



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. To start the evening off we'll introduce all our committee members. We have Ms. Beaudry-Mellor, Mr. D'Autremont, Mr. Fiaz, Mr. Parent, Ms. Wilson, Ms. Beck. We also have joining us tonight Mr. Forbes and Ms. Sproule.

**General Revenue Fund
Education
Vote 5**

Subvote (ED01)

The Chair: — We'll be considering . . . We'll be resuming consideration of the estimates for the Ministry of Education, vote 5, Education, central management and services, subvote (ED01). Minister Morgan is here with his officials. Minister, if you would please introduce your officials and make any opening remarks.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I went through the officials at some length last night and it's the same cast that are here tonight, so I want to thank them for coming back. I made opening remarks last night, but we do have some follow-up information that was requested last night, so if the members opposite would like to deal with that now I'm prepared to do it, or if they want to deal with it later on, that's fine.

The first item I would like to address is the heritage language question, and the question arose as to the status of the students that were taking credit classes. So this is the background that I have, and we've got some specific numbers as well. But right now there are 45 students that are enrolled through that program for credit classes. So 1.6 per cent of the total students that are taking the classes through the Saskatchewan Organization for Heritage Languages are taking credit classes. So that means 98.4 per cent of SOHL [Saskatchewan Organization for Heritage Languages] students are not taking for-credit classes.

The teachers for the credit classes would be accredited teachers with active Saskatchewan teaching certificates. Students for the non-credit classes are volunteers and could be whatever other status they might have but are often volunteers. There are several provincially developed language credit programs available in all divisions that include German, Mandarin, Spanish, Russian, Ukrainian, and various Aboriginal languages. There are also locally developed language programs in Japanese, Tagalog, Dene, Michif, and Nakawe. If a student demand for a class exists, school boards can create locally developed, ministry-approved curriculum in any language and teach it for credit.

So in summary, this year we have no students that will not be able to finish a credit class that was started, and we think that in all cases where a student wishes to take a class next year, a credit class would be available so they would get the credit and would be able to take it through the ordinary programs that are available.

So with that we would certainly answer any, any further

questions that you have.

The Chair: — Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — I'll start for a bit here. Thank you very much, and I appreciate those answers. Now do you have someone or a unit in the ministry that are your go-to people for a second or bilingual or heritage languages?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I don't think we have a specific division.

Ms. Johnson: — In our student achievement and supports branch, we do have consultants who are supporting all of the French language material in the schools. So French immersion and the francophone school divisions are supported by staff in the ministry. I am not sure if we have others supporting the other languages though, but Brett could answer that one.

Mr. Waytuck: — Hi. Brett Waytuck from student achievement and supports. So yes, we do have curriculum consultants within student achievement and supports that support French language but we also, in the instruction unit, have people who support English as an additional language and have managed the relationship with people who are learning additional languages.

Mr. Forbes: — So they're experts in English as a second language. Is that what you're saying?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — As an additional language.

Mr. Forbes: — As an additional language?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Yes. The same program was originally called ESL or English as a second language, but now they're often multilingual when a new person arrives, so it's EAL [English as an additional language] rather than ESL.

Mr. Forbes: — But you don't have any group that really works in the area of teaching heritage languages?

Mr. Waytuck: — No, we do not.

Mr. Forbes: — [Inaudible] . . . so who do you depend on for that expertise?

Mr. Waytuck: — Teachers within the school divisions are the ones who would be considered the experts and doing that work.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And where did you . . . Do you know where people found those teachers?

Mr. Waytuck: — I'm sorry. I wouldn't have . . . I don't have that information with me, but we could certainly find out from school divisions where they may have recruited people.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Our expectation is that they would be recruited by the school division in the ordinary course, you know, that all of the staff is employed by the division. Heritage languages would likely have had volunteers that they recruited

from whatever other sources they have.

Mr. Forbes: — Well I'm thinking that, you know . . . What I'm gathering — but I could be wrong — is the fact that the education system is benefiting an awful lot from recent immigrants from whatever country you name, whether it's Russia or Germany or Pakistan, whatever. They come over. They may be qualified teachers but they're willing to teach, and there's an expectation that they become accredited. They may teach only that language. They may not teach math or, you know, the classic story where you have to teach the science as well, but they teach the language that's being asked for in that school division. Is that . . . [inaudible] . . . do you think? Or do you think these are kids who are born in Saskatchewan who are learning . . .

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — You're asking the nature of the people that would take the SOHL or would be taking the credit classes?

Mr. Forbes: — Well who's teaching these classes, these heritage language programs? Because I get the sense from you, Minister, that they're professional teachers. They've gone through the teachers college here at the U of R [University of Regina] or U of S [University of Saskatchewan].

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Not necessarily. They're volunteers. They may or may not be being paid. It would depend on the specific program that's there. We don't establish the program.

Mr. Forbes: — No, no, but I'm talking about the ones who are teaching in our systems.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — They're the full-time. Then they would be an accredited teacher. And so if your question, what is the background of those teachers or where do they learn the other language, we would probably have to go back to the individual divisions to do it because the hiring is done by the divisions and if they're accredited through the teachers regulatory board, we probably wouldn't look beyond that. It's not something we've ever studied or done background work.

Mr. Forbes: — It seems to me a dangerous gap, where we have such, you know, in Saskatchewan we're benefiting from such an inflow of immigrants from around the world and we have this established heritage language program of some 40 different languages in 17 different schools and we're shutting that . . . Really, you know, this is a powerful message from the Government of Saskatchewan, for \$225,000, to say we don't want that; we're seeing it as volunteer.

And I'm hearing a serious gap of lack of knowledge from the Ministry of Education, maybe because it was only \$225,000 and it's maybe kind of goofy to have two or three people in a unit to manage that, but at the same time to make that kind of a decision and what the ramifications are of that out in the public.

Because it's not only the kids from those cultures that are learning it but it's people who wish to do . . . And we know this for a fact, especially with Japanese or Mandarin, that is a program that people, a language people often learn for economic reasons, for trade. I'm concerned about that, that there might have been some gaps in this knowledge, but I do understand that — and I'll come to my question here — that

just a few years ago the Ministry of Education did ask for a rigorous evaluation of the heritage language schools program because of the funding. Is that the case?

Mr. Waytuck: — We provided additional funding to them to help support an assessment program that they could use within those schools. Again it wasn't credit based because most of them are not teaching credit-based courses. It was to support the volunteers in the work that they were doing in the classroom.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I'm not sure whether your question said that you felt there was a gap in the knowledge the ministry had or whether there was a gap in education in the province because the program was no longer offered.

Mr. Forbes: — I'm saying it appears there's a gap right now. I'm saying that this gap, this decision has been made in perhaps a bit of a knee-jerk, very quick manner.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — So your question is the gap is no longer having the SOHL programming.

Mr. Forbes: — Well to determine whether it's a good program or not. I mean, I'm hearing . . .

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I'm sorry. Then you're saying the gap is in the knowledge and the questions that the ministry are asking? I'm asking which one it is.

Mr. Forbes: — Well or haven't asked because there . . . You know, I don't see that there's an expertise within the ministry or people who could evaluate whether or not this \$225,000 cut is a good idea or a bad idea.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I think the information we've provided is that the for-credit classes are the vast majority of the ones that are offered. They're offered in most of the schools. We gave you a list of which were 10, 20, and 30 level classes in a variety of different languages. We feel that our role as government should be to ensure that different language education is available. So the information we provided to you shows that it is.

SOHL was providing — and I don't mean to criticize the program in any way — was an after-school or an evening program and it was a cultural or . . . You know, there was certainly a learning component to it, but it was not core to the services that were provided by way of 10, 20, 30 classes that we provide, and maybe the people that were taking it weren't looking for a degree or diploma. But what we have done through our schools is we have a fairly significant group of classes that are available in a variety of different languages which we feel are important to offer, and are continuing to offer. So we made the decision that this was not core to our educational function.

Now I don't mean to demean or say the people that do it should not continue with it but it is not core to the function that we offer. It's not a fill-in for the things that are core because the things that are core are offered and will continue to be offered.

Mr. Forbes: — So, but this is the question is, so were you advised of that by your staff? Or is that something you came to

your own thinking? Because it appears to me that the issue is the ministry doesn't really have . . . and I'm not hearing them make the case to you. But you've had several reasons why you really don't want this program, and I think that's unfortunate. You've said it's because it's after school but now we know it's several classes that are credit are offered after school.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Less than 2 per cent of them are credit classes. So it's fine if there's overlap. We're not worried about it. The decision was made that it was not core to our main function of providing education to the students of the province. And we looked at and will continue to look at virtually every program that we offer and say, is this core to what we do? Is this something that duplicates something that's already there, as this one does? Is this something that's absolutely essential?

We had mentioned earlier that the resource decline in the province was very substantial, well in excess of \$1 billion. So it's not a matter of going through and saying, well if you just did this program, or you just did that program. What we're looking for is savings in a variety of different places all the way across government, whether it would be Education, Health, Social Services, and ones especially that don't impact on people if the program is discontinued. And this one would certainly fall into that because if a student wishes to take the class, the class would be available to them as a regular credit class and the cost, if they wish to continue, \$4.58 a month.

Mr. Forbes: — Well you've brought that up, that \$4.58, but surely you must be aware that this is already costing parents, and there's a whole range of costs to it. This has not been free because of the Ministry of Education. This has been a supplement to the 17 different schools, some of which will have to close down, and then you're really starting a spiral here.

[19:15]

And you know, I mean it's interesting. Maybe we have two different definitions of core, but when I think of core, I think of core curriculum, what's really important to the learning of our students and our children. Now maybe you have a different definition, but to me it's lifelong learning. And we all know . . . And I think now it would be interesting if the minister is being advised that it's not a good idea to learn a second language; people who learn second languages actually have more difficulty in school. In fact it's the opposite. We know that actually, that people with second languages do better in school. And so this is the concern I have, is it seems like we're on a downward spiral.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I certainly agree that learning a second language is a desirable thing to do. It's good for everyone's education. It's good for their role as a citizen, and I wish I had done better at learning second languages when I was young. But we offer them through the regular 10, 20, 30 program that we've got. This was an outside-of-school-hour program and duplicated the things that were already being offered within the system. And you made the point — and I agree with it — that a large portion of the cost was already borne by the parents or by the community. And we're saying to them, thank you for what you're doing. If you wish to continue it, we're no longer providing the \$4.58 supplement.

Now I can tell you that, you know, this amount of money allowed us to retain the equivalent of two classroom teachers in the province. So it came down to, you know, if you're looking at an either/or — and we probably shouldn't, but if you are — the cost of the saving allowed for two full-time classroom teachers in the system somewhere in the province that would be teaching regular 10, 20, 30, or whatever the things are that they would be teaching.

Mr. Forbes: — You know, Mr. Minister, you've given me quite a few kind of . . . And I don't know if the ministry is working overtime on creating these sort of interesting metaphors. First it was \$55 a month. Then they figured out . . . they divided by 31 and they came up with \$4.18, and now we're having two salaries of teachers. I mean this is demeaning to the people who worked really hard in the Saskatchewan Organization of Heritage Languages to put it up to, it's either two teachers or it's 4,000 kids. Is that what we're talking here: 4,000 kids or two teachers?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — No, no. What I'm saying is, that's the cost, is the equivalent of two teachers. And I'm not saying it's a matter of saying, oh we needed the two teachers; therefore we couldn't . . . I'm trying to put it in the context of what the cost of a program was that duplicates something that's already taking place. We didn't do the calculation, you know, that said \$30 or whatever the other one was — I think that was done by somebody in the opposition — because we knew when we made the decision that it was under \$5 a month, was what the actual cost would be to the parents or the people that are sponsoring the kids to go.

And I'm not saying this is a bad program or that it's an undesirable program or anything like that at all. And I hope that the program continues, would love to see it continue. However our focus is and will be core programming for our students, which is the programming that will offer them a graduation certificate so that they're able to go on to post-secondary either through regional college, polytechnic, or one of the universities. These programs didn't. So that's why we look at things that are core to what we do as what our function is.

Mr. Forbes: — Has anybody in that youth language unit told you what the best age to learn a second language or to retain their language is? Is it grade 9 or 10?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — No, it's earlier than that. You know, kids learn language when they're very young. They learn language before . . .

Mr. Forbes: — That's what the whole thing about heritage language schools . . .

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — So you know, these are high school level. I'm not saying that this doesn't offer a useful benefit to those people that take it. I encourage them to take it. It's not core to what we're doing. We have language studies that are in there. We look to the parents and we look to the community people, you know.

