

Alberta Children's Services

**ANNUAL REPORT
HIGHLIGHTS 2004-2005**

2004-2005

Alberta

Message from the Minister



It takes an entire community to raise a child. Alberta Children's Services works with partners and communities to give children the best start possible, in order to lead happy, healthy and successful lives. We're providing the best for children, youth and families through prevention, protection and community partnerships.

In 2004-05, we invested approximately \$760 million to build strong children, families and communities. Over the last year, we carried out several initiatives, and this booklet highlights some of our key accomplishments.

This ministry's achievements are a result of the endless commitment of the Children's Services staff and our numerous partners. I look forward to our continued accomplishments, working together as a community to build a strong future for Alberta's children and families.

Heather Forsyth
MINISTER

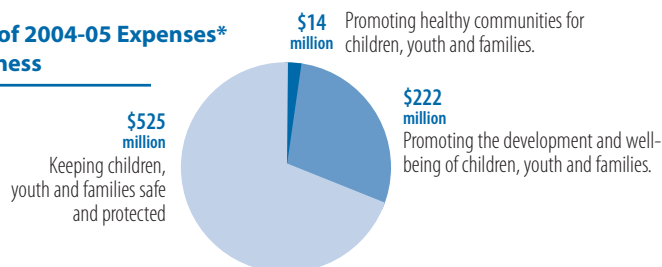
Strong Children, Families and Communities

Alberta Children's Services works together with partners and communities to create safe and nurturing environments for children and youth and help them become strong, healthy individuals.

In 2004-05, Alberta Children's Services continued to improve programs and services, with a focus on building strong children, families and communities. The ministry led the way in three core businesses:

1. Promoting the development and well-being of children, youth and families.
2. Keeping children, youth and families safe and protected.
3. Promoting healthy communities for children, youth and families.

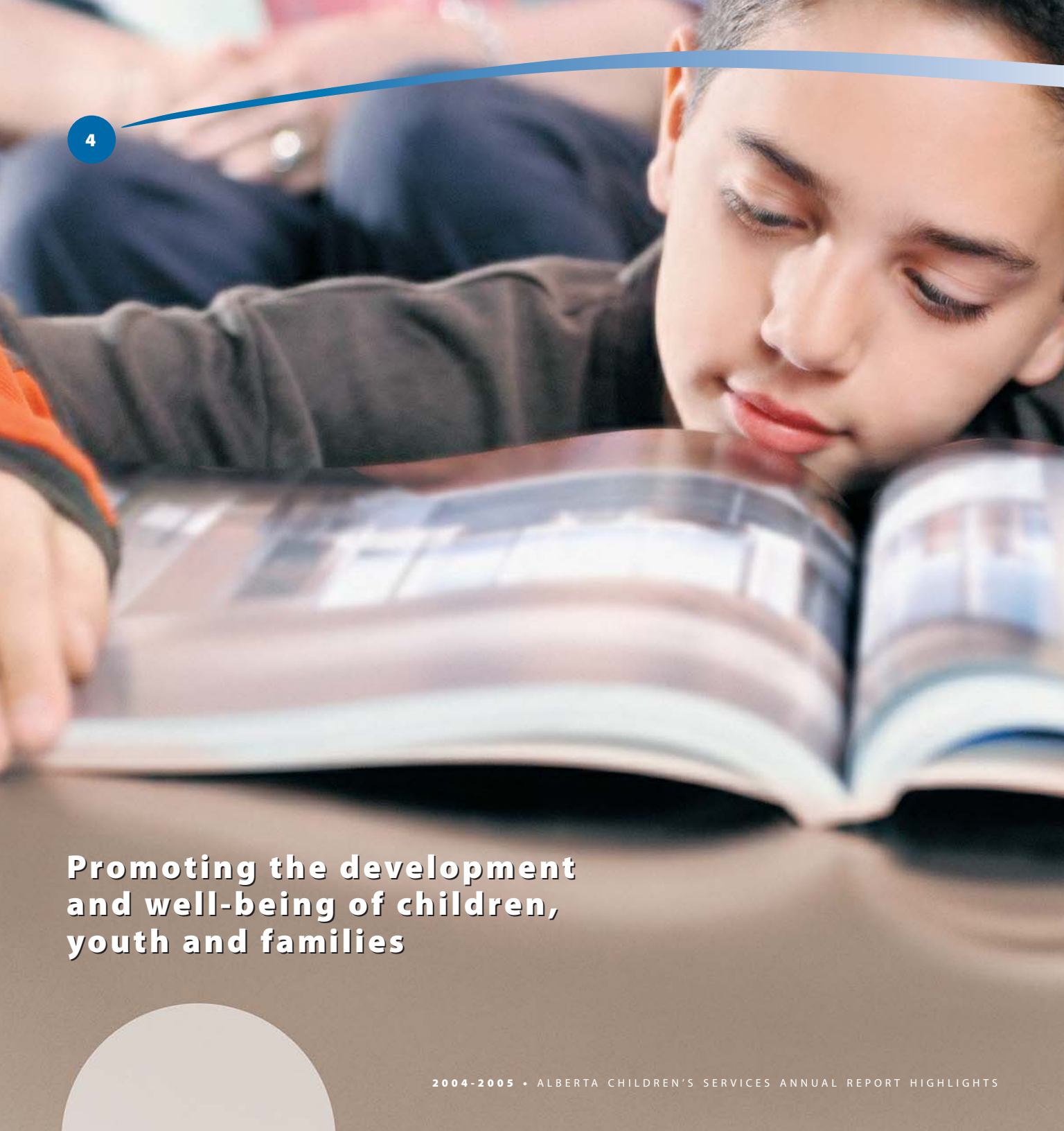
Comparison of 2004-05 Expenses* by Core Business



