



STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Mr. Glen Hart, Chair
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Rosthern-Shellbrook

Mr. Cam Broten
Saskatoon Massey Place

Ms. Doreen Eagles
Estevan

Mr. Serge LeClerc
Saskatoon Northwest

Mr. Greg Ottenbreit
Yorkton

[The committee met at 15:00.]

The Deputy Chair: — Good afternoon. I'll call the committee to order.

The committee Chair is not here, so I'll be chairing for the afternoon and some of the evening. There is also a substitution, obviously, for the committee Chair. For Glen Hart, we have Randy Weekes from 3 to 4:45. For Serge LeClerc, we have Warren Michelson for the entire meeting. And for Greg Ottenbreit, we have Laura Ross for the entire meeting.

The tabling of the document from the Ministry of Education . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Okay. It was mailed out, so that's being passed . . . You've all got that. And according to rule 146(1), the supplementary estimates for the following ministries and agencies were deemed referred to the committee on March 2, which will basically constitute our agenda. That's vote 37, Advanced Education, Employment and Labour; vote 5, Education; vote 32, Health; and vote 35, Social Services. If anybody needs other copies of the Supplementary Estimates, they're back here behind me.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — March
Education
Vote 5**

Subvotes (ED03) and (ED09)

The Deputy Chair: — We'll start off tonight with supplementary estimates for the Ministry of Education. I'd like to welcome the minister and his officials, and ask the minister to introduce the officials. And for the officials, a reminder when you're speaking to please identify yourself so Hansard can get your name. You can go ahead. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Madam Vice-Chair. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm pleased to be here before the committee to respond to the supplementary estimates for Education, and with me today are a number of officials from my ministry. On my right is Deputy Minister Audrey Roadhouse, and on the left is Helen Horsman who is the assistant deputy minister of Education. Behind me you should see Margaret Ball, over on this side, who is the director of education finance and facilities. We have Doug Volk in the middle there; he is the executive director of Teachers' Superannuation Commission. And next to Doug is Clint Repski who is also a director within education finance and facilities.

Seated in the next row is Sonya Leib who is the senior financial manager, financial planning and management; Dawn Court who's also a senior financial manager at financial planning; and Rhonda Smysniuk, who is also the executive director with education finance and facilities. And Gary Hutchings is there as well; Gary is my ministerial assistant.

Madam Vice-Chair, in response to the recent global economic downturn, government announced accelerated spending for infrastructure projects, allowing us the opportunity to supplement funding in the ministry. At a high level these supplementary funds are required for two things: 141.69 million

will go for school capital to enhance educational infrastructure in the province, and \$2.022 million is for education property tax relief.

The province's investment in educational infrastructure and tax relief will have a significant lasting impact on future generations in Saskatchewan. These investments will help make life better for students, families, and communities, so our youth can build a better future here in Saskatchewan.

Our government is committed to identifying new ideas to help our province increase its potential. And we would be pleased to take any questions that may be directed by committee members.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you. Questions. Mr. Wotherspoon.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. And I also welcome our minister and our ministry officials. Appreciate their time for us to ask some questions here today. I've got various questions. I guess as an initial one, do any of the increases here represent ongoing or structural increases or are they all one-time increases, expenditures?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Both are going to be for one-time funding.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Do any of these expenditures result in increases in staff or increased contract work?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — I'm assuming your question, Mr. Wotherspoon, about contractors' work is within my ministry, not within the jobs that the money will finance?

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Correct.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — No. The staffing will not change within my ministry.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Do any of these expenditures involve communications or advertising contracts? And if so, who are these contracts with?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — None of these amounts are with any other individuals or companies. No.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Do any of the expenditures involve land or building purchases or leases? If so, how much and whom with are these agreements with?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Yes. Mr. Wotherspoon, I believe that the 18 major capital projects, which are the ones of course are of significance because all the rest mean renovations to existing schools, it is our understanding right now that no new land will be acquired for those 18 projects as identified.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Looking at the 18 major capital projects as identified on the list that accounts for \$117.497 million, is this the total estimated cost for these 18 projects?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — I guess I'll begin with maybe a little bit of an explanation, Mr. Wotherspoon, for these capital projects.

We announced, in the course of the last year, two batches or two groups of projects. The first group were projects that were given design and construction go-ahead in April when we announced the budget. And then in May, we announced a further seven projects to move forward in what we called AIPs or approval in principle. So we put those forward.

Now what we've done is supplemented the ministry's share that was only part of the real cost of the total project for all of the 18. There was still an additional payment that would have to have been made by the ministry. We have decided that instead of allowing that money to wait for next year, we have moved that forward to this year so that those projects, those school divisions know that there is commitment to those projects, that they have the money, and they can there move forward.

So the 117 million is the entire amount. It's not just for the 18 major projects. That's also for the other schools that are affected by roof replacements or accessibility projects. That is a total amount.

So I can break that down for you as far as the ministry's share. When we look at the total projects for the 11 schools that were announced in April, the total cost is estimated to be \$205 million. And I'm rounding up now; it's 205.098 if you want to write that down. And the total cost for the seven projects given approval in principle in May is 100.442 million. So those are the total anticipated costs.

Now we know that that may change a little bit as we move forward because of some inflationary pressures and the design stage, and that then is divided up between the ministry's share and the school division share.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Just to clarify, I believe you just mentioned that the total amount, including the roof repairs and some of the small block capital projects that are detailed on this sheet, account for 117 million. Are we not voting on 141.69 million? Could the minister clarify?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — I can. You are right. The 117 million is the ministry's share on those 18 projects that I just announced. And I gave you the total amount. And then we add to that the additional 23.75 million that is referred to as block funding for all of those other projects.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — So looking specifically at the 11 projects that were announced in the spring's budget . . . And I know we sat in estimates in this very room, Mr. Minister, and we had the commitment of your ministry to provide coverage of potential cost overrun that projects may incur at that place and time. I guess that's what brings us here today with these projects being cited again is that they have cost more. Understandable in our construction environment with construction inflation. I'm just wondering how much more have these projects — these 11 specifically — cost than the original ministry estimates.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — My official indicates that probably on the high side for all 11 projects. We're looking at probably \$13.7 million more for all 11 in total from the projection that we gave last April.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Now with the other group of projects — the seven projects that are identified in the major capital projects — the original estimate from your ministry, your statement back in May 13, 2008, your estimate at that point was \$60 million. Today you've provided this committee that that amount is now more realistically \$100 million. So that's significantly more than a 50 per cent increase in your budgeted estimate, and in less than a year since that first number was provided. If the minister could provide some justification of this increase.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — What we've built into the amount of about 60 million, which is the original number, we've built in about another \$8 million worth for cost increases in the projects. And that's for all seven projects, about an additional 8 million.

And we also put in an \$11 million contingency, so if you add up the 60 plus the 8 plus the 11, you end up with that \$80.2 million mark that we're talking about in this budget. And the contingency's there because these projects are in the . . . We've now given them the go-ahead. And with working with the design people and the architects and pricings, those are our best guesses, but we want to make sure that there are sufficient funds provided so that school divisions will not be caught short. So that's why we're building in over an \$11 million contingency into these projects to make sure that if there are things, unforeseen costs or if there are just inflationary costs, we will be able to handle them.

[15:15]

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I'm not sure I quite catch the numbers that are coming at me here. We have \$60 million plus 8 million takes us to \$68 million. Then we have an 11 million contingency, so I believe that's 79 million. So I'm not . . .

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — I was rounding up. The amount of money that we have for these projects is 80.2 million. That's in the explanatory notes, I think, that you received. Or maybe you didn't. As far as the explanation on the \$117 million, 80.2 is for these seven projects.

The old announcement, the old estimate was about 60 million, and to that we have added a little over 11.4 million of contingency. And we estimate that the additional costs because of the project over . . . the project costs, as we've been able to identify better the full costs, we think that that's going to be about another \$8 million.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — So we now have the number of 80.2 million. I don't have the explanatory notes that the minister's referenced, but we're getting the information we need, which is appreciated. The number that was provided initially in response to the seven projects, the total cost, the allocation I believe was 100 point something, 100.42, something like that. So now there's a difference in . . .

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — No, no. The number, if you're looking at the value of a number of \$100.442 million, that's the total cost of those seven projects. That's the ministry's share of \$80.2 million plus the school divisions' share of 31.642. So if you add that up — the 80.202 added to the 31.642 — you'll

have a number of 100.442 million.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — So then to just completely itemize this 117.497 million, we have the ministry's share of 80.2, and then we have the other projects, the original projects, which I believe have a . . . It was mentioned that there was a cost overrun that was going to be 13.7 million or 13.1 million that was dedicated there. I'm just wondering where the other dollars . . .

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Again, school division share. Because you have to remember that we assigned a certain amount in the budget. And in the first allocation for those 11 projects, we assigned the ministry's share in April was going to be \$93.55 million. Now we have a second ministry share of 37.737, for a total ministry share of 131.292. Add to that the division's share, the school division's share for each of those 11 projects of 83.713, you now have a total project cost estimate of about \$205 million.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — So with question then for the 11 projects, I wonder if you could provide us an update as to where those projects are at — what phase of completion or the term that we hear everywhere, shovel ready, or is the shovel moving? Have the dollars flowed? I would assume the dollars have flowed.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — I'm going to ask Margaret Ball to respond to those because as the person totally in control of the facilities projects, she knows probably whether or not the shovel is in the ground. So, Margaret, if you would explain the 11 projects as you know which ones are . . .

Ms. Ball: — This will be based on our most recent updates from the school divisions.

Nutana is in the detailed design stage and we expect that to tender later this spring. E.D. Feehan is in detailed design, again with the tender later this spring. Porcupine Plain is nearing completion of the detailed design, and we expect it to tender in April. The Scott Collegiate project has completed its schematic design phase and is ready to go to detailed design sometime later this spring.

The Oxbow project is out to tender right now. St. Anne is nearing completion of detailed design. Stobart is nearing completion of detailed design. We expect both of those to tender probably by June. The La Ronge project — Churchill High — is in detailed design and we expect a summer tender.

Maple Creek is nearly complete detailed design and we expect tender in April. Balcarres will be . . . They're still working on that one at the school division level as they complete a facility study. So we look forward to that one in the summer. And Humboldt Collegiate is nearing completion on its detailed design and we would expect a June, July tender.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Ms. Ball. So just to kind of recap the whole picture of how many dollars of flow have left your ministry for all the education capital here this year, Mr. Minister, is it as simple as adding the budget number from the spring of one hundred and seventeen million and approximately six hundred thousand, and the new number that sits before us today at the 141.69 million?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Both of those are the capital numbers, correct. So when you look at the entire amount of money, you have to remember that there have been other projects that we've worked on to deal with things like the occupational health and safety implications, to deal with radon gas. So there are many other projects that we work on as well.

These are the full amount of both the committed amounts from the spring and now the additional amounts that have been put forward to complete those projects. Yes.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — So it's fair then to . . . that the capital expenditure from your ministry is the addition of those two numbers, the one hundred and seventeen and approximately six hundred thousand and then these numbers here today to roughly \$258 million or so.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Absolutely, Mr. Wotherspoon. We're using a number of about \$259 million in fact for infrastructure in this one year.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — As far as the projects that, the other seven major capital projects have been announced, those projects have already received approval in principle and commitment from you and your ministry for the upcoming year. So the only new news to this was the advancement of a couple of months. Is that correct, Minister?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Well as the member would know, when you look back over time you can do an approval in principle, but unless government is willing to put its money forward, projects sit there. And that's what we saw for many, many years in Education. In fact as you are very much aware, when I became minister we were finishing off the projects from 2003. So while other projects had been given some go-aheads and stage 1 planning, without money, that's where they sit.

So what this did to these projects, those seven projects — which are the Douglas Park Elementary, Hafford Central, Arcola Elementary, Campbell Collegiate, Elrose Composite, St. Mary Community School, and the Weyburn Comprehensive — what we did by putting the money forward is to show our commitment to those school divisions that those projects are for real. You have all of your funding; here it is and this is a guarantee that you can move forward and you don't have to wait.

And that's what, as I indicated in my remarks in the Chamber today, that's what we wanted boards of education to understand — that there was commitment, that there was dollars put in place, and that they could move forward and start working on those designs faster than what they would have been because they would have had to wait to see whether or not in fact, the government could put forward any money in its next budget.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Guess I'll remind the minister that he also inherited an incredible fiscal capacity to be able to address such projects. And it's, simply put, just the right thing to be doing — to be investing in the education infrastructure that's needed within our province.

That being said, I guess, framing this whole, these new dollars and the two-month advancement of this announcement as this

fiscal booster shot, people across our . . . well across our globe are concerned about our economy. And certainly here in Saskatchewan, people treasure a strong economy.

So I'm interested, from the minister: what sort of an analysis has your ministry done to see that these dollars . . . Because of the fact that the justification of moving this announcement forward two months was to stimulate the economy, what analysis and what process have you ensured to make sure that these dollars mean jobs, and mean a strong economic growth upfront, right away and now the whole purpose of this announcement as you contextualize it?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Well, Mr. Wotherspoon, as indicated by Margaret Ball, when we go to tender — and there are going to be projects that are going to total \$205 million in the 11 projects and over 100 million in the seven; that's over \$300 million worth of projects — I dare say that construction companies in this province, maybe even construction companies outside of this province, are going to look at these projects and they're going to look at the tenders. They're going to come forward sooner than later, and they're going to be excited. They're going to be excited about the fact that there are jobs in this province, that they can keep their companies working, that they can keep their employees working in this province.

So we haven't done a detailed examination to find out how many workers will be on the Nutana Collegiate project. We know that for a project of \$18 million, I dare say there will be many. And when we look at the total of the 18 projects, we have been assured by the construction industry that they are able to meet the challenge. That, in fact, with the Olympics, even something as the Olympics ending in terms of construction, we know that workers are going to be coming back. So we're excited about the fact that we're going to have literally hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of jobs that will be made available through these projects.

Not to mention, Mr. Wotherspoon, that on the block projects which total — how many schools did we affect there? — 89 block projects, 89 block projects will now be much smaller in nature. These are projects that are under \$800,000. And we believe in the school boards. We believe in the fact that the school board now has its dollars, the ministry's share, to work on that project. It may have its own maintenance people. It may have to expand its maintenance people for some of those smaller projects but also, you know, we know that there will be job opportunities in many of these communities for all of these smaller projects.

We have not totalled the number of workers necessary to fix the particular roof in a school. We haven't made that kind of analysis, but we know that when you spend the kind of money that we're prepared to spend on education, on ensuring that our facilities are built to a better standard, that we address the concerns that have been sitting on wait-list for years and years and years, there will be many job opportunities.

And we will be able to, I'm sure, receive from school divisions as they move forward, I'm sure, that the project managers on each of these major projects, when a company is awarded the contract, they will be able to provide us with the number of people that will be employed. Whether they be employees per

month or employees per year, I'm sure we'll be able to get that information if indeed that's the information that you want.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Minister. Just in framing this expenditure as this strategic stimulus and booster shot to address some economic concerns and to ensure strength, I thought it might have been incumbent of yourself as the minister to be able to, also to substantiate that you evaluated the best way to make these dollars flow, and to make sure that the structures that existed were going to be the most expedient, and that your partnerships with school divisions would allow these projects to be fired up and in a meaningful fashion that brought jobs online very quickly.

And I guess, Mr. Minister, what this gets to is a concern that exists in Saskatchewan people as well, Mr. Minister. And we fully welcome education dollars, and this advancement, this announcement that precedes the budget by two months is certainly welcomed. But the concern, Mr. Minister, and I've already alluded to it, is that people are very concerned about their economy. They're concerned about the global economy — they see it through their pensions and through their investments — and they are concerned about their regional economy. And so things like stimulus and booster shots, these are valued by the people of this province.

[15:30]

But they need to make sure that they're getting the best bang for their buck as well and are we maybe . . . What I hear from lots of Saskatchewan people is, do we have significant concerns over revenues in the coming year? Is that why this investment happens now, two months prior to the budget, to get this expenditure off the books in the current year where we have big surplus and an insurance fund, as opposed to investing heavily in the coming year?

Does the minister have a response of any kind? What are we expecting in the coming year from a revenue circumstance and how does that affect education infrastructure spending?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Well, Madam Chair, I think we're dealing with supplementary estimates for the current position, current year. But further to the member's question, when the very first question he asked was whether or not these were one-time funding or were they ongoing and my response was, these are one-time funding. And that is the beauty of it.

The fact is that this year we have received a far greater revenue source than what we anticipated. So what we are wanting to do is to ensure that this is passed on to the people of Saskatchewan in many areas, whether it is health or highways or social services, housing. But I was super glad to find out that cabinet made a decision that over \$141 million was going to come towards, to education.

And I again say, Mr. Wotherspoon, this is one-time funding. I don't know whether next year's budget will drop back to the average of what the NDP [New Democratic Party] used to fund, which was about \$25 million per year in capital. I don't know whether it will go back to that. That's for the next budget to reveal and it will be determined by revenue. It will be determined by other priorities. And I can tell you that I want to

ensure that — my colleagues, and they hear me often say that — education is a priority. And I will continue to lobby for additional monies in the upcoming budget on March 18 for the fiscal year '09-10.