Mr. Forbes: — Now the other thing is, did anybody or any of your staff . . . You're cutting the active child benefit, which is a \$150 tax credit for people who do cultural activities. So as well

as increasing the fees of people now having to pay for the languages, did you have a sense of . . . And that's impacting some 3,000 to 3,500 kids, and there may be crossover. I don't know what percentage it is in terms of the heritage languages.

But here you have actually these kids are getting a double whammy here, these families are. You're cutting, you know . . . On one hand, for the government who has an operating budget of \$176 million of what that comes out of, and then now forcing parents to pay more. When they come to next year to get their active child tax credit they go, oh yet again a second cut. So I don't know if you thought of the impacts, the unintended consequences here.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — You know, we looked at a variety of different things. This was not an easy budget process to go through. We looked at what happened in different provinces, and we looked at the size of the deficit that our neighbouring province had. We looked at the nature of reductions that were done in some of the eastern provinces to try and maintain a balance.

So here we struck a compromise. So we have a deficit in the province close to half a billion dollars. We have a decline in revenue in the range of a billion and a half. So if we want to balance at that level, that means we need to find some savings. So we looked at a myriad of different programs that were being offered and said, okay is this one that we need? Is this something we can live without? Is this something that will not impact families? Is this something that we have an alternative that's available? In this one there is an alternative that's available.

So those are the type of things that we looked at. And that's done in health, social services, and across the board. So none of these were easy decisions. The programs that were reviewed, none of them were bad programs or very, very few. Programs were provided by good folks meaning well, but not core to what we do as a government and the things that we need to look at if we want to maintain the balance in our budget. I mean, some of the things we had before don't exist. And this one, when you look at it as being a duplication of things that already exist, relatively low cost to the individuals that are affected by it, that was why the decision was made.

Mr. Forbes: — What's interesting about this was a program that was started in 1991 — and of course, if we remember what the economics of the province was back in '91 and the tough choices the government had to make — but yet they started this. And in many ways it was visionary because here we have a province that's rich in its culture and attracting people from all over the world.

And I think what it would have been in '91 if this program had not started or it had not been funded by, in part by the government of Saskatchewan, where we would be today. Would we be attracting the immigrants that we are today with the message that this is a warm and welcoming province and you're welcome here. We support you and embrace you. But we're . . . For \$225,000 — because I do get the sense of the situation we're in — but clearly this is, as I say, of \$176 million, the investment here is long-term and it could be short-sighted. So I'm going to stop my comments.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We looked at it. It was a difficult decision amongst a lot of other difficult decisions. We also, during the election, we looked at the costing platform that was put forward by the opposition, and it called for I think a 1.1 per cent increase in funding for education. So I think it was something like, when you looked at it, it was \$27 million. So I'm thinking where would the capital come from? Where would the other things come from that are in there? What would they do with that \$27 million?

The platform that was put forward, I sort of thought you're going to end up cutting not just this program, because this one was announced before the election, but you have a lot more things that you would be cutting if that was the type of increase. Now I don't know whether that 1.1 per cent you were talking about was an increase over the existing funding for the previous year or whether that was on top of inflation or whatever, but the increase that we've come forward with is, you know, in the range of 8 per cent plus a large amount of capital is there.

So you know, when we went into it, you can't have it both ways. You can't say during the election we were going, we were only going to do this much, vote for us on that. And now everyone's saying, oh no, we really meant way more. I mean, you know . . .

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Minister, I'm going to stop before you go to the Leap document.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I was working up to that.

Mr. Forbes: — I'm going to say we did lose that election. And you are the government, and you are responsible. The people of Saskatchewan are looking for you for leadership. But we will continue this conversation, and you are aware of the stack of petitions I have on my desk, so there is a groundswell of people who are very concerned about this.

So thank you very much. I appreciate the difficult position you are in. I know the folks at the heritage languages do as well. But they are going to be advocating for this because they believe passionately in this. And they've caught me up with that bug as well because I think this is a good, good thing. So thank you very much, and I'll turn that over to my colleagues. Thank you.

The Chair: — Ms. Beck.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you all again for being here. In some ways I'm glad to see that the curtains are pulled so we can't see exactly the type of evening we're all missing out there today.

I guess I'm going to get right into it here. One of the first things I have to ask about is just some clarification from last evening. So it was around the, I was asking questions about the increased classroom supports, the \$4 million, and Ms. Johnson noted that the 1.2 million increase that's noted in the estimates is actually supplemented by a \$15.4 million increase in education property taxes, which gives a total of \$16.6 million increase year over year. So I'm just wondering if I can get a breakdown of the total dollars for education funded by general revenues and then by education property taxes that is realized in this budget?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I don't know whether we target one or

the other. You know, we look at an aggregate budget. There's different sources of revenue come in, but we don't tie one source of revenue to another. We see this as the overall budget that's been approved for the division. But I'll allow the ADM [assistant deputy minister] to . . .

Ms. Johnson: — So what the minister has said is correct. When we're working out the allocations for each of the school divisions, we make no differentiation between GRF [General Revenue Fund] funding and education property tax funding. That split, if you will, is considered only at the highest level when we're determining what the total amount of funding is for all school divisions.

And so when we look back in time, in 2016-17 we have the GRF or the government's share of the total funding going to school divisions is 1,206.5 billion, and that accounts for 64 per cent of the total funding that's provided to school divisions. So the balance, the 36 per cent, is 680 million coming from education and property taxes.

And if we go further back to '15-16, '14-15 and so on, that split is more or less the same. In '15-16 it was a sixty-four and a half to thirty-five and a half per cent split. The year before, very similar. We would have to go back to, say, 2000 to see the EPT [education property tax] share sitting at about 59.6 per cent while the government share was 40 per cent. And that again is going way back to 2000-2001 fiscal year.

Ms. Beck: — I'm just going to move back to the estimates. So the 1.2 billion, so the total amount in the total expenses for education, that is an aggregate of both of those funding streams that we see in the estimates.

Ms. Johnson: — So when you're looking at this book here, it does not include the education property tax amount in the vote for Education, so the amount in this is exclusive.

[19:30]

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The education property tax flows directly to the divisions from the municipalities that collect it. But the approved budget includes all of the expenditures that are made by the divisions, so the Estimates booklet will show the amount of money that the province commits by way of a transfer to the divisions. But in addition to that, the divisions will have received their EPT but of course we know how much it is so it's part of the . . . I don't know if that . . .

Ms. Beck: — And does the ministry direct those EPT funds as to how boards are to allocate those funds within . . . So that is just realized as a portion of the overall revenues.

Ms. Johnson: — It is simply the place from where they collect that part of the revenue, but their total school division grant is the grand total amount that's shared with each of them on budget day. So their portion of the \$1.89 billion is described to them on budget day. And then over the course of the year they get that money either from the property taxes or from the ministry through a transfer payment that we issue on a monthly basis.

Ms. Beck: — So school division boundaries aren't coterminous

with municipal boundaries, so how is that allocated for those divisions that may have property tax assessments from different municipalities?

Ms. Johnson: — Well the school divisions, some of the school divisions certainly are collecting property taxes from multiple municipalities. But within each municipality, as you just pointed out, where a municipality has a school division boundary going through it, then that municipality is required to remit the education property taxes either to school division A or school division B depending on where the taxpayer is located.

Ms. Beck: — That's helpful. Thank you. So last year I noted in the transcriptions of this committee and, Donna, I think you just spoke to it in terms of the overall breakdown of about 64, 65 per cent from general revenues and about 36 or 35 per cent from property tax assessments.

And last year, Minister, you noted a desire to rebalance the ratio of government funding to property tax from the current 65 to 35 towards more of a 60/40 split. And I'm just wondering what the future plans are with regard to that ratio and why was the decision made this year to sort of keep it where it was again at 65/35.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Sure. The Premier mused last year about whether . . . The province-wide mill rate for education has not changed in a number of years. So the Premier mused publicly about whether there was, whether there should be a time when we would adjust it or have a policy to adjust it or to review it and then have, you know, some kind of an ongoing adjustment after that.

So he made that statement in a number of public forums and this year didn't go through the process, knowing that it was a challenging economic time for homeowners, for businesses. So nothing further was done this year. It might be done in another year, but wasn't, was not done this year.

Ms. Johnson: — I'll just offer to that, since 2009-10, and that was a year in which the split between the GRF transfer amount and the education property tax amount was sitting at 60/40, since 2009-10, the amount of cumulative savings for the ratepayers, based on the policy of the education property tax relief, has amounted to almost \$1.2 billion. So \$1.177 billion essentially in education property tax relief to the ratepayers following that policy change.

Ms. Beck: — And so the remainder of that would have been taken up by, backfilled by general revenues.

Ms. Johnson: — Yes.

Ms. Beck: — So I guess then this leads me into my next section, but . . . And perhaps, Minister Morgan, you did allude to this. Is the change in the mill rate on the table or a change to that ratio on the table as part of transformational change?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We haven't had a discussion whether it is or is not.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. A fairly broad level question: how do you see transformational change rolling out in education? It's one of

the sectors that has been highlighted, has been most frequently talked about I guess when we're talking about transformational change. How would you anticipate that process moving through education?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — You know, the deputy ministers have a series of meetings where they're trying to develop processes as to how the consultation and how the process might unwind. So we're trying to avoid a lot of things that would avoid unnecessary speculation or discussion at this point in time.

We've posed questions to the school divisions and I think I've repeated some of them here, that you should sit down with a blank piece of paper. You should figure out how you want to do transportation. Can you do shared services? Would it be a better idea if one municipality did all of the payroll for the province? We have one location in the province now that's doing distance learning through a location in Kenaston. Would that be able to do distance learning for all divisions or for the divisions and the ministry? So there's just a variety of those type of questions that you ask that may be things that would save money and may improve services to students, or making sure that we go forward with it. Another one that certainly people ask about is what's the right number of divisions, and I don't know that.

Ms. Beck: — I think they've had discussions about LINC [local implementation and negotiation committee] agreements and as you mentioned, amalgamation.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The LINC agreements were something that we had had discussions about prior to this, that we needed to find a way of resolving LINC agreements. The disparity for teachers in divisions was something that was unacceptable and there was no way to resolve it over time. So you know, the discussion we had yesterday was about the variety of different things that were not included in the LINC agreements. And I think when you have a person that's a professional educator, has gone to school, has a teaching certificate, should not be looking at wanting to work in a particular division over another because they've got a better or a different or richer LINC agreement rather than somewhere else. We think that should be something that's used to sort out whatever the immediate needs are, or the unique needs of a municipality, without being a hiring issue or a disincentive to people. So it just . . . No criticism of the course of events that took us to that place but it's really not an acceptable place to be in. And I don't know what the resolution is but I know we have to find one.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. And certainly education is in some ways like other ministries but in other ways, you know, it's not like the Ministry of Highways for example, or Parks where, you know, you have the ministry staff. Within education and even more so than with health regions — of course you have health boards but they're not elected — you have a different level of government. So I'm just wondering how board autonomy fits into transformational change as well and how you see that rolling out with another level of government to deal with.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Sure. The trustees are elected by the people in their divisions and have been since long before I was on the school division, and they represent those areas. In the past, amalgamation has come about voluntarily, sometimes not so voluntarily; sometimes successfully, sometimes not so

successfully.

But as time has gone on, some things you decide you want have more of a common approach across the province. We have graduation certificates and graduation programs that are common all the way over the province, not determined by the individual boards. We also have got the right to teach and the granting of teachers' certificates, not determined by individual boards but rather determined at a province-wide basis, as is a lot of the curriculum. So you know, it's a partnership. We provide information and supports; the divisions do as well. So we look to them for ideas and initiatives and ways that we can go forward to better serve our students, and also at the same time to reduce our costs.

Ms. Beck: — I'm looking at the list and, you know, some of this is talking about amalgamation or sharing of services. But I'm also hearing that amalgamation of actual school boards is something that is on the table. And now I know you haven't defined it exactly, the scope that transformational change will take. But are there certain areas where that might make more sense, the amalgamation of school boards in the province or are there certain areas that . . .

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I don't know. And I don't know how the boundaries should be defined. We have school boards as small as one school and some with I think in the range of 60. So I don't know what the right number to have and I don't know the right number for geographical distribution should be. So that's a question we're posing to the school divisions. Is 28 the right number? We have a different number of health regions. We have a far different number of municipalities. I don't know whether there's a benefit to having some of those on a more . . . and not willing to speculate on it either. At this point I am saying to the divisions: you tell us what you think works, what you think will be more efficient, more effective, and let's have the discussion.

Ms. Beck: — Certainly we have some school divisions, you know, that cover a large, large area. Some of the concerns that we hear in the more sparsely populated school divisions would be, you know, just the time it takes say for an SLP [speech-language pathologist] to get from one school to another, and if you've got an even larger school division, of course that increases some of those concerns. So okay.

