, and other partners. The issues facing Alberta communities, and the Ministry priorities for meeting these are outlined below.

Strategic Issues



Strategic Priorities

Supporting all children in achieving their potential

Alberta's children and youth represent 30% of the province's social fabric and 100% of its future.

In a recent survey, 75% of parents responding said they occasionally needed support to promote their children's development and prevent the need for crisis intervention.

Alberta has the highest work force participation rate in Canada. Over 13% of families are headed by single parents, and close to 50% of Alberta parents need child care arrangements at some point in time.

Almost 12% of children, early childhood to grade 12, are born with complex special needs including developmental disabilities, and need support to learn and grow.

Prevention: Promoting early childhood development and other prevention strategies to support families in promoting the optimal development of children.

A child's experiences in the first six years sets the tone for life-long development. The Ministry will establish early childhood development services to support families and others in giving children 0-6 the best possible start in life. The Ministry will also work with partners to improve the coordination of resources for children and youth with disabilities, including those with complex, special needs.

Youth must be seen and must see themselves as their community's greatest resource. The Ministry will implement the "youth in transition" framework to provide the opportunities, guidance and support for young people to make a successful passage into adulthood.

Increasing the resiliency of children, youth and families at-risk

At some point in their lives, 10% to 20% of children face at-risk circumstances such as parental low income, low education, poor health, social isolation, and lack of supportive networks, and may need help to overcome these.

One out of every hundred children will be born with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, 6 with low birth weight, 10 to 20 may be in high risk homes, 15 may need help to be ready for school, and 8 to 10 need support to stay in school and make a successful transition to adulthood.

Preservation: Improving early intervention to help preserve families and enhance their ability to provide safe, nurturing environments for children to learn and grow.

Healthy families are the best and most secure means for raising children. The Ministry will continue to implement the Alberta Response Model to improve and better connect community-based, early intervention strategies to help preserve and support families in overcoming at-risk circumstances so that they can care for their own children without the need for protection services.

Improving outcomes for children and youth in care

The number of children and youth receiving protection services has grown by over 61% in the past five years, as has the complexity of their circumstances.

Although the number is now declining, there are still 14,000 children and youth receiving child protection who need permanent, nurturing homes and support to develop to their potential.

Protection: Transforming child welfare to improve the safety, well-being and development of children.

Physical and emotional safety are the birth right of every child. The Ministry will implement a new *Child Welfare Amendment Act* together with the Alberta Response Model with a focus on "Kids First". This will increase the safety and well-being of children, involve children and families in decision-making, ensure that quality services promote children's development, and unite children with their families or other permanent, nurturing homes.

Improving services for Aboriginal children, youth and families

40% of the child welfare caseload is comprised of Aboriginal children and youth. Aboriginal children and youth generally have lower school attainment than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Disability rates are twice as high, and suicide rates are five to six times as high.

Building the capacity of Aboriginal communities.

The Ministry will continue to promote the cross ministry Aboriginal Policy Initiative. It will also negotiate children’s services agreements with First Nations, and work with the Metis Nation Association, and Metis Settlements to build on the strengths of Aboriginal communities in designing, delivering and evaluating services to better meet the needs of Aboriginal children, youth and communities.

Building Community Resources for Children and Youth

New approaches are needed to strengthen the capacity of communities to meet the needs of children, youth and families within the framework of government policies through greater integration of services and strategic alliances among all the stakeholders.

Promoting the strategic alliances needed in communities to plan, deliver and assess services that promote positive outcomes for children and families.

Children must have safe places to learn, grow, and thrive outside the home. The Ministry is launching Alberta’s Promise to engage individuals and corporations in building community resources that give children and youth the tools to learn, grow, and succeed.

GOALS, STRATEGIES AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

CORE
BUSINESS
ONE

1 Promoting the development and well-being of children, youth and families

Goal 1.1 Children and youth will have a healthy start in life and the supports they need to reach their potential

Outcomes

Children and youth are physically, emotionally, socially, intellectually and spiritually healthy. Children and youth meet individual developmental milestones.

Strategic Priority

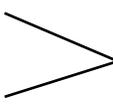
Prevention. Promoting early childhood development and a range of other prevention strategies to support families in promoting the optimal development of children and youth, especially those who need help the most.

Strategies

1.1.1 Build early childhood development services across the province to help parents, families and other care givers obtain the information and support to provide children with the best possible start in life to reach their potential.

