



STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Mr. Dan D'Autremont, Chair
Cannington

Ms. Nicole Rancourt, Deputy Chair
Prince Albert Northcote

Mr. David Buckingham
Saskatoon Westview

Mr. Mark Docherty
Regina Coronation Park

Mr. Muhammad Fiaz
Regina Pasqua

Mr. Hugh Nerlien
Kelvington-Wadena

Hon. Nadine Wilson
Saskatchewan Rivers

[The committee met at 15:00.]

The Chair: — Good afternoon, everyone, to the Human Services Committee. Before we commence I wish to indicate that we will not be taking any recesses during considerations today unless we have an agreement that that time need not be added back in at the end of any consideration. Is that agreed by the committee? Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Okay, we will now have consideration of Bill No. 53, *The Provincial Health Authority Act*. Welcome, Mr. Minister, and your officials. Before we start, I'll introduce the members: MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] Hugh Nerlien; MLA Muhammad Fiaz; MLA Nadine Wilson; MLA David Buckingham; MLA Mark Docherty; and for the opposition, MLA Nicole Rancourt.

Bill No. 53 — *The Provincial Health Authority Act*

Clause 1-1

The Chair: — Mr. Minister, if you are ready to proceed you may make your opening statements, and the other Health minister as well, and introduce your officials as they come up, please.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. As you indicated, my friend and colleague, the Hon. Greg Ottenbreit, Minister of Rural and Remote Health, is with us at the front table, as is the deputy minister of Health, Max Hendricks. We have a number of other officials with us today as well; that if they have the opportunity to engage in the discussion, they'll introduce themselves at that time.

I don't have a lot of opening comments, Mr. Chair. I would just say to you that the bill that you see in front of you is a result of a recommendation put forward by the Saskatchewan Advisory Panel on Health System Structure. That advisory panel was Brenda Abrametz, Tyler Bragg, and Dr. Dennis Kendel. They did a very, in my view, a very thorough and very good report, and so we were pleased to accept those recommendations.

Mr. Chair, when I had the opportunity in the legislature, I made a speech on this very issue, and I think I hit most of the key points in that speech. So in order to allow the member to make the most appropriate use of the time, I think I'll stop with my comments there and look forward to any questions.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. We will start with part 1, short title. Any questions? Ms. Rancourt.

Ms. Rancourt: — Well thank you and good afternoon. Usually I do committee in the evenings, so it seems a little bit odd saying good afternoon. But first of all, I want to thank all the officials for coming this afternoon and being available to answer some questions with regards to this bill.

This is a significant bill that we have before us, and it creates a lot of change in the health care system, and so it's really important to have this opportunity to ask questions. And I thank

you for making time, and also the other committee members and everybody else here that's working this afternoon to ensure that this process follows through.

I guess one of my first questions I have is, like I said before, this is going to create a lot of change in the health care system, and there's going to be a lot of different parameters that are going to have to be laid out. So what evidence do you have that this bill will actually create better quality health care for the people of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — You know, I'm going to make a few statements on this, and then I'm going to get Max to kind of fill in the details on this, you know, on anything I might have missed.

I think I would just refer to the report. I think it was, as I mentioned in the opening comments, that I think it was done very well. I also had an opportunity to have some discussions with the panel and, you know, it was very interesting. They went into it in some depth. And the problem with the current system, I think, is that we still have some boundaries to patient care. We still have some issues when patients will be transferred from, you know, typically from one of the health regions, other health regions, to either Saskatoon or Regina because that's where the large tertiary centres tend to be and the more specialized treatment is. We still have issues with that.

You know, we don't want to have . . . We're trying to have, as much as possible, uniform access to care for all patients right across the entire province, and so we don't want decisions made on regional budgets anymore. We're trying to move away from those things.

People have expectations of the health care system and, like I said, they . . . You know, we have regions right now that have programs that some other regions don't. And while in some instances, those may have been an issue to do with sort of localized issues, to a large extent they're not. So we're, you know, we're trying to avoid that. We're trying to be much more consistent across the system. So with that I'll just see if Max could put some more flesh on those bones.

Mr. Hendricks: — As the minister mentioned, one of the primary reasons for the move to a provincial health authority and something that was noted by the advisory panel in their report is it's highly focused on creating integrated networks of health care so that patient flow across the system isn't interrupted by really what are false boundaries with our regional health authority. So very few patients actually, you know, would be driving down the highway and say, I'm crossing from the Five Hills Health Region into the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region. They expect the health system to operate seamlessly. And you know, one might argue to a certain extent right now we have 12 health systems. The push over the past several years is to get our regional health authorities to think and act as one, to operate more like a system rather than 12 different systems.

But I think the provincial health authority affords us a number of opportunities. Number one and paramount is always improving patient service, integrating seamless care. The second is obviously we would want to have greater consistency

across the system. You know in our recent budget deliberations, it was pointed to the fact there are certain programs in certain regions that don't exist in others. And there might be reasons for that to exist based on the demographic needs, but not in all circumstances would that be the case.

One obvious one is for budgetary purposes. Right now we have 12 different health regions managing their budget. They're given direction by a ministry. This would allow a provincial health authority to take a system-wide view in the management of its budget, you know, and talk about the things that are really strategic in nature. You know, is there an ability to shift from tertiary to community-based care, that sort of thing.

On the issue of our tertiary system, one opportunity this also affords us is to allow for better co-operation between our tertiary centres in Regina and Saskatoon, better alignment of programs in those centres and so that whole system overview in terms of decision making, budget allocation, and taking the whole view in terms of an integrated patient care system.

On the administrative side, we do not have a standard chart of accounts in our health regions, or at least it's not adhered to. So it will provide some opportunities to move towards standardized accounting, standardized scheduling possibly. It will also allow the possibility for some administrative efficiencies so that we're able to reapply more money to front-line care. So those would be in the area of . . . You know, we've talked about information technology, human resources, potentially legal, things like that, and so we're looking at those opportunities.

I don't want to suggest for a second that, you know, that integrating or centralizing everybody in one community is the ideal here. We still want to maintain a highly decentralized model so that patients still have and communities still have that ability to have input into local decision making. And so there'll be a strong presence spread throughout the province. So I think there's a lot of excitement out there about the potential. The more we talk about it and the opportunities that this might bring, I think the more we see the potential opportunities that may exist.

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, I appreciate that answer. I'm going to let my colleague take over with her questions. Thank you.

The Chair: — I'd like to inform the committee that Ms. Danielle Chartier will be replacing . . . Yes, Danielle Chartier will be replacing Nicole Rancourt. I recognize Ms. Chartier.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to my colleague for asking a few questions for me.

I've got many questions over these next three hours. But when you talked about the health needing to work as one and needing to be more seamless, I know one of the recommendations in the advisory panel report was on four service integration areas, or coming up with service integration areas. I think four was one number, or three to six. So I'm wondering why that isn't in the bill. I know that the community advisory panels are, but how this will be broken out is not in the bill.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — It actually is referenced in the bill. It's 4-1(3). It will be done by the Lieutenant Governor, like by order in council, and the reason would be is the transition team right now would still be working on that. That will be part of the decisions on the overall organizational structure. So it'll be, it's being worked on, but it will come at a later date.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. Thank you. Well I guess that goes to my question that why this bill is attached to the budget. This didn't have to be a budget bill from speaking with people who were involved in . . . who are lawyers and who know about the previous bill, the RHA [regional health authority] bill. I understand that in order to do this, it wasn't necessary to make this a budget bill and pass this now. So in light of this being such a big change, wouldn't it be good to spend your time and perhaps do it next year instead of in the '17-18 fiscal year?

[15:15]

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — So there's a number of points I'd like to make. First of all, on the timing itself, you know, once the panel's recommendations were in and they were accepted, while we want to take enough time to ensure that we get it right, there's also been very much a desire amongst people who did presentations to the panel, people in health care in the province, they want to move with this as well. There's a certain amount of unknown, and that's uncomfortable for people. We recognize that. So we want to make sure people get to where we're going as soon as is reasonably practical. If we would have waited for fall, obviously we couldn't have it in place this year then. It would delay the entire process another year.

To the point of it being a budget bill, you know, while we certainly have a lawyer here from Justice that can get into the details far better than I can, but you know, generally speaking, this has huge budget implications. Health is the largest expenditure in the provincial budget, and this very much redesigns how health care is funded in the province. It's moving from 12 health regions to one and a number of things that go along with that.

Ms. Chartier: — Am I correct though in order to . . . We didn't actually need to have this bill to move to one health region. Like, from my conversations with some folks, we didn't actually need a bill. And not to say that you shouldn't have implemented a bill at some point, but is it true that we could have started on that path to amalgamation without introducing this bill?

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — I'm just going to ask Rick Hischebett from Justice first to introduce himself and his position, and to give you a more technical explanation of that.

Mr. Hischebett: — Hi, Rick Hischebett. I'm from the Ministry of Justice. In relation to the budget, there actually is a budget line in the budget that references the provincial health authority, so therefore the provincial health authority would not exist but for this Act. So it does have a tie into the budget and into the estimates, and in fact monies have been set aside on the basis that the provincial health authority will exist.

To get back to your initial question of, could the amalgamations have occurred under the existing regional health services Act, I

think the answer is possibly. The reality is that there were amalgamation provisions, and there are amalgamation provisions in *The Regional Health Services Act*; however, the whole concept of the Act is that there are health regions. The result of all the amalgamations would be that there really isn't a health region, and so the purpose of the Act is a little bit different. So to amalgamate along those lines would leave some question.

And the second thing is that if you left the existing Act in place, one of the things that this Act deals with are some of the new accountability structures and some of the new roles for the minister versus the provincial health authority. Those would not be in place. When this Act was being put in place, there were a number of things that could have been addressed, including matters that the panel report addressed and said the ministry should study. Those weren't addressed, so this bill was actually pared back just to deal with those very issues of the creation of the provincial health authority.

Ms. Chartier: — So just again though, so obviously, and the minister has pointed out that Health is the largest budget item. It's a huge ministry. It's really important to lots of people. This amalgamation has a huge impact on the way our health services will operate. So what I'm suggesting is that perhaps, wouldn't it have been good to have more due diligence on this kind of bill? So if we could've moved through an order in council with the RHA with the previous Act, and in that time, as obviously you've made a decision and you're moving in that regard, could there not have been some more due diligence on developing this particular Act?

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — You know, for the reasons that Rick just said, I'm comfortable that the due diligence was done. We'll end up in future sessions that there'll have to be some additions to or changes to the Act. But you know I think it's important that we get moving with this. You know the panel heard from many stakeholders and in my view did a very good report, and this is a case of getting on with business.

Ms. Chartier: — Just from the legal perspective though again, so recognizing that the government has made a choice and is moving to one health region, and I know you said it was referenced in the budget document, but could . . . from a legal perspective. So if the ministry wants to move to one health region and has the order in council ability under the previous Act, could they have started the move and then spent some time developing this bill?

Mr. Hischebett: — As I mentioned before, the answer to your question is that there were amalgamation provisions, including the amalgamation of health regions, in the former bill.

Ms. Chartier: — So does that mean yes, this could have . . . You're telling me there's provisions, but does that mean yes . . .

Mr. Hischebett: — The amalgamation could have occurred under the previous Act. Whether somebody would have challenged that on the basis that the Act was based upon a regional system and now we've taken away the entire component of the region, right, is something that you always worry about from a legal perspective. However if we had done that, we wouldn't be able to address some of the other elements

that came out of the report that are required to be addressed or at least were recommended to be addressed.

So for example here, one of the first questions was about the integrated services areas. There was nothing in the previous bill about the integrated services areas or how those would be structured, so this bill addresses that aspect of it. There was also a recommendation made that the provincial lab should form part of the provincial health authority. The bill here provides for provisions to allow for the transfer of those employees and make that transaction a much easier transaction.

So to leave it under its current state would have created a potential for people who didn't like that to challenge it, but equally to not achieve some of the other elements that the report suggested were necessary. And so that is the balance that the bill strikes. If you go through the majority of the bill, you will see that it's very little different. The majority of it is substantially the same as *The Regional Health Services Act*, and the rationale for that was because this was being put in place in such a short period of time and there wasn't a sufficient time for consultation that we should leave those things in place and address those other matters that could be addressed at a later time.

Ms. Chartier: — For sure, and like, side by side, the bills are very similar, but that's why I'm asking if . . . The question was if we could have put a . . . Not to say that you wouldn't have continued to develop this bill in absence or over the next six months or in time to do some more diligent consultations and chatting with folks, but the reality is the government could have moved to one region under this existing bill. Yes.

Mr. Hischebett: — Yes, I think I provided that answer.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — I would just like to add to that, though. If I could add to that, as Rick had said, in my view to your point, technically it could have, but it was far from ideal for the reasons he laid out.

Ms. Chartier: — I would argue it's far from ideal moving in this regard and rushing something that you're going to have to bring back probably many, many times as you've pointed out, but . . .

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Well I have yet to see you support a bill that we have brought in, so I'm not surprised.

Ms. Chartier: — Yes, the PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder], I was very supportive of that, and psychological injury under Labour, that I stood and supported that. There was some changes around traffic safety; I supported that. So when I think things are good policy, I'm more than happy to support those kinds of things.

In terms of restructuring of the health care system, so this time last year, around the last budget, that's when the idea of transformational change was floated. And then over the course of the summer, your predecessor was to put in place, actually I think he had said initially a commissioner and then ended up striking the three-person panel.

But I'm wondering, who asked for restructuring in the first place? Because obviously you had parameters for that committee to reduce the number of health regions. So was it cabinet who was asking, or who was asking for the restructuring of the health care system, particularly the reduction of health regions?

[15:30]

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Ms. Chartier. I guess to kind of paint a picture of where the direction came from, we'd have to look at the whole country, specifically Canada. A lot of other jurisdictions had gone this way, but specifically in Canada at any of the federal-provincial-territorial ministers meetings that we have, you would pretty much hear the same narrative from every minister across the country in respect to that, if we don't do something differently, within a number of years, maybe a decade or two, there'd be a ministry of finance and a ministry of health. That would be it, just the trajectory of spending that health was on.

So all jurisdictions realized there needs to be efficiencies found. Alberta was the first one that went through this process, and I think they would be the first to admit that they did it very quickly, a lot of mistakes were made. Which I've got to say, when the first, I guess, signal that I got personally that the panel might be recommending one region, it makes you kind of wonder off the start.

But when we looked at the panel report and looked at the recommendations and how much work they had put into it looking at different jurisdictions not only in Canada but around the world, and seeing that every jurisdiction that had minimized health regions or went to one health region post-Alberta learned from the mistakes of others and did a better and better job.

So that's where I started getting a lot of confidence in the direction the panel was going in the area of finding efficiencies. Even conversations with some of the other ministers across the country were . . . you know, I'd question, like is one the right number? Some had gone to five, leaving some of their bigger centres out.

And the message I got from all of them was, you know, we went from a number down to five or four or whatever the number might be. But they still found they had the same interjurisdictional problems with those boundaries, those borders where they would have — I think as Max touched on earlier — they had the system through CEO and health board meetings to get the whole province . . . or other provinces, our province, thinking and acting as one. But you still find those things that are getting in the way, those boundaries getting in the way of delivering good health care that's, you know, somewhat equitable or very equitable across a province.

So once we started realizing that's the direction they thought we should go, realizing that the panel report recommendations recognized the mistakes that others had made and that we had to do this in a well-thought-out manner, I think all of us had a lot more confidence in the direction they wanted to go.

So you know, when we saw the panel report, we recognized

again that's where we needed to go. And that was pretty much where the direction came from, was other ministers, recognizing other jurisdictions finding efficiencies, realizing we had to do the same, and learning from best practices of other jurisdictions that had gone that way.

I might ask Max to add in a few comments if he has.

Mr. Hendricks: — Sure. So during last year's budget cycle, one of the things that ministries were asked to do was to come forward with transformational items that were based on evidence, some kind of best practice, and our review of what was happening in other health systems, high-performing health systems in other jurisdictions.

You know, if I kind of look at the history in Saskatchewan of regionalization, as you know, in the 1990s, we moved to 31 health districts from over 400 distinct boards. And then in the early 2000s, we collapsed again to 12 health regions.

You know, the interesting thing with the health districts is you'll recall the funny shapes of those health districts, where you had maybe a donut circling Swift Current because those were kind of the union hospital districts that got along with each other. Again with health districts, it wasn't always set up in a way — or health regions — in a way that was actually consistent with patient flow across those health regions. So what one region and subsequently the integrated service areas within that region do is they allow us to organize care most effectively in terms and within the context of patient flow across the system.

So we looked very closely at the experience in Nova Scotia. We looked very closely at the experience in Alberta, had consultations with their ministries and their health authorities in both jurisdictions. We also had discussions with Manitoba to learn kind of what went well, what didn't go so well. We didn't jump into this lightly. You know, I think that there was a fair amount of discussion about what this would actually take to do properly. And so those discussions were had.

But certainly, you know, the ministry's view and proposal to treasury board and to cabinet was that there was an opportunity here in light of the transformational agenda to actually improve care for patients, while at the same time looking at ways to improve efficiencies across the system and to reduce barriers that might exist through the existing regional system. So you know, this was something that, as Minister Ottenbreit said, was based on current practice in Canada and a lot of other places where we are seeing kind of a highly regionalized system centralized to some extent.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. So just a couple things with that. So Minister Ottenbreit started by talking about efficiencies. So in January, a week after that announcement was made, the number of 10 to \$20 million by 2018-19 was slated as the efficiency. So we think about a more than \$5 billion budget and somewhere in the range of 10 to \$20 million will be saved by this amalgamation by . . . and then throwing an entire system into flux that is already struggling. I mean, over our course of the last couple of days we heard about some of the challenges around ED [emergency department] waits, those kinds of things.

So really this amalgamation isn't . . . I can get behind improving patient care. As the Health critic, I hear story after story from folks around challenges with patient care. But I'm not sure this is the method to get there.

But the 10 to \$20 million, is that the kind of efficiencies that your partners at the federal-provincial-territorial table were talking about? I mean, 10 to \$20 million on a more than \$5 billion budget is peanuts really.

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — I would disagree that on the scope of the budget, 10 or \$20 million seems like not much, but there's a significant impact could be made with savings like that in certain areas.

But the thing I would point to too, is if you'd look in the panel report, they made a strong statement about this isn't about saving money. This is about improving patient care. And that in itself, I mean you can't point to those savings off the start, just like continuous improvement, but we see savings continue to be surfacing in the system because of decisions and programs like that. This is very much the same, that those are the initial savings we can point to. They're very obvious. But just because of the way it will roll out and some of the input that we've gotten from some of the stakeholders, I have full confidence that there will be more and more savings that we'll be able to point it to as the transition rolls out.

I would point to an example. SEMSA [Saskatchewan Emergency Medical Services Association] has become a very good source, I would say, of information and efficiencies that they pointed out because of the boundaries. Either it's the boundaries, that they have trying to get across the different regions' boundaries and delivering services and the interruptions that that causes, whether it's dispatch, whether it's navigation, whether it's, you know, any group of indications that they would have that they're having trouble with the system as it is, with the multiple jurisdictions.

And even with things like group purchasing or, you know, something as inefficient as . . . I guess one example I can point out anecdotally, I suppose, is a case where they might put an IV [intravenous] set-up into a patient. And so they've got to not only supply that 30-some-dollar apparatus, but also they have to poke the patient. And then going into a hospital or a different jurisdiction, they don't, maybe they don't want that system. They want to put their own in, and it's another 32 or \$40 and then they have to poke the patient again. So that's an example of not really good patient care or not the best patient care, and funds that could be directed elsewhere. And in the one region alone they pointed to, you know, multiple savings that could happen there. And that's not indicated in this report or some of the numbers.

So again that's one small example, but there's a number of examples that, anecdotally and otherwise, have been pointed out to us by the many different stakeholders that will improve patient care but also save funds.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — I would just, if I could just add, you know, this was about patient care. Money's not the primary driver making this change.

But I would say what you just said is somewhat contradictory of past comments you've made. I have a copy of an NDP [New Democratic Party] caucus news release from November 19th, 2015 that talks about health care executive salaries up, and there's quotes in there attributed to you. I've heard you make other comments in the past about the high cost of health care administration.

This addresses that. We're going to go from 12 CEOs to one. We're going to greatly reduce the number of vice-presidents. We're going to consolidate a lot of management. And, you know, every dollar in health care is valuable. So I would say that, in my view, your comments today are somewhat contradictory to comments from yourself in the past.

Ms. Chartier: — We've just had your fellow Health minister say that the discussion came up at the federal-provincial-territorial table around efficiencies. I would again totally agree that patient care should always be the primary concern, but your colleague just said that that was what was the initial driver.

So I'm wondering around the analysis to the 10 to \$20 million. So that number in the news release from January 10th, 2017 points to the number that's either 10 . . . anywhere in the range of 10 million to 20 million. So 10 million or twice that amount can be saved by 2018-19. I'm wondering what analysis was done to come up with these numbers and when that was done.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — So where that number came from, it was a high-level estimate done early. It was estimated that on IT [information technology] we would save, once implemented, annually that we would save about \$9 million annually on IT. On board governance, would be about \$700,000 a year. And then there would also be, as I mentioned, some significant management salary savings — that's why the wide range. And we also think there's going to be obviously some other savings because of the consolidation.

But again the transition team, this is very early; they're still doing their organizational structure. So that's where the number came from.

[15:45]

Ms. Chartier: — When you said early, that was a high-level estimate done early, so I'm wondering when that estimate was done.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — I don't know the exact dates that the estimates were done, but again they were very high level. And it would have been . . . we're saying, December, January.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay, thank you. So in that number of savings from . . . So that '18-19 was estimated when we'd start to achieve those savings, particularly around IT. Have you factored in any of the costs to get there? So that's once implementation happens, but particularly around IT, recognizing that different regions are on different IT systems, it's not an easy process to integrate those. There will be costs to get to be on the same system, costs of consultants to get you there. So has there been any number crunching or analysis on the cost to get to that IT place in '18-19?

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — I think, as you know, IT is going to be transitioned. Rather than the 12 regions each sort of having their own system, it's going to be transitioned provincially to eHealth. I'm certainly not an IT expert. I'm going to get Max to give you some more detail on that.

Ms. Chartier: — The IT expert.

Mr. Hendricks: — Because I am.

A Member: — We can bring somebody in.

Mr. Hendricks: — So the cost of consolidating the IT system, actually a lot of what the whole savings attached to that are predicated on is reducing current duplication of services. So it's standardization of clinical experiences so access, network, desktop across RHAs or even facilities, hosting and management of all clinical and administrative applications brought together into the eHealth data centre. Currently there's an eHealth data centre, but regions also run another instance of it in our larger regions.

Consolidation of clinical and administrative desktop computing to common provincial service. Standardizing management of efficiencies could be achieved by using technologies such as virtual desktop services, so that's where people log on to your computers and do things remotely. Consolidation of a service desk for the health system to a single provincial desk. IT security services across the system. Procurement in IT hardware and software.

Right now regions secure their phone services separately and have 13 different VOIP [voice over Internet protocol] services, so it would be moving to a single telephone provider. We have 15 provincial networks, so moving again to a single one. So eHealth has, you know, the common systems in terms of the electronic health record and that sort of thing. But you know, if you looked at any regions, they're the common ones that eHealth has, but literally hundreds of other services and software programs that they operate.

And so it's about bringing consistency, using common purchasing for licenses so you get greater economies of scale. So this one was one that was identified early on and has been kind of budgeted out fairly clearly.

Ms. Chartier: — In terms of a budget number then, what is that looking like to . . . So it sounds great to move to a single IT system, but how much has been budgeted? What are we expecting it to cost to get there?

Mr. Hendricks: — I think where our anticipation is is that we're going to use savings to generate this, like . . . So we're not laying off a bunch of people across the system. So you know, I think the minister has said very early on, this whole regional consolidation to a provincial health authority doesn't mean that there aren't going to be IT services in North Battleford or Prince Albert. You're going to still have people working the desktop there, but in doing that sort of thing, providing support services. But this is about actually breaking down some of those different, you know, administrative barriers that exist between regions in terms of the delivery. So there aren't huge costs attached to this. This is just about doing things

smarter.

Ms. Chartier: — Are there any costs attached? So you've said there . . . Have you anticipated whether they're huge or not? What are the costs of getting to that place?

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Again as Max had said, you know, we don't expect those costs to be significant. But if you'd like some details, eHealth is, as I said, is going to be responsible for the provincial-wide. We can get you some numbers and follow up with you.

Ms. Chartier: — Yes, that would be great. Going back to our conversation of a few minutes ago, so I was asking where the restructuring of the health care system came and who asked for this. So I asked if cabinet, if it was driven by cabinet, and Minister Ottenbreit talked about the federal-provincial-territorial meetings. I'm wondering if at any time . . . Have any of the health regions, prior to this transformation agenda last spring, asked for consolidation? Any of the regions, have regions . . . I know that there's been the goal to act as one, but did any region advocate for a move to a single health region?

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — I'll just get Max to comment on discussions with the regions and then I'm going to follow up.

Mr. Hendricks: — So when we set about kind of scoping what types of transformation we might undertake in the health system, one of the steps that I took was to consult with my RHA CEO colleagues. And you know they provided a number of ideas for improvement across the system and a lot of that fed into our work in terms of a transformational agenda.

I think that it would be fair to say, and I don't want to paint with a broad brush here because it might have come from a couple or a few, but there was a recognition that there would be some increased efficiency, possible improvement in patient care with consolidation of services.

There might have been a couple that threw out the idea of fewer health regions. I don't know that anybody ever threw out single health region. But, you know, this wasn't done, you know, kind of in the idea . . . This wasn't done in kind of a secretive way. Actually, the discussions were happening with the CEOs, and I think some of their thinking fed in to the whole thought process that led to the ministry's tabling of its transformational items.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — I would just add that, you know, if your question is driving at, well if the health regions aren't asking for it, why are you doing it — that's not where the recommendation came from. It wasn't from the individual health authorities. It was because of the work that the panel did.

Ms. Chartier: — But backing that up. So we have to look at the time frame here. So we had election. We had talk of transformational change. We had budget. More talk of transformational change. Then we had panel. And then we had recommendations. So taking us back to, prior to the floating of the term transformational change in this regard, because I think that's what I'm . . . Was any regional health authority asking for something like this prior to that?

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — You know, I would guess not in a formal sense. I don't know what discussions would've went on at that time.

But again this is a significant change to the health system, to the structure. When significant changes like that happen, as you laid out what the process and where we arrived at where we were, I don't think in 1993 when the health districts were formed, I don't think there was an outcry and a demand from all the different hospital boards to be amalgamated. In 2002, when we amalgamated the health districts into the regional health authorities, I don't think the health districts were demanding amalgamation either. But sometimes in the best interests of health care, decisions need to be made.

