



STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
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Ms. Judy Junor, Chair
Saskatoon Eastview

Mr. Wayne Elhard, Deputy Chair
Cypress Hills

Mr. Lon Borgerson
Saskatchewan Rivers

Ms. Joanne Crofford
Regina Rosemont

Mr. Don Morgan
Saskatoon Southeast

Mr. Peter Prebble
Saskatoon Greystone

Mr. Milton Wakefield
Lloydminster

[The committee met at 19:00.]

The Chair: — Good evening and welcome to the Standing Committee on Human Services. Since this is our first night of the committee in this session, I'm going to start with introductions. I'm Judy Junor, MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for Saskatoon Eastview and Chair of the committee. I turn to Wayne. He's the Vice-Chair.

Mr. Elhard: — Good evening. My name is Wayne Elhard. I'm the Vice-Chair of this committee.

Mr. Gantefer: — My name is Rod Gantefer. I'm the Learning critic, and I'm substituting in the committee tonight to investigate the education . . . [inaudible] . . . proposal.

Mr. Wakefield: — Milt Wakefield. I'm MLA Lloydminster, and I'm a voting member of this committee.

Mr. Toth: — And I'm Don Toth, MLA Moosomin.

Ms. Crofford: — I'm Joanne Crofford, MLA Regina Rosemont and government member of the Human Services Committee.

Mr. Borgerson: — Lon Borgerson, MLA for Saskatchewan Rivers and government member of Human Services. And to my right.

Mr. Prebble: — Peter Prebble, MLA for Saskatoon Greystone.

**Bill No. 4 — The Education Amendment Act, 2006
(No. 2)/Loi de 2006 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur
l'éducation (n° 2)**

The Chair: — Thank you. The first item on the agenda tonight is consideration of Bill No. 4, The Education Amendment Act, 2006. And as Mr. Gantefer said, he is substituting for Mr. Morgan tonight. So we will ask the minister to introduce herself and her officials. And if you have an opening statement to the Bill, then proceed with that after the introductions.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Madam Chair. With me this evening to make comment and answer questions on The Education Amendment Act is Dr. Larry Steeves, associate deputy minister of the Department of Learning; Ms. Francis Bast, director, legislative services and school administration; and Ms. Edith Nagy, acting director, policy and evaluation.

Madam Chair, I'd like to just make some brief comments about the two primary changes to the Act. First, there are a series of amendments to enhance the process for the formation of minority faith school divisions. Second, there are a small number of changes related to the implementation of school community councils.

Members will appreciate that, in view of the broad range of matters covered by the Act and as part of the ongoing renewal of our education system, there is a constant need to update its provisions to reflect changes in the system to remove outdated provisions and to address issues of law, policy, and

administration as those issues arise.

First, however, I want to emphasize that these amendments have been prepared in consultation with the Saskatchewan School Boards Association and are fully supported by the association including the Catholic section and the public boards caucus, both of which are key components of the association.

The first series of amendments are proposed in the spirit of strengthening the process for the formation of minority faith divisions. These amendments will provide enhanced support to minority faith communities in establishing a separate school division. Informed minority faith community discussion and input is an important part of the process.

In the interest of students, the proposed amendments will provide an enhanced process of notice and consultation. Amendments are also included to clarify and strengthen the democratic process that include further changes to the public notification and consultation process.

Madam Chair, the governance and operation of a school is a very serious responsibility. Before a school is established, it is important that communities understand the implications of what they are undertaking. The proposed amendments will ultimately strengthen the process for the formation of minority faith school divisions by enhancing consultation and increasing participation of electors in the community.

The Bill also includes amendments that can be described as housekeeping amendments with regard to legislative changes that were passed in the spring of 2006 for the establishment of school community councils. The school community councils are a new entity in our pre-K to 12 [pre-kindergarten to grade 12] schools. The councils will ensure that parents and community members in both urban and rural areas will have access to the same opportunities for involvement in their children's learning and the same framework for local governance.

Madam Chair, I've just given you a quick overview, and I would be pleased to answer questions for the committee.

The Chair: — Thank you. Questions? Mr. Gantefer.

Mr. Gantefer: — Madam Minister, we're going to hear from the school boards association shortly. But I'm wondering since there were one or two items that were omitted from the amendments that were proposed last spring I guess in terms of the formation of school community councils, once these amendments that are proposed now are included, does that in your opinion complete all of the issues that are outstanding in terms of finishing the complete terms of reference for the school community councils?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Madam Chair, I believe that we all are hopeful that this is the extent of the changes. But as with any new process, we will have to keep track of the changes and the councils, community councils as they come into place within the divisions and the schools and make adjustments if they are necessary. But as of this point in time, we're hopeful that this is all the changes that will be needed.

The Chair: — Any further questions? Okay then, Mr. Elhard.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Madam Chair. As a matter of propriety I suppose as it relates to the agenda of the meeting tonight, we did ask the Saskatchewan School Boards Association to make presentation at this committee meeting, but we didn't undertake a formal request of the committee. So I would like to make a motion, Madam Chair, regarding the presentation of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association if I may. I would move:

That the Standing Committee on Human Services approve the attendance of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association to make a presentation regarding Bill No. 4, An Act to amend The Education Act, 1995 at tonight's meeting.

The Chair: — Any discussion? Then all in favour of the motion? I'll take it you don't mind if I don't read it again. Seeing none opposed, we'll have the school boards . . . Carried. We'll have the . . . Just have you introduce yourselves. Welcome to the committee. Introduce yourselves and if you have a presentation to make before we entertain questions. And I just wanted to alert the minister that we want to have more questions after this presentation of you and your officials. So thank you. Good evening.

Mr. Bean: — Good evening. My name is Lance Bean. I'm the president of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association.

Mr. Wells: — My name is Bill Wells, and I'm the executive director of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association.

Ms. Stephanson: — My name is Ardith Stephanson, and I'm on the staff at the Saskatchewan School Boards Association.

The Chair: — Thank you. Go ahead if you have a presentation.

Mr. Bean: — Good evening and thank you for inviting us here. I'm here on behalf of all boards of education including the Catholic section and the public boards caucus. And all of the MLAs have received a letter from the school boards association, the Catholic section, and the public boards caucus in support of these amendments.

We are the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, a voluntary organization representing all 28 boards of education in Saskatchewan. Our association was formed in 1915 under its former name, the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association or the SSTA.

The association came to age in 1952 when it was incorporated by a special Act of the legislature. This legislation reaffirmed the voluntary nature of the association. The school boards are elected to govern kindergarten to grade 12 education in their school divisions and so are essential members of local government. They ensure that the wishes of the community are reflected in the community schools and make decisions shaped upon the education of the Saskatchewan children. The Saskatchewan School Boards Association supports boards in that important role.

The association's mission is to produce excellence in

educational governance and leadership. As an association, we are governed by a nine-member provincial executive. We have a president, a vice-president, representatives from seven constituencies — Aboriginal, Catholic, urban public, francophone, northern, central, and southern areas of the province.

Part of our mission is to serve our boards through advocacy and that we also provide direct services such as legal, insurance, employee benefits, communications, and human resource services that support our boards' work.

Earlier this year, I brought the elected leaders and staff from the Catholic section and the public boards caucus together and, with myself and our executive director, we discussed common concerns and worked on solutions that would benefit all boards and their students. We're here today to outline for you those suggested changes and what we have asked from the government, and that's what we have developed together.

Our boards of education have gone through significant changes in the last two years. We've reduced from 82 boards to 28 boards through the government's restructuring initiative. We continue to undergo a review of the foundation operating grant. And we have renewed focus on student achievement and implementation of the continuous improvement framework and the assessment for learning initiatives and also the implementation of the school community councils in all our schools. Added to that is our continued declining enrolment, funding pressures, and tax revolts, just to name a few.

We are here to ask for the support of the Legislative Assembly to provide us with legislation that will support our work. We need the tools to be successful, and we need to be given the time and resources to continue our work.

The changes to The Education Act that are being proposed by the government are changes requested by the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, developed with and supported by the Catholic section and the public boards caucus. It is important for you to understand that this is not a government-driven change. We are charged with the responsibility of governing kindergarten to grade 12 education, and we see these changes as necessary for us to govern appropriately. Boards have asked for these changes and are asking for legislation to be passed quickly.

The first piece of legislation includes amendments that we've asked for to the Act concerning school community councils. These changes are complementary to the changes brought about this spring and will enable boards to continue with the implementation of those councils in our schools. The councils will be an important link between the schools and the board of education and will support a learning environment for students in those schools.

The second set of changes that we are requesting address the formation of separate school divisions. In Saskatchewan the minority faith in an attendance area has the constitutional right to form a separate school division.

The changes provided for a November 1 date for submission of a petition to the Minister of Learning by a community will do

the following: ensure that there is adequate time to consult with communities that want to establish legitimate minority-faith-based schools rather than using the process to maintain a school that has been considered for closure. Boards of education go through an extensive process in reviewing schools and the decisions on closure are made based on whether an adequate education program can be sustained for students.

Two, to ensure the establishment of a separate school division occurs with the beginning of a school year. And in doing this, this will allow both boards of education to budget effectively based on a school year. This will not prevent or interfere with the establishment of a minority faith separate school division that truly reflects the desire of a minority faith community.

Public boards and Catholic boards came together to suggest these statements. The process ensures greater community participation through a reasonable timeline, allowing for more effective community input through meetings and feedback sessions. This is good for students and parents. The changes respect the authority and responsibility and the autonomy of boards of education. The earliest possible passage of legislation is requested and expected by boards of education.

In closing, we are asking for the support of the members of the Legislative Assembly to provide us with legislation that has been asked for by boards of education, that has been developed by the Saskatchewan School Boards Association — the Catholic section and the public caucus — a solution arrived at by our members working together. We are asking for this legislation to be passed as soon as possible. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you. And questions then. Mr. Gantefoer?

Clause 1

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you very much. And certainly I would like to express my appreciation for the school boards association being willing to come here tonight.

By way of background, this is sort of new for us as a committee. The fact that the school boards association has been willing to come and present their position and their request for this legislation to be considered is relatively new. The Human Services Committee I think pioneered last year presentations directly in regard to legislation and I believe that this is the second time that this has occurred in our evolving committee structure. And I certainly welcome the presentation.

There is, as you've outlined, Mr. Bean, two parts to this legislation — one addressing the formation of school community councils. And I asked the minister a question just earlier if, in your opinion that this deals with the issues at least as you are aware of at this time in recognizing that this is an evolving process. But are there any other issues that the school boards association have identified that we should be aware of in terms of further changes that are envisaged, perhaps in the formation of school community councils?

Mr. Bean: — I think one of the things that . . . We feel that the recommendations put forward were very compatible with what boards were after. Just like anything new, there is . . . we may find some things that need to be tuned up or something like that.

Our big concern right now is the fact that we don't have any structure out in our schools right now. We've gone through restructuring in our school divisions and we have right now with the, basically the disestablishment of local boards, we have no local communication or capacity to talk to our communities. And right now that's a huge hindrance.

And secondly along that line, we also I think in rural Saskatchewan, especially with the local boards, we've built a culture there of community involvement in our schools. And we are very concerned that if we spend too much time on it we'll have people starting to fall away from this. And for us to be successful with the endeavours that we are interested in schools such as the continuous improvement framework and student outcome, that it's paramount that we have this process up in place and get the support of the communities and get their involvement and their input.

Mr. Gantefoer: — If this legislation is passed in the next number of days, when do you see the school boards being in a position to implement to a large extent these local school community councils?

Mr. Bean: — Well I think, in some of the cases, some of the school divisions have already initiated the initial steps as far as holding some elections and everything. But I think there's a lot of them right now that are just waiting. I can tell you, like in my particular school division, we have slated our elections for about a week from now and just hopefully that we're able to continue through and get them actually running as soon as possible.

We're looking at the first of the year if possible, if we can . . . Just getting the engagement back into the communities and into the schools is paramount. And it isn't just in the rural areas. We know that we need a good, consistent parental involvement system throughout our entire system. I think one of the things that we have an opportunity for growth is for a little more parent involvement in the cities in the actual curricular aspects of what these school community councils are going to do. So I think it's an opportunity for growth to have parents and community involved in the programs in the school.

Mr. Gantefoer: — I hate to use the word casualties, but one of the unintended consequences perhaps of amalgamation has been a delinking of the culture of ownership that used to exist where there was staff and parents and teachers. And people were involved and had had ownership of their school division and felt that involvement and directly through local school boards. That has largely been disengaged now with the amalgamation.

And really the loyalty factor for many people is to the institution that they're involved with, if it's an elementary school that their children go to or a high school in their neighbourhood or in their community. So certainly these local community councils can be the reflection of that community involvement and building of that culture of ownership that needs to occur because it's got to be rebuilt in my opinion.

And certainly from my perspective, the sooner that that can occur, the better it'll be. And I'm pleased to hear that you're hopeful that January 1 might be a possible date where largely these will be in place and start that culture building process

before the end of the school year.

Mr. Bean: — There are some already in place that are of . . . Regina Catholic schools, they have actually got their structure just about in place. They're anticipating that the recommendations are going to go through, and that's what they're basing their decision on. So some have taken a little bit of a chance and moved ahead a little bit by, you know, unofficially moving forward.