I guess this is another fairly broad question. We just had a fairly lengthy discussion with David here about what's considered core to the educational mandate. So I guess what I'm wondering is what would be on the table and what wouldn't be on the table with regard . . . Would there be any area of education where we say no, this is our core business, this isn't something that we're willing to change? And what are . . . And I do have a bit of a list here in terms of things that are on the table.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Sure. We have a plan for growth that outlines certain targets that we want to have by the year 2020 by way of graduation rates, literacy and numeracy rates, as well as the education sector strategic plan. The goals and the targets that are enumerated in those would be the things that we regard as what are priorities and what our key items are. I'll let I'm not sure which one of the officials provide a bit more background of the things that are . . .

Ms. MacRae: — Well our first priority, of course, is always going to be the achievement of our students. And so having students who are literate, numerate, socially responsible, and, you know, basically who are equipped when they leave our school system to pursue their aspirations, whether that's for more education, whether that's, you know, to go directly into employment or whether that's to become an entrepreneur, those are the things that I think most of the people across our province would agree are central to what it is they expect from a publicly funded school system.

Ms. Beck: — So certainly I appreciate that there is a sector plan and there are targets for improvements around reading and writing and numeracy. What about other curricular areas outside of those sort of three areas in terms of considered core? Are there other curricular areas that we would consider, maybe not on the sector plan, but still considered core to the business of education?

Ms. MacRae: — Certainly I think school divisions, supported by the ministry, have made good choices I think for the most part with respect to what constitutes a well-rounded education. There's sufficient flexibility in the system to ensure that local needs and priorities are met. I'm not prepared at this point to look at a list of our current course offerings across the province and say, well that one's in and, you know, that one's important and that one isn't. It would be my hope that that's perhaps an end result of some of the conversations and consultations that may occur, but it's not certainly something that we'd be prepared as a ministry to identify.

[19:45]

Ms. Beck: — As was noted, one of the overall goals of transformational change, it does seem to be in part a reaction to difficult financial times. And I'm just wondering if there are any reduction targets there in mind in terms of the savings that would be realized through transformational change.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The Finance minister talked about what the budget challenges are in this fiscal year. We have a resource-based economy that has ups and downs, and I can't speculate on where it would be next year. We know where it is now, and the analysts that most people are looking at are saying that an oil recovery is, I think, 18 to 30 months before there's a significant recovery. So the challenges would remain certainly with us for that period of time. That would be the only speculation I would engage in, is when the province's economy will have its, what we hope to be its inevitable rebound.

Ms. Beck: — So there isn't an overall target, you know, say a 5 per cent reduction or 10 per cent reduction?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Neither a target in dollars nor a target in time. We know what the size of the shortfall was that was occasioned by the resource fall-off. We know that we're not, it will not all be coming from . . . We know that there was a willingness on the part of the Finance minister to have a deficit.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. But we do know that there is a desire, a stated desire and plan to have the budget back to balanced by next budget?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We are very supportive of that goal, want to see that happen. We'll continue to work with Finance. We'll work with the divisions and hope that there's a recovery in resource prices or that there's a partial recovery.

Ms. Beck: — I think that kind of leads into, you know, some of my other thoughts. Of course, you know, the resource sector . . . We are a resource-dependent province. It does go up and down, unfortunately. It doesn't necessarily ebb and flow with needs and growth within school divisions. I know we continue to see a high level of birth rate and growth in many areas in education in terms of overall enrolment.

The other thing, as I mean, I know you at the table know better than I, is that we have some very specific windows in education in terms of children reading before grade 3. And we know that money invested in early education tends to pay dividends long run, so you know, unfortunately those needs don't necessarily correspond with what we've got in terms of overall revenue.

So I'm just wondering how those needs, how growth would factor into those targets where, you know, we . . . Yes, revenues are down, but we've got growth and we've got increased need within education. Is there any way to, you know, buffer that gap to protect that space, to ensure that we're not cutting supports that might cost us more money in the long run if we don't support that education for students?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Our reading rates have gone up 8 per cent, so we know that the work that's being done is valued work and is producing real results. We don't want to lose any of that momentum. But we are willing to say to the divisions, you look for as economic a way of doing this. We say to them as well, you look for ways that you can save money and make sure that you commit to keeping your resources in the classroom.

You were on a school board, as was I; we know the same trigger points that are early-years literacy, mid-years numeracy — those are key points, and the targeted programs that we have, we haven't cut those programs or asked the divisions to cut those programs. We've said to them, this is a tight budget. You find where you can . . . You decide. Can you do transportation cheaper? Do you have reserves that you can use? Is there better ways that you have that you can deliver it?

So there was an increase, and a significant increase, in the budget this year. And it was not as much as divisions would like to have seen with regard to the collective bargaining agreement, but the payment that we make for that isn't designated for that. They can move resources back and forth. The money goes to them, as you are aware, unrestricted, you know. They're required to spend the capital money on capital, but the rest of the options are completely up to them. So we look to them to make the best decisions that they can, and likely the decisions that they would make would be similar to the ones that you would have made when you were on the school board. And we'll make sure that those resources are there. I'm not saying that this isn't a challenge for them, but this isn't something that should impact their ability to provide services to the students.

Ms. Beck: — Well I think that we, you know, definitely agree on that fact that it is important that we provide students in the classroom with the supports that they need.

One thing that I'm hearing from school boards is, you know, this certainly has been a difficult budget. But this isn't the first. This has been a series of, you know, at least three — with the removal of the mid-year adjustment — difficult budgets. And I do expect that boards will have been making those decisions earlier on. But at a certain point, you know, those decisions, that low-hanging fruit if you will, isn't there any more. And there are potentially impacts.

So I'm just wondering . . . The Premier noted after the budget that one of the goals of transformational change was to improve service, good service quality for Saskatchewan taxpayers, so quality of service, quality of education. But another piece is also the cost reduction piece, and delivering services in a more efficient way which, I mean, I think both of those things can be true. But there can also be a point where it comes and there's a bit of a tussle between, you know, will it be cost cutting or, you know, at what point are we going to be impacting services?

I'm wondering where you see that school boards, you know, outside of the LINC agreement because, of course, right now those are fixed and they're contractual, but outside of that, where you see that boards might be able to realize savings that they would need in order to protect learning in the classroom.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I speculated on some things earlier this evening and I have publicly before. What I am saying to divisions is, you sit down with your blank sheet of paper. You work through the ways that you think you can be more efficient and more effective at providing those services. We want to see to it that the resources go into the classroom, and if you can do it by finding savings here, there, or elsewhere, do it.

The distance learning centre in Kenaston was able to save a half a million dollars by switching over to e-books for a number of the resources that they have, so easier to move and easier to acquire. So I don't know what those other type of things might be, but those are the type of things, when you look at \$400,000 here, \$500,000 there, all of a sudden those are the things that do.

The collective bargaining agreement shortfall was about, I think, \$8 million across the province. So when you look at a school division like Saskatoon Public, it's got a \$200 million budget. They need to find roughly \$2 million on 200, so they're looking at a fraction of 1 per cent. And I'm not saying that's the easiest thing to do, but it's not an impossible thing to do, and they've indicated that they can do it — as has North East and a number of the other divisions that we've talked to by phone, saying yes we think we can do this; we think can do that. We have some reserves. We had some vacancies that we'll choose not to fill, and a variety of other things that they've got. So I'm pleased that they're looking at and are willing to have those discussions.

And I think the problem that you might have is that you instantly assume, well there isn't as much money as we'd like to see, therefore it's coming out and will impact the children. And it just isn't so. What we're saying to the divisions is, you work hard; you find some efficiencies. We're not telling you where they were. We want you to look for, find them yourself, find some savings so that you can commit to resources there. And that's what they're there to do and that's what all of us are

there to do is try and commit those things for the kids.

So it's not for you or I to sit here and speculate how they might do it or this particular item or that particular item. We encourage them. We'll offer them discussion or suggestions, but we urge them to work between each other and make comparisons, look to other provinces, look to other jurisdictions and say, oh can we do a province-wide bussing contract? Can we do this? Can we do that? And these people do this all day, every day. We have 28 directors which are probably some of the best administrators that you would ever meet. You know, put them in a room, come up with some solutions and see where they can go to and share things. Perhaps they can do substantially better.

Ms. Beck: — I'd just like to make one note and, you know, there was talk of speculation and assumption. And you know, certainly I have my own biases, speculation, and assumption. But this is what people, you know, be it administrators and teachers and school board members have, these are concerns that have been brought to me, so it is a bit broader than just my own speculation and bias. And certainly I agree with you in terms of the quality and calibre of people that we have running our school divisions. But finding those sort of savings, you know, you mentioned \$2 million in Saskatoon Public and it is a small portion of the budget. But we're talking about, you know, school divisions tend to put almost everything into classrooms and into the buildings. So that's, you know, I think upwards of 85 per cent of most budgets. So that \$2 million, you know, for directing most of those savings to governance and administration, that's still a pretty small slice of the pie.

The other thing I do know, in talking with administrators and directors is that, you know, this sounds like a fairly big undertaking, this transformational change. One thing they don't have a lot of is time. You know, this doesn't sound like an off the side of your desk project. So it will take dedicated administration time to sort of, just to have the conversations that need to be had to realize these savings. So I appreciate that, you know, there may be, and they will continue as they have for many budget cycles, to look for efficiencies. But that doesn't come without cost in terms of time and collaboration between, you know, even driving between school divisions and setting up meetings and those things. So I'd just like to note that.

One question that I do have is going back to my comment about, you know, the number of budget cycles. You know, this is a transformational change process. We have had, you know, a fairly extensive lean exercise throughout the province and before that. I know in Education in particular, continuous improvement planning which also is, you know, efficiency year after year cycle. So I'm just wondering, how does transformational change differ from a lean exercise or a lean process and how does it differ from continuous improvement?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Well lean is a specific process designed to work at specific functions in a specific office. I don't know if you've ever gone through one of the exercises or not. So you'll know that it'll target a specific process or a series of processes in a specific office. And part of lean is the notion that it's not finished the day the process is done and it's an ongoing thing. And it's made substantial savings in health and made the system work a lot better.

When I had the Justice portfolio, we used it at the Office of Residential Tenancies. And they went through the process, did the wall walk, and everything there. They found some sort of strange . . . but what you wouldn't think are surprising when you looked at it afterwards.

They would come in the morning, and they wouldn't want to be interrupted from their work, so they put all the phones on forward as they went into their offices and did their work. So at noon they would clear their messages, and they would find out the people that were phoning were, what's your address? I've got a hearing at 9 o'clock and my child's sick and I won't be able to make it. Or we've settled this particular claim and therefore won't be able to be here. Or what's your address? I'm lost. Or I've got a problem with a hotel, or something that could be answered with a summary or a quick answer by the phone.

[20:00]

So they found by having a live person answering the phone, they were able to improve the satisfaction of the people that were using the system, save themselves a lot of time and effort in cancelled or what could have been cancelled meetings. Something as simple as answering the phone as well as how they file things, how they schedule things — so that's the type of thing that made a great deal of difference. And that's the type of thing that Health did. It's been used somewhat in Education to try and find savings in some aspects. I'll let Donna talk about it.

But we're not saying this is a lean exercise. We're saying, look at things between the divisions, you know. As you're building new schools, is there a common school design? Should collective bargaining be done rather than through the LINC agreement in each place or each division? Or the CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees] agreements, should they be done, you know, at a common table? You know, do you use electronic funds transfers instead of cheques? What kind of shared transportation can you have between the different divisions? Are you optimizing the routes, and so on.

I'm not saying what they should or shouldn't do. I'm just saying, sit down and start talking. You know, look at your budgets. Look at where your money is going to, and is there things that can be done better or differently or that would save money or improve the services to a student?

So I'm not looking for reasons not to do this, that people don't like the idea or that it's going to take some time or some resources. Of course it will. I'm saying to them, this is an exciting change. Participate in it. Work in it, and try and work your way through it.

You know, I'm not wishing to be partisan, but we're not of a party that will want to stand up and put out roadblocks. We want to say, let's do this. Let's move forward. This is where our province is going. This is where education is going. Let's be efficient. Let's be smart. Let's commit to having the best possible students, the best possible graduates we can. How can we continue to deliver that? How can we make it affordable? How can we make it sustainable without making compromises with how we do things for the kids?

So the nature of the handful of calls that I've had so far have been, what about this? What about that? And I'm saying, well it sounds like a unique idea. Talk about it between yourselves. It's not our role to do that at this point in time. We're saying to them, you sit down and do some of those things. We'll welcome the discussion. But I'll let Donna talk.