I can tell you that this money is going to return countless jobs. It's going to return a greater improvement to the environment, which is the environment of schools. When you look at the block projects, I'm sure you have taken a good look at all of the different things that we've been able to address. These school divisions are waiting to do this. They're wanting, they're wanting to go. They're not wanting to wait for, you know, two years from now.

So all of the projects that we're looking at in terms of moving forward have been in the works for many years. I dare say if I asked Margaret, you know, some of these projects that have been submitted by the school divisions that we're dealing with, as far as the 18 major capital projects, have been submitted over and over again as the sort of emphasis from that particular school division.

And now we're meeting that emphasis. We're getting 18 of the projects off the list, and you're very aware that the list that was compiled again from the ministry last June of all of the submissions from school divisions that want a major project is 92 projects. So getting 18 off the list is just a very small amount. So my lobby will continue, of cabinet.

There is concern about revenue of course. We're not dealing with \$120 a barrel oil. We're now dealing with, I heard today, it's \$46 a barrel, so that's a good sign. And I as Minister of Education have lobbied cabinet for significant dollars for infrastructure for education. You will find the answer to that on March 18.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I know there's many economists who are concerned and see this booster shot as nothing more than taking expenditures and commitments and promises that were going to occur in the coming year and to get them off the books in this current year when those revenues are there. Certainly there's no argument that one-time resources and surpluses are rightfully placed into places such as educational infrastructure.

Looking at the capital projects that have been approved and committed to by the minister, I would like to ask the minister if those projects, which some may incur certain cost inflationary pressures from what their original estimates are, are you as minister committed to these projects? With regard to the fact that the estimates that they've put forward in some cases might be a huge challenge for them to maintain that cost, we might have cost overrun. Are you as minister committed to the 18 projects on this sheet and to the overrun that may be incurred?

We know that school boards are going to do everything they can and be as accountable and transparent and to make sure that the best value for taxpayers' dollars will be achieved. As the minister providing capital funding, are you committed to potential overruns?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — The answer to that is very simple. Absolutely we're committed to ensuring that projects move forward, and that is the purpose of telling the school divisions

that they have the dollars ready to complete these projects. The officials within the facilities planning ministry work on a daily basis, I dare say, with the people from school divisions about these projects. They are in constant communication with them about changes, about the school division needs versus of course what the facilities planning unit says is the space that is required. And that is also a point of contention sometimes because a school division may say, well we think we're going to have a certain number of students, and we'd like to build the school for that many people. But the answer to that is no. The answer is we build for what is there and of course with some projections.

So those are things that are ongoing, Mr. Wotherspoon. We are fully committed to these projects, and you can tell, I think, by the fact that, you know, we've indicated to you in our numbers that we've committed just about \$10 million worth of contingency in the first 11, and we've committed over \$11 million of contingency to the second group of seven.

We are ensuring that, you know, maybe things will change rapidly over the next 18 months because some of these projects, as you've listened to Ms. Ball talk about when these projects are going to tender, some may not go to tender until this fall. So therefore the completion of those projects is a fair number of months down the road.

So we wanted to make sure that we're building in some contingency. And yes, we are 100 per cent committed to these projects.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — And you've been very clear. I'm going to ask the question one more time because there is concern in the sector with the pressures, inflationary cost pressures that construction is faced with. Your ministry is committed beyond the current estimates that you would have to cover the costs. That the actual expenses that will be incurred by the school divisions that will be a part of this development, particular projects that end up going beyond the current estimates within your ministry, you're committed to those as minister. Could you clarify one more time. You were, I believe you were quite clear in your last answer.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Well what we've noticed, Mr. Wotherspoon, is . . . And we were building these in on these projects right from the get-go. We were looking at inflationary pressures in the construction industry of about 2 per cent per month. That was back last summer. And I've just, in talking with my official here, Ms. Ball, she indicates that the number of people in the industry are indicating now that the inflationary pressure is down to about a 1.25 to maybe up to a 1.5. So we know we're maybe a half to three-quarters of a point better.

And I think as the pressures, you know, are falling on other provinces, maybe we're going to be able to see that benefit us in the long run because I think now with the ability to attract workers, the ability to ensure that contractors have the ability to be assured that they have the workers — whether they're electrical or mechanical or just general contractors — we should be able to hold that cost down a little bit. And that's the good thing is that we're not building in the 2 per cent rate per month as we were before. We're now working with a smaller number, and that's why our contingency numbers are going to

address those.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — With respect to the major capital request or the priority or prioritization of those projects, a question about process here. All the projects that are contained within this document here, or have all the projects that are contained in this document here, have they followed this document — being the attachment to your announced accelerated infrastructure spending — have all those projects followed the normal, regular, typical application process and assessment?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Yes, Mr. Wotherspoon, I can assure you that the projects came from the lists that are determined by evaluating each and every project. And I can tell you that the first 11 projects would have come from the list created in 2007 under the former government, and then the seven projects would have come from the list created in 2008. So these are projects that . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . She's just corrected me that the second group as well come from the 2007 . So all 18, all 18 projects would have come from the list of 2007, which I dare say probably was 100-plus projects on that old list.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Looking at the block funding projects, can you verify to this committee that all projects within the block funding components, the various block funding components, if those projects have followed the normal, typical application process and assessment process?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — The block projects work a little differently in that they're not published on lists like the major capital requests. Those are submitted to the facilities department. They work with the school divisions, and they grade them internally because as you can see from the projects that were identified, you know, there are many that will come from one school division. So the school division itself is ranking them.

Sometimes, and I know this from talking with school divisions, you know, over the past number of years, they've waited for a particular project, whatever it may be, and found that because there was not enough monies in the block funding amount from government, they went forward and fully funded it 100 per cent from school division money. So that's the kind of thing that occurs.

Almost all of these projects went through that same process. There was one project, which was the project at Wolseley, where the discussion had taken place about the submission for that project, and that submission came after the announcement. That is, as my understanding, that's the only one. All of the rest have been in the facilities area from the boards, directly from the boards.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — The process that's put out to respond to some of the block project needs is certainly, it's valued by the education sector to be equitable and fair and transparent. It's important that that process is adhered to. Certainly this opposition values adherence to that project.

So I guess my question to the minister is — I don't know if the member from Indian Head-Milestone has sharp elbows — I'm wondering how this project and the project in Wolseley went forward if it didn't adhere to the process that's expected, from

the fair and equitable way that the education sector values.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — First of all, I want to make a couple of comments about the projects. And we talked about the accessibility requests. There are seven projects, seven schools that are moving forward in that category. Those were all of the projects. So there were no, there were no additional projects that were, you know, valued or evaluated below that because seven submitted, seven were accepted.

We have, under miscellaneous block projects — and I think there's a number of them there; relocatable classrooms is also — and that's based on need. I mean we have schools that have a greater need than others, and here you can see that there are 10 schools that have been selected again. They would have been evaluated.

The Wolseley project actually came out of my office because we had contact by parents. So it had nothing to do with the member for Indian Head-Milestone. It had parental concerns. It had student concerns that were brought to my attention, and therefore then we were wondering whether or not the board was considering that project, and in fact they were. So that's why it's on the list.

[15:45]

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Were there other block projects valued through the typical process of application that school divisions had put forward, that I guess this project has possibly come ahead of — this Wolseley project?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Since the announcement, what we did was we evaluated the projects that we knew about and we created the list that you have before us. After making this announcement, we have received more submissions from boards of education. And some of those projects may rank differently than these that are before us, but we're creating a new pool. We're creating a new pool of projects, and whatever funding I'm fortunate enough to get to the Ministry of Education for block funding for this next year, we're now going to looking at this next list of projects that are coming from schools divisions. So the boards continuously update their asks, and now that we've got, you know, all of these 89 off the list, we're getting a new batch of projects.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Just to be clear, the minister's list or the ministry's list of small block funding had been exhausted, as far as those projects that have been valued by boards and put forward at the time that the minister's office phoned a school division to ask them if they'd be interested in repairing their locker rooms.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — The answer to your question about whether the list was exhausted, the answer is no. There are projects that are on there. Some will be evaluated to whether or not they're going to rank for this next selection, so the list is not exhausted.

And now these projects that are coming in will . . . some will move ahead of the others. Someone may think, well 89 projects were removed, so if I was evaluated as project no. 90, I'm first in line. That isn't true because every time a project is submitted,

there's a pool of money, and that pool of money can take care of a specific number of projects. And that's the determining factor; it's the amount of money that is allocated for the block.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — It's of significant concern to the opposition that we have long-standing processes that are intended to provide equity and fairness, seem to be abandoned. And I know it's one project. That being said, Mr. Minister, I guess I have the question to you. Has the education sector expressed to yourself or the ministry concerns about the application process around this individual school or the process not being followed?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — The explanation is that the specific project here is just a timing matter of about a week. There was discussion between ministry officials and school board officials about the project before the announcement was made, and the project then moved forward. Then the school board then submitted the proper procedure, okay? So discussion took place, which is a little bit unusual, but when we start to look at, you know, the project itself and looking at the benefits of the project, those are things that happen on numerous occasions.

Sometimes the ministry will get a request, could get a request tonight that a boiler has blown up, and that a boiler project in a school division that we haven't even thought about has to go like in the next short while. So there is an emergency fund. There is an emergency fund of some money that is kept and set aside until we get through the year to make sure that we can address the needs as they're put forward from school divisions.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Going forward — just wondering — is there a new process that's going to be in place then that allows parents, as was described, to phone the minister's office and to provide prioritization of projects they'd like to see? And then will there be a . . . I guess I'm wondering how that process goes. Does your ministry take those phone calls from concerned parents across Saskatchewan, and then do you simply phone the many school divisions in our province? Or is this sort of an isolated circumstance and a departure from that process?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Well it's clear, Mr. Wotherspoon, that the discussion was going on between ministry officials and school board officials about this project. There always are concerns raised by parents, and of course the project . . . We've always indicated to people that are calling our office to ensure that they're working with their school board because that's where the initiative has to come. So that practice will not change. The initiative has to come from the school board.

And in fact, if in the particular project — this one or any of the others — if a board of education has submitted a project and we've already put it on the list, and then they say, no, we don't want that project any more, well we'll remove it. Okay, it won't happen.

So clearly it's the board of education that is the determining factor for all of these projects because they're involved in the funding of this as well. You have to remember that the split is about 65/35, so you're talking about 35 per cent of local money. So they have to be committed to that project, and they have to want it to work.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I would implore the minister to move back to the processes that are completely consistent with protocol and process that are laid out. It just provides the most equitable and fair environment for the education sector. And that being said, I'm sure the families that phoned the office with regard to the Wolseley locker rooms are pleased to see these dollars flow.

The concern is there might be other school divisions who had projects that they valued, and followed the proper process, who now aren't seeing those projects completed. It might cause some concern. And I wouldn't be surprised if there's concerned parents in those communities as well.

Now the Chair today is the member from Eastview. And there's a specific school that falls within that member's riding — and that's Georges Vanier School up in Saskatoon. That project was, I believe, number four in 2007 on the priority 2 requests of critical space shortage. This year it sits number six on that list. So I guess I just ask the minister to share what's changed with the circumstances of the other two schools that have moved ahead of it.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — What occurs each and every year, Mr. Wotherspoon, is that we do an evaluation of each school, specific to itself. It's not a comparison of school A to school B. It's an indexing factor of the school. And that is upgraded . . . in fact we're going to see a new list coming out in June '09 that will give us a new top 20, if you like to address it that way.

What happens is there's sometimes a school that may not have even been evaluated last year, or maybe it was in priority 3, and because of the circumstances changing for that particular school, it now gets evaluated and may jump to a priority 2.

What we were looking at, of course, is most of these projects that are on the current list are all, or were all, priority 1. So we still have two projects within priority 1. Those are listed in the priority 1 category and then . . . and that's it. There are no other projects in priority 1. So we'll be able to move to priority 2 projects if, again, if we receive some funding for infrastructure in the next budget.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Well I'm sure we'll receive some funding for infrastructure in the next budget. And I certainly hope that the minister makes sure that's a significant share to continue to move progress on this file and to be able to make sure that schools like Georges Vanier who have done such successful — or I shouldn't say successful — such avid and strong advocacy to make sure their needs are heard.

Question here is, is there any money within this infrastructure dollars that is for child care or daycare facilities and space?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Yes, Mr. Wotherspoon. Of the block projects, of the 80-plus block projects, there are two schools within Saskatoon public that are receiving some renovations for new daycare spaces, and they are at Fairhaven and at Lester B. Pearson. I can give you the estimated costs for those if you like. We're talking a total project cost at Fairhaven of about \$479,000 — and I'm saying total, which will be ministry plus school division — and the renovation at Lester B. Pearson is estimated to be \$675,000. Those are the only two places of all

of the projects that involve daycare space.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — As you move towards the budget — and I know for the most part that budget's likely written at this point — but I hope it contains significant dollars for an urgent need within our province and across the communities of our province, and that being the child care facilities that are so under pressure and certainly play such a significant role in that role within our economy when we're looking at making sure we have that strong economy and our labour needs are supported and that our educational opportunities can be taken advantage of but . . . And we'll see that in two weeks, so there's no need to speculate on the budget. But certainly this side of the House, the opposition certainly calls for significant dollars for early child care. We've petitioned throughout the year on that front.

To speak specifically to the rebates, Mr. Minister, the property tax rebates, I guess, what does these dollars here today represent exactly? How has the program changed since the budget?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — What we had budgeted was a specific amount of money based on the assessment at that time, the mill rates of the school divisions at that time, and the percentages that we were applying. And that's at best a guess because there's never certainty until the actual school division set their mill rates, and the assessments change throughout the course of a year with addition of new properties or improvements.

So what we found was that the additional amount of \$2.022 million is needed to completely recognize the amount of money that is being paid to the school divisions as a result of that property tax relief. The initial estimate was \$156.584 million and now we require another \$2.022 million, for a total amount of \$158.606 million.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Minister. And again with our budget two weeks in coming here, or two weeks and counting, there's a potential that we might see a fundamental shift through your ministry in how education is funded. And this sitting here this time next year, we may no longer be looking at a rebate program, I suppose. But again, no need to speculate.

However this opposition sure wants to make sure that your ministry's aware of the urgent need and pressures that are placed upon families and business in this province because of the cost of their property tax, particularly in this environment of reassessment. And so many have had significant negative impact through reassessment.

But I do appreciate your response to the line item specifically. I believe our time is pretty much exhausted here at this point. I do have . . .

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Just before you indicate, finish your comments, and I didn't realize it was already 4 o'clock. But you know when we look at providing relief to the taxpayers, I mean we know that a short-term plan is the rebate plan.

And that's why the percentages were based as you've just explained. We've had the increase to 15 per cent this last year on commercial and residential properties, and we had an

increase to 56 per cent . . . or to 47 per cent, sorry, on ag land. The procedure will be rebate for next year if we cannot determine some other solution. So as you've indicated, you know, we've been working on that for a while. And I believe it's about nine days from now, and we'll hopefully have a statement for you.

[16:00]

Mr. Wotherspoon: — With regard to the . . . And one of the members opposite said nine more sleeps, and certainly it's important to me, but specifically it's important for, I know, my constituents, and I know the members opposite. It's probably both sides of the House concern with regard to property tax. So certainly nine more sleeps is rather important to families and business across the province.

Last question to the minister here, if you'll indulge me here. We've spoke about the contingency fund, or you've highlighted the contingency fund, which I think is responsible in our current environment. Those dollars, if left unspent — which would be an ideal circumstance, that the projects are done on target — if left unspent, will those remain within Education and allow new projects, or will those be returned to the GRF [General Revenue Fund]?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — When we get to the end of a year, and if there's any monies that are unallocated because of a project that comes in under budget, or doesn't go forward, that money is then usually reallocated into block funding, so then we can move forward and do other projects in Education. So the dollars stay in Education, I guess is the best and simplest answer.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — At this time, Madam Chair, I'd simply like to thank, on behalf of committee members and the opposition, the time that the minister and the ministry officials have offered us here today. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: — Unless the committee disagrees, we'll vote off the two votes that we discussed before five, at the same time just before five. We'll do the next one and then vote them both off. So thank you to the minister and his officials, and thank you for the questions. We'll now invite . . . We're not going to vote off your vote right now. Okay?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Is there any certainty that that will happen?

The Deputy Chair: — I think so, yes. We're going to do it just after we do the next one — the A and E [Advanced Education and Employment] and Labour. We're going to do them together.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Sure, absolutely, I'll leave it in your hands.

The Deputy Chair: — We might as well get in a flow.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you. I also want to extend my appreciation to my officials for providing a lot of information for me today, and this three-ring binder is very useful. And thank you especially to Margaret Ball because most of the questions were on capital, for the information provided to me.

And I want to thank you, Mr. Wotherspoon, for your questions. I very much appreciate it.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you. We'll just take a moment to exchange minister and officials and we'll be bringing up vote 37, Advanced Education, Employment and Labour. That's on page 11 of your book.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — March
Advanced Education, Employment and Labour
Vote 37**

Subvote (AE02)

The Deputy Chair: — Welcome to the Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour. We're on vote 37, which is on page 11 of your Supplementary Estimates book. I ask the minister to introduce his officials and remind the officials if you do come to the mike to speak, to say your name so the Hansard can record it. And if the minister wants to begin also with a statement.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll make those introductions here shortly. Let me begin by saying that, along with my officials, I'm pleased to be here today to answer questions regarding supplementary estimates.

