



# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

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## STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Mr. Greg Lawrence, Chair  
Moose Jaw Wakamow

Ms. Nicole Rancourt, Deputy Chair  
Prince Albert Northcote

Ms. Tina Beaudry-Mellor  
Regina University

Mr. Dan D'Autremont  
Cannington

Mr. Muhammad Fiaz  
Regina Pasqua

Mr. Roger Parent  
Saskatoon Meewasin

Hon. Nadine Wilson  
Saskatchewan Rivers

[The committee met at 19:00.]

**The Chair:** — Good evening everyone. Welcome to tonight's meeting of the Standing Committee for Human Services. First thing I'd like to do is to introduce our members and also our substitution. We have Ms. Beaudry-Mellor. We have Ms. Wilson, Mr. Parent. We have Ms. Beck chitting in for Ms. Rancourt, and I am Greg Lawrence. I will be your Chair of the committee tonight. And we have Mr. Fiaz in.

I'd like to advise the committee that pursuant to rule 148(1), the estimates for the following ministries were committed to the committee on June 9th, 2016: vote 37, 169, Advanced Education; vote 5, Education; vote 32, Health; vote 20, Labour Relations and Workplace Safety; and vote 36, Social Services.

**General Revenue Fund  
Education  
Vote 5**

**Subvote (ED01)**

**The Chair:** — We will be considering the estimates for the Ministry of Education. We now begin our consideration of vote 5, Education, central management services, subvote (ED01). Minister Morgan is here with his officials. We started at 7 o'clock. Minister, would you please introduce your officials and make your opening comments.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to be here and to be joined by ministry colleagues and by my chief of staff to speak to the Ministry of Education's 2016-2017 budget.

With me today to help answer any questions that committee members may have are Julie MacRae, deputy minister — it is her first time doing this; Donna Johnson, assistant deputy minister, who I think has been doing this since before the war; Clint Repski, assistant deputy minister; Lynn Allan, acting assistant deputy minister, but usually in charge of slide decks; Dawn Court, executive director, corporate services; Angela Chobanik, executive director, education funding; Brett Waytuck, executive director, student achievement and supports, who is leaving us on Thursday to go and become a librarian at U of R [University of Regina], so I'm afraid to have him put up for fear that we have no leverage over him going forward.

Also Kevin Gabel, executive director, programs; Gerry Craswell, executive director, information management and support; Allison Hopkins, Provincial Librarian and executive director, Provincial Library and literacy office; Janet Mitchell, acting executive director, early years; Brenda Dougherty, director, early years; Sheldon Ramstead, executive director, infrastructure; Doug Volk, executive director, Teachers' Superannuation Commission; and my chief of staff, Drew Dwernychuk.

This year's Education budget is about keeping Saskatchewan strong through investments in our students and infrastructure. Though fiscal challenges exist, our government is committed to continuing investment in our future, through both our students and our children.

During this past spring's provincial election, our government heard a strong message from the people of Saskatchewan: we want to maintain our essential services in the most fiscally responsible way. We know that a quality education is the backbone of a growing and diverse economy. As stated in the plan for growth, we are committed to making Saskatchewan the best place in Canada to live, work, build a business, and get an education. In order to achieve this, we need to have a well-educated population who can contribute to our province's overall success. Because of this, we know that despite our current economic decline, we must continue to make students and infrastructure a priority. It is our responsibility as a government to ensure that the education system is well supported.

We remain committed to reaching the targets laid out in the plan for growth and the education sector strategic plan to ensure our students are reaching their full potential. These include having 90 per cent of children exiting kindergarten ready to learn; ensuring that 80 per cent of students are at grade level in reading, writing, and math; decreasing the disparity between First Nations and Métis students compared to their non-First Nations and Métis counterparts, and leading the country in graduation rates by 2020.

We are continuing to work together with school divisions, First Nations and Métis education organizations, as well as our sector partners to move towards reaching these goals. The basis of these goals is putting the students' needs first to ensure that every child has the support they need to take advantage of the opportunities available to them in our growing province. That is why this year's budget continues to make students a priority by investing in pre-K to 12 [pre-kindergarten to grade 12] education, the early years, libraries, and literacy sectors. That commitment is evident in our funding increase of 7.8 per cent for the Ministry of Education 2016-17 budget, increasing the total investment to 2.2 billion. This is the largest ever budget day investment in education in our province's history.

I'd like to talk briefly about operating funding. Also included in this budget is an increase to operating funding for school divisions. Overall funding for school divisions in the 2016-2017 budget is \$2.7 billion, which includes 1.89 billion for school division operating funds, 391.4 million in capital funding, 395.1 million for teachers' pension and benefits. This is an overall increase of 176.3 million to support pre-K to grade 12 education in the government's fiscal year.

The school operating fund of \$1.89 billion includes revenue collected from the education property tax. That is an increase of 16.6 million or point nine per cent over the 2015-16 government fiscal year.

This budget also maintains education property tax mill rates at 2015 levels. This ensures that Saskatchewan residents will continue to benefit from the property tax relief announced in 2009.

On a school division fiscal year, school operating funds have increased by \$9.6 million or point five per cent. This includes increased funding for the collective bargaining agreement. We are aware that school divisions will need to find savings in other

areas of their budget to fund a portion of the collective bargaining agreement. We are confident that each school division will be able to make decisions on how to allocate their overall operating grant to best serve their division and their students.

School division operating funding is based on enrolment projections for September 2016 and will be adjusted to the actual enrolments come September. This will ensure that we are meeting the needs of those schools and divisions most impacted by this time of unprecedented growth.

Work is also continuing on the funding model review with Dan Perrins. We remain committed to working with our sector partners to ensure our model is meeting the educational funding needs of our province. We expect a review to be complete in time for the 2016-17 year.

This government is also continuing to invest in the infrastructure of the . . . yes, I have a typo. It should say '17-18 operating year. I'm sorry . . . continue to invest in the infrastructure of the education sector. We not only think that students' safety is a priority, but we also know that many school divisions are continuing to grow. Because of this we are committing the largest ever capital allocation in our province's history of \$391.4 million. This includes \$310.5 million for continued work on the nine joint-use schools currently under construction in Regina, Saskatoon, Warman, and Martensville.

I am proud to say that this project continues to remain on time and on budget and is now just over one-third of the way complete. When the doors of these 18 schools open in September 2017, we expect these schools to serve approximately 11,000 students. We know these communities are among the most impacted by the extraordinary growth over the past number of years and this investment will help to meet the demands of growth.

This budget is also investing \$41.9 million to advance other capital projects already under way around the province, including those in St. Brieux, Langenburg, Gravelbourg, Martensville and Regina. While we continue to fund ongoing capital projects, no new projects are being approved for the design phase at this time.

We are also continuing to invest in improving the safety and quality of our existing schools by investing \$33.4 million, a 24 per cent increase, for school preventative maintenance and renewal, and this budget continues to provide \$4.6 million for emergent funding needs. We know this is a welcome investment for school divisions as it allows them to proactively address maintenance issues.

This brings the Government of Saskatchewan's overall investment in school infrastructure since November 2007 to approximately \$1.4 billion.

I want to talk briefly about the joint task force for improving First Nations and Métis education employment outcomes. We remain committed to continuing investments to respond to the recommendations by the joint task force. The government's overall investment remains at \$6 million to continue this important work, with \$5.1 million of that money being directed

towards education. Our ministry's investment of nearly \$5.1 million will include \$2.4 million to continue the 16 invitational shared services initiatives, \$1.6 million for the continued implementation of Following Their Voices, \$1 million for the expansion of Help Me Tell My Story and Help Me Talk About Math, and \$100,000 for on-reserve Microsoft software licensing.

We know, as outlined by the joint task force report, that a multi-year plan is required to systematically improve these outcomes for First Nations and Métis children and youth. Ensuring equitable outcomes and improved student achievement for First Nations and Métis students continues to be a priority for this government.

In addition to the joint task force funding, the 2016-17 budget continues to provide \$3.8 million in funding to target innovation, accountability, and promising practices that directly impact educational outcomes for First Nations and Métis students. This funding will enable school divisions to actualize their First Nations and Métis education plan in order to improve students' literacy, numeracy, and engagement. We know this is a key to reaching our overall goals as set out in the plan for growth in the ESSP [education sector strategic plan], of improving the disparity between graduation and engagement rates of our First Nations and Métis students with their non-First Nations and Métis counterparts.

We are also providing more than \$600,000 in continued funding for summer literacy camps, which support the higher achievement of all students but especially that of First Nations and Métis children by providing rich learning experiences during July and August to ensure students continue to develop their literacy skills.

The government is also continuing to provide \$300,000 in funding for Junior Achievement of Saskatchewan. This innovative program has been running for nearly 40 years, and stimulates and inspires elementary, middle, and high school students to value free enterprise, understand business and economics, and develop entrepreneurial and leadership skills. These are important skills in our growing and diverse economy. Programs like these not only help these students reach their own full potential, but also provide our province with young professionals ready to lead us into the future. We look forward to seeing continued positive results in this area through ongoing partnerships and relationship building with our First Nations and Métis sector partners.

I want to finish by talking briefly about supporting students. As part of our ongoing commitment to supporting students and teachers in the classroom, this year's budget also includes \$4 million for classroom supports over the government fiscal year, bringing the total supports for learning for the 2016-17 school year to \$288 million.

We are also targeting \$5.4 million of operating grant funding to provide supports for the influx of Syrian refugee students. We understand the intense needs that the students have and the pressures these needs put on school divisions as they provide a quality education for all students. With support from school divisions, we have also put in a request to ask our federal counterparts to help fund these students. Funding for youth at

high-risk facilities is also increasing by 600,000 over last year for a total investment of \$5.8 million. This will help to address salary and enrolment pressures at these facilities.

**Early years.** The government remains committed to supporting early education and child care access to the province with a continued investment of \$76.85 million to support some of the youngest and most vulnerable citizens of our province. Funding for pre-K for 2016-17 is \$26 million. This will support 316 programs and 5,056 spaces around the province. Pre-K supports the social, emotional, intellectual, language, and literacy development of three- and four-year-olds. These programs are targeted towards children in communities in most need of these services, in order to help meet our overall goal as set out in the ESSP of having 90 per cent of children exiting kindergarten ready to learn.

The government also values the important work of early childhood intervention programs around the province for the differences that they are making in children and families' lives. That is why funding for ECIPs [early childhood intervention programs] is maintained at \$3.93 million this year.

[19:15]

Work is also continuing on the creation of 810 new child care spaces that are being developed as part of the joint-use schools currently under construction in Saskatoon, Regina, Warman, and Martensville. Since 2007 this government has allocated funding for a total of 4,935 new licensed child care centre spaces across the province, which is a 53 per cent increase. The 810 new joint-use school places which will open in fall 2017 are in addition to the 4,935 and will help meet the needs in communities experiencing some of the greatest growth. Our government is proud of these investments that we have made in these areas.

**Libraries and literacy.** We also remain committed to supporting and developing the literacy skills of all learners in our province and recognize the role public libraries have in supporting that. In this year's budget, support for public libraries will remain at \$11.09 million, and current funding for resource-sharing grants will be maintained. This includes continued investments of 8.25 million for resource-sharing grants for regional libraries, \$2.39 million for CommunityNet, \$138,000 for library initiatives, \$114,000 for the single integrated library system known as SILS, \$100,000 for services for people with print disabilities, \$100,000 for interlibrary loans. Our government recognizes the important role that public libraries have in supporting and developing literacy skills of all learners in our province. This funding will ensure that the people of Saskatchewan can continue to access information and resources they need through their public libraries.

Support for literacy organizations will also be continued with a \$1.6 million investment which includes \$537,000 for family literacy; \$600,000 as previously mentioned for summer literacy camps; another \$45,000 for on-reserve summer literacy camps run through Frontier College; and \$500,000 for the Saskatchewan Community Literacy Fund. The funding for adult literacy has been moved over to the Ministry of Economy to streamline the services to better serve the citizens of our province.

I would be remiss if we did not talk about transformational change. While we are very proud of the overall investment our government is making into our early years pre-K to 12 library and literacy sectors, we also know that there is room for improvement in how we do things. In light of our current fiscal challenges, we know that we need to look at new ways of doing things to ensure that we remain fiscally responsible while providing quality services and education to the students and families of our province. That is why we are talking about transformational change and what that means for our education sector. It is about putting our students' needs first and digging deep to ask the hard questions, including: is this the role of government? If yes, is this service being delivered in the best way and the lowest cost to taxpayers? Are there similar programs that can be combined with better results for lower costs? And could delivering services in a different way provide savings while also continuing to meet the needs of our citizens and/or students?

We will start consultations with our education sector to begin answering these questions together. We will work to carve a path forward that will ensure that our education system remains successful and able to continue to meet our goals while being sustainable for years to come. These are the highlights of this year's budget. This concludes my opening remarks. I look forward to our discussion this evening.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Forbes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much. I want to thank the minister for his opening remarks, and my colleague for letting me go first with a couple of sets of questions. I know you'll be long into the evening, and there's important conversations to have.

