



STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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Mr. Todd Goudy
Melfort

Mr. Warren Steinley
Regina Walsh Acres

Hon. Nadine Wilson
Saskatchewan Rivers

[The committee met at 19:00.]

The Chair: — Welcome to the Human Services Committee meeting. With us this evening we have myself, Dan D’Autremont, as Chair; MLA [Member of Legislative Assembly] Larry Doke; MLA Muhammad Fiaz; MLA Todd Goudy; MLA Warren Steinley; and the Hon. MLA Nadine Wilson; and sitting in for the opposition we have MLA Carla Beck.

**General Revenue Fund
Education
Vote 5**

Subvote (ED01)

The Chair: — Tonight we will be considering the estimates for the Ministry of Education. We now begin our consideration of vote 5, Education, central management and services, subvote (ED01). Minister Wyant is here with his officials. Mr. Minister, please introduce your officials and make your opening remarks.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I don’t have any additional opening remarks save what I had indicated at the last meeting. To my right, Deputy Minister Rob Currie is with me, and a number of officials who are sitting behind me who will introduce themselves as they come up if they’re asked to answer any questions.

Before I do begin though, Mr. Chair, there were a number of inquiries that were made when we last sat in committee. And if it’s all right, I’ll read some of those into the record to answer the inquiries that Ms. Beck had made at the last sitting of this committee.

So further to the April 30th, 2008 discussion at this committee, I’ll provide several pieces of information that were requested the last time that I was here. There was a question that was asked regarding the number of FTEs [full-time equivalent] in subvote (01) which required some clarification. The number provided was 272, but that number reflects the FTEs in the ministry. The number of FTEs in subvote (01) is actually 59.7 and remained unchanged from the previous year.

There was also a question with respect to how many child care centres or homes have a licence to operate 24-7 and how many of those spaces would be available in a 24-hour or non-standard hours situation. So there is one centre and seven homes that will provide 24-hour care. There are six centres and eight homes that will provide extended-hour care, and there are two centres that provided extended-hour care on a seasonal basis which would be May to October.

There was also a question with respect to updated numbers which might be available for the number of ECEs [early childhood educator] level 1, 2, and 3, and the statistics on wages for those ECEs, the number of ECEs in the province, and the current employment at each of those levels.

So as at January 31, 2016 the number of ECEs trained and employed in licensed centre-based care: there were no certified ECEs, or the number of non-certified ECEs was 1,094. The

number of ECE level 1 was 857. The number of ECE level 2 was 576, and the number of ECE level 3 was 697, for a total of 3,224. So within that total, there’s some staff that worked less than 65 hours and therefore do not require ECE certification. Some staff are in the process of getting their credentials assessed or are working toward that certification.

So with respect to wages — and that means the hourly wage for full-time positions — for the non-certified ECEs, the number was 1,378. For ECE level 1, it was 1,474. For ECE level 2, it was 1,766. And for ECE level 3, it was 2,616.

Ms. Beck had requested to know how many children were screened through the in-hospital birth questionnaire that resulted in KidsFirst placement/screening for positive support. So 2017-18 year-end data for the in-hospital birth questionnaire is not yet available as the year has just ended. But in 2016-17 the KidsFirst program received 1,251 IHBQ [in-hospital birth questionnaire] referrals. Of those, 107 families were admitted to the KidsFirst program.

The remaining 1,144 referrals were not admitted to the KidsFirst targeted program for the following reasons: 36 per cent lived outside the KidsFirst targeted program service area and should have been referred to other programs like KidsFirst regional program. The KidsFirst targeted program provides services only in The Battlefords, Meadow Lake, Moose Jaw, Nipawin, Prince Albert, Regina, Saskatoon, Yorkton, and off reserve in the entire northern part of the province.

Twenty per cent were a result of KidsFirst targeted program unavailable to make contact with the family. Eighteen per cent were due to families refusing the KidsFirst service. Twenty-two per cent were not a good fit for KidsFirst services and should’ve been referred to other programming, or may have already have been engaged with appropriate programming at that point in time; for example, they may be receiving child protection services. Four per cent of the IHBQ were already participating in the KidsFirst targeted program and would not need to be referred again. And the final point was that KidsFirst is a voluntary program, and families who are not engaged from an IHBQ referral are also welcome to engage in the program.

There was a report back on details for debt service charge and the maintenance interest breakdown that I had mentioned in the last meeting. I reported to the House on the breakdown of maintenance and interest for the P3 [public-private partnership] schools. At this time the information I provide is all that was available. I’m going to provide some further information in writing through the committee when that other information is available.

So unless there’s any clarifications that any committee member would like, we’re certainly prepared to answer those or proceed to other questioning, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — Mr. Minister, will you be submitting those answers that you had said you would provide the documents later on?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Yes.

The Chair: — [Inaudible] . . . being tabled?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Yes.

The Chair: — Okay, thank you. Any questions? Ms. Beck.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Minister, and thank you to your officials for joining us here this evening and committee members, Hansard, and all the folks that are here tonight to make this happen.

Just one follow-up question with regard to the last piece, Minister Wyant, that you noted with regard to the P3 debt servicing charges. You indicated that there was some other information that would be forthcoming. Can you just give some details with regard to the nature of that information?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — The breakdown between interest and maintenance in the out years, I don't have that information. That'll be provided in future budgets.