I'm pleased to introduce, from the ministry I have the honour of serving, Wynne Young, our deputy minister; Reg Urbanowski, the assistant deputy minister, advanced education and student services; Karen Allen is here, executive director, corporate services branch; Kevin Veitenheimer is here, the acting executive director, university services branch and training institutions; Tammy Bloor-Cavers is here, acting executive director, student financial assistance branch and programs branch; and Brent Brownlee, director of SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology], regional colleges, and apprenticeship and trade certification commission.

My statement will be as follows, Madam Chair. The ministry's estimates to be considered includes \$26.35 million to be applied to the much-needed renovation and expansion of Saskatchewan post-secondary institutions. This is part of our government's accelerated infrastructure \$500 million economic booster shot.

The \$26.35 million will assist in renewing Saskatchewan's post-secondary infrastructure for today and into the future. The specific investments made within this round were based on three goals: repairing, refitting, and growing the post-secondary system's infrastructure. This is about repairing facilities to ensure they provide healthy and safe learning environments that meet the needs of students. We are refitting existing facilities to create modern and more flexible spaces where students can access relevant and innovative education, training, personal and professional development. And we're enhancing our capacity to ensure that we are better positioned to meet the needs of future learners and labour market demands.

The \$26.35 million includes the following post-secondary institutions. For SIAST, the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology will receive funding for renovations to classrooms, laboratories, and enhancements to faculty,

administration, and student space in both Regina and Prince Albert. The Wascana Parkway renovations will allow us to accommodate the second year of nursing expansion programming here in Regina. Funding for the Wascana Campus will be used to convert existing shop space for the delivery of plumber apprenticeship technical training in order to meet the increasing demand for skilled trade workers. And at the Woodland Campus in Prince Albert, funding will assist in creating opportunities for carpentry and other trades training.

At the Great Plains College, Great Plains College will renovate its main campus in Swift Current. This is a building which was constructed in 1948 and has never undergone a major renovation. This project involves upgrades to classrooms, offices, and common areas; an overhaul of the facility's mechanical and electrical systems; the installation of new cooling; and sprinkler systems as well. These renovations will enable the college to effectively respond to local demands for education, training, and development, particularly in areas of construction and energy.

Regarding St. Peter's College in Muenster, St. Peter's College will also undertake much-needed building improvements. The college's Michael Hall was constructed in the 1920s and requires significant renovation to provide better accessibility and provision of services.

For the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies will also receive funding. This marks the very first time that a provincial government has invested in SIIT's [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies] infrastructure. The funding will support much-needed improvements at SIIT Saskatoon campus to enable the institute to develop video conferencing and related distance learning capacities. Funding will also go toward redeveloping part of the existing facility to support the coaching and mentoring services that are an essential part of SIIT student experience. And we can make a broader statement. We see increasing value in these areas of activity.

These investments, spread throughout Saskatchewan from north to south, are an important contribution for building a stronger Saskatchewan and a better life for the people of our province. Madam Chair, and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to speak today, and I welcome your questions.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you. Questions? Mr. Broten.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Mr. Minister, for your introduction and for being here today, and thank you to all the officials for being in attendance as well.

To start things off, I would like to refer to page 7 of the Supplementary Estimates. And there are two sections on here, the capital asset acquisitions and the capital transfer payments. Could the minister please detail for me what determines what expenditure falls under those two categories; essentially, define those two groupings to provide clarity for the committee and those at home, please.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — The basic distinction relates to whether the facilities are government owned or not is the key distinction.

Mr. Broten: — So under the transfer payments, that would be to an agency such as . . . or an example would be the regional colleges where, under capital asset acquisitions, that would be an asset directly under the control of the ministry.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — On the capital asset acquisitions, we can think of SIAST campuses — again government owned — and on the others, the different facilities that are in place across different campuses. Sure.

Mr. Broten: — So facilities that may have a partnership with the ministry but not be a university or SIAST?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well there's a distinction between the universities and SIAST. The SIAST buildings, as you know, are actually housed within government buildings. And that would be distinct from . . . The universities would be in a different category than that. An easy example is to look at the . . . Under post-secondary we see from last fall . . . and that relates to the university. So key distinction there, as you know, between SIAST and the universities.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you very much. Continuing on in the Supplementary Estimates on page 9, under other loans, under Advanced Education, Employment and Labour, the revised estimate is \$5 million less. Could you explain what that is about? What is the cause of that, please?

[16:15]

Hon. Mr. Norris: — It is likely the difference on two different mechanisms for deferred maintenance. The one relates to a permission to borrow and the other one . . . Reg, maybe you can speak to these.

Mr. Urbanowski: — There are two ways to have deferred maintenance for the universities. One is through an actual grant and the other is for permission to borrow, in which we pay the principal and interest. This may represent that difference, but we will need to check up on that.

Mr. Broten: — So would the cause of that, if it is in fact the university with this issue that you mentioned, would that be their request not to go forward at this time or would that be a ministry decision?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — It would be based on an institution's request.

Mr. Broten: — Does that mean if the institution is not requesting this now, my question is, what happens to the \$5 million? Does it sit there? Is it reallocated within the ministry? Is it reallocated outside of the ministry? Is it simply deferred into the new fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — The specific question what would happen to those funds, those funds would then be allocated to the General Revenue Fund, and it would come up under future deliberations.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Minister. So marching right along, we'll move to the heart of the matter, page 11, Supplementary Estimates. You characterized the 26.35 million, the sum of

money there . . . Just to reaffirm on the record, this is all part of the \$5 million stimulus package that was announced?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — That's \$500 million.

Mr. Broten: — \$500 million. And does that, of that amount . . . Dropping the zero there threw me for a second. And that's all coming out of the Growth and Financial Security Fund, the 500 million?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — We'll confirm the source of the funds.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. Of the projects, of the 26.35 million, could you please . . . You gave a nice listing at the beginning of the various projects going on. Could you please identify how much is going to each of these projects, please?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Sure. For SIAST Wascana, for plumbing, it's \$500,000; for SIAST Wascana Parkway, the expansion for nursing, that's \$5 million; the SIAST Woodland Campus, \$2.35 million; SIIT, \$2 million; Great Plains, \$13.5 million; St. Michael's hall at St. Peter's is 3 million.

And another one speaks directly to Social Services but affects the University of Saskatchewan, relates to student housing. And it's probably best to make reference to Minister Harpauer's work on that one.

Mr. Broten: — So the student housing funding that was announced for the U of S [University of Saskatchewan], that's in the 26.35?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — No, that goes through the Ministry of Social Services.

Mr. Broten: — I get that. So why did you just include it in the list of the items?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I just wanted to make reference in case you were wondering where that fit in. I just wanted to make sure it was clearly identified as coming from that other portfolio.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you very much. Of the list of capital projects, so is it safe to say none of this funding, of the \$26.35 million, is going to programming? It's all going to capital projects that provide programming. But it's all for bricks and mortar, so to speak?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — The answer is yes with one caveat, and that relates to SIIT. Some of the infrastructure would be defined to help enhance the distance learning capacity. So not just simply traditional bricks and mortar in that case, but actually a platform that will allow greater outreach and engagement with various communities.

Mr. Broten: — IT [information technology] bricks.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Sure. IT bricks.

Mr. Broten: — Virtual bricks.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes.

Mr. Broten: — So out of this 26.35 million, would you characterize it all as one-time funding?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes. I mean that was the nature of this, a twofold stimulus really when we talk about the significance of educational training and development institutions. And that is, the immediate stimulus that is afforded to respective communities and then the longer term piece that comes from having enhanced capacity on training, education, and development. So I would actually characterize it as really two for one when it comes to this type of investment.

Mr. Broten: — Would any of this funding mean that there would be an increase in FTEs [full-time equivalent] or positions of any type, or is it simply for the types of projects we've identified? Would there be any new positions or ongoing commitments that would be generated through this one-time expenditure now at this time?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Just a clarification on your question — wondering if you're making specific reference to any need for additional positions within government. The answer is no. If you're making specific reference to the institutions, for example the nurse training expansion, obviously here's an infrastructure piece that will go hand in hand with enhanced capacity, that is programming capacity. But out of the specific dollars, these are for infrastructure.

Mr. Broten: — So in an instance such as the nurse training program as you identified — I know there's been earlier announcements about that — but if that was one example, if there are other instances, has money already been earmarked to provide the add-on requirements for the new programs? Has that already been earmarked? Has that already been transferred, or is that something that would yet have to be brought up and discussed and determined by the ministry?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I think the frame I would use is that, certainly in the example that you've offered, these are anticipated. I wouldn't speak specifically about the forthcoming budget, but certainly anticipated over a prolonged period as we ramp that up. Sure, that's . . . anticipated is a frame I would use.

Mr. Broten: — Surely you wouldn't be going to the effort of building a new classroom and not putting a teacher in it.

For these projects, the money that has been set aside, and as you've detailed how the 26.35 million is divvied up — in all instances is this enough funding as you estimate now to complete the projects, or will there be additional funds required in the future?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — The answer is, while we're waiting obviously for tendering to go on, one wouldn't want to either predetermine, you know, what that looks like but we anticipate going down the line for the plumbing, for example, we anticipate that's sufficient; the nurse expansion, that should be sufficient; Woodland Campus, sufficient, though there's an example where it doesn't rule out future monies to continue to expand, but it is sufficient certainly for the terms of reference that we're using. SIIT, Great Plains, sufficient.

St. Peter's is a very, I think it's a tribute to the people of that

community. They've gone and raised significant dollars, and so we were able to help offer matching funds there. Now they're going out and talking about ways to further leverage some additional funds. So we would be a contributor but there are other contributors for St. Michael's hall at St. Peter's. So I would use that as an example to say we would be contributing to, but others will also be contributing to programs.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. Of the projects selected, there are many worthy ones here. Could you please share some information with how you came up with this particular list please?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Sure. We've established five criteria. Likely not surprising, first and foremost, issues addressing health and safety of learners, faculty, and staff. An example there would be St. Peter's College regarding some accessibility issues and Great Plains College regarding some of the mechanical systems and boilers.

Second need, there's a need to address the most critical shortages of space within the post-secondary system. And certainly I would add to this, there's more work to be done under all of these individual criterions. And so it's not in any way to say that the examples that are being utilized are exhaustive; they're simply reflective. And so as we look at critical shortages of space, we can look at the apprenticeship training space in both P.A. [Prince Albert] and Regina. We can look at the nurse expansion in Regina here on both . . . within SIAST.

Third, issues of deferred maintenance. And again we can look to Great Plains College there.

Fourth — and this was significant — that is readiness for the project to move ahead on a relatively short period of time in order to contribute to the government's economic booster shot. That is, a notion of shovel readiness.

Fifth, project could be seen through a lens of public-private partnerships. Again that's not one that we said had to be in place. We just looked at it as a way of helping to determine community buy-in.

What I will say on the readiness for projects, there are a number of projects that remain on the list. And what was important to have, community consensus. And that wasn't the instance; it wasn't the case as we went through that list. So that was one of the variables that we looked at regarding the readiness of the project. So those are the five key elements.

Mr. Broten: — The issue you just brought up with community consensus, how would you define the community in this sense — the institution, the learners, the city of Swift Current?

[16:30]

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, it could easily be. Certainly there are some other projects where there were some mixed messages between, let's say, institution and community about what was desired. And so in a couple of instances we had to step back and say, look, let's make sure there's a clear understanding. So certainly at the forefront on our understanding of shovel

readiness and community consensus was, first and foremost, the institution. But we certainly were attentive to stakeholders out beyond the institution.

Mr. Broten: — The criteria you listed for coming up with this list, is that public information available to communities, organizations, or was that simply an internal process that you used in creating your short list?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — It's certainly one that we've elaborated to some stakeholders.

When we came into office, there was no capital priority list and that's an important element here, if you can believe that. And so what we're doing is we're working up a system that we aim, within months, to be transparent up on a website, to say, these are the variables that we're looking at. And that way all the stakeholders can begin to have a better understanding in a transparent fashion about capital priorities for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour. So work-in-progress.

And certainly we're receiving feedback from across the system to say, look how do we do a better job of getting that kind of transparency? As I say, the goal here is ultimately to have a list that's available to the public, and that's what we're working towards.

Mr. Broten: — That was my other question. In the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] system, there's the various lists of priorities with institutions based on the list. Is that your end goal, Mr. Minister, that you would like to have for this?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Somewhere, I would say, certainly based on . . . I think it's an excellent reference for us. The distinction here is, because of the diversity of institutions we have within the portfolio, it will probably be categorized slightly differently. And you've seen a similar categorization come out recently from Ottawa where there's a 70/30 split between universities and colleges regarding the federal infrastructure initiative. So it may vary slightly regarding categorization.

But the goal ultimately whether we're talking about the capital priority list of the K to 12 system or the recent list that's been developed under highways, the same spirit's going to infuse a transparency. I have to say I was surprised when I came in that such a list wasn't available. It's taken a little bit for us to actually do a bit of an audit to begin to pull together what some of these needs are.

Mr. Broten: — To this line of questioning with the nature of the list and the existence of the list, when your government decided to do the \$500 million stimulus, was this list already in existence? Was this going to be a list used perhaps in the budget that we will see on the 18th? Was this a fast-tracking of that, or was this a creation of a list in order to have projects for right away? I hate to use the shovel-ready expression because I dislike it.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Right. It's a worrisome expression, I agree. No, it was one of the first tasks that we set upon as we came into government. Within the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour, the recognition that there wasn't a capital priority list was an obvious omission. It wasn't

a matter of being critical of one that existed in the past or not. It just didn't exist.

And so I said, well in order for us to begin to make empirically based decisions, we need to begin to have such a list. We need to begin to determine what these capital needs are right across the system, from regional colleges to the SIAST system into the universities obviously. And that work is well under way. So I would say, the work well under way, it's a working list as we have it right now. Is it finalized? I would say no. It continues to be a work-in-progress but at least provides some reference points for us regarding the respective institutions.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. For any of the projects or the projects that you listed, a number of them are existing buildings. And based on the repair, refit, grow — the repair, refit are obviously existing structures. For the grow category, do any of these expenditures involve the purchase of land or entering into a leasing agreement?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — The answer is, as we just go through the list, no. Essentially we're dealing with institutional space that already exists. The grow or growth element refers to the growth of spaces.

Mr. Broten: — Training capacity through the renos or changes. Let's look a little bit at one of the larger expenditures, the 13.5 million for Great Plains College. Could you please just confirm that that 13.5 is exclusively for the Swift Current Campus?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, I can confirm that. Sure, yes.

Mr. Broten: — And the \$13.5 million for that project there, that's only for the existing structure of Great Plains campus there? I know there's a number of buildings adjacent to the college, I think to the north, that they've perhaps been renting from for some time. Was there any consideration given to allowing . . . Is that part of this 13.5, or is it only with, sort of, the walls and roof that are currently there?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Again, this structure goes back to 1948 and has had no major renovations to it, and so the funds are directed to the Beatty Campus, as it's called in Swift Current. There will be an extension to a shop facility, so there will be an expansion to the actual core structure itself. I'll go through some of the . . . a new multi-purpose workshop — made reference to that — upgraded classrooms, tutorial spaces, computer facilities, office renovations, upgraded mechanical and environmental systems for the entire building, enhanced accessibility for the entrance and parking, as well as upgrades to the ventilation in the welding shop.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. If there's an institution on this list here of the \$26.35 million, and if they're receiving some of the stimulus funding now in the supplementary estimates, does that make them ineligible for funding in the new budget, or is that a wait and see?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — You know, it's probably best to, probably best to wait for budget day. What I will say is to offer some context around this. The institutional requirements — that is, the institutional investments and upgrades that are called for and undoubtedly required — far exceed any one investment.

And so, you know, again the purpose of drawing up that list is so that we can begin to have a determination of capital priorities. Again the goal is to have these up on a website, begin to attach some relative weight to each of these. Again, especially as we go down the five-point criteria list that we've offered, and so that we can begin to weigh some of the needs of the respective institutions.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. With this funding, what is your expectation that tenders . . . When would tenders be out, and when would construction begin, and when would targeted completion dates be, please?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I'll go down the list once again. We anticipate that, regarding the Wascana upgrades for plumbing, we anticipate that going forward this summer. Regarding SIAST, the nursing expansion, we envision that moving forward probably in the fall for the most part, but some of that space, there's some early work that will begin again during the summer.

The SIAST Woodland Campus, the expansion there, we envision that early, probably early summer, probably May even and going on throughout, probably July, August being wrapped up. SIIT, we envision that expansion being undertaken within the next couple of months. Great Plains, I've had a recent conversation there. We envision again that some of the work will actually start this summer. Because of the larger nature of that project, that's going to expand for a longer duration, not surprisingly.

And St. Peter's, we've had an update, and my sense is they're rolling up their sleeves. And certainly the day I was out there for the announcement, they were having some initial discussions. I anticipate that as early by the end of this month or early next, that some of that work will start.