Right off the bat, as you know, I've been daily raising the issue of heritage language instruction in Saskatchewan in that cut, so I'll have a few questions about that. Were there any other third party or non-government organizations where their funding was cut or eliminated in this budget?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — There was a \$100,000 payment that we had made to the Office of the Treaty Commissioner that was not continued. It was part of a . . . there was project work that was being done and was completed. The regional intersectoral committees — there was 10 of them — had received funding of I believe \$100,000 each, and that was not continued this year. And we've asked the people in that sector to work with the Hub and COR [centre of responsibility] to try and achieve the same types of results that are there. And then there was also, there was \$204,000 to the Regina District Industry Education Council, and the Saskatoon Industry Education Council. The total of 204,000 will be discontinued for 2016-2017.

And then there was a scholarship program with Pearson College which, a decision was made not to continue it several years ago, and it was \$34,000 but we left it in place until this year so the last of the students that were in the program could finish. And there are no more students in the program, so nobody will be left midway through whatever education program they were taking.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I remember that program. That was quite a

good program, so I'm sad to hear that's gone.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I don't think there was anything wrong or critical of the program. It was just a desire to support programs in the province.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. So my question then is, why the heritage language program being singled out before you're getting in this transformational process? Was it something that you had been thinking about for some time? Why were they . . . It seems quite singled out because you've gone through quite a list of third-party groups that you are continuing to fund.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We wanted to give the heritage language people as much notice as we could, so we announced it sort of somewhat prior to the budget, the program was not going to be continuing. We have, in the schools, a lot of the schools have got alternate language fund program and there's a number of different languages that are available — Cree, Ukrainian, German, French, and a number of others that are there. They are taught at a 20 or 30 level.

The heritage language program, which I'm sure is a good program, but it was an after-school program, sort of an add-on and not part of our core programming. The school divisions, I understand, are going to continue to provide space for the classes. But we felt it was something that wasn't core, wasn't specific to our mandate, so we made the decision earlier in the year that it was something we would not continue funding. The cost per student per month was \$4.58. So our hope and expectation is that it's something that the parents or the communities will be able to absorb. We'd like to, of course, like to see the programming continue, but we don't think it's something that's core to government and ought not be funded by government.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well they say, and I have a note here, that it's the Saskatchewan Organization for Heritage Languages member language schools offer the credit classes in Chinese, Spanish, and German. So who teaches your German classes? Is it all regular teachers? Or do you have some of those credits coming through heritage language schools?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I wouldn't be aware of how the classes are taught. The divisions make the decisions on who to employ. I'm not aware whether there's a full-time teacher teaching in the division that does heritage language after school or vice versa. I don't know that. It may well be.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Is there an official here today who can tell us who these teachers are? Because we're having a bit of a disconnect here. You're saying one thing and the heritage language folks are saying they are the ones who are teaching it.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I'm not saying anything. I'm just saying that we don't know . . . We don't have information as to who they've retained to teach the heritage language schools and whether there would be an overlap. I assume that there would be some overlap, but we don't have the information.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well, and are you doing this tomorrow as well?

**A Member:** — Yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So maybe you could get the information for tomorrow . . .

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I don't know whether we'd have it. We'd have to go to all of the divisions and ask them, do they have teachers that are there? You know, if heritage language says that there's overlap, we don't take issue with it.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So when you made this decision, were you aware that the heritage language instructors were carrying out these credit classes? And was that the information given to you?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The credit courses we expect to be taught by accredited teachers. We don't know whether they all are or are not in the heritage language programming.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well the ones that are offered, the member language schools offer credit classes in Chinese, Spanish, and German this year.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — If they are in an accredited course, if they're taking the course not as a being part of an after-school program, if they're taking the course towards a credit, those continue.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Do they continue? This may be news to them.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Okay. Yes. I'm sorry. If the course is a credit course — and it may be taught at different times — if it's a credit course, it will be taught by an accredited teacher. And so far as I know, those continue.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay, so the . . . Now how will that continue if the school is no longer functioning? How will you ensure that those programs . . .

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — They would be taught by the school in the ordinary course. They may or may not be taught at different times of the day.

**Mr. Forbes:** — But now you're expecting them to do that without any funding.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The funding that we provided was for an after-school or a weekend program.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So the credit classes were not taught at the same time, on the Saturday or after school?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — There might be some variation. We can try and find out some better information between now and tomorrow.

**Mr. Forbes:** — This is a pretty big issue. Because this is what they're feeling, is that there's not been a good communication around this issue.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We'll try and get you some information.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So tomorrow night? I mean, they're watching right now. I've told them . . . and unfortunately I don't have my phone with me because I said, text me any questions, because we do that. But there's a series of questions, though, because

they're an integral part of the education system and they take exception to be considered an after-school program.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We will certainly undertake to find out. It's not our goal to try and disrupt or discontinue a program that leaves . . . is part of an accredited course, is part of somebody's grade 12 or 11 classes. We'll find out for you.

**Mr. Forbes:** — It just seems to me . . . and I appreciate the numbers in education, and rightfully so, should be one of the main expenses of our government budget. And you talked about 176 million in operating funds, and I imagine that's where the \$225,000 comes out of. And it just seems to me the positive impact of heritage languages that we have in Saskatchewan goes beyond much more than being an after-school program. In fact, the different languages and the ethnic groups who support that instruction really feel this is a big part of them belonging to Saskatchewan, and they feel very strongly about that. And it is interesting, because they talk about how the Ministry of Education makes good use of them actually as experts in their fields and particularly when it comes to curriculum development. Are you aware of that?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I can tell you this. The program, I think, is of benefit to the families that choose to participate in it. To the extent that it's an after-school program or an evening or weekend program, it's something that we regard as not being core to the programming that we provide during regular class during the day. So for that reason it was felt that we would not continue funding for it. It was largely paid for by families and by the participants.

Within the divisions we have a number, nine or ten different language classes, that are taught at different levels. Those would continue in the ordinary course and would not be affected by this decision. So what this was was a decision that was for an after-school, evening, or weekend program, and that was why that decision was made.

[19:30]

**Mr. Forbes:** — So am I hearing you say that it's because it's after school, and any program that is considered or offered after school is now at risk because it's not during the regular business or the instructional hours? Is that what I'm hearing you say?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Well what I'm saying is we look at all of the programs that are provided or programming that's done in our schools with a view to determining what is core, to do it . . . This we know is going to be a difficult and challenging budget year. So we made a number of different decisions to try and make sure that we were able to maintain the viability of our school system, and this was one of the ones that we felt was an after-school program. The cost of it was small enough that families would be able to absorb it themselves at \$4.58 a month, and that we felt it was something that was not something that other taxpayers should be paying for.

**Mr. Forbes:** — You know, I mean there's a couple of comments there, and we're here to find out more information than to get into arguments. But I think, you know, we've all gone through the period of Mosaic here in Regina, and we look forward to Folkfest in Saskatoon. And you know, as taxpayers

we all get the benefit of these heritage language schools, and we all celebrate our heritages. And I think this is so critical because we do see a healthy, more robust provincial economy.

I think about when I was touring IRD [International Road Dynamics Inc.] in Saskatoon a few years ago, and they were so proud of the fact that many people spoke, I don't know how many languages were present in that workforce. It really made a difference because they could talk to the business world.

Now they didn't make a requirement to say, you must speak this language before you get hired, but they considered it a bonus because they're in particularly Saskatchewan as an export province. And we know we're an export province, and we seek to do more exporting, that rich array of languages is a gift to us.

And actually, it's the reverse at only \$4.58 to us. Is it a bonus? You know, I mean I think that we're getting the best part of the deal. We're getting qualified teachers to speak an array of languages. And we're getting . . . And as I was just talking about the curriculum experts, and I'm thinking of Eleanor Shia from Saskatoon who has worked on the Mandarin language curriculum, if I'm correct. And if the curriculum folks . . . I think that's correct that she's worked on that curriculum as an expert.

It is a gift. It's a complete gift. So I'm just curious about why in a \$176 million operating budget, you know, \$225,000 makes a difference?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I don't want to diminish the hard work of that group of people or the fact that a lot of the work that they do is done on a voluntary basis, but as part of our core curriculum, as part of our role as an education system, we have language classes throughout the divisions. Those classes are taught in the ordinary course. Some of them may be evenings and weekends as part of, you know, whatever the scheduling the school system has. So we said, okay these are the regular core programming that we provide in language services. That will go to assist us in making Saskatchewan a warm and welcoming place. That will assist us in having newcomers come to the province that will want to say, okay, yes I want to go there because my children will be able to take a class in this or that. So those classes are taught at and part of the regular school program.

So we made the decision that this particular program, what flowed through the heritage language program . . . And I've gone to some of their events. You know, I don't in any way want to . . . But it's something that should be provided by way of cultural work done by that group of people or paid for by then families, when we know that our goal as paying for core education is the languages that are being paid for within the regular school system.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I will continue tomorrow and if you could have that answer to the question. I guess the second question would be, how many of the languages off your website will be taken off because they are after hours or be part of heritage language school offering?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We'll find you the list of languages. I had it for a question period early on so I don't . . . [inaudible].

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you. And just shifting gears and . . .

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I can tell you these are the ones that will continue: core Ukrainian, K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12]; German, 9 to 12; Mandarin 10, 20, and 30; Russian 10; Spanish 10, 20, and 30; Aboriginal languages, K to 12; and nēhiyawēwin 10, 20, and 30. So those are the ones that we have now. Those are the regular ones that are done for and those will all continue.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So did you say Spanish 10, 20, 30?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Yes, I did.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay, I will follow up and see if the heritage languages folks seem to have the same understanding that you folks do.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Sure.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I just want to shift gears here and just talk a little bit about GSAs [gender and sexuality alliance]. And of course this was scheduled last week, but in light of the horrible, horrible tragedy in Orlando, the hate crime that was committed there in early hours of Sunday morning, this is something that I'm sure that many classrooms were abuzz about today. And perhaps even the ministry were thinking about what this really means in terms of some of the initiatives we try to do, to make sure our schools are as safe places as they are.

But we are in June, so the year is wrapping up, and I'm just curious to know what new initiatives you had over the course of the year. Were they successful in terms of providing safe spaces for students?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Thanks for the question, and I appreciate the opportunity to sort of respond on that.

On Saturday, myself and a number of MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] from both sides of the House participated in a Pride parade in Saskatoon. And it was a happy and joyous event — people celebrating in who they were, celebrating their pride — and the pride literally was just, was bursting out. It was truly a happy event.

I can say that our thoughts and prayers have to go to the friends and families of the victims, of the people in Orlando. I can't imagine a worse thing, to go through that. And I think as a government and I think as Canadians, we condemn this senseless and cowardly act of violence.

Today all of us stand as one with the LGBTQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning] communities, not just in Orlando but around the world. I think today we are all part of that community and want to do everything that we can to offer our support to them. I think it was a horrible, horrible tragedy. And you know, I don't know what we can do for those particular people, but I think it's important that they know that all of Canada and Canadians stand with them and offer our full support. So anyway, thanks for the opportunity of letting me point that out.

I can tell you that the work that we're doing in that area

continues. As you're aware, we had developed a curriculum and resource material for teachers to use with regard to *Deepening the Discussion: Gender and Sexual Diversity*, which you've likely seen. It's available online and is actually a remarkably good resource.

We've worked with the divisions to make sure divisions continue to offer the supports that students need. And we have seen, when a year ago there was issues raised in some of the school divisions — this wasn't available; that may not be available — I can say that the complaints or the concerns that have come forward to the ministry have dropped to virtually nil. Now that doesn't necessarily mean that we're where we want to be or where we think we should be, but we know that we're making progress. And when you talk to the people within a division, they regard themselves and the services that they're providing still as a work in progress.

Now I know that your next question will be, why we don't legislate it. To me when the divisions are wanting to do it, willing to do it, I think it sends a bad message to legislate it. And what do you say to a student? Well we have a law. Well what are you going to do if the law's broken, phone a police officer and ask him to give the school a ticket? No, we're there to provide supports for kids. I don't want this running off into the court system. It certainly would pass legislation in a heartbeat if I thought there was a single one of the 28 school divisions that wasn't willing to or wasn't trying as best they can to try and get up to speed and provide all the resources that they are.

I am joined by Kevin Gabel and I'll certainly let him provide a bit more detail.

**Mr. Gabel:** — Good evening. Right now with the gender and sexual diversity, some of the work we're doing is we continue to support all the student divisions and students with the document that the minister talked about. We're continuing to support students with the creation of GSAs [gay-straight alliance] through a pamphlet we've put all online. We have a policy statement online as well.