Ms. Chartier: — I was simply asking if this came from anywhere prior to that, prior to floating the notion of transformational change. Was anybody . . . I know that you're newer to this file, but you have a Health minister and a deputy minister who might have an answer to that, like that pre-dated Minister Reiter.

Mr. Hendricks: — It was discussed. I don't think that, as the minister said, I don't think anybody was saying, you know, let's move to fewer health regions right away, you know. But in the scope or in the vein of having that discussion about things that the system could do to achieve certain objectives for improved patient care efficiency, there were ideas suggested. You've got to remember then . . . This is where the minister's completely accurate. When the ministry took it forward, it wasn't to say, let's create a single health authority. That was the advisory panel's recommendation. The ministry's recommendation was to have a look at it.

Ms. Chartier: — The ministry's recommendation was fewer health regions. So I'm wondering . . . So that was the mandate of the ministry and the minister to the committee, to come up with a model where there were fewer health regions. So it wasn't prescriptive whether it was one or five or seven.

But I'm wondering . . . And I'm not saying we should've had more, but I'm saying perhaps we should've left it up to the panel to figure out what the optimum number of regions would've been. But I'm wondering why the direction . . .

A Member: — We did.

A Member: — We did. We did.

Ms. Chartier: — No, you didn't. Actually the mandate was to reduce the number of regions. If you look at the mandate letter, it is to reduce the number of regions.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Sorry, I thought you were referring to the recommendations of the panel. You're referring to the mandate that the panel was given.

Ms. Chartier: — The panel was given a mandate to reduce the number of health regions, so I'm wondering why the direction of the minister was to reduce the number of health regions. To come up with a system, whether it was again one or three or five or seven or nine or — the direction was to reduce. So I'm just wondering why the panel wasn't given a mandate to come

up with the optimum number of health regions.

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — I can maybe start following up on one of my . . . I think one of my first answers was recognizing best practices across the country and other jurisdictions, that going to less health regions was a direction to go to start getting rid of some inefficiencies and improving patient care.

[16:00]

But then again, looking at a reduction of regions, I mean your party and people around the province asked for a significant reduction of administration. The only logical way to start reducing significantly the level of high-level administration is to reduce administrative areas.

So looking at best practices and looking at the mandate or the ask that we were getting, from not only the opposition but people around the province, was to reduce significantly the administration; it's a logical direction to go. So to get the panel to look at recommendations and what would be the optimum amount of regions or what would be the most efficient level of regions in the province was the mandate of the panel. And they came back with the one region recommendation.

Ms. Chartier: — But that wasn't the mandate. But just, with all due respect, not once have I said we needed fewer health regions. I have said we needed to reduce administration. Administration costs had gone up considerably. Executive pay had gone up consistently. I had not once asked for reduced health regions. So my question isn't . . . My question is, why was the panel given the mandate to reduce and not to find the optimum number of health regions?

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — I think I answered that question, Ms. Chartier, in that recognizing the best practices of other areas and the successes that they'd have plus . . . And I didn't say you asked for less regions. I said you asked for less administration. And the logical course of the path was, and going by recommendations of other areas that had done the same thing, if we're going to reduce significantly administration costs, that means reducing administration, that means reducing administrative areas, which would mean less regions.

Ms. Chartier: — Well that's your logic, and I don't always agree with your logic. I think that . . .

A Member: — That's no surprise.

Ms. Chartier: — Yes, that is no surprise. I know you recognize that as well.

I'm curious, in your conversations, you said you talked to other jurisdictions. What did . . . and Alberta, Nova Scotia, and you said a conversation with Manitoba. I'm wondering what Alberta had said to you. You said you were trying to learn from their mistakes, but I'm wondering if Alberta, what their thoughts on the move to one region were.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Sort of chronologically, I guess, I would say when Minister Duncan was in charge of this file, I would assume because this is common practice, is he'd have relationships with various colleagues across the country and the

different provincial ministers, frequently discussions, not only the formal discussions at federal-provincial-territorial ministers' meetings but casual discussions as well individually. I would also say that the panel, I think, took a look at what other provinces were doing, including Alberta, because certainly that was . . . I mean, it's our next door neighbour, and it was a very significant change at the time. And the transition team, as they've been doing their work on this they also look at what other provinces are doing.

Ms. Chartier: — So backing it up though again, so as the panel is working on their recommendations and the ministry is thinking about this, what did Alberta say? Did they recommend a move to one region in their experience?

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — I would point to the panel. They reviewed what happened in Alberta, and their recommendation is to move to one.

Ms. Chartier: — You don't have any feedback from any of the any of the jurisdictions with whom you spoke or the panel spoke?

Mr. Hendricks: — So as the minister mentioned, the advisory panel had some discussions with Alberta and Nova Scotia. As well the transition team that has been set up and the ministry has also had some more detailed discussions with those jurisdictions.

And you know, I think what we've heard from Alberta is they're finding now that they liked where they ended up. You know, I think that there were some struggles getting there. One of the things in Alberta was that it was done very quickly, like literally overnight. There wasn't a lot of pre-planning, forethought, that sort of thing in terms of how this would be structured. And basically it was done very quickly, and it kind of shocked the system.

In talking to Nova Scotia, a bit different approach and more consistent with kind of what the approach that we're taking here, one that involves the system more. So we actually have CEOs, health system CEOs, and a couple of other people from health regions involved in the actual planning for this transition. We've involved almost . . . Well we've involved every CEO in that planning, our HR [human resource] communities, our finance communities. So this is something that's being done with the system rather than to the system, and I think that's the key difference.

You know Alberta went to one single health authority and then they subsequently added, subsequently implemented zones within that. I think that fed into the thinking of the advisory panel's recommendation of creating integrated service areas. So lessons were, have, and continue to be, learned from those jurisdictions.

You know, I think in Manitoba one of our key learnings in discussions with them was around how the whole notion of community — I'm going to call them the wrong name there but their version of community health networks — are working, and we sought some input on that. So we've done a pretty, we've done a pretty thorough review of what's been happening in other provinces.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — I would also just add to your point about, you know, sort of where officials in Alberta's mind set's at. I'm just going to get Greg to make a comment from an official from Alberta.

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Yes, and this would be an article written by the CEO of the Alberta Health Services. I'll just read part of it into record, but you might want a reference or I could read the whole thing into record if you'd like. 17th of January, 2017, commenting that, “. . . Saskatchewan [recently] became the third province in Canada to move . . . [to] a single . . . health authority.”

Others have gone to less authorities before us but the third to do to a single.

Alberta Health Services (AHS) officially came into being in . . . [’09], and immediately became the first and largest provincial health care system in the country. The organization is responsible for delivering health care services to more than four million Albertans, as well as to some residents of Saskatchewan, B.C., and the Northwest Territories [etc.]. AHS has more than 108,000 employees and almost 10,000 physicians . . .

They go on to kind of describe what the services looks like. She goes on to say:

The move . . . [to] a single health care system was a massive task, and not without myriad challenges, some of which we continue to work through almost eight years later. [However] It . . . [did require] hard work, ingenuity, dedication, and patience from all of our staff, physicians and volunteers. Transitioning from 12 separate . . . entities into one was not an easy task . . . did not always get it right. But looking back, despite the growing pains and challenges, we know it was the right thing to do.

It is estimated the move to one organization saved taxpayers . . . [in their number] \$600 million in administrative costs . . . [by them] being 25 per cent lower than the national average. But the most important advantage of a single . . . [provincial] fully integrated health system begins and ends with patient care [which I pointed to earlier].

Where once separate staff, rules and processes created barriers, today we have . . . [a single] co-operation and sharing of best practices between health care providers and sectors. [And it] . . . allows us to look across the province to find the best way of doing things.

And it goes on to talk about even emergency responses in Fort McMurray and a whole bunch of other efficiencies and improvements, not only to their financial status but also to the delivery of service in emergencies and health care to people that they do serve. So you can maybe look that up if you'd like.

Ms. Chartier: — No, I've read it. So Alberta, Mr. Hendricks, you talked about it being a shock to the system because it was just about overnight. How long was Nova Scotia's transition?

Mr. Hendricks: — Nova Scotia set up one year, post decision.

I think that's going to kind of put us into roughly the same ballpark that they are. They set up . . . You know, as I said, we've kind of replicated their model to some extent, by highly involving people from regions in the transition and not just having it being a ministry-driven, top-down approach. So we again have learned a lot from Nova Scotia, and are copying some of their approach.

Ms. Chartier: — Sounds good. Not recreating the wheel. Can you, getting back to the bill specifically, can you provide a time frame for when we'll see regulations in the bill?

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Well I'll just ask Rick to answer that.

Mr. Hischebett: — Ms. Chartier, the short answer is that any existing regulations that were done under *The Regional Health Services Act*, that can still apply, will still apply under this new Act. We will be going through all of the sets of existing regulations under *The Regional Health Services Act* and determining what regulations need to change in order to address some of the nuances that result from the bill. So that work will be being done over the summer period. We've already started a bit of that work, looking at some of those provisions.

Ms. Chartier: — Work will be expected to be finished at the end of summer, or it's a bigger task than that.

Mr. Hischebett: — I won't say it's not a large task. It is a large task, but it is a task that can be completed over a period of months.

Ms. Chartier: — And that'll be taking place this summer then, starting . . . or you've done a little bit, you've said, already.

Mr. Hischebett: — We'll be working both inside the ministry and within the transition team to identify all of those things. We've already identified things that we have to address, and so we'll be working on that in order to bring those through in the summer, yes.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you for that. So we've talked about the transition team, or you've mentioned the transition team and the work that they're doing. Can you highlight how many people are on the transition team?

Mr. Hendricks: — So you will be aware that the transition team is being led by Beth Vachon who is the, in her normal job, is the CEO of the Cypress Health Region. We also have the CEO of the Sunrise Health Region and the CEO of the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency on the transition team. We have a senior director of human resources, from a large region, as well as a CFO [chief financial officer] from one of our largest regions. We have a person who's responsible for . . . who's the director of representative workforce in First Nations and Métis engagement.

[16:15]

We have two physicians on the team that are . . . The way that we're structuring the model is that in any of these cases . . . and I'll use the physicians as an example, because they're going to be responsible for looking at clinical services and governance and how those work streams are kind of filled out. And one of

the things that they will do is that they will go to their colleagues that have specialization in certain areas, and so in some ways this is kind of, you know, this is the lead team. But even in the case, as I mentioned earlier, of finance, it's not just the one VP [vice-president] of finance. It would be all the VPs that are kind of virtually involved in this.

And so in addition to that, we have a director of business development from 3s [Health Shared Services Saskatchewan] and we have the director of . . . sorry, we have two people from 3sHealth involved. And we have a communications person who was seconded from the ministry, as well as a policy person from our strategic policy branch from within the ministry.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you. And how much has been budgeted for the work of the transition team?

Mr. Hendricks: — So our expenses to April 11th, 2017 are \$86,668 and our expenses to December 31st, 2017 are forecast to be around \$290,000. Included within that, one of the things that we've done is we've not hired additional people to be part of this. And so in the case of the regional folks that I've talked about, we've seconded those people from their health region either on a full- or part-time basis. So their salaries are continuing to be paid by their health regions. And there's, you know, people have . . . obviously are filling in in certain cases. But there, you know, there are no incremental positions as a result of this transition team.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. So just to clarify, so when you talk about the region folks, the CEOs, the region folks, or the Cancer Agency, they've been seconded from their respective organizations to the . . .

Mr. Hendricks: — Yes, they have.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. So that total forecast number to the end of December includes their salaries?

Mr. Hendricks: — That does not include their salaries.

Ms. Chartier: — So their salaries are being paid by their, you said by their . . .

Mr. Hendricks: — Respective health regions.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. And is it a full-time gig?

Mr. Hendricks: — In certain cases. You know, definitely in Beth and, you know, Suann, and people that are working full time on . . . It's pretty much a full-time gig. Yes.

Ms. Chartier: — And so obviously their salaries are being paid by the regions right now. And are their positions backfilled?

Mr. Hendricks: — So in the case of the regional folks that are working on the transition team, most of them would be full time, as well as the two ministry staff. And at least one of the 3s I believe as well is pretty much full time.

In terms of additional costs to the regions, in certain cases there might be an interim or an acting CEO while the CEO was doing this work, and they would have, you know, some temporary pay

for higher duties which I think is usually 6 or 8 per cent. I'm not sure of the formula. We would have to look into that. But that would be kind of the nature of the replacement in the regions. And you know, very clearly in trying to pick the transition team and who was on it, Beth and I were very intentional about making sure that we were picking individuals from regions where we felt that they had a good support system, like their second-in-command or the person below them could step into that type of role fairly easily. So that was one of the key considerations as well.

Ms. Chartier: — So for the three CEOs and the CFO then, so are they all . . . So let's just deal with the CEOs first. So Sunrise, Cypress, and the Cancer Agency, do they all have acting . . . I'm assuming they've got acting CEOs in those positions.

Mr. Hendricks: — Okay. In the case of Cypress Regional Health Authority, Larry Allsen is acting in Beth's place. Christina Denysek is acting in Suann's place in Sunrise. And Jon Tonita is acting in Scott's place in the Cancer Agency. And they are receiving TPHD [temporary performance of higher duties].

Ms. Chartier: — TP . . .

Mr. Hendricks: — Temporary pay for higher duties, or whatever.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. And that's coming out of the regions' budgets then?

Mr. Hendricks: — Yes.

Ms. Chartier: — Yes. So the regions are paying for the folks on the transition team, their salary, and for the backfill of the position then.

Mr. Hendricks: — Correct.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. Has there been, just out of curiosity, any numbers crunched on how much that is?

Mr. Hendricks: — We have the CEO salaries. We know what they make, right, and so we have some idea of what that would be. That's public information. I think they're in the disclosure lists.

Ms. Chartier: — Before I move on just from that, is it safe to assume that there's, like in terms of the CFO and the director of HR from the largest region, are those positions backfilled? I guess the better question, of the rest of the team . . . So you've told me about the three CEOs. Are the rest of the folks being backfilled?

Mr. Hendricks: — You know, there are folks that are kind of acting as their replacements. We would have to check whether they're getting temporary pay for higher duties or some supplement.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. Is that a difficult thing to check?

Mr. Hendricks: — No, we can check it to see.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. I know we only have another hour and a half. If we happen to be able to get that answer by the end of committee, that would be great.

Moving on here, so the budget only transfers half a year's worth of funding for the health region, and the remaining is to flow to the provincial health region. Is the assumption that the provincial health authority will be in place by the end of September?

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — So the line item in the budget refers to October 1st when it transitions from the 12 regions, the funding, to flowing to the one. We needed to do an estimate of when that would be. That may very well be the start date, but again we want to be cautious about this. So that could be, but it's also possible it'll be a little bit later in the year, in which case though we can move the money, you know, rather than the one provincial authority to the 12 regions or vice versa. It's a rough target, I guess, is what I'm trying say.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. So that's the target, to have all the operations of the RHAs wrapped up by the end of September.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Well I wouldn't . . . It wouldn't be all the operations, but it would be the funding flow.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. So that means for the flow, if they're not . . . So when will the operations of the regions be wrapped up then?

[16:30]

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Again our target is October 1st. So you know, I suppose it depends on how you're going to define all operations wrapped up. But that's the target, yes, October 1st.

Ms. Chartier: — Well I'd like to know how you define all operations wrapped up then to make sure we're on the same page. I've never been part of an amalgamation. I don't know what this looks like, so I'm wondering what it's going to look like.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — I don't even use that term. That was your term.

Ms. Chartier: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — But we'll have a discussion, and I'll get you a clear answer.

Ms. Chartier: — Yes.

Mr. Hendricks: — So the October 1st is, that is when we've targeted having the provincial health authority assume, the provincial health authority board assume governance of the health system. So they would effectively replace the boards of the other 12 health regions in terms of providing governance over the health system and those would cease to exist.

Ms. Chartier: — So and then the executive management will be in place. So you'll have the board in place and then executive management, all of that'll be, the hope is the plan to have it in place for October 1st.

Mr. Hendricks: — Yes, or certain pieces. And I think the key element here is just that the board of governors and the CEO will obviously be in place, and I assume most of the senior management team will be in place. They will assume operations, you know, then kind of the wind-down of the operations. Functionally all 12 regional health authorities will be the responsibility of the provincial health authority. How they wind down operations or, you know, integrate within that will be the role of the provincial health authority.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. Okay, thank you. In terms of transitioning executive management, how is the process going? Sorry, I understand . . . was it 7 of the 12 CEOs have taken packages?

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — No, it was one CEO and six vice-presidents.

Ms. Chartier: — Oh, okay, okay. So I — just looking at newspaper articles — so one CEO and six VPs.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Right.

Ms. Chartier: — And that's a total cost; it was 1.8 to \$1.9 million. And forgive my ignorance here. And so was that . . . Where was the CEO who took the package?

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — That was Sun Country.

Ms. Chartier: — And the six VPs came out of where?

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — It was Sun Country, two from Mamawetan Churchill River, Prairie North, Saskatoon, and Sunrise.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. And this is where . . . Forgive my ignorance on this part here, but so was the package any different . . . This is my lack of knowledge around labour standards and contracts. So a package was offered to folks before the end of March to take the buyout. And so you've still got 11 CEOs remaining and is it about 56 VPs remaining. How will we be dealing with them?

Mr. Hendricks: — I think it would be premature at this point . . . Well, first an answer to your question: those numbers would be approximately right. I'm not sure. We've had a retirement or two in the health system since.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay.

Mr. Hendricks: — But you know, in terms of how this will kind of work in practical terms, it would be premature for us to kind of speculate. One of the things that will have to be established is the organizational structure for the new region, how management will be or what management will be needed across the various communities in the province and within the integrated service areas. So a lot of this work will have to be the work of the provincial health authority and the new CEO of the provincial health authority to determine that.

You know, I presume that there will be a number of people, potentially even CEOs of the existing system or vice presidents who, you know, may want to step into different roles within the

new provincial health authority. So you know, that hasn't been predetermined until we actually go through the process of establishing the organizational structure.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. Again this is my lack of knowledge around labour standards though, so . . . The CEOs and VPs, the seven folks who took the package, will it be different from . . . So if someone doesn't apply . . . So their job ends, so a VP's job ends and he or she doesn't apply. Will it be the same package that those individuals would have been offered?

Mr. Hischebett: — Hi. Short answer is simply that the VPs and other officials will likely have contracts. Those contracts may have provisions that deal with circumstances of termination. So if they do, then those provisions will come into play. If they don't the short answer is that the common law principles that apply to the termination of employment contracts will apply in those circumstances.

Ms. Chartier: — And can you tell me what those are?

Mr. Hischebett: — I'd love to tell you there's a hard and fast rule. They're just isn't. It's a matter of what . . . You take a look at circumstances and the number of years somebody is . . .

Ms. Chartier: — Years of service.

Mr. Hischebett: — Yes, exactly. Position, age, those types of things go into a factor.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. So again, the question around . . . Are the packages that were offered to folks different than . . . was there anything special about those contracts, the buyout? Was it based on their contracts in the . . .

Mr. Hischebett: — They were based on the same principle, so the contract applied. There were provisions, and there are provisions, for example, in *The Regional Health Services Act*. They deal with CEO contracts and make the provisions of *The Crown Employments Contracts Act* apply to them. There are also provisions in the new provincial health authority Act. They deal with the same thing.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. So those folks who took the package wouldn't be treated any differently than those whose job may cease at the end of . . . So I'm not sure that . . . I'm not clear on whether or not the buyout package that folks took is according to their contract, the same principles, but was there anything . . . so and then you said there's provisions for that in *The Regional Health Authority Act*. But I guess what I'm asking, was there anything special about the folks who took the package versus those whose contract may expire? Was there anything additional offered to them that wouldn't be offered to those whose positions just come to an end?

Mr. Hischebett: — It's hard to answer that with absolute precision, but the answer is generally no. The principles will be the same.

Ms. Chartier: — Where's the lack of precision?

Mr. Hischebett: — Well the main difference is that when the packages were offered, they were offered on the basis of how

the government would deal with its employees. Whether the new provincial health authority will utilize the same standard or not, I can't say. That will be a matter for the provincial health authority.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay.

Mr. Hischebett: — But there's no reason . . . Let me just not get too legalistic. There's no reason that those principles will not apply.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay.

Mr. Hischebett: — It would be based upon the contract and based upon the common law.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. All right. Thank you for that. And how much severance . . . Sorry, stay there for one moment. And how much severance has been budgeted to deal with . . . So we've got those seven folks, but do we have an estimate going forward, what has been budgeted for severance for CEOs and VPs when we move to the provincial health authority?

Mr. Hischebett: — I'm going to leave.

Ms. Chartier: — Oh thank you. That's okay.

[16:45]

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — We recognize there's going to be some severance costs. We've said that from the outset. I know you'd prefer an exact dollar right now, but we just can't do it yet. It'll have to follow because the org structure isn't finalized yet, and we don't know where the existing people in the system will fall into the new system, or leave. So it's, we just can't give you a dollar amount yet.

Ms. Chartier: — I don't need a dollar, an exact amount, but you budgeted, or you know that there will be a cost. I'm just wondering what you've put into your budget.

Mr. Hendricks: — So there's no discrete line item for severance. I think there's a recognition that there will be some severance costs incurred by the system and those would be budgeted globally within the provincial health services authority number. We're expecting them to manage those costs of transitioning to the single health authority. In terms of, you know, developing an estimate for that, there's a lot of variables obviously. You know as I mentioned, the future structure, what that provincial health authority might decide, and that CEO, and the individuals that actually end up coming into those positions permanently, and the individuals that may leave the system depending on whether they're the CEO of a large region versus a small region or a vice-president of a small region.

Like, you know, you have salaries over a \$200,000 kind of span there, so it's one of those things that's hard to estimate with a high degree of precision. Plus to know whether, you know, of those 53 VPs or whatever, whether 20 will be retained in the system or 30, there's a lot of . . . That would require a lot of guessing.

Ms. Chartier: — But I'm going to point you to the budget that

has a \$250 million hole in it, or a place where we're supposed to save 3.5 per cent or money in health. So it's not that you haven't been able to estimate numbers. Clearly you know there's going to be a cost to severance.

And I'm not asking for this is the definitive number, but like, when you're thinking about setting the '17-18 budget, there must have been some notion about how much. Like, you've given a range for savings from anywhere between 10 and \$20 million come '18-19, so you must have some number that you've set aside.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — It will depend. Again it'll depend on how the organizational structure looks and the fact that we don't yet know which of the executives within the current health region structures are going to be part of the new provincial health region.

Ms. Chartier: — For sure, but you have to have something in your budget, or some notion when you're crafting a budget that this might be how much it's going to cost.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Well again as the deputy explained, it's a large budget. There's going to be some savings incurred, as well as some expenditures. We've said from the start that we knew there was going to be some severance costs. You've seen the first indication of that, the amounts that . . . with the seven people that took the early option. So that's as specific as I can give you right now.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay, so what I guess my question is, you either don't have a number that you've budgeted or you're not telling me a number that you've budgeted, so which one is it?

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Well as our deputy mentioned, there is no line item in the budget for that. It would be considered part of the overall budget, the overall global budget.

Ms. Chartier: — But in thinking about that, you don't have anywhere where you've factored in potential . . . I mean you've got numbers of potential savings. You don't have any idea, any range that you've crafted?

Mr. Hendricks: — Okay, so at the same time where we don't have a line item for severance costs, we also did not have a line item for savings that we've estimated within the system. So we know we're going to start saving money on board governance costs this year because once a new provincial health authority board is appointed, our costs will shrink by reducing the number of governors.

We've already told you about information technology, and so those savings will be used to defer the costs of the severance. And so again we don't have a specific line item for the severance costs, nor have we specifically accounted for the savings in this fiscal year because it will be half a year.

And I think the other thing to remember is that, you know, while we will incur a severance — and I described the variables, one of which that I forgot was length of service too — you know, at the end of the day going forward, the new PHA [provincial health authority], if there is a reduction, won't have those salary costs either. So there'll be savings over time related

to that as well.

Ms. Chartier: — That might be the case, but you must have some sense . . . But clearly I'm not going to get that number, which is . . . or the rough number, but I will move on.

How many of the . . . So let's back up to a couple years ago in lean leader training. So it's been CEOs and VPs who have received . . . Can you tell me who in the organizational structure received the lean leader training?

Mr. Hendricks: — I think you know that it was a requirement of our health system that all senior leaders across it be certified lean leaders. So presumably they would all have undertaken the lean leader certification.

Ms. Chartier: — So all the CEOs and VPs. And do you have a cost for that?

Mr. Hendricks: — I am inquiring to what that cost would be because otherwise I would just be going on averages, memory. But I'm checking on it.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. Is there any concern that some of that will be lost? Obviously there was a difference of opinion around lean, but obviously your government believed very strongly in it. Is there a concern about losing that lost capacity that you felt very strongly about?

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — I think it's fair to say that at the time there was an expectation, as Max said, that all the senior leaders would take that training. There was also an understanding that people don't stay in the same positions for forever. So I think there was also an understanding that as people left to go on to other endeavours or to retire that the expectation was you're going to lose some of that training with some of the senior leadership over time anyway.

Ms. Chartier: — So with the . . . Okay, fair enough. But, Mr. Hendricks, you said you'll have a number here shortly?

Mr. Hendricks: — Yes. Well I've asked for a cost or whatever the average is for lean leader training.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. Okay. So regions can't run deficits, so when the activities of the regions are wrapped up at the end of September, is it expected that they have zero on the balance sheet?

[17:00]

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Certainly there's always an expectation that we want the regions to manage to not be in a deficit. But this is a mid-year transition, so this is going to be a situation where, sort of, whatever the fiscal situation is of the individual regions is going to . . . that fiscal situation will transition to the new provincial health authority and they'll start to manage accordingly.

Ms. Chartier: — So the expectation is that they don't have to be at zero, necessarily.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Well, you know, I think it's fair to say we

want all our entities to manage according to the budget, but as you know, it's no secret some of the health regions have had challenges doing that in the past.

Ms. Chartier: — So the expectation is . . . So you've told me that their financial situation obviously on October 1st will transfer over to the provincial health authority, but is there a directive to be at zero by the end of September?

Mr. Hendricks: — So our expectation and the instruction that we give regional health authority boards is to submit a balanced budget to the region. They submit balancing proposals. Those are reviewed by the ministry. Sometimes we say, that's not on, and we send them back to the drawing board. Our expectation is that regions will work to balance their budgets to October when the provincial health authority assumes responsibility for those budgets.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. Can you comment at all on the financial health of each region going into this process?