But everybody is anxious to get moving forward on this because one of the things you just said is that even in the old school divisions that were smaller, the local community was mostly involved around their school, and it's always that way. It doesn't matter if you're in a large centre or remote rural centre, the parents in the community of that school, their primary concern is their school and their kids. And we need that input if we're going to make effective decisions as far as the education of our students.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you. That's all I have on this part of the Bill, Madam Chair. I don't know if members would like to separate the two sections a bit, and I'll . . .

The Chair: — Mr. Elhard.

Mr. Elhard: — Just around the issue of school community councils, I think there are a couple of other things that we'd like to discuss in that regard. What are the most urgent issues facing these school councils right now, in your estimation?

Mr. Bean: — Well I think right now two things that were . . . number one is the community engagement and the opportunity to bring special inputs also to the local boards. There's opportunities to bring . . . If a school has a program where they need a social worker or a police officer to come in and be part of the process for a while, those opportunities are there.

Also with the school improvement framework and the accountability aspect of things, in this process there is a school plan that these entities are supposed to . . . that will be required to develop and in that they are going to be accountable for some portions of student outcome. So it's really wanting to incorporate student success back into the schools.

Mr. Elhard: — So if I understand you correctly, these new councils will play a much greater role or a more significant role in the success of their school than previous local school boards were ever expected to.

Mr. Bean: — I think we're evolving that way. Some of the local school divisions had done some evolution in that way. I know that the old Qu'Appelle Valley actually had evolved very much to a system like this in which really getting the local people instead of being concerned about the volleyball equipment or the repairs to the gym or things like that, that they were beginning to be . . . there's an evolution to be involved in the school program. And what this . . . if there was a special need in their community that they could focus upon it. So we see it as really a tool in enhancing of the local accountability in their own schools and what their students need. Nobody knows better in their own community for what the special needs are in their community than the local people.

Mr. Elhard: — Is there any legislative provision that limits the role of the school community council though? Is there a certain point beyond which these councils cannot participate or go?

Mr. Bean: — They're very much like the local boards which in an advisory capacity to boards of education. So it would . . . Is that the answer you're looking for or . . .

Mr. Elhard: — Well I'm not sure. I guess I wanted to know if there was a limitation placed on the level of participation or advice and the areas in which they could advise.

Mr. Bean: — I think another . . . what we've talked about here our wanting, another thing too is the two-board policy. We can initiate things to help enhance and make sure that the things happen in the schools.

But I don't see much of a change in capacity from where they were in the last few years other than the fact that educationally there's a lot more opportunity and a lot more . . . that was where the capacity went as far as . . . I don't know where you were . . . What other things were you talking about as far as responsibilities?

Mr. Elhard: — You just gave a voice to the possibility that they would help assist in achieving educational outcomes, if I heard you right. And my limited experience with local boards previously was they looked after recommendations for busing routes and repairs to the playground equipment and some of the things that you talked about; repairs to the plant itself.

Well educational outcomes is, you know, is a significantly more important role for these councils than making sure the paint wasn't lead-based on the playground equipment. So I guess I'm wondering if you can identify some of the specific roles or possibilities that this council will undertake as compared to the previous local board.

Mr. Bean: — Well I think there's things like community decisions in maybe some health programs that are offered in schools. If there is a special problem in a community or a school, like if there's an incidence of bullying or drug addiction or alcohol abuse or things like that, that it gives the local school council or community council some capacity to direct its efforts in making sure that there's some support in those particular areas.

Mr. Elhard: — I know there is two parts to this Bill and we don't want to confuse them so I won't get into an attempt to make that obfuscation unnecessarily, but could a community school council provide advice regarding school closures?

Mr. Bean: — I think boards of education are open to . . . they've been open to all groups in a community when it comes to that process. That's why we have a consultative process that we have right now. And I would suspect they would . . . Well I know that their advice is going to be critical to some of the decision making in taking into consideration.

Mr. Elhard: — I have another question with this particular issue regarding clause 140.2(a). It's amended by striking out the words "to represent parents of pupils and community members" and substituting the following words "who are

parents or guardians of pupils or community members.” Can you tell me why it was deemed that this change was necessary?

Mr. Wells: — Could you repeat the exact reference?

Mr. Elhard: — Section 140.2. It’s found on page 4 of the Bill.

A Member: — Clause 6.

Mr. Elhard: — Clause 6, I’m sorry. Yes.

Mr. Wells: — Madam Chair, the intention of this is to be clearer, that it’s not a question of simply representing parents. It’s that you are expected to be a parent of the students in the school. And I think it’s a question of clarity. Clearly you can represent parents I suppose without being a parent. But the point was that the SCC [school community council] should be dominated by parents of children in the school.

Mr. Elhard: — So being a parent is the first requirement.

Mr. Wells: — Yes.

Mr. Elhard: — Getting elected is the second.

Mr. Wells: — Yes.

Mr. Elhard: — All right. Thank you. I have no further questions.

The Chair: — Mr. Toth.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a bit of a follow-up to what my colleagues have been raising. And, Mr. Bean, you’d talked about the new community councils having at least a voice that will be heard versus the old board members. I raise it in that form because I saw what happened just recently in my area, and in our debate last year with the Department of Education, I had raised some concerns as well. But in the area I represent, we have actually had some very active local school parent organizations and school boards. But I have to be very candid. I don’t believe they were listened to very carefully the last time around.

Now we’ve got a much larger representation . . . I mean a much larger regions. And what assurances can you give to these community councils that their voices actually will be heard? Because as you indicated, like, the government, through the . . . is initiating changes that have been brought forward by your organization and the Catholic school boards. And I believe at the end of the day people will get involved if they really feel that their voice is going to be heard. What assurances can you give us that that voice will be heard?

Mr. Bean: — Well I think what we’re really doing here is trying to get at the local level a focus on student achievement and student outcome and really redefine the role of what this local entity should be focusing on. Again instead of worrying about the playground equipment or the broken door on the furnace room, that there . . . actually the focus is on student improvement, student outcome, and student well-being.

As far as the relationship between the entities and the boards, it

would be our hope that they would be very open. But there are 28 individual entities, and I guess the culture that they build within it will dictate, and hopefully we can have a strong start to this where we can build a culture of collaboration.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you. You used the word student achievement. And we hear more and more there seems to be a lot of talk of student achievement. But a lot of that seems to be tied into the fact that we need larger schools, that we need larger, I guess places of learning, and more students to be able to provide more of the services.

Now I think if we go back over the years, we’ll find that even a lot of the small schools we’ve seen some people have come out of those schools with some . . . have been excellent achievers. And I think that’s one of the issues that really comes forward. And when I look at this legislation and some of the changes and as I talk to people . . . And I just talked to a board member today. And I saw the outline that Prairie Valley has drawn up for school closures, and it doesn’t leave a lot of schools open. And if you wonder why there’s concerns out there.

And it just seems like this legislation being pushed right now, although I don’t disagree with the intent of what the legislation is trying to accomplish. But it appears to a lot of people that the move forward is to basically put in place a process to close any avenue of a community or parent organization that may look at an alternative form of education. Is that true?

Mr. Bean: — What it will do is it will probably impede it for a year. But if this is really about minority religious-based education, then the process is there for it, that they can have a good, solid, consultative time frame in which to achieve this. And again I’m quite sure that the intent was set up for minority-based education. It wasn’t to use it as a tool to make sure that nobody closed the school or anything. It was based on the wants and wishes of the people of minority faith that they have that opportunity. That’s a constitutional right for them so that they could have it within their structure.

Mr. Toth: — And you mentioned for a year. Now I need a clear understanding here, and I may have misunderstood the way the legislation came forward. When you’re saying a year, I believe you’re talking of giving notice. Was it by November 1?

Mr. Bean: — Well the time frame would be if they were giving it in November they couldn’t . . . It would be September before they could . . . which is a new school year. And that was another thing here is, is that we would go around and we’re only going to be opening schools then on the start of a school year, so that we’re not moving kids in and out of schools midway through a year was one of the concerns that we had too.

Mr. Toth: — Okay, and that was something that I may have not quite understood clearly. It almost sounded like you were giving notice that you could close and then a year later, a group could come . . .

Mr. Bean: — No.

Mr. Toth: — And that’s just a follow-up to a comment you made just a moment ago, I think that’s . . .

Mr. Bean: — And it also falls in line with the idea of the budgeting too, was that it puts everything on the same timeline fiscally too so that the budgets, the school division, the establishment, everything has got a clear time frame.

Mr. Toth: — Okay. And one further question. We talk about minority faiths. What about other community groups?

Mr. Bean: — Could you be more specific?

Mr. Toth: — Let's say minority faith came forward and put forward a proposal that was accepted in another school that could be moved forward. What if it wasn't a minority faith, just a group of concerned parents and community owners?

Mr. Bean: — Are you talking about a publicly funded one or a private school or . . . because there's lots of apples and oranges in that question.

Mr. Toth: — You're absolutely right; there's a lot of apples and oranges. But the thing is and the big debate around this table too still comes back to the fact the property owner is bearing the biggest cost, and it's probably going to see some more increased costs especially at the rural level. And I think, I think, Lance, if you looked around you may find some of the small schools with the property tax that's collected, they could almost run an independent school with their own, with their own resources.

And I think that's the question that keeps coming up. It's been brought to my attention on a number of occasions. And while the law doesn't — my colleague is right — the law doesn't allow people to make that choice, it's interesting how democracy works. But I just said if people can make a legitimate argument for a minority faith, then why can't they make the same legitimate argument for a private school?

Mr. Wells: — The provisions exist in Saskatchewan for the formation of private schools as well as home schooling, and the criteria is set out in The Education Regulations. To this point, public education has been about the delivery of public education, not about the delivery of private education at a public cost, if that answers your question.

Mr. Bean: — I've got a response for you. This actually came up at one of our board meetings in my local school division. And the question came from a local parent wanting to know about our staffing and everything and they're talking about, you know, the money from my area should go into my school.

And I come from an area that was a zero grant board. We had quite a bit of more opportunity to provide a higher level of education than the kids in his community. And so what he was saying, that the kids in my community deserved a better education than the kids in his own community. Is that the type of education system we want in the province?

Mr. Toth: — I think there's a lot of questions to be asked and answered yet, but I'll let somebody . . . There's other questions to be asked too.

Mr. Bean: — I think we moved on to the next topic.

The Chair: — Mr. Borgerson.

Mr. Borgerson: — Well I'll move us back. Yes. Thank you for being here. As has been indicated, this is a process that's new to us as well, but a very good process. The experience that we had the last time around was very, very valuable for all of us and I hope for those who came to present as well.

I have a technical question. One of the things, one of the useful things in this process is that there are a few people out there in Saskatchewan who are viewing this. And if they are, they get a sense of what's happening in the province, in this case, in the area of education. So my first question is a technical question that might be, the answer might be useful to them as well as us.

On section 140.1 amended . . . It's the middle of page 4, section 140.1 amended, "The following subsection is added after subsection 140.1 . . .". So there's, "An amalgamated school community council may petition its board of education to recommend to the minister that that school community council be separated and two or more school community councils be established."

Now I have a sense of what the reason is for that particular amendment, but I'd appreciate your explaining.

Mr. Bean: — Bill has been through this particular one. This is a technical question and, Bill, you can give a technical answer to this.

Mr. Wells: — Thank you, I think. The capacity already exists for the consolidation of one or more — or two or more I guess would be the point — school community councils in a community where that made sense. But there was no like provision to allow it, at some point, to desegregate or to break up because that was reflective of the community's expectations or desires.

So you could combine them, but you couldn't disassemble them, and this provides the ability to disassemble them in the same way that their current legislation allows for them to be combined.

Mr. Borgerson: — So if, for example, a community has a high school, separate high school, an elementary school, this would permit separate school councils to operate.

Mr. Wells: — The legislation provides that presently in that community where there's the high school and the elementary school and in some cases a playground apart, that they could in fact form a single school community council for that community for those two facilities. This provision would say five years down the road, if they decide no, our interests, it's such that we need to focus more on this or more on that in terms of the elementary or high school, that they could in fact then re-establish two as opposed to having the one that people may at some point in the future decide isn't working quite the way we had originally envisioned or things have changed in such a way that we need to rethink what we were doing as a community. So it makes it a two-way street as opposed a one-way street.

Mr. Borgerson: — And my second question is a very general

question, but it . . . I'm thinking in terms of this province and the diversity of schools that exist within this province. We have school community council legislation now which is providing a template for all of those schools, but there is a very wide diversity in terms of those schools.

So for example, we have schools where there is a very transient student population and other schools where the population is extremely stable. We have schools where there is incredible cultural diversity and schools where there is not. We have schools where there are issues arising out of the socio-economic circumstances of the students and their parents and schools where there are not the same kinds of issues. And we have schools where we have parents who are used to being actively involved in schools and on school boards and on school councils, and we have schools where this is very new, where in fact there might be a transient population of families and people come and go through the school year.

So with that diversity, with that whole spectrum of schools, my question is, does the template provide enough flexibility, you know, for that diversity?

Mr. Bean: — I think that's the intention of what the whole idea behind it is, is that we needed to build flexibility. If you look at what community schools now are that exist already, they have the flexibility to meet the needs of their community. And what the needs in a community in downtown Regina or one out in the outer edge of Regina, they'll have distinctly different needs. Also the one that's 60 miles away from any major centre, it's going to have its own distinct needs. And the idea behind this is to have the flexibility within the school council to meet those specific needs.

Mr. Borgerson: — So you'll have school councils that formalize their process a bit more than others perhaps and, as you indicated earlier, will take on perhaps more of a role of governance than perhaps others will.