The ministry made several achievements under these three core businesses.

*rounded off from 2004-05 actuals



A close-up photograph of a young boy with dark hair, wearing a dark grey long-sleeved shirt, leaning over a table and reading an open book. The book is open to a page with a grid pattern, possibly a table or a diagram. The boy's eyes are focused on the text, and his expression is one of concentration. The background is blurred, showing other people in a classroom or library setting. A blue curved line is visible at the top of the page, and a blue circle with the number '4' is in the top left corner.

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

Goal 1

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

With access to information and skills, parents can help their children arrive at school ready to learn and able to reach their full potential. Children's Services has worked hard with community partners to provide parents with the tools they need to be the best parents they can be.

Together with the Library Association of Alberta, Children's Services placed over 17,000 new parenting books and videos in Alberta's public libraries. The ministry also connected parents to community resources, by establishing a province-wide network of 20 Parent Link Centres. Here, they can find information, access programs, obtain referrals, take part in learning activities and meet other families.

In October, Children's Services implemented the Alberta Child Care Accreditation Program, to improve standards, promote excellence in child care and help families select the best child care for their children. This program is a first of its kind in Canada, and is another example of how Alberta continues to lead the way in the delivery of quality child care programs and services. The accreditation program enables Alberta's licensed day care centres and family day home agencies to choose to become accredited, show that they exceed regulatory standards and receive financial support for staff wages, professional development and quality improvements. Already, 250 day care centres and family day home agencies have applied for, and are working towards, accreditation.

Children's Services continued to work with other ministries in 2004-05, on a provincial action plan to address family violence and bullying. *Finding Solutions Together*, the report from the Alberta

Roundtable on Family Violence, outlines five key areas for action: social change, provincial leadership; a collaborative, coordinated community response; services and supports; and, accountability. Through a newly established Office of the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying, Children's Services led the development of Alberta's first cross-ministry business plan, the *Strategy for the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying*. This outlines Alberta's plan for action to strengthen community-based services and resources and work towards an Alberta free from family violence and bullying. The ministry was also busy planning for the World Conference on Prevention of Family Violence 2005, which Alberta will host in October.



The Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Cross-Ministry Committee, completed a cross-government inventory of all FASD related programs and services and created a provincial strategic plan for FASD. The cross-ministry committee also hosted this year's Alberta FASD Conference, *Promising Practices, Promising Futures*, where delegates learned about the many important FASD programs, services and initiatives at work across Alberta and a number of government ministries. In March, the FASD

Research Network – with representation from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, BC, the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut – was established, through the Canada Northwest FASD Partnership and the Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research. This Network provides an opportunity for Children's Services to share resources with, and receive policy guidance from some of the best and brightest minds in FASD research and planning.

The Ministry of Children's Services is committed
to making Alberta the best place in the world to raise our children and families.

Keeping children, youth and families safe and protected

Goal 2

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

Children with disabilities face greater challenges than others in getting all the support they need for healthy development. In 2004-05, Children's Services worked to refocus resources for children with disabilities, on early intervention and family supports, and better coordinate services among partners, so that families get consistent, long-term supports for their children and youth.

The *Family Support for Children with Disabilities Act* was proclaimed on August 1, 2004. The first act of its kind in Canada, it provides distinct and separate legislation for children with disabilities and their families. This groundbreaking legislation better serves children and families, because it recognizes families as partners in planning, choosing and developing services that best meet their needs. The act provides proactive, family-

centered programs and services, to better promote the healthy development of their children.