Students are able to access our anonymous online reporting tool, where if they feel like they can't go anywhere else, they can go on that. I can share that 100 per cent of all issues that have been brought forward have been dealt with by school divisions through that tool. And we're continuing to work with some of our community partners in regards to gay-straight alliances and gender-sexual diversity issues.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I can also add that all the new P3 schools, as well as all of the schools that have been built in the last year or two, have gender-neutral washrooms or washrooms that have open sink areas and separate enclosures. So they will continue to have that type of facilities as they go forward. And it seems to be working.

We're also making changes to student data systems to allow students to enrol as the gender with which they identify or as unspecified, at their will, without any documentation. We think that's sort of . . . I don't know whether Kevin is going to be able to answer how many times that . . . [inaudible] . . . the discussion paper has been accessed or downloaded. I don't



really . . .

**Mr. Gabel:** — Since October of 2015, the document's been downloaded over 1,000 times: 975 in English, 38 in French.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Very good.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I know that was a long answer, but we tried to anticipate . . .

**Mr. Forbes:** — I appreciate it and it's thorough. And you know, it is interesting that . . . And I couldn't make the Pride march this week, so that's why I was at the flag raising. They're very important to get out to. It's interesting because the joy and, as you say, the happiness, it's got quite a good feeling to it.

But what's interesting that came out last night . . . and I know a colleague over here was at the same vigil. There was comments made about how we have to remember that it is a march, that we are marching for a purpose, and that is to make sure that people are all treated with respect. And sometimes just because the world . . . In many ways, it's two steps forward, and then we have a huge tragic step backwards like we did in Orlando. But does . . .

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I'm sorry you weren't able to make it. I know that you're a supporter and are a passionate believer, so I respect that.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I appreciate that, thank you. But I do and I will continue to advocate for the opportunity for students who ask that the school must provide a GSA, which doesn't mean every school must have one, just when a student requests it. And I really appreciate and I know parents and activists appreciate the good work that's gone on, but it's missing that final step.

And while I know you have a philosophical disagreement, and I don't think it's about giving tickets or anything like that, but I do have to say that this government, to its credit . . . But then at the same time it's been kind of shamed into this. The amendment to the Human Rights Code, we were very glad to see that. We supported that and we voted along with that, but we did have to acknowledge the fact that many other provinces were ahead of us in legislating the changes to the Human Rights Codes in their province. And Canada still is working on their change as we speak, and we didn't quite get far enough with that.

And today I'm very, very happy to see the amendments to vital statistics. But again, the recognition was that it was because of a ruling that really brought us to that stage, but again, credit to the government. And I can tell you, Mr. Minister, I will be celebrating the day when you bring forward the legislation to have GSAs in the schools. And you never know, you might be it because if it happens really quick . . . Are you going to commit to it right now?

[19:45]

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I appreciate the comments you're making. I may not agree necessarily with the reason or the rationale or the logic of why things take place with the timing. However if you want to have a further discussion on it, you may

want to go upstairs to the Chamber. I understand that Mr. Wyant is available there and is expecting your attendance.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So we can do it through Justice. No, but it is interesting. I do have to tell you that Laura Budd, when she was leaving and she was having a conversation with someone within the Chamber, that person told her that she would never see what happened in vital statistics today ever in her lifetime. And that was two years ago. And so it's amazing what things can happen. But we know that other provinces have done this. It's been painless. It's not a huge thing, but it's a signal that every student in every school must be safe. And not may be safe, but must be safe.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I think on that you won't get any disagreement. I think I'd mentioned last year that I had gone to Bethlehem and heard a grade 11 student speak about the support that he had got through a GSA, the difficulty he had coming in grade 9 to the school, not feeling a part of the school, feeling singled out. And then some older students made him feel comfortable, made him aware that there was a GSA in the school.

And what was amazing was that the school gym was full of grade 11 students from both sides and that he was able to stand up and speak comfortably in front of them and explain to his fellow students what he felt was the benefit that he had received, how he was able to feel safe, secure, and know that he wasn't alone and know that there was resources that were there.

When he finished speaking he got a generous round of applause, but this wasn't an epiphany or something that was new or different. This was just his . . . He was comfortable talking about it. And I turned to one of the administrators and said, that could never have happened when I was a student. And the administrator replied, saying, that could not have happened five years ago.

So there's no doubt the students are far ahead of where their parents are and where the teachers are, and those that have young people in their family or in their classroom are a long ways ahead of where the general population is. And it's great to see the youth leading the rest of the population. So to the young people in Saskatchewan I would say, continue being leaders, and it should be our role to catch up and to provide the supports that we can.

So I'm proud of the work that the ministry have done in developing this, would encourage both of you to read it, have a look at it, share the piece with it, whatever. And thank you.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you. And actually just, I'll end on this. It's a short comment. Students of Bedford, from their GSA at the flag raising, urged the GSAs be legislated. So I felt inspired by them. And to that point, that's why I'm here tonight. So with that though I think I'll turn it over to my colleague because I know she has many, many questions with that. Thank you very much and thanks to the minister for the answers.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Mr. Forbes. Ms. Beck.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. First of all I just wanted to say thank you to the minister and to Julie and to Donna and to all the officials with us here today. I know this has been a busy time I'm sure leading up the budget and today, and I just want to really, really welcome the opportunity to have you in the room and to ask some questions with regard to education funding, and particularly the estimates.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — They appreciate that statement because some of them have approached the Labour Relations minister about getting overtime and they're not getting it.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. And as it was mentioned, this is I believe Julie's first time in these estimates as a . . . It is also mine. So it's been a while since we've been at the same table together so I hope you will all bear with me.

I wanted to start tonight by just establishing a bit of a clear picture of the broad numbers within the sector today, starting with the most current numbers for the K to 12 enrolment in the province.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Actually I stand corrected. Julie was here last year but she was a total rookie and so she didn't . . . But she corrected me. That's why I stand corrected. Anyway, I'm sorry, go ahead.

So you're asking what the current enrolment numbers are? As of September 2016, 172,539.1. I don't know how you get a point one of a child but I'll leave that to the officials.

**Ms. Beck:** — And what does that represent in terms of an increase over the September 2015 numbers?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I'll get you the other number. We were looking at the change across two years so September 2014 it was 167,175.25. So over the two-year period, there was an increase of 3.2 per cent. And over the last year . . . 2015-16 was 170,031 and three-quarters of a student, which was an increase of 1.7 from the previous year.

**Ms. Beck:** — So in previous discussion it's been noted that the funding, as noted in these estimates, contemplates the projected increases for September of this year. So I'm just wondering what the projected number is for enrolment for this fall.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — That was the number that I gave you.

**Ms. Beck:** — That was that initial, that 172 . . . Okay.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — That's September of '16. So that's this fall's number, is 172,539.

**Ms. Beck:** — What is that? I mean obviously we're not at September 2016 yet, so what is that? What goes into that calculation? How is that number arrived at?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — As to how they look forward to it? They receive, earlier in the year they receive information from the divisions, which is their best guess. And that's in January and then they update it with the divisions on a monthly basis.

**Ms. Johnson:** — When they know of changes, like the Syrian

refugees for instance.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Yes. So it's updated periodically through the year and sometimes there's changes as there was this year with the Syrian refugees. This year is unique because of the late election, so we're able to use a projection that was made post-election. But I'm told that the numbers were consistent going all the way back to . . . Go ahead.

**Ms. Johnson:** — Sorry. The projections that we used were essentially the January projections from the school divisions updated for the Syrian refugee information.

**Ms. Beck:** — So those numbers are current to January of 2016 or those are the projected numbers for September of 2016?

**Ms. Johnson:** — They were projected as of the end of March with the Syrian refugee data.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — And then since that time they've been reviewed with the divisions so they are, as of now, we believe to be the most accurate numbers we have for projecting forward to September of this year.

**Ms. Beck:** — And certainly, you know, there has been some appreciation expressed for the fact that those numbers would be based on a projection for this year rather than the previous year's September 30th.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — For the sake of clarity, we make a reconciliation based on the projections so that the actual enrolment on September, we would adjust up or down for what the enrolment is in September, but we would not do a mid-year December, January increase as we did two years earlier. So there's a reconciliation that's done so that if the numbers we're using now are significantly wrong, then they would adjust for that. But we believe the numbers we're using right now are accurate, and they're usually accurate in the past to within less than half a per cent.

**Ms. Beck:** — Just so I have that clearly: say that there is a huge influx of students over the summer and in September we have a number of additional students, or let's say an increase of students, that that would be adjusted but there wouldn't be adjustments for any students arriving after that September 30th.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We tried to reach forward and be as accurate as we could so that we don't expect there to be a need for it, but I'll let Donna talk about how accurate we've been in the past.

**Ms. Johnson:** — Yes, so with respect to the use of the school division projections for enrolment, we've really been using school division projection information since September of 2013, and in 2013 on average the school divisions were within one half of a per cent of actuals. So for instance, in that year they were projecting enrolment of 165,483 and what we actually experienced that year was 867 students fewer than that.

The following year, their projection was 0.4 per cent different from actuals, so their projections improved. And then in

September of 2015 their projections improved yet again when they were only 0.2 per cent different from what we actually experienced. So we're pretty confident in the school divisions' ability to estimate enrolment and we expect that while there might be some minor fluctuations for individual school divisions, that on the whole they'll be accurate projections for the province.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you. Those are impressive numbers.

So going off of that, have you asked . . . Or do school boards anticipate, or certain school boards anticipate further growth after that September 30th? And you've indicated that they have been quite accurate in terms of their projections into the future. I would suspect that we have other data to go on, for example, immigration numbers and things like that. Do we know what the projected growth would be into the next school year? Further into the 2016-17 school year?

**Ms. Johnson:** — Are you asking if we have any sense of beyond September 30th what the increases might be?

**Ms. Beck:** — Yes. Funding for those children as they arrive in the schools.

**Ms. Johnson:** — I don't have that information in terms of fluctuation in enrolment post-September 30th in any given year. However, anecdotally we can certainly note that in any school division and in any school, there are a certain number of students that come in and a certain number of students that leave each year. So it would be my estimate that the leavers basically cancel out the newcomers in most years.

**Ms. Beck:** — So going to those numbers, I'm just wondering if there's any breakdown by region or by grade where you're seeing the most growth, and if there are certain grades that are seeing higher student growth than other grades.

**Ms. Johnson:** — We have that sort of data available but we don't have the breakdown by grade with us here tonight. Just by recollection though, our higher growth areas have been the elementary grades, which is again why we are building 18 new schools in Regina, Saskatoon, Warman, and Martensville. But if you are looking for specific numbers by grade, we could follow up with that tomorrow.

**Ms. Beck:** — That would be great. And numbers by region: are there certain regions or certain areas that are seeing higher levels of growth?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We can give it to you by division.

**Ms. Beck:** — By division? Sure.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Yes. We'll get that for you.

**Ms. Johnson:** — In fact that page that identifies enrolment growth by division is on the ministry's website right now.

**Ms. Beck:** — Right now? Thank you. Okay. And further to my goal to just establish some context with regard to boards in the province, I'm just wondering — and I think that this was noted in the briefing — but I'm just wondering the rate of inflation

that was factored into providing funding to schools in the province. Was there an inflation factor? Was that factored into the funding increases?

[20:00]

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — It was to the extent that point five per cent was provided across . . . which was only a portion of what was necessary for the collective bargaining agreement and inflation would be running in that range or slightly less as well. So the point five per cent would be less than what that upward pressure would be.

**Ms. Beck:** — So specifically with regard to the cost of the negotiated increases to teacher compensation, you just noted that there was about a point five per cent increase. Am I right in saying that the overall increase was about 1.9 per cent to those contracts?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — One point nine for the collective bargaining agreement, I'm told.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. And I'm just wondering about . . . You know, of course boards enter into collective bargaining processes. There's a collective bargaining process and the anticipation — well I don't have to guess; I know — boards would have would be that the government would provide for those increases in the funding. And I'm just wondering about the decision not to fully fund that duly negotiated increase to the contract.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The expectation is that divisions would work to find efficiencies within and that we recognize that the cost for the collective bargaining agreements exceeded the amount of the increase that's there. But we look to divisions to answer the type of questions that we had been asking: is there ways that they can reduce the amount of administrative costs that they're carrying? Are they able to share services? Are they better able to find efficiencies while maintaining the commitment to provide services in the classroom?

Each and every other year until this year, we have fully funded the cost of the collective bargaining agreement, an inflationary component plus whatever other costs had been negotiated with CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees] or other collective processes through the province. So this was the first year that we have not fully funded those increases. So what we've said to the divisions is, this is a challenging year for the province. We want you to work with us to try and find efficiencies where you can. And I think the divisions are working their way through that. You may have talked to some. I've certainly talked to someone who phoned and said, we want to try this; we want to try that. So I will be interested to see how that process works its way through.

**Ms. Beck:** — I'm going to go back at that a little bit. And I understand what you're saying about, you know, in going forward, finding cost savings where they can. And I think that's something that boards do tend to do, and you know, boards have been through continuous improvement plans and different regimes to ensure that they're running efficiently.

