



# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

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## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

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Batoche

Mr. Cam Broten, Deputy Chair  
Saskatoon Massey Place

Mr. Mark Docherty  
Regina Coronation Park

Ms. Doreen Eagles  
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Mr. Greg Lawrence  
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Mr. Russ Marchuk  
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Mr. Paul Merriman  
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[The committee met at 13:00.]

**The Chair:** — Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the Standing Committee on Human Services. I'm Delbert Kirsch, and I'm your Chair for today. And with us today is Ms. Doreen Eagles, and we've got Mr. Mark Docherty. And we've got, substituting in, Scott Moe. And then we've got Russ Marchuk and Mark Docherty . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And who did I miss?

**A Member:** — Greg Lawrence.

**The Chair:** — Greg Lawrence. There you go. And sitting on the opposition side, we have Ms. Danielle Chartier.

And this afternoon the committee will be considering the estimates of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Services. Before we begin, I would like to remind the officials to introduce themselves when they speak for the purpose of Hansard.

Also in lieu of the situation we got into last time, I just want to read right out of the rule book: "Just as the ruling of the Speaker are not debatable, neither are the rulings of the Chair made in the standing committee debatable." Okay.

So thank you and we will continue. We will now resume on consideration of vote 5, Education, central management and services, subvote (ED01).

**General Revenue Fund  
Education  
Vote 5**

**Subvote (ED01)**

**The Chair:** — Minister Harpauer is here with her officials. Madam Minister, if you would please introduce your officials and make your opening remarks.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And welcome to all the committee members.

I would like to introduce my officials. To my left is Cheryl Senecal, the deputy minister. To my right is Greg Miller, the assistant deputy minister. And behind me we have Lynn Allan, executive director of early years; Tim Caleval, the executive director of student achievement and supports; Lori Mann, executive director of corporate services; Clint Repski, the executive director of education funding; Doug Volk, the executive director of Teachers' Superannuation Commission; Brett Waytuck, the executive director of the Provincial Library and literacy; Kathy Abernethy, the director of early years; Mike Back, the director of corporate services and infrastructure; Daryl Richter, the manager of capital projects, corporate services, and infrastructure; and Dawn Court, the former director of finance, corporate services, who is joining us because of her knowledge. She just recently left us, and she's with the financial services here in the Legislative Assembly but was gracious enough to come here for estimates since she just left us.

I do not have any opening remarks, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Okay, thank you. And, Ms. Chartier, you have the floor.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Well thank you, Mr. Chair. And I think I'm going to start with the focus on child care as that's my critic portfolio. So just in terms of the number of spaces since the 2008-2009 budget, could you tell me how many spaces have been added since that? I believe that was your first full budget as government.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — 3,435 spaces.

**Ms. Chartier:** — And does that include the 500 this year in that number?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — No.

**Ms. Chartier:** — No.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — No.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay. Can you tell me a little bit about . . . I'm new to the child care portfolio too, many new portfolios this time around. Could you tell me a little bit about the process that goes into deciding where the spaces are going to go?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Okay. We look at the highest need communities are identified by looking at the number of licensed spaces relative to the child population. We look at current or emerging trends of a community are taken into consideration, example, immigration or proportion of women in child-bearing age. Age, not an age . . . Obviously we're not going to look at a seniors', predominately seniors' community. We take into consideration of communities who have expressed an interest of course and have space. A facility readiness is taken into consideration. As well we give priority to school divisions who have space in one or more of their facilities. And this budget we haven't identified but we still will be considering — last budget we definitely targeted — post-secondary institutions. This budget we haven't targeted them necessarily but nor will we be ignoring any that have space readiness.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Has it already been determined — so there's 500 spaces yet — where they'll be going? Has that been determined yet?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — No.

**Ms. Chartier:** — So that's still in the process?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay. And any sense on how long that process is? Is it a three-month process?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I would say, and my officials can correct me, it's ongoing. We already would have a number of communities or school divisions that have given interest that we didn't have enough spaces in last year's budget, so we begin there. So my deputy minister tells me that school divisions

would like confirmation by the end of June. And ideally we would like to know by the end of April, but that's sort of a target.

**Ms. Chartier:** — And does that generally, if there's 500 spaces in this year's budget, does that mean 500 spaces will be opened up before the end of the fiscal year? Is that generally what that means?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — That hasn't always necessarily been the case. Sometimes they're in development. It depends on how ready the facility is. If the facility is ready, yes, but sometimes we have applications in a situation where it merits — there's a lot of pressure — it merits the child care spaces, but there's construction work that needs to happen. So sometimes the fiscal year will end and some are just in development.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay. I don't know if you'll have this number or not, but in terms of the spaces, the more than 3,400 spaces that have been added, how many facilities does that account for? Have there been many new facilities? Or have they been additional spaces to . . . There have obviously been additional spaces to existing facilities, but I'm wondering if you have a breakdown of that.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — So my officials have said that they don't have that detail with us, but we'll provide it for this committee.

**Ms. Chartier:** — That would be great. In terms of some specific instances . . . So you've given me some criteria for determining where spaces go. I understand that there isn't a provincial-wide wait-list, or it's a little bit all over the place or . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh do you? Okay.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes the ministry does have a wait-list.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Do you know where that's at right now for children on the child care wait-list?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Just for clarification, are you looking for the wait-list for spaces or the wait-list of parents looking for a space?

**Ms. Chartier:** — Actually — you know what? — both would be great. So yes.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — So definitely we know from the applications coming in. So they're applying. They're asking. So that wait-list, it's obvious. As these applications come in, they're not tossed. They're kept. And for the wait-list of parents looking for spaces, we do not have a province-wide sort of directory of where spaces are.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay. Sorry, there's different parts here that I think I'm probably asking. So of all the individual child cares around the province, they all have wait-lists, or most of them I'm sure, whether it's 5 people or 175 people. Do we have the number of children waiting for a space in already licensed child cares?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I'm going to say right away, no. We'd have no way of knowing that. For example, how would we

know my daughter's going to be looking for a child care space because she's only . . . I mean she's not going to contact . . . Well she's going to contact me because I'm her mom. But she, you know, I've got two daughters who are very shortly going to need child care space, but there would be no way of government knowing that was indeed the case. So I think you're looking for more of the list of the different child care centres and how many spaces they may have available. Is that maybe what you're looking for?

**Ms. Chartier:** — No, I actually am trying to get a feeling . . . I know that Ottawa Capital Region has a centralized wait-list. It's sort of a one-stop shop where you can apply, so you apply to one central list. And Manitoba, I'm not sure if they're there yet, but they're planning on implementing a similar thing. So I'm just wondering if there's . . . Because obviously knowing how many parents are looking to put their children in licensed child care would be a very helpful thing in terms of your own priorities. So I'm just wondering if there's any plans on moving in that direction?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — There hasn't been yet, but yet I do believe it has merit to help parents. Even if they don't necessarily go on a wait-list, I think a directory would be even helpful of them to go to one stop and say, okay, these are all of the available facilities even. I think we should start there so that parents have a place to go. And no, we are not developing that at the time, but I think it's a very good suggestion of what we could do better.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay. In terms of the other numbers that you were talking about, so you do have some . . . So you don't have the numbers of parents who have requested a space, but you had referenced another number that you thought that you could give me or that you thought I was asking, numbers of child cares that . . .

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Spaces within child cares. So if you had a child care X and they had 60 spaces, I was saying, do we need to look at a possibility of a directory where it would say we only have 55, so we have 5 vacant spaces for ages, whatever the age it may be? We don't have that, but I see merit in that as well.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay, thank you. So you talked about how you determine spaces, highest needs, the numbers of licensed spaces per child, current and emerging trends, communities, facility readiness, and school divisions — I can't read my writing on one of my other points there. I'll have to look at *Hansard* — post-secondary.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes. Post-secondary facilities would be one we've looked as a priority. Just give me one second and I'll find my list. School divisions is the last one I have.

**Ms. Chartier:** — School divisions' facility readiness. Communities that expressed an interest, there we go. I can read my notes now.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Right, and then emergent trends of immigration, population increases, proportion of women in child-bearing years. Yes.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay. I just really would like to press that point that obviously keeping track of the parents who are interested in child care, I would highly encourage that. I think that that would be a really good way to also add to that list, parents who are actually in fact requesting licensed child care.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — So my assistant deputy minister tells me that they are looking at this priority list, sort of ongoing to revisit how we can reprioritize as we have a changing demographics in our province.

[13:15]

**Ms. Chartier:** — Now just with respect to a specific case. I know that there was a story on Radio-Canada last week about Felix Le Chat in Saskatoon which has a large wait-list, almost two-fifths, would take up two-fifths of your space for this year. So they've got 63 spaces and there's 172 parents or children on the wait-list. Is there any plan to address the wait-list at Felix Le Chat?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I couldn't commit here for one specific facility because they haven't been allocated yet. So I wouldn't commit today for a specific facility.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Is it on the radar?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — They've expressed interest. Yes, it would be on the radar.

**Ms. Chartier:** — And so basically now and between the end of April and no later than . . . school divisions, you said June, I believe.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes.

**Ms. Chartier:** — So decisions will be made at that point in time whether or not . . .

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — That is correct.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Yes, I think I just have some concerns. I understand that there was a family, for example, a family from Burundi who was in Saskatchewan, came to Saskatchewan. We're attracting thousands of people to our province, French speakers who want to work here in the province. And their children happen to be francophone and will eventually learn English. But that whole cultural shock of moving to a new province, and then a new country, new culture, and not being able to put your kids in child care, this family has now, two weeks ago, packed up and moved to Quebec because they were very frustrated with this 172 children on the wait-list. I know someone else who sat on the wait-list for eight months from interprovincial migration and said that it was extremely frustrating.

I mean one of the connections for many people is through child care or through pre-K [pre-kindergarten] or through school. And if you don't have that connection to the community, you sit in limbo here a little bit. So I hope that that is one of . . . Well obviously we are a province where we want to attract and retain all those people who come. So I know that that is a pressing issue for many people in Saskatoon. And I have many people in

my own constituency who've come from French-speaking African countries who this is a huge demand and a huge need.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes, I am well aware of that, you know, through other conversations that you and I have had. The difficulty of course comes in the fact that we started drastically behind other provinces. It was not a priority with the previous government.

We've increased by I believe it's 43 per cent now, which is quite significant. But we need to have not only the space availability, we need to have the workers, the trained workers' availability as well. So we're moving forward relatively aggressively. A predecessor in the NDP government, Pat Atkinson, acknowledged that we're being very aggressive in adding spaces, but we're a long ways behind the number of spaces of other provinces.

When you specifically talk about a French communities basis, proportionately we have added more proportionately to the French than we have to non-French spaces.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Fair enough, but again it's about making sure the supports for . . . I think, again, if your government has a goal to attract and retain others, people from other countries, I could see why that that would be quite important. But thank you for that.

One of the things obviously you just referenced — and you and I have talked about this and in the House — that it isn't just about child care spaces. Adding spaces is one thing, but being able to have the qualified staff is another. Can you tell me a little bit about your strategy or how you plan to train more staff and make sure that retention improves as well?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — More specifically of course, you're going to want to ask those questions of the post-secondary education minister as to what he is doing at his end because it's post-secondary training. What we have done through this ministry is in February of 2011, we significantly increased the tuition reimbursement grants. They were \$150 per individual course and we increased that to 500. And we increased the early childhood orientation course equivalent to early childhood educator 1. It was at 450 and we increased that grant to 1,500 to help those that are working in that area to further their education.

In addition, in 2008-09 we had given a significant government-wide lift to CBOs [community-based organization]. We can't direct CBOs exactly where the money needs to go because they of course are governed by a board, but it was with the encouragement that much of that money was used for recruitment and retention of workers. The child care got an additional lift over and above what we had done government-wide for CBOs. So since 2008-09, the increase that we now have, including this year's budget to CBOs that have child care spaces, is 18.1 per cent.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Just to put that in context though, I mean, we had some directors from child care centres here just a month or so ago, and they pointed out first of all that the average wage, or the wage of a child care worker can range anywhere from eleven fifty to about \$20 an hour. And you've talked about that

18.1 per cent since 2008-2009 but, for example the increase last year, there was a small increase last year, but that added to, from what I understand, 10 cents an hour for child care workers.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — That's decided by the board, not by the government.

**Ms. Chartier:** — But the money, the money is . . .

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Decided by the board, not by the government.

**Ms. Chartier:** — But the child care board that operates the . . .

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Right. The CBO board that would be operating the spaces makes . . . Like we don't have a government-mandated salary for child care workers. So it does vary from one child care facility to another because it's decided by the board, not by the government.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay that perhaps is one of the problems is that we identify that we have . . . I think this is one of the things that the directors have identified. You go from having some incredibly professional, sort of high or . . . They're mostly parent boards, by and large, on these not-for-profits and co-operatives. So you have varying skills on people who are managing these boards.

So we don't have a comprehensive system here across Saskatchewan. So you could be making \$11 here and \$15 here. So I think that that's part of the director's point is that there is no system in place, so you don't have mandated wages. You don't have the structures and supports in place for supporting these boards. And these boards are parent-run, and parents are quite strapped when it comes to child care. So very rarely is a child care parent . . . They're reluctant. And they know that their kids are really important, but with rising costs elsewhere, parents are probably quite reluctant to raise their own fees.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — No, the government money has got nothing to do with the parent fees. When the government raises the amount allocated to that child care, it shouldn't affect the parent decision. If we allocate money to a child care facility to address their expenditures, whoever the board is — and you're suggesting that often it's parents and I don't disagree with you — they're making the decision. I'm not sure why they would choose something over wages. I'm sure each situation is unique as to why they make their decisions.

But I think it would be a very, very, very broad, government-wide discussion and community if we're going to start going away from our community-based organization structures. They're hugely important to this province.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Well I'm very glad to hear you say that because I'm concerned about going any other direction. But the point here, I understand that last year, money was supposed to be, money that was given was supposed to be directed to front-line workers, and it translated, after benefits and the necessary costs of EI [employment insurance] and all the things that employers pay out, translated into 10 cents per employee, front-line staff increase. There was an increase last year, and that's what it translated into. So 18.1 isn't so fabulous when it's

a \$12 an hour wage.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Fair enough. We also compared our wages because this is definitely a concern that's brought from CBOs in general. Again, from my past experience in Social Services where I dealt in depth with community-based organizations, one of the reasons why we gave a 7 per cent increase mid-year after we had already given a 2.3 per cent increase in the budget was the fact that CBOs were very, very strapped in addressing wages within all CBOs. Now of course at that time, I was dealing mostly with CBOs that were working with children and individuals with disabilities.

So our government made that 7 per cent bump up. We encouraged the community-based organizations to put it to the front-line workers, recognizing that they have the choice to do that. The Minister of Education at the time did an additional bump up to child care community-based organizations. We've added on to that each and every year. So again we're backfilling a neglect from the previous government. We are now in a position where compared to Manitoba, we're very comparable. We're not out of line what other provinces are getting for their . . . or at least Manitoba is, where we did our comparison, and we're very much in line with the wages that are being paid there.

**Ms. Chartier:** — I've just two things that are . . . I'm going to take you back a few minutes around the recruitment piece and the post-secondary piece. And you had said that that would be something that I'd have to take up with the Minister of Advanced Ed, and I will make sure to do that. But this, again, sort of speaks to silos and child care falling under Social Services, Education, and Advanced Ed now. There's so many pieces to it. But obviously I think, you know, that I'm probably someone who would push for a comprehensive ministry and strategy.

But with respect to the post-secondary minister being responsible for child care training, what kind of discussions do you have with respect to him? I mean obviously that's a big piece of ensuring that our child cares are well staffed.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Obviously, I mean, he's well aware. It's a government initiative to be aggressive in increasing child care spaces, so the minister is well aware that we want to open 500 spaces and have been doing so, you know, opening spaces each and every year so it's not in isolation. So I'm going to have my assistant deputy minister also explain further the coordination that is happening between the two ministries.

**Mr. Miller:** — Good afternoon. Greg Miller, assistant deputy minister. So as spaces are allocated from the Ministry of Education, there are funds, training dollars, that flow from AE & I [Advanced Education and Immigration] to the training institutions, sort of, that are in proximity to where the sites are allocated. So there's coordination there between supporting the training and capacity of workers for these additional spaces.