Mr. Bean: — That aspect's probably true too, but also one will have a bigger focus in one area than the other, depending on the needs. So it allows the local community to make sure that the needs of that community are taken care of.

But if they all had the same rules or lived under the same criteria in common, you would have a really difficult time in getting down to really what they need to accomplish in their schools. And it's really based upon, I think, a lot of the experiences that come out of community schools is that they identified the issues and then were able to come up with a solution that met their community needs.

Mr. Borgerson: — Do you think the new school boards are tuned into that way of thinking, that they are prepared to allow that kind of flexibility in terms of the school councils?

Mr. Bean: — No, we've heard a lot about the size of the boards and everything, and that would be one of the concerns that we have, is that we need a strong local connection to our board so that we can have effective decision making.

And we've seen it happen in other provinces. We're not the first one to go through restructuring; we're the last one. And

ironically in the association of school boards in Canada, it was noted by a bunch of my colleagues that were all from small school divisions, which is 5,000 to 10,000 . . . So I just came from a small school division to be a big school division just to realize that I'm a small school division. So it's a matter of context I guess. But we do need to have this local engagement so that we can keep the pulse of the school and the needs of the communities. Even in a small school division if you didn't have that connection, you're going to lose the pulse of what's needed in your schools.

The Chair: — Mr. Wakefield.

Mr. Wakefield: — Madam Chair, if I could, I'd like to just follow on that a little bit maybe for clarification on my part. My assumption is that the community council are advisory. Is that correct?

Mr. Bean: — That'll be correct.

Mr. Wakefield: — So from past experience, advisories, they are and with the best of intentions . . . their advice, i.e., advisory really depends upon the ability or the willingness of the larger regional board to accept that advice. So I guess I'm concerned that there's going to be in certain areas, certain parts of the region or between regions much more effective community councils than in others. And I don't think these amendments have anything in there to be suggest otherwise. Is that correct?

Mr. Bean: — I'm having trouble following you. Can you clarify a little?

Mr. Wakefield: — Surely. If they're advisory and there's a certain board that feels that that council has some good ideas and they may wish to follow them but the regional board in other areas don't think that that advisory capacity is following what they really want and they just ignore it, there's nothing in there to say that the community involvement through this community council should be adhered to or at least listened to.

Mr. Bean: — Bill's going to give an example here of, I think, the example you're trying to use here.

Mr. Wells: — Clearly any advisory body provides advice, and the board which is the fiscal board ultimately has to make the decision about whether they can accept some or all of any given advice that they receive.

One of the things which the school community councils are expected to do, the central focus of their work is around the student outcomes. So a school community council might recommend to the board of education that they would like a full-time math teacher; they'd like a full-time reading teacher. They'd like a full-time this and a full-time that over and above the regular staff complement. The board of education would have to decide whether that was reasonable, given sort of how that school was doing in math, science, or whatever the area would be. So in some cases you may get recommendations or advice that can't be justified, that is unwarranted, that is too rich, is not connected to the results in that school.

But I think if a school community council looks at the program in the school and the outcome in the school and says, you know,

we have a deficiency in our math scores and how our kids are doing in math, we would like the itinerant math teacher to be here three mornings a week, I think that's the kind of, sort of, suggestions and advice which the board of education would be interested in hearing because it reflects how they think it could be handled by combining the advice of the teachers as professionals, along with their reflection on how the students in that school are doing.

Another example might be in terms of if there are issues relative to . . . well a program which we're involved in which is Breakfast for Learning, around nutrition, and how they might engage people in the community around feeding programs in the school. Another example might be the example of Northern Lights School Division in terms of the reading program and how they've engaged parents in the reading program with the kids in the schools in that school division. It's a nationally recognized program that that school division has run. And they found a way through their school committees, if you will, in the past to engage parents in the reading program of their own children.

So those are the kinds of things. So on one hand you can have the . . . we'd like some of everything, please, to those very concrete suggestions that, in a combination with the community and with the professionals in the school and the parents and the people on the SCC, that in fact they can identify a set of options and programs that combines both the community and the board of education in looking at the additional sort of supports or resources that may be warranted in a given school.

So is there a guarantee that whatever they ask for will be given? Well there are certain practical realities that the board of education has to face relative to mill rate and funding. Now if the Legislative Assembly were to provide us with substantially increased grants, probably anything that was asked for could be met. But I suspect that may not be the case.

I'm hoping that I'm answering your question — with a little bit of humour, but hopefully answering your question.

Mr. Bean: — Can I add one more thing to it? One of the things that is required of the local community councils is to develop a school improvement plan that they . . . And also we as school boards have to have a liaison to the school superintendent that's in charge of making sure that these school improvement plans are brought in, developed and brought in. And then we also have a responsibility to report these school improvement plans to the department. So there is a process that gets the local concerns all the way through the system. Again there are limitations to what you can act and not act on, and based upon some of the decision-making realities that boards face.

Mr. Wakefield: — I'll just end then by building on your example. And I really support the idea that each community should be very involved, very interested, and I'm worried that each community has equal capacity to be able to do that, whether it's their own initiative or whether they're restricted in some way or another. And I think you've addressed that. But if we're talking about student outcomes on a very active community council basis in one school and one that has not taken on that responsibility or doesn't wish to, the student outcomes may be considerably different within the same region.

Is that correct?

Mr. Bean: — One of the things that is a responsibility for them is to develop a learning program for their school. So there is an expectation of them when they take this responsibility on that they do develop these initiatives.

Mr. Wells: — If I might just add another component to this, that the board of education ultimately, regardless of whether the school community council is really engaged or just a wee bit engaged, the board of education ultimately is still responsible for the outcome for those students.

And the process which the department has outlined is that on a two-year cycle that the department will have discussions with each board — we believe and certainly support — in a constructive way about how did it go in terms of the plan over the last couple of years, where's the progress been made and so on so that then it's, how can the department support the board or what other supports might be available to assist that board in achieving the goals that the SCCs, the parents, and the community have set out as well as the board of education?

So a board, even if it has a school community council amongst its 30 or 40 schools that isn't as dynamic as another, doesn't alleviate the school board from being ultimately responsible for that. And they may have to make some decisions regardless of the degree of engagement which that community may have.

And there are all kinds of reasons, and the previous questioner identified some of the challenges some of the school communities will have in terms of turnover of children, socio-economic background, whether there's an immigrant population. And those are some of the things which we're encouraging our boards to look at in trying to make sure that the SCCs are representative of the community from which they're drawn, not just in terms of parents, but if there are, you know, significant immigrant populations or Aboriginal communities that are part of that school community, to make the extra effort to make sure that those parents are involved in that school.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: — Mr. Krawetz.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'd like to expand a little bit on the questions asked by Mr. Borgerson regarding the template. And you must have an idea on the expected number of SCCs that we'll see in the province. And of course, in each school division as we've had the amalgamation process occur, we have the 12 large school divisions. Is it correct that the director of education will in fact be the person to ensure standardization at each of the larger school divisions and that that person will draw up the template for the creation of the SCCs at those large school division levels?

Mr. Bean: — I think ultimately . . . well in the structure, the director of education is the one who's going to be held accountable. And how it gets carried out will be up to the director of education. He may assign someone else to do it or . . . But ultimately that will be if the boards would assign that responsibility to the director. That's a normal . . .

Mr. Krawetz: — Then would we expect to see the same type of school community council? You know, setting aside the makeup of representation from specific individual groups, would we expect to see the regulations and the criteria and the workings of an SCC the same in each school community council within that particular school division?

Mr. Bean: — No. I think what you . . . The expectations are that there would be a minimum requirement and that they have the opportunity to grow to meet their needs. So you have a base. But if your needs are here, you can go to here. But you have to at least go to here. So we're after making sure that we have a minimum standard. We have never had that before.

We had school councils or local boards with zero capacity and some with significant capacity. What we want is boards all to have at least a meaningful amount of capacity and then to have the opportunity to expand to meet the needs of their community.

Mr. Krawetz: — Good. Now as this school community council acts as an advisory council, how will the advice be forwarded to the division board?

Mr. Bean: — I think through their school improvement plan. And the rule . . . We will have to have regular meetings with . . . I think each of the school divisions are going to have to develop their communications process. Do you want to expand on that, Bill?

Mr. Wells: — As you can appreciate from your personal experience with school divisions, there's a variety of different approaches that will be taken. Some school divisions are starting with relatively a clean slate and so are going to establish some sort of fairly basic outline or policy within which the SCCs will evolve. Others have a richer history and so can start at different levels and can vary them by school, given their experience.

So at the outset, just getting them up and established becomes the biggest challenge. And depending on your history as a school division, you may or may not start at exactly the same place in year one based on that history. So some will start with a varied front because the history and the tradition is there. Others, because they don't have the same history and tradition, may start with a very, very basic structure.

Each school division is required to identify someone to work with the SCCs in the board office. In some cases it is the director of education and some cases there's a superintendent, or in most cases a superintendent. That having been said, as President Bean has said, the director of education as a CEO [chief executive officer] is ultimately of course accountable to the board for the performance even if there is a superintendent named that reports to that director. The director is still accountable for that performance as well as any other aspect of the school division operation.

Mr. Krawetz: — As you've mentioned, I mean there is a comparison between the former level of local school division boards and how they functioned, and I think any local school division board that was functioning at the maximum level — I'll use your term, Lance — constantly relied on a division board member being present at a local board meeting, and that

many times local board meetings didn't occur if the division board member wasn't able to be in attendance.

So therefore there is that direct liaison to the board and there's direct communication and in fact, you know, there's an understanding I think by the division board member of the discussion that goes on at a local board meeting. And I'm concerned that that's not going to be necessarily at the same level since I think the direction for having a board member attend a SCC meeting is that the director has to permit that board member to attend that SCC, or it will be at the direction of the director or the other person that's put in charge. It's not an automatic type of, you know, attendance if a school committee council has a meeting on every fourth Wednesday, the representative from the area — who may also represent four other schools. And in other words, four other school community councils must . . . There's no compliance that that person must be in attendance. Is that correct?

Mr. Bean: — Yes, that's correct. There is no provision either or direction that board members must be at each one of these meetings.

Mr. Krawetz: — So then, Lance, do you expect that it will be the principal's responsibility now to carry the initiative of that school community council?

And I know my colleagues have asked questions about curriculum and involvement. And I mean, strong local boards of education were involved in that process before. I mean, I recall presentations from the health teacher on optional topics within a health course that had to be first of all, you know, approved by the local school board and there was a division board member there.

If the division board member is not in attendance at school community council meetings and there is a initiative that needs to be forwarded to the board, how does that get to the board now?

Mr. Bean: — I think that, well there will be a number of ways I think. And in the past we've . . . some of the stuff that local boards initiated went through the principal to the central office. That was one of the ways. The other way was with the relationship between the community council or board Chair and their division board representative. So it was always on two levels. And I think that that's . . . that is still, we still have the opportunity to deliver on that.

The reality is that we have a lot more responsibility as far as number of schools. I used to be responsible for a couple of schools. Now I have about 10 schools. Capacity to do it at the same level, I don't know if it's there.

But you still have to have the communication. It might not be just at that meeting every time, but after every meeting you're going to continue to have to have that communication if you're going to be successful.

Mr. Krawetz: — I totally agree with you, Lance. And I know that if you have 10 schools, I dare say that as dedicated as you are, you will not be able to attend regular meetings of 10 community councils. And there has to be a communication

process in place then and that's why I was asking about the template because, you know, if ideas come forward from a school community council and a board member isn't present, we have to make sure that there is a communication procedure in place. And as you've mentioned, principals have done this before and maybe that's what is expected of them.

But I think it has to be clearly outlined in, you know, the rules and regulations of how community councils should work that says this is plan A if the board member is in attendance, and this is plan B if the board member isn't in attendance. And I think that's what's going to be needed because, as was already mentioned tonight, I think you're seeing a serious disengagement by people, by many different individuals. I hope that as we move towards encouraging parents to get involved, that that's critical. You know, I don't think you'll find too many good schools that are operating without a strong parental support.

And my final comment, Lance, is regarding a part that you said that local boards used to do. And there were many great local boards that used to be involved in curriculum choices, and they used to be involved in aesthetic planning activities. And they used to do the flower bed in front of schools and the signs in front of schools and all of those things. Could you tell then now: if your school community council is not expected to do that, who's doing it?

Mr. Bean: — Well first of all — and I want to get back to where you were talking previously — one of the things that in the past, that was always a decision of the board of education. That was some of our autonomy, how we did our communication processes and everything like that. In your previous board when you were a school board member, the processes you used probably differed from what we did, but we tried to use what was effective for each of our communities. And so what was effective to you might not have been effective for me, so we did develop those things. And they didn't just come out of a plan, but we did it out of necessity.

So I'm very confident because of the responsibilities involved here that the communication is vital. And that's one of our concerns right off the bat here is that we need that community involvement right now, because it's lacking.

Mr. Krawetz: — But the point that I was also asking about, Lance, is that . . . and I'm sure you followed a very similar procedure to myself in that if you put in place a system for local school board A, it was the same for local school board B.

Mr. Bean: — Oh in your own school division.

Mr. Krawetz: — In your own school division, yes. Right. So that's what I'm wondering about. As we have these larger school divisions, is the template and is the communication strategy and are all the rules and regulations going to be similar in nature so that there isn't a different expectation for a school community council, you know, a few miles down the road from this school community council when they're in the same school division, probably in the same area, you know, represented by the same division board member?

Mr. Bean: — I would say that would be a recipe for a problem.