- 1.1.2 Improve child care standards, and quality child care options that strengthen the ability of families in all communities to care for their children, support children in meeting developmental milestones, and balance home and work.
- 1.1.3 Develop legislation and policies to re-focus Resources for Children with Disabilities on abilities rather than disabilities, early intervention and family supports, and better co-ordinate services among partners so that families obtain consistent, sustainable supports for their children, including those with complex special needs.
- 1.1.4 Implement the "youth in transition" framework to improve and better connect programs and services at all levels to better address the needs of youth and help them make a successful, self-reliant passage to adulthood.
- 1.1.5 Continue to implement the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder strategy to prevent the disorder, support high-risk mothers, and strengthen approaches for assessing and addressing the needs of children and youth affected, and their families.
- 1.1.6 Support the community implementation of the Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research to advance research and develop strategies to help Albertans promote strong children, families and communities.

Performance Measures

	2003-04 Target	2004-05 Target	2005-06 Target
Percentage of child care centres that provide a developmentally appropriate environment for children.	5% over 02-03 results	10% over 02-03 results	25% over 02-03 results
Percentage of Alberta children demonstrating healthy social and emotional development.		maintain or improve level in relation to national average	maintain or improve level in relation to national average
Percentage of Alberta families using positive parenting skills compared to national average.		maintain or improve level in relation to national average	maintain or improve level in relation to national average
Percentage of families accessing Ministry programs who indicate positive impacts for their children.	–	85%	–

2

Keeping children, youth and families safe and protected

Goal 2.1 Families will be safe, healthy, and able to promote children's development

Outcomes

Children, youth and families overcome at-risk circumstances.
Children, youth and families are safe, healthy, resilient and self-reliant.

Strategic Priority

Preservation. Improving the quality of early intervention strategies to help preserve and support families in providing safe and nurturing environments for their children to learn and grow, and reduce the number of children who need to be taken into government care.

Strategies

- 2.1.1 Continue implementing the Alberta Response Model to engage, improve, and connect community-based early intervention strategies so that families can obtain a continuum of supports to overcome at-risk circumstances and care for their own children.
- 2.1.2 Develop a range of early intervention strategies that will support families, including those who access services under the Alberta Response Model, in the early screening and identification of risks, the development of positive parenting skills, and follow-up supports.
- 2.1.3 Continue to increase stakeholder awareness about the *Protection Against Family Violence Act* and family violence prevention strategies, increase treatment programs for children and other family members who witness or are victims of family violence, and improve quality services in women's shelters.
- 2.1.4 Continue to work with Alberta Justice in the reform of family law to promote family-centered services, restorative justice, better programs for young offenders, community conferencing and registries of offenders who may present a risk to children.

Performance Measures

	2003-04 Target	2004-05 Target	2005-06 Target
Percentage of children and youth reported to be at-risk who received supports through community resources, and afterwards did not require child protection services	85%	85%	85%
Percentage of adults staying at government-funded women's emergency shelters who report that they are better able to keep themselves and the children under their care safer from abuse.	75%	75%	75%

Goal 2.2 Children in need will be protected and supported by permanent, nurturing relationships

Outcomes

Children and youth in need of protective services are protected from further abuse and neglect. Children and youth in care are placed in secure, and stable environments that allow for the development of life-long relationships and connection to family and community.

Strategic Priority

Protection. Transforming Child Welfare with an emphasis on family centered practice with child centered outcomes to improve the safety, well-being, and development of children, and increase the number of children in care who are reunited with their families or placed in other permanent, nurturing homes.

Strategies

- 2.2.1 Develop and implement a new *Child Welfare Amendment Act* regulations and policies to place greater emphasis on and accountability for the safety and well-being of children, permanent, nurturing homes for children, the involvement of children and families in decision-making, and partnerships in the safeguarding of children.
- 2.2.2 Implement the Alberta Response Model to transform child welfare services by focussing on “Kids First” and ensuring that the assessment of needs involves families, focuses on each child’s individual developmental milestones, and outlines the steps to reunite the child with family or other permanent, nurturing homes.
- 2.2.3 Introduce a new quality assurance system to improve the quality, consistency, and accountability of child welfare services across the province and outcomes for children and families.
- 2.2.4 Continue preventive and treatment services for the protection of children and youth under the *Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act* to improve outcomes for children and care givers.
- 2.2.5 Promote transitional supports such as mentoring programs, peer supports, and extended networks that enable youth leaving child welfare to make a successful transition to independence.
- 2.2.6 Under the Social Care Facilities Review Committee, continue to conduct legislated reviews and investigations of social care facilities as required to ensure safe environments for children.