So it gives you a sense that each of the institutions — and we've certainly had some follow-up dialogue — each of them understands the dual nature of this stimulus package for Advanced Education. That is, let's get cracking on the work, and then let's make sure that the programs are up and operational so that we can actually maximize those spaces as soon as possible.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. With the stimulus package and similar types of packages occurring in different provinces and on the federal scale, there's a lot of activity going on, and that's what most individuals think would be appropriate. Do you have any . . . Or what are your thoughts? Do you have any worries about the availability of people to be doing the work?

Do you feel that the 500 million is the appropriate amount, and would the availability of labour and individuals to do this work and complete the projects — and I guess in the sense the value for the resources that you're allocating to this — do you think 500 million is the right amount? And what would your thoughts be going into the future, as we see what the results of the global economy will be here in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I think it's an absolutely excellent question, and it addresses elements of the investment and also elements of Saskatchewan's construction industry. And so

certainly the aspects regarding the investment . . . I'll keep my discussion to the 26.35 million that we're talking about here, rather than the broader investments. The global context is, a number of jurisdictions are moving forward with a variety of stimulus packages. Within the context of Western Canada, we've seen some cooling on the construction side, and we'll wait to see what that looks like as various jurisdictions roll out their individual stimulus packages.

Another variable that we're being very attentive to does relate to the \$2 billion investment that'll be forthcoming for advanced educational institutions out of Ottawa, so we want to make sure that we're able as a province to maximize that. So at this time, certainly something we're attentive to, that we're keeping our eye on, but I think we're well positioned to address, if and as those issues come to the fore.

Mr. Broten: — With the various projects that you've identified, do you have targets now for how many new spaces for capacity on that grow item in the various locations? Is this simply allowing for, perhaps to ease existing crowding, or will it create new training spots? And if you could identify, for the locations you listed, how many new spots in those locations, please?

[16:45]

Hon. Mr. Norris: — As we're just gathering the individual numbers, the answer is both. That is, we anticipate that there will be, in some of the instances, very specifically new spots, new training, education and development spots available. And in others, it's just simply enhancing the space that is already there. We're just . . . We'll get a list here.

On the SIAST Wascana for plumbing, we have an anticipated 108 additional positions and, importantly, a second location. Bringing these opportunities to Regina is a pretty significant move.

Regarding the Woodland Campus, we anticipate an additional 84 training spots that will be opened up — yes, both carpentry and under electrical training.

Regarding . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . A second wave on nursing; that is, as the students are moving through their program — I think that's close to 80, as I say — this one on SIIT, really about enhancing key elements of the distance learning. And so, waiting to see what that's going to look like. They have some really interesting ideas about ways to get out into various communities to actually undertake (a) assessments, and then (b) some of the training.

Great Plains, really that's about enhancing what's there. And St. Peter's is about an enhancement as well.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. Just to be painfully clear on this one, I'm sorry, none of this funding is going to the new military scholarship program? None of that's in this package? That's all March 18?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — No. The scholarship of honour, it was a promise made in the Throne Speech and that's distinct from any of the programming listed here.

Mr. Broten: — Well, Madam Chair, that's all I have at this time. So I thank the minister and all his officials for the answers.

Ms. Young: — May I make a correction? I gave my minister some erroneous information I would like to correct. Mr. Broten, you had asked on page 7 about the other loans and the revised loans. And we had thought that it was university loan. In fact it is the actual versus projected of the student loans. It's a finance number they use. We use money, loan money for student loans, and this was just a correction as they saw our forecast versus our actual. So that's what it is.

Mr. Broten: — So it was simply reduced because the need in the loan system was not there at that time?

Ms. Young: — That's correct.

Mr. Broten: — So if the need was there in the future, it's possible that that money would flow?

Ms. Young: — Yes.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Thank you.

Ms. Young: — Good.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — March
Education
Vote 5**

Subvotes (ED03) and (ED09)

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you to the minister. As then we had decided, we're going to vote off the two votes that we've discussed up to this point. We'll start with vote 5 Education, pre-K [pre-kindergarten] to 12 education, subvote (ED03) in the amount of 141,690. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — And then the education property tax relief, subvote (ED09) in the amount of 2,022,000. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — That's carried. Now I'll ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2009, the following sums for Education in the amount of 143,712,000.

Moved by Ms. Eagles. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[Vote 5 agreed to.]

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you. That's carried. So we'll do the same thing then for Advanced Ed.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — March
Advanced Education, Employment and Labour
Vote 37**

Subvote (AE02)

The Deputy Chair: — Vote 37, post-secondary education, subvote (AE02) in the amount of 26,350,000. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — I'll now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2009, the following sums for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour in the amount of 26,350,000.

Mr. Allchurch, thank you. That's carried.

[Vote 37 agreed to.]

The Deputy Chair: — So we will now recess until 7.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — If I could, at a previous meeting some information was requested. And I just wonder if I could forward that to your good offices, please.

The Deputy Chair: — Certainly.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Great.

The Deputy Chair: — Now we're recessed. We'll table the document as well. Thank you. Thanks to the minister and his officials. We'll see you back, everyone, at 7 o'clock.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

[19:00]

The Deputy Chair: — Good evening and welcome to the Human Services Committee consideration of supplementary estimates. Tonight we are doing Health estimates, vote 32 on page 12 of your Supplementary Estimates book. Before I turn the Chair over, we have a substitution. For Glen Hart, we have Fred Bradshaw sitting in for us this evening.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — March
Health
Vote 32**

Subvote (HE03)

The Deputy Chair: — I'll welcome the minister and his officials, but then I'm going to turn over the Chair and go into my Health critic role. So I'll be asking Mr. Allchurch to assume the Chair, please.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Allchurch): — Good evening. Mr. Minister, would you like to introduce your officials here

tonight, then.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you. Thank you very much. I'd like to take the opportunity to present the Ministry of Health supplementary estimates and answer any questions that you might have this evening regarding the 13 long-term care facilities that were funded. But first I'd like to, as you had asked, to introduce the officials that we have here with us tonight.

To my right is Gren Smith-Windsor, the associate deputy minister. On my left is Louise Greenberg, associate deputy minister. Over my right shoulder is Kari Harvey, executive director of capital and regional services. As well over my right shoulder is Ted Warawa, the executive director of financial services. Over my left shoulder is Linda Restau, director of community care. And I think that's about . . . Oh, and in the back is Lauren Black, assistant to the deputy minister of Health.

I have a statement, if I can just go through it, just kind of explaining where we are and how we got to where we are today, as far as the government's initiative, ready for growth, as well as also the Ministry of Health and how we determine the facilities that are being funded. And then I'll certainly be glad to answer any questions.

As we enter the second year of our mandate, I'm pleased to say that the government is keeping its promises to significantly and strategically invest in Saskatchewan's health infrastructure as part of its ready for growth initiative to ensure Saskatchewan's economy remains strong.

On February 2, Premier Wall announced an additional \$500 million investment in Saskatchewan's infrastructure. The spending has been accelerated to get infrastructure projects under way more quickly and to provide an economic booster shot, which is so important in these days of global economic downturn.

I think it's also important, when you look at what has been said publicly as far as calling on the federal government to also put money into infrastructure, we haven't asked the federal government to do something that we haven't done ourselves. We've accelerated the spending on infrastructure.

As Premier Wall stated, by moving forward on these much needed infrastructure projects, we can ensure economic growth throughout the year ahead. We can further capitalize on our province's strength and come out the other side of this economic downturn even stronger with some much needed infrastructure improvement.

Of the 500 million, nearly 132 million is dedicated to Municipal Affairs. There's also a large sum dedicated to education — well over 100 million — post-secondary education, housing. So a number of areas are being addressed.

As part of the strategic investment, I was pleased to announce nearly \$153 million to build 13 new long-term care facilities, replacing outdated facilities throughout the province. Long-term care beds in the following facilities will be replaced: Wheatbelt Centennial Lodge in Rosetown; the Kerrobert Integrated Health Centre; Cypress Lodge Nursing Home in Maple Creek;

Diamond Lodge in Biggar; Sasko Park Lodge in Tisdale; Kelvington's Kelvindell Lodge; Northland Pioneers Lodge in Meadow Lake; Pineview Terrace Lodge in Prince Albert; Parkland Terrace in Shellbrook; Manitou Lodge in Watrous; the Redvers Health Centre; Willowdale Lodge in Kipling; and the Radville Marian Health Centre.

I've had the opportunity of touring a number of these facilities and certainly know that, even though we'll talk a little bit about their numbers, I'm sure, in the future, as far as VFA, just walking around is — certainly not as an architect or a designer — but walking around these facilities and seeing them for myself, I know that they're in much need of repair or replacement.

From a capital planning perspective, we need to step back and ask ourselves if what we have truly meets the needs and practices used to provide health care today. The Ministry of Health evaluated these facilities using a process that examines our provincial health infrastructure and supports evidence-based, equitable decisions regarding capital investment. Sometimes it makes sense to consider renovating or refurbishing buildings; however these long-term care homes would require significant repairs just to prevent further deterioration, let alone bring them up to code as far as wheelchair-accessible bathrooms.

The decision to invest in these 13 facilities was based on capital priorities identified by the regional health authorities. Every year the regional health authorities put forward their priorities as to what should be looked at in their health region, and I can tell you that these facilities have been high on their wish list, I guess, for a number of years. And I'm going to, as we move through this evening, read from some of the different letters from the health regions saying how long these have been a top priority in their health region.

Also, facility assessment audit conducted by the VFA Canada. An independent Canadian company, VFA performs facility audits for the federal government, major corporations, health care and education facilities. These audits examine existing infrastructure condition, project the budget requirements to maintain or improve existing infrastructure, and assist with capital planning, projects planning.

I will say that the VFA study was something that I was not aware of when I first became the Minister of Health, but was brought up to speed shortly after. The VFA study was conducted under the previous government. A \$2 million investment went in by the former government to look at the health care infrastructure in our province, and I think it was much needed. It would have been interesting to know what the solutions were as we move forward. It's one thing to study it, but then where do we go from here? And I've said many times as I've met with different groups that the VFA study is very important for us as we move forward.

There's good news and there's bad news. The good news of the VFA study is that we know the condition of our buildings. The bad news of the VFA study is we know the conditions of our buildings. They are in much needed . . . much work needs to be done.

At the beginning of the VFA audit, they were asked, what do we own? What is it worth? What is the condition? What are the outstanding repairs and their costs? And what is the remaining life of the facilities and their components?

The audit looked at, particularly, deferred maintenance — which I was certainly glad to talk about last year when we put \$100 million in just to maintenance — of our infrastructure, emergency improvements, deficiencies, and code infractions.

Once that information is gathered, the building components are ranked, from currently critical to recommended, creating a building's facility condition index. The facility condition index or the FCI is the total cost of existing deficiencies divided by the current replacement value. Therefore the lower the FCI, the better condition the building. Zero to five per cent means that the facility is in excellent condition. There are very few deficiencies. Five to ten per cent means the facility is in good condition, and so on.

Reading through the VFA report on these 13 long-term care facilities, you would find the average facility condition index is almost 46 per cent. That is a very, very poor ranking. The infrastructure problems listed for these homes include critical problems with plumbing and water systems, antiquated air distribution and cooling systems, crumbling foundations and roofs that are beyond repair, and facilities that do not meet current electrical and fire code.

These are not simply buildings that need to be retrofitted in order to make them more accessible or more attractive. These are buildings that were identified during the individual capital planning process of the respective health regions' authorities that have reached the end of their lifespan — inside and out.

The 540 residents who call these facilities home and the staff who are providing care deserve to live if they are residents — or work if they are staff — in buildings that meet their specific needs.

In the case of these 13 facilities, it makes more sense to start from scratch with new buildings and providing these residents with the dignity they deserve and the staff with the necessary facilities to provide excellent care.

This announcement is focused on smaller facilities in rural Saskatchewan, although there is Prince Albert too. By targeting this \$153 million investment, we are able to make a meaningful impact in a number of centres who can move these projects along more quickly than you could with larger facilities. The capital priorities in Regina and Saskatoon, and especially when it comes to the long-term care facility in Swift Current, are larger and more complex.

We want to see results for the economy and these long-term care residents this year. Because these long-term care facilities are home to so many of our province's seniors and are in urgent need of replacement, we are presenting an overexpense as part of the government's plan to accelerate infrastructure spending.

Health's March 2009 supplementary estimates include the \$152.8 million necessary to replace the 13 long-term care homes. This is the province's share for replacement and

construction of these facilities. The communities themselves are also responsible to fund capital projects on a cost-shared basis. The province funds 65 per cent of the project cost; the communities are asked and will be asked to raise the remaining 35 per cent.

It is necessary to ensure that our health facilities are up to date, safe for residents and employees, and meet today's standard of care. We will continue to utilize independent audit by the VFA Canada of our health care facilities to provide a system-wide, evidence-based capital planning process that allows us to accurately model funding needs and priorities and evaluate options and implications.

Long-term care residents, their friends and families, community leaders, and our health regions have told us about the sad state of these facilities throughout the province and they are demonstrating overwhelming support since the announcement.

And I have a number of letters from almost every health region, whether it's the health foundation or the health region themselves, stating some of what they're hearing in their community, but also from their own perspective how important it is. And the one that I am just going . . . There's a number of them that I could touch on. I just want to read one from the Saskatoon Health Region. And it goes, just the one paragraph here, I'll read, "For several years . . ." It's talking about the Manitou Lodge in Watrous.

For several years, this project has been included in our list of high priority capital projects. The VFA facility condition index assessment confirmed that the existing building is in poor condition, despite the hard work of our staff to keep the building in working order. Over the years, we have made some changes to address risks associated with overcrowding at the nursing station, lack of appropriate space for medication preparation and poor washroom facilities. However, these small changes cannot address the narrow halls, small rooms and other aspects of the facility which are no longer consistent with how we want to provide safe, resident and family [care] centred care.

That's just one paragraph out of the Saskatoon Health Region, so how important it is for that health region, and from the CEO, as to addressing that particular long-term care facility.

[19:15]

Speaking of our stakeholders, we know that Saskatchewan's health care infrastructure will need additional investment in the future. We are working with our health regions on a long-term capital plan to ensure that we target those facilities that require our immediate attention and best serve the needs of Saskatchewan residents. Under the government, this investment in long-term care will benefit more than 540 of our elderly residents while providing a much needed economic boost to see the province through these challenging times.

Thanks for the opportunity to make my comments. I'd be glad to answer any questions from the committee.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Allchurch): — Thank you, Mr.

Minister. I now open the floor for questions. I recognize Ms. Junor.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Minister, for your explanation. I have several questions — actually more than several — but I just want to start off by clarifying . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Many. By clarifying that the 13 facilities that you've announced, were those the top priorities of that district? I know you mentioned in particular Manitou Lodge in Watrous, which would fall under the Saskatoon Health District. Was that their first priority?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Health regions quite often would list two or three. Probably three, I believe, is probably the average that most health regions would have listed. Some may have listed more, a greater number, but all 13 that we've identified here through the numbers that we see through the VFA study as well as when you look at the priorities of the health region, all 13 fell in the top priorities of health regions.

They've been identified, I don't know how far back we could go, but I can tell you from my perspective for the last couple of years, they've been identified as a high priority in the particular health region — whether it was Sun Country, whether it was Saskatoon Health Region, whether it's Prairie North. And we can go through and have letters here stating — Prince Albert Parkland — that these facilities have been on their priority list for a number of years and just hadn't been addressed, so it's certainly glad to be able to move forward with some of those priorities now.

Ms. Junor: — My question is particular to Saskatoon because that is my home city. And having been the minister responsible for long-term care for quite a while as well as the minister responsible for seniors, I visited many of the long-term care facilities around the province and I know in Saskatoon that there is a need — and you can correct me if I'm wrong, if this has changed — there are many people staying in acute care beds waiting for placement in long-term care. And Saskatoon had identified over the years that they need a new facility — probably, last I heard up to 50 new beds.

So given the pressures that the acute care centres have, in particular in Saskatoon, and the waiting times for beds and the backup that it causes in emergency, etc., I'm surprised to see that their top priority was Manitou Lodge and not a new facility in Saskatoon. Could you comment on that please?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you for that question. And I would agree with you. I know the concerns and the pressures that are being experienced in Saskatoon — and not just Saskatoon — in Regina, in many of our tertiary care centres. And so there is a shortage, and that's why I said in my remarks that both Regina and Saskatoon, we're working with those health regions to address some of the problems that they'll be facing or are facing now and will be into the future.

There is one project of course in Saskatoon, Oliver Lodge that is under way, and you know, we'll be increasing the bed count there by 40.

I think one of the concerns that we have is that to get this money flowing as quickly as possible, you need to . . . For

example, in Regina and Saskatoon, some of the planning that needs to go into developing a long-term care facility in one of those communities, cities, is certainly a lot longer than it would be in Maple Creek. I'm not saying that again that Saskatoon has identified that as a problem but they also identified Manitou Lodge as an issue and it's stated in the letter that we received from Maura that it had been high on their priority list for a number of years.