But what we're talking about here is a bargained-in-good-faith

agreement between two parties. And school boards would have expected that that money would be forthcoming to provide for what they had bargained and agreed to in that collective bargaining process. So I think, you know, after the fact, after the ink is on the agreement and it's signed and signed off on, that seems to be a fairly difficult position for boards to be put in.

I mean, I can understand if, you know, they have a smaller pot of money going into the future, but their understanding was that that money would be available to them and that that would be forthcoming from the government to cover those costs of particularly of the provincial agreement, you know, maybe less so on the LINC [local implementation and negotiation committee] agreement which we can get into later.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We're not advocating that people go back and ask for those contracts to be rewritten. I mean, those contracts were entered into in good faith. The province is a party to those agreements as well. They are a three-party agreement. We fully expect people to do it, but we expect people to find savings. And I think we could spend all of tonight and tomorrow night looking at and debating what those savings might be. Can they do a better job of contracting for transportation? Can they share a transportation contract? Can they do joint buying? Are they looking at the most effective and efficient ways of operating the buildings?

And I know the vast amount of money that's paid out goes to salaries, so it's a challenge that we're asking them. And I think they, the divisions want to do the best they can to try and find that and do it at the same time. But this is the year that we're not able to say to them, we are going to fully fund everything that's there. We're saying to them, you find some efficiencies where . . . and work your way through them. If you need some help and want us to facilitate some things, we're more than willing to work with you. But the reality of it is we are not fully funding those things.

**Ms. Beck:** — And I recognize this is my third go at this, but I do think it's that important. I think there are things that boards understand might be on the table in terms of where they need to find funding. Sometimes, you know, every student is . . . Student growth isn't fully funded or they might have to find efficiencies in ordering or how they . . . class sizes and things like that.

I don't think that boards would have anticipated that the funding for this negotiated contract wouldn't be forthcoming. In fact I can speak on behalf of, you know, some personal knowledge that it was fully the expectation that that money would be there. So you know, while there may be other line items, I just want to stress how unprepared I think boards were for the fact that this, you know, not even funding about a quarter of what this increase was. I just want to stress that that has put boards in a difficult position, noting as you just did, Minister, that the bulk of their costs are on teachers' salaries, and this is concerning.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I appreciate the point you're making. The point I'm making is that the status quo funding is not on. You made the point that the boards were not anticipating this, nor was the province anticipating it, nor was anybody

reasonably anticipating that oil prices would fall from over \$100 a barrel to under \$30 a barrel. There was no analyst in the world that predicted that type of a catastrophic collapse. There was no one that predicted that potash would do the same thing that it's done as well. So this is something that we are going to work our way through. It is a challenge for all of us, and we're saying to the school divisions, work with us to try and cover these things. Let us know how you're making out so we can work with you on it.

I'll give you an example of one of the things that has recently happened. Sun West School Division saved \$500,000 by the use of e-textbooks. So a number of the divisions are looking at different methods of doing things, challenging each other and looking at what they can share, how they can do things better or do things differently.

My goal is to ensure that we commit resources to the classroom. That's the front line. We want to make sure that each and every student has a good educational experience. But we'll say to the people that are operating the buildings, we'll say that are you using the most efficient method? Are you able to buy utilities cheaper? Are you bulk buying your natural gas? Are you doing this? Are you doing that? And these people are the ones that are there all the time. They're the experts in them.

You and I were both former trustees. When the officials within the division are working, it's amazing how much money they can find when they set out to work, so I'm hopeful that they will be able to do a good job. This is the first time since we've been in government that we have not fully funded virtually every ask that they have had. And we're saying to them, you need to do some work on this area and we're challenging you to do that and we will work with you on it.

**Ms. Beck:** — I'm just going to make one more point on this, and then I will move along because I think I have belaboured it. But, Minister Morgan, you noted that this was a three-party agreement. So you have the teachers who will and should receive their 1.9 per cent. And you have, you know, the ministry who's indicated they are only going to fund a quarter of that increase which leaves school boards on the hook without really a lot of levers to bring that collective agreement into force.

And, you know, maybe they can find savings hanging around, but it is also a potential that the 1.4 would be . . . If there isn't any low-hanging fruit, that's going to impact classroom sizes and other issues that will impact student learning. So I guess I just wanted to make that point. You know, we're not comparing apples to apples when we're talking about funding for a negotiated contract, and we're talking about cheaper light bulbs. You know, two different things.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I think there's a variety of things that they can do. We've asked them to look at their administrative components. We've asked them to look at transportation. We've asked them to look at utilities. There's a myriad of things that they can do, should do. We've asked them to look at, do we have the right number of divisions in the province? A consolidation of some divisions would save governance and administration costs to a very substantial amount of money.

So we're saying to the divisions, we put this to you: what can you do to try and find these things? And by the number of phone calls we're getting and the number of suggestions and queries that we're getting, I think the divisions are being creative and are trying to work their way through it. Time will tell how it goes, but it's our expectation that they will continue to maintain their priorities of keeping resources in the classroom and that they will look for savings elsewhere.

And I think we saw some things that have happened already. We saw the headline that Saskatoon Public was not going to have to take any resources out of the classroom, and we've seen some others. We heard Don Rempel. There was a quote I read in the House today which was a long quote but once again the same thing. They were going to be able to maintain the supports they had in the classroom. So we look to the others to see where they're at on things.

**Ms. Beck:** — So I will move on slightly but again still talking about the financial situation that boards are in right now. And, Minister, you had noted, looking at some cost savings around utilities, for example. We've established that the money isn't there to cover the teachers' compensation increases. And I guess maybe I can anticipate the answer to this. So are there any amounts provided to deal with any other fixed or inflationary costs? I'm thinking specifically of the 10 per cent SaskPower increase, the ancillary professionals, other non-teaching staff contracts, you know, just any other inflationary costs that school boards . . . and fixed costs that they might be experiencing.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I should actually correct you. The increase was an overall point five per cent but not all of that is teacher salary. So we're actually covering 50 per cent of the salary increase for teachers.

And I'm not saying that it isn't going to be a challenge for school divisions, but we're asking the school divisions, you look for some savings. You look for some admin savings. You look for some transportation savings. You look elsewhere before you look in the classroom. And the nature of the calls we're getting, that's what they're doing. So we'll see how it plays out.

This was a year that none of us anticipated. Nobody's come to us and said they're looking for sympathy. Everybody is saying we want to roll up our sleeves. We are one province. We want to work together, and we'll do this.

**Ms. Beck:** — And I'm certainly glad to hear that. And I know that that is, you know, that's typically what school boards do, and those involved in teaching and education, they roll up their sleeves and do what's best for kids.

You know, I have also noted, I've repeated because it has really stuck with me that this may be the most difficult budget in recent times but this is not . . . You know, there was some hardship caused by the removal of the mid-year adjustment in the previous budgets, and school boards, you know, have already been looking for those savings. You know, at a certain point though those easy savings and that low-hanging fruit, as I noted, isn't there and cuts will impact things like class sizes and number of staff and ultimately student learning. So I'm glad to

hear that you're getting good co-operation from school boards, although I'm not surprised by that.

So I'm going to move on to some questions around teachers and classroom supports. And I'm just wondering again what the total . . . and I don't know if you have these numbers, but the total number of teacher FTEs [full-time equivalent] are in the K to 12 system.

[20:15]

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I think we have the numbers.

**Ms. MacRae:** — In 2015-16, total number of school-based teachers, 11,650.6 and total number of educator FTEs, 12,332.7.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, Julie.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — An increase since '07-08 of, I think, 750 . . .

**Ms. Beck:** — 750 FTEs since . . .

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I think it's an increase of approximately how much since '07-08 . . . And it's gone up. Every year there's been a significant enrolment increase. We expect to see a levelling off this year, but it's gone up in previous years. We should be able to give it to you year by year going back.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Would it be possible to also get the corresponding enrolment for each of those years, sort of a ratio of FTEs to enrolment?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We can go back. I'll just give it to you now. Going back as far as 2011, in 2011 there was 12,098. It dipped in '12-13 to 12,003; 2013-14, 12,146; '14-15, 12,262.5; '15-16, 12,332. Now for the same period of time I'll let Donna read you the enrolments.

**Ms. Johnson:** — All right. So for September 2011 the enrolment was 160,812 and three-quarters. In September of 2012 it was 162,620 and a half. In September 2013 it was 164,616 and in September of 2014 it was 167,175 and a quarter. And in September of 2015 it was 170,031 and three-quarters.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I think those partial students are where the student didn't pay attention.

**Ms. Beck:** — That is curious, but thank you for that, Donna.

**Ms. Johnson:** — Those were student FTE or FTS, full-time student equivalents. So some of our students were not full-time students.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Or came and went through the year, so pardon the bad humour.

**Ms. Beck:** — I appreciate that. Thank you. I wonder if there are numbers kept for the number of EAs [educational assistant] or similar non-teaching staff, front line in classrooms, non-teaching staff over the same corresponding time.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — You're likely aware that we gave the

divisions flexibility as to what they chose to hire, what their staffing component was, but I'll let Donna review the numbers going back to '11. But I'll also ask her to read the numbers for counsellors, speech-language pathologists, because some of them go up, some of them go down.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you.

**Ms. Johnson:** — All right, so I'll preface this by noting that these education sector staffing profiles are on the ministry's website, so they are accessible. The education teacher assistants in 2011-12, 3,423; in 2012-13, 3,566; in 2013-14, 3,601, and in 2014-15, 3,514; and in 2015-16, 3,432. There are other positions: non-certified educator counsellors, non-certified educator speech-language pathologists, non-certified educator psychologists.

So starting back with the non-certified educator counsellors, in the '11-12 year there was a count of zero on our records for that position. The following year there were 129 — I'm going to leave out the decimal points this time — 129. In '13-14 there were 87. In '14-15 there were 98. And in '15-16 there were 107. Non-certified educator speech-language pathologists: in '11-12 there were essentially 100 of them. I'm rounding up slightly. The following year there were 99. In '13-14 there were 103. In '14-15 there was 117 and in '15-16 there was 106. Next, the educator psychologists: in '11-12 there were 34. The following year was 22. After that it was 12. In '14-15 it was 12 again, and in '15-16 it was 13.

There's other positions here too: social workers, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and other medical facilitators. I don't know . . . Would you like those figures as well?

**Ms. Beck:** — Sure, that would be good.

**Ms. Johnson:** — Okay. So for social workers, in '11-12 we had 98. In '12-13 there were 85. In '13-14 there were 89. In '14-15 there were 90, and in '15-16, 83.

For the physical therapists we have a fairly low count here, and so at this rate I will use the decimal point. In '11-12 it was 0.2 in the province; in '12-13, 0.5; in '13-14, 3.5; and in '14-15, 0.5; and in '15-16, 0.9. For occupational therapists, in '11-12 there were 23. In '12-13 there were 26.7; in '13-14, 28.4; in '14-15, 29.1; and in '15-16, 31.2.

And then our catch-all category for other medical facilitators. And our note says that these, in brackets it says "nurses prior to '12-13." Yes, so in any event, in '12-13 the count there was 21.6; the following year, 22.7. In '13-14 it was 22.1; '14-15, 21.6; and '15-16, 22.2. So a fairly stable number around the neighbourhood of 22 for the other facilitators.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. Again on just some context for the school divisions, I'm just wondering if you keep class size numbers for all school divisions and have there been any changes over the past year or the past couple of years to those class sizes.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We're joined by another official, Gerry Craswell.

**Mr. Craswell:** — So class sizes is difficult for us to measure directly so we do some proxy measures. One that's of particular interest is student-to-teacher ratio, and that includes classroom teachers. It doesn't include principals, administrators, and that sort of thing. So I can give you those numbers for the last number of years. 2009-10 provincial is 16.51; 2010-11 is 16.2; 2011-12 is 15.57; 2012-13 is 15.97; 2013-14 is 16.01; '14-15 is 16.05; and 2015-16 is 16.15.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, and I appreciate those numbers are difficult. I'm afraid I'm going to ask maybe a more difficult question, and I'm not sure if you're able to answer this. So in terms of a mean average of course, you know, you're going to take in a wide range of numbers. I know I came from a class of seven and I think my brother had two in his class. So on the low end we're going to have, you know, more remote and rural schools that are going to have very small class sizes, and understandably so. And then on the other end, you're going to have class sizes that are bumping up to a higher number. And I'm just wondering if there . . . I understand what I'm asking you is difficult because there are a lot of numbers involved, but in terms of the range or a median number, if you could give me some information about that.

**Mr. Craswell:** — Yes. The range for those numbers for this year range from 11.71 which was in the francophone school division. The highest for that number was not quite 18, 17.99.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay.