**Ms. Chartier:** — So if 300 spaces were being added in Saskatoon, just for example, then there would be 300, or not 300, there would be resources to SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] to train an appropriate level — Saskatoon Campus — to train the

appropriate number of staff. Is that correct?

**Mr. Miller:** — That's my understanding, yes.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay. On the retention piece, and I know again when the child care directors were here I know, Madam Minister, that you acknowledged that retention is an issue, and we talked about wages, professional development, working conditions. I know obviously there's ratios in place to keep children safe; that's absolutely imperative.

But I know one of the things that I've heard child care say to me is that workers are stressed and strapped. They'd love to see . . . It's hard to add to the ratios because there's not enough staff, but what I'm hearing is the need for a floating person. So you've got X number of level 1's, X number of level 2's, X number of level 3's in a facility, but I know the child care directors and workers that I've talked to have said that changing that ratio or adding the ability to have a floater or support — not just adding it because there needs to be financial support — would be a very beneficial thing. Is that something on your radar at all?

[13:30]

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — So again it goes back to the jurisdiction of the community-based organization board. We fund the spaces, and there is certain parameters within what staffing has to be for X number of spaces depending again with a factor in for the age of those spaces. But the community-based organization makes the staffing decisions.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Oh yes, I'm well aware of that, based on the ratios that are required by the government. But as you said, you've funded the spaces. But what many of these child cares are saying is that they could be providing better care and would be able to retain staff if there was even one or two additional staff. What ends up happening is the director, who should be managing, gets called, ends up being on the floor with the kids, which is fine once in a while but . . . Or when people are sick. I understand, I've been . . . Of course child cares make sure that they have the correct ratios, but because there isn't the room for extra staff and the funding for extra staff from the ministry, so you've got the funding of the 500 spaces, but you need a little bit more to be able to ensure that children are well cared for, most importantly, but also that staff are willing to stick around.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — It wouldn't be . . . Again each facility is unique in how they set it up. And so if I'm hearing you correctly, you would like more government-driven decisions. Again we're very comparable in our resources.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Again it's not more government-driven decisions; it's sort of more an overall arching plan. But it's about resources, Madam Minister, is actually what I'm speaking of. We have a province right now that your government is very proud to talk about growing. In order to be able to be employed or to get educated, families need good quality child care, and that's a real issue in making sure that we have the staff. Many of the people who work in child cares are often parents who are putting food on their families' tables as well. And again I'm hearing about working conditions. I'm hearing about wages, and hearing about burnout and not sticking around in the field.

So we spend this money on training, and it's great that you're given these grants so these young folks get into the child care field. They've gotten these grants, and then in five years they're completely burned out because the working conditions are not adequate.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Well again then I'm going to go back to, quite frankly, we have a balanced budget. We have a balanced budget because you make decisions. And we have definitely given community-based organizations through our five years, or five budgets now, a priority position. We have increased the funding by 18, over 18 per cent in those five years. Because of neglect of the previous government, there was years where they were giving ones. I don't have the past history here with me, but there was years where CBOs got zeroes, quite frankly. So if there is a pressure that built up, it built up then.

And we've been trying to take some pressure off of the community-based organizations and their recruitment and retention issue. Eighteen point one per cent is a fairly aggressive increase if they apply that portion to the wages. But we are making decisions on a lot of issues, and we are going to balance the budget.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Just with respect to that, so the increase last year, if the expectation was for them to apply it to wages, what did you expect the average increase to be for a front-line child care worker?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — The increase in 2008-09 was 11 per cent. And it was trying to backfill what had happened previously. And in '09-10 was 3. So that last three years has been 1, 1.5, and now 1.6. But in the first two budgets was 14 per cent to try to address neglect from a previous government.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Can you tell me what that translated into? Do you have any sense of what that translated into in terms of average wages for child care workers?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — There you would have to do . . . you would have to get that from each and every facility because the boards make that decision.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Well ultimately the bottom line is we still have . . . It's interesting. I sit here, having sat here now for two and a half years, and often the response or the retort from the government side of the House is that, oh we're filling a big hole or you, you didn't do this. Well the reality is it doesn't matter if someone didn't do it, is it the right thing to do now? I would argue it is in fact the right thing to do now. And I would argue that if the need to do it more aggressively, I think, is definitely there.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Fair enough. And I believe that we thought that in the first years of 14 per cent in two years, which was a huge increase and increases each and every year since.

You know, we will continue to watch this. Like I said, we're comparing ourselves to other provinces. We are definitely in line on wages in Manitoba on average, but is it something that we can just ignore? No, it isn't. But to suggest that we can fit it . . . Like I'm not sure we're comparable, how each board is making their own decisions as to what's applied to different

things within the facility and what's applied to wages. I don't think there is an appetite to change that governance. I think that the community-based organizations want that authority, and I can't imagine this province without our great community-based organizations, but we will always be watching this and be mindful because if we're opening spaces we're going to need workers obviously.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay, thank you. I would agree that there is definitely an appetite to make sure our CBOs are well-funded, but I would say that of all the child care directors, all the child care workers, all the child care parents with whom I've spoken — and I, like you, you're an impending grandma and have young daughters or daughters who are having children; I have a four-year-old and happen to be very immersed in this community — and I believe that there is an appetite for a comprehensive child care system that supports families, and I think a comprehensive system that's based on Saskatchewan values that our own made-in-Saskatchewan system perhaps could come about through really great consultation with parents, with caregivers in day homes, in group homes, in child care centres with educators. I think that there is a need and a desire for a more comprehensive system.

I belong to a Yahoo moms' group, and there's not a month that goes by where there aren't one or two parents who post frantically because they can't . . . Their child care has fallen through. They've had issues with their child care, and they either have to work or drop out of a Ph.D. [Doctor of Philosophy] program because they can't find appropriate care. So I would argue that there is a desire for a comprehensive strategy coordinated by government. I believe that there is that out there.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I think what you're asking for is more spaces, and that's what we're doing. When you talk about a strategy, but yet the issues that you've mentioned is spaces. We need more spaces.

**Ms. Chartier:** — We need more than more spaces. I would argue that spaces are not a strategy, and I will continue to beg to differ with you that spaces are not a plan. Spaces are . . . It's about recruitment and retention of staff. It's about making sure that you are creating more spaces. It's about making sure that you are reflecting people's values, whether it's supporting the need for some more child care homes or creating centres.

This is about having a plan on paper coming out of consultations with people who are impacted by child care here in the province. So that's what I would argue a comprehensive plan would involve.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I think our child care spaces and the community-based organizations that run them have great values.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Oh, I don't disagree. And I think that having a system that reflects our values is a very important thing. But I will again reiterate that I think that we're lacking an overall plan and strategy to create a really great system that supports families here in Saskatchewan.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — The really great system that we need is

to have more spaces, and you're right, and have them staffed with great staff. That's what you're talking about.

I really find it offensive when you suggest that the places we have now and the system that we have now does not have values. Because they do and they are amazing, amazing workers. So you're talking about, we need more spaces. And I absolutely agree. I absolutely agree we need more quality spaces. We need those spaces to be staffed by dedicated workers. Yes, we do need that.

**Ms. Chartier:** — And I find it quite offensive that you'd imply that I would be suggesting anything negative about those people who work on the front lines of child care. That is not at all what I'm saying.

I'm looking at your last mandate letter. Your goal was to increase the number of child care and pre-K spaces to strengthen early learning and child care for vulnerable children. So the focus I think, which is very important, is on vulnerable children, but is that a fair assessment or are we looking at . . . obviously targeting is great, but is there also a goal to support all families here in Saskatchewan?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Okay, as I said in my previous answer, we've increased child care spaces by 43 per cent. We've increased our pre-kindergarten program by 85 per cent. That has added 131 pre-kindergarten programs across the province since we became government. So that means that 2,096 more three- and four-year-olds are receiving early learning supports.

At this point in time with this budget, there will be 15 more pre-kindergarten programs; each pre-kindergarten program is 16 children. We are still targeting vulnerable children at this point in time. Eventually through adding spaces, as I said, we've increased by 85 per cent. Will there be a time where it'll be universally accessible? Hopefully, possibly, but at this point we're looking at more vulnerable communities and vulnerable children for the pre-kindergarten support.

As well we also have in this province early childhood intervention programs. We've increased the spaces for the early childhood intervention programs from 635 to 736, which is a 16 per cent increase. The major focus of the early childhood intervention program or the ECIPs is child development, family support, and community involvement. They are in more isolated communities. They are not as universally found as the pre-kindergarten programs that we've been implementing.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Just to reflect back then, so your goal eventually at some point will be to have universality for pre-K?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes, there's some limitations of course that I think you will run into, which will be again availability within a facility in some of our more smaller rurals. But eventually I think we should consider that to move towards.

Now even with an 85 per cent increase, we're not near there. We also have to ensure that it remains sustainable so we have to do this in a, you know, a thoughtful, thoughtful move forward, but I think it is an extremely important program for those parents and those children that need to access the extra support. At three and four, it's critical years.



**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you. Just with respect to support within the ministry, I'd asked a written question a little while back and got the answer this week around child care consultants. And of course in my stack of paper here, I don't have that in front of me, but looking at it . . . I understand that the numbers of child care consultants has remained at 10 for the last three years or four years. Is that right?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — That's correct. When we formed government we increased them from 17 to 22 and they've remained at 22.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Seventeen to 22, but you've added more than 3,400 child care spaces. So the consultants are the ones who support the work of the child care to ensure that they're following regulations and to ensure that unlicensed child cares are also doing what they need to do. Do you think that 22 is a . . . In light of the fact that you have increased spaces, do you think 22 is an appropriate number to be able to provide the necessary supports to child care facilities?

[13:45]

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — My office has never received any correspondence saying, I can't get a hold of my consultant. But I would like to take a moment and just see with my officials, because they may not direct that concern through my office. Greg Miller, the assistant deputy minister, will respond with what the ministry has done.

**Mr. Miller:** — So the ministry has, through its renewal process, has created some opportunities for efficiency in service delivery. For example the early learning and childhood consultants now report centrally to the director of regional child care services, whereas previously there were sort of three separate streams of reporting. This aspect of our renewal within the early years branch has brought greater coordination and consistency within the ELCC [early learning and child care] program, and it's certainly led to increased collaboration within the early years branch, across branches within the ministry and school division in the development of child care spaces.

As well over the past several years there've been developments in the delivery and governance of child cares where for example a board will govern several sites reducing the . . . you know, developing some efficiency around the overall development to try and address the oversight of consultants and make it as efficient as possible.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you very much. Is that renewal that you're speaking of the lean initiative?

**Mr. Miller:** — This specific example is just an ongoing renewal of operation, and I wouldn't characterize this as a specific example of lean.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Has there been any lean in the child care area?

**Ms. Senecal:** — There hasn't been a focused lean initiative within the early years area, but it's absolutely fair to say that some of our other initiatives that have taken place or been undertaken elsewhere in the ministry, one particularly around

the management of our contracts in the ministry as a whole, is an area where early years certainly does have a number of contractual arrangements that they have to monitor and provide oversight to.

And so in terms of that piece of their work, certainly they have taken advantage of the fact that we are working more centrally in the ministry to provide a central source of oversight around our contractual arrangements and how we administer them and our communication about them. So absolutely, early years has benefited from that work and would be impacted by that.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay, thank you. So again to the question around the 22 new consultants, I'm just wondering if . . . So that's 3,400 spaces up till now. It'll be close to 4,000 spaces by the end of the year. So that's five new consultants who will basically be managing 800 or so spaces, if I've got my calculation correct. Do you think that that's an appropriate level or . . .

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — There has been no concerns expressed to me that, like I said, that a consultant has not been available or isn't helping.

**Ms. Chartier:** — To you or directly to your ministry, I'm just wondering if there has been any to the . . . to early learning and child care.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — No they haven't.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay. Is there any plan? Obviously adding 2,000 spaces over the next four years, is there a plan to increase the number of consultants to support those spaces?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Ms. Senecal will answer that question.

**Ms. Senecal:** — Certainly in the ministry, as we continue to look at certainly an area of our responsibility where we see growth happening, we see more families moving to Saskatchewan which you have alluded to before. I shouldn't say alluded to, you've made very clear. There's an increased demand and a need to be responding in a way that makes sense for families. So we're very mindful of that as well. We understand that this is an area where there is a need to provide some additional spaces, and we're working at that at a pace that we find, that we believe is very aggressive.

But that being said, in terms of the support that the ministry provides, we are always looking at the way in which we're expanding services and how is that affecting our ability to respond and provide the appropriate kind of oversight that is necessary in that kind of a program. So you know, absolutely, we will be continuing to monitor that, to look at that, make sure that the work that those consultants are doing is the right work, that it is value-added to the child care providers and to their facilities.

And so we want to ensure that we are able to respond. We do pay attention to that. Are we saying that there is an absolute understanding that there's a pressure and that we need to respond to it by having more consultants? We don't have that evidence, but that's not to say that we aren't . . . We are paying attention. And if that were to change, then we would, within the

ministry, be looking at how we respond to that increased demand. And does that come from additional consultant positions? Does that come from looking at the way in which work is changed to ensure that we are responding to the priorities that the community needs us to respond to?

So some of this may be about additional resources at some point in the future. Some of this is also about constantly looking at the way in which we're doing our work to make sure it really is value-added for child cares.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Just for the record, I have actually spoken to a few directors who've said they've had some difficulties connecting with consultants. I think sometimes . . . I don't know if you've asked or how that would go about, how that would look. But perhaps directors, or those on the front lines of child care, are hesitant to flag things like that, because is it about spaces or is it about consultants or what do you want more of? And you know there's limited resources. But I have had child care directors flag for me some concerns around not always being able to access consultants.

**Ms. Senecal:** — So from a ministry's perspective I would want to be aware of that. And I would want my staff to be able to respond to that in a way that corrects the challenge or the problem, whatever it is — whether it is the inability of staff to be able to respond to needs in a timely way and why is that happening, or are there other issues that need to be addressed? So I mean that's absolutely something that the ministry would want to know, and then we can deal with it and hopefully find a solution that works for the child care provider. That's what we are there to do.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay, thank you very much. Again I am new to the child care portfolio — not new to the child care issue, but new to this portfolio. So can you tell me a little bit about exemptions, and when child cares receive exemptions, what that looks like?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — For the workers? You're talking about exemptions for the training and the workers?

**Ms. Chartier:** — No, I wasn't very clear about that. Exemptions from the regulations.

**Ms. Abernethy:** — It's Kathy Abernethy; I'm with the early years branch. Are you speaking about probationary licence to a child care facility? Or then there's exemptions for not having the right number of qualified staff.

**Ms. Chartier:** — No, both. Well I understand that there's exemptions from qualified staff and the number of children in a facility as well.

**Ms. Abernethy:** — That's right. So for licensing time for a facility, if they do not need all of the licensing requirements, they may be given a probationary licence for a certain amount of time. The consultant would then work with the facility to address the areas where there were some problems, and then it would be probably a certain amount of time for the facility to meet the requirements. So the consultant would always be helping the facility to address those needs.

The same with exemptions for the number of staff with the right amount of qualifications. Consultants would work with the facility in order to address how the staff would meet the qualifications at level 1, 2, and 3.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Can you tell me how often, well, around the number of children in a facility what . . . So you might be given that probation or that time to get things back to the level they're supposed to be at. What is the average length of time that a facility would be given that opportunity?

**Ms. Abernethy:** — I don't have that level of detail, but we can certainly get that for you.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Can you provide me even an example or two?

**Ms. Abernethy:** — For example, depending on what they didn't meet in the licensing requirement, sometimes it might be very easy to address it, such as a health issue. It's really case by case, so for example they might have to make one change and that could be done within, you know, a few weeks or a month. Others might take a little bit more time, and again the consultant would work with the facility to ensure that families still receive service and the quality of the service would still be there.

**Ms. Chartier:** — When you say a little bit more time, are we talking a year or are we talking . . .

**Ms. Abernethy:** — No, not a year. No. And again, case by case, they would consider . . . If there were quite a few issues then I think they would probably work on an action plan with the facility to ensure that the capacity of the facility would be there, so that they might work on one thing at a time when the probationary licence . . .

**Ms. Chartier:** — Last year, or last fall actually in Saskatoon, and I have no idea how this all played out but I know that there were in the area of Sutherland, there were some child cares, some day homes that had been flagged with high numbers, unlicensed day homes. And I'm just wondering if you know of the outcome there, what the resolve was with respect to those day homes.