Performance Measures

	2003-04 Target	2004-05 Target	2005-06 Target
Percentage of children who suffer severe injury or die while receiving child protection services.	0	0	0
Percentage of children who experience a recurrence of maltreatment within 12 months.	Baseline data	Equal to or better than national average	Equal to or better than national average
Percentage of children in care per 1000 child population.		Baseline data	Equal to or better than national average
Average number of placements a child has while case is open.		Baseline data	Equal to or better than national average
Average number of days from admission into care to permanent placement.		Baseline data	Equal to or better than national average
Percentage of children receiving child protection services who moved two or more times outside their communities in a year.	Baseline data	Equal to or better than national average	Equal to or better than national average
Percentage of children in care who maintain a grade advancement rate comparable to the general school age population.	Baseline data	Equal to or better than national average	Equal to or better than national average

3 Promoting healthy communities for children, youth and families

Goal 3.1 The well-being and self-reliance of Aboriginal children, families and communities will be promoted, supported and comparable to that of other Albertans

Outcomes

Aboriginal communities have the capacity to meet the needs of children, youth and families. There is a reduced percentage of Aboriginal children represented in the child welfare caseload. Aboriginal children, youth and families receive culturally appropriate services.

Strategic Priority

Building on the strengths of Aboriginal communities in developing the governance, accountability and service delivery capacity to promote the care of their children, youth, and families.

Strategies

- 3.1.1 Continue to implement the Ministry's Aboriginal Policy Initiative strategies to address gaps and improve the quality of services designed to meet the needs of Aboriginal children, youth and families.
- 3.1.2 Develop and implement a strategy to encourage First Nations to develop and deliver prevention and early intervention initiatives within their communities to assist Aboriginal children to reach their potential.
- 3.1.3 Work with partners in the development of a Mental Health Wellness Promotion campaign and services in Aboriginal communities to prevent and reduce the incidence of youth suicide.
- 3.1.4 Develop and promote strategies to increase the educational attainment of Aboriginal children and youth, particularly those in care, and the supports they need for a successful transition to adulthood.
- 3.1.5 In collaboration with First Nations representatives, continue to implement an accountability framework for child welfare agreements that support First Nations communities in the governance, delivery and evaluation of child protection and permanency planning services for Aboriginal children and youth.
- 3.1.6 Through negotiated framework agreements, promote joint planning and action between the Ministry, the Metis Nation of Alberta Association, and Metis Settlements respecting equitable participation and involvement of Metis peoples in the programs, policies and standards that affect Metis children.

Performance Measures

	2003-04 Target	2004-05 Target	2005-06 Target
Percentage of Aboriginal community partners reporting an increase in the community's ability to meet the needs of Aboriginal children, youth and families.		70%	
Percentage of Aboriginal children in care placed in Aboriginal homes.		Baseline data	Equal to or better than national average
Percentage of Aboriginal children in care who maintain a grade advancement rate comparable to the general school age population.	Baseline data	Equal to or better than baseline	Equal to or better than baseline

Goal 3.2 Communities will have the capacity to plan and deliver services that promote the well-being of children, youth and families

Outcomes

**Alberta is recognized for leadership in promoting strong children, families and communities at the international, national, provincial and community levels.
 Communities are responsive to the needs, values and cultures of children and their families.
 Children, youth and families participate in decisions that affect them.
 Albertans are involved in addressing issues faced by children, youth and families.**

Strategic Priority

Promoting and supporting the development of strategic alliances necessary in communities to plan, deliver and evaluate services that promote positive outcomes for children, youth and families.

Strategies

- 3.2.1 Lead the implementation of Alberta’s Promise, a public-private partnership dedicated to finding new and better ways of working together to give children the opportunity to lead happy, healthy, and successful lives.
- 3.2.2 Champion the best interests of children and youth through Cross Ministry Initiatives, in particular:
 - Alberta Children and Youth Initiative to support the healthy development of children and youth
 - Aboriginal Policy Initiative to improve the well being and self-reliance of Aboriginal people, and to clarify federal, provincial and Aboriginal roles and responsibilities
 - Health Sustainability Initiative to respond to the recommendations in the Premier’s Advisory Council on Health report.
- 3.2.3 Provide leadership on international, national, and inter-provincial initiatives to promote the safety, well-being and development of children, youth and families.
- 3.2.4 Work with municipalities to strengthen community-based services for children, youth and families through the Family and Community Support Services program.