I think that consistency of each of the school divisions, that's one of the things they're going to have to develop is a communication plan that is effective and consistent.

Mr. Krawetz: — Who's building the flower bed?

Mr. Bean: — Okay back to that one, okay. That's a good question. One of the things this doesn't preclude is that in the city there are a number of school councils here, and their roles and responsibilities. This does not inhibit that from happening. If they want to start something like that there's an opportunity to do something like that.

I think also that we've evolved. . . I think boards of education now are going to have to take a little more involvement in making sure that if we are taking those people away from doing that job that we have to backfill that ourselves. That's going to be one of the things. But another thing is that it's just not a switch of money or anything, it's a switch of responsibilities. But also I still think there's an opportunity there for local involvement in . . . to a lesser level than the requirements of the community school councils which is based on school engagement, student outcome, and school improvement.

The Chair: — Thank you. Mr. Elhard.

Mr. Elhard: — I think that as a result of the discussions we've had here tonight we've got, as a committee as a whole, we've got a lot better view and understanding of what the potential for these community school councils really might be. And I think that most communities are going to be reasonably optimistic about their contribution through these councils as it relates to their individual schools.

I noted with some interest the level of expectation and involvement and work expected at these councils. It doesn't sound to me like this is going to be an easy role to fill on the part of anybody who is part of these councils. And if they work, it'll be great. But because of sort of the — I don't want to call it onerous — but considerably more involvement and higher expectations of individuals playing a part in the school community councils they are also going to want, in return for their involvement, somebody to listen to them. And I think that is going to be the measure of success. And if that isn't achieved, if individuals participate with high expectations and their expectations aren't met, if that level of expectation isn't achieved, then I think this experiment might go off the rails pretty rapidly.

So I will be interested to hear the comments of individuals who participate at this level with these councils to see if, after a couple of years, they would indicate it's a successful experiment, whether it's a qualified success, or whether it's been an abysmal failure. And I guess we'll have to evaluate this experiment based on the conclusions we can draw after a couple of years of experience.

But, you know, if this works, it's a good thing. It'll be a great thing. I think communities and individuals can benefit significantly by this process. But it's a qualified if, I think.

And thank you for giving us, you know, a pretty thorough airing of these issues for the last hour or more because I think it's

important for communities and individuals who are thinking about serving on these councils to know what the expectations are and what the possibilities might be.

And I think now, Madam Chair, we need to move on to the rest of this piece of legislation and . . .

Mr. Bean: — Can I make one final comment on that? One of the things you just said there, that you want to make sure that people are being heard, that's exactly what the boards are asking right now. We need that structure there so that we can hear that. Because if we're going to be effective and run a quality education system, we have to have a grassroots connection. And we're drastically missing that right now, and we want to build on that. So thank you.

The Chair: — Mr. Gantefoer.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I would like to briefly turn our attention to the other aspect of the major amendments in this legislation.

On page 2 through 4 of the proposed Bill, there's various amendments to section 49 and 50 that outline timelines and publication notices and things of that nature along the road to the formation of a separate school. Could you put that into general overview for us please about saying that if notice for a petition is started on November 1, what happens then? What are the steps in sort of a general sense of the process to the formation of a separate school in terms of these separate amendments? And I'm not asking you to refer specifically to them but to just give us an overview — kind of a general summary — of what the process is under this legislation for the formation for a separate school.

Mr. Bean: — . . . walk through how we came to this outcome or the . . . walk through this. Yes.

Mr. Wells: — I will try and answer your question and if I've not understood correctly, please take another stab at it.

There is currently in the legislation a process for the formation of a minority faith separate school division which is not anchored in any given period of the year. It can happen any month of the year. And there's a series of steps prior to the submission of a petition from a community that involve community meetings and dialogue in the community about whether they want to proceed or not, the submission of a petition, and then a process after that by the minister relative to the formation or establishment of a separate minority faith school division.

So the central piece in that is sort of the submission of the petition. There are events before, events after. The petition is the central piece in that. But currently that can happen at any month of the year. What the, I guess it's section 49 or section 3(2) of the Bill says is that we want to anchor that submission of the petition to a day in the course of the year which allows for then to have the process orient itself around the school year.

So that if the petition is received before November 1 it's a discussion for the subsequent school year. If the petition is received after November 1 — it could be all the way down to

June 30 — it's for the school year after that, next school year if that made sense. So in other words you can't, with this provision, send in the application or the petition on June 29 and have a school division up and running for August 27, two months later. That doesn't allow sort of the right kinds of processes or decision making. Have I answered the question that you were asking?

Mr. Gantefoer: — I was looking a little more for you leading us through the process under this new system. November 1 being the petition date, then there seems to be, you know, 30 days that you have to advertise and certain requirements of advertisement and then each of these subsections seem to be listing the requirements. It has to be in six widely separated, conspicuous public places. There's certain conditions put in here. And then you're substituting on amending section 50 that you're striking out "third" and substituting the "21st." You know, those sorts of things.

So I was more or less looking if a petitioner community has a petition available prior to November 1, what are the steps that need to be taken subsequent to that so that the August 27 or whatever time line would be met? Do all of these requirements under these amendments have to happen prior to November 1 or indeed are there processes if the petition has been filed before November 1 that some of these notices and things of that nature are filed after that?

Mr. Wells: — Okay. I will try this and see if I capture the question correctly this time. In terms of section 3(3) of the Bill, which is on the first page, it talks about, "The petitioners shall, at least 30 days before submitting the petition to the minister . . ." do the following things. So that must occur prior. So if we said October 31, it means that these things must occur before October 1 of that year in order for the petition to be submitted on November 1 in order to be considered relative to the next school year.

If the petition arrives November 2, we're talking the year after that. So that would mean that these events, relative to the 30 days, would have occurred within the month of October, if I can use that by way of an example.

And clearly this isn't sort of clockwork as such. It's these are the steps you take before you submit the petition. If you do all of those things that are required before submitting the petition — the 30 days prior to and the meetings and the consultation and so on — prior to October 1 . . . so if you're involved in this discussion in the previous school year or in June or over the summer, you have your meetings, you do your advertisements, you have your community consultation, and then you bring them forward to the minister by way of a petition after that 30-day period and it's November 1, then we know the time frame in which that's being considered. If this is a discussion that starts after Christmas, we're not talking about the immediately forthcoming school year but the one after that. Am I answering the question now?

So the Act is relatively clear in terms of the series of steps that need to happen. In terms of some of the time frames and the issue of one issue of the newspaper, you would find similar provisions in The Local Government Election Act. And, you know, instead of sort of in a post office here and there or a

telephone pole of somewhere or another, the option of using the newspaper that's generally circulated, that you would find that in The Local Government Election Act. And the change of time frames from third to 21st and seventh to 28th in section 50 of The Education Act are to ensure that there is an appropriate sort of community dialogue.

With the attendance areas being larger in larger school divisions, you want to make sure that the entire set of communities within that attendance area have an opportunity to know about the meeting. And when you've got a three- or a seven-day window on now much larger geographic areas, it really limits the capacity for people to know and actually get to the meeting because they may not go to the post office on a daily basis. So that's part of the purpose is to make sure that the minority faith community, or the larger community for that matter, can have a consultation and a discussion about, is this the right thing for our students or not? What does it mean to our community? What does it mean for the education of the students?

So it's an effort to make sure that this new world that we live in, that the time frames fit the reality of the geography and the demographics of the attendance areas that we would be talking about. And a newspaper being circulated generally is more effective than a half a dozen post offices in an attendance area that may have 10 or 15 or 20 post offices or postal outlets.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Yes. I really support that this process has been spelled out to a greater degree and that there is proper timing in order to start at the beginning of a school year.

I think it's important to note that if a community, minority faith group in the community actually goes through this process, no matter how much time is going to be taken, it's going to create some tensions and divisions within a community. Because while the minority faith may well be exercising their constitutional rights, by definition there's a majority group who will be affected by the potential formation of a separate school under the constitutional rights that they have. So this can be divisive in a community because it indeed is doing that.

And so that there's a proper consultation process and advertising process and a methodology of making sure that this has all been talked through as best as possible to try to mitigate as much as possible the hurt that's going to occur in the community for some period of time is important. So I think that the advice that the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association] got from the Catholic and the public section that worked on this committee is important because there's issues, you know, beyond the surface of just forming a new school. There is . . . What about the other folks that are left behind or that are not part of that minority faith? And so there's ramifications for them as well.

And certainly I think, Mr. Bean, you mentioned that as well that it's important that this be done in concert with the school year, which is now also broadly the budget year. And that's changed so that there can be that predictability and that planning on both sides. Because if there is a successful petition and under the constitutional right to protect minority faith, they have budget issues that they're going to need to address when the school year starts. But so does the board that was there before and is

left with the majority of the students but not the ones that have successfully requested to form a separate school.

So I think this timing is really important not just for the formation of the separate school, but also for the community to actually be properly engaged in the process from both sides of the issue.

Mr. Bean: — That was a lot of our discussion too that the impact just isn't on one side. This is that yes, the one needs time to put forward a quality program. But it also has an impact if you've got, if you lose a number of students, in that how you deliver your program to the rest of it. So it gets some predictability to the budget process and so that you can continue with a constant program.

The Chair: — Mr. Krawetz.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Because we don't have all the sections of the Act, it's sometimes difficult to understand the changes. And just maybe . . . Probably this is not for you, Mr. Bean, I'll say, not Lance but maybe Mr. Wells.

Section 49 talks about the day fixed for the meeting, and section 50 talks about the day fixed for the poll. Could you explain to people who don't have an understanding of this what you mean by in section 49 the day that is fixed for the meeting versus the day fixed for the poll?

Mr. Wells: — At the risk of not having the Act in front of me as well, but let me go as I recall it. There is an expectation of a community meeting, and then there is an expectation of a vote. So one is sort of a consultation process; the other is reaching some conclusion. And I think I've got that outlined correctly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Now it talks about the 10 days before the day fixed for the meeting, and you were talking about the procedures that must fall into place before November 1 to make it in fact a legitimate petition. Are both of these occurring before November 1, before that petition becomes valid?

Mr. Wells: — "The petitioners shall, at least 30 days before submitting the petition . . ." so before October 1, "cause a notice of their intention and a copy of the plan of the . . . separate school division to be published in at least one issue of a newspaper . . ."

So these are the events which are by my example occurring in September or earlier so that the meeting is informed and so that the vote is informed before the petition is submitted.

Mr. Krawetz: — A further explanation to the question of Mr. Gantfoer though. If we're talking the 30 days, and pick a date — September 1. A minority faith group has formed an idea that they want to begin a school, and the petition has been signed. It says that 10 days before the date of the meeting. Now they've circulated the copy of their plan. They've circulated the map. Then there must be a meeting that is 10 days . . . and that notice must be given at least 10 days before that meeting.

What will occur at that meeting versus the one then that is proposed in section 50 that talks about the date for the actual

voting, the poll? Can you clarify what the intention is of those two meeting dates — the date of the meeting as referred to in section 49(7), and then later on in section 50 it talks about you must give at least another 10 days notice before the date fixed for the poll. So I take it those are two separate dates.

Mr. Wells: — Yes.

Mr. Krawetz: — Okay. Will those occur before November 1?

Mr. Wells: — Before October 1.

Mr. Krawetz: — Those two meetings have to occur before October 1, before the 30 days.

Mr. Wells: — Right. You need to have the consultation to have the community meeting to have the vote. Then you have your petition with the decision of the community meeting or the vote which is then forwarded to the minister, as opposed to submitting the petition and then deciding whether the community wants to proceed.

Mr. Krawetz: — Right.

Mr. Wells: — You decide whether to proceed first, or at least to inform them. They have their vote, then the petition is submitted to the minister with the evidence that the community is supportive of the application.

Mr. Krawetz: — Okay. Now let's look at the situation then presented to the minister under these new guidelines versus what the minister had to incur before. And when we look at . . . it says that the minister, ". . . for the minister to consider any petition". Now you made reference, I think, Mr. Bean, you made reference to using the term legitimate separate school division. Will the minister have additional guidance or clarification from the separate school system as to what is legitimate?

Mr. Bean: — I think what may be legitimate might not have been the word I should have used. I think it would be one that meets the intention of what minority faith education is. And I think that's . . . The key here is that we want . . . that all the boards when we made this decision, that what we were looking for were applications that were with the intention of what a minority faith education was intended for.

Mr. Krawetz: — I think, you know, and I guess there has been discussion with the separate school boards in the province as to, you know, what they see as viable schools. And I mean that's not a term that you have used and . . . But as we look at development of separate systems and separate schools, I mean there is always the discussion about what is a viable school.

And I mean there are many factors that come into place because distance and transportation problems and the number of students, of course, and as we see a declining enrolment in the province of Saskatchewan, I mean what was expected of a viable school 10 years ago probably those numbers are far different today, and that has always been a concern.

And as you've indicated, I've been involved in education for many years, and there's always been that question about, you

know, is the formation of a separate school system there because the people are upset with the public board's decision to close a school? And those are . . . you are very aware of, and I'm sure there are . . . most people in the province are aware of, but as we look at developing a system that is in the best interests of students, there's always I think going to be that expectation that the Minister of Learning will automatically approve an application or a petition. Is that still going to be the understanding?

Mr. Bean: — I think that is still the understanding is that he still retains that, he or she retains that . . . the minister retains that responsibility.

Mr. Krawetz: — Okay. So when . . .