**Ms. Abernethy:** — I don't have the specifics on that one. I do know that the consultants then worked with the day homes to ensure . . .

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — They did. You're right. There was a number of homes in Saskatoon that was flagged and so then the officials worked with those homes. They were not licensed homes, but we still work with them to ensure that they bring their numbers into compliance and so that the home that has been identified works with the officials to sort of come out with or to get an exit plan that will not overnight put a family in the lurch of not having a child care space.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Oh, for sure. I mean I've talked about my Yahoo moms' group and the panic that ensues when you find out you've lost child care. But I'm just wondering around that exit plan again: the timelines, so the time shouldn't be a year. Like it normally isn't ever . . .

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Often because there's been a couple situations, not lots, but there has been a couple of situations that has arisen in different communities since I've been minister. Often it's based around a school break or the school year. Like if we can . . . Quite often I've noticed that's been the plan that the child care provider has given, that when that school year ends and it's just time that it's been a month or two, then they will, often then they have less children. They just will take in less children the following school year. So each one is case by case, but I've noticed that's been one commonly used exit plan.

[14:00]

**Ms. Chartier:** — I know that I had heard also here in Regina — and correct me if I'm wrong here because often the rumour mill churns and you never are quite sure — I have understood that there was an unlicensed day home here in Regina that had more than 15 children in it and was given an exemption for more than a year and a half. And there was the sense that that was actually renewed, or they were given more time. So I'm just wondering if that was the case. This was about a year and a half ago.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — None of the officials here were here a year and a half ago with early childhood years. They will go and try to provide the committee with the information on this specific case. If at all possible, not on record, but if you could, after the committee, give a name or some sort of identification to help them find the specific case, that would be helpful.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Oh, you bet. And would it be possible, when you say you'll report back to the committee again — I'm still learning how all this works — what and how long would that take?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Well it depends on how, what the information is. So that varies. But we provide it with a letter to the Chair, who then distributes it to the committee members. When we provide information after, the information's provided to the Chair of the committee, who provides it to each of the committee members.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay. So it could be . . . I've actually asked questions in estimates — not of you, not of you — but where I've asked questions. And I've been told that the answer will be forthcoming, and it has never come.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — We've already submitted last week's answers.

**Ms. Chartier:** — I'm very glad to hear it.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — It took us a week turnaround in Mr. Wotherspoon's answers, so we'll see if we can be as prompt in getting your answers.

**Ms. Chartier:** — That would be great. I think that I flagged some concerns on whether or not this was the rumour mill churning or not, but I suggested 15 to 18 kids in a home is problematic. I mean the regulations exist for all kinds of reasons, not the least of them fire safety. So I would suggest that there are perhaps some problems with an exemption, if that was in fact the case, but I'm eager to learn if that was the case

or not.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — And again, just if you have specifics that we don't have something on record that may or may not be true, if you could provide it to the officials right after this committee to help them do a search, that would be helpful.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Are exemptions very common with respect to . . . And you're fairly new, it sounds like everybody's fairly new in this role. In your experience, have exemptions been very common for the numbers of children in unlicensed homes?

**Ms. Abernethy:** — Exemptions . . .

**Ms. Chartier:** — And I'm maybe confusing the language, but the probationary or . . . help me out here.

**Ms. Abernethy:** — So the investigation of complaints about homes is that what you're meaning?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — If I may, I think what you mean is, you're assuming exemptions are for the number of children compared to the number of providers. I think, and I can be corrected by the officials, the exemptions are more likely to be the level of training of the providers, not the number of providers. And so there will be an exemption until they can get the right level of training. And so the plan, of course, they would be together with the facility is that they're in training. As we had the conversation in the Legislative Assembly, for example, my daughter is working as a nanny right now, but taking night classes to get the proper certification to go into a child care centre. So I think you're believing that the exemptions are over the child care provider ratios, and that's not the case. Exemptions are usually that the care providers have the right level of education.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you. That clears some things up, but I think I'm speaking more about the number of children in a facility. We've got right now eight in licensed child or day homes, depending on the ages. Yes, yes, it's a mix, but up to eight and then up to 12 for child care homes, again with the ratios and mixes. But so what I'm wondering is how rare are exemptions for numbers of children allowed in. And maybe exemption isn't the right word again, but for the number of children allowed in one facility?

**Mr. Miller:** — In my nine months involvement, the over-enrolment issue would perhaps occur for me as ADM [assistant deputy minister] to be attended to perhaps once a month. It's not very common.

**Ms. Chartier:** — And then that one time a month your consultants would work with that. Okay. I think the piece that I'm — and I'll chat after the committee — but the piece that I'm wanting to know is around this one particular child care and also how long the average length of time that people have to bring their numbers down.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — And you're more likely, well, I'm thinking almost always likely to have the numbers exceed what we allow in unlicensed child care spaces than in the licensed. The licensed are . . . that's pretty much a non-issue.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Yes, I'd agree. And that's the concern that . . . And again I do completely understand that families are strapped and seek out child care. I know for those families in Saskatoon, they love their care provider, but the reality is the regulations exist to keep children safe. So I think again the issue is around unlicensed child care and how that length of time to get your numbers up to speed and how often consultants are working with them. What does that look like? Do consultants check back?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes, they do. And sometimes it's rectified very quickly. I do know of another one, again unlicensed, but it was reported so then we investigate. It was a simple matter of hiring an extra worker, and then it was resolved in that particular home. So often it's resolved very quickly, but we definitely do want to look into the rumour that you're talking about.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you. Again I think that I will actually again, the question for me around a comprehensive plan and connecting with parents is, has there been in recent years — and obviously we have relatively new officials, and the minister's been in this portfolio for almost a couple of years now — but that connecting, is there any desire or any will?

Looking at what PEI [Prince Edward Island] has done, looking at what Manitoba has done, PEI went from the bottom of the pack in child care to close to the top of the pack. And it was I think largely political will and investment, and it's been a fairly comprehensive strategy that they've implemented.

And again I think Saskatchewan's a great place to live. We're attracting all kinds of people here. It's not just a family support issue. It's about making sure people can be engaged in employment or education. Is there any will to embark upon that broad-ranging consultation and come up with an overall strategy?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — The consultation, from experience, consultation has to be something you're very much prepared to take action on, and the biggest thing we're going to hear, the biggest thing I am hearing and I'm hearing lots is lack of. So when we began government, and Saskatchewan's sitting on 8,800 spaces and Manitoba has 26,000 spaces and Alberta has 71,000 spaces, the biggest pressure is spaces and qualified workers.

So we need to do a major catch-up and that's a huge undertaking. And you're right, it's a political will. I am sure almost every facility has a wait-list of some sort because of lack of spaces, but again I have to say, the previous government left us with 8,800 spaces in all of Saskatchewan as opposed to our neighbour at 26,000 and our other neighbour at 71,000. So I'm not sure what else you want in this strategy. I guess I will look at PEI's and take a look at what this strategy is. But a lot of the extras that you can add to a system, you have to have the spaces to add it to, and that's the biggest pressure is spaces and workers.

**Ms. Chartier:** — I'd also point you again to Manitoba who is the middle of their second five-year plan, which has been very effective. So that, when I'm talking about it, that plan wasn't just about spaces. It was about all sorts of things. But I will

leave that, and I will cede the floor to my colleague here.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. And Mr. Nilson has the floor.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Okay. Good afternoon. It's a chance to ask a few questions in this area. I'm going to start I think with the school capital issue. And I can see in the documentation that there are some increases in the amounts of money shown here in the book for school capital. Can you explain why there's such a dramatic difference? I assume it has something to do with the accounting. It's on page 46.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — So I'm assuming you mean the \$112.4 million is the number that you're referencing? . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes. So our government has been quite aggressive as well in moving forward major capital projects, and we have now spent almost, well, approximately half a billion dollars in school capital. So 50.099 million of that allocation is the next stage of 21 previously announced projects. Four million is to allow for the AIP [approval in principle] for Hudson Bay Composite, Leader Composite, and the Martensville High School project. And then 36.613 million is for the six projects that will come for their next stage of construction, and they are the six projects that will come under the co-ownership model.

[14:15]

**Mr. Nilson:** — So could you list which communities those six projects are? Then we'll go back to the other ones.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Sure. Warman School of course is in Warman. St. Joseph/Oman is in Swift Current. Willowgrove School is in Saskatoon. Holy Family School is the Catholic proponent of the Willowgrove School. White City Elementary is in White City of course. And College Park Elementary is in Lloydminster.

**Mr. Nilson:** — And as I understand it, this new co-ownership is ownership between the school division and the province. Is that how it works?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — That is correct. In the situation of education, the holder of that ownership will be Government Services.

**Mr. Nilson:** — And will both portions show up in the budgets of the government or just half of it?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — It's not 50/50, it's . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, it's 65/35. And it will all show up in the summary financial statements, and 65 per cent would be in the Estimates book.

**Mr. Nilson:** — So 65 per cent would be in the estimates for Government Services, or for Education?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Education. The Government Services will be the owner of the title, but the funding will still go through Education.

**Mr. Nilson:** — So the other 35 per cent won't show up anywhere in the books. Is that correct?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — The other 35 per cent shows up in the summary financial statements. I know previously, the previous government, you didn't see school division debt. However with our government, it is all transparent in the summary financial statements.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Yes, I think the difference is that there is no other revenue really for schools other than provincial government because you collect the taxes centrally under the new system. So, but anyway, so that when we look at the books here, then we will see revenue for school divisions which I guess is a transfer. Where would we see that amount?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — You're asking where you see the tax collection for the school divisions?

**Mr. Nilson:** — Yes.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — We don't collect their taxes. They go directly to the school divisions.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Okay, so the figure on page 46, which is 1,128,091, is that in addition to the taxes then, that that amount is paid?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Okay, so what's the total amount for the cost of the education system?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Let me confirm the number. I was correct, so the government fiscal year is about \$1.7 billion.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Okay, but only this amount 1.128 shows up on the government books, and the other taxation revenue goes directly to the school divisions?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — That is correct.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Okay. And that was an amount that they used to be able to allocate themselves but they can't, or how does that work?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — They allocate it themselves. They cannot go back and increase the amount they can tax. We stipulate the mill rate provincially, but it still is collected. It still goes directly to the school division for their operating within the authority of the school division trustees.

**Mr. Nilson:** — So that then to get a true picture of the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education system, you end up having to have all the school division books plus these books and put them together in some fashion. Is that correct?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — That is correct.

**Mr. Nilson:** — And so on the summary financial statements, all that would show is the 1.1 billion, or do you show the 1.7?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — The statements will show the 1.1, but it will show all debt. Oh, I'm being corrected. I'm sorry. It shows the full amount including the taxes.

**Mr. Nilson:** — That's what I was thinking would happen. So at some point it may make sense to show all this together in the same area in the books so that we can actually see that. I mean I'm sure you kind of know within your department how it works and where the different pieces are because clearly the objective is to educate young people, make sure teachers are paid properly, and do all those kind of things.

Now it used to be that there was quite a long-standing list of capital projects that would slowly work their way forward as money was allocated. Is that still the practice in the department?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Is that list changed year to year, or is it pretty well clear for everybody that . . .

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — All of the school divisions submit their priority list, and then within the ministry it's prioritized from the school division list with health and safety being, you know, the ultimate. We're relooking at that. And the list goes out, the revised list for that year's prioritization is public information in July. So the new list will be available this July.

What we have found is we're going to have to sort of revisit the ongoing, what was the traditional prioritization because we have to give some consideration to capacity now with the changing province because capacity is now becoming a huge issue. As your colleague pointed out, we have communities that are growing, and the pressures are on the schools. So that wasn't something that . . . The province wasn't growing previously. It wasn't something that was a priority to consider when these lists were gone through. I think we need to take a look at our prioritization process, work with the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association] and come up with a different mechanism for prioritization, putting that into the mix, the growth factor into the mix.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Are there any projects that have sort of moved around on the list or that have caused any consternation? I'm just asking that question because I know over the years that was always one of the toughest difficulties.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes. No, there was, basically we've done them in order as they've been on the list, with one exception this year. Martensville became ahead of, on the list, Pleasant Hill in Saskatoon was ahead of the Martensville High School by one, I think. Yes, and Martensville went ahead because it's a community that's grown now by, I believe, it's some . . . 137 per cent was the capacity. So it became a capacity emergency. This isn't a new school in Martensville. It's an expansion to the existing high school, but the critical space overrode Pleasant Hill. Pleasant Hill has a declining enrolment. The capacity issue jumped Martensville one, one above the queue.

**Mr. Nilson:** — And these schools that are brought forward, as you said earlier, relate to the local school board setting out their priority lists. And so each July, you would reflect any changes they may have given you during the year around priorities that they have. So I guess I'm taking from that, we should watch carefully what the list will look like in July.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes. And we have in our . . . Now I think we're at 43 projects. We've done them just in order of that list with this one exception, and it was solely capacity. Martensville is the fastest growing community in Canada right now, and the pressures in Martensville is getting pretty enormous.

**Mr. Nilson:** — So when we see discussions in communities, like I know here in Regina there's a discussion around refurbishing older schools versus building new ones. Is there any advice given from the ministry about that whole issue of, say, refurbishing Connaught School — which is an odd issue here in Regina this week — over the coming time versus going and building brand new schools? Is there advice that's provided out of the ministry in those situations, or is that done at the local level?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Ultimately the ministry ranks them. Like, the school divisions put forward their wish list. Ultimately the ministry does the ranking, so it would be case by case. I'm not sure if there's ever been a situation where we've said, no, new would be better rather than refurbishing an existing. But I can check with my officials on that.

I'm being advised that an engineer's study would be done, and if the engineer's advice was that a new one would be better than fixing up the old, then we would be going with the new. So we get professional advice as to whether a project is worthwhile redoing or refurbishing.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Okay, and that would probably be true then around Scott Collegiate with the new project there which would be . . . Obviously there was a recommendation that we should go with a whole new building. And I guess my question is, where is Scott Collegiate on the list right now?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I'm being advised that it is in detail design, so it's in the next phase of the process. The projects that are with a number of partners generally take a little longer because you have to have all your partners moving together. And we have the city involved and the library involved, which is great for the end project. But sometimes that takes a little bit longer than when you get to the detailed design. So there has been no delay per se. It's going through the process. Scott Collegiate was announced; all of the money at that time was allocated for it, so it's still . . . our portion of the money is sitting there ready for it to go.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Okay. So that, in actual fact, it's off the list because the money is gone? Or I don't know how that works.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — No, no. Well the list shows those that have been approved. It shows where they're advancing through the improvement. Yes.

**Mr. Nilson:** — So then going back to, sort of . . . My original question then is that as the money is required, it's paid out from the General Revenue Fund each year. So in this year you said there was something around 50 million that was going to fund the various stages, or am I misunderstanding how this works?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes. We used to have an accrual fund and the funding — the old accounting practice — funding

would be allocated. It would go into the accrual and then be advanced as the projects needed it. The Provincial Auditor did not like that accounting, so now we're advancing the money annually that we assume the project will need. And I'll just get that clarified.

So now, on the Provincial Auditor's advice, with each budget we advance what we think that project will require for that year. So that's why you would have an allocation, such as what I said previously, where there was 21 projects, each would get a different allocation of money. So it's changing it from all of it being advanced in the one year of the announcement and put into an accrual, because the Provincial Auditor questioned that accounting practice.

[14:30]

**Mr. Nilson:** — And that was, you know, his concern that you send me a bunch of money in March that wasn't going to be spent probably for 12 months. Yes. So I understand that. Now what then has further complicated — I guess that'd be the kind word — is with the 65/35. You only advance the 65 partnership money on the six new projects, because the other 35 comes out of that other 600 million property tax revenue or thereabouts. That is the difference between 1.1 billion and 1.7 billion.

So once again my plea that maybe especially, well maybe especially in this ministry, that it might help to have — if you don't want to do it in these books, at least in the books for when we're looking at issues here in this committee — sort of a consolidated statement so that we could see how all things fit. Because I think it would help you. It would certainly help us, and I think it would help the public understand the really important investment that taxpayers are making into the education system. Because that's clearly what's there. So there's not, I don't think there's any great interest in confusing people about it. In fact it's good news.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — The great news is that it is all now . . . It's somewhere, at least. Before, the school division debt was not. It was hidden debt per se because it wasn't even in the summary financial statements. But I am sure that the Finance minister will . . . I will pass that on to him. And I'm sure that when his estimates come up, you'll be more than happy to give him some advice there as well.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Well maybe I'll ask another question. Do you in the Ministry of Education actually have some kind of a statement like that, where we would see all the money together, that you just use for a working document?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Not publicly. It wouldn't be a public statement. Of course I'm working . . .