- 3.2.5 Under Alberta's Promise, promote "communities of promise" which support the involvement of all community members, and recognize individual contributions to the well being of children, youth and families.
- 3.2.6 Work with partners to explore and develop community advocacy initiatives for children and families, and ensure that the voices of children and youth are heard in the decision-making processes that affect them.
- 3.2.7 Promote the capacity and accountability of regional authorities, Family and Community Support Services, and Aboriginal communities to design, integrate, deliver and assess services for children, youth and families.
- 3.2.8 Facilitate opportunities for citizens to participate in public forums and discussions to advance the well being of children, youth and families, including the Children's Forum, Youth Advisory Panel, and Youth Forums.
- 3.2.9 Develop and maintain a public education campaign on the needs and achievements of Alberta's children, youth and families, including the Great Kids Awards.

Performance Measures

	2003-04 Target	2004-05 Target	2005-06 Target
Percentage of community stakeholders reporting an increase in the community's ability to meet the needs of children, youth and families		70%	
Percentage of expenditures in the children / youth project and service category of Family and Community Support Services.	29%	34%	39%

MINISTRY-WIDE CORPORATE STRATEGIES

The Ministry's corporate strategies support goal achievement across all three core businesses. Children's Services is a learning organization committed to staff development, strengthening the business practices and infrastructure required to deliver services, and promoting the cost effective management of resources to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families. Children's Services will:

- I. Review regional authority boundaries to maximize the investment of available resources in improving outcomes for children, youth and families.
- II. Improve communications with all partners in the design and delivery of policies, programs and services for children, youth and families.
- III. Strengthen the accountability framework with regional authorities, including planning and reporting.
- IV. Involve clients and stakeholders in the regular evaluation of programs and services to continuously improve these for children and their families.
- V. Develop Ministry-wide performance measures with a focus on aligning these with the National Child Welfare Outcomes Measures to improve effective management and reporting of results.

- VI. Continue to develop a strategy to attract, retain, and develop staff across the ministry in keeping with government's Corporate Human Resource Development strategy.
- VII. Implement a plan to increase the effectiveness of the Ministry's information management and technology.
- VIII. Continue to build leading edge financial management and other business practices.

ALBERTA GOVERNMENT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES: SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

Children's Services is committed to ensuring that Alberta's children will be supported in reaching their potential because the well-being of children is vital to Alberta's future. The Ministry and the Ministry's Business Plan contribute to the Government of Alberta's goals for children, youth, and families as outlined below.

Government of Alberta Core Businesses and Goals

Alberta Children's Services Core Businesses and Goals

People...

- Albertans will be healthy.
- Albertans will be well prepared for lifelong learning and work.
- Alberta's children will be supported in reaching their potential.
- Albertans will be self-reliant and those unable to provide for their basic needs will receive help.
- Aboriginal communities in Alberta will be effective and self-reliant.

Prosperity...

- Alberta will have a prosperous economy.
- Alberta will have a financially stable, open and accountable government and a strong intergovernmental position in Canada.

Preservation...

- Alberta will be a fair and safe place to work, live and raise families.

Promoting the development and well-being of children, youth and families.

- Children and youth will have a healthy start in life, and the supports they need to reach their potential.

Keeping children, youth and families safe and protected.

- Families will be safe, healthy, and able to promote children's development.
- Children in need will be protected, and supported by permanent, nurturing relationships.

Promoting healthy communities for children, youth and families.

- The well-being and self-reliance of Aboriginal children, families, and communities will be promoted, supported and comparable to that of other Albertans.
- Communities will have the capacity to plan and deliver services that promote the well-being of Alberta's children, youth, and families.

FROM PLANNING TO ACTION: “WORKING TOGETHER TO PUT CHILDREN FIRST”

The Ministry recognizes the vital role of parents and families in fulfilling their primary responsibility to their children. Therefore, the Ministry puts its Business Plan into action by working with families, communities, service providers, all Albertans, and all levels of government to put children and youth first. The Ministry is a dynamic partnership among:

- *Department of Children’s Services* – provides leadership in putting into place policies that promote the well-being of children and families, designs system-wide corporate strategies to help the Ministry achieve its mission, and supports partners to deliver front-line services for children and families across Alberta.
- *Child and Family Services Authorities* – help determine Ministry-wide directions, and deliver Ministry programs and services to best meet the local priorities and needs of children, families, and communities.
- *Family and Community Support Services* – is a provincial / municipal / Metis settlement funding partnership to deliver prevention and early intervention programs and services that ensure the well-being of children, families and communities.
- *Aboriginal Communities* – comprise the First Nations, Metis settlements, and delegated agencies working to strengthen Aboriginal support systems for children, youth, families and communities.
- *Youth Secretariat* – advises the Minister on key issues facing youth and ways to address those issues.
- *Children’s Advocate* – represents the rights and interests of children and youth receiving child welfare services.
- *Social Care Facility Review Committee* – a citizen panel with a legislated mandate to visit provincially funded social care facilities and investigate complaints.
- *Other ministry and government partnerships* – The Ministry provides leadership in championing the best interests of children, youth and families, at international, national, provincial and municipal levels. For example, the Ministry leads the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative, and co-champions the Aboriginal Policy Initiative with other ministries.

EXPENSE BY CORE BUSINESS

(thousands of dollars)

	Comparable 2001-02 Actual	Comparable 2002-03 Budget	Comparable 2002-03 Forecast	2003-04 Estimates	2004-05 Target	2005-06 Target
EXPENSE						
Core Business						
Promoting the development and well-being of children, youth and families	231,180	236,476	235,269	252,929	260,066	270,194
Keeping children, youth and families safe and protected	336,007	338,536	340,366	352,975	356,163	361,959
Promoting healthy communities for children, youth and families	70,545	99,428	97,402	102,501	108,656	113,958
MINISTRY EXPENSE	637,732	674,440	673,037	708,405	724,885	746,111

MINISTRY STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

(thousands of dollars)

	Comparable 2001-02 Actual	Comparable 2002-03 Budget	Comparable 2002-03 Forecast	2003-04 Estimates	2004-05 Target	2005-06 Target
REVENUE						
Internal Governmental Transfers	1,200	25,000	25,000	30,000	30,000	30,000
Transfers from Government of Canada	120,933	136,615	106,032	139,933	146,233	156,050
Other Revenue	11,843	11,870	12,690	14,005	14,065	14,125
MINISTRY REVENUE	133,976	173,485	143,722	183,938	190,298	200,175
EXPENSE						
Program						
Ministry Support Services	14,635	13,622	13,622	15,945	15,945	15,945
Services to Children and Families:						
Program Support Services	39,614	31,851	33,491	37,924	37,691	37,691
Child Welfare	359,726	365,789	364,970	373,332	374,474	377,894
Services to Children with Disabilities	63,437	62,069	63,725	72,409	72,409	72,409
Child Care	59,598	60,276	58,700	62,498	67,369	75,225
Early Intervention	30,815	51,230	46,230	50,394	58,594	67,044
Prevention of Family Violence	12,767	11,161	14,000	15,376	15,376	15,376
Protection of Children involved in Prostitution	4,228	5,622	5,622	5,622	5,622	5,622
Other	2,306	2,343	2,200	2,220	2,220	2,220
Family and Community Support:						
Family and Community Support Services	42,240	57,476	57,476	60,786	63,286	64,786
Community Capacity Building	5,530	11,501	11,501	10,399	10,399	10,399
Valuation Adjustments and Other Provisions	2,836	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
MINISTRY EXPENSE	637,732	674,440	673,037	708,405	724,885	746,111
Gain (Loss) on Disposal of Capital Assets	-	-	-	-	-	-
NET OPERATING RESULT	(503,756)	(500,955)	(529,315)	(524,467)	(534,587)	(545,936)

CONSOLIDATED NET OPERATING RESULT

(thousands of dollars)

	Comparable 2001-02 Actual	Comparable 2002-03 Budget	Comparable 2002-03 Forecast	2003-04 Estimates	2004-05 Target	2005-06 Target
Ministry Revenue	133,976	173,485	143,722	183,938	190,298	200,175
<i>Inter-ministry consolidation adjustments</i>	(1,589)	(25,230)	(25,676)	(30,670)	(30,670)	(30,670)
Consolidated Revenue	132,387	148,255	118,046	153,268	159,628	169,505
Ministry Program Expense	637,732	674,440	673,037	708,405	724,885	746,111
<i>Inter-ministry consolidation adjustments</i>	(389)	(230)	(676)	(670)	(670)	(670)
Consolidated Program Expense	637,343	674,210	672,361	707,735	724,215	745,441
Gain (Loss) on Disposal of Capital Assets	-	-	-	-	-	-
CONSOLIDATED NET OPERATING RESULT	(504,956)	(525,955)	(554,315)	(554,467)	(564,587)	(575,936)