**Mr. Craswell:** — And again that's a ratio, so there are ranges in class size. Like you say, there are classes of seven and there's larger classes. We've done some preliminary calculations recently and we think there's about, I think it's about 3 per cent of elementary classrooms that are greater than 30.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. And is there a target number? Is there sort of something that would be an optimum class size in terms of student learning that we would target?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We've never as a ministry, as a government, set a target. The numbers are kept and averaged and when you talk to the divisions, the divisions recognize the disparities that you raise from your classroom size of eight to, you know, ones that are 17, 18, or some of them may be somewhat higher. So we look at the overall numbers. They appear to be well within the acceptable range, but where we worry about it is in schools where we've had rapid enrolment, and are those schools able to keep up with it? And sometimes it's not a matter of having an additional teacher. It's sometimes a matter of not having physical space and then the issue of . . . And that's why we have to supply the additional portables as well as the new schools that are under construction, just so that we have the space.

**Ms. Beck:** — Maybe let me ask a better question because I understand targets are difficult in terms of the STR [student/teacher ratio] or the PTR [pupil/teacher ratio]. Would there be a class size, sort of a ceiling that you would want to keep class sizes under?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I think, given that they're relatively consistent right now, we would regard them as at an acceptable

level. And what we would be watching for wouldn't be a target number, but what we would be watching for is the . . . where there was a deviation from it, for whatever the reasons are, in a particular division or in a particular school, whether it be lack of space or a staffing shift or something like that.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay, thank you. I'm just going to readjust my papers here and move sort of into estimates more properly and go through some lines here. The first thing that I'm going to note is an FTE change in the ministry staffing complement. I note that there is a 9 per cent decrease in ministry FTEs, and I haven't . . .

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — It's nine FTEs, not 9 per cent.

**Ms. Beck:** — Oh, I'm sorry. I think I corrected myself the second time.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Sorry.

**Ms. Beck:** — That's okay. And I note that in the '15-16 budget, there were five FTEs transferred from the curriculum department, and 4.5 were added to the infrastructure branch to deal with the work from the nine joint-use schools. And I'm just wondering about the plans for those FTEs and also what accounts for the change in FTEs with the ministry staff.

[20:30]

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Six of them were result of an elimination of an educator services unit. That was because of the creation of the teachers professional regulatory board. Those positions were no longer necessary there, and those positions or similar ones may exist over at the teachers regulatory board.

There is an additional decrease in curriculum of one, and a 2 per cent reduction . . .

**A Member:** — Two FTE.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Two FTE reduction in central management and services. One was an admin assistant from strategic policy. One was a facilities consultant from infrastructure.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. Not being overly familiar with the work of the former ed services unit, what type of work were they doing prior to this reduction?

**Ms. MacRae:** — One of their primary functions would have been for teacher certification and also tracking reporting of teacher discipline or personnel matters.

**Ms. Beck:** — And was there a specific area that the FTE eliminated from curriculum was in charge of, or that's just been absorbed within the remaining staffing?

**Ms. MacRae:** — The FTE had been vacant for some time.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you. Thank you. I'm working with multiple notes here, so I'm going to move into the K to 12 education on page 46 of the Estimates.

I note that there's a lot that is encompassed by these budget lines, including the overall operational funding, program delivery to the K to 12 education sector, as well as pre-kindergarten programs, First Nations and Métis education programming. So there's a lot that's encompassed here.

I'm going to look, move down to allocations and look at achievement and operational support. And I notice that there's, if my math is correct, \$108,000 reduction there. I'm just wondering what would be impacted by that reduction? What are the tasks that are performed by the achievement and operational support?

**Ms. Johnson:** — All right. So what we have making up that decrease of 108,000 in achievement and operational support is an increase in funding of about \$725,000 for funding for the Saskatchewan Professional Teachers Regulatory Board. And that's offset by the salaries related to those six positions from educator services that we mentioned previously. Essentially those positions were . . . or the combination of the people, the positions, and/or the work done from by the people in educator services was transferred to the professional teachers regulatory body. So in essence, the net change of 108,000 reflects the increase in funding to the regulatory board and the decrease in salaries and operating costs for what were previously the employees in the branch.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you.

**Ms. Johnson:** — Sorry, I'll just add a little bit to that. There was also netted in that \$108,000 decrease, were a couple of the program eliminations that Minister Morgan referenced earlier: the \$204,000 reduction for the Regina and Saskatoon industry education councils and a \$100,000 reduction for the conclusion of the agreement with the Office of the Treaty Commissioner.

**Ms. Beck:** — So maybe move on onto both of those. I did note, when you were speaking with my colleague earlier, the \$100,000 reduction to I think you said at the conclusion of the agreement with the Treaty Commissioner. What was the nature of that agreement and was this the end of a . . . Why was the decision made not to continue with that work?

**Mr. Waytuck:** — Brett Waytuck. So what that was was the work that was done around treaties in the classroom. It had been a contract that was completed, so we had finished the work. So the reduction was reflecting the fact that we had completed the work of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We regard the work of the Treaty Commissioner as being valuable work, but we don't think it's work that should be . . . It's part of the relationship between the federal government and First Nations, so we're loath to provide any funding that would go to, that would be seen as core funding or permanent funding. We would provide funding to that office for a specific project only. When the project is finished, then that would be the end of that funding.

**Ms. Beck:** — Was there any support provided with that program for treaty teachings within the schools? Did it support that work at all?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I don't think the Office of the Treaty

Commissioner provided classroom services, although there's certainly been situations I'm aware of where the Treaty Commissioner has gone to schools and spoke to it, but that wouldn't have been part of that funding. That would have been part of what the Treaty Commissioner would have regarded as his mandate.

The work that was done would have been the development of the curriculum. Then that project was finished, and then we would leave it to Mr. Lafond, or whoever his successor happens to be, to determine what their involvement with the schools are. And of course, we would welcome it.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. The \$1.2 million increase to school operating funds, we sort of have touched on it in terms of . . . briefly before, but I just wonder with that 1.2 million, as has been noted in recent days, some boards have experienced an actual year-over-year cut, and some boards have experienced an increase of some concerns about whether it meets the needs of growth and inflation. I'm just wondering if you have numbers or your best numbers in terms of how that \$1.2 million increase is going to be distributed to the 28 boards in the province?

**Ms. Johnson:** — I'd just like to note, first of all, that the \$1.2 million increase that's noted in the Estimates book is actually supplemented by a \$15.4 million increase in the EPT, in the education property taxes that are collected by the school divisions, giving a \$16.6 million increase year over year.

And the increase, to answer your second question, is distributed to all of the school divisions using the funding distribution model, using the September 2016 enrolment information as one of the data sets in that allocation model. The allocations to each of the school divisions have been provided to the school divisions and were provided on budget day, and that breakdown is provided on the ministry's website as well.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — You will note when you go through the individual divisions that some divisions went up, some divisions went down. They went up or down based on a number of factors as to how the formula was provided. There was, you know, different things that were taking place, projects that were under way or whatever.

But generally speaking, the divisions that saw a significant enrolment decline also saw a decline in funding. So it will not come as a surprise to those divisions. We cushioned it with transition funding in the past, but this year where there was a significant decline in enrolment, it translated into a significant dollar reduction. And we would certainly expect those divisions to make staffing adjustments accordingly, and I'm sure they are.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you for that clarification. And that transitional funding, which I understand was not contained in this year's budget, did boards have any prior notice that that was coming or to the extent to which they knew? And the efficiency factor is another one I wanted to ask about.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The efficiency factor doesn't exist in the budget anymore. The transition funding continued at the same level, but the divisions that would have seen a decline, it would

not have come as a surprise to them because they saw year-over-year decline. And then in previous years we said, well we'll work with you; we'll cushion it. We'll make adjustments so that there was no actual dollar reduction.

And this year we said, we will apply the formula; we'll extend the transition . . . [inaudible]. And I don't remember how much it was. It was relatively . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . So we'll give you the amount. But we applied the formula. We projected forward to the September enrolments — what we thought our best guess was — used that, applied it to the formula, and those were the numbers that went out.

Yes, it's not huge amounts, and only four divisions were affected by it. Creighton in '15-16 got 180,000 in transition; '16-17 they'll get 178,614. Living Sky, 550,000; and that went down to 545,765. Prairie Spirit, 760,000 in '15-16; it went down to 754,148. Prairie Valley was 1.2 in '15-16; and that went down to 1,190,760. So the overall transition in 2015-16 was 2.690 million; in '16-17 it was continued at 2,669,287.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — It affected only those particular ones.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you. I'm going to go off my notes a little bit, and hopefully I can find my way back. But I think this is an opportune time to just check in with regard to the progress — and I think in your preamble, your prior comments, we did talk a little bit about the progress — on the new funding model and the work of Dan Perrins.

And I'm just wondering, I know that there has been repeated calls by — requests, I guess — by the Saskatchewan School Boards Association for that predictability and transparency and equity. And there are eight factors which I won't try to name off without having them in front of me, but certainly predictability and transparency and adequacy. I'm just wondering about the progress, and if there are any details that we might have in terms of the progress towards that funding model.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Sure. I haven't spoken with Mr. Perrins since you did, so you may be more up to date than I am. But for the sake of answering the question, we started the process last fall at the request of three of the school divisions that felt the funding formula was not fair, didn't deal with their needs. So we contacted a handful of the other school divisions and said, do you share some of the same problems that were shared by the ones that are there? And they said, well we have this concern, or we have that concern.

So we brought in Dan Perrins and I phoned the same number of divisions and said, who do you think would be a good person? And I'm not sure where Dan Perrins's name came from, but I was certainly familiar with him from around the building when I was in opposition. I thought he was, in spite of the fact that at that time he was wearing the wrong colour political jersey, I thought he was a good person and a fair person and a competent civil servant.

[20:45]

So anyway we met with the divisions and with Mr. Perrins and



we made it clear to the divisions this was not an exercise in asking for more money; it was an exercise in how the funding was to be apportioned. And I said, I know we have two or three divisions that are unhappy with the formula now. It does us no good if you go through the process and it's a different two or three that are unhappy and we've just shuffled the chairs. So I said, our expectation is that you'll work through the problems, spend whatever time it takes to do it.

So they started their work and then we told the ministry staff, you're there as a resource. It is not your decision. This is something that is a project of the divisions. So I know the CFOs [chief financial officer] and the directors rolled up their sleeves and pitched in. And then I would periodically talk to Dan Perrins and say, ask him how it was going. And he indicated, well we're focusing on this area; we're focusing on whatever they were doing.

And then they were supposed to . . . The target timeline was for them to have been done in time for this coming school year. Then two or three months ago, they contacted us and said, we think we're making good progress. We have some more work we'd like to do on base instruction, but most importantly we would like to take on the issue of transportation, which wasn't part of the original discussion. And I said, if that's the divisions' request, and that's what the divisions want, I'm okay with it. But if you do that, you likely will have it so that it will not be done, so it can't be applied for the '16-17 school year. So Dan Perrins called me back and said no, the divisions are okay with that timeline, and if that's what the divisions want, I'm okay with the timeline as well.

So the short answer to your question is, I believe at this point in time they are working with base instruction and transportation and will work their way through it. They had a flawed process before Dan Perrins was involved or before I had the portfolio, to try and do transportation costing. And they came up with a formula, tried to apply it to the divisions, and it didn't work. They didn't actually go and use it, but when they tried to apply it to the divisions . . . So the transportation issue is obviously far more complex than a simple spreadsheet would be. It depends on, you know, how the routes are laid out and the size of the . . . any way that you can imagine the number of variables that would go into it. So I wish them every success in resolving that, and if they're successful in that I have a large number of other things for them to resolve as well. And anyway, you know, the bad humour . . . But I think they're doing good work, and when I talk to the individual divisions, my sense is that they're satisfied with the progress; they think it's going in the right direction, and I hope that they come up with something that they're satisfied with.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Once again, I'm sorry for the long answer. But it's been a long process to get to this point, and I think they're doing good work.

**Ms. Beck:** — And I thank you for that update and as well as the opportunity to meet with Dan. As you noted, I did meet with him.

I am going to get even further away from my notes right now,

but as you spoke and spoke about the good work and the amount of time that this committee . . . or Dan has been heading up this project with a number of stakeholders, I do wonder, you know. If we're not anticipating this funding model coming out until next year, and I do understand that's it's not to deal with sufficiency, only with the funding, how the funding is allocated, to what extent is it going to be vulnerable through the . . . to the transformational change process? You know, there's been this work that has happened up to this point and of course there's been considerable time and I would assume resources put into that, and goodwill and input from boards and other stakeholders.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — That's a really good question. And as we started talking about transformational change and the potential for a different number of school divisions, we had some discussion about that with the ministry officials and very briefly with Mr. Perrins. And the answer that we have, and hope that it still applies, is that it's a collection of principles and a formula that would apply whether you've got one school, as we have divisions that have one school, and it goes up to our larger ones. So the formula should apply no matter the size of the division or the different factors that are . . . It deals with things like dispersion, the number of square feet . . . I don't know if you've gone through the formula which is online, it's fifty-some pages long but lists all of the things that were there.