I would agree that we need to increase the number of beds and especially in our urban centres, but if you have been through the facilities over the last number of years like you say you have — I certainly have too — and there's no question in my mind that many of these facilities absolutely have to be replaced. Whether we add beds, these have to be replaced. I mean there are facilities — and Manitou is one of them — where if it rains, there is literally buckets all over the dining room to catch water. In fact they finally had to do some Gyproc work there to remove some of the black mould that was building up in that facility.

So there are many needs in the province. And we heard it today in QP [question period] regarding education, but I think you would agree that there is an infrastructure deficit in health care that is huge. And it'd be nice if we could fix them all at once. We can't, but we're moving ahead with some of these that we feel can be done quickly, that absolutely there is a need for, and that was a top priority for the health regions for the last number of years.

Ms. Junor: — I certainly do agree that there's an infrastructure deficit that in many of our areas . . . Not just in Health. But my colleague next to me and I have both been in Health together and have seen the deficit, and we both have sat on Treasury Board and made decisions basically where you govern with no money. So we have made those decisions along the way and have replaced several things which one of them is on the list here. So just for my own curiosity, Redvers is probably the first ribbon I ever cut as a minister and so I see . . . I would like to know what is happening in Redvers since I remember being down there and it was new.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — That's a very interesting one that you would bring up, that Redvers was the first one that you were at to cut a ribbon.

Redvers is a very unique situation because they had a very dated hospital. What was replaced was the acute care, not the long-term care. But what was so interesting about Redvers is their acute care facility was absolutely dated. The community went to work and raised money. What happens around the province is usually the provincial government puts in 65 per cent and the community puts in 35 per cent. What was unique about Redvers is they didn't get any provincial money for their facility. They raised 100 per cent of that facility's cost in the community.

So you know, and I appreciate that you were there to cut the ribbon on behalf of the provincial government. The ironic part is the provincial government didn't put any money into that facility.

Ms. Junor: — So I was curious and I understand all these

communities will have huge needs because there is so many more. What strikes me when I look at the map of the announced facilities is that there are none in big centres other than P.A. And knowing the wait-lists are more acute, I would still assume, in the larger centres, I can't really grasp how the decision was made then. You did allude to sort of shovel ready, and I think all of us want to gag when we hear that now. It's severely overused. But you seem to have said these places were chosen because they were easier to get building up and going rather than to pick something in Saskatoon, Regina, maybe Yorkton or North Battleford or Moose Jaw that needed something equally as badly.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Well we've already gone over that ground a little bit but I would, you know, I mean we know that there are some issues in our major centres around the number of beds. I think most of the time when you look at replacing a long-term care facility, for example, in Swift Current is in terrible shape. And I don't know if you've been through the one in Swift Current but that is in terrible shape. Regina and Saskatoon are short of beds. But when we look at those facilities, they're going to be significantly bigger than the 40- and the 50- or the 20-bed facilities that are being built in some of these smaller communities because the facility is so outdated.

I mean the decisions were made based on VFA numbers that show that these were past their useful life and the priorities from the health regions saying that these need to be replaced. So those are where the decisions were made. I'm not saying that there shouldn't be a facility — I mean as I said, Oliver Lodge is in the process — that there isn't more demand in some of our major centres. There is and we're working with the health regions on a daily basis to address some of those issues. And Saskatoon, you know there are issues around whether it's an acute bed or a long-term care bed. There's other ideas that can be put in there without just maybe putting in long-term care beds.

So there's a number of issues or pieces that went into the decision making, but I can tell you that it was a VFA study more than anything else, along with the priorities from the regional health authorities. I don't think Maura would be sending a letter how important it is to do Watrous if it wasn't important to do. It absolutely is important to do. And we also know that there is concerns with more beds.

But when you have, you know . . . I don't know if you visited any of these facilities in the summertime. I had the opportunity of going into a couple of them when it was 30 above and no air conditioning. And you're expecting staff to work in tight quarters with two or three beds in a room, and this is the person's home.

I guess maybe what you're saying is that we shouldn't have built Watrous, and we should just do Saskatoon. I don't know what your line of questioning is.

Ms. Junor: — I'm sure that's not what I said, nor what you heard. What I said was, I wanted to know if Watrous was the first thing Saskatoon would have identified as their top priority, given that I know that there are waiting lists for people to get into long-term care. And those people on those waiting lists are taking up acute care beds, which seems to be something that the

district, that Maura would also write that. I'm sure that Maura Davies, the CEO [chief executive officer], wouldn't turn away money for Watrous.

I'm sure that Watrous and every other one of these facilities need the money desperately. And I think every one of those communities and every one of those residents will be very happy and the money will be well spent.

What I'm asking for is answers to the choices, and how the choices were made. I'm also curious about how many people are on the wait-list in Saskatoon, waiting in an acute care bed to get into a long-term care facility. And I'll ask that probably, if you're getting out a list, for Regina, Saskatoon, and maybe Moose Jaw.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Well I've answered the question that you asked a couple of times. I've told you that the priority of the health region, and it was in the top priority of the Saskatoon Health Region for a number of years, so that went into the decision making, as well as the VFA report that shows these facilities were past their useful life. Those were the reasons, and those were the priorities that came forward allowing us to make our decision.

You asked why do those decisions made. That's the answer why those decisions were made. The health region had been calling for it, as well as looking at the condition.

In Saskatoon there are, you know, there are plans. We're working with the Saskatoon Health Region to look at other options other than just building more long-term care beds. There's step-down beds that are being used in other health regions that are effective. So there are other options that are used without just increasing the number of long-term care beds.

But you asked me the question as to why we made the decisions we made, and it was because of the priorities of the health region and the numbers that came out of a study that the previous . . . your government contracted.

Ms. Junor: — Now then, the second part of my question was how many people are waiting in an acute care bed for a long-term care placement in Saskatoon and Regina.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — You know, I think I'm going to answer questions on the \$152.8 million that were invested in the 13 long-term care facilities in the province. You know, we're not going to have a broad-ranging conversation on wait-lists. So we can certainly, you know, whether you want to talk wait-lists on long-term care, you can talk wait-lists some of the longest in Canada that we are having to deal with. We could have a long conversation about that and I'm sure we will when we get into the other estimates which will come about after March 18. I'm here to answer questions on the 13 facilities, \$152.8 million that we put into these facilities — and I'm prepared to do that.

[19:30]

Ms. Junor: — All right then. We'll save that question till estimates for the broader department estimates.

So then would you tell me how many new long-term care

spaces, if any, will be created by this money in these 13 communities.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Right now what is looked at is the work is being done between the regional health authorities and the Ministry of Health looking at scoping what is needed into the future, where the beds are, whether they're all going to be needed. For example, you can pick whichever one of those communities — is the need there, does it need to increase? That work is being done right now with the community, with the regional health authority who have all looked at long-term plans for, I'm sure, for where they think the beds will be needed, and the Ministry of Health.

So that exercise is going on and that's a fairly extensive exercise to scope out the needs in the short term as well as the long term as we move forward. So it's targeted at keeping the number of beds pretty close to where they are at right now. That's kind of how it was budgeted. Will they be exactly the same as they were? Maybe there will be more in some communities, maybe there will be less. But that work is being conducted right now through the regional health authority and the Ministry of Health along with the communities involved.

Ms. Junor: — So basically they're really not shovel ready, these communities, since their plans have not been finalized about the scope or the size of the facilities that will be replaced.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — That's fair to say that they're not — not to use that term that the backhoe won't be pulling in right away — as you know, because the work hadn't been done previously as to, you know, what the plans were for some of these facilities. So that work needs to be done.

All I can say that when you're looking at replacing a facility in Rosetown or in Biggar or in Redvers or in Kelvington, that that planning can go on pretty quickly. And some of the communities, a number of the communities, have been working towards a long-term care facility for years. I can think of Kerrobert and, again, Rosetown who have been planning for this, knowing that they have a 35 per cent share that they're going to have to come up with. They've been working on that for a long time and have certainly in their minds what they think they need. Now we have to square that with what the health region needs, as well as the Ministry of Health.

I think that the work can be done fairly quickly. It's, again, not like you're designing 100 or 120 long-term care facility, and you're having to do it in a city where there's some issues around is there enough space. A lot of these facilities and communities have been looking for this for a long time, and I think the planning will go along quite quickly. Our timeline is to have them done within the next budget year.

And, you know, that's certainly a challenge. I know it's a huge challenge, and sometimes I feel bad for the Ministry of Health to put them through this because they haven't had such an influx of money, towards infrastructure especially, spread out over a number of communities. If it was \$152 million into one facility in one community, that would be a little different than, you know, challenging to look at 13 different communities and different health care facilities, and the demands of that community.

But I feel guilty, but I'm sure the Ministry of Health is up to challenge. And I know the communities, having talked to a number of the communities since the announcement, they couldn't be happier. And they're certainly looking forward to working with their health region and the Ministry to move the project ahead as quickly as possible.

Ms. Junor: — I just recall hearing, around the time of the announcement, that I think it was the mayor of Biggar was surprised by the announcement. So I wondered if any other communities were surprised. I know they'd be pleasantly surprised, but I'm wondering if all of them were at a stage where they either had their plans drawn up or they had tenders given out. Or were they were at the point where that the mayor of Biggar was, was quite surprised that he got this thing coming to his community.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — I think it would be safe to say that when you're dealing with that many different communities, they range from anywhere from they've got money in the bank and they've been planning for a long time to communities that this is kind of — I wouldn't say new to them because they knew the need — but you use the word surprised in Biggar, and perhaps that's the case. Because maybe there hadn't been any talk about it for a number of years, as far as really any serious talk that these projects would be moving forward.

So I think it would be safe to say that, you know, the communities are on a pretty broad spectrum — as to being ready to go, to being surprised. But I think if you were to talk to any of them, they may have been surprised that they were able to so quickly have a facility approved and moving forward with money in the bank. In other words, not announced a number of times because certainly that was a bit of a case, from what we've heard in the past, is that announcements were made . . . Well I can think of seven announcements for Preeceville before the money was there to build. So I guess it would be surprising in the fact that things are different now, and the government put the money forward and are making the announcement — as opposed to making the announcement and then hopefully put money forward.

Ms. Junor: — Assuming then that you're not going to make any more announcements about this in any of those 13 communities, you've made your one announcement and you're done?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — No, what we'll do is we'll continue to announce, but we'll announce it with money behind it as opposed to announcing . . .

I've got a really interesting — and it is interesting, I think probably for yourselves as well because it was an announcement in 1990, so prior to your government — the front page of the Rosetown paper, big splash front page: "It's a go." And it was talking, the article was about a long-term care facility in 1990. So almost 20 years ago, that it was needed then, and it was a go, but it hasn't gone. And so I don't know what the headline is for the *Rosetown Eagle*, but I'm sure they're maybe a little hesitant to put big bold letters, "It's a go" again.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Allchurch): — I recognize Ms.

Atkinson.

Ms. Atkinson: — You mentioned earlier that there was a study that was done that cost \$2 million that indicated the state of repair of our health facilities in the province. Can you table that study with members of the committee?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — What it is, it's a database that the ministry has that was finished, I believe, in September '07 — something like that, August, September '07. So it was available to the previous government, and certainly had gone through it. I don't know if we, we don't . . . What we've done is we have reports on different facilities. We could table some of that information. But to table the whole database report which is, it's kind of a living document as well because it's a snapshot in time.

And as repairs are done . . . For example as I had mentioned earlier, in the last year's budget, in this past year's budget, we put \$100 million into repairing facilities. And you'd be very aware of, you know, the need for the chillers in Saskatoon and the tertiary care centres. We've replaced those, so that will affect the VFA number as we move forward.

You know, so that's a living document. But we could certainly table some of the information if you're asking for a specific facility.

Ms. Atkinson: — You mentioned, Minister, that there were a number of facilities that were rated in excess of 40 points or 40 per cent. Can you table the facilities that are in that particular range?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — We can do that. Now also you realize . . . I guess for our own benefit we need to kind of get clarity on what you're asking, because it's a \$4.4 billion infrastructure that every piece — and I forget exactly how many buildings that we have — we'll say just under 300 buildings under the Ministry of Health.

So that goes anywhere from, well, you can imagine, from the tertiary centres, the five tertiary care centres, to all the other facilities. But we would certainly be able to look at the long-term care facilities, and where we are in that range of around the 40 mark. As I said, it was an average. These 13 averaged out at about 46, which is in very poor condition. But just so that I have clarity and the ministry has clarity, and we don't have maybe all the information here tonight, but we can table then the number in around that 40 area as it relates to long-term care.

Ms. Atkinson: — What I'm trying to get at, in terms of transparency and of course accountability . . . We had, in government, the experience in 1991 seeing facilities that had been constructed that basically at the end of the day, there weren't enough people to go into those facilities. And that added to the long-term debt of the province.

And so what I'm trying . . . So we tried to put in place a system that, you know, as money became available, those at the top of the list came off the list. And I'm thinking of K to 12 education in particular. And so I'm trying to understand, given the infrastructure need, how decisions are made and where various

projects sit in terms of those infrastructure needs.

Let me give you one example. There's a nursing home in Saskatoon called Sunnyside Nursing Home. Now I've been in a number of nursing homes in the province, including Biggar, and I'm aware of Sunnyside Nursing Home. I'd be interested in knowing where Sunnyside Nursing Home sits in this landscape of facilities.

So in terms of transparency and accountability, it would be, I think, very useful to see facilities in the province, long-term care facilities in the province that require work and where these particular facilities sit, relative to other facilities that require replacement or work. So that's my request.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Sunnyside is a — and I haven't been in that one — but it's an affiliate. But the VFA looked at affiliates as well.

And you know, it's tough until we, I guess, put them all in relationship, at a 37. I'm not sure, and I have to go back as to where it was on a priority list from the regional health authority because the regional health authority also has input on this as well.

But further to your point, when you started, you had mentioned about in '91 and a number of facilities that were built. And they were a number of facilities built around the province at that time. And, you know of course, we can all look back and say whether it was right or wrong and, you know, you can certainly question some of that.

I think when you look at the communities that are selected, through again the VFA number, as well as the health region priorities, and you look at . . . They're really looked at as trading centres in the area. And I can just think of a small community that used to be in my constituency — it's not any more because of redistribution — but Fillmore was one that had a hospital that was to open as a hospital but never did open as a hospital. I think it's just been a long-term care facility. But the community — and not to take anything from Fillmore — but it has contracted, and it's pretty small.

[19:45]

When you look at communities like Rosetown and Biggar and Kelvington, they are kind of the hub of the area, the trading hub, and I don't think . . . I'm not worried about maybe some of the issues that we faced through the early '90s, of building facilities and whether they'll come or not. You know, we know that the demand is there and will be there well into the future. So I'm pretty comfortable and confident with the communities, not only because of the numbers through the VFA, also the health regions' interest, but just knowing where that community sits in the area as far as a trading centre.

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Minister. So I gather you have a list of long-term care facilities and where they sit on the VFA. So in terms — I think I know somewhat how this works — health was able to access \$152.8 million. So you look at the projects and how many projects based on 70 per cent funding from the province can be constructed. So are the top 13 nursing homes on that list, are those the nursing homes that are being

constructed?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — I think it would be safe to say that the VFA was certainly one number that was used. Absolutely the priority of health regions was also looked at and used. So it's a combination of things. I think, you know, to say that . . . Example would be Swift Current. Swift Current has a very high VFA number. Swift Current is not in very good shape. It's a home that is, you know — I forget exactly how many beds, but it's well over 100 — that's a major initiative and a major expense. As we move forward, I would say that Swift Current would rank higher than some of the ones that we are dealing with.

But we're also dealing with then expenditures in communities of \$10 million to look after a long-term care that we know is dated, as opposed to \$100 million, with the community having to put in its share after just building a hospital in Swift Current. I'm not saying that they couldn't, they probably . . . But there's all of those variables went into play.

I'm very confident to say that 13 that we selected are in the top priority. Are they 1, 2, 3, down to 13? No, there's some other ones that may be put in there, but I have no problem defending the decisions that we have made as far as VFA, health region, population, hubs, as to the facilities that we have selected.

Ms. Atkinson: — I know that the government is committed to transparency and openness and accountability. Can you provide us with the listing of the VFAs that you have there for all of the facilities, the nursing home facilities in the province?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — That's a little bit different than what you'd asked me before. You had asked for, you know, facilities that are in that 40 range. Our average, I believe, is at 46. You want all the long-term care facilities in the province, the ones that the VFA looked at? We'll try and pull that together. I don't think there's any reason why we can't forward that. I mean your government has seen it because it was conducted under your watch. But we'll work on pulling that together.

Ms. Atkinson: — Thanks. My last series of questions have to do with the, I guess, capacity. We have one health region that will have to construct three long-term care facilities. This is part of the province that I know very well — Rosetown, Kerrobert, and Biggar. It's your view that all three of these facilities will be constructed in the 2009-10 fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — As I say, it's going to be a challenge for not only the Ministry of Health but particular health regions too. And Heartland is a good example of, you know, they haven't seen this influx of money and initiative towards replacing infrastructure probably . . . Well I don't know if they had ever seen. So they're certainly up — I know it's going to be challenging — I would say they're up for the task. That is our timeline to meet.