Ms. Johnson: — Thank you. So your earlier question was about continuous improvement and lean and that sort of thing. And the way we look at it is that continuous improvement is essentially what we're all about all the time. All the school divisions have always been on that page, and lean is one tool in the tool kit that can be used to find other ways or better ways to do the things that we currently do.

So when we take a look at some of the work that school divisions have done under the heading of continuous improvement or lean, just one of the examples coming out not that long ago was related to some work that the Northwest School Division and the Prairie North Health Region did together. And in that case, they had identified their problem as being that wait times for pre-kindergarten students requiring occupational therapy services were facing delays of 11 months to receive services. So they got together and searched out the problem a bit more. And ultimately as they worked through the process, they were able to come up with the following outcomes. So the wait times for occupational therapy services, therapy services were reduced from 11 months to two months. So that's a staggering nine-month drop in how long any parent would need to wait to get their pre-kindergarten students access to occupational therapy services.

They also noted that through the prior processes, that there was a good amount of redundant information collected from families on multiple forms between, again the two agencies: the school division and the health region. And they were able to reduce that redundant information collection from 35 points to zero, so they got rid of all of the redundancies. The number of forms that were required to be filled out by parents were reduced by 50 per cent, going from eight different forms down to just four forms, and ultimately improved communication among the school division, the health region, and families.

So I think it's just one of many examples that there have been in the education sector where they've been able to, using the lean tool, find ways to continuously improve the services that they provide to the students in the school division.

And we know, with all of the discussions that we've had at our provincial leadership team meetings with our directors of education in both the provincial schools and in the First Nations schools, that they really do value the time that they're able to take to assess these processes because ultimately it saves a tremendous amount of time, improves the quality and timeliness of access to key services for students across the province. So it's been quite successful in the education sector, and again that being just one example.

Ms. Beck: — And certainly you'd have no argument from me in terms of willingness within the sector to, you know, roll up their sleeves and find ways to improve student learning. And I mean, I think it's rare. People within the sector, that's their goal — right? — is to ensure . . . And I mean, I don't have any doubt

that that's not the goal here. But at some point, you know, there are . . . If this were an exercise about let's find the best way, and of course we should always be looking when in any endeavour, you know, the most efficient way to do that. We take very seriously, you know, the dollars, the collective dollars that we do have to spend, and we want to make sure that we invest those wisely and ensure that we're providing quality, in this case, education for students.

But there is a point of sufficiency. And I guess, you know, in terms of educators being excited about this process, I'm just suggesting that there have been, you know . . . This is the third — I went on the school board in 2009 — the third sort of layer of efficiency exercise that I've seen in my short, short career. And there does seem to be, and I could be corrected, on behalf of the government, an assumed inefficiency within the sector.

And I'm just suggesting that maybe we're at the point — and this is certainly what people inside the schools are telling me — we are at a difficult point where there have been, you know, measures cut back and more efficient, more efficient. But at a certain point there are concerns that student learning will be impacted. And again not my assumption, not my conjecture; it is what people who have more experience than I do in the sector are expressing to me as honest concerns. And I don't think that they're just trying to avoid the work of transformational change. I think that they have some legitimate concerns about the impacts on student learning, so I just wanted to leave that there. And of course there's no argument in terms of . . .

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Not one of the things that we've talked about means reducing anything that would come out of a classroom, not anything that would mean changing the duties or responsibilities of an educator. All of them are around areas of administration and providing the services — how buildings are operated, how school buses are operated — those are the type of things that we're looking at. Because the key commitment that we have to have, and will always be, is having an educator in the classroom that is motivated and can educate our children. So we're not talking about reducing the numbers. We haven't had that discussion. What we have had is discussions about ways of whether we can run a system that costs literally billions of dollars, can we run it more efficiently or . . . [inaudible].

But just to say, as you say, well we think we've made some changes therefore we've done . . . Well the low-hanging fruit, as you've said, are things like saying, oh well, we'll manage vacancies or we'll do this. Oh yeah, we're done; well no, we're not. We need to say to the divisions, how best to do it? What are you using technology for? Can technology . . . I mean, there's all kinds of discussion that they should have, need to have, and ought to have between themselves as to how to do it.

Donna mentioned some of the process changes that are there, so we'll continue to work with them as we go forward. But we're not prepared just to say, oh a couple of them have said they don't like it, or they're done. We're saying to those people, we want you to continue work. We want you to look at the options that are there. We're not directing what you do. What we're saying is, you sit down and you talk to the person in the next division, or you look within your own division. And some of them, I'm sure, will come up with some surprisingly good ideas. e-textbooks is one that somebody should have come out

with a long time ago.

Ms. Beck: — Well I do suspect that they will continue to innovate and find ideas, you know, administrators, perhaps school board members.

But also a parent was speaking to me about the incredible complexity — and again, a parent — in classrooms. And of course this is an example of one classroom, but it is something that you do hear. Not only numbers often in classrooms are increasing and in schools, but also just the complexity. One parent I was talking to recently, you know, 33 students in the classroom, two children who she identified as being on the autism spectrum, and a number of children in the class who have EAL needs. And I don't think this is a completely atypical classroom, particularly in a number of centres.

And she was expressing to me, with that type of complexity — there was one EA [educational assistant] and one teacher in the classroom — that the learning needs of her child weren't being addressed. So what I'm suggesting to you is just that, you know, there is, there is need in the classroom. There is increased need, not only in numbers but in intensity.

And my concern is, you know, if this exercise is about saving money more than it's about improving services in those classrooms, that that's a concern going forward. And again it's fine to dismiss my comments as speculation. And that really is fine, but I am earnestly bringing these concerns forward because I do believe that they deserve a hearing and deserve some answers.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — One thing that we'll agree on is, we want to commit the resources to the classrooms. And the concerns that parents raise are something that all of us share. And I can't speak to a specific incidence- or a specific matter, but I can say that those are the type of things that we want to address, and that's one of the reasons why we have a budget issue.

But the other reason is, we don't want that budget issue to become something that affects our ability to educate our children. We want to make sure that we have the resources available to it. So on that point, we certainly are in agreement.

Ms. Beck: — So we do note that this budget, that schools — 14, I believe, out of the 28 — are dealing with actual cuts, and a number of other divisions are growing and dealing with operating budgets where this operational funding doesn't meet their fixed and inflationary costs.

Now again I know that they're going to be asked to go through this transformational change, but do you reasonably expect that there will be any impacts on student learning as a result of this budget, or do you expect that this will not impact student learning? And are you concerned about that?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — It's not our expectation that it is or it will be. I think we went through at some length last evening the different items in our opening remarks of where supports for the classroom were put, where they were continued.

In fact there are 13 divisions that will have a decline in funding.

Invariably those are situations where either a project is finished or where there's been a significant drop in enrolment. So if there's a drop in enrolment, you don't have the kids, you don't need that particular classroom to operate. So you know, to those divisions, they'll move, reallocate resources to make sure that where the teachers are where the students are.

[20:15]

But a lot of these divisions are ones that have had a decline in enrolment that's been going on for a number of years, and they have plans in place. They work. They know that they've got to reduce the enrolment in certain areas of their divisions so they say okay, we know that we're not going to have this class here, we're not going to have this class here, and they're going to work with it.

Six of the school divisions have had declining enrolment at least the past two years, some of them longer, so this is something that will not come to those divisions as a surprise. In previous years we were able to say okay, there will not be an actual reduction in dollars but certainly with the expenses that they had, they would have had to make reductions in whatever there was, and it's only reasonable that they would. If you don't have the kids, you don't need the staff. So we expect them to have made steps to try and do that.

And it's interesting that one of the divisions that has seen the biggest drop and biggest drop in enrolment, biggest drop in funding is one of the ones that's made the best progress in student supports or student outcomes and that's Chinook. The director there, Liam Choo-Foo — I don't whether you know of — has done work not just there but is on the provincial leadership team and has worked there and another division for early years reading for the literacy and is responsible for Sask reads and has produced excellent results. And he is a director of a division that is the division that will probably have the single largest, second largest reduction in the province.

So the divisions are working their way through it and some of them are working through it with very good results. I'm not saying it's not without challenges, but that's . . . These people are professionals, and it's those kind of dedicated individuals that are continuing to produce results.

The Chair: — Ms. Sproule.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much and good evening to the minister and the officials. I just have a few questions based on public accounts from '14-15. That's the most recent document that we have. I don't know if you have the numbers for '15-16 available or . . . It's not published yet, is it?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I don't think we've got those particular ones.

Ms. Sproule: — You don't have the audited or unaudited numbers? I'll just focus on '14 -15.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Go ahead and ask.

Ms. Sproule: — All right. So first off, I'm just looking at — what's the heading here? — K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12]

Education, (ED03). So it's vote (ED03) and these are on page 71 of the '14-15 Public Accounts. You don't have them with you? No. I wonder if there's an extra copy somewhere? Thank you. Just wondering if you could explain to the committee — where was this? — Junior Achievement of Saskatchewan gets \$300,000. What is the program or achievement and operational support that is funded there?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I'll let Donna provide some further background. There's actually two components to it. The \$200,000 flows to Junior Achievement, and they operate a program that goes in, I'm not sure how many schools but most of them, a majority of the schools in the province and teaches a variety of entrepreneurial and financial literacy type programming. A lot of it involves volunteers from the business community, business sector, and the students will participate in a business project where they'll have a business model that they have to develop. They'll actually produce some kind of a product that they'll market or sell, and we'll go ahead and do it. And then that's the \$200,000.

Then \$100,000 flows through them to the Martin initiative, the Paul Martin initiative. That is done in First Nations in particular in northern schools, but First Nations schools to promote entrepreneurial and business skills. And there's other money that flows into that program from the Martin foundation.

Ms. Sproule: — Those First Nations schools, is that on-reserve or off-reserve?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Some of each. It's done in Oskāyak in Saskatoon and done elsewhere. We flow the money through JA [Junior Achievement] so that we know that they're partnering effectively, so that we're not duplicating or at cross purposes anywhere where the program is delivered. And we know that they've got a working partnership.

Ms. Sproule: — And has that amount increased at all in the last couple of years?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I don't believe so. I think there was a set term for three years, and we'll be in this third year of it now . . . second year of a three-year agreement.

Ms. Sproule: — When you're doing your analysis of core programming, how is it that this type of entrepreneurial programming is decided to be core for the purposes of the ministry?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — It's done during classroom hours, and it doesn't necessarily lead to a credit, but we would regard it as something that's of value, a valued program. And we have access to other funds through it because they raise a lot of their . . . In any event it's one that we value and support.

Ms. Sproule: — Do you have a way to analyze, like a methodology to do the core analysis for these types of programs?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — This particular program hasn't had a specific analysis done at this point in time, but any of the programs, when they would come up for renewal, would have a review by the ministry officials. So at the end of the third year,

which is a year from now, they will have some discussion with the ministry officials at that time.

Ms. Sproule: — On the same page, I note that there was a payment made to the Canadian Red Cross Society for 68,000. What kind of programming does the Red Cross Society provide, and is that an ongoing program?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — That was a program that they present, work in the schools. It's part of the anti-bullying initiative.

Ms. Sproule: — Part of the which initiative?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Anti-bullying.

Ms. Sproule: — Oh, Red Cross.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Yes, they provide it in a number of different provinces, I think. We're joined by Kevin Gabel who can provide some background on that.

Mr. Gabel: — Good evening. Yes, with the Red Cross, they're promoting healthy relationships, developing protocols and practices that prevent and respond to bullying behaviour. We've actually entered into agreements with them that they're making sure that they're moving outside of Regina and Saskatoon to some of our remote areas of the province including the North.

Ms. Sproule: — I believe that will be it for the moment. Thank you very much for your answer.

The Chair: — You have more questions, I assume, Ms. Beck.

Ms. Beck: — I do, thank you.

The Chair: — The floor is yours.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — For what it's worth, our ministry is not always prompt but they do get there. We do have the 2014-15 Estimates books now.

Ms. Sproule: — You've got the '14-15 now? Perfect. If I have further questions, I know I can direct you to the page. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Certainly.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, and thank you, Cathy. I want to shift gears a little bit and just move into early years. And we didn't touch on this last night. I'm noticing that in the overall allocation for early years there is a slight decrease. Maybe I'll just move through line by line under the allocations. And first of all, with operational support, there is a slight increase. I'm just wondering what is all entailed in that line item of operational supports and the increases.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We're joined now by Lynn Allan who is . . . A moment to get the papers out because she typically does things with a slide deck, so this is a bit of an uncomfortable method of delivering information. But I have confidence that she will overcome the lack of not being able to present the slide deck.