Mr. Hendricks: — So the health regions, and I think we said this the other night, they haven't completed their year-end financials, so we don't have a really good idea. Well, we don't have the exact idea of where they're going to be. What I can tell you is that, you know, the smaller regions are either balanced or they've . . . a couple have run small deficits. Some are actually kind of more accounting issues than cash deficits.

Regina has done a remarkable job this year in managing its pressure, and Saskatoon I think will be positive at the end of this fiscal year, we believe.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay, so what does that mean when you say, RQHR [Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region] has done a remarkable job of managing?

Mr. Hendricks: — They've done a remarkable job of managing a significant pressure. I haven't seen their final number yet, so I don't know exactly where they'll end up. But I'm just crediting that management team that they've done a very good job.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay, so . . .

Mr. Hendricks: — As have a number of others.

Ms. Chartier: — Yes, yes. And so you think Saskatoon will . . . Are you expecting them to not . . . So I'm just thinking of the news article, and we talked about this the other day. So I'm wondering about the risk, any financial risks as we go into this provincial . . . moving into a provincial health authority.

So you don't have final numbers yet, and we won't have final numbers until the end of June, or in June sometime. But Cypress I know . . . I believe it was Cypress anyway — I'm just trying to recall from the news article — had forecasted that they'd have a \$9 million deficit. So I'm wondering if you have some sense of where folks are at. You said some of the smaller ones only have small deficits.

Mr. Hendricks: — So year '16-17 is what I was talking about . . .

Ms. Chartier: — Okay.

Mr. Hendricks: — So the year that's closing out. I think when you're mentioning Cypress, you're talking about '17-18 and some of the initial media that might have come out after budget.

What I would say to you is that those are probably initial reactions of that board or that administration, and we've asked them for balancing proposals. So to say that we're going to run a \$9 million deficit, is not the instruction that was given to that region. They're to come up with options to reduce that to zero.

Ms. Chartier: — So the expectation then is again, going into the provincial health authority, that regions will be balanced.

Mr. Hendricks: — That would be our expectation. That has been what has been outlined and is being outlined in their accountability agreements.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. How do you think they'll . . . So with this, with respect to '16-17, which you haven't seen the final numbers yet, you said you're feeling quite good about them.

Mr. Hendricks: — Yes, like there are a lot of pressures on the system right now, so I think overall as, you know, we look across the health theme there might be a couple of regions that, you know, due to certain circumstances have finished in the negative area and others that have finished in the positive area. And so, you know, to see how that balances out across the entire health theme, the final numbers will tell that.

Ms. Chartier: — So do you have any sense of whether the ones who haven't been able to manage, like I'm thinking the larger regions where the increase in usage has gone up, do you think that that's going to balance? Like realistically, the smaller ones who maybe are only running smaller deficits or none at all . . . By the end of '16-17, I guess my question is, by the end of '16-17 are you expecting it to be a wash?

Mr. Hendricks: — I think it will be very close to being a wash, yes, across the system.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. Okay, thank you for that. In terms of hospital foundations, how will they roll into all of this amalgamation?

Mr. Hischebett: — Ms. Chartier, I'll direct you to a provision in the bill in 3-4(8).

Ms. Chartier: — Okay.

Mr. Hischebett: — 3-4(8). Different numbering system than some of us old people are used to.

Ms. Chartier: — 3-4(8).

Mr. Hischebett: — Yes.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay, yes I see.

Mr. Hischebett: — Okay. So foundations aren't actually established in *The Regional Health Services Act*. They're established . . . Generally a non-profit corporation is established

for the purposes of providing funding for those regional health authorities. So this Act comes in and it doesn't affect them. It says that those foundations can continue to use the funds for the purposes of which the funds were donated, subject to any restriction that a donor gave to them on the use of the funds. So they don't have to go to the provincial health authority; they can be used in the region. It's their own foundation that gets to determine how they're going to utilize those funds within their mandate. So the bill actually speaks to that aspect of it.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay.

Mr. Hischebett: — And if there is to be a provincial health authority foundation, that can be established, but this bill actually doesn't establish a foundation for the provincial health authority.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay, thank you. I want to go to section 9. I just have to find my note here. Or part 9. Sorry, my lack of legalese is lacking here, or is obvious. Part 9. The section, it's 9-1(2)(a), the transfer of employees or class of employees, the chairperson . . . okay, no, sorry . . . 9-1(1)(b), and actually (2) also speaks to this too, but:

the chairperson of the Public Service Commission may, with the approval of the provincial health authority, transfer any employees or class of employees in the public service, as defined in *The Public Service Act, 1998*, to and cause them to become employees of the provincial health authority.

So I think one of the concerns that has been flagged, so can this . . . so if there is a case where, I'm just thinking for example the ministry has a contract with a private employer or the provincial health authority has a contract with a private employer and then decides, can those folks who were Public Service Commission or employees be transferred to the private employer?

Mr. Hischebett: — If I can talk about that provision specifically, I can tell you why that provision is there.

Ms. Chartier: — That would be great. Yes.

Mr. Hischebett: — That provision in the report — and we talked about this earlier in one of your earlier questions — the panel report indicated that the Saskatchewan Disease Control shouldn't be something that the government should operate. It should be something that's a direct service provision, and the provincial health authority should operate that.

So there are ways in which you can transfer employees outside of legislation, but by far and away, the preference is to do it through a legislative mechanism. And this is that legislative mechanism that would allow for the transfer of assets, if it's the lab, if it's the equipment that's being used and the like, or the transfer of employees from employment of the government to employment with the provincial health authority. That's what that section is doing.

I can tell you it's not a unique section. So for example in the past when . . . An example might be the Technical Safety Advisory Authority of Saskatchewan. A number of employees from government were transferred to the technical — TSASK

[Technical Safety Advisory Authority of Saskatchewan] I believe it's called — were transferred to TSASK. It was exactly this provision that we utilized to accomplish that.

So this provision is here for dealing with the lab circumstance and the transfer of employees from the lab from government employment to become employees of the provincial health authority.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. Does it have any other impact? So it says from the provincial health authority to a health care organization. So could that be any . . . Is it just specifically the lab or can that apply to a private service deliverer?

Mr. Hischebett: — So 9(1), that one is specific from the government to the provincial health authority, okay? So 9(2) allows for transfer from a provincial health authority or the Cancer Agency to a prescribed health care organization. So it is different, but it has to be prescribed; it has to be sitting in regulation for that to occur, and a health care organization has to be an agency that delivers health services pursuant to an arrangement between the provincial health authority.

Ms. Chartier: — So that could be, for example, if you've worked — just an example — in providing surgery in the public system and then now we have single payer but we have private delivery of surgeries, but single payer, so is it possible that . . . Does this make it possible say for an employee who has, say, worked in a hospital to get transferred to the private clinic?

Mr. Hendricks: — I don't know why we're doing this but . . . so I think, to be clear, and I think I understand what you're trying to get at with this. So this allows one organization, a health care organization, to take on employees, so with IT to have eHealth or whatever. You know, we can move people around within the system.

What you're specifically referring to, I think we have to refer to the collective agreements. And so each of the unions have a collective agreement that outlines what specific considerations need to be taken into account and what mechanisms are in place if there is a transfer to a private entity. So the CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees] contract prescribes one mechanism. SEIU [Service Employees International Union] is different. SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses] is different again. And so that kind of, the collective agreement kind of deals with the process there, and this doesn't really take that right away that exists in their collective agreements.

Ms. Chartier: — Is this clause . . . Okay, so according to subsection (5) and (7), these transfers do not require notice or consent or compensation to the employees who are transferred. Is that correct? In section 5 and 7.

Mr. Hischebett: — Yes. So what it means is it's not a violation. You don't have to . . . So for example sometimes there's technological change provisions in collective agreements. Sometimes there are other provisions that require a particular notice to be given. And there are lots of battles between unions and employers over whether that notice provision applies, or the like.

So this is just saying, no, a transfer of the employees to that

prescribed health care organization doesn't trigger any of those particular provisions of the collective agreement. It doesn't mean the collective agreement doesn't apply. It does apply, and it will apply to the new employer. Those terms of employment will continue to apply. But those things, it doesn't constitute an abolition or a termination that might require, oh now we have to pay employees as a result of this transfer. Those things aren't instigated by that transfer.

And so if I can just expand one step further on the deputy's answer here, one of the reasons for this would be, for example, an IT transfer. So if you have a number of regional health services' employees who become part of the provincial health authority, you may find that those employees are better served being employees of eHealth, right? So . . . [inaudible] . . . eHealth as a health care organization, allow for the transfer of those employees to continue their employment with that new employer, they bring with them their collective agreements. It doesn't impact those aspects of them. And that's one of the concepts of this clause; that's why it's there. And as I mentioned, it's like the TSASK clause. That's why the provision is in the legislation.

Ms. Chartier: — Was this clause in *The Regional Health Services Act*?

Mr. Hischebett: — It was not.

Ms. Chartier: — So why now?

Mr. Hischebett: — I think the main reason why this is here now is because we're moving from 12 to 1, and we do have other service providers that are doing some of those services. So it is in response a bit to the report of the panel because the panel recommended, you know, that we have an eHealth, should we still have an eHealth, those things. We do have very specific lines of business, so this allows for recognizing those specific lines of business. It allows for a mechanism to deal with some of the employee transfers that may be best served in terms of delivering services.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. But it does, just to clarify in my example around the surgery centres, so that collective agreements still apply, but this clause would allow that transfer to happen or enable it, that this is enabling legislation and you've got the collective agreement over top of that. Is that correct?

Mr. Hischebett: — So I'll go back. There's a process associated with doing this, right? And so when you come to your private surgical centres, the first thing that I would say is those private surgical centres exist today. We have the ability to prescribe, under *The Regional Health Services Act*, health care organizations, right?

[17:30]

So I won't dispute with you that it's possible they could be a health care organization. They have never been prescribed as a health care organization, and they won't want to be prescribed because it actually puts their operation in control of the minister in terms of how it operates.

So first off, there has to be a prescription in the sense that there has to be a regulation that actually makes them a prescribed health care organization. There's no intention of having those private facilities be prescribed as a health care organization. So if they're not prescribed, then this section will have no application to them.

And as I mentioned, currently none of those types of entities are prescribed as health care organizations under *The Regional Health Services Act*. This was there to deal with that consolidation that I mentioned. IT is one example. There may be other examples, but that was the purpose of that for sure.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay, thank you. I'm just looking again at the definition of health care organization. But let's talk about section 8-2, the critical incidents, no. (3), where it says:

A health services provider shall, in accordance with the regulations:

give notice to the provincial health authority or a prescribed person of the occurrence of any critical incident that arises as a result of a health service provided by the health services provider.

So that is different. So we've now added . . . It used to just be reported to the RHAs, and now this prescribed person is different. So I'm wondering what the rationale is for that.

Mr. Hischebett: — The short answer to that is that, the time that this was put together, we didn't have the rubric as to how the reporting mechanism should go. If you look, there is a difference. In 8-2(1), the definition of health services provider talks about "a prescribed person." So right now eHealth, for example, isn't prescribed as a health care organization. Give me another . . . There are other examples that are not . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Who was that, sorry?

A Member: — Recruitment Agency.

Mr. Hischebett: — Recruitment Agency. That wouldn't be the best example, but eHealth might be one, for example, where you could have a critical incident arise in terms of the IT delivery service, but they may not be caught by the critical incident aspect. But to have eHealth, which is a separate organization, actually have a reporting function through the provincial health authority, which actually doesn't control its operation to any degree, may not seem the right way to do it because it may not have a contract. eHealth is out there doing its responsibility.

So what this is doing is allowing for a mechanism for eHealth, or whoever that prescribed organization may be, to report the critical incident. It doesn't have to go through the PHA, but it may go through the PHA. We just didn't have the answer as to how that report would go at the time because it may not be appropriate it goes through the provincial health authority. It may be appropriate it goes directly to the minister. So that's why that is there, and it would be addressed in the regulations.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. Thank you. Sorry, I'm jumping back to section 9. I failed to ask you a question about the Acts or laws in this section. I'm wondering if you can give me examples of

the Acts or laws that this section is meant to override and why it was felt necessary to override them.

Mr. Hischebett: — Can you actually specifically refer me to the section?

Ms. Chartier: — Yes. No, I'm the worst at making my notes here, so I'm going to flip back here. Actually you know what? I'll go back to that in a minute. I will go back to that and find that. My stickies sometimes come off and then I'm . . . You know what? I'm going to come back to that. It's like watching paint dry, waiting for me.

So I'm going to ask about the Health Quality Council. So obviously they're mentioned in the optimizing and integrating patient care as they should be tasked, working ". . . with the Provincial Health Authority and the Ministry of Health in monitoring and reporting on the experience and outcomes of patient care."

And so my concern here is, so they were flagged as a fairly important element of this transition, and they actually had a budget reduction. In fact I don't think they've had a budget increase since they were established, and so now we have — from the Ministry of Health — so now we have a reduction in their budget. So I'm wondering how you think that they can perform their duties in helping with this transition with even less money than they had before?

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — So again we recognize the good work they do do, but again in a difficult budget we're asking everybody to look for efficiencies. Ministry officials worked with the Health Quality Council. They targeted reduction they thought they could look at in a number of different areas: board costs, salaries, travel, contract services, sponsorships, and some support costs. So while it was a reduction, it's still a substantial budget for them — I think it's about \$4.7 million — so we do still think they're going to continue to manage effectively.

Ms. Chartier: — So they identified some places where they . . . So just to be clear, so is it correct that the Health Quality Council hasn't had an increase in its budget, I think, since its establishment, but they identified or . . . Did they volunteer to take a reduction or were they voluntold?

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — You know we could get into semantics but I guess it's no different than other partners we work with. Ministry officials approach them. They have an idea for targets they'd like to meet. They work co-operatively. Our folks have a very good relationship with them and this is where we arrived.

Ms. Chartier: — What role are they expected to play in this amalgamation?

Mr. Hendricks: — The Health Quality Council will be highly integrated into the performance management elements of the new health authority. And so one of the things that we want to do is, we want to start moving towards measures of outcomes versus outputs. And so they're very interested in that type of work and they're well suited to do it.

The other thing that, you know, when I do meet with the board, which I do quarterly . . . You know, the Health Quality Council

plays an important role in kind of leading or visioning kind of where the health system should be moving to in the future. And so the board is very much aware that that's a role that we want them to continue playing.

And, you know, they do provide, in addition to the data . . . You know, they're kind of our data experts within the health care system, but they also do provide educational support to the health system on quality improvement and safety . . . or sorry, quality improvement. And so we see this board as being integral to the new provincial health authority and very complementary.

Ms. Chartier: — What message do you think it sends to have a body that's integral to transformation having their budget cut?

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — I think there's many areas of not just the health care system but government in general that are obviously very, very important. But again, it's a difficult budget year. We're down substantially in resource revenues, and we've asked everyone to participate, be co-operative. So certainly no organization would enjoy having their budget cut, but you know, we think, given the current fiscal situation, that where we landed with their budget is reasonable.

Ms. Chartier: — I'm going to move on here; we're actually pretty short on time. One of the recommendations of the panel was on pursuing opportunities for consolidation of clinical services and included emergency medical services. So it's not referenced in the bill, but what kind of work has been done around that thus far, on EMS [emergency medical services]?

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — I guess I would say to that, that over the two and a half or two and three-quarter years that I've been in this position, I think I've developed a very positive relationship with SEMSA and the EMS providers in the province, and much prior to this bill or the panel report, having some really good conversations as to where they'd like to see EMS delivery go and some of the challenges I had talked about earlier that they face. So I think that's reflective in the panel report, where the panel saw the value of EMS and some of the input that they would have. And it's, again, reflected in some of the comments they had.

You know on areas as I described earlier, whether it's GPS [Global Positioning System] tracking, whether it's dispatching, whether it's finding efficiencies in the system, whether it's breaking down those boundaries between the existing regions to implement a better system that's more responsive to patients. You know, I think that's where you're going to see MS [multiple sclerosis] go in the province.

Ms. Chartier: — Do you see that . . . Has there been any work around privatization of some of our public services? Like in RQHR, has there been any even high-level conversations around privatization of our ambulance services?

[17:45]

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Ms. Chartier, I'm not aware of any specific conversations that would have revolved around that subject. I can say that, and even looking in the list, we don't see any other consultation that the panel had with anybody other than SEMSA. But what I can say is the conversations I've had

with SEMSA representatives over the past few years, the only message I've gotten from them specifically is that they work very collaboratively between the public and private operators of EMS in the province, and they didn't show any concerns over continuing with that relationship, even moving to one region, and, you know, how the new provincial health authority would be contracting out.

The Chair: — Just a second. I'd like to inform the committee we have two minutes left for questions.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. Has there been any . . . So obviously we're looking at consolidation of planning, dispatch, and delivery. Has there been any overtures or conversations with private providers about how we might do that? So obviously we could . . . When we think about consolidating those services, we've got a mix of private and public. Has there been any discussion or offers or talk about how we might do that with private providers?

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — I guess I would say to that, Ms. Chartier, that conversations that I've had with SEMSA, they've offered different suggestions how the system might get more efficient, how dispatch and GPS tracking and all that might get improved. But specific conversations about that, not really at all.

And I would say, I just wouldn't want to presuppose the work of the new board and the new executive and working with SEMSA and other partners, public and private, as to what the best dispatch system and the most efficient system for EMS would look like in the province.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. And I know that, Mr. Chair, they committed to a number here, to providing me a number by the end of this. So just I was wondering around the lean leader costs.

Mr. Hendricks: — So I inquired with my staff, and just so you know, lean leader training continues within the system. So we have 677 people who have their lean certification, and we have another 900 or so that are currently within stream, totalling 1,612. I guess where this differs in my inability to calculate a number per se is that we've shifted from, you know . . . You were probably referring to the John Black contract, when we looked at the cost per event or something and tried to calculate a cost per certificate, right. And we kind of moved out of that so we don't really have a cost per anymore.

Ms. Chartier: — But what was the . . . But I think folks . . .

The Chair: — That's it.

Ms. Chartier: — But, Mr. Chair . . .

The Chair: — We have another committee meeting starting at 6:30, and we had agreed to have three hours only. We haven't even started to vote on this particular bill and we have another bill to go through after this, before 6 o'clock.

Ms. Chartier: — You're cutting off an important discussion, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — Well you should have got to that earlier. Okay. This bill has over 100 clauses. I'm asking leave of the committee to review the bill in parts and divisions. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Okay. Part 1, preliminary matters, clause 1-1, short title, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Clause 1-1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 1-2 to 12-1 inclusive agreed to.]

[18:00]

[Appendix agreed to.]

The Chair: — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: *The Provincial Health Authority Act*. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. I would ask a member to move that we report Bill No. 53, *The Provincial Health Authority Act* without amendment. Mr. Nerlien. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Bill No. 54 — *The Provincial Health Authority Consequential Amendment Act, 2017/Loi de 2017 portant modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Provincial Health Authority Act*

The Chair: — Okay. We will now move on to the next bill. And we have considerations of Bill No. 54, *The Provincial Health Authority Consequential Amendment Act, 2017*, clause 1, short title. Do either of the ministers have any comments on this? Are there any questions or comments from any committee members? Seeing none, we will proceed with the voting of the clauses. Clause 1, short title. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Clauses 1 to 5 inclusive agreed to.]

The Chair: — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: *The Provincial Health Authority Consequential Amendment Act, 2017*. This is a bilingual bill. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. I would ask that a member move that

we report Bill No. 54, *The Provincial Health Authority Consequential Amendment Act, 2017* without amendment. Ms. Wilson.

Hon. Ms. Wilson: — I so move.

The Chair: — All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Okay. Ms. Chartier, do you have any closing remarks you would like to make?

Ms. Chartier: — I do not have any closing remarks. Thank you.

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

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — I do. Thanks for your time, Mr. Chair, and for the time of the committee members, and also to the officials that were here and for their work in this. And also thank you to Ms. Chartier and Ms. Rancourt for their questions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — Okay. Thank you very much. This committee will now move for a recess until 6:30.

[The committee recessed from 18:06 until 18:30.]

General Revenue Fund Labour Relations and Workplace Safety Vote 20

Subvote (LR01)

The Chair: — Well thank you, ladies and gentlemen. This committee is reconvened. Welcome back and we are now considering the estimates of the Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety. We'll begin our consideration with vote 20, Labour Relations and Workplace Safety, central management and services, subvote (LR01). Mr. Minister, if you have any opening remarks and if your staff would state their name when they come up to speak.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to present the 2017-18 budget of the Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety. I have very few remarks, and then I'll be pleased to answer questions.

Joining me today is my chief of staff, Drew Dwernychuk, and I have several senior members from the ministry who are here tonight as well: Mike Carr, deputy minister; Louise Usick, executive director, central services; Greg Tuer, executive director, employment standards; Ray Anthony, executive director, occupational health and safety; Denise Klotz, director, office of the workers' advocate; Rikki Bote, executive director, communications; Pat Parenteau, director of policy; Fred Bayer, registrar of the Labour Relations Board; Dustin Austman, executive assistant to the deputy minister. Also joining us today is Peter Federko, chief executive officer of the Workers' Compensation Board.

Our ministry remains committed to working through this period

of fiscal challenges. We will continue to transform government's delivery of programs and core services to be more cost effective and sustainable. Over the last year, the Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety has continued our work to encourage healthy, safe, and fair workplaces.

We are seeing results. We have seen a reduction in the total injury rate from 8.65 to 5.55 in the last four years, a 30 per cent reduction in total injury rate. Still more work to do. This province has the third worst injury rate in the national rankings, but we are declining faster than any other jurisdiction. The positive impact of the targeted intervention strategy is clear.

Since 2007 Saskatchewan has enjoyed extensive economy growth which has steadily added employers and workers to our provincial economy. Employment levels in Saskatchewan have increased by over 64,000 people. Even more dramatically, active Workers' Compensation Board employer accounts have increased by 39.41 per cent from 2007 to 2016. These employers and workers require and are entitled to service from the occupational health and safety branch. However historically the number of total OHS [occupational health and safety] officers has marginally increased. There were 52 officers in 2007-08, and there are 58 now. This means that the ratios of workers to OHS officers and WCB [Workers' Compensation Board] registered employers to wages have increased considerably over time.

We are pleased that we asked for and received three additional occupational and health officer positions so that we can continue to drive down the injury rate and achieve the goal of Mission: Zero. This year the ministry continues our strong support for workplace health and safety while holding the line on spending and without raising taxes for Saskatchewan people.

The 2017-18 budget for the Ministry of Labour Relations Workplace Safety is 18.811 million, an increase of 186,000 and seven FTEs [full-time equivalent] from 2016-17. The budget includes \$317,000 for an increase of three full-time equivalent positions. These new positions will support expansion of occupational health and safety's targeted intervention strategy; \$316,000 and three FTEs transferred from the Ministry of the Economy to provide enforcement of *The Foreign Worker Recruitment and Immigration Services Act*. One FTE was transferred to deliver support services from the Ministry of Advanced Education, formally delivered under a shared services agreement.

And \$875,000 capital investment for an enterprise customer relationship management or ECRM system. This capital investment will integrate three case management applications and employment standards, office of the workers' advocate, and occupational health and safety. These three systems impact approximately 48,000 Saskatchewan employers and 569,000 Saskatchewan employees. The new integrated system will replace old systems which were no longer supported and will allow us to share data, maintain stronger record keeping, and provide a means for data mining and trend analysis. These are important investments to ensure the ministry continuously improves client services and invests in workplace safety for the citizens of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Chair, our ministry remains committed to working through this period of fiscal challenge. At the same time, we will continue to transform government's delivery of programs and core services to be more cost effective and sustainable. That's why we've made a \$465,000 reduction in the ministry's base budget to meet our reduction target. These reductions include a 410,000 decrease in non-WCB reimbursed expenditures in a number of program areas and a \$55,000 decrease due to the cancelling of shared services with the Ministry of Advanced Education.

Mr. Chair, safety and healthy workplaces ensure growth and opportunities for Saskatchewan people. They secure a better quality of life by making sure everyone has the opportunity to share in Saskatchewan's successes.

The second thing I want to reference briefly is eliminating workplace injuries and deaths. Workplace partners must work diligently together to eliminate and prevent injuries and illnesses. Mission: Zero means zero injuries, zero deaths, and zero suffering. It is the only acceptable goal and the Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety is determined to get there.

We remain focused because frankly the injury rate in Saskatchewan has been far too high for decades. Every year far too many workers suffer life-altering injuries or never make it home to their families. Our risk-based, targeted approach to occupational health and safety ensures that limited resources are focused on those workplaces experiencing work-related illnesses and injuries. This risk-based approach targets employers with a high injury rate.

We decided the best way to actually see change in Saskatchewan was to work with those employers with the highest injury rates to help them devise plans and strategies to get better. So far 201 priority employers have been engaged in targeted interventions. Together these companies employ over 106,000 employees. The companies we work with in the targeted intervention area, or targeted program, are on track to achieve a reduction of 38 per cent — a savings of \$26.4 million in workers' compensation claims. We are confident that this year's \$317,000 investment to put three more officers in the field will save even more. We can track monetary savings. The human savings are perhaps even more important. What price do you put on someone making it home after a safe day at work?

We have pledged to cut the province's total injury rate in half by 2020 with yearly targets to get us there. Through the diligent efforts of our staff, our partners at WCB, employers and workers across the province, we have exceeded these goals each and every year. This year we have slowed slightly. Our injury rate goal was 5.50 per cent, and we achieved 5.55 per cent. This indicates to us that there is still more work to do. Last spring we moved up two places in the interjurisdictional rankings. This year we need to redouble our efforts because we have fallen back to third worst in the country.

Putting safety first requires belief and commitment. We believe and we are committed. In 2017-18 the ministry will continue to deliver for Saskatchewan people. We will expand the targeted intervention strategy. We will continue evidence-based, sector specific inspections. We will continue our Worksafe

Saskatchewan partnership to ensure a focus on reducing injury rates.

We will ensure a level playing field. We want to meet the challenges of growth by making sure everyone follows the rules, and that ensures a level playing field for all. We've conducted 1,008 officer-initiated inspections in the past year to ensure that workers are protected. We've also conducted 1,690 evidence-based or targeted inspections, a total of 3,832 worksite visits.