As you know, that, you know, we can move the money into the RHAs [regional health authority], and they can work on trying to have it completed. But the nice part is that they know the money is there. They just need to move on the functional planning, on the design.

There are some talk of, you know — with one health region for example looking at three long-term care facilities — if there's not some efficiencies that can be gained through design. I've had the opportunity to be at a few openings of long-term care facilities. And not that this is the way it's going to happen, but when you look at those three different communities that I was at with the long-term care facility, and after touring it, the long-term care rooms themselves were virtually the same. The only thing that changed was the town.

And so when you're looking at maybe trying to incorporate some efficiencies, and for example Heartland maybe can incorporate some of those efficiencies as having three facilities. Again, the rooms will be virtually the same. Where the property is and if it's hooked onto an integrated facility, becomes an integrated facility — those are some of the variables for community to community. But I think there are some real efficiencies that Heartland will be able to achieve by number one, knowing the money is there and number two, working with an architect or a designer.

Ms. Atkinson: — Is it the intention in terms of these facilities all becoming integrated facilities?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Again, every facility in every community is a little different. And it really varies from stand-alone in some communities to integrated into a facility that's already there to perhaps starting from scratch for both facilities and having some acute care beds in some facilities.

But again, you know, I'm not going to say what is . . . It would be premature for me to sit here and say this is what it's going to look like in Maple Creek and this is what it's going to look like in Shellbrook or Radville because that's the work that will be done between the health region, the community, and the Ministry of Health — to go through that scoping exercise and taking inventory of what's there, what we can use, what we can't use. And I know it's a tight timeline, but that's the work that is being done as we speak.

I know the Ministry of Health has met with all the health regions already, so that work is starting. I have been out to Maple Creek, where the community is extremely involved and anxious, as I'm sure it is in Shellbrook and a few other communities. And they're looking forward to the conversation continuing. It's probably not going to be without its bumps and bruises because I think, you know, every community would like to have a tertiary care centre, I think. And that's not realistic, I don't think. But we're working with the community, the health region — as the Ministry of Health — to work through that.

Ms. Atkinson: — Can you tell me, Rosetown had a VFA of what? Kerrobert, Biggar — if you could just go down where we're at for each of those facilities, that would be helpful.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — So are you asking me all 13? Do you want me to kind of go through all of those?

Ms. Atkinson: — Please, yes.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Kerrobert was at a .707, Shellbrook was at a .696, Prince Albert was at a .639, Sun Country was at a .608, Radville . . .

Ms. Atkinson: — I missed that, Minister. If you wouldn't mind, again.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Okay. So take it from the top or . . .

Ms. Atkinson: — No, no, no. Radville.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Radville was at .608, Rosetown was at a .539, Kelvington was at a .518. And so as you were mentioning, there is certainly a number in between that are in . . . Well I'll just continue on down. Maple Creek is at a .4, Tisdale is at a .408, Rosetown is at a .406, Heartland is at a .393, Heartland is . . . Biggar, sorry.

Ms. Atkinson: — What is that, point three . . .

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Three nine three.

Ms. Atkinson: — Watrous?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Prairie North, which is Meadow Lake, is a .3, Watrous is a .26 and Redvers is a .24.

Ms. Atkinson: — Kipling?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — .33.

Ms. Atkinson: — Now I'm trying to understand, now that you've given us these numbers, which number would be on the worse side and which would be on the somewhat better side?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — The higher the number, the worse the facility. But there's some variables that go into that. It's replacement cost — repairing compared to replacement. I mean these numbers, you can take a number such as, you know, the worst one at .707. And there's, you know, I mean there's some variables within that as to what is a replacement cost, what are the repair costs, and that's how they come up with this facility . . . yes, the FCI number that's going to be the . . .

Ms. Atkinson: — What I don't understand then is Watrous is at .26 and Kerrobert is at .707. So can you explain the difference in those two?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — So there are a number, as I said earlier, there are a number of variables that go into this FCI number, and it will even vary a little bit from community. Just understanding that in Watrous for example the acute care facility and the long-term care facility aren't connected, but they were looked at in combination. The acute care centre is in quite good shape, and the long-term care centre is not in very good shape, but that's why the long-term care number would be skewed a little bit because it's in conjunction with the acute care centre.

The other thing is that the FCI looks at the structure of the building. It looks at the mechanics of the building — heating and cooling systems and electrical systems and safety systems. It looks at those type of things. It doesn't necessarily look at the functionality. It looks at, is this building ready to fall down? It doesn't look at how it's functioning, how it's set up.

And certainly being in Watrous — which I have been in, you

know — its function, its design is just outdated and flawed, but as far as the VFA number . . . And that's why I say, I mean, you can use those numbers as some sort of a guide, which we certainly have. It's not the only piece that goes into it, you know, because I can guarantee you that Saskatoon Health Region, if all it looked at was two compared to some of the other numbers that you may see, they wouldn't have it as a priority. They'd realize that it was a priority in that area because it's not functional; it's wearing out. The FCI number combines the acute care centre, which skews that number somewhat.

[20:00]

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. Well I guess in terms of transparency, it's difficult to see how this is transparent, but perhaps there's some way to do this so that the public can understand. Okay. Why would a Biggar be built relative to a Sunnyside Nursing Home? Or why would a, I guess, Tisdale be built relative to some other facility? Because I guess that's what I was trying to get at, Minister. So my final question, then I'll turn it over to my colleague — where is the Sunnyside Nursing Home on this? What is their number?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — So what we have is it's at a point three seven. It's also, the important part though, it's a 95-bed facility, as is the one in Swift Current, which again, you know, if you were just to go on the VFA numbers alone, would be higher, a higher VFA number. But again as I said earlier, it's not that these facilities don't need to be replaced. We know that they need to be replaced and improved for sure. It's what we can do in the short term.

You know, a facility like that would probably be . . . and I'm just going to ballpark guess, you know. You know, again, a facility like that — and this is just a guess, so don't quote me on that because I'm no contractor — but we are probably looking anywhere from 35 to 45 to 50 million, depending on where you built it. And again in Saskatoon, you know, whether you could . . . where you get the property because you can't . . . I don't know what the property layout, the footprint is of that facility. If you could build on the same ground, I'm not sure. There is just all those variables that go into it.

Ms. Atkinson: — There was a very nasty little history of a replacement facility where the engineers, you know, messed up, and I think Mr. Smith-Windsor might know about this.

But a final question. I know all the health regions have been reappointed or appointed, and my assumption is, I know it's just a little off the topic, but my assumption is that they can meet with their MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] — can they? — regardless of which side of the House they sit on? Health regions are encouraged to . . . [inaudible] . . . members of the legislature regardless of whether they're in opposition or government?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Yes, I'd be glad to answer that question anywhere, but I'll answer it here, even though it doesn't have a lot to do with the 13 facilities. But they're appointed to serve the people in that area and so, yes, I mean, that's been past practice.

Ms. Atkinson: — I just want to make sure it continues to be the

practice. Thank you.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Allchurch): — I recognize Ms. Junor.

Ms. Junor: — Minister, of the 13 new projects, how many of them will be owned by the district and how many of them will be affiliate?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — So I guess the simple answer is they'll all be in the same status as they are right now, which means that 12 out of the 13 are owned strictly by the regional health authority and one is an affiliate in Radville owned by the Catholic Health Corporation. So that would remain the same.

Ms. Junor: — Now we've all sat here trying to look intelligent when you said BFA. Now we're starting to almost hear it as VFA. So can you tell for the listening audience whatever it is, whatever it means?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — That's one thing that I'm sure you will know as former associate minister of Health, is the acronyms in health care. I think you could write a very, very, long book. And we've been throwing them out here. So what it is, the VFA is the name of the company. And I don't have the exact what VFA stands for as far as the name of the person — V as in Victor, F as in Frank, and A as in also. The VFA is for the company from Vancouver that was contracted through the previous government. The FCI is the facility condition index.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you. I notice in the 13 locations that several of them — I think it's five — are attached, or called a health centre actually, that were integrated in Kerrobert . . . But in say Maple Creek, it's the nursing home and the hospital. Are they attached now? Like is the Maple Creek Hospital attached? And there's another one. And Shellbrook, the Parkland Terrace in Shellbrook. Are they right now attached?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Neither Maple Creek nor Shellbrook are attached.

Ms. Junor: — So then you say Parkland Terrace and Shellbrook Hospital. What does that mean? Will there be renovations done with this money to the hospital as well?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Again as I said earlier, we're working with the community, the health region, and the Ministry of Health to scope out what can be done there. You know, in some cases the acute care centre is in extremely rough shape and it may make more sense to start from scratch on both of them. In other cases, you know, they're salvageable. When I think of Outlook, that's what happened in Outlook, is that a long-term care centre was put on to the acute care centre. So that work is going to be done through the regional health authorities, the communities, and the Ministry of Health to look at what best fits that community.

Ms. Junor: — So we may then end up with integrated facilities like many of the other communities have with the health centre or still called a hospital?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Yes, in some of them. And again it's a pretty wide range from when you're dealing with 13 different facilities. Every one is unique and every one is obviously

different, as is with the community as far as what's available for land. And all of those need to be worked out. So I would think that there will be a few of them that will be integrated health care facilities. Some will be stand-alones, special care homes. I think it will vary, and, you know, that work still needs to be done.

Ms. Junor: — I noticed on the map of the 13 locations there are none from Keewatin Yatthé or Mamawetan Churchill. What happened to those two districts, or regions? Did they not put any priorities in?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — It would be safe to say that, you know, we'll certainly be monitoring it and seeing what the demands are as we move forward. But if you look at La Ronge and La Loche, they have newer facilities in those communities. And I'd have to go back and I don't know . . . I know that health regions will put on the list their priorities, but it's not always long-term care facilities. There may be demands and needs and wants in other areas that isn't kind of necessarily a long-term care facility. Ile-a-la-Crosse has a new facility.

So there are some new facilities in the North. But that's not saying that again as our population ages that there won't be demands and requests for expansion or increased number of beds.

Ms. Junor: — I would have assumed then that Mamawetan and Keewatin would have actually put forward some requests. But the criteria you used were basically looking at facilities that were not structurally sound, or needed replacement. Not necessarily what these two northern districts would have said, say, Beauval needs some nursing home beds, and we need a facility there. That might be their top priority. I mean, I'm just saying that. But that's not the criteria you used. You used looking at existing facilities and replacing them. Am I right to say that?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Yes, that's what we did is we looked at, again, the VFA study. We looked at requirements from the regional health authorities, what their top priorities are. These were all listed from health regions as their top priorities. And we can go back. I stand to be corrected that perhaps those two northern regions in their top priorities was not a long-term care facility. So what we have done is we've replaced facilities. These are not necessarily adding on or new beds. And we could have gone around maybe and built 13 new facilities and kept the ones going that are there, but I think you'll have to agree with me when you go into some of these facilities and see the shape of what are virtually people's homes.

And you know there is a number of . . . I've seen, not only touring them, but also a number of photographs that have come back, some pictures showing some pretty deplorable conditions. And you know, I guess it's whatever your priorities are. We can continue to build and ignore the living conditions that some people are having to live in, or we can try and shore up that and then look at increasing.

And that's what our government has done, is to look at shoring up some of the facilities that I don't think any of us would want to spend a lot of time in, let alone live in or work in. Recruitment and retention is always an issue, and certainly a

newer facility makes it a little bit easier for those communities, smaller communities, to attract LPNs [licensed practical nurse], RNs [registered nurse], and perhaps even physicians.

So that was the decision as to which direction we were going to go — continue to increase the number of beds, or shore up the facilities that are past their useful life.

Ms. Junor: — Before I ask another question, I just want to make sure that people that are listening, including my colleagues around the table, I want to make it clear that the questions I am asking and the fact that I am asking questions in no way infers that we begrudge people having good accommodations and money being spent on them. The role of the opposition is to ask questions. And so I don't want anybody to think that we have anything but appreciation for the fact that these residents will be getting better accommodations. But there are questions, and that is our job to ask them.

There is a couple of other ones I'd like to ask. Just to give me a sense, when I look at these 13 that are there, I think you've said there are 540 residents that are in these 13 facilities. Can you just give me a sense of how many, say, are in Meadow Lake? I want to know exactly, I guess, how big these facilities are. Is there 10 people in Meadow Lake and 60 in somewhere else? Just to give me a sense of the size of them.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Just one second. I want to make sure that when I give you these numbers, they're accurate, they're right on, because I have a couple of . . . As I look at the one sheet it doesn't correspond with another sheet, so just give me a second.

[20:15]

Okay. I think, you know, these numbers are what we have as it stands now, so that's what I'll give you. As I said, it's a kind of a snapshot when VFA did their study a year and half ago. But how it works out is: Maple Creek is at 48 long-term care — 48, yes; Rosetown is at 47; Kerrobert is at 36; Biggar is at 59; Tisdale is at 33; Kelvington is at 46; Meadow Lake is at 55; Prince Albert is at 50; Shellbrook is at 34; Watrous is at 35; Redvers, 24; Kipling, 28; Radville, 52, as of the VFA study, as I said, a year or so ago.

Ms. Junor: — Now with the VFA I can't remember, if I ever did know, the terms of reference of what they looked at. But do they look at the projected needs of the community? So if you look at Kipling that has 28 people in that place, is there a, I don't want to use the word waiting list because you didn't like that last time, but is there a waiting list to get into Kipling? So that the VFA would say, yes it's economically sound and a good business decision to build a new facility in Kipling because there's an ongoing need and there will be more people and there always will be at least 28 people in there.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — So what the VFA was asked to look at, again under a previous government, it was asked to look at what we own, what it's worth, what is the condition, what are the outstanding repairs and their costs, such as . . . And that can really range from roofs to heating and air systems to safety issues such as fire alarm systems to even, in some of the facilities, call systems for calling nurses. And then the final area

was: and what is the remaining life of the facility and their components?

So it wasn't for VFA — which, you know, I'm glad it wouldn't be; I mean that's not the role that they were to play in this — is to look at the demographics of an area, to look at the trading patterns of an area, to look at all of those variables, the growth that we're experiencing in the province and how that would impact, you know, in the future of long-term care in some of these communities. It wasn't asked to look at the farming trends as more people move from the farm to smaller communities, and what's going to happen with that.

That wasn't what the terms of conditions or the parameters that VFA was asked to look at. They were asked to look at the tangible of what it's worth, what its condition is, what the heating and electrical system is like, what the cement is like, what the roof is like, those type of things. And that's how they came up with their numbers.

So that, you know, when you look at long-term trends and those type of issues, that is the work that's going to be done again through the regional health authorities as they move forward with communities, and in conjunction with ourselves at the Ministry of Health, as to what is needed in the health region.

Is it the exact makeup that I talked about as far as those numbers of two or three years ago? In fact those numbers could have varied a little bit in facility to facility, depending on demand and depending on a lot of things. I mean quite frankly some of these rooms with windows that, you know, were not in very good shape at all, I can't guarantee that every room that VFA studied in this study is still being used for a resident. In fact I would say that maybe in some cases maybe two residents because it's not uncommon in some of these facilities to have two or three residents in a room.

So I'm talking about the number of beds and that could vary, but certainly VFA was never asked to look at any of those demographic issues that communities were facing. They were strictly asked to look at the condition of the facility — be it the construction and that type of thing.

Ms. Junor: — So then you're saying that the department, in conjunction with the communities, will be looking at that to determine the size of the 13 new facilities that will be going up. So it would be safe to say that some of these numbers may vary then? In some of these communities, you may not have as many or you may have more? You know, they may vary given that the department and the communities will be working on the long-term needs, given the demographics and the various trading trends and all the other things that you've mentioned.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Yes, as I mentioned earlier that, you know, there's an awful lot of work that needs to be done from now until the final stamp of approval is put on it, as far location and integrated or not integrated, as well as the number of beds. And that work is being conducted right now. It would be safe to say that there are few communities that don't want more health care services or more beds, whether it be in long-term care beds or anything else. There are few communities that would be in that position.

So there is a lot of work that needs to be done between the community, the health region, and the Ministry of Health. And as I said earlier, it's not going to be without its challenges because I just know the expectations of some communities. And, you know, so we'll have to work with the community and come up with facilities that reflect the demographics as we move forward, that reflect, you know, the issues within a specific health region as far as what they need, whether it's more long-term care beds or not. And that work will be done.

So for me again — and I've said it probably three or four times this evening — I can't sit here and say that this facility will be an exact amount of beds because that work needs to be done. I'm sure you can understand that. There's a scoping process that has to take place. It's been done with every other facility, and it will be done with these 13.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you. So I'm also assuming from our conversation this evening that this is considered to be a one-time expenditure in each of these communities. But my question is — because I'm assuming that is a yes — my question is, since we don't know the actual scope of the facility, we may end up having a facility that is substantially bigger, a new integrated facility. Do you anticipate then any staffing costs, operational increases?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Because we don't know the exact number of beds — although I think it's going to be pretty close to where we're at — that's kind of the ballpark of replacing the number of beds. They may fluctuate a little bit higher or lower, but I don't think when you fluctuate by a few beds here or there that it's going to have huge implications on staffing levels. You know, that's certainly something that the health region will be looking at.