Mr. Bean: — That wasn't anything that we . . . That is the department's concern. That role, our role is to make sure that the claims coming through had a specific timeline and that they were there for the right reasons.

Mr. Krawetz: — So the changes that you're putting forward today will not prevent a minority faith group who have legitimate reasons and have the, you know, the ability I guess is the word I'll look for, under the Act and under the law of the province of Saskatchewan to in fact form that minority faith school division.

Mr. Bean: — That's correct. Our intention is not to limit it, to make sure that the process is there, that it is more timely, and that it's there for the right reasons.

Mr. Krawetz: — Now my final comments I think are more to what Mr. Wells said regarding his discussion with Mr. Toth about the year. And we've seen, we've seen of course — I've been part of it — where under The Education Act notices are given to specific communities and specific local school boards under the old system for school closure or the idea that a board of education may close a school.

And those of course are — within the guidelines — would be many times discussed before November 1 but not necessarily acted upon before November 1. And I think the concern of a number of people is that this legislation be not seen as a way of preventing and I think preventing a school closure from, you know, not taking place. And when we look at the guidelines and the notice that has to be given for an effective date of closure for a school, that can take place after November 1. And in fact as our discussions of a number of weeks ago, the board of education does not have to inform anyone prior to November 1 that there is an idea of a school closure. And therefore that could take place after November 1 and if there is a viable minority-faith-based school, that can be set up.

Is it true then that if that is a petition that is then created, as you've indicated, after November 1 and the board of education proceeds with the closure of a public school on June 30, then the school can remain closed for a year, and then the minister may declare that a minority-faith-based school can reopen the following year? And I think that's where Mr. Toth was coming from regarding his question about a year.

Mr. Bean: — Yes, okay. I think your analogy is correct there. I

think what we've seen already is boards are making those decisions right now irregardless of this legislation. They're not . . . have to make these decisions based upon the educational needs of our students or an ability to deliver a quality program within the resources that we have. And so those are the tough decisions before us right now. And here we are debating this legislation right now, but boards are out there making those decisions irregardless if this is passed or not right now.

So will it make sure that they're closed for a year? Yes. But what we're after here is that if there is a need for minority faith education in a community, that they have a process, a time, and it's for that reason and not another reason because that's not what minority faith education is about. It's not about just an alternative — this is what my board said; we don't want that — it's about something else. It's about the constitutional rights that were enacted for that particular sector.

Mr. Krawetz: — Right. And my final comment, Madam Chair, is you know there's been a lot of discussion about school closures, and there have been school closures in the past for decades, and there will continue to be school closures. And I know I've heard this comment from your organization. And when we look at school closures, decisions that a board of education will undertake to close a school, it's not a decision that boards, that board members like to take.

And I think that's very clear when we . . . We need to assure people in the province of Saskatchewan that board members don't go about willy-nilly closing a school just for the fun of closing a school, that it is a very serious thing. It's a difficult task, as was pointed out. There's always community members that are going to be opposed. There will be divisiveness within a community, and there will be friends that will be no longer friends, and those are things that have taken place in the past.

So I think that it's great that you have put forward a plan that will be there for clarifying the dates, clarifying the procedures, and ensuring that those two really don't have anything in common — whether or not there's a school closure or whether there's a minority faith school division that needs to be created. And I want to thank you for appearing before this committee today.

Mr. Bean: — Thank you. And I really want to comment on your last comments. And that is something that is really to . . . With the amount of dialogue and consultation that goes along with it, it's a very emotional issue in communities, and it divides communities. There are people who support the closing of the school in some of these areas and some that don't. And not only just the board members but the communities. It divides them too. But you're absolutely right. It's nothing that anybody with any common sense would want to approach without a great deal of thought because the consequences of making a bad decision on this could last you a lifetime . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Or worse. Thank you.

The Chair: — Mr. Wells.

Mr. Wells: — If I might, just a follow-up to a previous question. Occasionally I make mistakes, and now that I've had a chance to look at the full Act I realize that I probably didn't answer your question correctly. The vote would come after the

petition, not before. There would be community meetings before the petition was submitted, but the vote would occur afterwards. So I erred in telling you that it was otherwise. So my apologies to the committee, and of course I get to do this on TV so that's even better.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Wells, could you clarify after which . . . are you referring to after November 1?

Mr. Wells: — Well after the minister receives the petition, the minister deliberates on it, and then there is the vote in the community as a result. Am I being helpful now?

Mr. Krawetz: — That can be after November 1. If in fact the petition is submitted to the minister on October 31, it will occur after.

Mr. Wells: — Yes. So if the petition and the community meetings that occur prior to October 1 results in it coming in prior to November 1, then after that there would be a meeting and a vote in the community. So I had the cart and the horse mixed up there. I apologize. But I've checked the Act and . . .

Mr. Krawetz: — You're on the record.

Mr. Wells: — Yes and my apologies. One hates making mistakes, particularly on TV. But at least I could clarify that.

A Member: — We all . . .

Mr. Wells: — That's part of being human unfortunately, right?

A Member: — Welcome to our world.

The Chair: — Mr. Gantefoer.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would like to share with Mr. Wells that we do it all the time.

I would particularly like to take this opportunity to thank the school boards association — Mr. Bean, Mr. Wells, and Ms. Stephanson — for coming this evening. This is new ground that we're breaking. Your candour and your forthright answers were very much appreciated, I think, by all members. Thank you very much for your dedication to the education of the children of this province. It's inspiring to see your commitment to that lofty goal. Thank you very much.

Mr. Bean: — Thank you very much. We appreciate the opportunity to come and explain our concerns in this particular areas, and hopefully we can move forward with this. So thank you very much.

The Chair: — And thank you on behalf of the committee for appearing tonight. And do you still have questions of the minister?

A Member: — Vote it off.

The Chair: — Yes, we don't have any further questions. So short title. Clause 1, short title, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 10 inclusive agreed to.]

The Chair: — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: An Act to amend the Education Act, 1995, The Education Amendment Act, 2006 (No. 2).

Can I have a motion to report the Bill without amendment?

Mr. Prebble: — I move that we report the Bill without amendment.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Prebble. All in favour.

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That's carried. We'll take a short break while we switch to the second agenda item.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

The Chair: — We're back again. I just have a couple of announcements. We have Ms. Draude substituting for Mr. Morgan at the moment, in this section of our second item.

And I'm tabling some documents now on behalf of the committee: the school board's letter that was mentioned in our previous discussions and then some correspondence that has come out of our last session, things from the Minister of Justice that he promised to provide, and Community Resources, and CYR [Culture, Youth and Recreation], as well as some verbatim things, and Advanced Education and Employment. All have come to the committee. And I think all members have copies of them, but we're tabling them now.

The second item on our agenda is consideration of supplementary estimates for the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation found on page 13 of the provincial budget Supplementary Estimates. And we have the minister here — it's vote 27 — the minister here if he can introduce himself and his officials and anything that you want to say before we start.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — November
Culture, Youth and Recreation
Vote 27**

Subvote (CY01)

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and members of the committee. I would like to begin by introducing the officials who are here with me today. And then following that, we'd be happy to answer any questions that you might have.

First, to my right is Barbara MacLean, the deputy minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation. And seated behind me in the centre is Dawn Martin, the executive director of culture and heritage. To Ms. Martin's left is Brady Salloum, executive director of strategic policy, recreation and youth. And to Ms. Martin's right is Melinda Gorrill who is director of corporate

services.

I'd now like to give you a brief overview if I may of the five items that are in the book under discussion in our supplementary estimates tonight. As you know our focus is on making life better for the average Saskatchewan family, and an important part of what makes life good in Saskatchewan is the opportunity to participate in cultural and recreational activities in our communities. I think many people would say that's the important part of what we call quality of life.

Because the last major federal investment in sport and recreation infrastructure took place in late 1960s across the nation in celebration of Canada's centennial, many of our province's aging recreational centres, rinks, and pools are in decline. And the fact of the matter is that across the country there are a whole host of cultural and recreational facilities in every province, including our own, that came into existence before or about the time of the centennial — the Canadian centennial — and they were kind of built to last about 40 years, and here we are 40 years later. And so we find ourselves here in Saskatchewan in circumstances similar to many other provinces.

Well with the opportunity presented by one-time revenues from high energy prices, \$100 million under the Building Communities program will be provide over the next three years to assist the communities in building cultural and recreational infrastructure. I'm excited about the program and will be announcing the details of it in the coming weeks.

The second item for discussion is the communications work to be done to promote the benefits of living in Saskatchewan. And as we all know, our government is focused on building a future for youth right here in Saskatchewan. I think that's been a common theme of discussion as we've been in the legislature and continues to be and I think we all predict will be for some time.

We've put in place a number of measures to increase opportunities for young people to learn, to work, to build their careers and their futures, and to raise their families here in the province of Saskatchewan. I think we all agree that that's a high priority for our province. Our efforts must also include overcoming the perceptions about opportunities for young people here at home. Saskatchewan is a success story, and I believe it's one that needs to be told.

As we saw in the two major Saskatchewan daily papers on the weekend — and just in case any of us think that other provinces are not thinking similar terms — other provinces are developing communication strategies to both raise their pride at home and encourage people and businesses from other provinces to move to their jurisdictions. This is part of the environment in which we are living in the country right now. Population retention and attraction is becoming increasingly competitive in Canada and we must be proactive in communicating the advantages of a good life in our province.

And so we will be allocating one and a half million dollars to ensure that young people and their families hear about the opportunities and the quality of life that Saskatchewan has to offer. We are going to ensure that young people outside of the

province also hear that Saskatchewan is the best place to live, work, and build a future. Further details will be announced in the not too distant future around that program. It's still at the design phase and has not been finalized.

I'd now like to move onto the \$400,000 increase in the book which is an increase to the base grant of the Western Development Museum. It's in response to a review of the museum by a highly respected external museum consultant who was commissioned by the Western Development Museum. Robert Janes, in his study, found that in order to absorb inflationary increases in costs over the past five years, that the WDM [Western Development Museum] had sacrificed key activities that could have an impact on its long-term sustainability.

And so the government is continuing to work with the Western Development Museum to ensure the financial sustainability of the WDM because of its importance to both Saskatchewan's cultural heritage but also as well to our tourism industry, and plays an important role in both of those elements that fall within the responsibility of our department.

The next item for discussion is an additional \$126,000 for the Community Initiatives Fund, a program that allows a portion of casino profits from Casinos Regina and Moose Jaw under the jurisdiction of Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation to be directed to important social needs such as positive activities for children and youth, problem gambling, and physical activity. The fund receives 25 per cent of the annual profits from Casinos Regina and Moose Jaw, minus a \$2 million annual payment which goes directly then to the Clarence Campeau Development Fund. Payments made in any fiscal year are based on the forecasted annual profits from the casinos and this year the profit projections are higher than originally expected, resulting in a requirement for \$126,000 then in additional funding. And so that's what causes this line.

Our last item for discussion involves the \$84,000 to the music industry review that is currently under way. And as you will all know, in May the Premier announced the appointment of Joanne Crofford as the Legislative Secretary responsible for examination of the music industry. This review . . . She may be multi-tasking as we speak. This review will identify ways to ensure ways that the Saskatchewan music industry can benefit from the major music events coming in the next year. I think if you talk to people in the music industry across the nation, they will all tell you that in 2007 if you love music, then Saskatchewan's the place to be.

The stage has been set for that because of the co-operation with the four largest cities of the province, together with the province, that the Juno Awards will be hosted in Saskatchewan this year in Saskatoon in late March and first part of April. The Canadian Country Music Awards will be hosted in Regina in September and the Western Canadian Music Awards will be hosted in the city of Moose Jaw in October. And a fourth event to profile Aboriginal artists will be hosted in Prince Albert. That is yet to be finalized.

This will be an amazing opportunity for artists and producers and broadcasters, distributors, venues, and technicians — everybody in the province — to feel our music and we'll share

it well beyond the borders of Saskatchewan. So, Madam Chair, and members of the committee, I'm excited about the coming events in '07 in the world of music.

Ms. Crofford's work with the music industry has already identified a number of ideas to build on this momentum to bring value-added to our province. And I look forward to sharing the results of her work with you when they're completed and presented to me.

We're building a bright future for our families and each of these items for discussion are focused on making Saskatchewan a good place for Saskatchewanians to live and raise their families, and with a particular emphasis for young people to build their futures in our province.

So, Madam Chair, that's the short of the description on the five items that are in the Culture, Youth and Recreation supplementary estimates and I'd be happy with what voice remains for the remainder of the evening to do the best we can to respond to questions of the members of the committee.

The Chair: — Thank you. Questions. Ms. Draude.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you very much, Madam Chair. And to the minister and your staff, thank you for the opportunity to discuss this important department this evening. I'm going to start with the first issue that you discussed and that is the Saskatchewan infrastructure fund. We know that it was announced last week when the government announced their \$880 million that they have put into their Fiscal Stabilization Fund. And it raised the ears of many people who thought maybe they were going to have an opportunity to get some funding from government for some of their recreational and cultural facilities.

I know the minister spoke about 1967, the centennial when rinks were built right across Saskatchewan and I remember the rink being built in my town. And I imagine my small town isn't different from many across Saskatchewan. Now it's closed. It's closed because there isn't anybody to use the rink. It's closed because they can't afford the insurance on it. It's closed because they couldn't afford the utilities on it.

And then there are other communities who are still struggling to stay alive that are looking to see if they can actually encourage people to stay in the small town, and to do that they need to have some of these facilities.