Ms. Allan: — Good evening. My name is Lynn Allan. I'm the acting ADM. In the early years, I'll just sort of give you the overview of what's included in that area. So under the operational support, our budget is 4.334. Or sorry, that's '15-16. And for the estimates it's 4.482. We also have the KidsFirst program and that is 15.528; the ECIP [early childhood intervention program], 3.953; child care, 52.891; for the total of 76.854. So the decrease that you've noticed is primarily due to a reduction in child care grants, and those are start-up grants. And it's partially offset by an increase in early childhood services operating grant that's related to prior year approved spaces that will be coming on this year.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. So just so I have this clearly, that the child care line would entail largely start-up grants for new child care spaces?

Ms. Allan: — So the child care line includes all of the child care grants that we provide to licensed child care centres and homes. So there's a start-up grant that's given when a child care centre initially starts, but over the course of the year we will provide ECE grants, early childhood education grants, and that is given to a centre. It's based on the number of spaces they have, the number of spaces that are targeted at various age groups, and so we have a formula that's given. So they get that every month. They get a grant.

Ms. Beck: — So with this budget, I noted in some of the preamble, 199 previously announced spaces, I believe the number was and confirmation of support for, I believe it's the 810 spaces in the new schools that will be opened in 2017. Were there any further daycare spaces announced with this budget besides those that have already been announced?

Ms. Allan: — No.

Ms. Beck: — And with regard to the KidsFirst program, first of all in particular, could you just go over some of the services that are provided by KidsFirst and sort of what their mandate is, what benefit we're seeing from that KidsFirst program.

Ms. Allan: — So the total budget, as I said, is 15,000,528, and there's two parts to it. There's 14 million that goes to the KidsFirst targeted program and 769,000 to the KidsFirst regional program. So both the KidsFirst targeted and regional programs are managed through partnership agreements with seven school divisions and nine regional health authorities. So we have contracts with them, and they actually then contract with a CBO [community-based organization] or deliver the programs.

So the KidsFirst is a targeted program to vulnerable families. They're screened at birth through an assessment that's done in the hospital, the in-hospital birth questionnaire, and basically then they're assessed based on that. It's a voluntary program that's targeted to families that have children zero to five. And there's a special program that the staff are all trained and go in and work the family through the curriculum to support them.

[20:30]

So some of the components of the program we do: prenatal, home visiting, early learning opportunities, access to child care

to help them if the parents need to participate in some skills training or the workforce or need some respite. There's dedicated mental health and addiction supports for the family. And there is community-based supports for the families as well that the workers locate for them, including literacy, parenting programs, skills development.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I don't know if you've ever had the opportunity to go to any of their events or meet any of the families that have participated. I've gone to a couple of the events where the families will come together, and it's amazing how beneficial the families feel the supports are because they're able to identify, diagnose the issues with a child at the earliest possible time and start to have whatever supports are helpful put in place as early as possible, whether it's a health or a learning disability. So by starting at a prenatal level, a lot of what might be other problems are either avoided or eliminated or we're giving that particular child the best possible outcome. And it was a really gratifying thing to go through and listen to the parents talk about the experiences they had, the experiences that they had with the worker and the supports that they're getting.

So I think we have, through the different ministries, through Social Services and Health, a good array of supports. But I think this is the program that gets the parents and the families direct to the specific support and seeing whether it's the right one and moving things back and forth. I saw dads that cried because they were so happy for their kids.

Ms. Beck: — I think it sounds like a great program. So with the universal screen, what would be some of the vulnerability factors that would screen someone into that program?

Ms. Allan: — So the questionnaire would ask about health factors, socio-economic. So they would ask a lot about, you know, the mother's situation. Is she, you know, married, single? Has she been working? Any health history? Mental health, addictions issues? So all of those answers are pulled together in terms of the assessment and that's how they are screened in or out.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. So how many families would be involved in the KidsFirst program?

Ms. Allan: — Approximately 1,700 families are served annually across the province and at any given time there's approximately 1,000 that are participating in the program.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. So are there a fixed number of spaces for people in the family? You had mentioned it's a universal screen, so everyone who screens in — it's also voluntary — so everyone who screens in and voluntarily wants to be in the program, is there a space for them in the program?

Ms. Allan: — So there's 10 programs in the province and for the most part there aren't waiting lists but there may be pockets of the province where there are more, you know, and there would be a short waiting list.

Ms. Beck: — Just given the nature of the program, you know, targeting vulnerable in the prenatal period even, it sounds like, and targeting babies' moms that maybe have mental health and

addictions problems, it sounds like sort of a good support but also a bit of a preventative program as well. Would that be fair to say?

Ms. Allan: — Absolutely. We know that the early years are extremely important in terms of getting good outcomes for children and having them graduate. And we know that the brain development in the first three years of life is so important. There's actually, you know, from brain development, 700 neuron connections a second in the first couple of years that's happening. And so the experiences that children have all play into their development and their resiliency and their social and emotional and cognitive development.

And so if children are ready when they go to school, they're going to be successful. Chances are they're going to be reading at grade 3. Chances are if they're reading at grade 3, they're going to graduate and be successful in society.

So those first, you know, five years of life are so critically important. And so yes, you're absolutely right. This is a targeted program to vulnerable families, and it is, you know, helping them to become successful.

So it's geared at parenting, you know, for the parents to work with their children because those experiences are so important for the children in terms of their development.

Ms. Beck: — I would suspect first of all, just the experience of the parents and the children, that that would be very beneficial to them. And there might also be impacts, I think you noted already, within the K to 12 system. For example if children have those rich experiences prenatally, you know, in their first couple of years of life, that that has impacts in terms of what they need in the classroom and later on, and their success in the school system.

I suspect, you know, if these are targeted supports to families that maybe are already struggling, it may have impact in terms of, you know, preventing children going into care and things like that as well. Would that be fair to say?

Ms. Allan: — Well ... And I can't speak from a child protection side of things, but clearly one of the goals is looking at parenting and supporting the parents.

Ms. Beck: — That's a great program. I do note that the year-over-year funding for the KidsFirst program is stagnant this year. So again I would anticipate that they would have some inflationary costs as well.

And I also note that the birth rate continues to grow in Saskatchewan, I see, since 2011 with 14,400 live births and last year 15,676. So the decision to keep that funding level then was ... Well this is conjecture on my part, but more of a budget-based decision than one that addressed, you know, what may be a growing need within the KidsFirst program.

Ms. Allan: — Yes.

Ms. Beck: — I just want to get on record my support for that type of programming and that program, certainly.

Ms. Allan: — Absolutely. You know, we've got a lot of programs in the early years and they are targeted, you know. And even in the child care centres we are focused on . . . Our program guide is called Play and Exploration. That is focused on, you know, those early years experiences in terms of ensuring positive experiences and positive development for the young children so that they are ready for school.

Ms. Beck: — I think I have some similar questions around the ECIP programs or the early childhood intervention programs again. So I would assume that the mandate of ECIP is slightly different than that of KidsFirst. Can you just speak to some of the services that might be provided by the early childhood intervention programs.

Ms. Allan: — So the ECIP program again is a province-wide network providing services to more than 1,500 children from birth to school age that experience developmental delays.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The KidsFirst program is a screening and more of a referral program. The ECIP program is more of a location providing a specific resource. So they're located in specific communities around the province, providing service to identified people. It's not come in, get screened, and get referred on. It's an ongoing support. And we regard it as one of the more effective tools that we have for a lot of the same reasons that the KidsFirst programs were there.

The locations that we have them are sometimes in the North and will be providing services for children that will come off reserve. So we have in the past had some funding from the federal government and I think at this point we're not getting any. So I think Lynn can give you the numbers, the dollars that we received from the federal government. But we had had discussions with our federal counterparts going back over a couple of different federal ministers, and now with the change in government we're not sure where it's at. But we think it's a program that should be paid for, at least a significant portion of it or a substantial portion, by the federal government because it's on-reserve kids that are getting the benefits from it.

And our goal was to partner with the feds and say, a child is a child. It doesn't matter if the child is on or off reserve. We want to make sure that the supports continue on. This is how we're providing the supports; partner with us to continue to provide it through our ECIP centre or, you know, find one that we can partner with on it. So I'll let Lynn provide . . .

Ms. Allan: — So as the minister said, this program is very important and it is wanted on reserve. So we've been working with Health Canada, and the First Nations and Inuit health branch has secured funding for '16-17, and that means that it will be increasing their funding to include 33 additional spaces for children residing on reserve, bringing the total number that they will be funding to about 290.

Ms. Beck: — So the ECIP centres are place based. There would be a centre . . . I know that there's a centre in Regina. Minister Morgan referenced a centre in the North. How many ECIP centres are there in the province?

Ms. Allan: — There's 14 programs. Now I'm not sure when you said centres. Again they're home visiting so they will go

into the family's home and work with the family there. There's often sort of exercises and different things skill based that they will do with the children. They will also support the parents in terms of treatment programming that's already been put in place for them or help them in terms of ensuring that they get the right services that they need.

Ms. Beck: — And are there wait-lists for these programs?

Ms. Allan: — Again, yes some of them do in various parts of the province.

Ms. Beck: — So again this is a valuable program. It sort of has a preventative nature to it and is well utilized, by all accounts, with wait-lists. So this stagnation in the budget, there would be again a budgetary decision rather than a decision based on a need.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The program has increased its funding steadily: 2011-2012 the program received funding of 3.784 million; then 2012-13, 3.844; the following year, 2013-14, it was up to 3.96; 2014-15, 4.004; 2015-16, 4.044. So there were modest increases that reflected what the wage changes were there. Some of the people were in-scope; some were out-of-scope, so it was there. But it provides a valuable service and one that we value and want to continue to support.

[20:45]

Ms. Beck: — My last question in this section is just around pre-K [pre-kindergarten] programs. I know last year in the budget I noticed some announcements, but not this year. So I just want to confirm, were there any additional spaces associated with this budget for pre-K?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Daycare spaces?

Ms. Beck: — Pre-K.

Ms. Allan: — There were no new programs, so right now we fund a total of 316 programs.

Ms. Beck: — And to the best of your knowledge, are there wait-lists within those programs, within the pre-K programs? Or do they . . .

Ms. Allan: — So pre-K is targeted as well to the most vulnerable three- and four-year-olds, so we don't have any. But right now they're operating in 86 communities. And one of the things to note about pre-K is, again in the pre-K program we use our Play and Exploration program guide, so it's the same program guide that we use in child care. So there may be a child that's going to pre-K, and there's a child that's attending a child care centre — they basically are getting the same curriculum.

Ms. Beck: — Okay, and that's within licensed daycare spaces?

Ms. Allan: — Yes.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. I guess I do have one more question. In terms of increase in child care spaces, I know that there are some that were talked about in this budget that are to come online. Currently the availability of licensed child care spaces,

how many licensed child care spaces do we have that are functional right now?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — 14,546.

Ms. Beck: — And does that meet current demand or do we have wait-lists on those licensed spaces?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I don't know how long the list would be. It would vary from location to location, but with a growing economy a lot of the new people that are coming have got children of an age that child care would be important to them. So it's certainly something we've made a commitment to increase it by . . . We were increasing . . . In the 2011 election we made a commitment to increase them by 500 spaces per year. We actually exceeded that.

We found it a challenge in some years to find operators or places willing to have a daycare. We actually had in some years, the budget was underutilized and we carried it over to the next year so that we were able to meet the targets. By adding that much there just wasn't people or appropriate places that were willing to do it.

We decided as a general policy that whenever we built a school we would always want to have a daycare as part of the elementary school. It worked out very well because the educational supports were already in the building. There was often an older sibling, so there was a common drop-off point. There was usually, more often than not, an after-school program so it worked out really well to have the daycares in the elementary schools. So we decided that as a practice we wouldn't want to build a school that didn't have that. So when we started the joint-use schools, we included in each one of them a 90-child daycare.

So as of next fall, there will be an additional 810 spaces that I suspect will fill up very quickly with those because those will be nice spaces. We've added them, spaces, recently when the U of R, U of S tried to find places where there was a good partner to work with, where they were near where parents would work. But it's been a bit of a challenge to find groups. So in any event, we didn't add any this year because we know we've got the 810 coming next year. We've fulfilled the 2011 budget campaign and didn't add . . . Without making a specific commitment, we know it's important and want to continue to add.

Ms. Beck: — The 199 that are mentioned in the budget documents, when would those be expected to be opened?

Ms. Allan: — So the ones that are in development will become operational this year, we expect. So just a correction for the 199. It was missing actually two. There's one in Stony Rapids for 15 spaces, and Royal West in Saskatoon for 16. There's a couple others in Saskatoon that will be opening up as well, and so our total number of spaces that we anticipate to come in on stream because we've had a few others related to capital development: 365.

Ms. Beck: — So that's ahead of that 199 number that's noted in the budget.

Ms. Allan: — Yes.