We do know that there is certainly more and more work being done and smaller communities are involved with recruitment and retention. And if they had an increase in beds and maybe in only a few, I'm sure they could work with the recruitment and retention initiatives that our government has put forward to help address those issues as we move forward. But I can't see there being a real large, wild fluctuation in the numbers that we have talked about here this evening.

Ms. Junor: — Just a couple of more questions. The timing of the flow of the money, I understand the planning process is going to be fairly convoluted and take a bit of time, but would you anticipate the money to be flowing by the end of — not this fiscal year, I would think — but the end of at least the year, like '09?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — So there's a couple of issues there. You'd mentioned about the planning, and you said something about being convoluted. I don't know if I would agree with that description of the process — as we move forward, whether it would be convoluted or not. Work is being done between the regional health authority, the community, and the Ministry of Health. Like every other facility that's been built in this province, that is the process that we work on. Will the timelines be tight? Yes, I'd say the timelines are tight. I don't know if I would say that the process is convoluted.

As far as the issue around money and whether it will be

flowing, it will be flowing to the regional health authorities with terms and conditions surrounding that money before the end of this month. Our fiscal year is at the end of this month, and so money will be flowing to the regional health authorities as they work on the plans, but it will be held by the regional health authority. As they get their functional plans finished, the money will be there that they can start on the project right away, which is, again I will state, that is a marked difference from the way things have been done in years past, where announcements were made over and over again regardless — there was no money there, but they would continue to make the announcement.

And I can think of Preeceville as one. The Deputy Premier has press release after press release of a facility that was going to be built. The other one that I am very familiar with too is Humboldt. That was announced over and over and over again with no money to the health region.

So if there is a change, it's a marked difference that money will be in the health region's hands, with terms and conditions that this money will go to the long-term care facility once the work has been done through the regional health authority and the community. Once all that work has been done, they will have the money then to move forward on the project.

Again the nice part is, is that our government has stepped forward and committed the 65 per cent that is needed, and it will be in the health region's bank . . . well, bank or in their possession as to moving forward with the project.

Ms. Junor: — So anticipate then they'll be holding it in trust. They could get interest on it and that sort of thing?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Yes, it'll be held in trust. You know, as I said, there'll be terms and conditions, stipulations as the money goes to the health region that it can't be put into anything else such as operating costs. It'll be held there that, you know, so I'm sure they'll be working on the best interest rate that they can find. And if they find a good one, I'd sure like to know what that interest rate would be.

Ms. Junor: — Well I think I have one more question, basically. Well a comment too. When you talk about having money in trust, I have a specific interest in the money that was in trust for Station 20, and I understand how quickly that disappeared. So I know the communities will trust that the money will stay there since it's been committed.

My last question is more for a principle of how you build. Are you thinking of building your long-term care facilities with the objective of having one person per room or no more than two? Is that sort of the standard or principle that you'll be doing in long-term care?

[20:30]

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — The second part of the question was regarding the size of room, and the standard is one resident per room. And I don't know if there's any variation on that depending on whether it's a couple and, you know, so there's some variation with that.

As far as the Station 20 piece, money was . . . You're talking about functional designing and processes and planning going into facilities, and we're certainly rushing this. You know, that is a classic example where there wasn't a lot of work done before the call of an election. And so that it's interesting that you would bring that up because that \$8 million then did go to the health region, which went to repairing some of the facilities that were not in very good shape.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Allchurch): — It being 8:30 . . .

Ms. Junor: — Oh, I was just going to say thank you to the minister.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Allchurch): — Okay. It being 8:30, I'll turn it over to you for closing comments.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you. I want to thank the minister and his officials for coming and answering the questions. And I look forward to the broader discussion we'll have in estimates.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Allchurch): — Mr. Minister, do you want any closing remarks?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Other than to thank the committee for the opportunity to present our estimates and have them voted off tonight. And also thank you to my officials who have all the information, and thank heavens for them.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Allchurch): — We'll be voting off the estimates later on this evening when we do Social Services. We'll take a five-minute break now for the other committee to come in. And we'll be looking at vote 35 Social Services.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — March
Social Services
Vote 35**

Subvotes (SS06) and (SS12)

The Deputy Chair: — Welcome to the Minister and her officials. We are now looking at the supplementary estimates for Social Services and that is — quickly when I find my vote — vote 35 on page 16 of your Supplementary Estimates book.

Welcome to the Minister, and if you would introduce your officials. And a reminder to the officials, if you speak, would you please give your name so the Hansard can record who you are. And if the Minister has an opening statement, please feel free to do that.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Madam Chair. With me tonight, to my left I have my deputy minister, Allan Hansen. To my right I have the acting assistant deputy minister of housing, Larry Chaykowski. Behind me is the acting assistant deputy minister for policy, Cheryl Senecal; the executive director for corporate services division, Don Allen; the acting executive director for housing operations, Tim Gross; the assistant executive director for income assistance division, Gord Tweed; the executive director for the community living division, Jeff

Redekop; and my chief of staff, Laurie Pushor.

And I don't have any opening remarks, and so therefore it is open for questions.

The Deputy Chair: — I recognize Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, thank you very much. And so, I'll get right to it. Thank you. A lot of it is very straightforward, and that's why . . . but I do have some questions, and we'll see where that goes.

But I do want to start with page 7; I did ask you this question in the supplementary estimates in November. And it's on the schedule of capital appropriation, and it's Social Services, and it's some \$5 million and the estimated adjustments. I think this is related to the computer program with foster care. I'm taking a guess at that, if that's correct.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I'm being told that yes, that that was funding for the computer systems.

Mr. Forbes: — And has anything changed since November when we last looked at this? Or is this . . . I know that you had released, or you had been asking for requests or proposals earlier on, I think it was in January.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes, we have the proposals and they're being reviewed now.

Mr. Forbes: — Reviewed, yes. So in terms of this number, this is not a changed number. Or has this changed since November?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I don't believe it has been.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay, good. Thank you. Then if we can go back to page 16 and the heart of what we're talking about. I'll go through a series of questions here with as we work through this, the \$600,000 payments for community living, if you could provide some information on that.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Four hundred thousand is . . . All of the pieces, I should say in the beginning, is part of the investment that we announced for the 76.9 million over the next four years to address the waiting list of 440 individuals in need of specialized residential and day programs that have intellectual disabilities. So 400,000 of that is to support the Maidstone Group Home Society Inc. with an infrastructure grant of 400,000. And it's to complete renovations to their activity centre to enhance capacity, to provide day program supports for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

The organization currently operates two group homes and a day program in Maidstone to support 11 individuals, but 4 of those 11 individuals have needs greater than what is available. So the current day care, or day program centre, is too small to serve all of the individuals in that community who require services. So this will address the needs, particularly for individuals who have higher needs, with the \$400,000 to do an infrastructure upgrade.

The second initiative under the 600,000 is to support the Saskatchewan Abilities Council Inc. in Yorkton. It's one-time

funds of up to 200,000. We had advanced 100,000 already, so in this line item in the budget is an additional 100,000 for a total of 200,000 to support an additional 16 individuals within the community of Yorkton. The Saskatchewan Abilities Council in Yorkton currently provides services for up to 125 individuals, so this will allow for renovations that will enhance the current training and activity centre space and allow for the addition of 16 more individuals to their programming.

The third project is again \$100,000 to support the Langenburg and District Activity Centre. This allows them to purchase a home, to operate a new four-space group living home and . . . However, it will accommodate five individuals. And the reason is, is it's a little bit complicated. They're going to move four individuals from their existing home into the new home, and then change the existing home which will create another bedroom. So we're creating five spaces, but only purchasing a four-space house.

Mr. Forbes: — It sounds interesting. So are they moving the two houses together?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — No, they're moving from an existing group home that they already operate, they're moving four individuals from that home into the new home. Then they're going to renovate the existing home, and it'll create another bedroom.

Mr. Forbes: — So in the end there will be room for nine?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — No, five in the existing . . . Four bedrooms in the existing home, there will be five.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — And then the new home has four.

Mr. Forbes: — And so together . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Together they actually have six group homes.

Mr. Forbes: — Oh okay, right. Now I get it.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I could be mistaken on the number of group homes they have, but they have . . .

Mr. Forbes: — But I understand what you're talking about. Good. Okay.

Then in the description below it talks about these are for Sask Housing, additional capital investments. So there won't be any ongoing operational costs to the money we're talking about tonight. This is all . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Oh no, there absolutely would be ongoing operational costs that will be in the budget, in the upcoming budget, because as you take on more individuals, you're also going to have to fund the operating costs.

[20:45]

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. All right. And then, but as we were

talking about the \$500 million infrastructure stimulus package, so you have 15 million for the U of S for their student residence space.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — Twelve million for a low-income housing project in Regina. And then you have a project in Prince Albert, and that's a \$2.3 million project, is that right?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — That is correct.

Mr. Forbes: — Right. Okay. And then you have improvements to community-based activity centres and groups, and that's just what we talked about.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — That's true.

Mr. Forbes: — That's the \$600,000, right, to those three communities that we talked about: Yorkton, Langenburg, and Maidstone.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Well let's go through this. The U of S, and that's very good news — I think everyone in Saskatchewan is excited to see student housing. That was one that I think that everybody thinks it's an important project. I mean all housing projects actually from my point of view is a very good thing. And so and clearly this has been a need that's the U of S has identified for many years and so it is good news.

So I have some questions about it though. I'm curious about where the tipping point happened, because I know these folks were turned down earlier last year when they came and asked for \$19 million project, and now \$15 million. And then they went back to the books. I was reading the on-campus news and they gave a sort of a bit of a timeline there. I'm curious: from your perspective, what was the tipping point? What it made it more appealing when they came back with their project?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Two things that I can say. Their project obviously is a considerable amount of money, it's a substantial amount of money for one project. So when we made selections in the expression of interest earlier it was . . . And you know you and I have discussed the priorities in housing that I had at that time, and the vacancy rate in Saskatoon at that time was very low. We felt that it was more important to put, say \$8 million investment into the Pleasant Hill area.

The tipping point came from two things: the task force — that was one of the recommendations and as I had announced before, that we would be working towards addressing more of the recommendations of the task force. Ultimately it was the decision to do a stimulus package. And the stimulus package by our government to put a stimulus package in place to ensure that our economy remain strong and steady, it allowed for some major projects such as the student housing piece. It had a good proposal and we already had it and knew about them.

I also met personally with Richard Florizone with the university and President MacKinnon, as did the Premier. And, you know, we had the discussion of whether this would be ready and

where they were at and they expressed their concerns and highlighted how important the project was. So the tipping point honestly was our government's commitment to a significant stimulus package to our economy.

Mr. Forbes: — Now one of the things the university had done is they went back to the drawing board and they looked at how they could make this come about, and one was to bring in a partner. And I know this is something your government's talked a lot about is the P3 [public-private partnership] things and you have a group in there. Could you talk a little bit about that?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — It is a P3 project and the third partner is Meridian Development Corporation. And they weren't recommended to do this, to re-look at their proposal, quite frankly, from my office, but that was a recommendation given to them by the task force and so they took that seriously and went themselves then to find a third partner.

Mr. Forbes: — Now when I look back, one of the questions of course will be affordability because that was one of the quotes in the student report actually that came out the day before — a very good report as well — and it talked about, if it's not affordable, it's not available. And so the question will be around rent. And will Sask Housing have any influence in terms of how the rent is set?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — No, I don't believe we will. Now this question was asked — and I'm trying to draw from memory here — of Mr. Florizone when we made the announcement and I believe he said he was going to try, their hope to hold it about 500 is the business plan they're looking at, at 500 a month. But they are doing a business plan from their end — they being the university and Meridian.

We do understand that they could not make it affordable unless there was help from the government because of the cost of construction. And so that is why we made the decision to participate in this project. But we are leaving it in the hands of the university, the other two proponents, to actually do the business plan on what the rent will need to be.

Mr. Forbes: — One of the things that the university's done I think an outstanding job is in terms . . . I know the law college has been designed with LEEDs [leadership in energy and environmental design] in mind and you know, you folks opened up the STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] and it was LEEDs and that was a wonderful thing. I'm hoping that Sask Housing will continue on that with energy efficiency. Has that been part of the criteria when you talk to the university about the new project?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — It's not a criteria per se, but it's taken into consideration when you do prioritizing of different proponents or different proposals that come to Sask Housing. There's a number of things that they look at, and that definitely would be one of them.

Mr. Forbes: — I think it's a very, very important thing. And I think it's one that often people look at the cost being high at the beginning, but you get your return on your investment very quick in that. I think it's an important issue.

I don't know if you want to talk about . . . In terms of student residence, I know that there's one in Prince Albert that's somewhat on the go, and I think actually you made an announcement in November.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — How's that coming along?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I can't say a lot to that project because I didn't bring any of the information. It's not part of tonight's discussion. But I can say that we did announce student housing with SIAST in Prince Albert.

Mr. Forbes: — Now between the three projects, I'm going to be comparing apples and oranges so I want to be corrected on this, so I know I am. Right off the bat, this looks like a very affordable project. When it looks at it, they talk about 400 student resident spaces or beds, they talk about for \$15 million. So the investment for the government looks like about \$38,000 a space for a bed. And then you go to the one in Regina, which is \$12 million. Now it's units, it's not beds. It's 140. And it's 86,000. And then I look at the one in Prince Albert. And I guess this is why I need more explanation because I'm not familiar with this and I don't know if there is a press release on this one. But it talks about 12 affordable housing units for seniors and the price is \$2.3 million, which makes that about \$192,000 a unit. So that's where I'm talking about apples and oranges and so I wonder if you could clarify. Clearly I know what a student residence looks like, and there's probably four, there could be many in a unit. But what would be the Prince Albert units, what do they look like?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Just give me one moment. And you are comparing apples to oranges, because the other two projects — the Regina project and the Prince Albert project — are not P3.

The Prince Albert project will be 12 rental units for Métis seniors. It's a proposal brought forward by the Prince Albert Community Housing Society Inc. — short is PACH, P-A-C-H. And they had brought forward a proposal to the expression of interest that had two proponents. One was a 26-family rental unit and one was 12-unit rental for seniors. The 26-family rental unit was approved, so that is already under way. And the 12-unit rental seniors was sort of put on hold pending if there was more funding. And so when we chose to do the stimulus package, that of course came to the top and they'll be able to do their entire proposal.

Mr. Forbes: — How did you come up with these three in terms, and will there be more? Or will you tell me to wait for budget day?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Absolutely.

Mr. Forbes: — So how did you come up with these three projects?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — All three projects were proposals that were brought forward and Sask Housing had them. So things that we considered when we were looking at the stimulus package is what is ready to go.

You know, you look at a number of things. What is really needed? What is a large project that perhaps you need a, you know, can't just do it in a regular flow of housing continuum? Because as you know, you're constantly building and renovating housing within Sask Housing. But something like the student piece, for example, is a significant amount of money — so was the Regina — so that you need a time when you're going to do a major project and you have the funding to do so.

The other was to be shovel ready, and we talked about being shovel ready. We want these projects that we had in our stimulus package to create jobs fairly soon to keep our economy strong. At times we're quite frankly . . . Globally there is some concerns to the economy.

Mr. Forbes: — There are so many questions here. When you say shovel ready I have to think about one that in Saskatoon that just has to be shovel ready pretty soon, and that's the Lighthouse project. What is happening with the Lighthouse project?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — It's not shovel ready.

Mr. Forbes: — Any more details on that?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Stay tuned for that one.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Well I'm looking forward. Because that is a really again one that is very important and it's been almost two years. It'll be two years this summer. I'm looking forward to that one.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — It's not ready.

Mr. Forbes: — So now in terms of the Prince Albert project, again because of the cost I am assuming that these are bigger, that they might be one- or two-bedroom type of . . . Is it like one building with 12 units in it or are some of these detached?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — It's a 12-unit building. It's brand new construction, which of course makes it more expensive. Again, there isn't a partner, a third partner that's involved so, you know, we are funding new construction for seniors' housing. I'll just ask my official if they're one-bedroom or two-bedroom units. That I don't know.

Mr. Chaykowski: — Larry Chaykowski from Sask Housing of the Social Services.

Yes, these are one-bedroom units, so this is intended as a seniors' complex with a number of different suites, if you like, and some common area for them to congregate and . . .

Mr. Forbes: — Any interesting designs?

Mr. Chaykowski: — There's nothing, I don't think, particularly unique about the design, so it's just the price that you're looking at is the realities of new construction in today's world.

Mr. Forbes: — Are you fully funding this project?

Mr. Chaykowski: — Well we're fully funding it. We look for

the community-based organization to bring whatever resources they can, whether it be in-kind types of supports and services, but this required this level of public investment in order for it to proceed. The community-based organization just couldn't have mustered it on its own, even with a mortgage.

Mr. Forbes: — I fully understand the capacity to bring forward resources. And comparing it between the three projects you have, it sounds like a very good one. I just want to make sure I understand the different costs when we come with this. So that's great.

Now I may just ask if my colleague here has any questions before we stray too far from the student housing, because I know he's quite interested in this project as well.