We have set a goal of increasing compliance with employment standards legislation, and we have a plan to get there. We continue to develop educational resources to help employers and young workers know their rights and responsibilities. We have had over 10,000 people, primarily 14- and 15-year-olds, complete the young workers readiness course, so they better understand the rights and responsibilities of workers each year. We have had 245 people participate in a variety of employment standards-related webinars so that employers understand *The Saskatchewan Employment Act* and stay in compliance. The ministry also continues to support injured workers. Our office of the workers' advocate helps people who wish to appeal a decision on their workers' compensation claim. This valuable work ensures that WCB employer premiums are paying for injury-related health care and not public health funds.

Maintaining a competitive business environment in Saskatchewan also means making sure everyone has the same rights and responsibilities. It also means ensuring that our laws and regulations stay modern and up to date. To achieve this goal, we have done considerable work to modernize our mine regulations to recognize technological advance in the mining sector. We proclaimed Bill 39 which was an amendment to *The Workers' Compensation Act* to establish a rebuttable presumption for those experiencing psychological injuries as a result of their employment. We increased compassionate care leave to 26 weeks of job-protected leave. This is in line with what is now available through federal employment insurance. This gives everyone caring for a critically ill family member the flexibility to take time off without impacting their job security. And we amended Saskatchewan's labelling system for hazardous materials to harmonize the workplace hazardous materials information system, commonly known as WHMIS, to align with a new worldwide standard.

In conclusion, Mr. Chair, the people at the Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety work hard to protect Saskatchewan workers and employers. The Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety is here to ensure that everyone plays by a common set of rules, and in doing so we protect our economy and our way of life.

This was a challenging year to prepare a budget. We can see targeted intervention is working, and we want to continue that very important work, but we also understand the challenges involved in preparing a budget in the current fiscal climate. Our budget is a reflection of our values, and we are putting more resources into front-line services that protect working people, employers, and our economy. We found places where we can spend less without harming the people that we work so hard to serve. This is a responsible budget that helps Saskatchewan get back on the road to balance. It focuses on safety, services, and

people first.

I want to thank you and the members of the committee for this opportunity. We are prepared to answer questions.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I wish to inform the committee that substituting for Ms. Rancourt is MLA David Forbes. Are there any questions from the committee? I recognize Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair, and I would say thank you. I want to be brief. We have only 60 minutes. I do want to put on the record the minister's remarks were over 12 minutes long, of which many was not new information, not related necessarily to the budget. And so I hope that their answers will be quick and to the point because there's a lot to cover here, and we don't need to recover grounds from previous years' budgets.

So my first question would be around domestic abuse. This is a very important issue, and Saskatchewan has the worst record in Canada. We were fortunate to see some movement on the Ministry of Justice in terms of housing. But unfortunately we didn't see the same movement from the Ministry of Labour around domestic abuse — in terms of supporting people fleeing domestic abuse — in the workplace.

Does the minister want to make a commitment now that this is a program that he will look into and support, I hope, as quickly as possible?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I will give you a brief answer. Yes. And yes, the Ministry of Justice has lead on the file. They did the one piece that went through the House earlier, and we thank everybody for their support on that. We need to do some consultation and some work to try and make sure that everything dovetails, and we've got everything fitting as it should. But the simple answer to the question is, yes we are. And the work is under way, and we will be looking to the opposition for their support on it.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you. I have a document that I want to share with the minister actually. And it's one that I just had the library . . . And I want to thank the Legislative Library for their outstanding work yet again. I asked them to just quickly put together over a few days how frequent are we seeing domestic abuse following workers to the workplace in Canada, and they have found several examples from 2000 to 2017. So this is not something that doesn't happen. And when it happens once, it happens once too many times, unfortunately.

So I would share this with the minister. And I'll just put it here, but I'll give it to you afterwards. It's the same set of documents that I have. And I also want to thank the minister for the answer to the written question. And I asked how many violent deaths occurred in Saskatchewan workplaces where the victim knew the assailant, and the answer was over the past 10 years, 2007-2016, WCB has accepted two claims resulting from violent deaths which had occurred in Saskatchewan workplaces where the victim knew the assailant.

[18:45]

So this really underlines that it is a real issue in Saskatchewan. It's not so frequent that employers should worry about, that this may be an undue cost because of its frequency. But when it does happen, it's something we should look into and should be supporting.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I don't want to debate this at all because we're fully supportive of the direction you're going. The two deaths that took place were not ones where there was a domestic relationship or . . . One was the situation in Yorkton where there was the armed robbery and the victim and the assailant knew each other, and the other one was La Loche.

Mr. Forbes: — Oh okay, fair enough.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — In La Loche we only report that as one because the teacher was not a WCB death, but it was the same situation there.

Mr. Forbes: — Well I thank you for that because that was going to be a follow-up question. Because I know names are often released on day of mourning and actually the type of death, so whether this information was in public domain . . . But the member who represents the area of La Loche wanted me to raise the issue because again here is an example.

And that brings up another issue but related to violence in the workplace and something that fortunately we have not seen in Saskatchewan: shootings in schools. And we hope that's the last we ever see of that. But when something does happen in that situation, and there is no long-term support for the victims of that shooting that are alive but their ability to work is limited, workers' comp, it doesn't seem to be able to cover that. And I know that we're going to be looking at amendments to the legislation probably in the fall. So is the government looking at some sort of extraordinary circumstances where people who are hurt violently in the workplace, find themselves a victim, that they should have some support?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — These are horrible tragedies that we don't want to see ever happen in our province. I hope we don't see what happened in La Loche happen in another school. I talked to the mayor of where Columbine took place to try and get a sense of how they coped with the tragedy, and it was, you know, it's one of the things that, when you're dealing with it, you have absolutely no sense of where it's going to go.

What we did following the incident in La Loche was we had Corey O'Soup, who is now the Children's Advocate, who was at that time working . . . We sent him to La Loche and we said, spend two to five days a week or whatever it takes. Deal with the people that you need. And we gave him the ability to provide money for all kinds of one-offs: hotel costs, travel costs, whatever was necessary.

Now there was two different situations in La Loche. One was a teacher's aide that was covered as a part-time teacher. That person received workers' compensation benefits up to what their earnings would have been. But because they were a part-time worker, there was no additional other coverage for them. Now that was something that I brought in, and I was insistent that we were not going to leave part-time teachers without workers' compensation or without the benefit of a plan

because they were not part of the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation] plan. So we brought in that coverage for them. The STF also covered Adam, the other teacher that was there, covered the death benefits and whatever that was there.

So to answer your question, we covered everything that we could through WCB, sent people back. We made a number of payments through *The Victims of Crime Act*, through the legislation at the Ministry of Justice, and we had somebody on site to try and do as much as we were legally allowed to do. So that's what we've done. And with anything when you have a tragedy of that magnitude, you look at it afterwards and you say, are there things that we can and should have done better or differently? And are there different supports that might be necessary? So it might be something we would look at in the future.

Mr. Forbes: — And that's the thing. So are you looking at different supports in the future? Because this person has gone through those supports and is now . . . has nothing to turn to really.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — You know, there is existing supports through WCB which will continue. There may have to be something that would come through the Ministry of Social Services. We would find it difficult to single out a specific worker and say because this was a bad situation we're going to change sort of the overall system that's there. It's something we want to be mindful of, but we don't have anything under active consideration to increase retroactively the benefits for one individual.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. To get back to the domestic abuse and workplace consultation, so it sounds like you're committed. How is that looking in terms of dollars and cents? Is there a point person within your ministry that's leading this, or how's this taking shape?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — It's being led through the Ministry of Justice. We're looking at the interjurisdictional comparisons that are there. You're likely aware of what Manitoba and Ontario have done, and that would be the same type of thing that we would be contemplating in our province. But we would look to the Ministry of Justice because within Justice, you know, we dealt with landlord issues and something else. We would look at the same kind of issues here. How we would identify a person that would be . . . or how we would provide those supports to make sure that we don't just sort of move them to a different location, you know, that we'd maintain . . . So anyway it's a work in progress.

Mr. Forbes: — And as we have done before many times, we have worked cooperatively and supported the ministry on positive change, so we would be there. The change is a positive change.

In terms of Jimmy's law, you would have known that I asked several written questions, but there are about 30 that I asked on March 30th about different news stories that had been reported about late night convenience store robberies. And the answers that I got back was that none of these were investigated. And I continue to have grave concerns that there doesn't seem to be a linkage between Justice or whoever's investigating these as a

crime scene and letting people know this is also a workplace. We've heard about stats from last year. I've reviewed the 2016 Labour estimates, so we don't need to go over that too much. But I do need to ask, have you reached out to the Ministry of Justice to say, here, here are 30 examples of workplace violence late at night in either convenience stores, some are pizza joints, and you haven't . . . according to the answers you haven't investigated any of the 30?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I'm going to let Mr. Anthony answer the question. We've tried to adopt a proactive approach where we've said to the workplaces, you must have adequate lighting. You can't have blocked windows. You must have a panic response and a cash management system and a variety of other tools to try and eliminate . . . or so that when there is a robbery, it is less likely to become a violent robbery. So that hasn't minimized the effect that those crimes take place, but it has minimized the effect or at least we hope it's been able to. I'll let Mr. Anthony answer.

Mr. Anthony: — Ray Anthony, executive director, occupational health and safety division. I apologize in advance for the length of the answer. The first issue is notification — us finding out about these. The current legislation, the current regulations we have, regulation 8 on serious injury and regulation 9 on dangerous occurrence, specifically use the word accident. There's no requirement on an employer right now to notify the division of a criminal activity.

The second is that simply because there's been a criminal act in a workplace is no indication of wrongdoing by an employer. So what we do is we go out, and we inspect these workplaces — whether they're a Mac's store or wherever the violence has occurred — top to bottom for all workplace issues including regulation 37 on violence.

Now there are exceptions to this in the case of La Roche, where we did become aware of it through the media, and we did get a location because, if you quite often notice, the media reports don't actually tell you the name of the business. They may indicate a general location, but actually we had quite a time chasing down the employers on the list that you provided us because there is a requirement on an educational facility under regulation 37 to have a workplace violence policy. This doesn't extend to a Mac's store unless they're open after 11:00 p.m., and of course from the information provided through the media we have no idea. So in a nutshell that's the answer — no.

Mr. Forbes: — So you're aware of the Westray mining accident that happened in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Anthony: — Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes, and you're aware that, because of that, there was a change in the Canadian Criminal Code about the fact that owners or managers now could be charged if there's leading to death. And so I guess what I need to know is — and I appreciate the answer — if there's no connection, that's a weak link. To me, clearly what is happening here . . . and I think about the La Ronge incident just a couple of weeks ago where a worker watched his boss get beat to death. Now if there's not a situation where there's going to be PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder], that's horrific. So I kind of think there's some

obligation to investigate and then let the worker know you do have some opportunities to be healthy, including what you've seen might actually be something that you have a claim for compensation, workers' compensation.

Now I don't know what's happening, but in many of these cases we're seeing, I would think, horrific situations where the worker needs help and needs to know. And while I have some sympathy that maybe the employer didn't do anything wrong, but there seems to be a need to be a check. I can't buy this, that just because a criminal act happened at a workplace there might not be a connection. There might not be a connection between OH & S [occupational health and safety], but I think there might be.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Is your question that we should be more proactive in offering support for psychological injury, or you want something done differently with regard to the conduct of the employer in late-night situations?

Mr. Forbes: — Well my point is particularly where violence is involved, there should be a follow-up investigation and that Justice should be letting you folks know that . . . you should know that there has been an incidence of violence in a workplace during work hours. And OHS should know to be able to investigate to say either that's not a problem, that's just something that happened, or in fact actually this is something, that there's serious issues here, and we need to be more on top of. But to say that, I think there's a serious disconnect.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I'm still trying to understand what the issue is that you're trying to raise. If there is something that happens at a location, a workplace, the police are called. The police do their investigation. Justice lays charges, prosecutes, courts . . . That's their job; that's not ours. So we have Justice doing it. If you're saying that we should be reaching out more to the workers, that's a separate conversation which we're glad to have. As you're aware, the PTSD sections of the Act are new. We're still dealing with how they're being implemented or the type of protocols that WCB is setting up to analyze those or meet with what the rebuttable presumptions are.

So we're treating that at this point as a work in progress, and we may need to do more work. We made the conscious decision when we implemented the legislation not to identify specific employers or types of work because it's just too broad a list to try and do it. So we haven't tried to identify. So for us to now go out and say, oh well if something's happened, it would become a challenge. So I'm not sure really what you're asking us to do.

Mr. Forbes: — Let me be clear. I have a problem when you say, it's not our job. People look at the government and say . . . I mean they may not even understand that the Ministry of Labour has different components to it — occupational health and safety, labour standards. They may not get that part. But say for example the police go and it's a situation of domestic violence and a child's involved. I think they actually probably do call the Department of Social Services because there's a child involved, and that only makes sense. Justice doesn't say or the police don't say, hey we're a one shop only.

[19:00]

So what I'm saying when violence happens in the workplace — because that's a pretty important thing, that's hugely important — there is a responsibility. And I think that actually I can't say it's your responsibility, but you need to talk to Justice and say, can you let us know when a violent incident has happened in a workplace during work hours. We need to know because if I've heard you talk about major offenders and workers' comp in terms of workplace injuries, you're going back to the same place because you're using stats. That's evidence-based thinking, and I think that's a quote you used last year.

But here you have a situation where . . . You know, I appreciate the proactive part to it. But here we've had 30 situations that I found out about quite easily by asking the library to do a scan. There's probably more. And so I just think there needs to be a better link between the police, Justice, and yourselves to really clean up the violence. And I appreciate the proactiveness, but I think that there needs to be a breakdown of these silos.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I'm still trying to understand what you're trying to ask us to achieve, that they would contact us so that we can offer psychological support for those workers? Or that we're to interfere with the investigation? Because if you're asking us to interfere with the investigation, we won't. The purpose of having the Ministry of Justice do the investigation is their responsibility. If there's been an issue of violence or something like that, we don't do that. We don't do that in the legislature. We don't do that there. That's what we have the police for.

If it's not a criminal activity that's taken place — you know, there's been one of the situations you're talking about — and we have something that there's been misconduct in a workplace, we've been really aggressive about charging. We have a dedicated prosecutor. We've hired a retired police officer to teach our OH [occupational health] workers how to do an investigation, how to complete the material that's needed for a prosecution, how to give evidence, how to do all of the things that they need so that a successful prosecution can take place.

So if you're saying we need to do a better job on prosecutions, we think we've ramped it up a lot in the last year or so, and we've had better success with ones that are going forward. If there is a criminal misconduct in a workplace, we will always defer to the Ministry of Justice who will have their police. If you're saying that we need to reach out to the people that might have been victims, we're willing to have that discussion.

Mr. Forbes: — You know, Mr. Minister, that's one of your most ludicrous answers I've heard. Of course not investigate where the criminal or get involved with a criminal investigation. They've got to do their work. But you have got to do your work too. And you can't be washing your hands and say, if they have drawn a gun it's not my problem; I'll do it before they draw the gun. Mr. Minister, that's absolutely ludicrous. You know, after the investigation, there is a time to step in and say what's happening in that store? Maybe I need to follow up a week or two afterwards. But I'm conscious of the time, and I appreciate that you may in fact be baiting me to eat up the clock . . .

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I'm not at all. I'll certainly give you the time on it, but I take, I take strong exceptions to say that it's a

ludicrous answer. I tried to understand, and I still don't understand whether you're wanting us to reach out to victims or whether you wanted us to interfere with the police investigation. I told you we're not interfering with the police investigation, but if there's something we can do for a victim, we'll have that discussion. That's my answer and I take strong exception to it being called ludicrous.

Mr. Forbes: — Well then . . .

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — If you want to spend your hour debating that, I'm fine. If you want to move on to something else . . . but I want to put it on the record I take exception to that.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay, fine. But there you go. I want to now turn to the asbestos advisory committee. How is that committee going?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We have not, since the election, we have not utilized anything that is taking place from that committee. The committee has not sat since that period of time.

Right now we are the leading jurisdiction in Canada with regard to the registry, and we are waiting to see what will happen in other jurisdictions so that we can get more data as to where we need to go from here. But right now, we are the furthest one out in Canada.

Mr. Forbes: — The information I have is that's not quite the case. BC [British Columbia] is further ahead than you. The federal government now is further ahead of you. And I know that you did take great pride in making it a statement this spring about Asbestos Awareness Week, but you haven't called the advisory committee, and people are looking for it. So is that something that will be happening in the next weeks ahead?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We will probably wait to see what happens in some of the other jurisdictions. I'm aware of the recent announcement with regard to the federal government, and what we're actually looking to see is what other jurisdictions are doing with regard to a registry. The registry that we created, we think . . . And I want to thank the good work of the committee for having recommended and raised the issues with it.

So we want to see who else is doing something else with regard to a registry committee, and we want to make sure that we do everything else. As you're aware, almost half of the deaths that we have in our province every year are mesothelioma or asbestos related. So anything we can do, even though the exposure took place decades ago, it's an unacceptable thing to have happen.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay, fair enough. I want to raise the issue of dependent drivers in workers' comp. But first right off the bat, I want to ask, are you planning to introduce some new legislation in response to the committee review around amendments to *The Workers' Compensation Act* in the fall?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — So this is the situation that I've been made aware of about dependent drivers who are actually organized by

Canadian Union of Postal Workers, but they're covered by the Canada Labour Code, and that's because the transportation sector is covered within the federal jurisdiction.

But dependent contractors are a unique category of employees. They are the fellows who drive their own vehicles but work for small companies, for example Dynamex. It wouldn't be Purolator because they have their own. Purolator has their own vehicles and that type of thing. But apparently this unique situation in Saskatchewan is that they're, under section 8(1) of workers' comp, they're considered to be dependent contractors. And therefore their premiums, they have to submit to the overall contractor, which would be the company in the city that they're working in, and then that company then submits that to Workers' Comp or WCB on their behalf. There's two issues here, and I don't expect you to maybe give the, you know, the definitive answer here, but I did want to make you aware of this situation.

First, in many other provinces actually they are like every other employee. The employer pays the premiums, and that's what they would like. That's the simplest thing; that's a straightforward thing. But for some reason in Saskatchewan, they're considered contractors under the section 8(1). And interestingly when you read section 8(1), it talks about independent or these — if I can get this quickly here — 8(1) talks about, "... **“equipment”** including trucks, bulldozers, draglines, power shovels, and any other machine, implement or apparatus that the board may declare to be equipment." So their vehicle, which are usually small cars, are declared as equipment equivalent to draglines, bulldozers, power shovels, and trucks. It doesn't seem to make a lot of sense because the image I get from 8(1) is that's like a contract on a construction thing. It's a job, a contract you start and you finish. But these people actually are in continuous employment. They deliver parcels around our communities.

So they've had two issues. One is that they feel they should be treated as employees, and the employer pays the premium, and that would be straightforward. They'd be very happy if that was it. But they're not being treated that way. And in fact they've had a lot of pushback saying no, you are what you are; you're a dependent contractor. You pay what your employer tells you need to pay for workers' comp, and we'll pay that on your behalf. Okay, that's how it's happening right now, but they have no idea of knowing if that's what Workers' Comp is actually charging because of privacy rules.

So they're saying, like I don't mind paying, but I should know what that's based on, and it doesn't seem to be very fair. Are you aware of this situation?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — No. I can say this. The normal rule is if you're a subcontractor, Workers' Compensation will either pay it on behalf of the subcontractor or require clearance certificates. So there's lots of cases where there's a chain of employers and subtrades that would be working. But I'm looking back at our WCB official. We can undertake to find out.

I can tell you this. There's nothing in the core report that would indicate that this is an issue, that we're . . . So I'm not able to make any kind of a meaningful comment on it, but we can

certainly look at it. And if Mr. Federko can give anything in a general sense. What you're talking about would be Dynamex or a courier company where the courier driver would, because they provide their own vehicle, would be treated as a subcontractor or a subtrade. Am I understanding?

Mr. Forbes: — You're pretty close. But they have gone to the Supreme Court and they've been ruled as a dependent contractor, different than a regular contractor or subcontractor. And that's why they're recognized that way in the rest of Canada. But I'd be interested to hear what Mr. Federko has to say.

Mr. Federko: — So I'm Peter Federko, the CEO [chief executive officer] of the Workers' Compensation Board. So section 8 of the Act is actually intended to deal where you've got leased equipment, that you lease the equipment and then you hire somebody to actually operate that equipment.

And so what section 8 actually requires, if a principal, if the owner of the business or the owner of the equipment actually hires somebody to operate that equipment, that individual is actually considered a worker of that principal. And the principal has to remit the premiums. So I would need a little bit more detail from you in terms of the specifics of this.

Now if this is an issue . . . So federal government employees are covered by the *Government Employees Compensation Act*, which is a federal piece of legislation, and we only administer that in our jurisdiction on their behalf for an administrative fee. But generally speaking, our rule with respect to subcontractors is if you have a contract of employment, whether you're required to use your own vehicle or not but you're providing that service in the majority to one employer, you would be considered a worker of that employer, and the employer would pay the premium on your behalf.

So I'd need to have a little bit more information from you on these specific issues in order to respond more fulsomely.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes and I do appreciate that, and I don't want to go into a long thing, but I just wanted to put that out there. I'll submit this to you in the next few weeks because it certainly hit me as odd, and it has been a developing case federally, in other provinces. And so I don't know where it stands in Saskatchewan, but I've been asked to raise that.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — If you can provide us — we'll certainly look into it in any event — but if you can provide us a specific name of an employer or a company, it makes it easier for them to find records. But yes, we'd be glad to look at it.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes, I'll share everything that I have. And what Mr. Federko said made great sense because when I was looking at it, it didn't make any sense at all that they should be considered part of that group. Anyways, thank you so much.

I have a couple of questions about PTSD, and I know my colleague does as well, and that may take us up to the time that we're required.

I will be, in terms of WCB and the committee of review, I think I'll be submitting written questions about the place of, how each

recommendation is being dealt with. I was planning on doing that anyways because that would be a better, more accurate way of doing it as opposed to get into a long discussion here.

But in terms of the PTSD bill and Act that was passed in the fall, I want to just get some quick, general impressions about how the implementation is going. You've recently just changed the policy. The policies now have been updated, I think in the last few weeks, and of course it came into force. So any quick general observations about this?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I'll give you one, and then I'll let Mr. Federko answer. The coverage has always been there. The change with the legislation was the presumption and the method of determining what the nature of PTSD is for the coverage.

So there hasn't been — and I was asking [inaudible] — a mass influx of claims because they were always covered, but it may make it easier for the workers. But Mr. Federko can give you some background information as to accepted claims or a sort of a preliminary thing, but I . . .

Mr. Federko: — So as the minister said, we have covered psychological injury claims forever and a day because our Act was never exclusive of those types of injuries. We treat them just like any other injury and applied the same procedures.

The presumption puts us in a little bit different spot than we were before. So when we received a claim before the legislation, we would be seeking to collect information to confirm that the workplace injury actually happened. With the rebuttable presumption, it almost puts us on the defensive. And while we're still seeking the same kind of information, it appears that we're now trying to collect information to deny the claim. And that's simply not the case. It's the perception, I guess, of what a rebuttable presumption means. There's perhaps a misunderstanding that the introduction of this legislation now removes the need for the Workers' Compensation Board to confirm that it in fact occurred in the course of employment.

[19:15]

So we are proceeding, being sensitive to the fact that we don't want to add to the trauma of folks who've experienced either acute or chronic trauma over the years to have to relive the story. So in cases where it's extremely sensitive, we're seeking to try and get that information from other available sources like the employer, like the health care provider, and confirm that the individual was actually in those jobs, would have been exposed to those particular events, and so on and so forth.

Our challenge right now, because of the requirement to have a DSM [*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*] diagnosis, is to find practitioners available that can provide those assessments on a timely basis. So we do have a few that are in progress, to the minister's point we have not seen a huge influx. We've seen a lot of inquiries about what does this actually mean and what's the process now. So a worker's still required to file a report of injury. We need to confirm the employment with the employer. If there is wage loss payable, of course we have to confirm the wages that the worker was earning in order to pay the benefits, and just like any other injury, we need medical to confirm that there actually is an

injury.

So as the minister said, it's a bit of a work in progress as we try to deal with, you know, what's become a more sensitive issue than it was before. But access to practitioners is probably our biggest challenge right now.

Mr. Forbes: — I think my colleague has some questions here.

The Chair: — I recognize Ms. Chartier.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Federko. I want to start with some of the forms. So there was recently a meeting of several folks who have a vested interest of PTSD Saskatchewan, paramedics, firefighters, a group of people who came together and discussed some of their concerns just around some of the forms involved with workers' compensation claims.

I'm not really, that's not . . . I'm familiar with the W1, but I understand that there's issues with the W1, E1, and PPI that don't really address psychological injuries. So when you've got a picture of a person and it says circle the area injured, well it's a hard thing to identify. So is there a plan to amend these forms in light of this legislation and then to properly implement it?

Mr. Federko: — So we have not considered amendment at this particular point in time. I guess we want to gain additional experience with respect to managing these claims and, you know, what becomes workable and not workable. Again from our perspective, we've never treated the psychological injuries any different than a sore back or a broken leg. We seek the same processes to confirm work-relatedness of the injury.

There was concern, I know, expressed by employers. There's a section on the worker report of injury, the W1 that you referred to, where they're required to describe the circumstances. And we don't need a lot of, like we don't need them to relive the entire, you know, all of the traumatic events they were exposed to or whatever the case may be. We simply need a general description of, here's the work that I did and, you know, I had to deal with these kinds of traumas; I attended motor vehicle crashes where there were deaths or, you know, whatever the case may be.

So we're seeking to educate and clarify around exactly how much information we need from the worker because we can get additional information from the employer and from the health care provider.

Ms. Chartier: — And that's a conversation that I'd like to have too in a moment here. But recognizing . . . And you said in the past you've treated psychological injuries the same as physical injuries, but they are vastly different. So from the folks with whom I've spoken, they've suggested that there should be some work around these forms. Actually, but when you sit down and look at them, it's quite surprising that . . . Even the nature of a psychological injury, perhaps if you're a first responder and you might not even realize, it's not like you're lifting a box and you twinge your back. You might attend an event and then might not have any symptoms for some time to come. So the reporting process doesn't match well with what psychological injuries are. So I would hope that WCB would work with people working directly with these forms to either revise or come up

with some new tools.

Mr. Federko: — Absolutely. If the group that you spoke of, you know, has some ideas or suggestions on things that we would consider, we would appreciate receiving that from them.

Ms. Chartier: — They do, and I know some of them have been in contact with or have had meetings with WCB a couple weeks ago.

In terms of Manitoba and what they've done, they have a crisis response team for those at risk of harm through the claim process, and they have a certain number of intake workers and case workers who are specially trained to respond to psychological injuries because again it's vastly different than physical injury. So is it a plan for WCB to go down that route as well?