Ms. Beck: — Okay, thank you. One thing that has come to my desk — and maybe it's a local issue, I'm not sure — is around property taxes for licensed child care spaces. In the school-based daycare centres or child care centres, would they pay property tax in those centres?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Yes, the problem has recently been identified with the addition of the new school-based ones. The daycares that are in the schools pay no property taxes. The ones that are elsewhere are not subject to the exemption that the schools have, so we want to have some discussions with the municipalities and with the divisions as to how we should handle . . . We think, just not on the sake of economic or competitive fairness, it's just not right that one of them would be paying property tax. Or the group of families somewhere through whatever co-op, whatever they had operating it, would be paying taxes whereas the one, you know, a half mile away in a school wouldn't. So we know it's an issue, and we're going to have some ongoing discussions. I don't know what the solution might be, but we recognize the issue.

Ms. Beck: — I'm glad that that's come to your attention. One other issue, and it was just around the calculation of subsidy for those who . . . My understanding is that in order to qualify for a subsidy you would have to have a space in a licensed child care facility. When was the last time that those, the rates for a subsidy or the threshold for subsidy to kick in were calculated?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Those are provided through Social Services so we don't have knowledge or . . .

Ms. Beck: — Oh, I got ahead of myself.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Pardon?

Ms. Beck: — I said I got ahead of myself in my critic portfolio. Okay. Okay. I will ask that at a different table then. Thank you. I'm just going to take a minute to look in my folder.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Sure.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. I asked you a lot of questions, thank you. I'm going to ask some curriculum questions. Just starting with a fairly broad question in terms of what the goals are with regard to curriculum over the next year. More specifically perhaps, are there any plans to update or introduce any new curriculum over the next year?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Shortly before I took the portfolio, the Premier toured the province and went into a number of schools, met with a number of teachers. Teachers expressed concern about a number of issues: bandwidth, but also the rate of change, the number of things that were coming, our teachers were directed to do by way of recordkeeping and a variety of other things.

And changes to curriculum were one of the areas that teachers expressed a lot concern. In some cases, it was curriculum directed by the division. In some cases, it was curriculum directed by the ministry. So the Premier directed that a pause be placed on new curriculum rolling out.

Now during that period of time, I know that some of the officials are working on some things, laying some groundwork. But as yet, that pause has not been lifted although we're having some discussion as to what we might want to do going forward. We think that it's important that the reason we put the pause on was because of concern expressed by the teachers.

So we've had some discussion with STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation] as to what the process going forward might be, what they wish their involvement to be. I think my sense is that they regard curriculum as something that's a provincial responsibility and as long we're providing sufficient resources for teachers to learn new curriculum, they want to be consulted but don't necessarily want to be part of the process. But we'll certainly look to them for advice or guidance as we go forward.

Ms. Beck: — So a pause.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — That was a long answer to say that we put it on pause and haven't taken the pause off. But going forward, we want to do it with a fair bit of thought and with caution because we did it for the benefit of teachers through the province. Some of them are now asking for it to be taken off because they want to have science or math or whatever curriculum that they're working on. So we want to do it carefully. We have in the interim provided other resource material as part of existing classes, particularly in the areas of treaty education, gender diversity, and a variety of other things where it either falls as part of curriculum or alternatively would be a stand-alone resource for an issue that a teacher or a school could avail themselves of.

Ms. Beck: — Are there any plans to sort of expand teacher access to, you know, be it within the various objectives and outcomes within the curriculum, you know, resources to supplement lesson plans or resources available on a central site for example? Are there any plans for that type of innovation or to make that process simpler?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I'll let Brett provide it, but the answer is yes. We think that's an important part of it. If the teacher is going to engage in teaching the curriculum, we think it's incumbent on us to either provide the direction where to go to for the material or alternatively the material itself. So I'll let Brett . . .

Mr. Waytuck: — We work very closely with the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. They actually do the resource evaluation for the province. They also provide the access to teachers through their website to the materials that have been recommended either for direct use or as supplementary resources within the curriculum.

Ms. Beck: — So I have a question written down, but I think you answered it already with stating that there's a pause. So prior to that pause, was there a standard protocol for updating curriculum, or a standard pattern that would roll through in terms of looking at different areas of curriculum?

Mr. Waytuck: — So there was actually a plan to have a seven-year review. It didn't always work out that way which is one of the reasons why, when we went into pause, we really

looked at what the process might look like moving forward as well. We weren't necessarily meeting those targets in the ministry. Teachers were finding it very difficult to sort of plan forward so the pause has helped us look at what the processes might be and then, as the minister mentioned, also then have a meaningful discussion with our partners as we move forward on this.

[21:00]

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. A couple of sort of notes as preamble. When I was still on the school board, some students from one of the local high schools — I'll give a shout-out to Thom Collegiate — made a presentation to the board just in light of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The report put the challenge down to require native studies to be taught to every grade 9 student in the province. So that was one idea that was put out.

Recently I was at a long-service dinner and the director of Regina Public noted that — and I wrote this down. In fact I tweeted about it because I thought it was a good quote — that "Education is a key piece of reconciliation." And certainly when you're looking at those recommendations, one of the first categories is around the role of education in reconciliation of certainly, you know, in the history of colonialism, and certainly through the residential schools that education played, unfortunately in many cases, a very, very large role in some of the, well euphemistically, the challenges that we face today, but also, you know, being part of potential reconciliation and having a key role there.

I would note, and someone pointed out to me, that the social studies curriculum, particularly at the 10 level, was last updated in '92, native studies in 2002, and history I believe in 1990 . . . I have 1 here written but I think 1992, and the social studies 30 updated in 1997.

So I guess I'm just wondering, you know, thoughts in terms of, or plans in terms of updating those area of curriculum and potentially addressing some of the recommendations. I draw particular attention . . . And I'm looking now at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action. One, and I know that this is part of the sector plan, calling upon the federal government to eliminate the discrepancy in federal education for First Nations children being educated on—reserves and those First Nations children being educated off—reserves. And I note that there's been some movement on the part of both parties to address that and also providing funding — and this is at the federal level — to close the achievement gaps, and I know that there is work being done in that area.

But specifically number 12:

We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate early childhood . . . programs for Aboriginal families.

So that would be part of an earlier curriculum, but also perhaps opportunity within the K to 12 system as well as for updating those areas of curriculum.

So I'm just wondering, I guess, in a very long-winded way,

about your thoughts and plans perhaps in terms of updating that curriculum and incorporating some of the recommendations.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Unrelated to the TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] recommendations is the work that's been done on treaties, that our curriculum was supplemented and enhanced specifically for treaties. TRC is separate from and ought not be confused with or included as part of . . . The over 90 recommendations by the TRC are stand-alone for that issue and should be treated as such.

I've met with some survivors in Saskatoon as well as the Chief Commissioner of the Human Rights Commission, and the reason I made the distinction with treaties is because he's a former Treaty Commissioner, so he is always conscious to say this is not a treaty issue, this is . . . So he's arranged some meetings, and I think it's something that we know we need to go forward with and want to have some ongoing discussions as to how we would deal with it in the schools.

The recommendations are pretty clear where we need to go to, so we're working now on a project to supplement current teaching resources to capture the residential school experience by gathering information on other resources and identifying other opportunities for support. But whether that is sufficient in and of itself, I don't know, and I think we want to have more discussion with people like Eugene Arcand and other survivors to make sure that what we do, not only satisfies the recommendations in the TRC, but also satisfies the people that are the survivors that have had this experience in life. So I think those are the type of discussions we want to have.

You referenced as well the need for federal funding. Two things have happened earlier this year. The federal Human Rights Commission made a ruling that said that on-reserve children were funded by about a third less than what they would have been. Now that wasn't from an Education point of view. That was from a Health and Social Services context. So that ruling came down, and I had discussions about that with Grand Chief Bellegarde as to, you know, what that might look like, what that might roll out. So anyway that's now an obligation that the federal government has indicated (a) that they're aware of, and (b) want to work their way through. That's the most effective way to try and address that ruling, and I commend them for having done that.

The other part of it is the commitment that they made pursuant to TRC that they wanted to increase funding for education. So the discussions that are taking place now are to try and make sure that what the federal government might do would be supportive or would work in tandem with what the province is doing, that we wouldn't be at cross-purposes with each other. So the type of suggestions we'd have for them is identify the providers of service, whether it be a tribal council or a specific school that have had good success stories, try and build on the successes that are there, work with partners that will do . . . [inaudible].

So those discussions are under way with the federal government and the different providers, and we'll obviously partner with or work with them wherever we can. So part of that might be support for ECIP. Part of it might be for education with the issues that are identified specifically in the TRC. But it's an

obligation that we have, but it's not one that we have because we feel we want to. It's something that it's the right thing to do to fulfill and satisfy that. So it's very much a work-in-progress and at the early stages of the work-in-progress, but the discussions are under way and we probably have a lot more work to do before we have specifics.

Ms. Beck: — Yes, certainly there are some very clear signals about the human rights ruling and, you know, going back to Jordan's Principle, that these gaps between funding and the jurisdictional wrangling between, you know, who pays aren't really going to be tolerated much longer, so I'm glad to hear that there are plans there. And I know that both the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition have indicated their desire to go talk to the federal level of government to ensure that that 40 per cent gap in terms of funding for First Nations students on—reserve as opposed to those students in provincial schools, that that would be addressed. So I look forward to some results there and I know that those students certainly, and their families, look forward to those results as well.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — A lot of the discussion that took place took place immediately following the La Loche incident. I went to La Loche on the Sunday following it and travelled with Minister Goodale, and I think at that point in time people were still trying to come to grips with the tragedy that had taken place. But in the time that we travelled, we started having discussions about where we were going forward and the things that might have to take place. And I was pleased to see that he was receptive and open minded and wanted to have the discussions. So when you mentioned the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition, I think that's a really worthwhile discussion to have and would certainly encourage people, especially Regina MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly], to meet with and encourage Minister Goodale or tell him what the needs are. He's got an incredibly busy portfolio that had a whole lot of challenges that none of us anticipated with Fort Mac and with La Loche.

So I think if we can continue to work and lobby and bring it front and centre, that we're going a long ways down the road. So I think there's a lot of goodwill. The Prime Minister has been to Saskatoon and spoke at Oskāyak and talked about the ongoing . . . I was hoping he was going to arrive with his chequebook, but he didn't. In any event, that's there.

While we're here I want to briefly correct . . . This is what happens when you don't have slide decks to present information. Lynn said that there were 10 KidsFirst programs. In fact there are only nine. So for purposes of the record or rather then send you a note yesterday, she extends her apologies. And the usual response is apologize, withdraw, and resign, but we're not going down that road. I don't know. And I don't want to change the questioning, and I don't know if you had more in that area or not, but there was other information that you had asked for last night that Donna has now on some enrolment figures. So if you want that now or if you want that later on tonight, it's your call.

Ms. Beck: — Maybe if you just want to get that to me later that would be good because I'm having trouble keeping my train of thought right now with my sinuses.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Far be it from me to deliberately try and distract you.

Ms. Beck: — One thing that did come to mind as you were talking about, in particular La Loche, it was just around rates of mental health issues amongst students. And I'm going to roll into that issues around bullying as well. So you know, talking increased rates, I certainly have seen some evidence of, amongst students, increased rates of anxiety, depression, in some communities rates of suicide, and also bullying. So I'm just looking for a little bit of an update in terms of where we're at with regard to . . . I know there was an anti-bullying strategy and just some of the supports that are being provided within schools to address some of those needs that we are seeing among students.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The Premier had asked Jennifer Campeau before she was in cabinet to travel around the province and make recommendations regarding bullying. She travelled extensively across the province, met with students, school divisions, and a variety . . . and made a number of different recommendations which were implemented. The challenge with this kind of work that you do is you don't know which of the things that you're doing are helping and which of the ones just happen to be there. So we did a number of things and we want to continuously analyze them and see that they're working.

When we were going through the process, people asked, well what was this going to do? And I said, if it saves one child's life, it's worth it at twice the cost. It's just, you know, there's . . . You can't measure the tragedy that some of the kids go through. I think, not wanting to make reference to either yours or my age, when we were growing up we didn't have cyberbullying. It didn't follow us home. We didn't have cellphones and electronic devices that . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I know, it was back in the days of Gestetners.

[21:15]

But the nature of the cyberbullying is, it follows the student home. And the young person, you know, will wake up during the night, look at their device, and find out that something has been posted, either a personal image or something. And these are people that are not emotionally mature, and some of these things are absolutely devastating for them. And then you have a suicide or an attempted suicide and . . . You know, we did a lot of things that are then . . . I'll come to them in a minute. But I worry about it, and want to make sure that as we go on that we're watching to make sure that the different things we're doing are effective, and if something's not effective, admit it's not working and try something else.