**Mr. Nilson:** — But could you provide it to us here in the committee so we could actually see how it works?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — So specifically you want to see how much tax a school division collected, how much they would have got from the government. And what else would you like?

**Mr. Nilson:** — And how it's spent, right? And I guess, like I'm basically saying, this shows kind of how we're doing it, but

basically just to have a statement on the K to 12 system.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — You're going to have to . . . I mean how it's spent, I don't mind giving you a spreadsheet because that's what I look at of the school divisions, their tax collection, and then what the government revenue is. I would go to every school division's website and see how they spend their money. And I actually myself have not done that, to go to each individual school division's site and see how they . . . But they will all have it on their websites.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Well yes, but I guess I'm just making a plea that this is not an area where you really want to confuse people, and sometimes it's helpful to do some of those things. And I know quite a few years ago we started trying to do that in the health system so, you know, three times as much money as this, and so it is possible I think to do that.

So now another question I have, and it kind of is a slightly different area I think, although I don't know exactly what this is, but I got an OC [order in council] in my critic role as the Justice critic, which also is the Education critic, from a couple of weeks ago where there was \$125,000 to be paid to a numbered company by the Minister of Education. And the numbered company is 101203472 Saskatchewan Inc., and I'm just curious who and what that is.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — That, it goes to the Human Rights Commission who is building the curriculum for civics, a civics course.

**Mr. Nilson:** — But who, like what is this 101203472? It doesn't say Human Rights Commission, or why wouldn't you just make a cheque to the Human Rights Commission?

**Ms. Senecal:** — It's because the Human Rights Commission cannot receive revenue from the ministry. So this is a mechanism to ensure that both the ministries of Justice and Education are able to flow money into the Human Rights Commission to support this initiative, which as well the Ministry of Education is also playing a role in terms of providing support around the integration into curriculum and what have you. So it's really a mechanism to facilitate our support for this initiative.

**Mr. Nilson:** — So who owns 101203472 Saskatchewan Inc.?

**Ms. Senecal:** — It's my understanding that it is . . . There is a board that will be established around that entity. I don't have more detail than that with me today.

**Mr. Nilson:** — So have you given the grant from the Ministry of Education to 101203472 Saskatchewan Inc. yet?

**Ms. Senecal:** — No, not yet.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Well is this a privately owned company by the Chief Commissioner or is it . . . Who's on the board? Is it the deputy minister of Education and the deputy minister of Justice, or what is this? This just seems a little strange.

**Ms. Senecal:** — So at this point, I have to be honest that the Ministry of Justice has worked most closely on this particular

aspect of the file. That being said, I know that it was discussed with me that there would be representation on the board from both the ministries of Justice and Education. And I, other than that, do not have the detail today, but I will ensure that we get you that detail. We'll speak with Justice and get you the detail and provide it through the committee.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you very much. And could you also, I guess, have your financial officials or whoever would have these documents — maybe it's you — give me a copy of the incorporation documents for this company so I can see who incorporated it? And if it's incorporated by the Ministry of Justice, well that's kind of interesting. If it's incorporated by the Ministry of Education, then that's also interesting. Or is it incorporated by somebody else, or is it incorporated, you know, was it a private law firm that's done this? I'm just very curious.

**Ms. Senecal:** — Okay, we'll ensure that all the background is provided to you through the Chair.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Okay. And once again I would give a little advice to cabinet and the secretary to the cabinet, that you could've solved a lot of that by explaining it in the OC, as this is not very helpful. It looks like trying to hide something, frankly. So that's why I ask that question.

Now let's go onto another area. I see one of your largest expenditures after payments to the school divisions is on page 48 — 100 and, well I guess, 140 million into the teachers' superannuation plan. And this is increased from last year which was 103 million. And I realize these are budgetary amounts, in other words, estimates of the payouts that are going to be made. And there's always lots of people interested in teachers' superannuation around whatever coffee table you're at. But I'm curious to understand why there's such a big jump or if that's an unusual jump. And I know that there's a longer term plan around teachers' superannuation and the requirements. And perhaps you could lay out an explanation for this, and then I'll ask my next question.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Absolutely. And I agree this is a conversation for the coffee table. But I'm going to turn it over, all of the superannuation, teachers' superannuation questions, to Doug Volk.

**Mr. Volk:** — Doug Volk, executive director, Teachers' Superannuation Commission. What is required from the GRF, the General Revenue Fund, on an annual basis to fund the teachers' superannuation plan is very dependent on which teachers retire and how many retire in a given year. So our plan is starting to diminish in the active members, and that's as a result of the plan closing as of July of 1980. So there's less and less teachers available to retire which their contributions plus interest that's allocated to their name offsets monies coming from the General Revenue Fund.

So there's two things happening here. One is the payroll is increasing, that we're paying the teachers on an annual basis. And the number of teachers that are available to retire, to offset that payroll, is diminishing. Therefore the amount required from the General Revenue Fund is increasing.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Okay. So let me explain what I heard you say,

which is that each year the Ministry of Education pays a certain amount into the pension fund for teachers — or maybe this isn't what's happening here — that are now working and that that ends up . . . Well you better try this again because I don't think I totally understand what you're saying. If it was cut off in 1980 as far as people enrolled, is that correct? But they still, but they're still part of a defined benefit system. Isn't that correct?

**Mr. Volk:** — Yes. I'll give a real quick mathematical example. There's two things that get paid in. One is the matching contributions for the active teachers, which is where a teacher puts in a dollar; the General Revenue Fund puts in a dollar. Okay. And that's allocated to the teacher and that money is invested. Okay.

So let's just assume that for the annual payroll it's \$300 million, just as a number. And let's just assume that we have 400 teachers retire in a year. If we add up all the contributions that are attributed to those teachers for that year, let's just say for example it equals \$200 million, what the General Revenue Fund is required to pay is the difference between the actual payroll and the amount that's actually attributed to the retiring teachers because that's held in a separate fund. So on that example, it would be \$100 million. So if your payroll is growing and your number of teachers that are retiring are diminishing, that gap is getting bigger.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Okay. So then if we look at the actual numbers on page 48, and you go down the list, and there's obviously the administrative costs for the commission, so don't have any question there. You've obviously got some efficiencies since or plan a few efficiencies since last year.

The next item is 140 million statutory amount. Is that the amount being paid dollar for dollar for teachers right now?

**Mr. Volk:** — No, a portion of that is dollar for dollar for teachers. Out of the 140 million, 3.794 million is the matching contributions because there is . . .

[14:45]

**Mr. Nilson:** — So 137 million is actual payouts on pre-1980 or people who were enrolled in the system pre-1980. Is that . . .

**Mr. Volk:** — Yes.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Okay. And so that's the number. Okay. So then practically, those are the numbers which are going to shift as the years go on. Is that correct?

**Mr. Volk:** — That's correct.

**Mr. Nilson:** — But right now there's not much that relates to the post-1980 teachers?

**Mr. Volk:** — The matching individuals, no there's not.

**Mr. Nilson:** — And then the next item is insurance, so that's fine. Dental plan, and then the next item of the \$71 million. How does that one relate to the other ones? Can you explain that 71 million?

**Mr. Volk:** — What that one is is the new teachers' pension plan, the new teachers' pension plan or teachers that were hired after July the 1st, 1980. That plan is administered by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, and what that is is the matching contributions that is determined through the collective bargaining process. Currently those matching contributions are 7 per cent to the YMPE [year's maximum pensionable earnings], which is the maximum pensionable earnings and then 9 per cent for any salary that's above the YMPE.

The YMPE is a federally . . . a measurement through the Canada Pension Plan. So that would be the matching . . . or it's not matching because it's a set amount right in the collective bargaining. So that is the government contributions towards the new teachers' pension plan, so that's separate and apart from the superannuation plan, the old plan.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Is that based on so much per teacher or . . .

**Mr. Volk:** — The salaries of teachers.

**Mr. Nilson:** — On the salaries of teachers.

**Mr. Volk:** — Yes.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Directly on the amount of salaries. So as the years go ahead, we'll see that number go up and this other number go down. Is that the plan?

**Mr. Volk:** — Well that's fair to say because that plan will be growing. And that plan, because teachers have a provision in their plan where their 30 years of service, they're eligible to retire. We're, you know, just over 30 years away from 1980, so they're starting to see their eligibilities for people to start retiring on that side. But for every person that retires, you're going to get a new hire to replace those retirees, teachers. On our side, it's going to be the natural progression of teachers moving through the plan through death.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Okay. So then is there any extra liability on that negotiated amount which is the 71 million now so that if there's some kind of a, I guess, glut of retired people that all of sudden you need . . . So is there required any more money in that area?

**Mr. Volk:** — So what you're asking, if unfunded liability exists, is the government responsible for that? And my understanding of that plan is, no, the contributions are negotiated through collective bargaining. It's essentially, here's the money.

Now the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation] have the plan, and they've designed the benefit to match the monies that they receive. So that's why you may have a situation like it currently is now. The employee contributions are a little bit higher than the government contributions because through their processes they have the ability to change the employee contribution, but it doesn't affect employers because that is set right in the collective bargaining. So any unfunded liability that does start to exist that's over and above the funding requirements for the . . . it's the STRP, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Retirement Plan, would be borne by the plan itself.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Going back again to the 140, which is



comprised of 137 plus about 3.8, that 3.8 million, where is it paid and where does it go?

**Mr. Volk:** — That is paid right into the teachers' superannuation fund, so that's a fund that's held separate. And eventually that's the monies that help offset the monies from the General Revenue Fund when those teachers start to retire. Because that's where the money flows now, where we physically cut the cheques, is through the teachers' superannuation fund.

**Mr. Nilson:** — That's why it's not included with the 71 million because that money goes directly out to STF.

**Mr. Volk:** — Yes. Yes.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Okay. So I mean practically, it's a good system in Saskatchewan and many citizens have benefited from it, so we know that. But sometimes it's not always easy to understand how these numbers fit together with the other, I guess it's \$1.7 billion that we pay, because these numbers aren't included in the 1.7 of the K to 12 system.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — No, the 1.7 is exclusively what the school divisions have to operate. And this is separate from that expense, over and above that expense.

**Mr. Nilson:** — And so it's the old discussion about what is the percentage paid by the local education tax versus the overall system. I mean, I guess what I would say is that there's about \$250 million that's part of the K to 12 system on top of the 1.7. So if you wanted to really be gung-ho and tell about how much you're spending on K to 12, you might say 1.95 billion and it would be very accurate.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes. No, you're absolutely correct. If you want to talk about how much we spend on K to 12 education in total, it's more than the 1.7 billion. The 1.7 billion just represents what flows to the school divisions.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Okay. Well thank you for that, and I've got just one last area. And I'm not sure exactly when you're going to take a break, if it's at 3 o'clock or just before . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, okay. Well just one more area which is the Aboriginal education gap, which I know all of us have concerns about the dollars available on-reserve versus off-reserve.

And I guess my question is, do you have a strategy or a plan or are there negotiations ongoing with the federal government as it relates to this particular issue? Because I know from experience that many students are moving back and forth between the two systems for various reasons, whether it's jobs or other social reasons or just sometimes going where they can get the education that they need. So can you maybe give a little bit of an explanation of what the strategy is in the short term and then in the little longer term?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — So as you pointed out, there is a number of issues involved with this particular concerning gap, and the gap is definitely real and it definitely exists. One is the underfunding on-reserve, which is a federal government responsibility.

You asked if there's ongoing negotiations. There is, I wouldn't necessarily say negotiations, definitely conversations on every level. The Premier has talked to the Prime Minister on this issue. Each of the concerning ministers — there's myself, the Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations, the Minister of Social Services, the minister of post-secondary education — have talked to federal ministers, one of the difficulties being, and you're well aware, is there is no federal education minister. So we have to sort of deal with the federal department that looks after the First Nations file.

We have seen an increase this year for the first time in a very long time. I still do not have the details as to how much money that will mean for Saskatchewan, but I have expressed publicly that I still have concerns that it's not going to fully fill that gap. We have also at the table of provincial ministers, we've raised this issue, myself and the Minister for Advanced Education, and Saskatchewan hosted a First Nations meetings here in Saskatchewan for the different provincial ministers.

What we can do provincially is that we have done a number of initiatives knowing that we need to know what more we can do. First of all we have our children and youth committee that's looking at education is one of the pieces that they're looking at. And it's a table where Social Services, Education, Advanced Education, Health, Justice, and Corrections talk about all of the issues to do with youth. And one of those issues of course of concern is the gap in First Nations.

We have increased, as I talked previously to your colleague in questioning earlier, we've increased the early childhood intervention programs in the province by 16 per cent but the pre-K programs by 85 per cent. In meetings that I've had with First Nations leaders and FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations], they have identified two areas in their research that they're saying are the most effective, and that is the very early learning years and kind of that mid-middle years. So we've been very aggressive in the early learning. And we have, as the conversation was with Ms. Chartier, right now we're looking at the vulnerable children, First Nations often being those vulnerable children, to help them be more prepared to get into school. And there is a ton of research that supports those early learning year supports.

We also have some great results. And the committee, if they haven't already received, will be receiving the differences it's made by supporting the summer literacy camps. We're putting \$500,000 into 20 summer literacy camps. It's to retain the students through that summer reading loss. And again many of the benefactors from those camps are First Nations children. But it's also showing in the stats that our northern libraries are giving us that it's capturing the families visiting libraries more. So that's had a positive effect.

We have dedicated 4.3 million to the First Nations and Métis Education Achievement Fund last year and again this year. That is varying programs that are proposed by individual school divisions to access this fund. And so the programs delivered through there vary from one school division to the next, and they would be specific to that particular school division's need. And of course geographically, you know that they're quite diverse in their makeup of First Nations students.

The final piece of course, as we have announced, the panel members for the task force. And it's a partnership between the ministry of K to 12 education, the ministry of post-secondary education, and FSIN. I have a lot of enthusiasm to what this task force can do. It's chaired by Gary Merasty who is well-known and respected in this province. And we're hoping they identify programs that's working here, what's working in other jurisdictions, identify programs that simply isn't and so let's reallocate those dollars in something more effective. And what are our practical solutions that we can use? So I'm quite optimistic that this task force report will be very helpful.

All of those things, you know, is sort of continually working on what more can we do because it's a significant problem.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Is it possible for some of the First Nations schools to apply for these provincial monies, or are they allocated for just provincial school divisions?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — They were allocated to provincial schools.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Okay, and so there is no specific money that would go to a First Nations school if they'd apply?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — There are. Some of our school divisions that have partnership agreements with some First Nations schools and in . . . so that they're recognizing, as you pointed out, which is very, very true, the students now are very transient on- and off-reserve. So we know that we have to do better in building some partnerships to help that transitioning with our students.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Okay. Well thank you very much. And I appreciate the responses and I assume maybe there's a bit more time, or I'm not sure exactly. But thank you for the responses and I look forward to the information that you're going to forward to me and to my colleague about the . . .

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much, Madam Minister. Have you any closing comments?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes. I want to thank all the committee members for being here for these very, very important deliberations, as well as the two members from the official opposition for their questions in areas that I know that they are very, very passionate about and very, very interested in.

[15:00]

**The Chair:** — Thank you, one and all. We will now recess for five minutes in order for the minister and the officials from Social Services to take their seats, and we will continue at that time. Thank you.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

**General Revenue Fund  
Social Services  
Vote 36**

**Subvote (SS01)**

**The Chair:** — Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. We will now resume our consideration of vote 36, Social Services, central management and services, subvote (SS01). Minister Draude is here with her officials. Madam Minister, would you introduce your officials and make your opening remarks please?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon, committee members, and to the Chair.

I'd like to start by first of all introducing my deputy minister, Ken Acton. Income assistance and disability services, we have the assistant deputy minister, Bob Wihlidal. Jeff Redekop is the executive director of income assistance service delivery. Beverly Smith is the executive director of community living service delivery, and Gord Tweed is the executive director of program service and design. And representing corporate services, we have Al Syhlonyk who is the assistant deputy minister. Lorne Brown is the executive director of enterprise projects and risk management. Miriam Myers is executive director of finance administration, and Doug Scott is the director of benefits policy. And representing the Status of Women office is Pat Faulconbridge, and she is the executive director.