Mr. Federko: — So we are in the process, just started setting up what we're calling our extended services unit. So our initial focus . . . It's only a staff of one at this particular point in time because our initial focus became around providing supports to survivors in a situation of a fatality. So we have an individual who began some time ago reaching out to families of deceased workers, whether it's asbestos related or, you know, a fall or whatever the case may be, to ensure that they're aware of the supports that we do have available and the benefits to which they would also be entitled.

We've extended that to also deal with people who have encountered serious injuries. So, you know, quadriplegics, amputees, the same kind of thing, recognizing that they will need special care now and probably into the future. The plan is to extend that as we staff that unit, to extend that to include psychological injuries as well. The individual who's heading up the extended services unit right now is a very, very experienced claims manager with us and is providing supports to the adjudicators to guide them through this process and to help them understand the current policy. So our intention is in fact to provide those supports.

I just want to add, under the current policy, we will also provide supports to any workers who would have witnessed a horrific event and have not yet experienced any symptoms of a psychological injury. So we will reach out to the employer, determine if the employer has any family assistance programs, for example, and if not, we will make available resources in order to provide counselling services to those individuals.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you. Well with respect to the extended services unit, is it planned in this budget year to up that complement?

Mr. Federko: — Yes.

Ms. Chartier: — So you've got one person who's leading it — or is it — and so what is the plan for that? How many folks will be part of that unit?

Mr. Federko: — So right now we will add one more and we have selected that individual will be located in Saskatoon, in Saskatoon office. We envision a complement of three or four people in that particular unit, but I guess our experience in

terms of the demand for those services will dictate really the extent to which we need to staff up.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. One of the things that's come up, and I think you're aware of a case that I've been advocating around a firefighter who has received some treatment. One of the challenges with respect to him, he's got comorbid disorders. And you've also identified earlier on one of the issues is not having enough people to do mental health assessments. So waits are long which can be damaging to people with psychological injuries. But so I know under the new policy, it addresses pre-existing conditions, but comorbid disorders have not been addressed in the policy. So I'm wondering how you're planning to address that.

Mr. Federko: — We have not contemplated bringing in the comorbidities. We are, I guess in the particular case . . . And I'm happy to talk to you. Of course I can't talk about the specific case here, but I'm happy to talk with you offline about that particular case. What we're relying on is the mental health assessment to provide us evidence of the comorbidity connection between the psychological injury and anything else that may have resulted as a result of that psychological injury.

If that proves out, that in fact we need to somehow include that in our adjudicative process, we will be making those changes. But we need some experience under this policy first.

Ms. Chartier: — So there's no plan at this point to include comorbid disorders in the policy?

Mr. Federko: — Not at this particular point in time. We are asking the providers of the healthcare services, the ones who do the mental health assessments, to comment, to bring their expertise to inform us in that way.

Ms. Chartier: — One of the other things . . . and it's been an interesting struggle with this fellow, and he's signed a consent form so he's quite happy actually to have public conversations about his case. But one of the sticking points is he has a mental health assessment that identifies that he has comorbid disorders and then he's being asked to come up with a . . . to go through a second mental health assessment to determine the connection between his alcohol use disorder and his PTSD, but he already has a mental health assessment. So I'd be happy to have further conversation, and I know that he's filed an appeal though so it might not be appropriate to have that conversation until the appeal has gone through.

But the challenge . . . So how do you anticipate addressing the shortage? What is the plan for addressing the shortage of assessors to do mental health assessments?

Mr. Federko: — We've asked our chief medical officer and our psychiatrist consultant to assist us in finding alternative ways where those assessments could be provided on a more expedited basis. So out of province isn't out of the question.

I can tell you with a particular case, there is a meeting tomorrow between the union and the particular individual to hopefully further this along. We can't talk about the decision because if it is under appeal, I don't want to interfere with that appeal process but I'm happy to discuss with you the process up

to this particular point in time.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. So what is the average wait now to get a mental health assessment?

Mr. Federko: — Six to eight weeks.

Ms. Chartier: — Six to eight weeks. Has that gone up or is that stayed . . . How long has that been the case?

Mr. Federko: — That's pretty much been the standard for this. The legislation, however, because it's requiring a DSM-5 diagnosis, requires more assessments to be done and so even though we're not seeing more claims, the requirement to have the DSM-5 diagnosis is putting a little bit more demand on the health care providers than was in the past. So that has added probably a couple of weeks to the wait times in terms of getting the mental health or DSM-5 assessments.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. And just looking . . . Sorry, sorry, okay. My colleague . . . it's his committee, I should . . .

Mr. Forbes: — Well, no, I think . . . We're good or we going with one more real quick one?

Ms. Chartier: — I think you're going to get cut off here.

Mr. Forbes: — I'm going to get cut off.

Well in conclusion then because we're really so close, I do want to acknowledge . . . And I read in the paper about the new initiative to combat violence in workplace. That's a great thing and that's a really important thing, and I do want to acknowledge and I think that's a good thing about the increased FTEs in OHS. And three more officers in OHS, that's a good thing. And so I do want to thank the minister for his answers, and I want to thank the staff for this time. And I'll leave that with that. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the officials that came out tonight and thank the members of the committee on both sides. I know it's the time of year where people would rather be doing something else other than sitting inside this building.

The Chair: — Okay. Thank you to the minister and his officials, and thank you to the MLAs with questions. This will now adjourn the consideration of the Labour estimates, and we'll move on to the next item.

[19:30]

Bill No. 63 — *The Education Amendment Act, 2017*
Loi modificative de 2017 sur l'éducation

Clause 1

The Chair: — Okay, thank you very much. We will now begin considerations of Bill No. 63, *The Education Amendment Act, 2017*. Before we start the consideration, I wish to inform the committee that substituting for Ms. Rancourt is MLA Carla Beck for the opposition.

Clause 1, short title. Mr. Minister, do you have any comments you wish to make, and please introduce your officials as they come forward.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am joined tonight by a number of people from the ministry: Deputy Minister Julie MacRae; assistant deputy minister Clint Repski; assistant deputy minister Donna Johnson; assistant deputy minister Rob Currie; and Sara Hawryluk, our legislative draftsman.

Mr. Chair, I'm told there is going to be a House amendment going to be introduced and would like to speak to that at the time. I would do some introductory remarks, which I'm prepared to do now.

Mr. Chair, the House amendment consists of dealing with sections 85 to 89 inclusive. Those sections deal with the rights, responsibilities, and duties of boards. Those were initially intended under Bill 63 to be moved into regulation. Upon discussions with the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association], they wanted to see them left within the legislation. They are of course subject to ministry oversight, and so we think that's an appropriate change to make.

Also in the interest of abundant clarity, we have included a section that specifically identifies that school boards shall remain elected. To determine that they are elected under Bill 63 in the form that it was originally, you had to look at a definition form for municipal elections and go back and forth. So we've added an additional section that clarifies that that's to be their place. There's no change in intent with that; however by putting it in, people will be able to point out to that, and we'll be able to identify that there's no change.

The amendments that are in Bill 63 are about ensuring that we have a sustainable and accountable education system and that we're able to serve the people that are most important in our system, who are the students. The amendments are as a result of public and education sector feedback that was received during the review consultation following Dan Perrins's *Educational Governance Review Report*.

Following the introduction of Bill 63, the SSBA identified a number of occurrences which required us to do the changes that are there. So we've included those changes in the Act, and we've also made consequential changes to ensure that it deals with the changes that are contemplated by changes to the education property Act. We've also dealt with a number of other minor housekeeping issues that were in the original Act. We look forward to having ongoing discussions with members of the SSBA, members of the STF, to try and have the best educational system that we have and that we have ever had in our province. And we believe we'll have one of the best that is possible in Canada.

Some of the changes that we will make will include sector purchasing and services that were necessary to achieve efficiencies in areas of transportation bulk purchasing. It will look to creating a common salary grid for senior school division management, standardizing board member costs, reinforcing the value of school community council, possibly looking at joint-bargaining initiatives, and making sure that we've got

good oversight and are able to move forward. Having said that, we want to fully respect the role of the trustees and continue to work with them as we are going forward.

We want to avoid a situation like we had in Theodore. We want to be able to stop boards from suing each other. We have spent on that lawsuit literally millions of dollars. We now likely have two further stages of appeal before there's a final resolution to that. So we want to make sure that monies stay in the classrooms, not boardrooms or courtrooms. That decision could affect more than 10,000 students in our province.

The consultation process that we went through, we heard from more than 3,800 members of the public and more than 40 sector organizations. So we believe that Bill 63 addresses a number of those concerns, so we're pleased to recommend Bill No. 63 with those changes to move forward to third reading. I have the officials here, and we're prepared to answer any questions that you have.

The Chair: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. I'd like to welcome our guests to the committee and like to remind them that they are not allowed to participate in any way, shape, or form. That includes applause. Any questioners? I recognize Ms. Beck.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Minister Morgan, and welcome and thank you to your officials. Also welcome and thank you to our guests here this evening, as well as committee members.

This is a bill that has, in a short time, gathered a lot of tension, and there have been a lot of statements of concern expressed both through emails, through petitions, public statements, but also through . . . I know that they've been raised with the minister. They've been raised with the members of the opposition.

And one of the overarching concerns that has been brought forward is the lack of time, the scope of this bill, the way that it will change education in this province. And the feeling, the expressed statement by a number of bodies across the province — from teachers to parents to school boards, public boards, Catholic boards, and everyone in between — that they do not feel that there was enough consultation and that they would like consultation. They would like this bill stopped.

So in light of all of that, I am going to propose a motion.

The Chair: — Sorry. Can you read that again?

Ms. Beck: — Yes. And my motion reads as follows:

That the Standing Committee on Human Services hold public hearings on Bill 63, *The Education Amendment Act*.

The Chair: — Okay, thank you. We have a motion on the table presented by Ms. Beck:

That the Standing Committee on Human Services hold public hearings on Bill 63, *The Education Amendment Act*.

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Chair: — It is not carried.

Ms. Beck: — Can I have a vote on division, please? On division?

The Chair: — On division. All those in favour? Okay. All those opposed, please raise their . . . The motion fails: 5 nay, 1 yea, on division.

Clause 1, short title, any other questions? Ms. Beck.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. First of all I want to express my disappointment. I think that we were willing to be reasonable. Of course I respect that people's time, the officials that are in the room . . . But this again is a bill that people invested in the sector — parents across the province, school boards, teachers, those who work in our schools — really wanted the opportunity. So I am disappointed to hear that they will not have that opportunity. So I will do my best to give this the consideration that it needs and deserves in the short time that we have here tonight.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I would respond briefly to that. The Premier has spoken of the need for transformational change for well in excess of a year. During that period of time, we reached out to school divisions. We reached out to individual schools, individual . . . [inaudible] . . . to talk about what things would work, how we could have a better, more efficient school system, how we can commit to the needs of the sector plan.

Pursuant to that, in follow-up, we had the Perrins report. Dan Perrins was initially only going to do a paper that provided options. Instead people asked to meet with him to give their opinions, so he met with virtually every school division in the province, and met with them, and put that information into the review paper that he prepared.

Following that, we had a panel of people made up of largely school board trustees, municipal . . . travel around the province. They in turn met with the school divisions, large groups, and travelled extensively about the province.

So what I would say to you is this: that what has taken place is probably some of the most extensive consultation that has ever taken place on a piece of legislation, and it's based on the recommendations that came from the Perrins report. So that's where we're at with it, and I think that's not a bad spot. And we received good comments, favourable comments from the boards, and the boards by and large accept the recommendations and are supportive of the things that are there. And I understand some of the concerns they've had, and that's why we've proposed the House amendments.

Ms. Beck: — Minister Morgan, we are receiving different emails, if that is the case. And certainly I have spoken, as I have stated, with boards across the province. They have put public messages, in some cases videos, publicly to express their desire that this bill be stopped, that there be further consultation, meaningful consultation. Boards are saying very publicly that they believe that this preserves the face of boards but not the voice of boards. And I am not sure that the reinstatement of

sections 85 to 88 fully resolves those concerns that boards have so clearly stated.

But I'm going to start at the top. Certainly there was talk after the election of transformational change, and there were a thousand trial balloons floated as to what transformational change would look like. It set a bit of a panic into the sector. And at one point the amalgamation, up to coterminous boundaries with health regions, which we now know is one, and the appointment of elected trustees who had just been elected at that point, was also on the table.

[19:45]

You're correct of course, when Dan Perrins had the governance review — and I think three weeks to conduct that review — he did meet with a number of folks in the sector as well as the panel, the six-person panel that heard from 4,000-odd people in the province, including all of the school boards. Yet on budget day when this bill came down, it was delayed, but surprise, shock, anger — I don't think I'm mischaracterizing any of that — when people got an understanding of what this bill actually looked like and what it entailed.

The pulling out of most duties of boards out of the Act and putting them into the regulation; changing the way that bargaining is conducted; allowing the minister to set targets and penalties for not meeting those targets; it came as quite a shock. The other thing about this being a budget bill is the fact that in the normal course of events a bill such as this we would see in the fall. We would have some time to speak to it in the Assembly. We would have the winter to consult with people across the sector, get their input, their view, and then have opportunity to speak to it further in spring session in 20 hours of scrutiny. Of course because this is attached to the budget, we have five hours of scrutiny on this bill, and I understand we will be asked to vote tomorrow on this bill.

If you are hearing from people in the sector that they are happy about this, we are not hearing from the same people. And I have looked at public statements. I have looked at the hundreds, I think, probably thousands now of emails that are coming to my phone. And across divides — rural, urban, Catholic, public, parent, teacher — we are seeing that people want further consideration on this bill, further input. And for now, they want it stopped pending that consultation.

Further to that, there is a real concern here about the political gamesmanship that's being played that is actually damaging relationships in the sector. And the other thing that came along with this bill of course were \$54 million in cuts to the classroom over the next school year despite taking in \$67 million in education property tax and now a new goal of a \$60 million reduction to funding in education.

I guess my first question is this: why was this designated as a budget bill?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We went through a large review process. The changes that we feel are necessary with regard to a matrix for administrative staff, common busing were all financial issues. We wanted to have those in place as quickly as possible to try and maximize the efficiencies that might be there

so that we would be in a better position to ensure that our resources are committed to the classroom.

We still have issues as to how far people would have to travel on a bus before they have to walk or are entitled to a bus. And in Saskatoon and Regina, we have four school divisions. All were using different methodology for how far it is, and so we will likely say to them, get together in a room, pick a number, and if it's reasonable we'll work with it.

But that's the type of thing we wanted to have in place. So for that reason, we chose to make it a budget bill. You've indicated in the statements that you made that we were going to dictate penalties and targets. I don't know where in this Act you find . . .

Ms. Beck: — Directives.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Well don't call them penalties then. You know if it's a directive, there certainly would be the ability to say to a division you must have, you know, walking distance of so far, a busing distance of beyond that. So those are the type of things that would come by way of a directive.

Obviously we would want to work with the divisions and say to them, what is reasonable? What can you do? What is manageable? But we need to avoid the competitive things that were taking place between divisions to try and attract students. We want to make sure that we've got a fair playing field all the way across the board in the two systems.

We want to make sure that we've got some significant savings when it comes to procurement. We're looking at things like 3sHealth [Health Shared Services Saskatchewan]. We've invited the divisions to come in, participate in whatever that process might be to determine how those things would look.

And I don't know what other things they might have besides procurement, but if they work with 3sHealth, with SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] or SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] and identify things that municipalities are doing, health districts are doing, those are things that we can find some significant savings in. Some of the larger divisions are already doing those things. Some of the smaller divisions, we would want to give them some assistance so that they would be able to do those things.

We would also look at possibly sharing financial assistance by way of accounting direction or whatever else is there. So we've said to the divisions — and you know I've said it here as well — you guys roll up your sleeves. Start with a blank piece of paper, find out the things that you can do to commit to the students in the province, and commit to doing it through the sector plan.

The sector plan came into place shortly before my time in the ministry, but it actually was implemented when I started. But I wasn't there during the development. But I know that the sector plan had the full support of all 28 divisions. And it is from there that there is the commitment to the students in our province, and that has to be our front and centre.

Ms. Beck: — It's interesting that you bring up the education sector plan because yes, there was co-operation amongst boards. There was a target set of \$5 million in reductions, and boards found \$20 million in reductions. I'm hearing — and I'll allow you to let me know if I'm not hearing you correctly — but there was a lack of trust that boards would find efficiencies even though they already have, or that they would not work together even though they already do or that they would not put students first, which I would suggest very strongly that they do.

I'm wondering why, first of all, this is a budget bill. And second of all, why any of what you just noted as being the reasons for this bill could not be done within the existing legislation or by working collaboratively, as has been asked by every school board in this sector, to come to these savings.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I read in the House . . . and I'm not sure whether it was a day that you might not have been there. Andrew Thomson, when he was the Education minister shortly before we formed government, was asked why there was duplication of directors in a particular school division. And he said, I'm the minister of Education, and I don't have those powers. I don't have the ability. And that was his answer. So we want to be able to address some of those concerns that are still there. And I'll give you some of those specifics.

We have Prairie Spirit School Division. Prairie Spirit School Division had schools in Rosthern and a number of other places that were in significant need of upgrades. Instead they built a new office for the division board, long before my time, but it was a choice that was an expensive choice when they had schools that were in need of retrofit. So instead of doing things with the schools . . . And we're now dealing with the schools in Prairie Spirit a lot of times on an emergency basis, and they were saving a disproportionate amount of capital. So we want to make sure that people are making good decisions with what they do with offices. Well you might smile. You might not think it's serious. We do.

Ms. Beck: — Oh, I think it's very serious.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Well it is. I mean, we're talking about money that belongs in the classroom not in a boardroom, not building a boardroom. We have the francophone school division, had a falling out with a director, terminated the director. When there was fewer board members there, rehired the director but in the meantime another one. So now they're paying two full-time directors and dealing with the fact that the two full-time directors have issues between the two of them as to who's responsible for what. We have similar issues in Good Spirit.

We have a number of boards that are now, because we're looking to them to find efficiencies and find savings, are now moving administrative staff out of the administrative office back into the classroom. The classic example, and the one we talk about most because it's a recent one, is Chinook. Chinook has moved 25 administrators from the administrative office into the classroom.

We have Sun West School Division. Sun West School Division, based in Rosetown but deals with Kindersley area and around to Davidson, a good school division but every year sends several

dozen people to a conference in Florida at taxpayers' expense. Some of it may come from division money. Some of it may come from professional development. This year, we're told, 59 people went. For 59 trips to Florida, we can put a lot of money in the classroom.

Northern Lights School Division. Northern Lights School Division deals in the far North, covers a huge geographic area. Their payroll office wasn't paying overtime stat pay for the non-teaching staff. Just weren't doing it. So we have a complaint comes in from one of the workers. They go up, deal with them. A short while later, Northern Lights says they're going to deal with it, so they quite properly follow up. Oh, they fixed it for the one or two people that raised the issue but not the rest of the people. So they directed them they have to go back and do it. A year later, same situation again.

So we have workers in that school division that are short not 1 or \$2,000 but collectively several hundred thousand dollars, something that's absolutely unacceptable for us to deal with. And what we need to do is say to those people, you hire a proper payroll system. You get your payroll done, so it's done professionally, competently, so you don't have a liability to your workers.

We need to deal with the distance to busing.

We think we should have a pay grid for out-of-scope, for administrative staff that would say, okay, a school division of this size for this many students, and this many locations should have a certain number of superintendents and administrators. And we would look to work with the divisions to try and identify that. And I can tell you that that work has already started. We're already having some preliminary discussions with the divisions to determine what the makeup of that should look like.

And I've said it in the House, and I'll say it again. The goal is money in the classroom not money in the courtroom, not money in the boardroom. Our focus is on students, and it is on teachers. So we'll focus on group buying. We'll focus on 3sHealth-type model and the things that we think that should be done to try and do that.

I don't want to be in the business of running a school. I've been a school board trustee. I've been a board Chair. It's not something that either I or most of the people in our ministry have any appetite to do. But we would like to work with the divisions, with the trustees, with the directors to get some specific parameters and some directions — obviously done in consultation with them — so that they can sit down and say okay, no, we know we can't hire another director. We might like to. We might be able to hire an EA [educational assistant], but we can't hire another director or whatever the situation might be. So that's the gist of where we're going, and that's why it's a budget bill.

Ms. Beck: — So "work with" sounds a lot like "dictate to." But, Minister Morgan, I am hearing repeatedly the people want responsible leadership here, not pitting boards against EAs against rural against urban. They want to work with relationship, to work collaboratively, to do the things that they've already been working towards in the sector.

And they're also telling me that it's very hard to keep money in the classroom when the government is slashing 60 million dollars out of operational funding for schools at a time when we're increasing the number of schools by 21, when we see about 2,000 additional students into the system this year, when we've applied PST [provincial sales tax] on a number of items that did not have PST before, when there are all of the inflationary drivers that all of us experience in the province. Power bills. There are contracts to be respected. To suggest that this is strictly about ensuring dollars are in the classroom, I would . . . I have one suggestion how to ensure \$60 million are in the classroom: don't provide a \$60 million corporate tax break.

[20:00]

And I understand I'm being adversarial. I have not enough time on this bill to express all of the concerns that I'm hearing. I would be delighted to sit down and do what we've been doing since last year, and that is talking to boards and stakeholders and parents around the province. We are completely in favour of relooking at *The Education Act* and listening to feedback from stakeholders, and I would much rather work from a point of consensus than this adversarial place that we've come to.

But I'm trying to express to you how clearly people are telling me across this province that they want this bill stopped. They have serious and legitimate concerns about it, and they are concerned about the impact on education. It is not Andrew Thomson's fault. It's not Good Spirit's fault.

Those are decisions that are being made. And of course when elected officials make bad deals or waste taxpayers money, it is a serious thing. These are elected officials. They are accountable to those people that elect them much as you and I and everyone here are. I think it's important that these concerns be understood and respected and not to try to sow division, but to work with people in the sector to do a better job of rewriting *The Education Act*. But yet here we are.

The question I have is, when was this bill drafted? When was work started on drafting this bill?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I don't know when it was started, sometime earlier on. I couldn't tell you the date it was started.

You raised the issue of honouring contracts, and the inference that I took from that was that we were not going to honour contracts and that we were going to breach contracts. And I can tell you this right now, we have told our divisions and we've made it clear to them that we expect them to honour the contracts that they've entered into whether it's a labour relations agreement, a LINC [local implementation and negotiation committee] agreement, a contract with CUPE.

We've said to them, you find efficiencies and you work towards, you know, whatever your monetary restrictions might be that you imposed on yourselves. But we have never asked anybody to do something that would be regarded as an unfair labour practice or to breach the terms of a contract. We've been abundantly clear that that is not to be expected.

We've said to the divisions, you have a funding increase of so

many dollars; we're not providing you specific funding for it, but you have a budget allocation of so much. We expect you to work within that allocation, and we remind you that you have your obligations to those workers.

Ms. Beck: — So well, I asked a specific question.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — You've also raised the issue that you do not feel that you had specific, that you did not have specific time to participate or do anything on this. There was no submission to the Perrins report from the NDP.

Ms. Beck: — Yet you know that I did speak with Dan.

The Chair: — One at a time, please. The minister has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The NDP did not make a submission to Perrins. The only thing that came there from you was the real reform group that you belong to.

Ms. Beck: — You've got a few things wrong.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — And we respect and appreciate the things that they said which do not necessarily appear to be the things that you've said since.

So I'm not sure where you're at on those things, but I can tell you that we have heard from the divisions. And I'm glad you met with Mr. Perrins, and I don't know what he did with the information because it wasn't referenced specifically in there because there was no written submission from you.

The Chair: — I wish to inform the committee that substituting for Mr. Fiaz is MLA Glen Hart. I recognize Ms. Beck.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. I have to correct the minister. The name of the group I believe he's referencing and that he's referenced repeatedly is RealRenewal, and that was a group that I belonged to prior to becoming a trustee in 2009. So I'll just correct that.

So the bill, so I'll take high-level general timelines on when this bill was drafted. Was it after the Perrins report? When did work commence on this bill?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I can't give you a specific time. It would have been sometime after the Perrins report and when it went, you know, the governance panel went out after that. So I . . .

Ms. Beck: — Before the panel or after?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I don't know whether they started any work on it before. We didn't, I didn't give them a written direction, do this, do that. They react to what's there and they come back to us with options saying, this is what we heard in the Perrins report. I don't have a timeline.

Ms. Beck: — This was a fairly lengthy, fairly complicated piece of legislation. So we're hearing then that it was started after the panel reported?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I can't give you a timeline.

Ms. Beck: — Well I think it's reasonable to ask about the timeline, given that the assertion is that it is exactly those things that Mr. Perrins and the panel reported on that are the impetus for this bill. Now that's been a bit fluid, but that is, those are two of the pieces of . . . those are two of the consultations that you have stated are the reason for this bill.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I can tell you that, you know, it was very much a moving target as we moved along, and we are making changes as recently as the last few days based on our discussions with the SSBA.

Ms. Beck: — So at some point after the Perrins report and after the panel reported, this bill was drafted, if I understand the flow of that correctly. Had you consulted with either Mr. Perrins or members of the panel to ensure that their very important input into this bill, that it was reflected in the changes that are proposed here to *The Education Act*?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — There would not have been a formal consultation. Their work was largely completed at that time. Mr. Perrins provided a written report. The review panel travelled around, and I met with the review panel, I believe, twice and had discussions with them about what things they heard. They were actually lengthy discussions. And then it was based on that that we were giving instruction or proceeding from there.

Ms. Beck: — Did you hear any feedback like at the SSBA spring assembly or any place like that for example?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I was at the SSBA's spring assembly, and there was concern, post-budget concern expressed by some of the trustees about their indemnities, about their travel allowance, and not wanting to . . . They weren't particularly supportive of where we were going with the bill. We indicated to them the concerns that we felt that government had that had been there for many years, wanted to address them and undertook to work with them going forward.

Ms. Beck: — You characterizing that the concerns that trustees expressed were around their own personal compensation.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — That was certainly one of the issues that came up, was the travel component, the per diem, the number of meetings they would go to. That seemed to be one of the significant things that came up at that meeting. They raised other issues as well, but that was certainly front and centre.

Ms. Beck: — So they weren't concerned about the cuts or the loss of local voice, the ability of the minister to set directives and force those through boards. Or they weren't concerned about repealing whole sections of the Act and putting them into the regulations, where they could be changed without scrutiny as we have here today. It was largely around their concerns about compensation.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — They talked about issues of consistency, and we raised the issue of, you know, having some equity on how the other compensation might look. We also heard from them about school community councils. And they also wanted to be reassured that they would remain as elected trustees and that they would represent the local voice.