So anyway we had . . . The report was released in November 2014. \$615,000 is included in the proposed budget for this year in Saskatchewan's action plan to address bullying and cyberbullying.

So these are some of the things that we will be doing. We will maintain access for Saskatchewan children and youth to report bullying incidents by phone, text message, and online. So we have services available for that. We will provide training and professional learning opportunities for educators in the areas of

digital citizenship, gender and/or sexual diversity to prevent bullying and promote healthy relationships. So that's training and information that's available for our educators and administrators to build greater consistency in how schools and communities prevent and respond to bullying behaviour in crisis events, because we found there was a significant difference. Some schools responded very quickly, rapidly; others, oh it's just how kids are, whatever. So there was a variety of different things that were there.

Provide opportunities for youth to lead positive change in their community, including the I Am Stronger community grants and a student engagement process; to work with community-based organizations to deliver services that address recommendations in the provincial action plan. That would be things like the Red Cross. We have a hotline service that's a text or phone service. It's actually provided in partnership with Crime Stoppers. It's the same . . . because they have trained people answering the phone all the time, on 24-7 as it is, so they have a separate number, and it's the same people that are doing that. [Inaudible] . . . there was enhanced resources and tools that are available for students, families, and educators on the I Am Stronger website. And I encourage you to go to the website and have a look at it because there's good resources that are available on there. So anyway that's sort of the nature of the things that are there.

We also have got a violence threat risk assessment training that is being done, and the community threat assessment and support protocol. You know, it's a frightening thought that we now live in a time when those things are part of our life now. We didn't use to have to think of those things, and we do. You know, we have schools go into lockdown mode several times a month at one place or another in the province and, you know, you get the email that this school or that school has gone into lockdown, and most of the time it's because somebody made an unfortunate post on Facebook, but you never know when it's going to be the type of situation that we faced in the North. Anyway I'll certainly answer any more questions you have. Sorry I took so long.

Ms. Beck: — Just so as to clarify, this budget contains about \$600,000 to support those initiatives that were listed?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I think that's the correct number, yes. That's correct.

Ms. Beck: — You mentioned an online. It was an online as well as a call tip line where children or students can access live counsellors. Is that live right now?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Yes, I believe it is.

Ms. Beck: — And do we know how many calls have been taken by that line?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — It's in the early stages, and I know the uptake has not been great so far, but the numbers are gradually . . . Do we have them?

Mr. Gabel: — Thank you. The Crime Stoppers is for reporting bullying incidents live. They can do it 24-7. They also have a texting service as well so that they can report it in immediately and talk to a live person. We also have, through Kids Help

Phone, access to live counsellors. It's a support through a counsellor in the classroom program where we've actually had the counsellor goes by phone into a classroom, talks to students, lets them know what resources are available and how to access them for a variety of different topics.

Ms. Beck: — I think I've seen some of those brochures come home. Thank you. I think I'm going to move a little bit into capital funding now.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Sure.

Ms. Beck: — So within the K to 12 allocations, there is noted under the school capital line, there's an increase of, if my math is right here, \$143 million year over year, and that was to support already announced programs. Correct?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Correct.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. So those were the P3 [public-private partnership] schools, the nine joint-use schools, as well as costs associated with . . . Was it seven other building projects?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — There is the joint-use schools, so there will be a portion will go to that. But there are major projects that are already under way: St. Brieux, Langenburg, Gravelbourg, Martensville, and Regina. And I think there's several in Regina. As you would be aware there would be Connaught . . . I don't remember the . . . Yes, Connaught. Sacred Heart and Connaught.

Ms. Beck: — Was there any funding put forward for portables within the province?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Not in the budget, but there was immediately preceding the budget. There was an announcement for \$16.6 million which was 40-some additional portables, which would have been allocated across the province to where, not necessarily where the highest need was because we didn't put any where the joint-use schools were because we knew they would have additional capacity coming on a year from now. I just got a note that says it was 49 . . . 46 new and nine moves. And those would have been all across the province. But we didn't put them in the areas that were serviced by the joint-use.

Ms. Beck: — And there were some additional funds for PMR [preventative maintenance and renewal], for preventative maintenance as well in this budget?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Yes. We've increased it every year so it has gone this year from a 25 increase, from 25 million to 30, 31 and change.

Ms. Beck: — I remember, and I'm not sure when this practice discontinued but at one point you used to be able to go onto the Ministry of Education website and get a list of all of the B-5 requests, sort of the projects that were in progress that had been approved, and then as well as all of the requests. It made it, you know, fairly easy to look at, you know, a number of all of those requests. I'm just wondering. I assume that that list is still kept, it's just not public at this point?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — It's not put in a rank order, so it's not a

meaningful list. And some of the divisions provide a lot of information on it. They use it as, I don't want to use the term a wish list, but you know, then others will provide one or two key things. So it's not a list that's beneficial in any form. So what we do is we provide a list of the 10 that we think are the top items and those would be the ones that would likely go ahead in the foreseeable future.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. So last budget . . . And I'm understanding that there are a number of capital builds right now, but there were no new schools announced last budget and none announced this budget.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — In this budget, there was not.

Ms. Beck: — Okay.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — So the capital money that you see in the budget is for work that is under way. What is new this year was the additional relocatables that were announced shortly before the election.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. And you mentioned what used to be was sort of a rank ordering. So I'm just wondering if there are any changes contemplated with this budget or in the near future with regard to how capital projects are allocated. Are there any anticipated changes to that funding model, the capital funding model?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — They have a complex methodology of using it, whether it's a life safety item or whatever. If it is a life safety, then it moves on to emergent funding. And they look at a variety of other factors within the division, such as the occupancy of the school and the type of things that are there.

So they'll look at . . . And it's done by the ministry officials, so their critical things would be health and safety, the state of being without illness or injury; safety, the condition of being protected from or unlikely to cause danger, risk, or injury.

And then there's an efficiency component where they encourage efficiencies attained through consolidation of facilities or joint-use collaborative partnerships. And I know that a number of the requests came in that said, we want to rebuild the school. When the ministry would go and work with them, they would turn out and say, oh well we haven't thought that we might do this or whatever.

And it happened in Moose Jaw where there was a request that would have, in isolation, been something that would have been a priority but when they looked at the efficiencies and other things that were there, they were able to . . . They may still need some help elsewhere but that particular request was dealt with.

So they look at the, as well, the facility condition components, sort of the blended service life, and then a facility priority index is calculated based on all of the factors. And that methodology I think varies from time to time and it doesn't necessarily agree with what the division's priorities are. So we try and if we have something that looks like it's at or near the top of the list, have discussions with the divisions. And we'd usually want to give pretty good weight to what the divisions say where there's been a difference of priorities between us and the division as to what

would go ahead.

Ms. Beck: — How many capital requests are currently under that top, I would say, health and safety category? I don't think I have that right though, the critical request list.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We don't use that process for health and safety because those get moved into emergent or are otherwise covered. Go ahead.

Ms. Johnson: — Just to clarify, the health and safety concerns with any school facility is always a top priority. So if all things being equal, we get a request that's focused on health and safety issues and another request that's focused on say updating the facility for programming, then the health and safety concerns are the number one priority.

But as Minister Morgan already explained, when we're ranking the capital project requests that come in from school divisions, we rank them on a number of categories including health and safety issues, and particularly any health and safety issues which have been validated by an external consultant, a professional in the field. We also rank them based on efficiency component, facility condition component, and overall we calculate then a facility priority index.

So those requests that have a substantial health and safety component to them do tend to rise to the top in the ranking of all of the requests that come in from school divisions because of the priority that we put on health and safety issues and the need to address those in as quick a fashion as we can.

[21:30]

We don't make any attempt anymore to separate those major capital requests that school divisions might say are only for health and safety reasons and separate them from other major capital requests. Again, the process that we use encompasses a number of different factors, and the health and safety issues essentially garner enough weight or enough points so that when they are a significant issue within the building, they will essentially rise to the top.

Ms. Beck: — So are there any capital requests that are in that category now, on that top 10 list?

Ms. Johnson: — Yes. With the top 10 list . . . Sorry, I'm just going to get that in front of me right now. In the Prairie Spirit School Division for instance, the Rosthern Elementary and High School will have some health and safety concerns identified with respect to it. So that's essentially a renovation project.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I want to clarify that health and safety doesn't mean that children are at an immediate risk. It's a potential for something that might be down the road — the heating system is running close to the end of its life cycle or something like that. If there's a situation where children are at risk, we would want to close the school immediately.

By coincidence, I happened to be in Connaught at the time the engineering report was received that said it was structurally unsound. I got out, but you know, those are the things that

you're not prepared to leave a child in a place where it's not safe or where it's a risk. So if there's, you know, the type of health or safety risk, you know, leaking gas or whatever it is, you don't leave kids in there. You take them out and you find other options for . . . and that's what we've done. While Connaught and while other schools are being rebuilt, we've found other locations for them. And I don't know if you've gone and toured any other locations, but they're older schools that are a bus ride away that are still quite serviceable and are providing adequate places in the interim.

Ms. Johnson: — Just to emphasize the minister's point, if there are imminent health and safety concerns that need to be addressed within the next month or two, or whatever the case may be, we do have the emergent funding available for that. So we do regularly, where necessary, provide funding on a fairly immediate basis to schools that have identified imminent health and safety concerns.

Ms. Beck: — So that list, of course we've noted, established that it isn't published anymore. But is there a sense of the overall number of current capital requests? Is there a dollar figure on what has been requested of the ministry for either repair, outside of the PMR repairs or capital upgrades, major capital upgrades, or replacement schools? Do we have the sense of what that number is?

Ms. Johnson: — So what I would offer there is that when we are at a stage where we're close to being able to approve those schools, then we go to the next step of properly costing out the value of any of the projects. In very rough terms we can cost out certain projects, but it really does put us in just the ball park.

So for instance, we know that elementary schools of a certain size can range between 16 and \$25 million. So we can do that sort of guesstimating. But ultimately when we're trying to sort out what the cost is, we really do need to know the nature of the project and some more specific details.

And as we go through the process of working with school divisions to determine what their needs are, and to then rank them against the needs of other school divisions, we generally find more information. We learn new things. We learn of new options or opportunities. And that results in, again, a change to the estimated cost, or what the estimated could be, for the next two years or the next four years or the next 10 years, for that matter. So generally we just rely on the fact a replacement school will run, you know, anywhere from 16 to \$25 million, depending on the grade configuration and the size of the school, you know, the enrolment levels of the school. And, you know, we go from there.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — It's really difficult when there's a major capital project to try and determine the cost in advance of going ahead with it. And then even once the project is started, the costs will sometimes change on it. We agreed to do renovations at Holy Cross High School in Saskatoon. The renovations were to include a small addition and some structural upgrades and some utility updates. It was expected to initially be under \$20 million.

The project started. It looked like everything was going well. The division made what they thought was a prudent decision

and expanded the scope of the project. Then as the work went on they discovered not only was there asbestos that was exposed and friable, there were structural issues, issues with the other utilities and everything else. So the budget wasn't approved for any more than that, so they had to come back to us midway through and then the budget actually ended up . . . or the project ended up costing nearly \$30 million.

So you know, the idea of putting a price tag on a specific project or even a specific group of projects is really difficult to do, because you have buildings that are anywhere from a few years old to over 100 years old, so you don't know the nature of them, when they were built, or early on in their lifetime. Adequate records weren't kept of how things were constructed, so when repairs are started it's difficult to do it.

So for that reason we don't try and cost the value of the things that are on the list. We identify what they are, what the priorities are in conjunction with the discussions we have with the divisions, identify the top-10 list, which is circulated every year with the hope that in a reasonably foreseeable future that list would work it off, and that will bump up or down on the list as sometimes things come off.

But those are the ones that we would regard as being the priorities, and I think since we formed government we've done — how many major projects? — 60-some. So it's a list that we're working off of. Since that time, construction costs have gone up as well. But I mean, that's like that with everything else.

Ms. Beck: — I guess checking in first of all on the seven projects that were noted in this budget as being under way and substantially completed, are those projects all on time? Are they on budget?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The joint-use schools are, because we've been checking on that on a regular basis. Sheldon indicates the replacement schools, which would be the Regina ones, are on time and on budget but there may be . . . Anyway I'll let him provide the particulars.