Our government recognizes the very important work this ministry does to improve the quality of life and make life more affordable for Saskatchewan children, youth, and families, seniors, and people with disabilities. Social Services' budget for '12-13 is \$852.7 million, an increase of \$38.6 million or 4.7 per cent over last year. With this investment, we will ensure that the ministry's good work on behalf of our government's most vulnerable citizens will continue.

Today we're here to talk about the income assistance and disability services part of the ministry. I'm very proud of the work we've done to make life better for people with disabilities, for seniors, and for those with low income, through the programs and services offered by the income assistance and disability services division.

I'm going to begin with the significant work we've done with and for people with disabilities. I think we all know that, for decades, people with disabilities have been asking the government for a new dignified income support program that really separates them from welfare. Together we formed a task team, and in 2009 we introduced the Saskatchewan assured income for disability program, which is a milestone for people with significant and enduring disabilities.

The initial enrolment in SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] was limited to social assistance clients who lived in residential care facilities or family homes and have a level of care assessment of 2 or higher, as well as social assistance clients living in community living or mental health service group homes. Since 2009 we've enrolled 3,500 people in the SAID program. In January of 2012 we increased SAID benefits by \$50 a month. In collaboration with the disability community, we developed a new disability impact assessment tool to determine individuals' eligibility for the next phase of SAID enrolment. Those assessments are now under way.

In 2008 we recognized a wait-list of 440 people with intellectual disabilities who required residential, day, and

special ed programs. Our government responded with the largest investment in the history of the province in support of people with intellectual disabilities. And I'm proud to say that to this date, 373 people on that wait-list or 85 per cent are now being served. They're receiving the services they need. Thanks to this initiative and to successful partnerships with community-based organizations, new or expanded services have been developed in 40 communities across our province.

Our government is also committed to making life more affordable for our seniors. In our first term of office, we doubled the benefits under the seniors' income plan as well as the number of seniors eligible to receive those benefits including extended health benefits.

To assist Saskatchewan people with low incomes with the increasing cost of living, we have adjusted shelter rates seven times between August of 2008 and October of 2011 in response to the average market rent.

I can say with confidence that we've worked very hard to deliver on our commitment to improve the quality of life for all Saskatchewan citizens, including those who are most vulnerable, and we work hard at continuing it this year. In this budget, the total budget for income assistance and disability services for this year is \$575 million. That's up 4.3 per cent from last year.

I'm going to highlight the most significant investments. This budget includes \$17.8 million to enhance the Saskatchewan assured income for disabilities program. Using the new assessment tool I spoke about earlier, we expect to enrol as many as 7,000 additional clients who live independently. We are increasing benefits under SAID over the next four years with the largest increase in June of this year. There are three categories: couples living independently will receive a \$230 per month increase; singles, individuals living independently will receive a \$200 per month increase, and people in residential care will receive a \$40 per month increase. Our government wants to make Saskatchewan the best place in Canada to live for people with disabilities. And this continued investment in the SAID program, I believe we're making this vision a reality.

[15:15]

This year we are investing a further \$3.4 million to ensure that the remaining 67 of the 440 people with intellectual disabilities who have been waiting for specialized residential and day care programs will have services in place or in development by March of 2013. This fulfills our four-year commitment to the wait-list initiative and will also provide services for 20 new clients.

We are also fulfilling our commitment to provide the seniors' income plan . . . to improve the income plan at a cost of \$3.3 million this year. Maximum monthly benefits to more than 16,000 seniors will increase by \$50 per month effective July 2012, and we will continue to increase the benefits for the next three years. By the end of our second term, benefits under the seniors' income plan will have more than tripled. In '12-13 we will launch the new personal care home benefits to assist approximately 1,500 seniors with the cost of such homes. This benefit will be introduced in July at a cost of \$3.5 million for

this fiscal year.

Also this year we will adjust shelter rates based on the average market rent to assist about 10,000 low-income households. Through these measures and our investments in the '12-13 budget, we are working hard to ensure Saskatchewan people will benefit from our strong and growing province.

There's a few other highlights I'd like to mention. I've mentioned the new case management system that's being implemented in child and family services. Over time this will become a ministry-wide client information system and it's going to include the income assistance and disabilities service, supporting improved outcomes for all of our ministry clients. We're investing \$18.7 million in this enterprise system this year.

Community-based organizations are invaluable partners in delivering programs and services to the people right across the province. In '12-13 all CBOs will receive a 1.6 per cent increase and totalling, for Social Services alone, \$3 million.

To enhance efficiency and effectiveness, we will continue to streamline and enhance accountability in CBO management through the use of multi-year contracts and continue the improvement in CBO information and performance management systems. We'll focus on citizen-centred approaches to income assistance programs, including the delivery of basic income and disability supports, income supplements and housing support programs, and we're going to review core programs systematically to ensure they are relevant and effective in meeting our citizens' needs. We're going to continue to improve emergency social services for Saskatchewan people in disaster situations, including transportation, shelter, food, and clothing, with community capacity to respond, if it's exceeded.

In conclusion, I'm proud of the decisions our government has made and in the investments we are making for those who need our help the most. Social services' budgets and priorities for the upcoming year reflect a clear focus on our ministry's clients — thousands of children and youth, families, seniors, people with disabilities, and those with low incomes — who rely on programs and services that we provide each and every day.

In our budget we're going to keep our commitment to people of the province to ensure that we can deliver the programs and services they need. So thank you very much to the members, and I'd appreciate your questions.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much. Questions are going to be Ms. Chartier first. You have the floor, Ms. Chartier.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Madam Minister. I've got a few questions around the child care subsidy. So I know we talked a little bit about this last year with Mr. Forbes, but I was wondering — and we didn't pin down a year — when was the last increase to the maximum income eligibility point for child care subsidies?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Thank you very much. I knew that was going to be a question that was important to you, so I know that the information is available. It was 2006.

**Ms. Chartier:** — 2006. And do you have the previous increase from then, so the maximum income eligibility point? Not the exit threshold, but the income eligibility?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I know that you're looking for specific details.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Yes.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — And so I'm going to get somebody to give you all the details.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — And if you have specific and technical questions, let's do it. I know that the member has got questions and a shortage of time, so let's just do this in the most effective way we can.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Sounds good. I think 2006 was the exit threshold. But what I understand . . . And we didn't get a date last year. We got the maximum income eligibility point which is currently \$1,640. So how long has it, I think the question is how long has that been at \$1,640?

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — We don't have that date with us today.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Is it possible to get that date?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Yes it is, and we'll get it for you as soon as possible.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay. And will it come through to this committee here? Actually I've also asked some written questions just today or yesterday actually, and this was one of the written questions.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — So I'll get that information for you. And I can give it to you through the committee, and I will ask the Chair to provide it to you as quickly as we get it.

**Ms. Chartier:** — I think I've been told, and this is what we didn't confirm last year, but I think it was 1983 is the year that I've been given. And I'm not sure if that's correct or not, so I'm eager to find that out.

Around the workers who do the subsidy assessments or subsidy applications, what was the caseload for subsidy workers? How many families per worker?

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — So I can describe the unit as it currently is today. Today we have two supervisors, nine assessors, and 1.5 administrative staff supporting that child care subsidy work. And just to be clear, that unit, the work that they are doing each month or these assessors are doing each month is receiving and adjudicating attendance lists for child care centres and family homes. So on average, you might find that one of those assessors might be working with 50 to 60 centres on a monthly basis, and those 50 or 60 centres might represent between 300 and 400 families each assessor.

So what their role is to update and change data each month on those families where there's changes required. Certainly there's

numbers of families where no changes are happening every month. So an example of that might be someone who's on student loans for a year. And so the end result is that they produce one payment for each of those centres because the payments go to the centres, not to the individuals. And those payments occur about two weeks after they receive the attendance lists.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay.

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — That's a little more information than you asked for.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Well no, actually I did have a question, wondering how that all . . . I've been told some of the paperwork around it is that the child care centres fill out an attendance card for each child, and then that goes to the subsidy workers, and they then put that into your own system. So I was just wondering if that . . . It seems quite labour intensive.

And I know one of the concerns that directors of child care centres have flagged is around subsidy applications. So I'm just wondering how long it takes to process. So if I apply for a child care subsidy, what I understand is most child cares will accept, if they've got a space, they'll accept a family. The family will apply for the child care subsidy, and then the process can take up to, well, I've been told quite a long time. But I'm just wondering what your average length of time to process a . . .

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — For a new application?

**Ms. Chartier:** — A new application is.

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — Okay, I don't know if I have a number for that. I don't know if it's that much different than our monthly work. I imagine there's some new applications in each month.

So what we understand is that new applications or existing applications take about the same amount of time because what we do is prioritize new eligibles and do those first. And so that two-week time frame applies to new applications as well, as we understand it.

**Ms. Chartier:** — I think one of the concerns with this current system that has been flagged is that a family will come in and apply for the application and believe that they are quite possibly eligible and then won't get the subsidy. But they're a low-income family and can't afford the child care and will pull out, so there's some bad debt left on the books of the child care. And I understand that's actually quite a common phenomenon that child cares are . . . Because it is a monthly reporting system, it can be problematic. Has that been something that's been flagged for your ministry?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Again, as we get further information, I want to advise the member that this is something that I haven't heard of directly, and obviously my officials haven't heard a lot about it. But it is something that I will inquire into because if there is something that can be done more effectively, then we will look at it. But it isn't something that I've heard of directly nor have my officials brought it to my attention.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Fair enough. And I've heard it from nine

child care centre directors who've flagged this as a real concern. The process is quite onerous. So it's interesting that you haven't heard it, but I'm glad to hear that you're interested in looking into it.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I will get the information. We'll request further documentation or issue management on this. And if it's something that we should be looking at, I will definitely do that, and I thank you for bringing it to our attention.

**Ms. Chartier:** — And I think one of the other things they've talked about is sort of streamlining that whole system. I think directors say they or their staff — and they've got limited staff — spend a great deal of time, a great deal of time filling out attendance cards. And then obviously you have subsidy workers who are then filling it out or inputting it wherever it gets inputted. And I think part of that whole . . . I know that you're very interested in electronic records and making things a little bit more efficient, and I think that the centre directors have some very good ideas about how to do that.

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — It's correct that it's a laborious process. We're aware of that. And it's a process that is ripe for some simplification, and so we are in fact looking at that over the next year. But the specific concern around new applications versus old hasn't been something, at least we . . . would have been brought forward to us, anyway.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — And if I may, to the member, this issue and process is something that we're very concerned about as we go forward and talk about being efficient and effective with time and with money. So I think not only is it could be a lean process, it also is something that has to be developed, the electronic records with the Linkin system. It's something that probably could be part of re-engineering some of our income assistance and the redesign. So I would be surprised if it isn't being considered, and as Bob said, it is, so hopefully by the next time we meet we can talk about it.

**Ms. Chartier:** — I think, again, just the big concern that they'll talk about is you've got TEA [transitional employment allowance] clients who then become SAP [Saskatchewan assistance plan] clients because it's on a monthly basis. You've got people moving back and forth between programs, and they were eligible one month and had child care for one month, and then they're no longer eligible and then eligible again. And so that's where some of the bad debt accumulates, and more families pull out of child care because they can't pay the bills, and then that impacts their employment plans. But they pointed to Alberta does it on an annual — they look at annual, your tax return. But anyway, I'm very glad to hear that that is something that you're looking into.

And you'd mentioned the lean processes. I'm just wondering if the child care subsidy has not yet been something that's gone through the lean process yet?

[15:30]

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — Not to this point, but there's plans. There are plans for that.

**Ms. Chartier:** — And just ensuring that the directors and the

people who work with the system, I trust that they'll be consulted in a meaningful way and linked into this whole review.

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — Absolutely. That's the foundation of lean methodology is to involve those who actually do the work to understand the bottlenecks and problems with it and unwind them and make them more simple.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Well thank you. With respect to the SAID program, I think in many of our offices, we've had lots of people who've been very excited, very concerned, sort of mixed feelings about it, or they're eager to learn if they are going to be able to get onto the program. So I'm just wondering about how some of the numbers broke down. So I know you've got 3,500 people on SAID currently.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — That's about the correct number, yes.

**Ms. Chartier:** — And so I just want to make sure I have my numbers right. I understand there's, aside from those 3,500 people who are currently on SAID, there are about 12,000 people on social assistance who have a disability flag. Is that correct?

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — Correct. There have been 12,000 applications sent out to those folks to make application to the new SAID program. And should they be eligible through the functional impact assessment that is done, they'll have the opportunity to move from Saskatchewan assistance plan to SAID.

**Ms. Chartier:** — And I understand that at this point in time there'll be about 7,000 people that you have budgeted or allotted. How have you come to that? Have you taken AISH [assured income for the severely handicapped] numbers in Alberta and extrapolated? Or how have you come to we will be including 7,000 more people on the SAID program?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I'll maybe ask another one of my officials to come up. I know that the member is interested in the details, so we will give you the information that we have. And you're right; they have looked at a number of different programs to identify the estimate that we have. So I'm going to ask for further clarification.

**Mr. Scott:** — Doug Scott, strategic policy. Yes, the methodology I believe for estimating the population that we thought would be eligible is actually contained in a backgrounder to the task team report. So it was the community government task team that produced the estimate. And it was produced . . . We took two different methodologies to try to estimate the number of folks eligible. One was to look at the Alberta program and to sort of take a proportionate number of folks from Saskatchewan.

The other way was to use . . . StatsCan does what they call a participation and activity limitation survey. It's sort of the disability survey. They used to do it every five years. And so we had the 2006 survey results at that time, and we looked at the proportion of that population that had been flagged as having severe or very severe activity limitations and used that as the estimate. And the two estimates were very close. They sort of ranged between 8 and 10,000 in total. And that's where

we came up with that number.

**Ms. Chartier:** — I think one of the things that I'm hearing from people again very excited about the possibility of SAID and that it ranges from people with intellectual disabilities to mental health issues that . . . But obviously that leaves 5,000 people who are on SAP with disabilities and perhaps not as profound and enduring as some, but still with huge impact. So I've had many people concerned about, well what happens if I get left behind on SAP? Is there any . . .

**Mr. Scott:** — I can answer that. Nothing changes for clients that remain on SAP. So there currently are some disability support benefits in SAP for those clients. There's a mobility allowance and there's an allowance to help people pay for services in their home that others might otherwise . . . other people that were non-disabled might do themselves. There's also a higher earned income exemption in SAP for people with disabilities than for non-disabled folks. So all those provisions will remain.

**Ms. Chartier:** — So nothing changes. And I think that that's the big concern then, that you've got people who still have disabilities who may not have worked for a very long time for all kinds of reasons, and can't work. But they . . . So nothing has changed. And I think that that's part of the problem, is that SAID obviously is an increased benefit rate. And I think that that's some of the concern that people have expressed.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I think the member opposite should realize that everything has changed. For decades people have asked for a program that sets them aside. So we do have, and we know we'll have up to 10,000 people who had never been recognized as to their disability, meaning that they would not be under the same circumstances as those on the Saskatchewan assistance plan. So to say that nothing has changed is not quite accurate, because we've had probably up to 10,000 people who are going to be receiving more benefits.

The assessment tool is something that we are working with. I know that there's going to be individuals that will not be on it but there's also, for the work that will be done, this is the first step in a change that's been asked for for many, many years. And we're leading the nation. When this program is in place, we are going to be the envy of the nation because we're talking about treating people with respect and giving them pride in their lives that they have.

So I agree there will be some people who might be disappointed, but at the same time we will work through it methodically, making sure that everybody is treated with the respect that they deserve and ensuring that we will continue our work in this area.

**Ms. Chartier:** — I had an opportunity to chat with some people on DISC [Disability Income Support Coalition] who have been part of trying to support their folks fill out the SAID applications, and they've opened it up not just to their general clientele, but to having, not seminars but workshops, SAID workshops. And I think one of the things that I've heard from one the DISC folks, who is a huge proponent of this program, but she said, oh my goodness, she's working through these packages with people. And she isn't saying this but she's

finding people who she doesn't believe, as they fill out the assessment, they will end up on the SAID program. But she's seeing huge holes where . . . So they won't end up on the SAID program despite the fact that they have huge challenges. And of course the one thing about the SAID program is dignity, but the other one is increased benefits.