I know that in Saskatchewan we . . . the minister's talked about 2007 as being an important year in the music industry and many important issues in the province and not least of one could be the election. And so many of us are looking at this amount of money that this \$100 million . . . I know \$20 million has been allocated up until the end of March of this year. It was interesting to see that there really — unless the minister has something different to tell us tonight — there really hasn't been any criteria. There hasn't been any applications. There hasn't been any decisions made on what the actual basis of this funding is going to be. It leads one to believe that perhaps it's going to be a making a promise that will be looked at either before or after an election.

I am really concerned. I am concerned for the number of communities who have raised a tremendous amount of money through hot dog sales and working very hard as a community to put something up in the last little while. I know that I have . . . Some of my colleagues are telling me that in the last couple of years they have new rinks and they have new town halls that were built through the hard work and sweat of people in their community. And now all of a sudden there is \$100 million that's going to be spent for something else. So it does make it difficult to understand how we can have one community benefit from a government's funding, which is of course taxpayers and some that have had to work very hard.

I have a number of my colleagues who want to ask specific questions, but I do want to hear first of all, Mr. Minister, can you tell me, what criteria do you have for the applications? Have you made any final decisions as to how a project will be approved for funding? Who is going to be eligible for the funding, and what can we really expect? Is there going to be something tangible for something besides an election promise before the end of March of this year?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Well I think it's very important that there will be something tangible. Let me put this into a context, and the short answer to your question is no. What has been identified is the amount of money that's available — the Minister of Finance identified it last week in his mid-year statement — of \$100 million available over the course of the next three years. So that defines the amount of money that we now have to work with.

The criteria are still in the final stages of being developed and concluded, and when the announcement is made, then communities will be advised as to how it will be available to them. I think it's very, very important to give this a context which is true not only for our province but across the nation.

You may be aware, I don't know, of the call that the ministers of sport and recreation made to the federal government earlier this year. Okay? And this is really, this is Saskatchewan's statement that we are willing to be a part of the solution to the infrastructure challenge that the nation faces.

If you were to ask me the question, what would be the cost just in Saskatchewan today, what's our best estimate based on the most recent review that we've had done of either refurbishing or replacing, just limited only to currently existing swimming pools, curling rinks, hockey arenas — just those things, never mind something new; never mind cultural or, you know, other things — the answer to that would be about \$750 million.

If you would ask me the question, what would be the cost of replacing just those things — again nothing new, nothing cultural, and so on — the answer would be about \$1.4 billion. This is a huge problem or a challenge I guess that we have in Saskatchewan. But I think the thing that is noteworthy is that this is absolutely characteristic or typical of each province across the country. And when the provinces met together, ministers responsible for sport and recreation this summer to look at a common challenge that we're all feeling — there's no exceptions to this — we have recognized that this is just for sport and recreation. Never mind culture which our program will also be available for. This is a challenge that will not be

able to be met in anybody's imagination by any single level of government. It's going to take federal, provincial, municipal, and probably private sector I would suggest as well, to address these kinds of infrastructure needs that we are feeling in every province including our own.

And when we put that into the context of, I think, of rising concern that everybody is feeling around the recreational side of seeing the magnification of youth diabetes and all those things that are symptomatic of a less active society that we're living in, I think we all understand both the health and economic impacts of this.

So the proposal made to the federal government by all the provincial and territorial sports and recreation ministers was that we accept the new challenge similar to what Canada did 40 years ago around the Canadian centennial. And as we approach our 150th anniversary as a nation in 2017, that we make it our objective as a nation to dedicate \$10 billion, which would not address all of those things that I've described across the province, but it would be one heck of a fine start. Not that much from the federal government, but a national program that, when you put together federal, provincial, and municipal governments, that would bring that amount of activity into the infrastructure world in the provinces across the country. And territories.

So we've got the benefit of one-time revenue because of oil that's been helpful to us this year, and we see it as therefore appropriate to dedicate it to capital spending. And what has been identified is \$100 million over the course of the next three years to go to Saskatchewan projects.

When I announce the . . . when the criteria have been finalized and the program is announced, then I will at that time be asking the federal government to join with us, consistent with what all provinces have asked the federal government to do, to be a part of that solution so that . . . Because I guess what I envisage is for Saskatchewan communities, it's the communities and the province and the federal government and we need to work together — and probably with the private sector, I'm thinking, in many if, you know, if not all but certainly a high percentage — to address these issues as we look, you know, look forward to the years ahead and try to deal with the infrastructure we've got.

Plus the needs that we see where it's not a matter of replacing something there, but it's a matter of adding what doesn't currently exist. And also the program will not be limited only to sport and recreation as that call has been, but it will also facilitate the possibility of a cultural use as well.

The Chair: — Mr. Wall.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Minister, I would assume then that cabinet would have approved the announcement that the Minister of Finance made last week with respect to this \$100 million. And today we see in the supplementary estimates, I guess, the instalment on that up until the end of March '07.

I obviously don't know what happened at the cabinet meeting that approved this particular announcement. Why would you

approve or suggest — I would expect that you did — that you make this significant announcement without any details at all as to application process or matching funding or what might be asked of applicants?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Well as you'd be aware, Mr. Wall, the Speech from the Throne made reference to the building communities program. And what the Minister of Finance did then was announce the monies that would be available. And the announcements then and the process of submitting for participation for the building communities program will be announced when they're ready. So it was announced in general terms in the Speech from the Throne. And then what we have before us is the assignment of funds in the department's budget to make funds available in this fiscal year.

Mr. Wall: — Granted, there was some reference, very general reference to this — notionally — to this kind of policy coming from the government in the Speech from the Throne. But of course I would give the government the option to . . . That Speech from the Throne is in effect until the next one, which would take us into the spring. And I just think it's . . .

I mean, in my constituency, for example, there's a significant project that is happening at the Centennial Civic Centre — yes, a rink that was built in the centennial year. And now the city council there has approved a \$13 million project for the civic centre that involves seating, and it involves curling sheets. It involves a new auditorium, a meeting room, and some seating as required by the WHL [Western Hockey League], not unlike what your own community is being asked from the league in terms of the Warriors' future.

And so you can imagine the questions from Swift Current. I'm sure you may have fielded them in your role as the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for Moose Jaw. Now that the announcement's made, what would you tell my constituents, the city of Swift Current? Who should they be contacting? They may have done that already. But what process should they undertake now to make sure that they can try to access this initiative whenever the rules are set?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Well the communities are certainly welcome to communicate now if they wish. It won't be long into the distant future that the details of the criteria for the program will be announced. They're in the final stages of being developed and when they're announced then the process of application will be identified at that time.

Mr. Wall: — And at this time when the rules are announced you'll be requesting then, formally requesting some federal participation in this.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — I'll be repeating request for federal participation. I've already asked for federal participation at the time of the national meeting of ministers for sport and recreation. There were two national meetings, one in June and the most latest in September. The September meeting was in Toronto. And at both of those meetings . . . These are the meetings of ministers of sport and recreation.

What struck me actually at both of those meetings . . . I've been to some national tables and it is rare that you come to a meeting

at the national table where you have the unanimity as to what every single province and territory identifies as their top priority in their dealings with the federal government. And what is amazing is the unanimity there. And then in addition to that what is even more rare is the proposal for solution to the problem. And both in June and then again reinforced in September meeting . . . June was a meeting of ministers of sport and recreation dealt with a number of subjects including infrastructure. September meeting was dedicated only to the subject of infrastructure.

And it was then at the September meeting that the provincial and territorial ministers unanimously made the request to the federal government to become a partner in a \$10 million proposal. Not 10 million for the federal government but to be a partner in a . . . sorry \$10 billion proposal over the course of the next 10 years leading up to our 150th anniversary as a nation. In essence to repeat the spirit of nationhood that was experienced across the country back in the '60s leading up to and for the centennial celebration. So I was a part of that call at that time and so I'll be repeating it.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Madam Chair. Do you know what share you'll be asking the federal government to consider; what percentage of funding that you'll be asking them to consider?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — The sport and recreation ministers have asked the federal government to consider being . . . to pick up 50 per cent of the \$10 billion program over the course of 10 years.

Mr. Wall: — And ours would be, I guess, \$100 million of the . . . We can do the math very quickly on a percentage basis, I'm thinking, in the interests of projects here in the province and taxpayers. So what are you considering now in terms of asking the federal government to do, to match your 100 . . . Are you asking then for \$100 million? Is that what you'll be asking for?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — I'll be asking the . . . I don't expect for a second that the federal government will develop a program that is exclusive to Saskatchewan. And what I will be doing is reinforcing the request from the province of Saskatchewan for the request that ministers across the nation made to the federal government. And so the request to the federal government is to put into place a program over the course of the next 10 years — a 10-year program.

But what Saskatchewan is saying is we have some funds now. We're prepared to start now and to identify what we can make available. And the ministers for sport and recreation have not been prescriptive in describing how we think the federal government should respond in specific terms. There will be some ministers who will be, I expect, will be meeting in the not too distant future with the federal ministers who are involved in the matter of infrastructure and the like to talk with them. And if the federal government identifies a specific way it's prepared to move forward, then the province of Saskatchewan will be interested in complementing as effectively as we possibly can.

Mr. Wall: — They're well under way, as I'm sure the current government in Saskatchewan is, with the budgeting process. And so I'm not sure when very, very soon is. I think you've used words to that effect anyway in terms of when the province

is going to be announcing its details for the funding that we're discussing here tonight.

Suffice it to say though that the federal government's obviously in that budget planning process now, so we hope it doesn't take very long. Otherwise I'm not sure what chances we or any other province, frankly, would have to access, to lever some federal sources there.

My last question then, Madam Chair, if I may, Mr. Minister, is related to, then, retroactivity because they have already moved dirt in Swift Current. It's very . . . and the project is brand new. However they are now doing site preparation near the Civic Centre. So I think that's a question that council there would have, that the city manager may have already asked — I'm not sure — of your officials. But what would your comments be with respect to projects that are already under way?

Mr. Hagel: — As the criteria are being developed, then we will be willing to take into consideration projects that meet the criteria of the program as those criteria are funded.

Mr. Wall: — I'm not sure I understand the answer, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Hagel: — Projects would be dealt with each on the basis of their own merit and there could be the possibility of projects that are already under way.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Minister, thank you.

The Chair: — . . . then Ms. Draude.

Ms. Draude: — So just for the communities that have already heard about this announcement, then we don't have to say to them that if they're pre-committed to their project already that their application will be denied. They still have an opportunity to apply. Is that correct?

Mr. Hagel: — Yes. We would be willing to, I expect that we would be willing to look at projects for which there has been progress. I don't expect it will be limited exclusively to brand new projects, looking forward only.

Ms. Draude: — Okay. Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm going to ask another question first. When you're making the decisions on these applications, who will be making the decisions?

Mr. Hagel: — I'm not sure that's been finalized yet. That's an element that's still in the final stages of development. It hasn't been decided finally yet.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, last year when the centennial fund was announced — or a couple of years ago — there was a number of communities who were very disappointed because they didn't get their funding. One community was the community of Tisdale. And I believe when the Premier went out there, he made mention of the fact that they had applied for three different programs over the last span of time and were denied all of them. And when the Premier came out, he gave them a cheque for \$5,000 for one of their . . . I can't remember exactly which project it was.

I don't think communities feel good about that kind of way they're dealt with. I believe that they need to know what the criteria is. They need to know who's going to be looking at the application. They need to know that it isn't on the basis of politics. It's not on the basis of where you live. It's not on the basis of who's your MLA. It's on the basis of this really good project in their community. It has to be open. It has to be transparent. And people have a right to know how much money is being spent when and where.

We had a difficult time during the centennial to find out how much money was spent where. In fact I believe we had to wait a good amount of time to get the end projects. It was very frustrating for a lot of people.

Now we've got \$100 million. It's a once in maybe a lifetime opportunity to get some of the infrastructure that's needed. People want to know that they have a fair chance. Just for your information, I can tell you that this evening I spoke to six or seven of my colleagues who live in rural communities, and they gave me a list of I believe about 20 different . . . of needs in 20 different communities. One hundred million dollars isn't going to go very far.

And we have to know that there isn't already two or three projects already looking at the bulk of the funds. We have to know that it's going to be spread out in rural areas as well. The number of rinks that are needed across this province is amazing when you think of the number of towns that don't need them any more. Like we have a lot of small towns out there that won't apply because they don't have enough people, young people around to need them. They don't have the population. So Mendel Art Gallery is going to be one of them. They were denied under a number of . . . a number of times in the last couple of years. Their needs alone is huge. Wood Mountain swimming pool, the rink at Glentworth, the rink in Estevan, the rink in Mankota. Lashburn has spent \$3 million and they're only half done. We know that North Battleford is looking at a \$35 million project themselves, and Danceland in Watrous.

The other one that really will cause some people to think, there's . . . will a resort like Duck Mountain Park that needs snow-making equipment, is that . . . something like that, will the criteria be large enough to include applications such as theirs to receive the equipment they may need?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — I think you put your finger on a very important one of the criteria. I think you made two points that are particularly pertinent. One is that on the one hand \$100 million sounds like a lot of money. On the hand when we look at the reality of the needs that the province feels, it's not a lot of money. I think we all recognize that.

And secondly, you refer really to the criteria of sustainability. And I would consider both of those to be important. I think they'll be characteristics of the program.