The Deputy Chair: — I recognize Mr. Broten.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you so much. I do have a few questions about the student housing. Back in our sitting before the break some time ago, that when there were some questions in question period about P3s, I recall the Minister of Education commenting that in certain situations it would be government policy to pursue P3s and in other situations it would not, according to the nature of the P3. And we know there are various models and types that can be used.

Could you please, in some detail, describe the P3 model that's being used in this instance and indicate why in government's opinion, in your opinion, this is the right way to go in this instance.

[21:00]

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I'm just going to comment that Sask Housing, a lot of their projects has partners. Actually quite a few. I don't know the actual details of the agreement between Meridian and the U of S, so maybe Mr. Chaykowski can address that question.

Mr. Chaykowski: — Thank you. Well one of the, in this particular case, one of the appeals, appealing part of having a private-public partnership is the private developer, Meridian, bringing some resources to the table. As was observed earlier, the cost per unit is significantly lower than in another non-profit where we're putting in virtually 100 per cent of the capital. So in that particular case, it makes a lot of sense or, you know, brings . . . you're able to leverage the resources, the public resources and still achieve, you know, some substantial public objectives along the way.

Mr. Broten: — So I see how there's the incentive or how it's attractive on the front end to have another partner bringing funds to the table. What is the mechanism that Meridian will receive a return on its investment and the funds that it is bringing to the table now? How will that be achieved?

Mr. Chaykowski: — In this particular case, Meridian has been working with the University of Saskatchewan, so we're . . . Sorry to be a bit vague, but we're kind of, if you like, third parties to this. And so we don't have the working details of, you know, what their business plan looks like on . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The agreement between Meridian and the U of S is their agreement, so as Mr. Chaykowski said, we are third party to come in and help them bring it to fruition. But their business plan is just that — their business plan.

Mr. Broten: — Fair point that it's their plan and that the work is going on there. Possibly also a fair point that with the province putting in \$15 million through your ministry, with that being a significant amount of funding, is the document, the agreement, the P3 agreement between Meridian and the U of S, are representatives from your ministry signatories to that agreement?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — There is a memorandum of understanding between Meridian and the university and then it will be developed from there.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. The documentation, the framework, is this public information that can be tabled to the committee?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I don't believe so, but I will ask. I will look into that for you, but I don't believe so. I think it would be requested to be confidential on behalf of Meridian because they are in a competitive business.

Mr. Broten: — Fair point. I realize there's sensitivities with privacy. However you can understand from a transparency perspective, with \$15 million going from the public purse and with the need for . . . perhaps with the increased prevalence of P3s, it would be interesting to see why. And as the minister . . . I realize you're not the Minister of Education, did not make this comment, but I assume the minister was speaking for government policy, why in certain situations it's a go and certain situations it isn't. And I'm curious as to how this possibly fits the yes category.

If the information can be shared or even if not all the detail but the structure and some of the broad strokes, would you be willing to table that information if you're able to get your hands on it?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I already said that I would for whatever Meridian and the university would be willing to share publicly. However I cannot force them to share business plans that they have if they feel that there is business interest not to share that information. I would hate to see something like this even begin to slow down the project. I think it's an extremely important project. It's something that hasn't been addressed for literally decades. So I just would hate to see that happen.

Mr. Broten: — Does the auditor have a role in reviewing the agreement at any point, would you know?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — No.

Mr. Chaykowski: — Maybe a point of clarification is that there is an agreement . . . So there's more than one agreement in place. There is an agreement or will be an agreement between Sask Housing and the University of Saskatchewan that in terms sets out some of the accountability standards that Sask Housing . . . for any project that it would fund. So that's a pretty standard agreement and contribution agreement that we have in place,

and it sets out the parameters in terms of what the public's interest in that capital investment.

The information you're looking for is, you know, one step further away, so typically when the Provincial Auditor would be looking for the contribution that is covering the provincial or the public monies going in. And that would be made available when an audit of the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation took place.

Mr. Broten: — I do recognize there are multiple layers, but when this one's presented as the linchpin for the project going forward, it is certainly a crucial part of it. Do you see the 15 million as a one-time investment? Will this be it for funds flowing through through your ministry to this project?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — What this funds — because the proposal that the university has is actually has more than one phase; they have a four-phase proposal — this is funding for the first two phases. So at this point in time, yes, that is our commitment to the first two phases of their proposal.

Mr. Broten: — Okay.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — And also I would like to comment that the second or the third and fourth phases are not shovel ready either, so that would be a decision that would be made in the future.

Mr. Broten: — Would you please identify the parcel of land where this construction will be taking place, please?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes. It will be located off-campus — south of College Drive, north of 14th Street, and east of Cumberland Avenue.

Mr. Broten: — And I've seen the larger plan which I assume is the phase 3 and 4 and the larger components. What is the projected start date for this phase of the project?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Construction will start on the first building, they are saying, the fall of 2009. And building two will follow depending on, you know, how construction is going, the availability of workers, and so forth. They hope to have building one complete in August 2010, and building two complete in August 2011.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Thank you. Going back, touching on some of the points Mr. Forbes talked about in terms of why these projects, in Mr. Norris's estimates before supertime, he identified five criteria to be used in choosing projects, why funding went to the six or seven training institutions. He identified health and safety of the learners and staff, the need for more space, deferred maintenance, readiness, and P3 lens, preference being given to areas where there is a P3 present. With Minister of Health that we had just before you, he spoke of an index, sort of a combination of concrete numbers plus some more qualitative aspects. You identified the need and shovel ready — those two criteria. Is that an exhaustive list, or are there other factors used in determining which projects are a go?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The Saskatchewan Housing

Corporation has, throughout time, put out expressions of interest. And of course they have submissions. So they have a number of projects. And they can't always or there isn't always available funds for their projects.

So the criteria that the Sask Housing Corporation uses in prioritizing projects includes sponsor experience, targeted client group, project location, the need and demand for that community, affordability, whether or not there are partnerships — and as I said, many of the Sask Housing Corporation projects have partners — skill development of the plan, how close is it, how well has it been developed, and the project support within the community. So there is a list of criteria that Sask Housing uses when they prioritize projects.

All of the projects or the three projects were submissions that they had from an expression of interest that was extended in fall 2007. They all ranked high on priority.

So in essence, we took our list out and took a look at what had already been prioritized. And we had addressed a number of the top priorities with the funding that was available for the expression of interest, and we just looked down.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Minister, and officials.

The Deputy Chair: — Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you. A couple of questions. In terms of when you have these projects and you put them into priority lists — and I assume people are coming forward all the time — have you set a date and told projects, you know, we've set our priorities for the term? Are you encouraging people to come forward continually, or how does that work now?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — If I have any community or group that is interested or have a proposal, I don't ever turn it down but have indicated to them that at this point in time . . . For example there is a community that has approached me that would like to have a seniors' project. I ask for their proposal. I send it over to Sask. Housing Corporation and say it will be taken under consideration on the criteria that I have just named, and we will address projects as funding becomes available.

Mr. Forbes: — And the reason I ask that — and I think that it's really worthwhile, the projects that the government has set forward in terms of priorities around the community living division and those priorities working on the waiting list — but there is some that are just sort of outside that scope, people with mental health issues that are very vulnerable. And we've heard of some projects there that, you know, sound pretty good. And so I hope that the government is taking a look at those as well.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I would suggest to you that you direct some questions to the Minister of Health because depending on the level of mental health . . . because I know from working in the health system many, many years ago, that is a very broad term for a number of needs. And so some would fall in the category of our ministry with assisted living, and some would fall into health and would have a higher level of needs.

Mr. Forbes: — I think that's a very good point. I'm wondering how are the two departments working together though because I

know . . . in fact I'm struggling to understand the residential services the government provides. And I've been involved some eight years now, and I'm trying to figure out where do they fit into which department. And I'm hoping that the two departments, particularly Health and also Corrections because they provide residential services as well, that there is good coordination so that people don't fall between the cracks.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I agree with you, but I think this is a discussion for another day.

Mr. Forbes: — Fair enough. I want to get back to standards. I have a couple of questions. One is around when you're taking a look at projects, particularly a student project, are there standards around square footage, that when you're building, you know, residences like that, that you look at in terms of what is acceptable for a student residence?

Mr. Chaykowski: — We have criteria that we use when we look at projects. And essentially we say it has to be modest in terms of size and amenities. And so those standards would vary from if it was a family situation or a senior or a student. As you suggest, a student would be a smaller, you know, a smaller dwelling with less amenities than say what you do with a family unit. But it's not precise in the way that we say it's X number of square feet. But that is certainly one thing we look at when we are looking at projects is that we have some reasonability parameters that we use, and we test those. And as we are working with third party organizations through that, we will share some of those thoughts with them as we are working through a development process.

[21:15]

Mr. Forbes: — I am a real amateur in this area. Building housing is not my expertise. But what I do want to ask and I guess if you do have a sense of a range, that would be interesting. Because I understand student housing, of course that's transitional; these people aren't going to be there. Maybe just one year; maybe four years. But whereas opposed to your Prince Albert project with seniors, these are their homes year in, year out. Is there a range that you can give? I know for example I have heard somebody using the number 400 square feet.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — . . . these units are varying in sizes in the university's proposal to some of the units having four beds. But student housing, you have to remember, we haven't done this in decades. So we don't have a whole lot to compare it to. It was a proposal brought forward. There wasn't a competing proposal for student housing. So we looked at it as an important piece to do. It was within the parameters of being reasonable. And we also looked at it being an investment by the government that tipped the project over the edge of being able to happen with the two partners that were in place.

Mr. Forbes: — But there is some experience. You're right in terms of it's been decades at the U of S. But you had the Prince Albert project that has been designed and should be proceeding. And also the U of R [University of Regina]. There was a recent project that was opened just in time for the Canada Summer Games. Two of them. Yes. The twin towers I think they're were referred to as sometimes.

So I don't know if you have that. It's just something I'm curious about. When you look at projects, what's a reasonable square footage? I see he's looking through . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — You probably could get a better answer by talking to the university because I'm sure when they were designing the project, they compared it with other resident housing. And they did the design; we didn't. And so they're going to be comparing it with other campuses, what's available for student housing, and picking something that is compatible or comparable with other student housing. We don't have anything written in stone that it has to be, you know X feet by X feet or so many square feet in the Sask Housing Corporation that they must comply with. We go with, as Mr. Chaykowski mentioned, is the proposal reasonable and not a palace or, you know, too small. And so I'm sure I have total faith that the university did their background and homework on it and their due diligence that this is a reasonable size of units for student housing.

Mr. Forbes: — Well I don't want to pull at this too long, but I do hope . . . I mean there must be at least building codes in terms of square footage. There must be and at some reasonable due diligence on the part of Sask Housing to say, this is not modest; this is the palace. Or this is way too modest; people cannot live like this. But I'll just leave it at that unless you've got an answer really quickly because I do want to go on. What's that?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Let's move on.

Mr. Forbes: — Let's move on. Okay. I want to talk a little bit about the project in Regina, and it talks about 140-unit Milton Heights apartment, and I'm not really familiar with that. I have a sense of where that is and I think I've driven by it. So it's 140 units. Do we know how many people live in the building right now?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — No, I don't.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Is it possible to get that number? Now it's Luther. It's not owned by Sask Housing, right?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — This is run by the Regina Lutheran Care Society. So there are bachelor units. There's 39 bachelor units. There's 52 one-bedroom units. There's 46 two-bedroom units. And I would feel intrusive to go to them and say, how many people are in each unit?

Mr. Forbes: — I just thought you might know. You don't have to know the names, just curious whether it's 140 that affects 300 people. It's a good project.

And so now again it's talking about upgrading this or renovating this apartment building, which will be quite a thing, and that's a huge task. Will there be people displaced? How will the process roll out? Is it one floor at a time or two floors per year? I know in government we've seen that with some renovations in some of the buildings that go on for years. And what happens to the people in the building now during that period of time?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I just want to mention that some

renovation has already taken place and funded by the Regina Lutheran Care Society. And they have already renovated 40 units, and they installed new elevators and a new boiler system. But what they found was, in order to keep it, you know, the rents low, to accommodate low-income families and youth at risk and seniors, that it just wasn't viable for them, which is why they had come to Sask Housing for some help.

Because you're right. It's a large number of people that would be displaced should the building be thrown on the market and perhaps face condo conversions, which is happening a lot. Sask Housing Corporation has worked out something with them. I'm not sure how many units they're doing at a time, so I will turn it again to Mr. Chaykowski.

Mr. Chaykowski: — Thank you very much. That's something that we're currently working on with the building owners right now, and we'll also be engaging some consultants to help us take a look at this.

One of the challenges with an older building like this is that you don't quite know the full scope of it until you start to open up some things, so we will be taking a very good, hard look at that. The plan is to do it in stages. And the owners of the buildings, there are a few vacant units that they've been not filling them as they've been getting notices to leave. We're going to try to work it so that it achieves the right balance of not displacing people, but at the same time providing it in economic, workable units so that we keep the costs down.

So we don't have all of those details worked out, but that's something that we're currently working on with the project proponent — to achieve that best balance as possible.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — As it was important that the residents didn't become displaced if the Lutheran Care Society could not continue to run the building without the renovations, it was extremely important to us not to see all of the residents displaced. It's equally important not to see them displaced as the renovations go, so we're going to work diligently in finding alternative spaces, be it in the building or elsewhere as the renovations unfold. The building, the Regina Lutheran Care Society have already got estimates from some contractors, so that they had already looked into costs and so forth, and so then we're, you know, we should be able to proceed fairly soon on moving forward with this project.

Mr. Forbes: — You know, when I read the press release and it talks about being the first high-rise apartment building in Regina. And I'm not sure how that's a technical definition, what counts as a high-rise in Saskatchewan, but . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well no, the Balfour is the first apartment to have a . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The Balfour, yes, it's a heritage building, and but it's the first apartment elevator in Saskatchewan, I think, in a residence. But at any rate, I digress. Is this a heritage building because of that line — first high-rise in Saskatchewan or in Regina?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — No.

Mr. Forbes: — No. Okay. And now again I'm curious about any particular renovations like in terms of, you've talked about the elevators being replaced, which is a huge, that's a very

important safety factor. Are there any energy-efficient systems that will be in terms of heating, windows, that type of thing, that will make this very worthwhile?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The elevator and the boiler system has already been replaced and efficiencies will always be considered as we move forward. We don't have the specific details. The building will have to be gone through and all of those details will be reviewed with contractors that are going to take on the project, but absolutely, energy efficiency will be a high-priority consideration.

Mr. Forbes: — Hugely important. Then with that, I'll just make sure that I've got all my questions. They were straightforward. So of course any of the work that's done, it sounds like it was able to be done within the staff that you have. There was no extra staff or time, that was all pretty well straightforward?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — That's true.

Mr. Forbes: — Great, we got you on that. And of course the communications were relatively straightforward. There was no extra advertising or any work like that?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — No. These, as I said, were submissions that we already had in the Sask Housing Corporation and already gone through the prioritizing processes with the expression of interest in the fall of 2007.

Mr. Forbes: — That was going to be . . . Again restating my next question, if these aren't really totally brand new projects, you had just moved them up the list, you already were familiar with these projects.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Well if you suggest that the only brand new project isn't yet on the bottom of the list, yes, they're brand new projects. We always have a list so to suggest that anything on the list isn't a brand new project, it becomes a brand new project when it's funded.

Mr. Forbes: — Right. Okay. And then we're just looking forward to . . . You can't tell us anything about the budget coming up.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I can't.

Mr. Forbes: — Well we're looking forward to that because I think that clearly when you talk about a stimulus program and housing and work, I think this is very important. And the report that Merriman Pringle did identified that and I'm looking forward to hearing more about that in the weeks ahead. A very important part of what makes Saskatchewan affordable and a great province.

So with that I don't have any other questions unless my colleague has any more. I just thank your officials for the answers and being here, and I appreciate the answers. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you to the minister and her officials.

As agreed by the committee, we are going to do the votes for Health and Social Services now.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — March
Health
Vote 32**

Subvote (HE03)

The Deputy Chair: — The regional health services, subvote (HE03) in the amount of 152,800,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — That's carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — March
Social Services
Vote 35**

Subvotes (SS06) and (SS12)

The Deputy Chair: — Community inclusion, subvote (SS06) in the amount of 600,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Carried. Housing, subvote (SS12) in the amount of 29,300,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — I didn't get the motion. Okay. To go back to Health. Sorry.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — March
Health
Vote 32**

The Deputy Chair: — Health is vote 32. I now need a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2009, the following sums for Health in the amount of 152,800,000.

Moved by Ms. Eagles. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — That's carried.

[Vote 32 agreed to.]

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — March
Social Services
Vote 35**

The Deputy Chair: — For Social Services I need a member to

move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2009, the following sums for Social Services in the amount of 29,900,000.

Moved by Mr. Allchurch. Thank you. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — That's carried.

[Vote 35 agreed to.]

The Deputy Chair: — We have the Standing Committee on Human Services fifth report has been circulated. If you've got it before you and have looked at it, we now require a member to move the following motion:

That the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Human Services be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

Ms. Eagles would like to do that. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — That is carried. I think the work of the committee is over, and I now need a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Bradshaw: — I can do that.

The Deputy Chair: — Okay, Mr. Bradshaw. Thank you very much. The committee is now adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 21:31.]