So what I'm wondering, I know that you have indexed shelter rates, but living allowance is . . . And the last time the living allowance increased was in 2007, under the last government. So I'm just wondering if there's any plans to increase the living allowance for those who don't make it onto the SAID program.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I think part of the answer is in what, Ms. Chartier, you just said. There has been an increase in living allowance seven times since 2008 because we . . . Part of living is shelter, and what we have done is looked at that shelter allowance, and the people that . . . The removal of a number of people, a great number of people onto SAID is important. And the other thing that we've done is making sure that, for people who are employable, we put a lot of effort into making sure that there is education and training available so that people can, if they do not have a significant injury, disability and they are currently on SAP, Saskatchewan assistance plan, can we help them through the transitional employment allowance to have them part of the workforce.

So for discussion, to first of all look at those that are most in need of help and respect from government is our SAID individuals and in making sure that the living allowance, including the shelter rates, is looked at and will continue to be looked at. And then ensuring that people who could be part of the workforce are encouraged and supported in their efforts. So the work is continuous right across this ministry, the 500-and-some . . . seventy-three, I believe, million dollars this year is looking at people that are working with our ministry. So we don't stop on any front.

**Ms. Chartier:** — I think the one thing that people have asked me is, is the 7,000 a cap? And I've been told by people on DISC, no, no, no, don't worry, it's not a cap. But I think there's many people who'd like to hear it from you, not from me. So when they hit that magic number of 7,000, is there room for 7,500? Is there room for 8,000 this year and this intake?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Yes, to the member and to everyone watching, 7,000 is not a cap. Seven thousand is based on the assessment that we have at this time, but we will ensure that people that are part of the assessment tool and they are understood to meet the criteria, they will be part of our SAID program. It will ensure that we're the best place in Canada to live if you have a disability and, on the other hand, we're the best place to live in Canada if you don't have a disability. And that's our goal.

So everyone that you talk to, I hope that you send the message that there isn't a cap on the number of people we will support. There is a goal to make sure that we will be supporting everyone, looking at their individual needs, that we will continue to make them happy to call Saskatchewan home.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Can you tell me about, is an appeal process if you . . . And I believe that there is one, but if you don't get . . .

If you learn that you're not on the SAID program, what are the avenues to, and to whom would you be appealing?

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — The appeal mechanism will be described in the new regulations that support the SAID program when it's expanded for this summer.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay, thank you. I think one of the other things, one of the other concerns that I've heard is that the package . . . I think it's great that you've sent out 12,000 packages to those who have a disability flag but . . . And depending on the different groups, for example, if you have FASD [fetal alcohol spectrum disorder] and you receive a giant package from the government, you won't open that package. You think, oh my goodness, I'm in trouble. And you've got other people who are overwhelmed opening it. I had one fellow a week ago who suffers migraines every day of his life and tried taking a look at it. And I know community organizations have stepped up to the plate to offer support, but I'm just wondering . . .

And I know, I understand from some of these workshops, it's labour-intensive and it's taken four hours to fill out a SAID application with one individual, for example. Are there any resources forthcoming to community organizations who are doing the work of supporting individuals to fill out their SAID applications?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Thank you. I'm going to ask Bob to comment further on it. But I also have spoken to the FASD network. I've spoken to parents who have children with FAS [fetal alcohol syndrome]. I've talked to people that are involved with young people with autism. I understand that the package itself can be overwhelming. But through the Saskatchewan Abilities Council, through the caseworkers, we've sent the message that an understanding . . . that a big brown envelope could be intimidating to people, so how can we work with them to ensure that the application process is worked through. We have actually looked at it, tried to look at it from a perspective of somebody who may not understand what's happening, and walk through the steps.

That's why we have worked with the Saskatchewan Abilities Council as well, to make sure this process is not only as easy as possible, but the opportunity to have individuals have their voice in it. Bob, do you have further comments?

[15:45]

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — Just a couple of comments. Yes, the work that SAC [Saskatchewan Abilities Council] is doing on this file is very helpful. They've hired the staff to do the assessments and have been quite involved with us in designing the process that would be used. A reminder that the assessment tool as well as the process to unroll it was something that was designed through collaboration at the community table with the program implementation advisory committee, which is a subset of DISC.

So we have a membership there that is quite interested and quite vocal in terms of what they think the needs are and were quite insistent that what was required is a functional impact assessment tool. And we're involved in its design and now involved in its implementation, quite aware that it is at times a

daunting process, especially given it's a brand new process to us who are delivering it and those who are receiving it. But it was expected to be deliberate and careful so that it did discern those who really should be on SAID from those who shouldn't. It was understood that not everyone would be on SAID, and that was intentional because we wanted to make sure that those who need that level of support got it.

Back to your point about the 7,000, again this is a conversation that's happened at the PIAC [program implementation advisory committee] table about the numbers of people that are on social assistance and where to draw the line. Well the line will be drawn by that impact assessment. So a level of independence that's applied on each individual's circumstances based on their particular needs, not on the basis of a particularly arbitrary number.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Well again, I'm glad to hear that. Just though around the question, obviously CBOs do a great deal of work and do it quite effectively for not nearly enough money. I think we'd all agree that there's always more money that could go into CBOs, but I think my concern is around . . . I think it's great that all the CBOs have stepped up to support people to fill out the SAID packages. I can't remember how many are on the front of the package, but it is a lengthy list of CBOs. But obviously time and resources, that they're taking great time and resources to support not only their clientele, but opening it up to all kinds of folks. So I'm just wondering if there's been additional support for CBOs to support individuals to be able to fill out the package.

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — No, not to my knowledge. No specific particular support's been provided to the CBOs to do this. They're doing this on the basis of this being the right thing to do, and something that they're capable to support because they have clients who they are supporting and in addition help them to work through this application process. SACL [Saskatchewan Association for Community Living] would be another example of that, where they are taking quite an interest in making sure that clients they have, as where they're the advocate for individuals, are making sure that they provide the support that's needed to get the job done and make their applications meaningful.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Oh, for sure. And I recognize that this is, this is the work that they do. But CBOs are often strapped, and not just for resources and financial resources and labour resources, so I was just . . . I mean in the light of the fact that this is such an important program to the ministry that, would it make sense to provide additional resources this year to support organizations in this big flood of 7,000 applicants or 7,000 individuals getting onto SAID?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — The Saskatchewan Abilities Council has been given the responsibility and the work to do that. They were provided funding. And I've also spoken to people, again like the FASD network support people, who haven't said one thing to me, one word to me about this. What they are doing is ensuring that the people that they work with through the CBOs, through their organizations, are supported. I haven't, I have not heard anything about the concern of filling out the applications.

What everybody that . . . the comments I've heard from the

CBOs that are involved with individuals who may actually qualify are saying, I am so pleased that finally we are looking at the opportunity to support people in a dignified and respectful manner. That would mean that the process of being on that type of assistance from the government has changed, and they are supportive of the work we're doing. Bob, did you have a further comment?

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — I would just reiterate that not all individuals who are making application are going to CBOs, and some might be because they are already clients of those CBOs. And certainly to provide supports broad-based wouldn't work very well because the population of people that are looking for the support are going all different directions for that support, to Sask Abilities Council or to SACL [Saskatchewan Association for Community Living] or to their family doctor or any number of locations. There's quite a response across the province in terms of advocates and others who are able to put in those few hours to help people with the application forms.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Just with respect to the DISC table and those who — and if this was identified or not — but how about those who aren't connected to organizations who have disabilities? I think FASD might be one of them. Families are often connected or parents, but grown children or people who need the direct services sometimes aren't always connected to organizations. So I'm wondering around the DISC table if there's been conversations about how to help ensure that those folks are receiving and filling out their SAID application.

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — There's been certainly discussion at the PIAC table about making sure that we have connections and outreach, and certainly there's been news releases and open houses held across the province to create forums for people to come to and have their applications filled out for them. There's . . . Sorry, lost my train of thought. Sorry. That's all.

**Ms. Chartier:** — That's okay; I know how that is. With respect to rural Saskatchewan, how many of these organizations, CBOs that have committed to supporting their clients and others, how many of them are in sort of rural and remote areas?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — While my officials are getting some information, I can tell you that I do live in rural Saskatchewan. I've had the opportunity to stop in places like Mallard Industries in Wadena and Porcupine Opportunities, and they have individuals that are coming to them as well for support. They've talked to me about some of the issues and initiatives. No one has said anything except this is a great thing where we have an opportunity to support individuals who may be qualifying. And the network in rural Saskatchewan is different than you maybe are used to, living in the city. There is opportunities for us to help individuals and that is what's happening.

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — First to answer your question about rural response. Gary Tinker Federation is one of those agencies that's helping in the North. Canadian Mental Health Association has branches in Battlefords, Kindersley, Moose Jaw, Swift Current, Weyburn as well as Regina and Saskatoon where we're providing support. The other is the 20 offices that we have across the province where we are also getting and giving support. We're getting lots of inquiries, and many of, well

obviously all of these 12,000 people are already social assistance recipients and have relationships with a worker of ours. And often that's one of the first calls that they make is to our workers, and so we're helping them where we can as well.

**Ms. Chartier:** — That's again one of the comments or thoughts that I've heard people have called into our office. I think that there's mixed information when you call your worker because the second phase isn't implemented yet. It's in the process of being implemented. So I've heard people call and ask, can I apply or get on the SAID program? And they've been told no, there's already people on the SAID program. So people are getting mixed messages about being on the SAID program from some of their workers.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — That surprises me because the professionals we have that are working, that are income support workers, have been given information. In fact I know that there was some internal information was sent to our workers. And if there is some mixed message, then I would like to hear about the individual cases because it's something that surprises me. Bob?

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — Just to add to that, one of the possibilities, in response to your question, might be the fact that only people in residential care facilities are currently eligible to be on SAID. The new enrollment won't happen until the regulations are passed this spring and the program's actually expanded. So people are certainly eligible to apply. If they didn't get an application form and wish to have one, we can certainly make that happen. But we provided application forms to all people who had a disability flag on social assistance, so we think we probably got everybody who has needed to get that application form. But certainly we can give application forms to anyone. But no one's eligible currently, technically, until the program is expanded.

**Ms. Chartier:** — I think that that's where the confusion has come in where — and sorry, I maybe didn't state that properly in my previous question — but I think that's exactly where the confusion is coming in. And I know some people, well 12,000 people have received the packages, but not everybody opens their mail from the government for all kinds of reasons. So I think that perhaps, and this has been raised two or three times with me with people having called their worker, and so I think that there's some, still some confusion around that. So it might be worthwhile to send out a memo to make sure that the right language is being used when people call in about that because just in my office, I've received a few calls. So I don't know, with all of us, you times that by two, and there's other people who aren't getting the same response perhaps.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — And you could be, that's probably correct. If you ask if you can be enrolled on SAID, the official answer would be no, we can't enrol you on SAID. There's an assessment process it goes through. I think most of the workers probably are aware of that, but if someone who has called in has asked a direct question, they only hear part of the answer. That might be what's happened. So I'm sure that we will continue to get the information forward so that people feel confident that they know the process and that they know the time frames that are in place.



**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you. Speaking of CBOs, I know in your opening remarks you mentioned that all CBOs will receive a 1.6 per cent increase totalling 3 million for social services. I'm wondering if that 1.6 per cent is directed or mandated to go towards anything in particular. So the 1.6 per cent increase goes to social services CBOs, and do they have to spend it on X or Y?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — We had anticipated that the money would be going for wage increases. And the money was given to them, but it hasn't been specifically mandated that this is what it must go for. We would expect that that's where it will be going to. But they do, when you have a community-based organization, they will identify their specific needs. And in most cases, the largest part of their job will be the wage issue or the largest expense in their CBO will be the wage issue. But it is a 1.6 per cent.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Can you tell me what that looks like in terms of . . . So obviously you're not mandating it, but you have some expectations that it'll go to wages. How is that message delivered to CBOs?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I'm going to get a copy of the letter that was sent to the CBOs. I know that it didn't take very long after the budget before we started to receive calls from people saying thank you very much. They know that they received nearly 19 per cent more in our first five years than they did in the last 12 years. So that was an important message that was being sent. I know that we're at about a 16 per cent increase in the last five years, so an important expenditure of public money. But I'm going to give Bob a chance to get the letter that was sent to the CBOs.

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — We're looking for a copy of an example of the letter that we sent to all the CBOs this year with their new contracts and indicating the increase which, as I recall, didn't specify how the money ought to be spent.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay, thank you. With respect to CBOs, I know, I think the member from, I can't remember which member had a member statement yesterday about volunteerism, then mentioned there's 195 CBOs, 195 CBOs supported by this government. Is that correct?

[16:00]

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — To the member, to Ms. Chartier, it's actually 193 CBOs within Social Services. So there are other CBOs outside of this ministry but this is . . . We actually have 210 contracts with 193 CBOs to deliver services on behalf of child and family services and income assistance and disability services within our ministry.

**Ms. Chartier:** — And so forgive my ignorance here, but so are these multi-year contracts or annual contracts? Or how does that . . .

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I'm going to ask some of my officials to get the numbers, but I'm very pleased with the work that's been undertaken in the last three years to ensure that we can have as many multi-year contracts as possible. The frustrations that many CBOs have is the time that it takes to fill out contracts on

an annual basis. What we really are needing from CBOs is the front-line work that they can offer to clients, to individuals who require their care. So we spent, for the last over three years now, we've been assessing contracts that we have with various CBOs to find out if we can just do a more than one year contract. And that's one of our goals.

At the same time, we want to ensure that the money that is spent in the CBOs is done as effectively as possible. And in some cases we're requesting that they, you know, can they show us some outcomes or how are they improving the lives of individuals. So we have to look at what they can provide to us for information so that we can just continue the work that they are doing without taking up the extra time and paperwork and the burden of filling out yet another government contract. So I'm going to ask Bob to continue on this . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I'm sorry, Ken.

**Mr. Acton:** — Ken Acton, deputy minister. Just in terms of multi-year contracts in terms of numbers, we've been working hard at trying to move more and more to multi-year. And so just in terms of percentages, in '09-10 we had 8 per cent of our contracts were multi-year, and this year we're at 74 per cent of our contracts are multi-year contracts. And we're continuing to work on that way to standardize the basic form, enter into multi-year so that CBOs have a little bit more comfort in terms of what we're expecting and they can plan ahead. So we're moving in that way. So we're about 74 per cent right now, and we'll continue to move in that direction to try to streamline things and make it a little easier, well both for us and for the CBOs, obviously.

**Ms. Chartier:** — So just a couple clarifications here. So 2011-2012 is 74 per cent?

**Mr. Acton:** — '12-13.

**Ms. Chartier:** — '12-13 are. Okay.

**Mr. Acton:** — I think we're at about 54 per cent or 55 per cent in the previous year.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Oh, in '11-12.

**Mr. Acton:** — In '11-12. Yes.

**Ms. Chartier:** — 55 per cent. And are we comparing apples to apples there? Have you, just in terms of the numbers of CBOs that you've been working with from '09-10, '10-11, '11-12, are there fewer CBOs that are getting contracts in general? Have you . . .

**Mr. Acton:** — We have been very consistent. In terms of exact numbers, I don't believe I have them in front of me year over year, but they're very similar. There hasn't been any significant change.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Is there a way of . . . And of course there's a way. Could I get that number?

**Mr. Acton:** — Sure. Year over year?

**Ms. Chartier:** — Year over year.

**Mr. Acton:** — You bet.

**Ms. Chartier:** — That would be great, in terms of the numbers of CBOs that you've worked with over the last three years. So how many . . . Okay, so you don't have numbers, you've given me percentages. All right.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I have a copy of the letter that was sent. And the reason it wasn't as readily available is that, the letter starts with saying that the Hon. Ken Krawetz, the Minister of Finance presented the budget. So one of the paragraphs says:

I am pleased to inform you that the 1.6 per cent funding increase is being provided as a line item at the bottom of your appendix A. The increased funding is expected to be used primarily to support recruitment and retention within your agency.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Recruitment, okay. In terms of, so if I've got a multi-year contract, then it's April 1st to March 31st, and it just rolls over on April 1st to March 31st. If I have a year contract, if I'm applying and I don't have a multi-year contract, and my organization is applying year to year so the fiscal year ends March 31st, when does funding kick in if you receive an annual contract?

**Mr. Acton:** — So if it's just a one-year contract and we moved into April, we'd provide one-twelfth of what we anticipate while we do the paperwork and finalize the contract so that we'd keep the money flowing in April while we sign a new contract.