The program will identify how the province can act as a partner, but only as a partner. And it would be my view that in order for taxpayer dollars to be spent well, that it is important that the criteria give support to the concept of sustainability, that it's money that are used for infrastructure that people will be able to make use of and for some significant time into the future.

And that will really be, I think . . . I'm one who does believe that the federal government is — although they've not said anything yet — is still high potential to be a partner in a national program that we and others can participate in. And I know as ministers at the national table have talked, those I think those are criteria that are commonly, commonly mentioned.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Again I'm going to mention the fact that we are all aware that next year could be an election year. We're also aware that two communities, your own in Moose Jaw and North Battleford alone, their needs could use up most of that money. And we do know that all communities are going to have to feel like they're part of this program.

You had indicated a little while ago that the criteria was going to be available, I believe you said, before the spring session. I guess it would have to be because you're going to be spending \$20 million before then.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — As soon as we can. Yes. It'll be in the next few weeks, yes.

Ms. Draude: — Okay. So then the criteria and the application process and who's going to be part of that process will all be something that will be available for everyone to see.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — That will be included in the announcement about the program and how communities can take advantage of it to serve their sport, culture, and recreational needs.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. I had indicated earlier that one of the problems in not just small towns, but I'm sure you're aware a community like Wynyard is having a difficult time keeping their doors open because of the utility costs. That type of thing is having a huge impact on a small community. We've seen the utility rates increase considerably and that is really difficult for them.

I'm hoping that when you have these arenas or these structures built, something is taken into consideration when it comes to sustainability to recognize that the operation has to be viable. It has to be something that we don't just build it and then we can't use it because we can't afford to operate it.

So when these decisions are made on how it is spending the money, I'm certain that or I'm hoping that your government will say okay, let's look at the overall costs and not just something that looks good in the news, in an announcement, and it's there for the future.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — No, I agree. That's why I come back to the word sustainability, and I hear you endorsing that loud and clear. And that just makes sense. As we look at this program and other provinces look at what they can do and in the context of a national program . . . I mean I hate to, you know, beat on that. But I see that as, I really do see that as such an important part of realistically for us and other provinces being able to do the kinds of things we want.

And I see the 150th anniversary of our nation as an opportunity for us to kind of come, you know, to come together again on part of that national dream as a reason for celebration. And

there's, you know, absolutely no doubt that when we look at these sport, culture, and recreational facilities, these are the kinds of things that contribute to quality of life and on many different planes for us, and these are common. This has got nothing to do with certain parts of the country or certain ages. It's common to all of us.

But over and over again when you have these discussions, that point about the criteria of sustainability is very, very important when you know you can't be all things to all people, and clearly we can't. And therefore you have to define criteria, and it'll be a surprise to absolutely no one I hope that one of the criteria will be verification of sustainability.

The Chair: — Mr. Elhard.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Madam Chair. The criteria has been alluded to as a work in progress. And I think I've heard you indicate that you are interested in some, you know, capital expenditures in terms of reconstruction or upgrading or those types of things. But would the criteria that you're considering now also include refurbishing or retrofitting of say a heating system or an ice-making plant in an existing arena? Would you look at new energy technologies that might be employed in terms of electrical sourcing for some of the existing facilities? Is that the kind of thing you're considering as part of the criteria?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — I think that can be expected to be part of the criteria and these discussions really fit together. Part of the matter of sustainability is . . . several things that contribute to sustainability. Usage is one of course obviously. Affordability is another. And in the world in which we live I think all of us do recognize some of the challenges faced by sport, culture, and recreational facilities now in terms of operating costs related to energy costs. And so I think it can be expected that those will enter into the criteria of what helps to make a project sustainable into the future.

What we want to do is to make sure that we're using this money as best we can in the interest of maximizing the ongoing use of these facilities for quality of life to be experienced by Saskatchewan people. And although we're calling for a national program to support recreational facilities, this program will also include cultural facilities as well.

Mr. Elhard: — Thirty million dollars I would assume or 100 million divided into three years is approximately 30, \$35 million a year. Is it your expectation that you'll divide the amount of money equally, or do you anticipate a larger sum of that total being expended in the first year of the program with diminishing amounts in the second and third years?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — You'll note on the fourth line of the estimate that we're dealing with right now, the figure is \$20 million. And that's tagging \$20 million for expenditure in the current fiscal year. That's why it's here as a supplementary estimate in the '06-07 fiscal year with the remaining \$80 million then expended over the subsequent two fiscal years.

Mr. Elhard: — One other question in regard to this particular initiative. Do you have a plan by which you will publicize or let communities know of this, other than just the standard

announcement that will be made?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Absolutely. This is a very important item for communities. And we will want communities to see if it can fit with their plans and whether the province acting as a partner with them can put them in a position to achieve some of the aspirations they have to meet the sport, culture, and recreational wishes of the people in their communities and areas.

Mr. Elhard: — Okay. Thank you. That's it.

The Chair: — Ms. Crofford.

Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would not be representing my community well if I didn't ask this question. I think in both urban and rural communities there's aspects of community renewal that takes place when buildings that were previously used for some other purpose are then renovated to be used either as art centres or as part of the creative space for people to have a better quality of life, either in an area that's being revitalized in an urban area or in a smaller community.

I don't know whether this program would be the one that might, under the umbrella of the municipality, might . . . if the municipality had identified it as a priority, whether that might be the route that individuals that are working in those kind of things would have to go or whether that would be a separate kind of consideration altogether.

The other comment I make is just listening to the description of the size of the problem compared to the size of the resources. Although we would hope that, you know, this isn't a one-time thing — it'll continue on — it almost seems like at some point there would be some wisdom in developing, as the schools do, a rolling capital list that you then chip away at as you're able to get resources. Because otherwise I think what can develop is a bit of a sense of hopelessness that this is too big to tackle. And I don't need an answer to that part today, but there seems that there would be some wisdom in doing that.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Yes, but what's been referred to here in our discussion is that this item that's before us right now in the committee — this \$20 million — is for the building communities program, is housed in the provincial financial organization in the infrastructure fund. That's the piece of legislation that was introduced in the first reading today.

Ms. Crofford: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Yes, first reading today was the infrastructure fund. So the infrastructure fund will hold the money that the building communities program will draw from. But if you look at the legislation, you will see that the infrastructure fund does not exist for all time for this purpose only. And it becomes, in my view, a vehicle then through which infrastructure can be addressed and not just limited to sports, culture, and recreation.

See one of the things that to me is really important about the building communities program is that we're recognizing here, as they are in other jurisdictions, that in recent times . . . there's nothing new about the fact that we need upgrades or

replacements or new sport, culture, and recreational facilities. The need's been there for some time. But in recent years as we've had national and provincial programs, inevitably when communities sit down and compare, you know, sewer, roads, and bridges to sports, culture, recreation, sports, culture, and recreation keeps losing because communities say in terms of meeting our needs, sewer, roads, and bridges they always come first. And gee, we'll sure get to that some day.

And that's why sports and recreation ministers have asked, through our provinces as well, that we need to dedicate in the world of infrastructure another piece that results in quality of life activities in our communities at the end of the day. Which is not to say roads, bridges, and sewers are not important. They are; they contribute to quality of life. But if you don't dedicate it, it keeps coming second. It never gets to the top of the list.

So what I foresee, and this is why going back to the question that was asked earlier — what will I ask the federal government to do when we announce this? — I'll ask the federal government to do what every minister of sport and recreation will ask the federal government to do as we each deal with this in our own ways.

Saskatchewan has the opportunity this year because we've had the benefit of the high oil prices to do some one-time dedication of funds to the infrastructure fund which can then roll out over a period of time in the building communities program for sport, culture, and recreation. But I don't think . . . I would hope that this is by no means the last dedication of money that will ever go there. It will become a vehicle as we look forward.

And I would love, I would love for us to come to what the sports and recreation ministers are calling where the federal government would say, yes, we'll come in on a 10-year plan. And what are you going to do? And we would be very happy then to . . . if we knew that to go back and then look on an ongoing basis. Because what we know right now is that the federal government is not there at this moment and that we've got some one-time money we can dedicate. But if we can get the federal government to dedicate over a period of time then that's a strong supporter because Saskatchewan knows where we are going to go in the next three years in this. Year four? There is nothing in year four right now.

But this is not . . . Now sports and recreation ministers didn't ask for a 10-year program because we thought you could do everything, you know, that was needing to be done in two or three years. We asked for a 10-year program because we think 10 years of applied dedication of funds is a very good start. But in fact that doesn't address all the . . .

So this is, you know, this is our way of getting the ball rolling and putting in place a structure here in Saskatchewan that . . . And I'll be letting my colleagues . . . When we get it finalized, I'll not only be letting the federal minister know, but I'll be letting my provincial colleagues know what Saskatchewan's doing, as we share our practices of what's going on in each of our provinces as we try and find ways of dealing with things.

Ms. Crofford: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Mr. Wakefield.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Minister, in the description on page 13 talking about the Saskatchewan Infrastructure Fund for new construction, sustainable development, rehabilitation of community-created recreational, culture, social and economic infrastructure, what's economic infrastructure?

Mr. Hagel: — I think when I was just saying the infrastructure fund that's being introduced in the legislature today then creates a fund for infrastructure use, the building communities program will draw monies from that fund for the purpose of sport, culture, and recreational facilities. And the infrastructure fund itself will not be limited exclusively to this program. I don't know that there is any other plan. If there was, that's not my place to announce.

But the legislation does not make reference to a \$100 million building communities program. The building communities program will draw its monies from that fund. So the fund itself could have other uses.

But having said that, I think we all recognize that sports, culture, and recreation facilities do have economic impacts as well in our communities. So they contribute to quality of life. There's no doubt about that. But that's not the only value that they bring to a community. And so events taking place . . . We will all recognize that when companies are talking about investing or coming to a community, then one of the questions they regularly ask are what are the, you know, what are the facilities that are available to people who would be working at our place and living in that community? So there will be economic effects that will be . . . [inaudible] . . . but this program is for our sports, culture, and recreation facilities.

Mr. Wakefield: — Well I guess I didn't understand — and maybe I still don't — what the idea of an economic infrastructure is doing under this particular topic but I'll take your explanation I guess the best I can. But I don't . . .

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — I won't say it louder. Repeat it just louder.

Mr. Wakefield: — Okay. The situation that we have in my constituency and in particular on the west side of the province is not so much rehabilitating or trying to prop up, it's . . . The economic driver is such that the population growth is expanding very quickly. And if you don't have the community, both recreation and social infrastructure in place, you're not going to move ahead as quickly as you can and I can see the value of that.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — And part of that's economic.

Mr. Wakefield: — But to be honest, I'll have to say for the same reasons as was alluded to earlier, for my constituency there's a great deal of skepticism about how we can fit into quote, "the provincial scene", and it's because of several years and several examples of not being part of the Saskatchewan social and recreational infrastructure that has been in place so far.

You know I can give you examples. There is a multi-million dollar performing arts centre that reluctantly the provincial government put about \$200,000 in. There's a \$25 million

multiplex that's already been constructed. The city contributed. One of the provincial governments contributed, but we did not. And it's drawing from about a 50-kilometre radius of people using those facilities.

We're very skeptical that this is going to apply to us. Will it apply to Moose Jaw? Will it apply to North Battleford? Will it apply to Lloydminster? It's just a question that I have to ask because when that very obscure line in the Throne Speech came up, I talked to the city about it. I've talked to people in our area, and they just said, pfft. What can we tell them?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Well Lloydminster is a Saskatchewan community. And last time I looked, it was on the Saskatchewan map.

Mr. Wakefield: — But it hasn't been considered that way, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — I don't think I'd agree with that because I know I've personally participated in my responsibilities as an official of the government when I . . . This is outside the department that's before us in right now. But I recall when I was Minister of Community Resources coming to Lloydminster and being part of opening a resource centre that was specifically a design to meet the needs of programs from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and the federal government combined under a single roof.

In our centennial celebrations Lloydminster was included as a . . . Lloydminster was a very active participant in the centennial celebrations of Saskatchewan and Alberta. And I don't think it was a participant in any lesser way in the Saskatchewan celebrations than other communities.

So I understand your point, and I certainly aware of it. I think sometimes Lloydminster has the advantage of having two provinces, and sometimes it has the disadvantage of feeling like it's not in two provinces. And I understand the point that you're making. And Lloydminster is a Saskatchewan community.

Mr. Wakefield: — It's a seamless community unless the recreational and cultural facilities are on the Alberta side.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — That's right. It is a . . .

Mr. Wakefield: — That's my problem with the Lloydminster charter as accepted by this government.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Well I acknowledge that it is a community which sees itself as both and functions as both. I clearly acknowledge that. And in that context it is a . . . at the same time that it's an Alberta community, it is also a Saskatchewan community.

The Chair: — Ms. Draude.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Our time is going way too quickly. I'm having a great time.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — How time flies when you're having a good time.

Ms. Draude: — I have the other four areas I wanted to touch on as well, but I just need to clarify. When Mr. Wakefield talked about this line on page 13 that talked about development and rehabilitation of community — recreational, cultural, social, and economic infrastructure — and your answer to him was that the economic infrastructure was basically the fund that is holding the money for these other areas. When I read this I believed that it was recreational infrastructure, cultural infrastructure, social infrastructure and economic infrastructure.

I thought, well perhaps maybe if I wanted to start a hot dog stand at Greenwater that that would be something that you were looking at. So you are clarifying that there is going to be no applications accepted for anything to do with economic infrastructure. Am I correct?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — That's correct, yes. Again, the reference is to the Saskatchewan Infrastructure Fund. And then I think you'll see the link to the wording when you go to the legislation that was introduced today.