We heard from them as to how we valued the school community councils. We told them that there was no intention in any way to diminish the role of the school community councils. And actually to the contrary, I've always felt, or have for the last number of years, that school community councils have not been appreciated or utilized in a way that, I think, people originally contemplated them. And there was a lot of variation from area to area or school to school as to what was taking place on a community council — whether it should be just a school council, whether they should have a broader role, or whether they should do it. And in some cases, they served a role as a fundraising role.

And that was certainly something that in my time on the board we never looked to the community council to hold events to raise money. I'm not saying that somebody can't or shouldn't, but I never saw that as sort of being an auxiliary that should do that kind of thing. I always thought of them as being a voice of the parents, a voice of the community, and should be an integral partner in how education is to be delivered.

And then I think you and I could talk about it at some length, you are a trustee, as to where the role of the . . . and where the role of the trustees were. I always took it to mean that the trustees were responsible for the business operations, and the school community council was sort of the voice of the community and, you know, how you would tie those together. Anyway that's probably a discussion that you and I might want to have on another day and perhaps in a slightly less tense . . .

Ms. Beck: — Maybe in a public hearing someday. Interesting that you mentioned the SCCs [school community councils] of course because they also have expressed a lot of concern about this bill and wanting this bill stopped. So that would be a point for sure. I value the role of SCCs and value that input.

So today and a number of times previously, there have been sort of these extreme examples of areas where, you know, boards have made decisions that certainly, I'm sure that don't impress those who have elected them and that they are certainly accountable to those who do elect them. And a number of those extreme examples have been noted, some of them repeatedly. For example, the paying two salaries for the director.

Certainly though, on balance, there are examples of boards who have the kids' interests at heart. I would suggest that that's all boards. That there are examples of boards being innovative and creative and collaborative; where they are finding efficiencies, where they have a real vision of where they want to go, and how they can work with their staff and their parents and their communities and their students to ensure the best outcomes possible.

And I would suggest that there are some examples here that you've cited that, you know, those are problematic. But on balance and the overwhelming majority of transactions and actions by boards are centred on student learning, on improving education for kids. I don't know a lot of people, I can't think of any who get on to school boards out of self-interest. And I do have some very significant problems with that characterization here that, you know, the concerns that we've heard about are trustees' own remuneration or that the reason we have to have this very overarching bill that so many people have expressed

concern about is because, you know, something that was done in Good Spirit around a roof, or something that Andrew Thomson did in 2007.

The concerns have been pretty consistent. They have been across the province. So I take some umbrage at the suggestion that this is you know, self-interested trustees or something along those lines.

I'm going to move on.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Can I just respond to that just a little bit? What you were saying about the boards by and large doing good work, I think I'd even go further than that. Most of them do great work, care about kids, and I think we should take, as a province, a lot of pride in the work that they do.

And I think most of them, when they look at some of the things we're trying to address, when they get down to it, say, oh yes, that shouldn't happen; this shouldn't happen. Oh no, we don't want to do that either.

So what we're looking to them is not to be punitive. Because you and I were on the two largest boards in the province, and I thought the board that I was on was great, and I suspect you might think yours was slightly better, although I won't concede that.

[20:15]

But I mean the boards do a lot of work. They provide a lot of great guidance and direction. But we think we need to have some consistency and some better shared decisions. And when you come down to it, when you ask the boards, for whatever reason they may not have done those things in the past, but now they're sitting down and they're saying oh no, we know we have to do this. We know it's the right thing to do.

So it's not just a matter of saying, oh, we'll find a saving here, we'll find a saving there. They're rolling up their sleeves and now they're looking at the bigger issue of saying, yes, what do we need to do, or can we do this in a fundamentally different way.

And I thank them for the work that they've done so far and look forward to continuing to work with them on those things, whether it be busing or acquisition of IT or whatever else it was. You know we're not in the business of dealing with computers or IT. We're not in the business of buying buses or relocatables. Those are things that should be done at a division level, but they ought to work across the table with the other divisions in the area in saying how best do we do this. Can we get, can we do some group buying? Can we have a standardized format for this? So I look to them to find some expertise that will make the commitments that we need to our students.

Ms. Beck: — And I would submit that boards were already doing those things. And that is one of the concerns that has been consistently expressed, that this bill is an overreach. It's an overreach in terms of increasing ministerial power in education. The amendments that you sent us today preserve the ability for the minister to issue directives to school divisions on any matter. Why do you feel that that is necessary to add into *The*

Education Act?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — If, for example, we had a division that was refusing to provide a GSA [gay-straight alliance], we would want to be able to say to that division, you will provide one. We would want to be prescriptive, directive, and immediate in doing that. We don't have any that that's happened to. In fact, all 28 of them agreed to do it. But our province to the west does have that issue, does have that legislation that they're fighting with and are . . . Thankfully — I commend the divisions in our province — we're not having that issue here. I hope we don't, but if we do, I would want to make sure that the province of Saskatchewan would be able to address that immediately and promptly, and be able to say this is something we're standing up for.

And some of the financial decisions that are made. Some of the same things that have taken place when Andrew Thomson was the minister, the issues that he was dealing with, were money that was not spent in the classroom. It was spent by duplication of payroll. We want to do those same things. The money that he was dealing with should have went to a teacher. The money that we have now should have went to a teacher.

Ms. Beck: — I'll say a couple of things about that. First of all, I do not think for a second that this bill is about ensuring that we have GSAs, and I think that is an attempt to distract and divide. That is simply not an issue before us.

The other is, I think this is the third time that I've heard Andrew Thomson's name. And I'm going to address it for this reason: because I'm consistently hearing that people are tired of hearing about schools that closed in '93 and they're tired of hearing what Andrew Thomson did. They're tired of, you know, who did what first and when. They want to deal with what's in front of us now in education. They want to deal with these \$60 million in cuts. They want us to understand the pressures the people are feeling in the classroom.

It's real. I've been in three meetings since January where I have seen CFOs [chief financial officer] emotional at the stress. I am not being hyperbolic. I am not being . . . I'm trying to present clearly what I am hearing from people around the province, and to urge you to listen to those voices, to come to the table with them and to work towards solutions to these very real issues that we're seeing in this province. And I'm also here to express their very reasoned and persistent and urgent concerns about Bill 63.

Okay, so I'm going to move on. What kinds of performance measures and targets will you be directing to school boards, directing school boards to use?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We have the targets that are set in the sector plan. So we would want to work with the divisions to see to it that they're able to move forward on the sector plan targets. The sector plan, as you're aware, sets 2020 goals and we want to be able to see that we do everything we can to try and meet those goals. So that's the type of thing that we would look to.

We would also . . . I think you're directing as to what other things we might direct a board to do. We might say to a board, subject to whatever they determine over the next while as

they're working in a group, you will buy, you know, three or four approved suppliers for whether it be computers or paper or desks or windows or roofing material, that we've gone out and we've tendered and we have three or four of the local tenders so that they would have an approved list of suppliers where we were able to get the benefit of having tendered or located services on a province-wide basis. Those would be the type of things that we would ask boards to take direction on.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. You brought up the education sector strategic plan again. One of the things that was noted certainly in the Perrins report — I can't remember if it was in the panel report — but was around concerns that upheaval such as looking at further amalgamations or concerns about more changes or more cuts to the sector would have on being able to achieve those goals.

So certainly, you know, just setting the goals does not get you to the goals. Resources have to be provided to attain those goals. One of the things was I remember around the reading goal, there was a number . . . There was some really good work done around that and there were supports and professional development provided and there was some lift in those goals. What I'm hearing, and I believe when we were in estimates, that for the additional goals around numeracy, around writing, there isn't quite that same level of support available at this time.

And certainly moving \$60 million of cuts through the system surely will have an impact on how . . . the supports we can provide to children. We've heard from children who are losing their preschools for speech, which certainly will impact their ability to read and to write, to engage in their school programming.

So you know, to suggest that this has to be done because boards weren't making their targets according to the education sector plan goals, I would suggest to you that there are a number of reasons that those targets are not being met. Also the fact that we have done really not very much to address the truth and reconciliation recommendations. That has an impact on student learning, on the gap between First Nations and Métis students, in this province, and non-First Nations and Métis students, which is a major part of the education sector plan.

So I guess, you know, to suggest . . . I have some questions about what further will be directed for boards in terms of performance measures and targets. What happens if boards don't meet those targets? And what responsibility does the ministry have to ensuring that those targets that are classrooms are funded and fully supported from the ministry?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I think we need to have a commitment from everybody that's there that we want to meet the targets that are in the sector plan.

You raised the issue of early-years literacy. We know that if a student is not reading at grade level by grade 3, that student will likely have academic difficulties for the rest of his or her career. So that was the first commitment that we started to work towards, and we did it across the sector.

The second one was to work for middle-years numeracy, and that's not as far down the road.

The goal though is to increase the graduation rate province wide. And the grad rate has come up. Since we have been in government, it has come up about 9 per cent. It's not where we want it to be, but if you look at any of the indicators on a year-by-year basis, there's been increments.

So I'm not . . . I give credit to the divisions and to the teachers. I think the credit has to go to the teachers because they're doing remarkable work. So we know that there's more work to do, and we would like to accelerate the process. I don't think it's simply a matter of saying, oh there's more money. I think it's a matter of saying what other resources do you need, are you . . . [inaudible]. On some of the background, I'm going to let Mr. Currie give you a little bit of more information.

Mr. Currie: — On the education's sector strategic plan, we've had, since its inception, our grade 3 reading rate has improved by 9 per cent since it began. And that's been as a result of the school divisions coming together to focus their resources and their intentionality on directing resources and equipping teachers for success in helping students achieve reading at or above grade level by grade 3.

We have had continued, as has already been referenced earlier tonight, considerable work on realizing and achieving efficiencies within school divisions and the numbers have already been quoted earlier tonight. We've had significant work by our early years specialists as well as our primary teachers focusing on our early years preparation of children as they enter the school system and we are looking to meet the targets, and we're very close to that right now of meeting the target of 90 per cent of our children will be school ready when they enter grade 1.

We have found lift in our Following Their Voices initiative that's been realized as of late where we've been able to realize results where attendance results have improved dramatically for the schools involved with the Following Their Voices program, as well as credit attainment of students within those respective schools having realized lift as well. And we look to see that they are progressing well on their graduation journey.

We have found through the sector plan a focused, a continued focus and an increase in our First Nations Métis engagement and with our work with our school assessment that's been provided in all of our schools, that we have found that the engagement level has increased which has a direct impact on the attendance results that I've just referenced, as well as the credit attainment that is showing signs of growth and lift as well.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. So again my questions were around the kinds of performance measures and targets that you'll be directing school boards to use, and could this lead to more standardized testing or lean being imposed on schools, for example?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Some of the divisions are voluntarily using lean methods in their accounting or in their procurement. We've never considered or ever advocated . . . I don't think it's a model where you put it into a classroom. But no, there's no lean agenda. It's a matter of saying how best can we deliver the services. As you're aware, we have, you know, 170-some

thousand kids in the province, 12,000 teachers. Our goal as a system, whether it be the divisions, the ministry, or the province is to try and support the people that are delivering services to our kids by way of education.

What happens in a classroom — I'm not an educator. I've been in classrooms and I'm always amazed at the great work that the teachers and the EAs are doing. So our goal should be to provide them with the best supports. I leave it to the people that are the experts in teaching. Those are the ones that know the psychology of children. They know the best practices for learning. And my goal is and should be that we want to continue to support that.

You asked about standardized testing. You know, you do evaluations the same way we're doing now. When I first took the portfolio, we took standardized testing off the table.

[20:30]

Ms. Beck: — You mentioned the importance of supporting teachers in the classroom, and certainly I agree with you wholeheartedly. I'm wondering if you're hearing from teachers if they feel supported by Bill 63 or the process that has led to this and if they're feeling that their voices are being heard.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I don't think in fairness that Bill 63 affects teachers. Bill 63 is about governance and about administration. The day-to-day operations of a classroom the day after this bill is passed, or the day before, there will be no difference. This isn't an idea of doing something different within a classroom, but this might be about doing something more productive and more efficiently in a boardroom or in an office where they're purchasing something or doing the IT [information technology] work that is done. It's about supplying resources.

Ms. Beck: — So the STF has it wrong. They shouldn't be concerned about this bill.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The day-to-day operations are not affected by this bill. I mean if you look at sections 85 to 89, those sections deal with roles and responsibilities of boards and the ministry. They don't deal with education.

Ms. Beck: — So when it . . . While we're talking about increased ministerial power, you're also gaining the power to operate, I believe the terms are, experimental or special schools. How will this be used?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — It is much the same as it is now, and I'll give you an example. Like, that's not a change. We have . . . Sun West is operating a distance learning centre in Kenaston. It's working out remarkably well. We think that's the type of thing that has been a largely successful experiment and would like to say to the other divisions, if you're considering using a distance learning model, would you look at that one? Are there things that they've done well? Are there things that you think should be done differently to satisfy your needs? So I use that as one example.

Ms. Beck: — Does this open the door to charter schools for example?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — No. No more than it does right now. As you're aware, the current model that we have, we have about 750 schools in the province. We've got a majority of them would be public schools. Then we would have separate schools. And then we've got a number of independent associate schools, qualified independent historic high schools. Those applications are handled on a, you know, a school-by-school basis as they come out. But if you're asking whether we've got an appetite to go ahead and create a voucher system or a charter school, I have no interest in that.

Ms. Beck: — So no interest, no discussions around introducing charter schools?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — There was some submissions that were made during the government's review that that's a model we should consider, but it's not on.

Ms. Beck: — I'm glad to hear that. So going back to teachers, how will bargaining for teachers be affected by Bill 63?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — There's a number of things. The bill has a provision in it. In the current legislation teachers have, and I don't know whether it's ever been used, if the parties agree to it, there's a circuitous route to get to binding arbitration.

We've taken that out because it was sort of a strange anomaly to have it in the legislation. Given that we have now passed the provisions of the employment Act, we have virtually no other place in the province that has the right to binding arbitration unless there's an essential service involved such as firefighters, a slightly different model that's available for police service.

So there would be no need or no . . . It would not be necessary or appropriate to give one group of workers in the province the access to binding arbitration when it does not exist for anyone else. So teachers would be able to strike or would be able to have the ordinary rights of every other worker. Now the section has never been used, so it's there but has not been used in the timeline that any of us can remember.

Other than that, the bargaining would be done largely in the ordinary course where . . . it's sort of a strange thing that we do where we've got sort of a three-cornered bargaining model. The nominal employer is the divisions but the funding partner is the province, so the provincial agreement is done in conjunction with the provincial bargaining team, an SSBA bargaining team, and the STF bargaining team, which we would expect would continue.

It's a strange thing to have happen but it's there. That's the status quo. I don't see anything that would change by that. In the past rounds of bargaining, the SSBA has come back to the province and said, what is it, you know, what can we work with you on a mandate? You're our funding partner, whatever. So that part of it wouldn't change.

The other thing that might change, but not necessarily as part of Bill 63, is I've been fairly vocal that the LINC agreements, the cost components of the LINC agreement, probably should become part of the provincial agreement. I have a difficult time — and you might have a different view — that the LINC agreements, you know, are . . . all across the province, they vary

greatly, include things from parking to prep time to professional development. All things that are important to teachers, all things that need to be addressed, but not on a different basis all the way across the province. If I was a teacher, I would have some concern before I would move to one area to another, knowing that I had a different type of supports or different type of resources available to me by going from one division to another.

So I would . . . And I don't know what the timeline might be, but I don't want anybody to say they're surprised by it later on once we start talking about it. And I've raised it with the STF that that should be a goal of ours, is to try and support our teachers by having some consistency in the LINC agreements and having the cost items moved into the provincial agreement. I'm sorry if that's a long answer.

Ms. Beck: — Does anything about this bill, if passed, allow the minister, yourself, to ensure that your desire to see changes to how LINC agreements are negotiated? Does those extra powers allow you to ensure that that affinity for that idea actually makes its way through board tables?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — No, it doesn't. The agreements have got a variety of different expiry dates and they were negotiated in good faith. We can't say simply we'd like them to be gone away. We have to sit down and negotiate or deal with them separately. But there's nothing in this bill that would give the ministry the ability to do away with them. It may give us the ability to say to boards, we want to give you a mandate for them, but that's more or less what we're doing in any event now.

But no, there's nothing that would take away anything out of those agreements. There's nothing that would change anything within those agreements. But I don't want . . . In the interest of full disclosure, I want people to know that I think those are something that if I was a teacher I would regard as problematic.

Ms. Beck: — Still moving within the area of increased ministerial power and subsection 4. Clause (h) or subclause (h) states:

. . . if the minister considers it advisable and in the interests of education to do so, by order, alter the boundaries of any school division that is not a separate school division.

That's one of the things that was noted pretty clearly in both the Perrins consultation, the Perrins governance review, and the panel consultation was that there was really no appetite for amalgamation of school divisions.

How does the passage of Bill 63 impact how amalgamations happen in the province?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The provision you're referring to is an existing provision, it's in the existing Act. So there's not a change in the legislative powers with regard to them.

We actually move boundaries fairly routinely at the request of boards to accommodate busing or other schedules, you know, if there's, whatever the issues might be. But I've signed any number of orders moving boundaries. I haven't consolidated

any but there's certainly . . . The powers to move to consolidate have been in the Act for a long time.

Ms. Beck: — Yes, and I don't think the concerns were around moving borders for busing routes. I think more along the lines of consolidating or moving schools from one school division to another. So one of the things that we haven't talked about is the fact that also announced, I believe it was on the same day — there were a lot of things announced on budget day — the four working groups in the province, and one of them looking at amalgamations, specifically, I believe, in the North, the doughnut divisions around Regina and Saskatoon. And I'm just wondering what work has been done, how this bill will complement that work, and what can be anticipated by people in those school divisions?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Yes, not a lot. There's been some discussion as to what benefits there might be or what benefits might not exist. I've spent a fair amount of time in La Loche. And following the tragedy of La Loche, it was clear from the community there that it didn't work for them with the relationship they had with Northern Lights. Now there might have been other issues, but a portion of that at least was the geography of the North. The headquarters for Northern Lights is in La Ronge, so for somebody to come from La Ronge to La Loche you had to go south, across, and back up because there's no . . . or else fly. There's no easy way to get there.

So the people of La Loche asked whether they could partner with another division. I think they had meetings with another division to sort of see whether that was an option. So we've had other discussions with them about how that might work. Ile-a-la-Crosse is a small division, like essentially one community, but it's adjacent. So I asked, I posed the question to them, would that be an option for you to become part of that school division? And the concern that I had was that Ile-a-la-Crosse is a Cree community, La Loche is a Dene community. The response that I got was they were amenable to having those discussions.

So I'd like to see the discussions take place because there's a strong desire from the La Loche community to try and do something different than what their status quo is. So we're trying to have some discussions where we would give them some options. And then what would flow from that is if there is something better or something different that works for La Loche, maybe there's something that would be better or different that would work in other areas of northern Saskatchewan.

We've always made the assumption that the North should be just treated as one block. Well we have . . . The MLA boundaries are broken in half sort of — half on the east, half on the west. Is that the type of division that we can have or should have? And I haven't talked to enough other people to have a real sense of what they think might work, but that would certainly be one of the areas where we would want to have discussion, on changing boundaries or looking at something different for that community.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. So is there a timeline for those discussions? Is it something that parents and students and teachers and trustees in those . . . Should they consider . . .

Would those changes be made before the next school year, for example, or at some time in the future if there were to be changes?

[20:45]

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — To the people in La Loche, we've made a commitment to them that we want to look at it fairly quickly. Mr. Currie has been up there and he's probably going to be going back there again to try and work through some of those issues with them.

I don't know whether it's possible for something to take place before the next school year or not, but I think if you talked to Robert St. Pierre, the mayor, he would very much like to have something in place by the end of this school year so they would have something for next school year. I don't know that we can meet that timeline or not, but that certainly would be a goal for us.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. I feel compelled to note something and certainly when we had the opportunity to be up in La Loche, first in La Ronge meeting with Northern Lights and then in La Loche, there was . . . and I'm very . . . I cannot remember her name but there was a very committed superintendent there who had been very involved with the community and certainly was there for the one year anniversary of that tragedy. And I just, I think I'd be remiss not to point out her commitment there and certainly the relationship that was evident at the school and . . .

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Do you remember the name of the superintendent?

Ms. Beck: — I can see her face. She has glasses, short . . .

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Could you be referring to Ms. Sproule?

Ms. Beck: — Maybe. Is she your . . . Maybe.

Ms. Sproule: — I'm not a superintendent.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Yes. I mean, the reason I ask was, if you want to recognize somebody that you thought was a hero or was really good, I'd love to see it in the record. If you want to do a member's statement or ask me to do one, I'd be glad to.

There was a lot of people in La Loche that were heroes, both on the bravery that they showed on the day of the tragedy and the follow-up to that. As a province, I think we should be proud of the citizens that we have that rose up because we had people going up from all over the province. They were volunteering to go up and work doing counselling and doing a variety of other things there.

I don't think government should take credit for that. I think that's a humanity thing, and you just can't . . . Your heart goes out to everybody that was affected by it, and you just feel so grateful for everybody that was there.

Ms. Beck: — Absolutely. One of the things that I wanted to note, and certainly one of things that I wanted to note was in the educational governance advisory panel review near the start of the document. One thing is noted here, and it's a note that:

While there were no formal consultations with First Nations, the Panel heard from representatives of the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations and some tribal councils that if any changes to the education system would affect First Nations, further consultation would be needed.

I guess I'm just wondering about a timeline or a commitment to those consultations. One of the things that will be impacted with this bill is the ability of boards to enter into agreements with First Nations. And I just wanted to hear a little bit of an explanation about why, and then what the plans are going forward.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I think we want to support the agreements. A lot of them are . . . You know, there's a number of tripartite agreements. The supports that we offer across the province, we think should be somewhat standardized. We want to work with the federal government as well as the local boards. We want to encourage the supports that we're offering to the First Nations communities.

You've likely travelled as much in the North as I have. A lot of the northern communities will have a school that is part of our school division — not on-reserve, that's immediately adjacent to — but the students that would attend that school will largely be from the reserve. They would come off. Sometimes there's a school, as it is in La Loche, where's there's one on— and one off-reserve, so we'd want to continue those type of relationships when the vast majority of students in a particular school are First Nations or from reserve. It's important for us to have the relationships that are there. We want to continue those. Nothing in this bill should be seen to take away or diminish those, other than us wanting to know what's taking place in those or if they're going to enter into one of those type of agreements.

I'm going to let Mr. Currie speak to some of the initiatives that we have in our First Nations.

Mr. Currie: — We have a number of school divisions and their respective schools involved with our Following Their Voices initiative, and this is run for provincial schools and also for First Nations schools. And this is again focused on engagement of students, tracking attendance, helping them realize credit attainment that's going to help them successfully graduate. So Following Their Voices is a significant initiative that is realized between provincial and also our First Nations schools.

As well we have a partnership initiative that's called the invitational shared services initiative. That is where our First Nations schools are working with provincial schools in terms of sharing resources, again focused on the education sector plan in terms of student engagement, credit attainment, and realizing graduation. These resources are important because they have helped support these school divisions that are beside one another, working together to share resources and realize resources that in effect are going to be student-first focused and help students graduate.

Ms. Beck: — I'm sorry if I missed it, but I didn't hear was there a timeline? Were there any firm plans to enter into consultations with FSIN [Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations] or with First Nations?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I think there's no wholesale change to the relationship that we would have with First Nations. So as the agreements would expire or need to be changed, we would deal with them in course. But there's nothing in this legislation that would trigger a need to make changes to those at this time.

Ms. Beck: — And certainly understanding that, you know, these agreements often come after a good deal of groundwork is laid in terms of relationship between communities and that that is not something that can be just sort of taken from one level of government and placed with another. That relationship is very, very important. And I'm just wondering if any consideration or feedback was received around that move.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — No, there's no intention to move those. It's when we enter into an agreement, wanting to make sure that there's appropriate checks and balances as to, you know, that we make sure that we're involved in the agreements. Some of them have some significant cost factors and some of them may affect our relationship with the federal government. So it's not, it's not an intention to reduce the relationship with First Nations.

I had a telephone conversation with Chief Cameron early on in a process and indicated, you know, that we could have a further conversation later on. And to him, you know, I certainly want to reach out and say that it was not intended to do anything in here that would reduce our obligations or change the relationship that we have with First Nations. Now most of these agreements are not with FSIN. They're with individual bands so we, you know, we would carry on and try and maintain or build on those.

You're likely aware that we want to maintain a good relationship, so we pay Microsoft's software licensing agreement that we provide to all of the on- and off-reserve schools that we provide to. Our partner in that one is FSIN, so that if you're an on- or off-reserve school, if you're educating kids in our province you're entitled to have current up-to-date Microsoft software. We did a joint signing when that was announced two or three years ago.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. And you certainly did mention, you know, that not being your intent in that conversation. And I guess I would just reinsert that that really is the reason why, you know, that level of consultation and with the concerned bodies and entering into discussion with them, certainly there can be all sorts of measures where the intent was not there but the impact is still there if we don't understand and don't hear from all of those different parties.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Boards can still enter into agreement with bands. We expect that they will. We don't intend to alter those partnerships at a division-to-band level. We expect that those would continue. To the extent there might be a cost factor, we may want to say, oh, well can we do this, can we do that? But by and large, those agreements would continue. We want to respect the autonomy of the divisions and want to make sure that we respect and honour the agreements as far as First Nations are affected.

Ms. Beck: — I'm going to move on. One of the things that had been noted, and I believe you stated it again today in your

preamble, Minister Morgan, was that one of the reasons for Bill 63 was the Theodore case and the litigation costs. I'm just wondering when did you decide that this bill was needed to resolve this long-standing litigation? I think it was a 12-year court case.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The case was launched in 2005. I became Justice minister in 2007 when we formed government and was made aware of it in my capacity as Justice minister that it was an ongoing file, was headed for litigation. And I didn't know about it before I came to government. I had been a trustee before, but I don't remember ever having heard about it at the time, although I certainly knew there was issues on the part of the public boards in the province, that they had concern about non-Catholics attending the separate school system.

In any event, I was aware of the decision and I was briefed on it periodically as the case went on. And I said to the officials on several occasions, find us a way to get out of this; it's costing us millions of dollars. Now with respect to the officials in the Ministry of Justice, nobody suggested the notwithstanding clause. And I don't know whether, prior to the trial taking place, whether we would have been willing to entertain the use of the notwithstanding clause at that time. It's a moot issue because it wasn't brought forward. I never took it back to government, and it never was something that I thought of at that time.