**Ms. Chartier:** — And in terms of stipulation of who would get . . . So if I'd had a previous contract or a track record of previous contracts, that's how it would work. Would I reapply?

**Mr. Acton:** — Well if you're in the provision of service, we would obviously, well we would have staff that would be in discussion with you prior to that in terms of the provision of service and the ongoing nature of that and how we'd move forward. So those would be discussions that would be happening prior to year-end, and then subject to budget, we'd be having those discussions as quickly as we could in April to carry on. That's the advantage of the multi-year is so that we kind of take that uncertainty out of there.

A number of our CBOs have been providing services to us for years, and sometimes the number of clients they're providing service for might change, and so the actual dollar amount might fluctuate. But I think both us and the CBO know that it's going to be an ongoing relationship.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you. I think one of the . . . I know the child nutrition development fund right now are multi-year contracts. But it's just not your . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Okay. Health. Education. Okay. Well I should have asked that an hour ago. Well thank you.

Moving on here. When we were talking just a little while ago about SAP and SAID and people being employed and encouraging people to be employed, I'm just wondering if the Saskatchewan employment supplement has . . . what kind of increases it's seen over the years. You know, when was the last

time the employment supplement rates were reviewed?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — The last increase was 2008. In fact I think it's fair to say that that was the largest increase in history to the Saskatchewan employment supplement.

**Ms. Chartier:** — And it went from what to what?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — The maximum employment benefits were increased by \$30 a month depending on the family size. And that was, again, that was the largest increase in benefits in this program's history.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Is it scheduled for a review any time soon?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Everything that we do is being looked at at all times. What we do is ensure that the money that's being spent and provided to people who need our support is spent within the balanced budget and ensuring that we provide our clients, the people that are looking to us for support, with as much support as we possibly can. Again this year we looked at adequacy, and we also are focusing a lot on the SAID program, ensuring that people that are most vulnerable are receiving benefits of up to \$400 over the next four years and tripling our benefits for the seniors' income plan as well. So all programs are looked at when it comes to adequacy.

**Ms. Chartier:** — I have a piece of casework here that I've brought here that has run into stumbling blocks through your office here that I just wanted to mention here. I have a two-person family that has four children, their kids under 13. They qualified for the employment supplement, and recently her husband who works as a janitor had a small contract increase and they're now \$25 over the top of the maximum allowable, so \$25 over the maximum limit. And they received only a very small SES [Saskatchewan employment supplement] benefit.

It wasn't the benefit that was a big deal to them, but they received family health benefits as well because they qualified for the SES. So they relied very heavily on those family health benefits. He is diabetic. She has health issues, and the four kids obviously dental, eyeglasses, and chiropractic were things that they all tapped into. And particularly in light of the fact that he is diabetic, this is a huge blow to their family income. And they're not quite sure how they're going to make it work.

It's a significant hardship being \$25 over the cut-off limit. There's no extra funds in their house to cover their expenses. And this individual — I'm again asking on her behalf when SES rates are going to be reviewed — and she ran into some stumbling blocks with her MLA, which isn't me, and then ran into some stumbling blocks with your office and just was told that there's nothing we can do. And I think in light of the fact that, especially in light of the fact that she's heard that MLAs have gotten a pay raise, and those obviously are reviewed annually or increased, she is very frustrated that the employment supplement rates haven't changed since, the threshold hasn't changed since 2008 when lots has changed here in Saskatchewan since 2008.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Thank you very much. And we definitely would . . . We could meet. We could talk about this individual.

There could be special support through the Ministry of Health. But I'm sure the member opposite realizes when I just said that this is the largest increase in benefits in the program's history, that would mean three years ago they would have been cut off a long time ago.

So we continuously look at the programs to ensure that we can provide as much support as possible. I know that, especially when there's health needs involved, that's something that's critical to a family's well-being. I will bring this to the Minister of Health, or you can as an individual. But I assure you that all of our programs are being enhanced to ensure that people can be working. If the individual that you're talking to has had the chance to have a small contract, then I'm pleased about that. At the same time, health issues are significant and they impact the family, so we'll see what we can do. But I assure you that when we looked at increasing the benefits under SES, it was something that we recognized was an important part of our government's responsibility.

**Ms. Chartier:** — And again 2008 is four years ago and the cost of living has gone up. And recognizing that the employment supplement and the family health benefits were implemented by the last government to address the welfare wall, that inability of people to . . . or to help people be better off being employed than on social assistance — that's the whole point of the program.

And I'm wondering, I know that you've put significant investment into SAID, but this is a pretty important program too. I mean, and in light of someone like this, I'm sure that there's other people out there like this family as well. And I really appreciate that the minister often suggests that I can bring people to her, or cases, but I think that this is a structural issue.

And I'm wondering, what goes into a review when you decide around the SES that we will increase it or we won't increase it? And what went into the decisions in the last four years? And it doesn't matter if it was the biggest increase in 2008. It still is time. Four years, the cost of living has dramatically risen here with housing particularly.

[16:15]

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I think the member opposite probably wasn't sitting around the table four years ago when the last government, the NDP, must have looked at the seniors' income plan and said, we haven't done anything for 16 years. There was discussions around the table at that time when they talked about disposable income being 93 per cent of the national average. There was discussions around the table at that time when they decided that they . . . when they didn't increase the Saskatchewan employment supplement. There was discussions around the table when you were government, and it wasn't that long ago when decisions were made about where to spend money, whether it's an investment in a company outside of the province or investment in our people. The decision was made then by your government.

What I am proud of is the fact that we have increased the amount of money in Social Services, the largest increase in very many . . . across government. And it is an important issue for our government. We can talk about caseloads going down. We

can talk about child welfare caseloads going down, and why? Because we've put money into it.

So yes, there has been increases. There's also been increases to the weekly earnings in this province, just about the highest ever. There's more people working in this province than ever before. So we can do some comparison. It would be interesting. I think the member should realize that one of the . . . We ran on it in November of 2011 on a program, on a platform that talked about people with disabilities being an important part of our government and of our plans going forward. And we also talked about a balanced budget. And that's what people are proud of and I continue to be proud of, not only the budget we brought forward, but the policies that are around it.

**Ms. Chartier:** — The reality is, it is 2012. It's an \$11.2 billion budget, and there are people significantly falling through the cracks, people who are working hard. And I'm just wondering around the analysis around the employment supplement benefit, is this a case where you choose we're going to put money here, and so we can't afford to put money here? I'm of the belief that, again, it's everybody's costs keep going up every year, and that incremental cost across programs is probably not a bad thing to have happen.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I thank the member, and of course it's something that we're always looking at. That's why we did things like taking 114,000 people off the tax roll, people who four years ago were paying taxes. That's why we indexed the income, indexed income tax so we can save families of four \$2,600 a year. That's why we have the second highest average weekly earnings in the province and why we increased the rental supplements and why we doubled the low-income tax credit. All those are initiatives that we balance as we design a budget.

It's not an easy process because there is competing good ideas. And ensuring that we can do things like increase shelter rates seven times since November of 2008, those are the kind of things that we look at. But importantly in the big picture, we want to ensure that Saskatchewan is the best place in Canada to live, and we are doing that work. I think the member opposite should know and realize that since 2007, we've increased the minimum wage by 19.5 per cent.

**Ms. Chartier:** — And who, which minister had that plan in place? It was the former minister, the member from Saskatoon Centre who actually hit . . . The one thing you haven't done is index it. So you did follow the plan, but you haven't indexed it.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — We followed the plan to grow the province.

**Ms. Chartier:** — The plan was in place. The plan was in place.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I'm quite happy to discuss this. We can continue to discuss it if you want to. Or if there's any more questions on income assistance, we can do that — whatever you prefer.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Well I'm concerned about this family and thinking that . . . And I hope that you'll look at this family situation. But I again think that this family is indicative of other

families who are employed, who are struggling because they're not high-income earners, who want to keep working and have health benefits. And I've talked to people who choose not to leave social assistance because they know they won't . . . They'll lose their health benefits if they have too much money. I mean that was the whole purpose of implementing the SES and the family health benefit.

So I hope that we can talk about this family afterwards to see what we can do for them because thus far they have had very little satisfaction in the answers that they've received from their MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] and from the minister's office, so I hope that we can pursue that a little bit later.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I've told the member that we will look at it. We know that there's always, whenever there has to be a cut-off level, somebody's going to be impacted. And I really . . . That's not something anybody wants to hear. But we will look at this individual case and any other individual case you bring forward to ensure that if there is something within our policies and programs that we can do that will have a positive impact on their world, we will do that. But in the big picture, we are pleased with what's happening to the majority, by far the majority of the people in the province.

**Ms. Chartier:** — I'd ask in your next budget review that'll start in the forthcoming months that you look at the employment supplement program because 2008 is a few years ago, and things have changed. Housing has skyrocketed. So that would be my one request: obviously the individual case, but again recognizing that this is one person or one family indicative of many others too.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I'd like to assure the member that all of the programs are reviewed on a regular basis to see what we can be doing within the context of the budget that we are given and the province's finance. So of course it will be looked at, not just because the member talked about it, but because it's the right thing to do as government. My colleagues bring forward ideas at all times as well. Thank you.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you. Just wondering with respect to the changes to OAS [old age security] that we expect in forthcoming years, when will . . . Perhaps the ministry's already started thinking about that. But obviously the off-loading from the feds to the province, changing from 65 to 67 will have an impact. Has there been some groundwork done on that already?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Yes, there has been. We are currently assessing the impact of the federal changes for seniors in the province. We know that the changes aren't going to take effect until 2023 and then that it's going to be phased in gradually over the next six years. So this is going to give us plenty of time to ensure that there is a plan in place for low-income supports as they're needed. Our goal of course is to ensure that we have a fewer number of seniors that are needing assistance. And that's, as a government, that was one of the questions that was asked of us and the thoughts that we had.

We were assured by the federal government that the changes wouldn't have an impact on the province, so we're going to be looking forward to a formal assurance of compensation from

the federal government in the weeks and months ahead. It's something that our Minister of Finance has discussed with us as well, and it's a decision that we took seriously. But knowing that we do have time to prepare and acknowledging that it's an issue that will be hitting the table sometime in the future, we will continue to work on it.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay, thank you. Thank you. I'm just going through my very organized pile of papers here around foster care. And again being new to this portfolio, this is something that I'm learning about.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I'm going to add, I do probably have some numbers here, but that was child and family services.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay. I'll put these away and save that extra half an hour for child and family services again.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — We've already finished that.

**Ms. Chartier:** — They can't come back?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — No. You asked . . . That's what I asked you on Monday night, that we had two hours for housing, and then we had our child and family services, and now we have disabilities. So that was the . . .

**Mr. Nilson:** — She asked the questions. If you can't answer them, then you can get the answers back later to them.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — For sure I would do that. To the member, if you have specific questions, ask me and I'll make sure I can get the information for you.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay, I will. In light of that, I've got three, three questions here. Well you know what? That's okay. I've got written questions on two of them, so I'm sure the written questions will come back. The third question though . . . That's a good point to my colleague here. I'll just put this on the record, if you can seek an answer here for me.

So we talked in estimates last week — or actually it wasn't last week; it was just a few days ago — about the changes to the children's special allowance. And I asked many questions about how much money, and where is it coming from. And I was told that it was going to the Ministry of Finance and that a number couldn't be pinned down. And then afterwards, I had a brief conversation off the record with one of the officials. And we discussed the child tax benefit, and I asked the number. I'm wondering if the number you're receiving for the child tax benefit is in fact \$298.50 per child? Oh no. Yes, that's 2012-13. Yes. So I'm wondering if the amount you're receiving per child for child tax benefit is \$298.50.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I will get the answer for you, and we will . . . What I'd like to offer to the member is, this issue is one that's complex. We know from the amount of time we spent on it on Monday night. And the various answers and answers we couldn't provide were . . . It's something that we are continuing to work on. So we will get the answer for you. And at the same time, as we have further answers given to us, we will talk to you on an individual basis and maybe even ask you to come up to the office and talk about any new numbers that we've received.

**Ms. Chartier:** — That would be very helpful. Thank you very much. I'd like to move over just directly to the budget document here and ask some specific questions around the budget here.

With respect to the transitional employment allowance, the allocation is dropping from 29 million, about 29 million to about, just about 22 million. And I'm just wondering what the accounting is on that.

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — Simply put, simply put we have a decrease in caseload in the transitional employment allowance of about 1,000 cases estimated for the coming year, so the costs will be less. More people are being employed and . . . [inaudible] . . . people coming to the transitional employment allowance for assistance.

**Ms. Chartier:** — How many people does that account for, the 21,845,000?

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — It's based on an estimate of 2,485 individual cases for the coming year on average, and that compares to 3,460 in the previous year's budget.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you. With respect to the child care parent subsidies from 17,000,500 to 18,000,175, what is that in terms of numbers for individuals?

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — I just have to get the right sheet here. So the 18,175,000 for child care subsidies in the coming year is based on a caseload or a subsidization level of 3,650, and that compares to 3,515 from last year, so an increase of 135.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Obviously the government is adding 500 new child care . . . It's an increase of only . . . You're only anticipating a small number of the 500 spaces being occupied by those who need child care subsidy then.

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — Probably in the same order that they are currently subsidized, at around 30 or so per cent of the licensed spaces are subsidized.

**Ms. Chartier:** — About 30 per cent of licensed spaces are subsidized. Okay. Just going back to the child care subsidy here since we're on it here, we had talked a little bit about the exit threshold, and I'm wondering what the exit threshold, say if you have one child, would be.

**Mr. Tweed:** — Gord Tweed from income assistance and disability services. So we have a number of illustrations of different family types with one child, two child, three children. So if I can just give you some illustrations of . . . You want the exit point?

**Ms. Chartier:** — Yes.

**Mr. Tweed:** — Okay. So for example in the child care centre, I appreciate you probably understand that our child care subsidy rates are organized into tiers based on communities of similar charges. So in what we call tier 1 in a child care centre, if I had a child who was an infant, the exit point would be on the order of \$42,000 annually. If I had a school-aged child, the exit point would be on the order of — just backing that up — about

\$30,000 because a school-aged child is in the centre for less time.

[16:30]

**Ms. Chartier:** — How about for a toddler?

**Mr. Tweed:** — That one is not on this. That one didn't make our example list. I can take you to a two-child example with an infant and a toddler. Would that help you?

**Ms. Chartier:** — Oh, sure.

**Mr. Tweed:** — Okay. So our exit rate there would be on the order of, in tier 1 again . . . Oh thanks. That's much easier. Infant and toddler running on the tier 1, on the order of \$70,000, just a little under \$70,000.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Can you tell what the subsidy would look like for two children, an infant and toddler who are just on the cusp of exiting in a tier 1 centre?

**Mr. Tweed:** — So the maximum subsidy available for that constellation of children would be \$1,010 per month, and then it would gradually reduce as your income exceeds, in the instance of this threshold, \$1,740 per month. And it would extend out over the income ranges to as high as the threshold that I referenced earlier, \$69,360.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay, so if you've got the sixty-nine thousand . . .

**Mr. Tweed:** — Three hundred and sixty dollars. You'd have zero eligibility.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay.

**Mr. Tweed:** — Does that help you?

**Ms. Chartier:** — Yes, I think. I know I'm still trying to understand all of this here too.

**Mr. Tweed:** — We have many illustrations that . . .

**Ms. Chartier:** — Do you have a copy of that, that I could have?

**Mr. Tweed:** — This would be in the public domain, so we can advance it to you through the Chair I'm sure.

**Ms. Chartier:** — That would be very helpful. Thank you. Okay. Thank you. Those were just my questions around the exit threshold. And that's what changed in 2006? Sorry, I thought that was . . .

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Yes.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay. Thank you very much. The Saskatchewan child benefit is going down from 574 to 500. Can you tell me a bit about that?

**Mr. Tweed:** — Sorry, I dropped my glasses, so I won't be able to read. So the child benefit program actually matured fully in

2006. So that program, as you might recall and you referenced some of the earlier programs, was a program that saw the transition of children's basic-need benefits or income support from the province, from the combination of the province and the federal government, fully to the federal government over a period of years. The child benefit program itself, as I said sunsetted in 2006.