In my earlier life I had to learn foundation operating grant; now I've been blessed with this one. And there is no easy way. And I think the purpose of a formula is to try and ensure that the resources are there so that a student in Englefeld will have the same educational experience and commitment as a student in downtown Regina. So that's the purpose of the formula, to recognize the distances that people have to travel, the size of the school, and that some schools are small and older so . . . We believe that a change in the number of divisions or the size of the divisions should not affect those basic principles because the principles are intended to focus the resources to the student at a fair and equitable manner. And I'll let either of the officials . . .

**Ms. Beck:** — It does lead me to another question though. So as we're all aware in this room, I'm sure, that we are heading this fall into municipal elections. If it is on the table and there's some anticipation or at least that that would be something that would be looked at, the reduction in the number of school boards . . . I mean these are four-year terms, of course, as you know. I'm just wondering what that would look like in terms of timeline if there were anticipated amalgamations.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I can't speculate on any kind of a timeline, but to go through any kind of a process and do any kind of meaningful consultation, to try and have it done prior to the October election, I just don't see that as being a likelihood. So it would have to be something that would take place after that, and how you'd work through would be another layer you'd have to deal with it. You know, going through, there hasn't been anything that's been sent out to the divisions in writing yet saying, look at this, look at that. And by the time you develop a process and everything, for it to be completed in that timeline is not realistic.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. I'm going to move back to my notes, so

excuse me while I reorientate myself. Another note here is with regard to the educational agencies. There is a decrease from \$504,000 down to, this year, \$279,000. First of all, I guess, which agencies are incorporated into that line item, educational agencies? And I'm just wondering if you could expand on that decrease.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Yes, \$212,000 was the heritage language program, and there was a \$30,000 decrease in the budget for CMEC, or Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, where we don't have a specific federal counterpart, so we don't have federal-provincial-territorial meetings, so this is the equivalent that exists. Our participation in it is limited. We get the benefit of some French language programming and translation services, some copyright, but we don't participate in a lot of the things that they do, so we're reducing our commitment to that.

**Ms. Beck:** — I just wanted to draw attention . . . Last year, in last year's budget there was a \$6 million line to address the joint task force recommendations around First Nations and Métis education and training. What was the amount provided this year? And are there any new or continuing initiatives focusing on First Nations and Métis education?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Yes, the portion that flows through this ministry is 5.1 million. The other 900,000 flows either through Advanced Education or the Ministry of the Economy, depending on the nature of services that are being provided. So I'll let Donna give you the specifics of what's there, but it's the invitational shared services agreement and a number of those type of programmings.

The other 900,000 went to a variety of different programs. If you'll remember when the task force report came out, it talked about people in remote areas were not able to get employment because they weren't able to get a driver's licence because they weren't able to travel down. So some money was given to SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] so that they could travel in the North and set up ID [identification] or driving testing stations. And there was some money given to some of the regional colleges to develop short-term programs to develop a course that would be job specific. You know, an underground laser surveyor course of three or six weeks in duration or something where there was mining jobs that were there. So there would be specific training for a specific job. So those type of programs were provided with the 900,000, and the 5.1 stayed in this ministry. And that stayed consistent. I'll let Donna answer.

**Ms. Johnson:** — And so with respect to that 5.1 million in the ministry, as has been mentioned already, 2.4 million of that is for the continuation of the invitational shared services initiative partnerships. And those are partnerships between First Nations and provincial school divisions, so those are continuing. Also included in the 5.1 million is \$1 million for the continued expansion of Help Me Tell My Story and Help Me Talk About Math. Also another 100,000 to extend the Microsoft software licencing agreement to on-reserve schools, and that ensures that on-reserve students have access to the same up-to-date licensed software that's available in our provincial schools. And finally, 1.6 million is used to further the development of Following Their Voices, which is one of our First Nations and Métis

student achievement initiatives and it is also one of our two key priorities in the education sector strategic plan.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. I'm just going to move . . . I have a number of questions that are focused around the news release that came out with the budget. There's a note that there is a \$4 million increase to funding for classroom supports, and I'm just wondering where that's represented in the estimate lines and what's included in that classroom support funding.

**Ms. Johnson:** — So the \$4 million would be built into the estimate line that is entitled school operating. But keep in mind, as I mentioned earlier, in estimates that line is increasing by 1.2 million. The total is increasing by 16.6 million because of the additional education property taxes. So the 4 million is part of that \$16.6 million increase.

**Ms. Beck:** — That's why I couldn't find it.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I appreciate that it, you know, wasn't there as a specific . . . But the purpose of that was, treasury board specific direction with that money was that was supposed to be targeted for teachers for help in the classrooms, and that the expectation was that we would work with the boards to ensure that that funding went specifically to classrooms so that the teachers, being aware there was a commitment, that there was going to be additional supports for them.

[21:00]

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. I think that clarifies and maybe as we move through with my other questions here, I'll have more clarity.

So are you okay if I call you Donna? I realize I've been calling you Donna.

So in terms of what exactly is meant by classroom supports. What would be some examples of things that would fall within that category of classroom supports?

**Ms. Johnson:** — Well, that would include personnel, so human services. And so for instance speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, and that sort of thing. It would also include any other sorts of more tangible or physical — not more tangible, I guess people are tangible — but other educational resources. So it will include any assistive technology, any kind of other supports that come in essentially that form whether it's resource materials or other assistive technology that's useful to help the teachers interact with the students when students have difficulty either speaking or indicating their intent.

**Ms. Beck:** — I wonder, do we want to take a five . . . Is it possible to take a five-minute recess? I know . . .

**The Chair:** — Yes.

**Ms. Beck:** — Is that okay with . . .

**The Chair:** — Yes. For sure we will take five-minute recess. Being 9:02 we'll be back at 9:07. That's enough? . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Excellent. We'll take a five-minute recess.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

**The Chair:** — The time being 9:08, we will resume our debate. Ms. Beck.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. Thank you for the break, and I hope everyone was able to make use of it . . .

**A Member:** — Is refreshed.

**Ms. Beck:** — Yes, that's right. I can find my spot in my notes again. Back again to the news release that came out with the budget, there was note of 288 million for supports for learning, different than the classroom supports. And first of all I'm just wondering if that is an increase over last year.

**Ms. Johnson:** — Yes, it is. If you'll just bear with me, I'll tell you how much of an increase it is. So last year, supports for learning was 286.5 million. This year it's 288 million, but one thing I would note is that in the component summary for the breakdown of the operating grant to the school divisions, we did break out the support for the Syrian refugees separately, so that's an additional 5.4 million. So when we move on to next year, the support that's directed at the Syrian refugees will be essentially moved into that supports for learning column. So if you wanted to look at it that way, then essentially supports for learning this year is 293 million.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. You anticipated one of my later questions. I mean obviously there was a large number of Syrian refugees who entered into the school system over the past year, and important that Canada and Saskatchewan in particular were able to welcome and make room for those students, and glad to see that there is support there. That had been something that had been noted by a number of school divisions, that there were some concerns being able to address the needs of, you know, that very large influx of students.

I'm just wondering, were there any additional supports for other perhaps students who came to Saskatchewan as refugees or students who might be requiring English as an additional language supports? And I'm just wondering, of the number . . . So I'll start with that question first.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The other people that would come here, either by way of immigrant status or refugee status, would be included in the enrolment numbers that were there before, and those ones would be part of our usual settlement support for newcomers. So the distribution model includes targeted funding to support newcomers. The \$286.5 million was allocated to boards under supports for learning, with an additional \$600,000 available within that budget to facilitate the initial assessment of newcomer students with English as additional language needs. So other newcomers would be included in the supports for learning lines that we were talking about earlier and as part of the funding formula.

The Syrian refugees were unique because they came as a block of newcomers and some of them had very unusually high needs. They all came with language issues, but in addition to that some of the students had other challenges as well, and a lot of them had issues with PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] and other family issues. So I think as Canadians we wanted to do our best

to reach out and to make sure that we provided them every support we can. So I certainly want to use this opportunity to thank Open Door Society and the various different support groups around the province for the very good work that they did in providing supports for those people.

When the first ones arrived in Saskatoon I met them at the airport, and the children, you could tell, had other issues to deal with. And at that point in time they gratefully received the Rider toques that we brought them, and didn't understand what Riders were . . . Can't understand that; thought everybody in the world knew that. In any event, they were glad to be here, I think wanted to go home and go to bed and try and get on with their lives. I followed up with and made inquiries about how they were doing and, you know, they'd found places to live, got supports within the community, and then the students were enrolled in our system. But they were some of the challenges . . . the students were the neediest. They would have been some of the most expensive ones by providing the right amount of resources.

So I should thank the school divisions for rising to the occasion and doing it because we didn't provide funding last year but then we'd indicated that we were going to be asking the federal government for it. So we had discussions with the federal government, told them we would be working out through particulars. We've come up with a number which is the amount of money we've included this year and we've asked the federal government to have some discussion with us about it. But we have yet to see any money from them, nor have they even said the cheque is in the mail. We've got, you know, we're working through it essentially on our own.

We're going to continue to press the federal government because we think it was their decision to bring the students here. We're glad they came, but nonetheless there's a cost and it's not fair for the province or the divisions to try and pick up that additional cost either in year 1 or an ongoing basis, so we've chosen to provide funding for it for the upcoming year and will continue to duke it out with our federal counterparts. And they've been good in a lot of ways, but this is one we haven't seen money yet.

**Ms. Beck:** — So that \$5.4 million, is that the sum that you would expect to, were the federal government to make good on their promise, was that the amount that you would expect to recoup from the federal government?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — No, I think that was the amount for a full school year. It would have been a pro-rated amount because they came around mid-year so I think we'd asked for between 2 and \$3 million, was the amount that we'd asked them for, for that year.

We'd asked them for 2, which was probably a low number, and then . . . This would be the ongoing number, would be the 5.4.

**Ms. Beck:** — Do we have a number in terms of the number of Syrian refugee students who are currently enrolled in the K to 12 system?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Yes, yes we do. As you're likely aware, they came . . . not distributed evenly through the province. They

came to the larger centres. Interestingly some of them came to the separate school system. A lot of them had fled because of religious persecution so they were ones that had come here, so . . .

As of April 25th, we have 1,114 Syrian refugees, with the highest number of landings destined for Saskatoon, Regina, Moose Jaw, and Prince Albert. As of March 18th, eight school divisions reported enrolling a total of 390 Syrian refugee learners: Regina, 123; Saskatoon Public, 183, receiving the majority.

The Ministry of Economy estimates that there will be 12,000 to 13,000 new immigrants arriving in 2016-17, but those are ones that were factored into the formula. But these, the ones from Syria, are ones that pose some real challenges for the schools, so kudos and thanks to the divisions and the teachers.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. And I do understand that schools have and the province has done a good job in welcoming those youngsters to our school system.

I do wonder, within that \$5.4 million, what would you anticipate would be covered or provided as supports to those particular students?

**Ms. MacRae:** — We would expect that the folks who are actually providing the service to those children would be in a better position to ascertain their needs and try and meet them, so we have no preconceived notions other than that the boards will put the interest of the students at the heart of their decision making and do the best they can with the available resources.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — It goes without saying that ESL [English as a second language] will be the significant initial . . . But these children will often have other challenges as well. But the English language one will be the first one. And then whatever additional support they might need by way of family supports or working with the family, some of those things will come from Social Services or Health.

**Ms. Beck:** — And I guess I'm just wondering. So this amount is within the broader supports for learning category. It's a bit of a line item for boards. Often they get a lump sum and are able to negotiate their budget, but this comes across as a line item.

I'm just wondering, you know, when you're providing supports to students, you know, for example if you have need for some EAL [English as an additional language] supports for example, how you delineate out supports for, you know, maybe there are 16 children in a classroom all receiving language instruction in the same language. I guess that's what I'm getting at. How do you . . . When this funding is targeted, how do you account for that? How will that be reported back?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We don't. It's like most of the other funding. It's unconditional. We give it to the divisions. They make the decision how to apportion it. We say this is . . . And it's like that with speech-language pathologists, all of those supports for learning. We give the funding to the divisions. We respect their autonomy, and hopefully they make good choices with it.

We use the budget preparation as to determine what those costs might be. But if a division has ability to do things differently or, you know, some of the children don't have the same needs, then, you know, they would apportion it elsewhere. So we're not requiring them to break it out either for accounting purposes to justify it to us, nor has there been a request from the federal government that we needed to break it down, to bill it separately.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you for that clarification. I'm going to go back to the broader category of supports for learning. It's noted that this entails intensive needs, students in vulnerable circumstances, and students who require EAL support, and I think you can probably figure out some of what's entailed in supports for EAL students. I am just wondering about criteria for the other two of those categories, what constitutes a student requiring intensive need and what constitutes a student who is deemed to be in vulnerable circumstances and . . .