And that's why I said earlier, I don't see the infrastructure fund that was introduced in the legislature today as existing in the future for the building communities program exclusively. It's putting in place a financial structure that can support infrastructure funding in a host of ways, and the first program that will be funded by it happens to be the building communities program which is for sport, culture, and recreational facilities.

There will be no hot dog stands funded in the program. You can count on that. Sorry, but that's just the way it is.

Ms. Draude: — Okay. All right. I'll have to go on to a new idea then. Mr. Minister . . .

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — I guess perhaps somebody now has a hot dog stand in the arena, you know, that might be in operation but . . .

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, I want to go on to the other issue, or one of the other issues where you talked about youth retention and the importance of young people in building our province. Again no one can question the necessity of this, but again the frustration over the announcement without any strategy that's developed. It's a communication strategy of one and a half million dollars. I believe you'd indicated in your opening remarks it will be done both within the province and outside of the province, but the details are going to be developed later. Can you give us again any ideas? Like what are you basically talking about?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Well in the same way you'll recognize that when we have budget estimates that come before the committee from the spring budget, it will be extremely — not only typical — it'll be extremely usual that in there will be funds made available for things that are going to happen later. So that's true in this fiscal year for this particular announcement. This is funds that are dedicated that will be expended in this fiscal year but have not been finalized at this point at which the decision is being made and brought to the committee.

Bottom line is that we will, as you have said, that we will all

recognize the importance of communicating the attractiveness to Saskatchewan for young people to build their futures here — both for young people who are here already, but also for young people who are not here now. Maybe have been here before, live somewhere else now, or maybe have never lived in Saskatchewan, but the . . . In order to meet our ongoing social and economic objectives, I think we all recognize the importance of young people making choices about building their futures here.

We should ought not to minimize the importance of this. I think those of us in the legislature on both sides of the House recognize that. But I don't know if you saw this in this weekend? I think we all did, saw the . . . So here we have coming to the Saskatchewan's two largest weekly newspapers this weekend advertising from another province about the attractiveness of coming to that province. And so clearly it's, you know, that is advertising targeted to Saskatchewan young people, clearly.

And so I see us doing two things. One is reminding Saskatchewan young people and their families, because it's not . . . I think young people don't make their decisions in isolation. We make our decisions. So it's primarily for young people, but not exclusively for young people about the advantages that exist in Saskatchewan as a place to build their future.

However we're not going to be . . . that will not be a message that'll be targeted only within the province. It will also be targeted outside the province as well and I guess in some ways doing the Saskatchewan version of what Manitoba's doing here.

Ms. Draude: — And so then, Mr. Minister, basically the money is going to be spent communicating through print, probably videos, media ads of some sort. I would . . . Maybe even attending trade shows. I'm not sure exactly what you have in mind.

That would probably mean hiring or tendering to different communication companies the opportunity to put forward proposals on how they would best communicate. Is this going to be an open tender or what kind of thoughts have you got on how you're going to actually spread the good word of youth in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — I expect the program will be multimedia. I don't know the formats, the specific formats yet, because that's not been developed. The decision has already been made in terms of the tender. Because it's Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, then it will be done by the department's communications agency of record which is Brown's Communication.

The department's put out tender for agencies of record for their communications activity and the agency that has won that tender. So it's not just for this. It's for Culture, Youth and Recreation communications activity. And this will be one of the activities of the department. I mean obviously a very large part of the activity, but it's included in that.

Ms. Draude: — So Brown's Communication is going to get this work. It wasn't part of the original tender or whatever the criteria that was involved when Brown's was accepted as the

agency that would do this work. So they are going to get the bonus of having this large amount of programming put on to them.

How often do you review the agency that you have for this department and other departments? And I'll stop there. How often do you do that review?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — The tender is done every three years. And the most recent one then was in October to begin November 1. And this was, this was part of the RFP [request for proposal] that was let for the competition for the communications. So they would have been aware of this particular project in providing their response to the RFP request to be agency of record.

Ms. Draude: — How many companies were part of the tendering process and were they all from Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — You get tied up in the answer here. I forgot the question. Sorry about that. That shouldn't get us off track, should it? No. Okay.

The process is initiated by Executive Council when the requests for proposal are put out. And then the Executive Council, based on the criteria that the department put forward, did a short listing of three. I don't know that we know how many would have been considered before the shortlisting, and the three shortlisted were Saskatchewan firms.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. Obviously the Speech from the Throne was determined long before October, or there would have been this communication aspect and others that we heard about in the Speech from the Throne. How many times in a row has Brown's been the agency of record for exec councils?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — For the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation?

Ms. Draude: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — The question is, how many times have they won the tender?

Ms. MacLean: — We'll have to check on the exact number.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — We don't have the answer here to that. We'll have to check and advise you of that.

Ms. Draude: — Okay. Thank you. This initiative for youth retention is going to be crucial, and yet it has to be targeted well. Who is going to be the person that determines, or what group of people determining their criteria of who it's going to be touching, when, and where? And how are you going to be measuring the outcomes? How are you going to be ensuring that there's actually . . . we're getting the best bang for our buck? How are you going to measure your outcomes on this?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — There will be a strategic communications plan developed around the initiative. It's not finalized yet. And it's the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation and Brown's that will be jointly developing the strategic communications plan, part of which then will include the measures that will be used to determine specific decisions. So it

will be the department and Brown's Communication working in concert with each other.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. The community initiative fund, an extra \$126,000 I believe it indicated . . . and that was as a result of increased funds or increased revenues from the casino. And one of the areas where money is spent when it comes to money from gaming is on problem gambling. Can you tell me what initiatives your government is looking at to deal with the issue of problem gambling? And are you doing any tracking to see how Saskatchewan is doing when it comes to the number of people who do have an issue with gambling?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — The funds dedicated to problem gambling are \$500,000. They're administered through the Canadian Mental Health Association and the . . . It's not our department that's involved. It's the Department of Health that works together with them in dealing with the problem gambling strategy.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So when there is an increase in the amount of money received from gambling, does this \$500,000 go up or is it a base amount of \$500,000?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — It's a base amount. When there's a shift in the forecast for the profits realized, then they're dedicated to the Community Initiatives Fund which is why that's where these funds are going.

Ms. Draude: — So the \$500,000 amount was the same targeted amount for how many years in a row?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — This is the fourth year that the base funding for problem gambling has been set at \$500,000.

Ms. Draude: — And over those four years, how much has the gambling profits increased?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — They've actually declined.

Ms. Draude: — So we're taking less money in now than we were four years ago.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Yes, yes.

Ms. Draude: — Okay.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Less profits, yes.

Ms. Draude: — So is this less profits? Is the 500,000 . . .

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — It's not out of revenues but of profits that are the source. Yes.

Ms. Draude: — Okay. So is the money — this \$500,000 — is this taken off before you considered the profits? Or is this paid out of what is considered profits? Or is this an expense before you get to the bottom line?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — The profits of the casinos are realized, and then this is one of the dedications of those profits.

Ms. Draude: — Okay, thank you. Under the Community

Initiatives Fund has any money dedicated to First Nations events . . . or do they all come under the CDCs [community development corporation]?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — So the funds dedicated from the Gaming Corp revenues targeted towards First Nations are the Aboriginal participation urban grants, and that's the amount of \$620,000. And the CDCs you're referring too then, the funding for those would come not from Gaming Corp revenues but they come from the SIGA [Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority] revenues.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, can I get a copy of the listing of the money that was given through the Community Initiative Funds last year?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Yes.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you very much. And now the music industry review is something that we're waiting for I know. I understand that Ms. Crofford is working on this. When do you expect to see this report?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — If I can just go back to your previous question for one additional piece of information and then move to that. I think probably what would be helpful is, what I'd like to do is provide all members of the committee a chart that just shows the flow of the gaming revenues, CIF [Community Initiatives Fund] and others, and then you can see it. It's a lot easier to understand when you can see it together in one piece. So I'd be happy to do that for all members of the committee.

Ms. Draude: — And then can I also get the details of the money that was spent through the CIF fund last year?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Yes.

Ms. Draude: — Okay, thank you.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — The music industry review that Ms. Crofford is doing will provide to the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation an interim report that will come about the end of this month, early part of next month. And then there will be . . . the final report I believe is in June 2007.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. We have heard a lot about the status of the artist and I'm . . . Is there going to be a Bill on this, on the status of the artist, this year?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — There'll be a Bill coming forward in the fall session.

Ms. Draude: — Okay. And one of the other issues that you talked about in your opening remarks was the Aboriginal artists and you said that it had yet to be finalized. Can you give me an idea of this . . . the music part of your cultural event, so your music events for this fall? It sounded like there isn't any details on this program yet either. Can you give us an idea of what you're expecting or suggesting?

Mr. Hagel: — Like the details of the program that doesn't have details yet?

Ms. Draude: — Yes, I want to know something. Tell me something here.

Mr. Hagel: — As I'd said originally, the notion of making Saskatchewan the music place to be for 2007 came as a result of the four cities of Regina, Saskatoon, P.A. [Prince Albert], and Moose Jaw together coming to the province and forming a partnership to seek those awards and to plan for the year.

And there is a committee that's in Prince Albert that has been working towards the development of an Aboriginal music awards program for some time. There will be an announcement coming. I can't really give you a timeline. Again, not a long time into the future; 2007 isn't that far away. And so details would be available at the time that we were able to make that announcement.

However having said that, as well, it's worthwhile noting that there is some Aboriginal music that goes to . . . participation goes to P.A. as part of the Junos, is there not? Yes, so although . . . And that's not what this is. When the . . . it is . . . Okay. See what happens when you ask for details about something that hasn't got the details yet? Well I can't tell you the details but I can tell you what it's not. Okay.

But it is typical that the Junos are a major activity. And typically when they go to a community there will be, wherever the Junos are held, there are typically outreaches that will go to other communities in the area. And P.A. will benefit somewhat from the Junos being in Saskatoon in March, April. And included in that there will be some Aboriginal music events but there will be an Aboriginal musical event that will be separate and apart from that that has yet to be announced.

Ms. Draude: — Will this just be Saskatchewan Aboriginal artists?

Mr. Hagel: — I don't know that I know the answer to that yet at this point in time. There is no doubt it will feature Saskatchewan artists but I don't know that I can be that specific yet.

Ms. Draude: — Can you tell me how much money the province is putting into these four events?

Mr. Hagel: — The answer is yes. Now I suppose you want to know what it is.

Ms. Draude: — I'm just so shocked . . .

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Okay. The province's financial commitments. There was \$100,000 in the initial bid work. And then dedicated to the Junos, the CCMAs [Canadian Country Music Awards] here in Regina, and the WCM . . . Western Canadian Music Awards, in total is \$972,000. What I don't have at this point is a figure about the province's share for the Prince Albert Aboriginal Music, and that will be a part of the budget in the spring budget.

Ms. Draude: — It all comes out of the Department of Youth, Culture and Recreation?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Yes. Oh, does it? Just a second. Yes.

Ms. Draude: — That doesn't include any money that the Crowns might have put in?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — No.

Ms. Draude: — And just so the museums don't think that I don't care about the money that's being put in, which I do, there's \$400,000. Is it divided out equally amongst the Western Development Museums, or where's it going to?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — It goes to the Western Development Museum organization and it adds their base. So that is the base figure from which the Western Development Museums, their budget for '07-08, will be developed.

Ms. Draude: — So from . . . Is that going to be their base budget from now on? So it's not a one-time fund for this one?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — No.

Ms. Draude: — It's going to be a permanent addition of \$400,000.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — That's right. It's in addition to the base in recognition of some of the challenges that they've been wrestling with and the impracticality of continuing as a sustainable tourism retractive museum system. And so it's been added in this fiscal year and, as I said earlier, this will be included in their base then as the budget for '07-08 moves forward.

Ms. Draude: — So they're going to get \$400,000 sometime between now and the end of March and then another \$400,000 that will be starting, you know, again in April.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — At least that, yes. Yes. Well I can't tell you what next year's budget will be, but I can tell you that next year's budget will be based on the figure with the \$400,000 in. Yes.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Minister, and your officials. I'm sure that we would both like to spend many more hours doing this, but this evening I guess we're not allowed to speak about any more tonight in this assembly. So thank you very much for you and your staff. I appreciate the information.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — And I want to say thank you for the questions. There's lots of interesting stuff happening in the world of culture, youth, and recreation. It plays an important role I think in the province, and I appreciate the questions, the opportunity to provide some information. We'll look forward to exciting times in '07 in a whole host of ways . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Hang on; she's coming.

The Chair: — . . . it's not quite 10:30. We need a motion to adjourn. Everyone does. Mr. Elhard. All in favour? That's carried. We are now adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 22:28.]

Corrigenda

On page 544 of the verbatim report for the Standing Committee on Human Services No. 33, May 3, 2006, references to Cst. Patrick “Burk” and Cst. Oscar Alexander “Kerne” in the list read by the Hon. Mr. Yates should read Cst. Patrick “Burke” and Cst. Oscar Alexander “Kern.”

On page 593 of the May 11, 2006, verbatim report No. 35 for the Standing Committee on Human Services, the acronym expanded in the left-hand column, eighth paragraph reading:

METSI [Métis Education and Training Services Inc.]

Should read:

METSI [Métis Employment and Training of Saskatchewan Inc.]

We apologize for these errors.