But it was one of those things, during my entire time, the five years that I spent as Minister of Justice, I was unhappy that the file was going there. I was unhappy that each and every year as part of our budget, we saw money that was going to litigation paid for by the taxpayers of the province. It was one of the things that I was concerned about, did not have an answer for, and deliberately had the officials come over on several occasions saying, have you got a way that we can get out of this? And I said, can we defund it? Can we legislate our way out of it? And there was nothing that was . . . that was not there.

So anyway I went to Advanced Education with something else, and then when I came to the Education file, all of a sudden I was living it again. It was there. It was ongoing and it was something . . . [inaudible]. So I asked the same questions again: where can we go? I was regularly visited by members of the separate schools and by the public: are you going to fund us? Are you going to fund an appeal? Can you do this? Can you do that? And I think my answer to all of this was, I don't want to fund any of this. I want to put money for kids.

So Bill 63 wasn't specifically designed to deal with the Theodore case. Bill 63 was designed to deal with a variety of efficiencies and things that came from there. But having said that, if Bill 63 would have been passed and would have existed in 2005, whoever the minister was at that time would have been able to say to the divisions, you will not sue each other, period. And I know you and I might be not on the same page on that, but I would not have let that litigation start. I would have used whatever authority was there to say that that case should not have gone ahead.

I think we're at a point now where the decision has come down. We of course respect the court, respect that the decision is there and, if left alone, will become the law of our province.

And so anyway, Bill 63, at this point in time, is not going to address that decision. What will, as the Premier announced, would be the use of the notwithstanding clause in the Charter. But that's a separate issue from where we're at right now.

Ms. Beck: — So I guess I'm curious then. If this bill were to have been passed in 2005, what action would you have taken to ensure that that didn't happen?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Well I would have been in opposition then, so I probably wouldn't have done very much.

Ms. Beck: — Let's imagine that you were the minister then.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I think at that point, you know, you may well have said to the parties, the status quo is where it's at; we're not going to allow you to sue each other.

[21:00]

Ms. Beck: — And that would be enforced by?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Well, by whatever ministerial directive might be given at that point in time.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. A question that I have, the Catholic boards are protected by section 93.1 of the constitution from anything the government could do to limit their rights. Are you concerned that this directive-making power, the increased ministerial power that we've talked about could be unconstitutional?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — No, we've had the legislation reviewed and believe that it complies.

Ms. Beck: — Has any work been undertaken to support the appeal of the Catholic school board with regard to the Theodore case?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Not at this point in time. The decision, as you're aware, just came down a week ago. So not wanting to admit that I have no life, I did spend a substantial amount of time on the weekend reading the decision and sort of going over and, you know, trying to familiarize myself with the issues and the things that were in the decision.

We know the separate school division has made an announcement that they are going to . . . [inaudible]. We haven't made that kind of an announcement at this point in time and haven't formalized a decision.

Ms. Beck: — Does your decision to appeal or not appeal, does that impact the appeal process for the separate school board?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — That's an interesting question. When the actions started, both the province and the separate school division were defendants in the action. So on an appeal, it would be a strange appeal not to have all of the parties that are there.

So what we want to . . . It would be inappropriate for me to speculate on what's in the appeal or how the appeal might be conducted, but I can tell you that we've asked the officials

within the Ministry of Justice to give careful assessment of and to come with options of where we would go from here.

Ms. Beck: — At any point — and I meant to ask this a bit earlier after you were talking about coming into the file, Minister, with regard to having discomfort about the money going into court cases — at any point were you asked about a constitutional reference?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Yes. Yes and there was some discussion as to whether a reference could have been undertaken. And usually for a reference to be effective, the government would have the ability to go and apply for the reference on its own.

But for a reference to be effective would require the parties to agree on the exact wording in the constitutional question. I understand that that discussion took place prior to my coming into government. And I understand that those discussions did not bear fruit. So it was raised in passing and not recommended as a plan.

Ms. Beck: — Have you had opportunity to speak to either the public or the Catholic section or the Roman Catholic school board association about the Theodore decision?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Yes.

Ms. Beck: — All parties?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I have not talked to the public schools association since the decision, but I have talked to the Catholic board.

Ms. Beck: — Do you have any estimates about the cost of appeal both to the provincial Court of Appeal or the Supreme Court?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The costs that the province would bear as a party to the action, those costs are done by in-house lawyers, so they would have some court filing fees, some travel fees. And we haven't had a discussion whether any of the party costs would be picked up, so I don't have any more information on that.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. So again and in this line of questioning as well, there's been a few references to the need to have these increased powers to stop public money going into lawsuits, yet there was a decision that was made to intervene in the BC teachers' case that was fought. There was also a decision that fought the essential services case, and there has been speculation about suing the federal government around the carbon pricing. Can you explain the contradiction there.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I think governments are often embroiled in litigation for a variety of different reasons. I have issues when one taxpayer-funded entity sues another taxpayer-funded entity. With regard to some of the court challenges where another level of government's involved, I would rather those be resolved than . . . [inaudible] . . . and I appreciate the fact that they sometimes need to be resolved at a court level.

Ms. Beck: — So why was the decision made to spend money, resources that could have gone to the classroom, to intervene on

the BC teachers' case?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Actually that was a decision made by the Ministry of Justice. I didn't participate in the decision-making process, so it's a question properly put to Minister Wyant. And I understand that it dealt with a number of broader issues, and I think most of the provinces chose to be intervenors in that case. But our ministry wasn't party to that. It was done through Justice.

Ms. Beck: — Jumping back a little bit to the discussion around amalgamations. The working group that has been convened to look into that issue, have there been any outside bodies, any consultants, perhaps in province or out of province, that have been consulted around reducing the number of school divisions?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Given what happened with regard to SaskTel, I am looking carefully at my officials. I am not aware of any. The officials on either side of me are nodding in the negative as well. In the event, when they go back to their office tomorrow morning, I will let you know directly if they . . . [inaudible] . . . but I don't believe there's been any discussion on that whatsoever.

Ms. Beck: — I would appreciate that clarification. One of the other sections, rules being removed from *The Education Act*, removes protections around school closures, sections 87.1 through 87.8, that your government brought in, minister Krawetz. Why was the decision . . .

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — A decision was made by the ministry officials that they wanted that particular portion to be moved into regulation not with the idea of changing or increasing or making any changes one way or the other with regard to school closures.

Right now as you are aware, the existing provisions deal with schools of opportunity and schools of necessity. I think those sections were rather carefully crafted to ensure that communities had every opportunity to maintain and to keep a school open, but the officials tell me they wanted to have some discussion with the school divisions as to whether that's a workable option or whether that's something that should be amended or changed.

I'm not looking for a change, one way or the other, but will look to the divisions to see what direction they have on that particular portion of it.

Ms. Beck: — I do happen to remember when this provision was brought in. It was brought in with a great deal of fanfare. There was wide support particularly, well specifically in rural Saskatchewan for those protections. And that is something that we heard certainly when we were down in Fox Valley for example. That was very important, that assurance. I'm just wondering, was it an error that those were brought in? Or what has changed that those provisions no longer need to be in the Act and be moved into regulations?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — If they're in the Act, it requires an Act of the legislature to change or update them. If they're in regulation, we can, with consultation with the divisions, look at

updating, changing, whatever, adding more particulars on them. The divisions, when you ask them questions about it now, they wrestle with the numbers that might be there, whether the numbers are the right number, whether it should vary for this or for that. And I haven't done enough of them or been involved in enough of them to really get an understanding of what's important.

I know I've met with communities that are saying, if we can do this, if we can do that, and the Act has actually served them relatively well to try and give them the opportunity they need. And I guess what we want to hear, is that sufficient? Is there better or different methods that should be there? So it's more a matter of just giving the flexibility to the divisions.

Ms. Beck: — And I think that's an important distinction that you made. Those provisions contained in the Act, when they're moved into regulation they don't enjoy the same protection. I think you did mention that, you know, in consultation with divisions. But certainly for clarification, if you wanted to change the regulations, you do not need to consult with school divisions. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Well I think we want to hear from the divisions. I think, generally speaking, government has been more inclined to keep schools open than divisions. Divisions wrestle with it on a day-to-day. But you know, some of the things that they wrestle with are grade discontinuance, so it's easier for them to deal with a grade discontinuance or a consolidation within the community, where you've got a K to 8 and a 9 to 12, to look at a consolidation without having that as being the spectre of closures. So we want to just have a broader discussion with the divisions about the tools that they need to be able to maintain and sustain those schools, and to try and deal with those in an effective manner

Ms. Beck: — I'm not sure I understand how moving it from the Act to the regulations, how that gets you at that goal?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The current Act is pretty prescriptive about the process that's there. So if the divisions come to us and say, we would like to have a set of regulations that prescribes a more formal process or just putting numbers in it at a different level or whatever else, we would like to hear from that and be able to do that by way of a regulation that could be changed if the divisions asked for them.

Ms. Beck: — So if the divisions asked for that. But also if, without any input from the divisions, you would be able to make those changes in the regulations as well?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We would be able to make the change to the legislation. We want to make the change so that it can be done in a consultative manner with the divisions.

We have a record in our province, since we've been in government, of maintaining schools in rural Saskatchewan, working with the communities, trying to sustain and do them as opposed to the previous government which did not. So our record is clear. We want to maintain the schools in rural Saskatchewan. We want to look at what's effective, what's efficient. And if it's a great consolidation or a consolidation within a community, we want to work with the communities

and with the divisions to try and do that.

Ms. Beck: — But certainly this Act doesn't just apply to your government. This will apply to all subsequent governments once the changes are made?

[21:15]

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Other governments can change the Act. They can change regulations. But our goal is to do things in the legislation that protects schools.

Ms. Beck: — Right. But right now they're protected in the Act. Once this change is made, they can be changed without the same level of oversight, even the oversight that we're being provided today, by any subsequent government.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We think that in the regulations, we can develop a system, working with the divisions, that maintains and demonstrates our support for rural schools. Our record is pretty clear as to where our government has been with regard to supporting rural schools.

Ms. Beck: — But as I stated, you know, it's possible that there will be a change of government some day and that this does not just apply to this government. This applies to all subsequent governments.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Well if there is a change in government, I would hope that they would live up to the spirit of this as opposed to some other governments that did not. Another government could change the legislation, move it back in, and I leave it to them to do that.

We believe, by moving it to regulation, we can work with the divisions to ensure the viability of our schools in smaller communities.

Ms. Beck: — The consultation piece with school divisions about any changes in the regulations would be optional?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We intend to work with them in the development of the regulations that are there.

Ms. Beck: — I understand that, but the point that I'm trying to make is that, you know, the intentions of today will not impact future governments or future ministers for that matter.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The point you're making is that regulations are easier to change than legislation.

The Chair: — I recognize Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — Hi. I have a few questions for the minister. The minister's made quite a few comments, and he's been using the slogan: more money in the classroom and not in the courtroom or the boardroom. And that seems to be the reasoning, the connection with Bill 63.

But we see very clearly that you are giving money to the corporate boardroom, some \$60 million. And there's a \$60 million cut in education into the classroom. And where did that \$60 million . . . There's seems to be a direct line over to the

corporate boardroom. Would you comment on that?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I think those are questions you'd need to put to the Minister of Finance regarding the tax changes that are there. I'm prepared to talk about Bill 63.

Mr. Forbes: — Now I assume Bill 63 . . . I assume that you had input into the budget. This is a budget bill.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I'm here to talk about Bill 63.

Mr. Forbes: — Well I think we're talking about a budget bill, right? Am I right?

The Chair: — We're talking about Bill 63, which is a budget bill, but you have to constrain your questioning to Bill 63.

Mr. Forbes: — But I've heard the minister several times, several times, Mr. Chair, refer to courtrooms, boardrooms, and money going into the classrooms. And so I'm just questioning when he talks about boardrooms, is he talking about corporate boardrooms? And I think his redirection . . . Either he hasn't been paying attention during budget deliberations because he says he has nothing to say about that. I find that very odd and evasive. So again, what boardrooms are you talking about?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I was talking about school board boardrooms.

Mr. Forbes: — Well, Mr. Minister, I mean this speaks to really a lot of credibility because you're picking and choosing what boardrooms you're . . . You know, because people outside are talking about Bill 63 very clearly and talking about the impacts it has on their classroom. And when the minister chooses to be evasive and say, well I'm talking about . . . And he's given a couple of examples that he uses repeatedly. And of course the one that he talks about, the school division sending people to Florida, just reminds me very much of his own government in Health sending people to Washington, and probably more than 59 went in a year to Washington for training. Now I don't know if he's been briefed on that or if again, he might throw that he's not the Minister of Health, that I should talk to the Minister of Health.

The Chair: — Order. We're talking about Bill 63, nothing else. So please confine your questions related to Bill 63.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm just reflecting on his comments that he's made, that he's raised points, and I think that we need clarity around those points. Unless he can say whatever he wants and then he gets . . .

So, let me . . . Can I ask about GSAs then? He's raised that. Okay. What brings your new concerns about GSAs and the fact they may not be protected throughout Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I'm not sure who the critic was when we were . . . I think you were, actually. And we wanted to ensure that we had GSAs available for all students throughout the province.

We met with school divisions. We met with the bishops, and the conversations we had with them I felt were productive. The

bishops indicated that they had already met with or had people meet with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. They had developed programs. They had developed protocols. And when I talked to the individual divisions within the Catholic, in the separate school system, they didn't challenge or question the directives that they'd received. They were working to get their staff brought up to speed and up to date.

So I'm pleased that that's . . . We have, you know, a policy statement on that, so you're welcome to that if you haven't already seen it.

So we have GSAs throughout almost every school division in the province. What I would say to you and to anyone else, if you are aware of a school that's not doing it . . . I don't have an appetite to pass a law to do it, but I would want to be able to say to that school division, you'll do it.

When we went through the process, we had relatively good co-operation from almost all of the school divisions, that yes, this is something they should do. It's the same thing with gender-neutral washrooms. It's just these things are becoming the norm. But if we didn't have the ability to direct them, I would not want to be in a position where it's not there. They don't have to come back to the legislature to legislate something. I would like to be able to say, no, this is a minister's order; you're going to provide one.

Mr. Forbes: — So I'm curious. I mean on one hand you're arguing the case for the status quo because it seems, from your point of view, to have worked, in that GSAs are being provided through the province, and there's ways of dealing with that. You're happy and satisfied with the policy. But then on the other hand, you seem to be concerned that that may not be the case into the future. Is that right?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Well I think you're the government that wants us to pass legislation because . . . for whatever reason. So if it's working, we don't need the legislation. So I think I'll remember your quote. But not wanting to get into a debate on it, what I would like to ensure that the province has, is the ability to be directive in that area if there is a school or if there is a division that is refusing to do it.

I'm pleased and I'm proud as a Saskatchewanian that the path that we have chosen to go on is one that is inclusive and one that supports the students of our province. I hope that that continues and that we don't have to consider passing legislation or being directive.

Mr. Forbes: — Just to be clear, I was summarizing what I heard you say, in that you were the one that was satisfied with the status quo. I wasn't commenting that I was satisfied with the status quo, just to be clear on that. I was verifying what I was hearing, that that's what you were saying. And I know this minister has a tendency to expand and put words in other people's mouths, so I just want to be clear on that.

And again just to clarify, when you talked about our government, we're in opposition as of today. And even though it was a private member's bill that we had brought forward, and we think there's still a need, and it's actually a much simpler fix, and if the minister is concerned, and that's why I'm asking

if that's the case, then that would be simple, to pass a private member's bill. That we could do in a day, and I think people would be quite happy. But again . . .

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I used that as an example. There may be others. But I used that as an example, so I don't wish to come back. But the point you're taking about what your position was and mine are, I accept your comments in their entirety.

Mr. Forbes: — And I guess what I'm saying, though, is my concern, and it's the concern that we continually arise from this Bill 63, that the powers that end up in the minister's hands are pretty strong.

And I do have to say, Minister, I have been impressed up to the point that you haven't passed our private member's bill. But you have been very supportive of GSAs and you've worked very hard on that, and I do want to acknowledge that.

But I'm not sure, I'm not sure every member of your caucus would work as hard as you have in ensuring GSAs in our schools. Are you feeling confident that every member on your side of the House would do as much work or more than you do?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I have yet to have one of my caucus members come to me saying that they disagree with where we're going. We've discussed it at caucus, and I can tell you that that is the position of our government, and I'm not aware of there being any opposition within.

I mean, I'm proud of our province and I'm proud of our government for having done that. It is one of those things that we do because it's right to do it. Not wanting to create a right, but we just do it because it is simply the right thing to do to have that. And I'm glad those supports are there.

What I would say to you is, as you go through your travels, you probably are in as many schools as I am or talked to as many other people as I do. If you become aware of a situation where you think a student is not being adequately served in any school, I'd ask you to let me know and Mr. Currie will be leaving his office immediately to go and have it addressed. It's something that's not acceptable, not to be providing those students because these are students that are some of our most vulnerable and are most in need of those supports.

When we talk about suicides or the needs for mental health, I can imagine no better way of providing this than by having the supports that are given by a GSA. I think you and I have both heard students speak about it. Students are ahead of the teachers and are way ahead of their parents on this issue. So I think it's something we say yes, we believe in this. We support this. We're doing it.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes. See, our concern . . . I mean this, we've heard over and over again, is so much power then resides in one person, and hopefully they have the appropriate moral compass. But also, you know, and I just want to catch you up again on something you said, it is the right thing to do. It is the right thing to do, but it's because it's a right. Every child has a right to be safe in the school, independent particularly in terms of their gender identity expression and sexuality. That is not a privilege granted by an administrator. That is a right of a child

to be safe in their school for that. And so that's what's really clear, and that's the difference, I think, between . . .

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I couldn't agree with you more. It is a right of the child. We want to ensure the right is in it, but we also want to do it because it's right to do it, not simply because it's a right or it might become a right. It is a right thing to do to ensure that each and every child has the supports that are necessary regardless of their background, their sexuality, their orientation. Those issues should not be issues for us as parents or educators. Those issues should be just that we provide supports for students, period.

Mr. Forbes: — Now I do, I want to come back to this point that you have, seem to have an avoidance to take things to court because of the costs — and you and I have had many discussions about court costs — but some people aren't. Some people want to go straight to court, and they think that's the best way to resolve this. And we've seen that around some other issues this government has wrestled with, and they've lost. And I believe it has been expensive for the people of Saskatchewan and those funds could've gone to a better use. But we're not here to talk about that. But we are here to talk about the power that resides within one person. And while you may have an avoidance to courts, what happens if the next minister of Education really wants to ramp it up and take it to court on a lot of issues?

[21:30]

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — You know, what I ask people to do, and I've charged the trustees and I've said, why don't you sit down and look at the previous Act before Bill 63 came in. You'll see that most of those authorities exist. There isn't a lot of new things that exist by way of direction or control from the ministry. By and large, the obligations are there. We want to make sure that we've got the ability to make sure that those things that we need to give direction on are done. But if you look at the existing Act, we've had situations in the past where we've said to boards, we're not approving your budget. You need to change this. You need to change that. We don't do it very often, but we've done it.

So there are a number of things that are there. We'd like to not do those kind of things at all, but we've done them. And if there is a division that refuses to take a direction, then we would not want to be left with the status quo. We'd want to be able to say to that division: you'll make this change; you'll make that change. And generally speaking, when you talk to the other divisions, it's usually an outlier, one or two divisions that aren't doing something, that aren't part of a buy-in group or whatever. So we'd like to say to those divisions: belong to the buy-in group. That's how we do business. We're not telling teachers . . . [inaudible] . . . what they do in their classroom. That's done by education experts. But we certainly think it's appropriate for the ministry, in concert with the SSBA, to say okay, we will have a 3s-type model for buying. We will have a common IT system across the province. These are the things that we can and do that should change the cost structure so that we're able to commit to resources being spent in the classroom rather than elsewhere.

Mr. Forbes: — Well I think you're making the case for the

status quo, that, you know, when you say you should read the bill because a lot of the stuff is the same. Then why don't we just keep the bill and do the fine tweaking?

I remember when Ken Krawetz used to talk about his buying club when he was president of the SSBA and how well that worked. He was very proud of that. But my point, though, is again in the power that resides within one, and that's why we have elected officials, and that's why we're all here. We're accountable to our constituents and whether they be voters and that type of thing. But I know the critic has lots of questions she wants to get on. So thanks.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Forbes, that's where we're going to agree to disagree. You're saying the status quo is . . . [inaudible] . . . position for it. I know your colleague will not want me to raise Andrew Thomson's comment, but the challenges that Andrew Thomson faced when he was the minister — and I know he was a colleague of yours at the time — the frustrations that he would've had with a board that would or wouldn't do this, or some of those things that are there, that there was not the ability within the ministry to say you can't hire two directors or you're going to do this or you're going to do that. Those are the type of things. And there's not a lot of those situations there, but there are enough of them that we have to deal with them if we want to be able to continue to commit resources to the classroom.

You know, we need to deal with the competitive things that take place in Saskatoon and Regina between the two school divisions with regard to busing. So each year, the divisions would move a little bit closer to try and compete with the other one. Well it's not an effective use of resources to say, oh well if we move it a block closer, we'll get more kids. You know, you pick something and it's the same.

So the parents make their selection for the school, based on the programs, based on the choice they need, based on whatever else, but not based on which kid gets a closer bus ride. So we think that should be something where there is a referee that goes in and says, okay, let's sit down and decide amongst the four of us what are we going to do so that a kid in Saskatoon Lakeview has the same busing rights as a kid in Regina Lakeview.

The Chair: — I recognize Ms. Beck.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay, just noting the time. Thank you to my colleague. And one of the things that my colleague noted was this still repeals a number of sections of *The Education Act* and proposes to move them into regulations. And that has been repeatedly and consistently raised as a concern.

One of those sections, under section 370, under regulations, Bill 63 provides a long list of what matters the Lieutenant Governor in Council can make to regulations. It really is a lengthy list if you look through the bill. One of these changes, in (ii), states:

(ii) prescribing the qualifications of persons employed as educational assistants and the conditions of employment and general duties of those persons.

In the current education Act, section 58 gives the responsibility

for determining the duties of educational assistants, or EAs, to the board of education and the supervising principal or teacher. Is the minister or is anyone in the ministry planning to develop provincial qualifications, job duties, or conditions of employment for educational assistants?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Do you have the section number you were referring to?

Ms. Beck: — So I'm looking at the new section 370 subsection (ii), 58.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Can you repeat which clause of 370?

Ms. Beck: — Subsection (ii) on page 370. Sorry, section 370. Oh, it's page 46. Sorry, I had my page reference wrong. Page 46, (ii).

A Member: — Yes. Towards the bottom.

Ms. Beck: — Towards the bottom.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I'm told by the legislative drafting people that both of them are reg-making authorities. And there's not a change either in the effect of the legislation or in the . . . There was no policy direction given to change it, and they're saying the effect of the Act . . . They're both reg making.

Ms. Beck: — They're both regulation making, is it?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Both regulation-making authorities is what I'm told by the officials. And there was . . .

Ms. Beck: — So regardless, I guess the question is: is there any plan to develop provincial qualifications or job duties for EAs?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I haven't had any discussion with anybody on that. I'm a fan of the EAs in our province. They do great work. We would be lost without them. I'm not aware and have not been privy to any discussion to make changes to either their qualifications, job duties, or anything else.

Ms. Beck: — So if something . . .

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Okay. I'm now told by one side of me, nor has there been. I'm looking the other direction. No.

Ms. Beck: — No. Okay, so no plans for provincial, okay, job description.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — No.

Ms. Beck: — For EAs or other . . .

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — And while we're talking about EAs, I'd like to use this opportunity to thank them for the great work that they do.

And your next question I think you're going to is, what about anybody else? And there's not. The only area where we've wrestled with qualifications on is, directors are required to have certain qualifications. And we have had, since I've been here,

situations where divisions have wished to or were unable to find a qualified person that was willing to work in their area, one of them being the CÉF [Conseil des écoles fransaskoises] earlier. They have a challenge finding somebody that's fluently bilingual. And I think they were able to resolve it, but they came and said the Act requires certain qualifications.

But this wasn't part of a direction that was given, so the answer to your question is no, we're not. There isn't a plan to change or revitalize.

I can say this, though. There may well be a direction given — obviously in conjunction with them — that would say, okay, for a school division of X number of schools, that they should have within a given area an administrative makeup that would say, okay, you should have so many superintendents and so many senior administrators, that would be an appropriate number, and possibly a proposed pay grid as well. Those are things where . . . We've been pleased that the number of administrators in the last while that have come out of central office and gone back into the schools. And we know you need to have administrators and directors, but we think it may be appropriate to have some discussion on a province-wide basis as to whether you would have a grid or a formula.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. So I did hear you say, and you did hear or anticipate my question, any other plans for provincial qualifications? A specific question about educational sign language interpreters, no plans for provincial qualifications there?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — No. I'm not seeing any nods.

Ms. Beck: — And you did note a grid for the number of administrators. Could you expand upon that, please?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Yes, I don't know how that would look like, but if you had a division of 50 schools or 20 schools, that you would say, okay, for that many within a given geographic area, a staffing profile would be I don't know what number of superintendents.

And you know, maybe more when they've got to travel more, or there may be more in different areas . . . [inaudible] . . . say as a general rule that you need so many superintendents for so many students or so many schools. And I think that's a discussion that you'd want to have with the directors of education — to try and come up with that — because, when you look at what's taken place across the province, there's some pretty significant variations.

Ms. Beck: — And if the directors don't agree on a certain number, what happens then?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I think province-wide we would be able to say to them, we should get you to come to a number.

Ms. Beck: — Is it possible that local conditions or local context would necessitate some variation in terms of the number of superintendents?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Yes.

[21:45]

Ms. Beck: — I seem to recall, you know, sitting on a board at a particular time when there was a very high number of requests from the ministry that was just consuming a lot of administrative time. And there was some duties that were necessitated to be undertaken by a superintendent because of the level of those requests from the ministry, just to use one example.

And I would suspect, if you've got a school division as large as Northern Lights for example or Chinook or the South East, that there might be some different local needs there that might be a little bit different than Regina or Saskatoon, for example.

And I guess that really is at the crux of the concerns that people have, that what this bill does is removes that ability for trustees who understand the local context, in conjunction of course with the administration, to be able to respond to the needs of their local communities. And that really is a consistent concern that has been expressed here.

And certainly if the local ratepayers are not, the local citizens are not happy with the decisions that the board makes, they have opportunity every four years to vote them out, and furthermore, not only to vote them out, but tend to have a different level of proximity with their trustees than they would with their MLA, for example. And that's something we're hearing consistently across the province.