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We used to at one point require a process to have the students designated and then would have the paperwork audited. But the last time there was a budget review, which I think was 2012, the formula was changed and the determination at that time, which was before my time, was that the divisions were relatively uniform with the number of high needs or special needs that you may have. More of one in a specific division and less of another, but that overall that the dispersion of those students was relatively uniform, so that by giving the funding to the divisions on an unrestricted basis, we expected that they would apply it appropriately. And we don't require specific accounting back to them as to how many were designated special needs or needs of a specific level. So the funding formula provides the rationale for it but we don't require follow-up as to which ones were which. We have confidence in what they do and we look to them to apply it appropriately.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. So within . . .

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I think Julie will speak to the vulnerability.

**Ms. MacRae:** — Again in calculating or looking at vulnerability, some of the factors that are included are low income, transiency, children in foster care, and as we have already discussed, student refugees.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. Excuse me while I check the notes here. I'm just going to move on to the education sector strategic plan, which of course everyone here I'm sure is familiar with. And I just wanted to check in, I guess in terms of some of the improvements over the shorter term and longer term targets or outcomes.

I'll just start with . . . We're approaching quickly the June 2018 target of at least 75 per cent of students being at or above grade level with regard to reading and writing. So maybe I'll start there and just in terms of the progress towards that goal.

**Ms. MacRae:** — We have seen an 8 percentage point increase in that number over the last two years. We are now at 73 per cent.

**Ms. Beck:** — So 8 per cent in the last two years. And a similar question this time with regard to the June 2019 target of 75 students at or above grade level in math.

**Ms. Johnson:** — I'll just begin the response here and then Julie or others can add in. With respect to the work related to the math, the sector plan has, as you've noted, several outcomes. Each of the outcomes in that plan is essentially spearheaded by a group of folks from what we call the provincial leadership team.

And the provincial leadership team, for those who may not be aware, is comprised of the 28 directors of education from the 28 school divisions as well as the members of the deputy minister's office at the ministry and directors of education from some of our First Nation partners.

So within each of these outcomes, the one related to reading, writing, and math is probably the most I'll say complex outcome because it does touch on so many things: reading, writing, and math. And so the work related to the math part of that outcome is not as far along as the reading.

We focused on reading initially. Math is essentially next up. And with a 2019 target, we're really at early stages where the team working there is putting together essentially rubrics and plans for how to achieve that target by 2019.

**Ms. MacRae:** — Essentially we have yet to establish the baseline for math because we have made those other two things a priority.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay, so maybe I'll work back then. Julie, I think you noted an 8 per cent increase in the last two years in terms of those students at or above grade level for reading and writing. So what would be some of the . . . Now with some ability to look back on the things that were effective with regard to meeting those targets.

**Ms. MacRae:** — One of the things was the creation of a document called *Saskatchewan Reads*, which was essentially a resource developed by all of the literacy and reading specialists from the divisions across the province. They put their best thinking into a resource. It was compiled and then distributed back to the system so that all of the teachers in the system have access to it. It's been followed up this year with a companion document for administrators, again basically capturing best practices, best strategies for how to oversee an effective reading or literacy program.

And so the combination I think of having the educators collaborate together and then capturing their collective wisdom and making sure that all educators or teachers have access to it has been instrumental. The other really straightforward answer is, when you start paying attention to something, it has a tendency to improve.

**Ms. Beck:** — There's an effect. So thank you for that answer. When those resources were developed, the *Sask Reads* and then the subsequent document, I'm wondering the extent to which resources were directed towards that, you know, to allow for the teacher time and the collaboration time as well as the printing and the research that would go into those documents. And then

. . . I guess I'm asking a fairly long-winded question, but have those similar resources been set aside in order to commit that type of energy to the math goals for 2019?

**Ms. MacRae:** — The budget allocation for *Saskatchewan Reads* was 344,682. And yes, there is money in the current budget to continue the support of the provincial leadership team and the work being done with respect to the education sector strategic plan.

[21:30]

**Ms. Beck:** — I'm going to move now into the yellow goals on the ESSP, particularly under the improvement targets and achieving an annual increase of 4 per cent in terms of the First Nation and Métis three-year graduation rate. And I know that there was a recent article that indicated some lift there, and I'm just wondering if you could expand upon that. Maybe I'll stop there instead of asking very long questions.

**Ms. MacRae:** — So the most recent results we have available with respect to graduation rates show that an overall graduation rate is 75.2 per cent for the province and an extended-time graduation rate is 82.5 per cent. The First Nations and Métis on-time graduation rate is at 40.1 per cent and the extended-time graduation rate is 55.9 per cent. These are about three to four percentage points higher than the respective five-year averages of 37.3 and 51.7 per cent. We are not necessarily achieving the 4 per cent year-over-year lift but we are making significant progress.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — When we formed the government, the First Nations and Métis graduate rate was around 32 per cent and is now over 40 per cent. So it's an increase of a little over 1 per cent per year, which is certainly a step in the right direction but in my view not nearly fast enough for where we need to go. It's a target. It's a goal, and we want to make sure that we work with the divisions to try and meet that. I think the future of our province lies with the First Nations and Métis people and we want to give them every chance for success and the ability to participate fully in the wealth and growth and prosperity of the province. And the only way they can do that is to become educated and part of the workforce. So it's a work-in-progress but it's a long way from where we want it to be. It's coming but it's not there.

**Ms. Beck:** — And I would expect that you've been looking, you know, those practices that have been promising and have seen good result in terms of graduation rates, and then probably some challenges as well that still exist. So I'm just wondering if you could expand upon, you know, some areas that maybe have shown promise and have shown results, and then some continuing areas of challenge. Because I do agree with the minister that, you know, the status quo obviously isn't acceptable to anyone and this is something that we need to get right as soon as we can. And so I'm just interested in your . . .

**Ms. MacRae:** — One of the things that's showing great promise is the work that we're doing on invitational shared services initiatives. These are partnerships between public school divisions and First Nations education authorities or bands. They are essentially partnerships created I guess voluntarily or by invitation, with a view to sharing resources,

sharing expertise, and more importantly sharing information on students, who quite often go back and forth between one system and the other. There are 17 of those in place across the province and as I say, they are showing some promise.

The other fairly significant initiative is something called Following Their Voices, where we have . . . Sorry, I've been distracted. The Following Their Voices initiative started with actually doing some research, contacting students, asking them about their schooling experiences, how they might be improved, and then setting up these initiatives across the province where we focus on basically relationship-based pedagogy. It's modelled after a New Zealand model but it has been basically adapted for Saskatchewan students and Saskatchewan teachers.

So in terms of some of the results we're seeing from that: decrease in behavioural incidents, down to 1,065 compared to 1,871 in the same time frame the previous year; number of students on track to graduate, 38 graduates in 2014-15 with a potential of up to 50 in this year, which is a 32 per cent increase; credit attainment in grades 10 to 12, an average of 101 awarded per block in 2014-15 compared to 176 per block in 2015-16, again, a 74 per cent increase. And with respect to some more generalized measures of student achievement, increases by more than 20 per cent in achievement measures related to comprehension. And we also have some fairly strong anecdotal evidence from teachers who are essentially saying that the professional development they've received in conjunction with this process, along with the change in the practice, has actually been life changing, not only for their students but for themselves.

**Ms. Johnson:** — Just one last thing that I'll add to what Julie has said there is that we, as I mentioned earlier, the provincial leadership team is comprised of the provincial directors of education and some First Nation directors of education. And the Following Their Voices priority is one that is led by Pat Bugler. He's the director of education from Treaty Six Education Council. And he has been a tremendous leader for this particular initiative and has been able to keep everything moving along smoothly.

**Ms. Beck:** — I'm, as if by pattern, going to move down to the next improvement target here. And specifically, and again this one is coming up quickly, is the 2018 goal of having school divisions achieving parity between First Nations and Métis students and non-First Nations and Métis students, on the Our School and Tell Them From Me engagement measures. Maybe, you know, just clarifying for people what those measures are within that tool, and reporting on any progress or any challenges with regard to meeting those goals.

**Mr. Waytuck:** — So the Tell Them From Me, Our School survey is actually a perceptual survey that looks at what's happening within a school. And what we looked at is sense of inclusion, a sense of belonging, feeling of security within the school as well. And what we have done is taken . . . So it works best at a school level. So all schools are enabled to look at that, their own results and make changes based on what they're seeing within their school itself.

But what we've also done is looked at the fact that there are some gaps between First Nations and Métis students and

non-First Nations and Métis students, and that we will be working with them over the next year to help them address that as they look at that particular perceptual survey. It really comes down to what schools need to do internally. It's not something that could be directed by the ministry or even by school divisions so much as what happens within the school itself because it is school based. It's not even school division based. So it really depends on what students in that particular school are saying and then what that school administration then looks at to try and address those particular issues.

**Ms. Beck:** — And I do appreciate what you're saying in terms of being . . . that the work of inclusion and belonging largely has to happen in the school. But this is a sector-wide target, so how does that filter down from the ministry through the school divisions to the school level?

**Mr. Waytuck:** — So once again the provincial leadership team looks at the engagement and inclusion of First Nations students, and we have involved directors of education as owners of the outcome for increasing the achievement of First Nations students as well. So besides Mr. Bugler, we also have other First Nations leaders working on that with us as well.

Certainly within . . . It all works together, so Following Their Voices, the invitational shared services initiatives, and the administrator . . . We're developing an administrator professional committee so that they can help teachers in the classroom as well as principals across the province work to support students as well.

**Ms. Beck:** — And when do we expect to see results from the latest . . . or when would we see the next results from the Tell Them From Me surveys?

**Ms. MacRae:** — I think that's probably an answer we'll have to bring to you tomorrow evening.

**Ms. Beck:** — I think that I will move on to overall three-year graduation rates within the province and just check in with regard to progress towards that goal of a 3 per cent increase per year for the overall three-year graduation rate.

**Ms. Johnson:** — Well as you know, our graduation rates for June 2016 aren't available yet, so just looking back on 2014-15, our on-time or three-year graduation rate is currently sitting at 75.2 per cent with the extended-time graduation rate being 82.5 per cent.

**Ms. Beck:** — Do we have any indication if that 3 per cent . . . I suppose I'm asking you to predict but any indication if we would expect that target to be met, that 3 per cent increase over last year?

**Ms. Johnson:** — I don't have any information that would allow me to speculate on that.

**Ms. Beck:** — And then again, back to the Tell Them From Me, the improvement target is that by June of 2018, 77 per cent of students will report high levels of intellectual engagement and a sense of belonging. Do we have any measures towards progress?

**Ms. MacRae:** — Again I think we'd need to have the most recent survey data and I don't have it with me.

**Ms. Beck:** — All right. All right. I just have some general questions with regard . . . sort of switching gears, the committee on teacher time and that task force. There had been I understand a considerable amount of work that went into that initial document and since then there seems to have a little bit of pullback. I'm just wondering what the current status is with regard to the task force.

[21:45]

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Sure. At the time the last collective bargaining agreement was entered into, the issue of teacher time was very important to the STF and to the teachers. And there was a number of issues that they wanted addressed — number of hours in the classroom, the nature of the work that was done, assigned time versus non-assigned time. And what they agreed to do, at that time the settlement was entered into and a memorandum was attached that would establish the task force on teacher time.

The task force had a number of members, including two members from the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association]. They did their work across an extended period of time. Their work was led by Andrew Sims, an outside person who was brought in as a facilitator. They arrived at a series of recommendations or a report that was done; the appendix B to that report is the actual recommendations.

And after it was completed, the SSBA members took it back to their membership, and their membership had issues with how it was going to be applied, whether it would be part of the collective bargaining agreement or whether it would be a stand-alone, and they added a number of questions or issues.

I have met with them a number of times. I don't believe that they have anything that's a disagreement with anything that's in the report but it's more a matter of particularizing or providing better detail in some of the definition, or how things might work. So they've struck a committee to work their way through whatever those issues are, which they've indicated they are planning to do over the next relatively short period of time.

I have told the SSBA that we'll certainly support whatever additional time is reasonable for them to work through the issues that were there and ask them to get back to the table and try and work through whatever those issues are or resolve those issues as quickly as they can.

The STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation] approached the bargaining process, in my view, in good faith. Bargained for this, and this is something that should be there. Now if this is a procedural process that the SSBA has to work through, I'll certainly support them in doing it, but my goal and my expectation of the ministry is that this will be a resolved issue. I can't give you a timeline but our expectation is that it should get itself worked out, and in my view, the sooner the better.

So I will continue to put pressure on SSBA to work out and identify what those issues are. I'm not sure what the dates that they have for their committee meeting, but the expectation is

that they will come back to us and say, this issue, that issue; can we . . . and how will this be implemented in the calendar.

One of the items I know that they raised was, well is there going to be additional cost on it? Well the underlying assumption of the agreement was this was how teacher time would be assigned, but it would not be a cost item. So I went back to the STF — and it's not my role to negotiate this thing — so I said to the STF, I said if you put something in the document as it would come in, that it was expected to be cost neutral. And they said that was our understanding all along. If you want to put it in the agreement, we're fine with that.

