



Community Services  
Office of the Deputy Minister

PO Box 696, Halifax, NS B3J 2T7  
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June 3, 2024

Received LCO  
June 3, 2024

MLA Lorelei Nicoll, Chair  
Standing Committee on Public Accounts  
Legislative Committees Office  
1700 Granville Street  
One Government Place, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor  
Halifax, NS B3J 1X5

**Re: Standing Committee on Public Accounts Appearance, May 15, 2024**

Dear MLA Nicoll:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on May 15, 2024, to discuss the 2024 Report of the Auditor General: Health, Safety and Well-being of Children Placed in Temporary Emergency Arrangements and Child and Youth Care Homes.

As per your letter dated May 23, 2024, I am sending responses to three questions asked of the Department of Community Services during the meeting.

If there are further details needed, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Craig Beaton", written in a cursive style.

Craig Beaton  
Deputy Minister, Department of Community Services

cc: Shelley Bent James, Executive Director, Service Delivery  
Tracy Embrett, Executive Director, Child & Family Wellbeing

## Responses to Questions asked of Department of Community Services

Standing Committee on Public Accounts, May 15, 2024

### 2024 Report of the Auditor General: Health, Safety and Well-being of Children Placed in Temporary Emergency Arrangements and Child and Youth Care Homes

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**1. When will that position (Child and Youth Advocate) be filled and when do we expect that office to be up and running? (page 3 and 4 of transcript)**

We anticipate that the Office for Children and Youth will be operational in 2025. Pending proclamation of *An Act Respecting the Office for Children and Youth*, the Department of Community Services will begin developing regulations to guide aspects of the Office's operations and authorities. Staff will be hired closer to the Office becoming operational. The Department remains engaged with members of the community, including children and youth, for continued assurance that implementation of the Office reflects the perspectives of those who will rely on the Office the most.

**2. What was the number of TEAs at the end of the audit period, and in your mind, what explains the drop there since then? (page 8 of transcript)**

The audit period was from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2023. At the end of the audit period, there were 76 children in TEA's who were in the care of the Department of Community Services.

The decrease in the number of children residing in TEAs since March 31, 2023 can be explained by our commitment to ensuring children in care have appropriate placement options. Our goal is to reduce the total number of children residing in TEAs. Over the past year, we have revised our TEA policy and have streamlined the process used to approve these temporary arrangements. These changes enable us to ensure consistency in information gathered about children needing placements and has put in place regular reviews of the placement plans for children residing in TEAs.

As well, various aspects of our work to redesign the foster care program have helped the Department to address placement shortages. This includes significant progress with our foster care recruitment and retention strategy, which is supporting more foster caregivers to open their homes to children who need placement.

**3. Do you know how many African Nova Scotian or Indigenous children are currently in TEAs or in some of those homes? (page 21 of transcript)**

As of May 24, 2024, there were 29 children in the care of the Department of Community Services residing in TEA's. Of these children, 3 identified as African Nova Scotian and 6 as Indigenous.