So really the program that's offered here is displayed this way for budget purposes. It's actually something that we refer to as a child benefit adjustment. So it's a backfill program for parents who don't receive the maximum children's benefit through the federal government at this point. So a condition that would take you to that sort of circumstance would be if you had a higher income last year, a lower income this year. It's based on your income that you report in the previous tax year. So if you had a circumstance where your income dropped significantly, you might qualify, and there might be a lag time. So our program — or government's program, pardon me — the child benefit adjustment backfills until such time that the federal government reinstates your full benefit package.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay. Okay, thank you. And you're expecting a little bit . . .

**Mr. Tweed:** — Yes, it declines over time. It's just that the program is very much baselined out now at around, I think it's around 500 cases, if I actually read . . . At around, sorry, around 260 cases, 210 cases in the coming year. And it's sort of at a bottom-line baseline.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay.

**Mr. Tweed:** — The other part of the program that operates or that we fund you can claim back in terms of retroactive adjustments. So we keep a portion of the budget available to support those retroactive adjustments for people that may have been eligible for higher benefits in previous years. It's a small portion.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay, thank you. I think I probably have many questions about that, but I'd have to read *Hansard* and think about it and maybe submit some written questions because they're not jumping out at me. But I'm not quite sure that I fully understand.

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — It's probably the explanation being afforded isn't all that clear.

**Ms. Chartier:** — No, the explanation is just fine.

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — Okay.

**Ms. Chartier:** — With respect to income assistance community-based services, it sees a small drop. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — So my understanding is that's going up by \$38,000, not down.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Oh. It could be my very weary eyes here at this . . .

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — And that \$38,000 increase has to do with the 1.6 per cent increase.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Yes, it is in fact going up, not down. Thank you. So that's the 1.6 increase?

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — That's correct.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay, thank you. Disabilities for the community-based organizations is going up. Is that the 1.6 per cent increase as well?

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — In part. It also includes funding to carry forward with the wait-list initiative completion over the coming year.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay. Okay, thank you. Around income assistance and disability services program delivery, that is dropping.

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — The change has to do with a wage adjustment in that subvote. That's our operation subvote, so it includes Valley View Centre and our front-line staff.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay, so that's wages at Valley View? Did I hear that correctly?

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — It would be salary changes in that subvote.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay.

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — And that subvote includes Valley View Centre and our front-line income assistance service delivery.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay. With respect to the seniors' personal care home benefit, which is something new, can you tell me a little bit about how this is going to work?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — This is something that we heard about a lot in the last number of years, that people who are living in the personal care homes, sometimes their income isn't adequate for the dollars that are required by the personal care home. So it was something that we heard about a lot in the last three or four years. So we're going to be going up to \$369 a month by the end of the fourth year to provide monies directly to the seniors for those who live in personal care homes that are scattered right across the province. We're excited about this plan. It's one that we had a lot of calls about, people saying that, you know, their income just wasn't adequate if they only had, probably not even CPP [Canada Pension Plan], but GIS [Guaranteed Income Supplement] and old age supplement.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Is it a refundable tax benefit then, or how will it work? So I've got my . . .

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — It will be paid in the form of a cheque to the individual.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay. A cheque to the individual. Like a monthly cheque.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — That's correct.

**Ms. Chartier:** — And who will all be eligible for it? What is the income cut-off?

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — Actually the intent of the program is to provide funding to seniors in personal care homes. So first, you're over 65 and you're living in a personal care home and your income is less than \$1,800. So the benefit will fill that gap between your current income level and \$1,800, whatever that is.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I could add that the first benefit will be available in July of this year, and seniors can apply by filling out their application and mailing it to the client centre. Applications will be available by the beginning of June. And as I said, these individuals have to be a permanent resident of the province and live in a Saskatchewan licensed personal care home.

**Ms. Chartier:** — And how are you letting . . . Obviously there was a news release when you announced it a few . . . well in the budget or whenever it was. But how are you making sure that seniors are going to be able to tap into this?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — The information packages have been sent to the personal care home operators.

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — Will be sent.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Will be sent.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Will be.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Yes.

**Ms. Chartier:** — So the first payment is, it's 369 or up to . . .

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Up to 369 by the fourth year, I believe. This year's 278. That will be the average, will be 278.

**Ms. Chartier:** — But it's geared to income, so some will receive less.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Yes.

**Ms. Chartier:** — And some will receive more. Okay. So 278 this year, and then when do you anticipate it reaching 369 maximum?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — By the end of the fourth year.

**Ms. Chartier:** — So seniors can . . . So the packages are going currently to care homes, or will be in the near future?

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — Nothing's been distributed yet. Similar to the SAID development process for this spring, regulations are in process for authorizing this program, and that is being geared for payments in July to personal care home residents who have incomes less than \$1,800.

**Ms. Chartier:** — In terms of coming up and developing this benefit and the amount that would be payable, in terms of numbers used, factoring what the average cost of a care home is, do you have those numbers?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — A lot of this information was determined by the Ministry of Health as they are the ones that are, you know, they are dealing with the individuals. But because we have the seniors' income plan and we are the ones that are going to actually put the program forward, it'll be administered through our office. So we've been working in conjunction with Health, and when it comes to determining the actual cost for private care homes and the amounts of money that individuals may have to pay, I know that I have a number of personal care homes in my area, and their rate may fluctuate a little bit. So our discussions has been an involvement with Health and Finance.

**Ms. Chartier:** — How much of this gap between the rate, the cost of the care home and the income, do you anticipate this filling? Like, has there been some numbers done on that? How much of that do you think it'll fill?

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — I think the problem with averages is that they're rare. So the circumstances of the individual are really what matters. Some are less than \$1,800 in cost, and many are a lot more. So it's a matter of the choice being made around selecting \$1,800 as an income point to fund and increasing it over the next four years to a \$2,000 per month income point. That's what the benefit changes will do. It'll increase that income threshold and backfill instead of 1,800, \$2,000 in four years time.

[16:45]

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay, thank you. I just wanted to chat a little bit about the FTEs [full-time equivalent]. We talked about it in child and family services, and you had said that there won't be any loss, and you've been quite proud of your record in child and family services.

But around income security, and I know I flagged this and you respectfully disagreed with me. But I do speak to people, as do my colleagues, on a fairly regular basis who have difficulties getting calls returned from folks in income security and as do we on occasion. And we're dealing in the Saskatoon region. So I'm wondering about FTEs and income security.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I'm going to ask Bob to go through the FTE numbers in his area.

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — So a little bit of background on our income assistance system: has 20 offices, as I mentioned earlier, across the province including also a contact centre here in Regina. I'll just go back two years. That service system altogether has been using 296 to 300 FTEs, so on a fairly consistent basis in and around 300 full-time equivalents in that service delivery system.

What we've found, and your question is around workload, what we've found in recent years is that with the economy improving and our caseloads actually declining that we have been able to maintain our . . . Caseloads have been stabilizing and declining that we've been able to manage within average caseloads between 130 and 150 per worker, which is a standard we had set some years ago. One change that we did make in recent years, just to make the flow of our resources, human resources, across the province more possible, was creating what we called floater positions which allows us to have a staff who can go

from community to community and provide backfill when the volumes change from community to community.

I would add also that over the coming year we'll be adding resources in fact to the income assistance service delivery system in order to implement the changes in the Saskatchewan assured income for disabilities. So rather than going down, in fact we're going up in that service system.

**Ms. Chartier:** — So with respect to the attrition in the FTE positions that we talked about and that where we talked about 30 of them likely from Valley View, so what area of Social Services are those 70 positions coming from?

**Mr. Acton:** — Well as I mentioned last evening when we were here, we really have kind of four areas that we're focusing on. One is how we work differently with First Nations and Métis people, and we're looking at opportunities there. We've had some success in the North. We're certainly trying to improve or build on our partnerships with community-based organizations. And we're reviewing and looking for efficiencies in terms of how can we make sure we're focused on client-centred approaches. And I think one example that you brought up this afternoon was on the child benefit, and is there a way that we can streamline that and make it much more efficient, as opposed to having I don't know how many different folks filling out different forms.

So I mean those things we want to look at. And we've had some success just in terms of, with retirements or vacancies that come up in the ministry, to look at each one of those and to have a real sense of do we need this position and do we need it in this location and so that we had making maximum use of our folks and making sure that we're lining them up in the right spots.

And I mentioned some of the decisions that have already been made around Living Skies Housing Authority. You mentioned a couple at Valley View for the cottage closure and the laundry. We're having discussions with Lac La Ronge child and family services there as well, and of course there'll be a couple that will be impacted through the accounts payable project that's right across the piece.

Other than that, we haven't identified specific positions, but we're going to continue to work at it over the year. And we've had success in the past and I'm confident we can do it again.

**Ms. Chartier:** — So again the Lac La Ronge Child and Family Services then, it would be not diminishing services but giving the resources to Lac La Ronge or having Lac La Ronge CFS [child and family services] provide the services that the ministry formerly provided. Is that what you mean when you . . .

**Mr. Acton:** — That's discussions that we plan to have. They're already providing . . . They took over after-hour emergency services last year and it's been well-received, and so we want to explore opportunities there for sure.

**Ms. Chartier:** — So just help me understand this. So there might be a possibility for a few positions from the ministry to go to Lac La Ronge child and family services to do some more work. But that still means the resources . . . If they're going to do the work, they need the resources to do the work. So how

would that work?

**Mr. Acton:** — That would change our FTEs on these numbers here if those individuals were employed by a child and family service agency as opposed to the ministry.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay, so again . . . I think I'm tired here. So the reality is the FTE would be over there, but the resources would still be . . . you'd still be supporting Lac La Ronge with the financial resources to provide, but the FTEs are no longer under the ministry.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — That's correct.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Then to the member, that's an important discussion because it's really part of what we talked about to the child welfare review. One of the recommendations, and they're important, was a recommendation that was dealing with First Nations and Métis families in a different way and recognizing that there could be a way to ensure that the support was given through the First Nations or through the band in some way.

I was really pleased with the work that La Ronge is doing after-hours and so was, from feedback, so are the people in that community. So our goal is to ensure that, following the recommendations. And it just makes sense. It makes sense to ensure that the people that are, the First Nations and Métis in the area are providing the services that are required. It's an exciting way to deal differently and to have different outcomes

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you. I know we're running out of time here, but I'd be remiss if we didn't chat a little bit about Valley View and what the plans are over the next few years with respect to Valley View. And I have a few questions, but I think my colleague does as well. So can you tell me what your anticipation of the closure of Valley View's going to look like?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Thank you. And this is a very, very important item. I know it's something that . . . When they stopped admitting individuals into Valley View in 2002, I believe it was, and the number of clients has decreased to 207, the letters that we received in January underlined the need for us, from the families of Valley View, from SACL, and individuals saying, you know, let's make a decision on this issue. So in conjunction with the families in Valley View, we've determined that transitioning up to the year 2015-2016 we'll at that time . . . We're hopeful that there'll be a place for our clients at that time.

We've had very good meetings with the families and the organizations in Moose Jaw area saying that they want to be involved. I've personally had discussions with a number of them who are saying, this is the right thing to do. The mode, the way that that centre was set up nearly 50 years ago is the wrong way to deal with individuals of Valley View. So they want to have a voice, and we need their voice in determining where will be home for the individuals that are there.

So there's been a number of ministry meetings — in fact I think the last one was yesterday — with the families, with the group



that are saying, how do we plan ahead? There will be some individuals that . . . Every one of them will have a unique need, and the family will have a desire to have a voice where those individuals may go to. So I know, Bob, if you have anything to add to that . . .

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — Just a few observations. We've had now four joint steering committee meetings with the family group, SACL, and ourselves, the Ministry of Social Services, which forms the steering committee for planning for the transition of Valley View Centre residents. We've adopted that we will be using a person-centred approach, so very much that we need individual plans for every one of those 207 residents at Valley View Centre.

Social Services uses, in our community living service system, a comprehensive personal planning and support policy which creates a protocol and process around exactly that, around individualized planning, around the person, and making sure that we use those advocates or family members or staff who know most about those individuals in terms of their needs and interests, and planning for meeting those.

So as we plan ahead over the next number of months and years, the first steps will be to look at the . . . gather information about each of those 207 residents and understand well their interests and needs in terms of some of those people certainly have complex medical and some complex behavioural needs that need to be supported in a new service system. Once we understand those individual needs, we'll be gathering that information together to understand and plan accordingly around what kinds of services need to be built in Moose Jaw or other places in Saskatchewan to replace the services at Valley View Centre.

Another concurrent piece of work that we'll be doing will be to research and inventory the kinds of options that are available in Saskatchewan, or across Canada for that matter. What kinds of ideas have other jurisdictions come up with in terms of providing good services to people with intellectual disabilities?

One of the points made in the meeting the other day with the joint committee was that we're planning not just for new services for these 207 residents, but creating a sustainable, flexible, and innovative system, and a vision for services for people with intellectual disabilities for the future. So it's not just being thoughtful about the individual needs of these people but how we can use the experience, the understanding, and the research that we do here to build a system that's good for years ahead.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you for that. I just have one quick question. I know, I know that People First was involved in the advocacy around closing Valley View. It was very important to them. Some of them are past Valley View residents. And you've mentioned the Valley View family group that's around the table and SACL and obviously the ministry. I'm just wondering why at this stage the self-advocates, People First, aren't around the table?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — We're involving the families that have members in the home at this time. What we need is their input on what they need to do with their loved ones. So it's important

to us to make sure that the families that are impacted at this time are the important . . . are making the decisions. Bob, is there anything to add?

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — I would say yes. And it was a collective decision of the steering committee, as it's currently formed, that those were the members and that would form the steering committee going forward — SACL, the family association, and Social Services.

**Ms. Chartier:** — So there's no interest in having People First again, who some of them are past Valley View residents, doing some self-advocacy? Obviously the families are really important who are currently, or that the individuals who are currently there are absolutely important to have their family supports. But many of them don't have family supports, and self-advocates are people who've been there and live . . . SACL and the family group are important, but I think self-advocates, the people who are living the reality, are important people to have around the table too.

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — Yes, I understand that. And certainly People First did voice that to us, and it's understood. As the minister said, we are planning for the individual family members who have representatives there, and those are the people that are represented on the steering committee. The voice of People First and their views and influence around this planning is important as well, as well as many other stakeholders who have an interest in this work including SARC [Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres] and other CBOs around the province who have quite a lot of interest in how this is developed.

So we will be looking for — we've had this conversation at the steering committee level — looking for ways to inform and be informed by those other, those other bodies as a steering committee.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — As a ministry, it's important to us to hear from them. So even though they're not at the table, their voice is heard through the ministry as well. We appreciate their input and I've had discussions with them as well. So you're right. You know, they can advocate for individuals, and that's why there's the three members at the table ensuring that their voice is heard.

**Ms. Chartier:** — So you've had the discussion with the steering committee, with SACL, the Valley View Family Group, and the ministry. So the steering group . . . About these other stakeholders, have you come up with any mechanisms to . . . yet? Or are you still in the process of organizations, whether it's Valley View or the unionized employees or the CBOs who will be taking on some of the work? Have you developed any mechanisms yet for feeding that input into the process?

[17:00]

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — No, we've not. Those mechanisms have been discussed. We've had four meetings so far as a steering committee. The most recent was Tuesday of this week where we spent an all-day planning session sorting through what the path ahead looked like, including some of the governance structures that would fall under the steering committee,

including working groups and reference panels that we should be creating to make sure that we have an opportunity to inform, but also be influenced by other voices in the community.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay. Thank you very much. I see it's 5 o'clock.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. Before we adjourn, Madam Minister, have you got any closing comments?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Yes, I'd like to thank the member for her questions. They were important and relevant. I thank all the committee members for being here today. I'd especially like to thank the staff and the personnel who are with me today. They're working extensively. I can't thank them enough for all the good work that they do, the staff in my office as well. They are incredibly dedicated to the work that we're doing. Every one of the people that we're dealing with are valuable and vulnerable at the same time. So I do want to thank them.

I'm not sure if the member is going to require further time. Maybe she could indicate to us if there would be other . . . I think there's another allocation of a few minutes at some time if she wanted to have it. I'm just wondering if you'll be requiring that.

**Ms. Chartier:** — I think I would like it. I will . . .

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — On this file.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Yes.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — On this disability file.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Yes.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Okay. Thank you.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you very much. And thank you to all the . . . well the committee and officials — officials, that's the word. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, one and all. I would ask a member to move a motion of adjournment.

**Ms. Eagles:** — I so move, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Ms. Eagles has moved. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. This meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 17:02.]