Mr. Ramstead: — I'm Sheldon Ramstead, executive director of infrastructure for the ministry. So right now all of the replacement schools — Sacred Heart, Connaught, Langenburg — they're all on time and on budget. There's the renovation work that's being done at Martensville High School, St. Brieux, and Gravelbourg. The addition work has been on track. The renovations, as Minister Morgan mentioned, there's been a few extra things that have come up, so those are slightly delayed, so we're seeing those slightly behind schedule. But the addition work was on schedule.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. So, and as noted, the joint-use schools are also on time and on budget. So I guess my understanding of part of the . . . I mean setting aside the need for the schools' obviously just capacity issues, we need the schools. But with going with that P3 model was around, you know, assurances that they would be delivered on time and on budget. Was there an issue before with schools being wildly over budget or over time?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We left a lot of the contracting to the

divisions, and the divisions maybe wouldn't, didn't have the bargaining clout to negotiate the same way that we would on a province-wide, with 18 of them.

The one that recently, that came to mind that was badly overdue on time, was Willowgrove in Saskatoon. I don't know whether it was over budget or not. I think it maybe it was a fixed-price one, but it was, I think, in excess of a year behind completion date when it was done. And then there was a long time afterwards where they were doing deficiencies and cleaning up odds and ends. So for that reason I . . . Nothing against the traditional-build method — but we certainly want to look at better ways to make sure that things are done on time and on budget. And we certainly seem to be going down the right path with the joint-use schools.

Ms. Beck: — So in terms of progress on the contracts around those schools, have all of those, the contracts at the school board level, have they all been signed on with the schools?

Mr. Ramstead: — Sorry, are you referring to the agreements between the school boards for the joint-use schools project?

Ms. Beck: — Right.

Mr. Ramstead: — Yes, all of those were signed prior to the end of March 2016.

Ms. Beck: — So I sense — and I don't want to assume, Minister Morgan — that your comments about being on the right track with regard to the P3 schools, would that be a model that would be contemplated for future builds?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Possibly it would. We'll certainly want to see how these come out in the very end. So far it looks really promising. The interesting thing about P3s is that they work really well when you have a large number. We wanted to do a catch-up so it was an opportunity to do a number of schools that would use similar central core and . . . You know, there were certainly differences in how they were laid out on the lot but, you know, there was enough similarities. There were savings. They were able to be tendered as a block. So from a cost point of view, the calculations show that our savings on them were in excess of \$100 million, so we are pleased with where they went out. I'll let Donna speak more directly to it because she's on the committee that works through it.

So if there was . . . To answer your question, if we were looking at one school in one neighbourhood or a rebuild, probably not. It wouldn't be large enough to generate interest in people from doing it as a P3, but if we were doing another block of four or five or ten schools where there was some similarity between them, it would certainly be a good option to look at, and naturally want to see how these roll out.

We met with, as we went along, with CUPE and with the different people that were going to be working in the school — with teachers, with students — to make sure that they liked how the layout was going to work. We had mock-ups built and had the kids working with Styrofoam walls. The kids actually kicked the adults out so they could make their own decisions. I kind of respected them for doing that. So there was a lot of community consultation went in, so we're optimistic that we'll

have something that will work well, that will serve the community well.

One of the issues that often was asked: well how do we know that we can access it on the weekend? Well the schools are owned by the cities and by the school division. They're the ones that have got the common space in the thing and, in my view, the schools should be the centre of the community and of course they should be available on weekends for a community event. You know, naturally you have to have security or, you know, somebody that's there to make sure that you don't just have schools open, but that if you have a team or a sport and you need to use it for this or that, that there's a way of making an access for it, you know, whatever methodology the divisions choose to work. So that was something that was front and centre that I wanted to see happen.

So I don't know whether, Donna, if you wanted to talk any more about the process and what we anticipate the savings might be.

[21:45]

Ms. Johnson: — I guess I'll just reiterate a bit of what has been said already. With the P3 project that is under way right now, we are estimating that the savings for the taxpayers is about 100 million. But as to whether or not this is something that we'll be doing again or if this is the approach to be taken regularly in the future, there is clearly a role for continuing the usual design, bid, build traditional approach to school building.

And the P3 financing option for schools, as has already been said, is usually worth pursuing when you're doing a number of schools that have some similarities, whether it's design similarities or geographical similarities. So usually the market is looking for that work to be worth at least \$100 million before there's any interest in it, in going the P3 route. Which is why it will be important, why traditional builds will continue to be very important in how we deliver capital in the province going forward.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Thank you for that answer. I guess one thing that the minister noted was just around, you know, the concerns about community usage and community access. And I think that the reason that that concern came up is because it was an issue with previous . . . in other jurisdictions with community access to some of those facilities when they were being maintained by contract.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We heard the concern and I understand it . . . I forget where it was, Alberta or BC. Anyway, they were able to address the concern. But nonetheless, you go through . . . You have a nice shiny new school and a playground and you want to go there and have some event, and you find the school's locked up and you have no way to access it. And then you got to talk to some property manager that . . . Anyway, that just wasn't on.

Ms. Beck: — And I'm glad to hear certainly that, you know, they'll continue to be monitored. You mentioned, you know, in the end, you know, in the end I guess the end of this contract is a little ways into the future. I believe it's 30 years, so it'll take some time for us to be able to fully look in the rear-view mirror

on these projects.

I know that there have been some significant concerns, including some quite recent concerns I believe in Nova Scotia with sort of the end of agreement issues with P3 schools. So I'm just wondering if there were any, if we . . . there any comments on that and if we feel like these contracts will be different than those contracts that are of concern with leaving school boards with a big buyout at the end of those P3 contracts.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The title vests in the municipality in the school division from the outset, so we don't expect there to be an issue at any point during the contract. I know those are probably better left to Minister Wyant and Rupen Pandya, who's in charge of SaskBuilds, to identify where they are. But I know I've gone to some of the P3 conferences and listened to people about the issues that are there. And I think what you often hear are where there's been an issue, but you don't hear of where the successful ones are. And I think as time goes, this is a model that seems to work well. It seems to be working better as people work through the issues that are there.

So we're excited about it because it gave us a chance to have nine neighbourhoods that will now have a new school that will serve both school divisions. We'll have community space at the Stonebridge one in Saskatoon. We'll have space recognizing the Whitecap First Nation. And when you drive by and look at them, they're large schools. They're 900 kids. So they're quite striking and impressive looking. So as the siding goes on it will be great to see children running in the corridors, instead of hardhats.

Ms. Johnson: — Just one thing that I would add by way of clarification. All of the 18 schools are going to be owned by the school divisions. The land that they're on will be owned by the municipalities, and the school divisions have a lease with the municipalities for 40 years with a renewable option for yet another 40 years. So just to be clear, the school buildings themselves, even though they have essentially community space in them, including the child care spaces, all of the buildings themselves are owned by the school divisions.

Ms. Beck: — And Donna, you mentioned the \$100 million in savings. I think both you and the minister noted that. Where did those savings come from, you know, as an example as you roll through? What would be some of the examples that would bring you to that total of \$100 million?

Ms. Johnson: — The savings, and I'll ask Sheldon to clarify this a bit too, but the savings generally come through the construction costs and some of the risk transference. But with the estimates that have been provided, what SaskBuilds was able to do was, working with KPMG, who is, you know, more of a financial expert on these matters than either Sheldon or I are, they were able to review the contracts in detail and confirm that if we were to follow a traditional build approach versus a P3 approach on the construction side, that the savings are thirty-four and a half million dollars compared to a traditional build. And then that, I believe, would make the balance of 100 million arising from savings that are the result of risk transfer to the project-co, or in this case, JUMP [Joint Use Mutual Partnership].

Ms. Beck: — Maybe this is a really big question but can someone describe or explain risk transfer to me, and how you put it a dollar amount on that?

Ms. Johnson: — Well, I'll give it a try, and the better answer will no doubt come from SaskBuilds and Rupen Pandya. But in terms of risk transference, for instance, as you know we have a 30-year contract with JUMP for the ongoing maintenance of these schools so that the schools are returned to us in like-new condition at the end of that 30 years. So it is their responsibility to ensure those schools are maintained in good condition so that when we have them at the end of 30 years there's no major repairs for us to take care of. There's no roof replacements. There's no boilers that need to be replaced, and so on.

So part of the risk transference savings that are referred to are the risks associated with the possibility of a boiler going, or maybe going more than once over the next 30 years, and JUMP essentially bearing the cost of that and ensuring that the building is, as I said, in like-new condition at the end of the 30 years. So that's an example of the risk transference that takes place, and that there is a value attached to.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. I'm just going to go over my questions here. I just about made it right to the end.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — If you want, I can have Donna read in the information that was carried over from . . .

Ms. Beck: — That would be great. Thank you.

Ms. Johnson: — So last night you had asked about enrolment information by grade and what we were able to arrive at and . . . We'll just provide you with a copy of the page that I'm looking at right now. And this is a summary of the enrolment based on head count, so I do want to clarify that at the outset because last night when I was referencing enrolment information I was talking about FTEs [full-time equivalent] or FTES [full-time equivalent student], full-time student equivalents.

So just to do a quick example of the difference between head count and full-time students, when we have kindergarten students, for instance, we consider them a half an FTE because they attend school for half the day rather than for a full day. So the numbers that I'm going through now are head counts, not FTEs.

And in 2012-13 . . . rather than going through every grade that I have on the page here, I'll just go through some of the categories. So kindergarten, for instance, in 2012-13 was 13,179. That has increased in '13-14 and in '14-15. By '14-15 it was up to 14,000. A bit of a dip there in '15-16, down to 13,805. And the projection for '16-17 is 13,896.

Taking a look at the elementary grades in total, so grades 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5: in 2012-13 the elementary head count was 61,876; in '13-14 it dropped somewhat . . . or sorry, it increased to 64,110; increased again the following year, in '14-15, to 66,290; and in 2015-16 again up to 68,661, with a projection for '16-17 to be at 70,133.

When we look at the middle years, so grades 6, 7, 8, and 9, again a trend that's somewhat similar but not as large a

year-over-year increase as the elementary grades. In 2012-13, the middle-year grades had a head count of 50,140. The following year, it dropped slightly to 50,007; back up the year after that to 50,198. And then in '15-16, up again to 50,972 with a projection in '16-17 of 51,687.

And then when we look at our secondary grades — so that's grades 10, 11, and 12 — that's where we do see the enrolment trend going the other direction. So in '12-13 we had a head count of 43,247. The following year, it dropped slightly to 43,017. The year after it made a bit of a recovery, 43,060. And in '15-16 it dropped again to 42,863, and in '16-17 we're expecting it to drop again by a small amount to 42,581.

And yesterday you had also asked about, do we have some of that information on the basis of regions. We do have this information on a school division level basis. And there are quite a lot of numbers here, so what I'll do is just provide you with the hard copies and you'll be able to see by grade, by school division, what the head counts are for each grade in each school division for the 2012-13 to the projected '16-17 school years.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Being that it's getting close to 10 o'clock, do you have any closing comments, Ms. Beck?

Ms. Beck: — I guess my closing remarks would be this: just to thank everyone for their time. I know we didn't get to ask everyone a direct question, but I do appreciate that you were all here. And we all spent, you know, two very lovely summer evenings together, and I do appreciate that and of course all the work that I know, in that row, but also behind you in that row, that goes into these estimates. And I do appreciate the opportunity to be able to ask the questions, to have met some of you that I only know by name.

And I guess, you know, the one comment that I would like to get across, and I know that there's a lot of points of agreement, but I do, just as an overall remark, you know, as I noted a couple of times tonight, I do bring these concerns forth because they are concerns that are brought forth to me from within, people, you know, as I noted, parents, educators, school-based staff. And I do welcome the opportunity to clarify some of these things. And I guess we will continue to watch and to gather that feedback and, you know, where we can, work collaboratively, but you know, respecting that it is our role to bring these concerns forward. So again I guess by way of closing, I think I've made it to 10 o'clock and my voice hasn't left me yet. I just sincerely do want to thank everyone for their time.

[22:00]

The Chair: — Mr. Minister, any closing remarks?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to wish the critic the very best in recovering her health. I appreciate the challenge, losing a voice and not feeling well. So to her and her colleagues, I want to wish them the best. To the committee members, thank them for being here. And to the staff that are here, I would like to compliment them and thank them. It goes against my grain and my character to do that. Anyway I will anyway. They're a really superb bunch of professionals,

and the province is privileged to have the members of the public service that we do, so to them I thank them.

The Chair: — Since we did receive some paperwork, I'd like to table HUS 2-28 and K to 12 provincial student enrolment by grade; and HUS 2-29, 2012-2013 Saskatchewan enrolments as of September 30, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016.

I'd also like to thank the minister and his officials for coming tonight, the committee members, and Ms. Sproule for lasting tonight, and of course our members from Hansard. The time being 10:02, I'd like to ask a member to move a motion of adjournment.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I so move.

The Chair: — Mr. D'Autremont has moved. All agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. This committee stands adjourned until tomorrow, June 15, 2016, at 7 p.m.

[The committee adjourned at 22:02.]