So I think the issues are gradually getting resolved, but they're not there yet. And for the SSBA, to be fair to them, this is a fairly significant thing. I think each division has to look at it. There's 1,044 hours that are prescribed in the documents which is roughly what was taking place before, but it puts it in black-and-white terms so that if a division wants to prescribe more time than that, then they have to do something by way of time in lieu. Anyway the short answer is the SSBA is working on it, and we hope they do it soon.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. So if I understand that correctly, then it's the SSBA that has struck their own committee within the SSBA to deal with some of the issues that they have, and it would be your hope that they would then get back to some understanding with the STF.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — That's correct. I think they're doing some work with LEADS [League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents] members as well. But you know, the issue is the signatories to the collective bargaining agreement are the SSBA, the STF, and the ministry. So those are the primary entities that we have to get . . . We're working our way through it.

But I'm not in a position to take it back to cabinet or to treasury board until the other entities have signed off, so I'm hoping that they get to a point where they've accepted where they're at or they've resolved the issues and they say yes, we can work with this. Then I'm prepared to take it forward as quickly as I can after that.

**Ms. Beck:** — And then, Minister Morgan, what would be your expectation . . . Say that they were able to come to an agreement around this document and the work of the teacher time and workload intensification. What would your expectation be then with the recommendations and the agreement that they come up with?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I have to take it back. There's a multi-step process. It has to go to treasury board. It has to go to the public sector bargaining. It has to go back to cabinet. Now the collective bargaining agreement and the fact that this agreement was there, was agreed to and acknowledged by all of those entities at the time the collective bargaining agreement was entered into. So I don't anticipate anybody will have a lot of issue with it. They may have questions and they may want things clarified for them and we'd certainly, you know, make the officials available to whatever one of those entities. But that process has not started yet, but I would want to start it as quickly as the SSBA was done their work.

**Ms. Beck:** — Now just to clarify, Mr. Chair. We are going till 10 or 10:30?

**The Chair:** — We're going until 10 and then we are considering Bill No. 3, *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act*.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. Okay. I guess I will move a little bit into the LINC agreements, and there's been some comments post-budget in terms of the LINC agreements. And I'm just wondering, first of all, the number of LINC agreements in the province, how many are there?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Each division has one so there would be 28.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I don't know what would happen like in Englefeld where there's one school, whether that's part of what Horizon would do or not. But there's . . . Each division would be party to one. I don't think that there's any standardization across the province. I think each one is negotiated and they would vary all across the map.

To be candid, the current status quo is not acceptable to have an agreement that has that much variation and because there's significant variations in what the cost of applying those agreements are. In some divisions, there is a significant percentage of time allowed for preparation. In some other ones, there would be zero time that's allowed for prep time. So you have teachers that don't have any time to do prep time and then you have others who've got a significant amount, and then those divisions have to staff up to compensate for that. So there's . . . We have included those as sort of grandfathered into the funding formula but it's not fair and it's not right to either the teachers or the divisions. So sooner or later we have to find a way to, at a bare minimum, standardize the costs.

When you talk to the individual divisions, they all, most of them will say there's a need for it; there's a place for it. There's unique things that take place within a division. I haven't had that discussion with them. But when we talk about transformational change, that has to be part of the discussion as to how we control what those costs are or we treat the divisions and the teachers in a fair and an equitable manner. And we're not there with it right now.

It was different back in the days where divisions set their own mill rate and said, yes, that's how it is here, that's what . . . And they competed, you know, whatever, when they were hiring teachers. But now we've got joint-use schools. We have a standardized mill rate across the province. So we need to find a way to control it.

**Ms. Beck:** — And I am going to go back a little bit. So just so I understand, obviously the system of there's a large provincial agreement that contemplates most of the compensation for teachers throughout the province and then you have these local agreements or these LINC agreements negotiated individually with each school board. So the historical reason for the difference between the larger agreement and the local, locally determined agreements, how did that come into play? Do we

know? Or what was the purpose of having two, the locally determined portion of the agreement and then the larger agreement?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I think I'll have . . . Some of the officials will probably give you a better answer than I will. It will go back to the days when the collective bargaining agreement was not negotiated at a province-wide level. So when it was negotiated at a province-wide level, the divisions wanted to maintain some local autonomy for things they wanted, so then it was split at that level. And I'm not sure when that would have come in. It was long before my time on Saskatoon Public, so it was maybe before the war.

**Ms. Beck:** — So presumably there was some reason to have that portion of the locally determined . . .

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — There was. I think when the province decided that, once again before my time, that they wanted to negotiate the collective bargaining agreement on a province-wide level, I'm sure that was agreed to by STF and by the province, so they negotiated. But it was to preserve local autonomy for the divisions that were losing the right to negotiate the CBA [collective bargaining agreement] on a one-by-one basis. So that would have preserved the local autonomy for that. And as time went on, the individual agreements became increasingly varied, both in the things that were included and the cost of the agreements. I don't know whether Donna, who lives and breathes those things, can . . .

**Ms. Johnson:** — Yes, I can add a little more detail. As has been said, the agreements having been locally negotiated certainly more than 10 years ago, because back when there were 81 school divisions, there were 81 locally negotiated agreements. And during amalgamations, school divisions certainly had some challenges in finding a common ground and then bringing those multiples into now 28 locally negotiated agreements. So those agreements will cover everything from the amount of prep time that high school teachers might get in their calendar day, how much prep time is available for elementary school teachers, things like principal allowances and what sorts of leaves the board will provide teachers, whether they'll provide leaves for, you know, health-related reasons, for extended family, etc., etc.

So there's quite a broad spectrum of things that do actually have a cost attached to them that have been historically locally negotiated, over and above what has been negotiated provincially and in the collective bargaining agreement.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. So given that context — and thank you for that — would there be reasons that there might be variation between these LINC agreements in terms of prep time or to address different needs at the local level beyond the previous ability of boards to set their own mill rates, so some were, you know, maybe more costly than others? Or would there be reasons that there would be some want to be able to address local context and local situation within these agreements?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I asked the folks behind me when they thought this started. One of them, in a career-limiting move, said before she was born. So I think just through the passage of time and the nature of individuals that would have been



negotiating the priorities that either a board or the local bargaining committee would have had at the time.

I don't think there would be anything unique within a board or a division that would say oh yes, we need to negotiate this or negotiate . . . Because in areas, public and a separate school division operating in the same city would have significantly different agreements, so there's no logic or no pattern. And I think the longer it goes the further they'll drift apart. The only limiting factor right now is the pressure that we put on the divisions to try and contain the cost of the LINC agreement.

So I think what's incumbent on the divisions and us and the various bargaining entities is to say, what are the things that should be kept at a local level? What are the things that should be rolled into the CBA? And can we put a cap on what those costs are? What are the type of things that wouldn't have a cost on it that could be . . . And I know there's professional development, travel and, you know, a myriad of other things that are in the agreements.

And when you look at the agreements — I haven't looked at a lot of them — but you look at one or two of them, you're surprised at the type of things that do get bargained in them.

[22:00]

**Ms. Beck:** — So there are 28 of these agreements, and it's my understanding, although I stand to be corrected, that they don't all come due at the same time. Currently they're under contract; they're bargained by three parties, two parties.

So my understanding of your indication that you would seek to look at these LINC agreements, would you be looking at one large agreement? I guess the "L" will mean something else perhaps at that point. I'm just wondering about the logistics of what that would like, post-transformational change or through this process. I know you don't want to probably presuppose, but wondering what's on the table?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I wouldn't want to speculate as to how it might roll out because of the timeline, and you may have to, you know, have a transition process as you would work your way through it. And that's certainly something that would have to be . . . part of the process is dealing with the towns.

I can tell you some of the expiry dates. One of them expired in 2013 and has not yet been renewed; two in 2014. A lot of them come due in this, in mid-2016. Some are renewed until 2017. Some, five or six of them are renewed until 2018, and there's four of them that have been renewed until 2019. So they're all over the map as far as expiry date. And I think the things that are in the agreement are even more varied. So there's . . .

**The Chair:** — You have about four more minutes to just, so we can get the time in that we need for . . . If you want to ask a last question and we'll wrap up.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I can volunteer, you know, by way of LINC agreements, when I was in the Saskatoon Public we took some pride in being able to negotiate relatively quickly. And at that time we didn't have to worry about the province-wide agreements sort of affecting the costing on it because at that

time we set our own mill rate. So prior to the standardized mill rate, the divisions had significant flexibility and made, you know, the decisions that they wanted to do. And at the same time they were talking about the LINC agreement.

There's always a trade-off; well, if we do this in the LINC agreement, it will affect the number of staff we hire and whatever. So it was really a management tool that the divisions had and the divisions used. So at that time we took some pride, you know, in having a good relationship with the teachers and in being able to work through.

At the same time, we also had two separate CUPE contracts for non-teaching staff. So why we would have had two separate CUPE contracts for people that work in a school? And I realize they were doing different kinds of work, but there were two locals, two contracts. And then the issue was, well do we really need to have two? Should those not be in one local? You know, it's really the right of those workers to decide how they want to be represented, but there's lots of anomalies that have come in over the years, so we work to try and address those things.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Minister, are there any final statements, comments you'd like to make before we wrap up this session this evening?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — No. I want to thank the members of the committee for being here tonight. I know it's been a long night when they would rather have been sitting outside or sitting at Five Guys or doing something else other than being here.

And to the building staff, in spite of the fact that Robert Park didn't bring me a sandwich tonight like he was supposed to, it's always appreciated when they're here as well as the officials. It's not enough to say it's part of the job; it's appreciated. And it's a challenge for them not just being here but getting ready, so I thank them all.

And to the member opposite, I feel sorry for you; it's been a long night. You don't look like you're well, so take care of yourself please.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Well I'd also like to take this time to thank the officials for being here tonight, and we'll have another long evening tomorrow night. I'd also like to thank my committee members to sit through this time.

And the time being 10:05, we will adjourn consideration of the estimates for the Ministry of Education. Thank you again, Mr. Minister, and your officials.

And wow, Ms. Beck, do we need a recess or can we jump right into the Bill No. 3, *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act*?

**Ms. Beck:** — I don't need a break. Does anyone want a break?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I'm ready to go and I don't . . . Given the discussion, I'm assuming we're not going to be long.

**Ms. Beck:** — And just before people leave, I just wanted to

reiterate my thank you. I know it's been a long evening for everyone and I appreciate it.

**Bill No. 3 — *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2016***

**Clause 1**

**The Chair:** — Okay. Minister, are there any new officials that need to be introduced, and do you have any opening remarks?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm joined at the table by Deputy Minister Julie MacRae, and by Clint Repski. It's my pleasure to be here to address proposed amendments to *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2016*. *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Act* requires amendment as a result of the new provincial collective bargaining agreement which was signed with the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation in February 2015.

The first amendment that is required is to repeal the clause concerning denying refunds on member contributions where a member has less than 20 days of contributory service. Currently teachers that fall under this scenario are unable to receive a refund from the teachers' superannuation plan. This amendment will allow teachers who have less than 20 days of teaching service to receive a refund of their contributions with interest.

The second proposed amendment pertains to contribution rates for the Saskatchewan teachers' retirement fund. The contribution rates were put in place on July 1, 2009, will conclude on June 30, 2016, and new rates will come into force July 1, 2016. The new rates are as follows: they are an amendment required to reflect the new rates as per the agreement. I want to thank you for the opportunity to discuss the amendments, and I believe I have the actual bill that has got the dollars and cents in it for the percentages. I'm going to let Mr. Repski read the numbers.

**Mr. Repski:** — The new percentages are going to go from 7 to 7.25, and 9 to 9.25.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We would answer your questions if there are any. I can advise the members of the committee that I'd made the officials available to the opposition earlier. And I understand that a briefing took place, so I'm not expecting a tough ride.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Are there any comments or questions on the bill?

**Ms. Beck:** — Only a comment. Yes, and I thank you for the briefing. And I'd also previously been in contact with both the SSBA and the STF, both, you know, respecting that this was part of the collective bargaining process, an agreement that was made by those parties, and both had encouraged us to allow swift passage of this legislation. So that's my only comment, and I won't be asking any further questions.

**The Chair:** — Are there any more questions or comments from any committee members? Seeing none, we'll proceed to vote on the clauses. Clause 1, short title, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 5 inclusive agreed to.]

**The Chair:** — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2016*.

I would ask a member to move that we report Bill No. 3, *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2016* without amendment. Mr. Parent moves. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. I would ask a member, being that it's prior to 10:30, to move a motion of adjournment. Ms. Wilson.

**Hon. Ms. Wilson:** — I so move.

**The Chair:** — All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. This committee stands adjourned until June 14th, 2016 at 7 p.m. Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 22:11.]