One of the questions though, speaking of that, there was also a decision made within this bill to remove the sections relating to annual and special meetings of electors. And can you tell me about that decision?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The intention with that section would be to move that portion into regulations, so we could have discussion with the boards as to the right number of meetings. I don't know whether once a year for an annual meeting of the electors is appropriate or whether we should we give more frequent ability to have an annual meeting.

And annual meetings of the electors — you've probably gone to them — are kind of a strange type of a meeting where you elect a chairperson. And I've gone to them where the board Chair was not elected as the Chair, and they sort of go a different direction. They're sort of a special voice of the electors.

And I think we'd want to have some discussion with the boards about how those would be there or whether we would have a mechanism so that electors might be able to want to bring one at a different time or through a different process. So I think it's something we want to move to regulation, have discussion with the boards about how we'd do that.

Ms. Beck: — I would suspect that boards and perhaps ratepayers, for whom those meetings were designed, would want to have some input into that. Has there been any discussion about what democratic mechanism for the public would be put in place of those annual meetings?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We have not done a consultation on that. I think we would go to the boards and ask them what their

experience has been. I've actually gone to some of those meetings where there was a strong local issue and it became a voice for the electors to raise some specific concerns. And I've also gone to them where nobody goes to them and they're . . . [inaudible] . . . through.

So boards go to a significant expense and whatever to try and set up for those meetings. So I think it's a discussion to have as to what the mechanism should be to trigger one of those meetings and whether you need to have a certain minimum number, or whether there might be a mechanism that electors might want to use to develop a petition to have one on a different time.

I know that sometimes issues come up and electors want to raise an issue immediately to prevent a board from building a new building as they did in Saskatoon. So there may be other options, so I think it's a discussion point to have.

Ms. Beck: — The Education Scholarship Fund, there's a decision here to . . . I can't remember if the term now is wind it up or wind it down, but there is a decision made around that Education Scholarship Fund. How much money is currently in that fund?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I think it's more a matter of administering the fund. I'm not sure which of the officials is going to speak to that issue. But it was not an intention not to have the fund, but it was a question of how the fund was administered. So I'm not sure which . . .

Ms. MacRae: — Actually the intention here is an administrative one in terms of having the minister assume responsibility for the administration of the fund rather than a separate entity as currently exists.

Ms. Beck: — So how much is currently in that fund?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We can get you that. It's subject to an appropriation every year and the funds are disbursed in the ordinary manner. We had contracted the process out to, I think, an out-of-province entity. And we thought we'll do it. The advice we received from the ministry was that it could be done far cheaper in-house and with the same level of objectivity.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. There will be some transparency around the tracking of that, I think was . . .

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I would certainly expect so. You know, I don't know the criteria that are used for the various scholarships that are there, but I think we have people in the province that are as capable of making those determinations. But I agree. Your comment's valid.

Ms. Beck: — Okay, so I'm just noting the time here, and there are a few questions that I want to make sure that there's some discussions that we enter into here.

And the biggest one I guess is one of those high-level questions and that is, why now? On November 15th of last year was when we heard that Dan Perrins was going to be contracted to undertake the governance evaluation. I think the task was, what system of governance and administration is needed in Sask's K

to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education sector to achieve the outcomes established by Saskatchewan's plan for growth and the education sector strategic plan?

So this strategic plan, as many of us here, I think many of us here know that that was started back in 2014, and the plan for growth came out in 2012. I had mentioned earlier that this certainly wasn't anything that was talked about during the election. Why that gap, and why now, and why this urgency? Why the quick passage of this bill?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — You mention the plan for growth and the 2020 targets. We've made no secret; we've put those out, those are sort of there. That's the direction we're going to. We're still supportive of those. There's no change. I don't think either party campaigned on what the targets were as being a specific thing other than that we wanted to meet those targets. And we certainly do. We think they're important. We think they're important to the province as a whole and to the students that are affected by them.

We brought this forward as a budget bill because we want to deal with it and we want to deal with the issues that were there. The Premier talked about transformational change. We went through the discussion around amalgamation. The province didn't participate in that. We stepped back and said, no that's a democratic issue; we'll let the citizens decide what they want. We heard from them quite clearly that they were not looking for any wholesale or large-scale amalgamation. We also heard from them that they wanted to maintain locally elected boards. We also went ahead with the Perrins processes trying to improve and have more efficient or better governance.

But all of those things have created a lot of angst and uncertainty in the province, and by doing this now, it puts us in the position where we're sitting down with our partners, with the SSBA, with the STF, saying, okay, help us develop the regulations that are . . . [inaudible]. And we put behind us a lot of the uncertainty that's existed for the last, over one year that's there.

So what we would like to be able to say to our partners is, we have addressed the concerns that came out of the Perrins report. We've made some amendments to the bill. We think that right now we are at a point where we want to go ahead, sit down with everybody, and decide how, going forward, what education looks like in our province. I don't think it's going to look vastly different than what it does now, but it will give us the ability to say, okay, we are doing some of the things on busing, we are doing some of those things on joint procurement, some of those things that we think are significant money savers and will add to the efficiency and make it better for us to be able to commit resources to the teachers, the EAs, and the supports that are directly offered within our classrooms.

Ms. Beck: — Minister Morgan, I don't know how I can express more clearly that what I am hearing in consultation with groups across the province — again teachers, educational assistants, boards, parents — is almost the exact opposite of what you just described.

What I'm hearing is there's increased uncertainty, increased pressures, division, feelings of frustration about the lack of

consultation, and certainly, you know, I've got a book of public statements made by the SSBA, the STF, the Saskatoon Catholic School Board expressing those very things.

And so if that was the goal, I would suggest to you that that goal has not been achieved with this bill. In fact it has done exactly the opposite. And I guess that's the frustration here, is we hear that this is about respect and this is about kids and this is about improving education. And we're hearing repeatedly the concerns, very real concerns, that it's going to have the exact opposite impact.

And there are concerns that this is about ensuring that those \$60 million in cuts are exacted through the sector before we even get to the 3.5 reduction for staffing costs.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I appreciate the points that you're making. We want to try and address some of the uncertainty. We've gone for a long time where we've looked at different ways to do things, and I understand the uncertainty that exists. So by passage of this bill, it allows us to focus on these things at a regulation level, rather than at a legislative level.

And I think, you know, you and I are not necessarily hearing all of the things. From the submission from Ile-a-la-Crosse, "Governance costs could be lowered in other ways, some of which might be set at the provincial level."

Lloydminster Public:

While school division finances are audited and boards are held to a high level of financial accountability student learning, which is our core business, is not monitored with same laser-sharp focus.

Northwest School Division, "Changes in legislation — setting outcomes and standards — Do it!" So then they go on to say, "Consistency/Standardization, Place out of scope on provincial grid." Then it says, "As trustees we would welcome provincial guidelines (or regulations) that would establish fair and equitable rates for remuneration and for expenses while conducting board business."

Prairie Spirit School Division:

It is the belief of the Prairie Spirit [School] Board of Education that each of the concerns [outlined] could be addressed through legislative changes, without the disruption of major governance changes throughout the province.

So when you go through them, board after board after board — and I don't want to use up all your time reading from the submissions — that's the messages that we heard from them. Most of them when you talk to them individually are, as you said, good, competent, hardworking. But there are the outliers. There is a need to make joint decisions, and we want to be able to do that. We want to be able to do that in conjunction with them. I would say to the EAs — some of them are here tonight — we support and value their work. The changes that are in Bill 63 do not change anything for an EA. They don't change anything for a teacher in the classroom, with the exception that the binding arbitration provision doesn't exist anymore.

[22:00]

So by and large, there is not changes that will affect the day-to-day operations of our schools. What will be there might be a common boundary for busing. What might be there is, oh, well this is how we're ordering roofing material. Oh, it's going to come from a standard supplier in Wadena or whatever the bidding process has generated. Those are the type of things that we're looking to achieve with this Act.

So I'm hoping by passing this and working as quickly as we can with the SSBA and with our partners that we're able to eject some calm, and that we go back to the system that we have where teachers are respected, where students are given a first-class education, and that we continue to meet and monitor and move the goals that are set in the sector plan.

Ms. Beck: — With respect, Minister Morgan, nothing about . . . So those were submissions that were made prior to this bill, so prior to anyone seeing the bill. I didn't hear anything in there that would suggest that people were asking for whole sections of *The Education Act* to be repealed and put into the regulations. This also was consultation made at a time where they had the elimination of appointed or of elected trustees hanging over their head, the spectre of amalgamations, including up to one school division. And what they were signalling was their willingness to continue what they have already been doing, and that is work collaboratively towards finding efficiencies.

There's nothing there that suggests that there was a requirement to take vast sections out of the Act and put them into regulations and to award the minister and council, really, a lot of power. And that's the message certainly that we are hearing repeatedly out there, and it's frustrating that that message isn't being heard.

So a number of reasons have been given. So one of the reasons that you noted for this change, I guess I'll say first, it's always been my belief and supported by some others at least that you don't make rules for the outliers. That's not how we create policy. Anyway, speaking of the outliers, what exactly about Bill 63 would allow you to stop paying for more than one director at the same time that's different than your powers in the old bill?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — If we realized that a director has been terminated and they're contemplating rehiring, we would probably go to that board before that decision went too far down the road and say, you're not having two exist at the same time. That's the type of thing that I think is an appropriate step for the ministry to take, is to say, oh, well we heard that that was on the agenda, and it was. And we had no way of preventing that from taking place. So it's happened. We're paying it out of money that ought be in a classroom.

I appreciate the point you're making about outliers. I don't think it's a matter of saying it's outliers. I think there's two issues. There's one where somebody has done something that would make them an outlier, but there's also the issue of wanting to find some standardization and some common procurement in some of the things that we think are significant savings.

Those are the things that took place in the Ministry of Health. We went to the health regions and said, okay we're going to create 3sHealth which will allow us to do joint buying. We can't do that with the school divisions. In fact when we asked the school divisions: oh, we're buying with so-and-so or we want to do this or whatever, whatever is there. We think it's appropriate for us to sit down with them and say, okay what are you buying, what are your needs on this, and looking for the most effective and cost-effective way of procurement. There was a variety of different ways of doing it. There is one division used to buy all its supplies at the beginning of the year, then they knew they were out. So they were warehousing large amounts of paper products and whatever else, rather than having a standing order with a specific supplier so that you could order as you needed things.

Ms. Beck: — I don't know that the ministry wants to get into the minutia of where you buy your toilet paper.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I don't think I want to be in that minutia, but I want to know that they're doing it at an effective rate with everything that they buy. That is where the health regions have saved literally millions of dollars, and we're saying to the school division . . . And do you know something else? That's what the school divisions are saying: yes, we can do this; we'll sit down and work with you on it.

Some of the school divisions are already doing it in significant numbers; some of them are not. Some of the larger ones that are being very effective on it . . . You and I both came from very large school divisions that were highly efficient, but there's adjacent ones that may not be or ones that are further . . . I shouldn't use the word adjacent because I don't want to tar anybody with it, but we think that some of the expertise that exists in those should be shared with, and the others should accept that.

Ms. Beck: — What precludes them in the existing education Act from doing that?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Nothing precludes them from doing it. They're just not doing it.

Ms. Beck: — Okay, so back to your example of the two directors. You know, I'm not sure how many times I've heard this but it's been a number, and I know that there was an article in the paper about it. Could there be a situation where you have, there's a director who has been hired, who has a compensation package, a termination package, where there's significant concerns about the performance of that director. Would you tell the board to continue with that director and not pay the compensation package, or would you tell them to hire another and break the contract with the compensation package? I mean, these are very real issues.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — What I wouldn't let them do is if they chose to terminate one and hire another one, you realize you were not able to hire one. But what I wouldn't let them do is rehire the first one again, which is what they did. So then now they have two directors working in the same division.

Ms. Beck: — Well it seems rather heavy handed to legislate a whole bill around that.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Can you imagine having two directors hired by two different board meetings working in the same division? That's the problem we're trying to address. Why would you want to have two directors, paying for two directors, as well as having paid one of them a bunch of severance as well and then rehire?

Ms. Beck: — It's almost as hard to imagine as paying \$11 million extra for two parcels of land. These decisions get made, and you don't make policy for those outliers, Minister Morgan, and that's the frustration here.

What about this bill will allow . . . Busing has been brought up a lot and there have been, you know, joint projects looked into between school boards to look at reducing busing costs. What exactly about this bill will allow you to set busing limits and reduce busing costs?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Because right now, they're competing. Each one moves . . . [inaudible] . . . and each one has got a separate contract. So you've got bus A and bus B from the two divisions going up and down the same street picking up kids. So why wouldn't you have a common busing contract that you only have one? You tell me. You were on the board. I was on the board.

Ms. Beck: — Minister Morgan, why is it difficult in the city of Regina to have joint busing between the public and the separate system?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I don't have it in Saskatoon right now. We've got two different contracts. So I think you need to be able to have the directive.

The authorities that are given in this Act are exactly the same as the minister would have under *The Regional Health Services Act*, so they are no different than done under the Ministry of Health. In addition to that, we've maintained the right of elected boards to continue. We have, under this piece of legislation, the duties, rights, and responsibilities of the board subject to the oversight of the ministry. We'll continue exactly word for word the way they did before.

So there was not any wholesale or significant changes. But if there is a situation where the divisions aren't agreeing on having shared busing, then they will. If there's a situation where they're hiring and paying two directors, we'll look for a legal solution. So those are the type of situations that we want to avoid having.

Ms. Beck: — But then we go to court and pay court costs. So what is happening now in Regina Public is they're moving busing distances back because they have \$9.5 million to find in cuts to their system.

And I will use that specific case again. They were told to cut 9.5 before the 3.5 reduction for costs, for staffing. They announced some measures, some very difficult measures to some very important programs, and it was suggested to them that no, they cannot make that decision or we will not approve your budget.

Where is the list of what boards can and cannot cut to find these enormous cuts in their budgets?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We haven't said that they have to. We've said, sit down and work it out together. We haven't prescribed something. What we're saying is, we need to find something that's accommodating and they're there. I would say this to you. I'd ask you this question: how far do you think kids should have to walk to school?

Ms. Beck: — Is that really where we're going to go?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I'm asking you that question.

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Morgan, people are watching this. They are tired of these sort of shenanigans, frankly.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Well I'll tell you where you're at with it. What you're on record as saying is, you want to have walking buses where the kids walk as a crew. That's where you're at . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well when I've got a five- or a six-year-old that's got to go several blocks . . .

Ms. Beck: — That was in 2007, Minister Morgan.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Is that, is that . . .

Ms. Beck: — And you are going that far back. You are reaching that far back. While we're at it, do you want to go into this?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — If you want to say, you've changed your mind . . .

The Chair: — Order. Both of you.

Ms. Beck: — This is an important bill that many people in this province are concerned about and, frankly, to stoop to that level is really appalling.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — [Inaudible] . . . If you want to distance yourself from the position that you had in 2007, do it. It's been on your website. The information that you have that you support walking buses is one that's abundantly clear.

Ms. Beck: — I support them today, but that has nothing to do with this argument here.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Well we're talking about buses. You raised the issue that you don't think we should be involved in buses. I'm asking you how far the kids should walk to school. What I'm saying is, I don't want to make that decision; I want the divisions to make that decision. But I want it to be a common decision across the four large boards.

Ms. Beck: — You are creating division, using ad hominem attacks where you should be taking responsibility.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — If you don't want to take a position as to how far somebody should walk to school, then we will ask the four divisions how far those students should have to walk. So we'll work with the divisions to try and find a common distance for them so they are not competing with each other. That's all we've said.

Ms. Beck: — Minister Morgan, you can continue to make

personal attacks. I'm afraid it reflects more on someone else than it does on me. I am asking questions that people around this province want to hear the answer to. To dig back to 2007, to a walking school bus — which I stand by; is a good idea — but really to go there when we have the enormity of this bill in front of us and we are looking at passage of this bill tomorrow is appalling.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I think what we want to talk about is exactly the type of issue where boards do different things, and we are trying to get to a standard or a common point. And I respect the position that you've taken with walking buses. I'm okay with that.

But when we're talking to the divisions, we can't have one division say, we're doing this; another one doing that; and having students migrating back and forth between the divisions and divisions competing on that. Busing is a significant and expensive portion of our budget. We expect them to sit down and work something out, and I have every confidence that they will.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Referring to section 4.02(1):

The minister may, from time to time, give a written directive to a board of education or the conseil scolaire to take any action that the minister considers necessary [any action that the minister considers necessary] in relation to the operations of the board of education or the conseil scolaire, as the case may be.

(2) Without limiting the generality of subsection (1) . . .

Can you explain why the language “without limiting the generality of subsection (1)” is used?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — It's a legal term saying that you speak in general terms but you are allowed to give some specific examples.

Ms. Beck: — So it opens up to other powers not prescribed?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — It would allow the ministry to give direction to a board to participate in a joint buying program, the ability to give a board a direction that they don't rehire somebody that they've terminated, and some of the things that we've talked about before.

Ms. Beck: — So sort of limitless power, undefined scope of power here.

[22:15]

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — No. It's exactly the same as the Minister of Health has under the regional health authorities Act. So the legislation, the powers prescribed would be exactly the same. And the minister in that case allowed the regional health authorities full discretion to try and do everything else, and I suspect that would be the same.

I don't think the province of Saskatchewan wants to be involved in the day-to-day operations of the school. But we want to make sure that the divisions make good decisions,

consistent decisions, and that they work together. They work together when they buy things. They work together when they bus students, that they have full buses instead of half-empty buses. But also at the same time giving options for school boards who wish to do unique and inventive things.

For example, South West School Division has got a provision where the children were on the bus for a very long time. It was a remote, sparsely populated area of the province. So what they decided to do so the kids did not spend as much time on the bus is they lengthened the school day, and they went to a four-day week.

They found that it was better for the kids because the kids weren't on the bus so long. They also found out that it had some significant savings because they weren't operating and paying to heat and light the school. The parents liked it for a variety of other reasons, including that the kids were home on the Friday. So they spread that out to a number of other areas, and I understand are looking at doing it in other schools across there.

So I don't think we want to stop those kind of discussions to take place between parents, school community councils, the division, and the employees within those zones. If they've worked out some alternate things on their own, those are the type of things that we want to foster, encourage, and expand on, and do more things with. That's the goal that we feel is necessary in our province, is to recognize the autonomy, recognize the things that they do, but at the same time we expect them to have the economies and efficiencies that we're asking them to find.

I'm sorry, I'll apologize if that's an unnecessarily long answer.

Ms. Beck: — Well I'm just trying to follow the logic through that answer because what you've just described is how boards, as they exist today, work in their local context — knowing their local context, knowing their local families, knowing the area that they work in, the people that they represent, how they work to find efficiencies in their systems. And that is exactly the type of concerns that are being brought forward, that the local autonomy to make those type of decisions . . . You know, maybe you could . . . If there was a provincial mandate that you could not have four-day school weeks, that wouldn't allow them to make that type of decision. And that is exactly the kind of concerns that are being brought forward. And I don't understand how anything about that story prescribes a need to take powers of boards out of the Act and put them into regulations.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — There's great examples that we use that show boards are doing really good things. We want to continue to foster and support that. However we have boards that aren't, boards that need some assistance. Northern Lights, not paying overtime, not paying stat pay two years in a row. I don't have an answer for that. I don't have an answer for those employees.

And I know that we'll probably end up being asked by them for a special warrant to cover off some of those expenses. I don't want to deprive the students of that, but I don't want that to happen again. I want to be able to say to the director up there, you can't have a system that doesn't work; you need to do that.

So those are the things that we want to try and help, to try and make sure that those type of things . . . [inaudible] . . . I don't want to see 59 people going to Florida. I'd rather that money get spent in a classroom, and I think you would too. I'm glad that Chinook School Division has been able to move 25 people out of the administrative office back into the classroom. Those are the things that we want to foster and improve and continue to work on. But some of the things that are there, if we need to be directive on, then we need to have that authority. Andrew Thomson raised the issue, and I know you don't like me raising Andrew Thomson, but it is a recurring long-term program. I have had the issues for five years. An issue here comes up, an issue there comes up, and you are not able to address it, short of giving, you know . . . We need to have the authority to do it, and we want to encourage the boards to work together. We've got some great boards with some great ideas in the province. We look to them to give some leadership.

The Chair: — Excuse me. It's my understanding that we have an agreement to vote this this evening. We have 67 clauses to go through plus some amendments to deal with. So if the committee is ready we can start to proceed with that.

Ms. Beck: — May I have one more question?

The Chair: — One more.

Ms. Beck: — Minister Morgan, you have the right to deny, not approve budgets.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Are you asking for a yes or a no?

Ms. Beck: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The budgets have to be approved every year by June.

Ms. Beck: — So would that not be a more effective, less draconian measure to use to deal with the outliers than changing the whole education Act?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — No, that's when it happens, once a year. You'll say to somebody, oh you've got to use reserves, or you can't use reserves, whatever that is. It's largely a budgeting exercise. If somebody's not participating in a buying group, if somebody's not working through things as we expect that they will, those are the things that we think need to be in the legislation.

The Chair: — Okay. Clause 1, short title, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Ms. Beck: — On division. I'll be calling for all of them on division.

The Chair: — On division.

[Clause 1 agreed to on division.]

The Chair: — Can we forego the hand vote on every one if it's

called on division? Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Okay, agreed. Clause 2, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — No.

[Clause 2 agreed to on division.]

Clause 3

The Chair: — Clause 3. I recognize Mr. Nerlien.

Mr. Nerlien: — Mr. Chair, I move we amend clause 3 of the printed bill:

Strike out the definition of “board of education” in section 2 of *The Education Act, 1995*, as being enacted by Clause 3 of the printed bill, and substitute the following:

“**board of education**’ means the board of education of a school division that is elected pursuant to *The Local Government Election Act, 2015*; (<< commission scolaire >>”).

The Chair: — Will the committee take the amendment as read? Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Chair: — On division.

[Clause 3 as amended agreed to on division.]

[Clauses 4 to 20 inclusive agreed to on division.]

Clause 21

The Chair: — Clause 21. I recognize Mr. Nerlien.

Mr. Nerlien: — Mr. Chair, I propose that we vote down clause 21 because I plan to move new clause 21 after all the clauses have been read.

The Chair: — Is clause 21 agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Chair: — Clause 21 fails.

[Clause 21 not agreed to.]

[Clauses 22 to 37 inclusive agreed to on division.]

Clause 38

The Chair: — Clause 38. I recognize Mr. Nerlien.

Mr. Nerlien: — Mr. Chair, I move we amend clause 38 of the printed bill:

Amend subsection 180(5) of *The Education Act, 1995*, as being enacted by subsection (2) of Clause 38 of the printed Bill, by striking out “A pupil” and substituting “Notwithstanding clause 85(1)(g), a pupil”.

The Chair: — Will the committee take the amendment as read?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[22:30]

Ms. Beck: — I just have a question about this one.

The Chair: — Go ahead.

Ms. Beck: — This is a bilingual bill. Is there a French version of this clause?

The Chair: — Yes, there is. Do you want me to read it?

Ms. Beck: — Well maybe. I’ll take your word for it.

The Chair: — Yes, it’s here.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Is clause 38 as amended agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Chair: — On division. I think I said carried on that. I did.

[Clause 38 as amended agreed to on division.]

[Clauses 39 to 50 inclusive agreed to on division.]

Clause 51

The Chair: — Clause 51. I recognize Mr. Nerlien.

Mr. Nerlien: — Mr. Chair, I propose that we vote down clause 51 because I plan to move new clause 51 after all the clauses have been read.

The Chair: — Is clause 51 agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Chair: — Clause 51 is defeated.

[Clause 51 not agreed to.]

[Clauses 52 to 67 inclusive agreed to on division.]

The Chair: — I recognize Mr. Nerlien.

Clauses 21 to 23

Mr. Nerlien: — Mr. Chair, I move we add the following clauses after clause 20 of the printed bill:

“Section 87 amended

21 Clause 87(1)(d) is amended by adding “subject to the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council,” **before** “enter”.

“Sections 87.1 to 87.8 repealed

22 Sections 87.1 to 87.8 are repealed.

“Sections 89 and 90 repealed

23 Sections 89 and 90 are repealed”.

The Chair: — Will the committee take the amendments as read?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Is it the pleasure of the committee to agree?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Chair: — On division? Carried, on division.

[Clauses 21 to 23 inclusive agreed to on division.]

The Chair: — I recognize Mr. Nerlien.

Clause 51

Mr. Nerlien: — Mr. Chair, I move we add the following clause after clause 50 of the printed bill:

“New section 283.1

51 The following section is added after section 283:

‘Authority of the Provincial Auditor

283.1 For the purposes of conducting an examination, review, or audit pursuant to *The Provincial Auditor Act*, the Provincial Auditor for Saskatchewan has, in relation to the board of education or the conseil scolaire, as the case may be, all the rights and powers set out in subsection 24(1) of that Act”.

The Chair: — Will the committee take the amendment as read?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Does the committee agree?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — On division. Carried on division.

[Clause 51 agreed to on division.]

The Chair: — Okay. There is one schedule, section 64. Is the schedule agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — On division. Carried on division.

[Schedule agreed to on division.]

The Chair: — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: *The Education Amendment Act, 2017*. This is a bilingual bill. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried on division. I would ask a member to move that we report Bill No. 63, *The Education Amendment Act, 2017/Loi modificative de 2017 sur l'éducation* with amendment. Mr. Docherty. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried on division.

Okay. That is the end of it. Okay. We have completed our business of the day. I would ask a member to move adjournment. Ms. Wilson. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Agreed. We stand adjourned to the call of the Chair.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank all of the members that were here today, the staff that have come today, and I know we have a number of members of the public. This is a democratic process, and I want to thank people for coming out and being courteous. And we are mindful of their views that may not necessarily be ours. We thank them as well.

The Chair: — Ms. Beck.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to express my thanks for your time this evening, for all of your officials, for our guests, for committee members, for Hansard, my support team, and my colleagues who are here today. I think I'll get a chance to make some additional remarks, but I do sincerely appreciate your time and your effort.

And I can't help but express my sadness about where we're at tonight, and I think I've hopefully made that very clear. But it's not about my personal sadness. It's about the voices of those who we did not have opportunity to hear from when the opportunity to speak to committee was voted down. I suspect we'll continue to hear from them. But for tonight, I recognize the time, and I do want to sincerely express my appreciation for your presence here this evening.

The Chair: — Okay. Thank you to everyone. And we are adjourned as of 10:42.

[The committee adjourned at 22:42.]