Since proclamation of the new act, the ministry has implemented a new service delivery model; developed policy and procedures manuals; and, completed training on the FSCD legislation, policy and procedures, service delivery model and information system. Through a Provincial Stakeholder Advisory Committee, the ministry involved parents, service providers, advocates and other community members in the development of the act, regulations and policy. And, the ministry established a Provincial Parent Advisory Committee in July 2004, consisting of parent representatives from each CFSA, to involve parents of children with disabilities in the Family Support for Children with Disabilities program.

Goal 3

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

The *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* supports the development and well-being of Alberta's children, youth and families, while keeping them safe and protected. The act came into force on November 1, 2004, and it helps the ministry serve families before they reach crisis, get permanent homes for children more quickly, and strengthen the involvement of aboriginal communities in planning for their children. The *Enhancement Act* also provides the opportunity for more collaboration and partnerships within the community, and involves children and families in decision-making.

Since the act came into force on November 1, 2004, Children's Services has developed a new policy and regulations to support the legislation; trained staff and foster parents; and, developed a framework for evaluating the act and its implementation.

There is a growing and urgent need to protect sexually exploited children. In response, Children's Services, in partnership with other ministries of the Alberta Child and Youth Initiative (ACYI), developed and started implementing the *Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation of Youth*. The plan focuses on four actions: education and

awareness; prevention and protection; enforcement; and research and training. The ministry completed the *Protection of Sexually Exploited Children and Youth Manual*, which provides information on risk factors for becoming involved in prostitution and information for parents and service providers, and developed new resource materials for parents and professionals.

Children's Services also worked to expand the scope of the Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution (PChIP) initiative, to include new forms of sexual exploitation, such as Internet luring, child pornography and the inappropriate use of chat lines and pagers.



A photograph of a family of four running across a lush green field. On the left, a woman in a colorful patterned top and white pants runs with her arms outstretched. In the center, a young girl in a white tank top and pink shorts runs barefoot. To her right, a man in a light blue t-shirt and dark pants runs. On the far right, another young girl in a white dress runs. The background shows trees and a bright sky. A blue curved line is at the top of the page, and a blue circle with the number 12 is in the top left corner.

**Promoting healthy communities for
children, youth and families**

Goal 4

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

Children's Services is working hard with First Nations communities on permanency planning for aboriginal children and youth. In 2004-05, the ministry increased First Nations adoptions by 10 per cent over the previous year. This was achieved by both an increase in the number of adoptions by First Nations foster parents, as well as use of the ministry's adoption website.

The ministry also piloted the Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy last year, in three areas: Eden Valley First Nations; Lethbridge and surrounding First Nations sites; and, High Prairie and surrounding Métis settlements. This project involved eight communities, who developed local action plans to meet their needs in preventing and reducing the incidence of youth suicide.

Children's Services continues to promote and improve access to bursary and mentoring programs to increase opportunities and achievements for aboriginal children in care. Last year, the ministry provided Advancing Futures Bursaries to 29 aboriginal youth, which will help them pursue post-secondary education and support their successful transition to adulthood.



Goal 5

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

Research is an important part of serving Alberta's children, youth and families. With up-to-date information, Children's Services can make the best decisions and find the best ways to meet their needs. In 2004-05, the ministry developed a strategic research plan in partnership with the Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research. The Centre conducted state of the evidence reviews on FASD prevention and intervention, as well as family supports for children with disabilities. The ministry also worked with the Centre to explore ways to prevent the sexual exploitation of youth and support successful transitions for youth to adulthood.

Through the Youth Advisory Panel, Alberta's children and youth have a voice in the decisions that impact their lives. Children's Services continued to work with

youth last year, to receive advice on planning and accomplishing several community initiatives. Youth facilitators were trained and actively participated in developing and delivering 15 Youth Forums, representing 72 communities across the province. These forums addressed a wide range of youth issues, including: abuse, bullying, depression, addictions and suicide, youth empowerment, youth justice, politics and aboriginal youth specific issues. The ministry also sought youth contributions to several government consultation processes – Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying; Provincial Focus Group on Bullying; Workshop on Family Violence and Bullying for Youth; Alberta Workshop on Methamphetamine – and youth provided input into the *Enhancement Act*, and issues regarding youth in transition and peer-on-peer violence.

Alberta is full of special young people with the passion to make a difference. In recognition, Children's Services honoured another 19 outstanding children and youth with the 2005 Great Kids Award. In total, the province has recognized 100 Great Kids who display leadership, selflessness and a strong sense of spirit. The future of Alberta is in great hands!

Since its launch in 2003, Alberta's Promise has made great strides securing community resources for the

province's children and youth. The Alberta's Promise movement is a commitment by all sectors of the community, to help Alberta's children and youth lead happy, healthy and successful lives. Children's Services continued to fund Alberta's Promise in 2004-05, which has established 236 partnerships across the province, to support and sustain community strategies for the healthy growth and development of Alberta's children and youth.



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(dial 310-0000 for toll free access).

Alberta