Ms. Beck: — In future budgets, okay. All right. So I'm going to start with subvote (ED03). I just wanted to note there was a press release that accompanied the budget, a Ministry of Education press release that noted that school divisions will receive \$1.87 billion in school operating funding for this year or for the upcoming year. It also states that this is a 1.6 per cent increase over last year.

And I just wanted to clarify what is included in that 1.87 billion from subvote (ED03), what's not included, and ask if there's funding from other subvotes that are included in that figure.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So the \$30 million — I hope this answers your question — is added to the budget. That's on the school division year, and that's what represents the 1.6 per cent increase. Did you want a breakdown of that number?

Ms. Beck: — Well, I'm just noting that the (ED03), for example, I'm just wondering how the \$1.87 billion in operation funding for the upcoming year, how that number was arrived at. It doesn't configure exactly with (ED03) vote, and I'm just wondering which allocations make up that 1.87.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Donna Johnson will . . .

Ms. Johnson: — Good evening, Donna Johnson. So I believe what you're asking is for an explanation of the \$1.87 billion that we've talked about as being the school divisions' operating grant for '18-19, and how does that compare to the 1.801 billion that's identified in (ED03). Essentially the difference that we're dealing with is the timing difference, with the 1.801 being the government fiscal year. It includes five-twelfths of the school divisions' '17-18 budget and seven-twelfths of the school divisions' '18-19 budget. So the 1.87 billion is the full amount of the school divisions' '18-19 budget, which starts on September 1st of 2018.

So what we have here with the 1.801 is a blend of five-twelfths of the school divisions' '17-18 budget and seven-twelfths of the '18-19 budget, which is \$30 million higher than their '17-18 budget was. So when you look at the increment, of that \$30 million increment, 17 and a half million of that is sitting in this

1.801, and the remainder will show up in the next government cycle.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you for clarifying. And I just wondered if we had any updated figure for the number of students enrolled in the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] system in the province.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — The enrolment numbers that we have are as of September 30th, and those numbers haven't changed. And the projections for '18-19 for September haven't changed.

Ms. Beck: — The projection is for how many additional students over last year?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So as of September 2017 the population was 171,542, and the projected enrolment for September of '18 will be 174,278. So that would be a difference of, or the variance of 2,735.

[19:15]

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. I'm going to move specifically now into some of the allocations, looking first at the allocation for achievement and operational support. What exactly is funded with this allocation?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I can read out the program descriptions, what's included in the amount that's set out in the estimate if you'd like . . . what's in the program.

So part of the program summary, there's infrastructure, there's priority action team, education funding, northern education, office planning and reporting, student achievement and administration, assessment, student supports. There's programs, curriculum, federal-provincial agreement. There's the ISSI [invitational shared services initiative], general proficiency awards, the sector technology and network services, the business and technology solutions, data value and interpretation, student and educator services, information management and support, and the teacher regulatory board.

Ms. Beck: — How do these programs that you just listed, how do they benefit the ed sector plan goals? What support do they provide towards that goal, those goals?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — That was a broad comment. They all provide support to the sector plan in various ways.

Ms. Beck: — Part of the reason for my question, I note that the allocation for this . . . funding for this allocation has steadily declined over the past several years. I think back in 2014 the amount in this allocation was \$34 million, thirty-four and a quarter million dollars, and we're down now to 26.4. I'm just wondering why the reduction, the significant reduction to that allocation.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I'll provide some more detail to this, but generally the decrease is primarily as a result of the elimination of the general proficiency awards program as well as some general operating reductions. There's a \$3.8 million restatement on the First Nations and Métis Education Achievement Fund from the achievement and operational support subprogram to the school operating program. So that money was moved across

to the school operating subprogram.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. Moving now on to school operating allocation. The first question: is there any of the federal money for early childhood education present in this subvote, or in the allocation rather?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So the operational support for early years is in subvote (08).

Ms. Beck: — In its entirety?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — That's right.

Ms. Beck: — Okay, thank you. Do you have a figure on how much was collected in education property tax last year, in the most recent year?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Okay. There's still some reconciliation that's going on, but on the government year it was \$680 million for '16-17, and the budgeted EPT [education property tax] for '17-18 has been 746.9 on the government year.

Ms. Beck: — The previous figure, that's on the government year as well?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Yes.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. What percentage of the total allocation for school operating funding is provided by EPT in this year and last year?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So on the government year for '16-17, the government's share was 64 per cent, and the EPT was 36. For '17-18, the government's share falls to 59.9 per cent and the EPT at 40.1 per cent.

Ms. Beck: — Sorry, the latter figure, was that . . . That's this budget year? Or that was the previous budget year?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — '17-18 government year.

Ms. Beck: — And this year is 64, 36.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — '16-17 was 64 and 36; '17-18 is 59.9 and 40.1.

Ms. Beck: — I recall when the changes were made to how EPT was collected and remitted, there were some concerns that were expressed by divisions with regard to the transparency. I'm just wondering if boards are aware of the amount of EPT that's collected within their local jurisdiction. Has that been communicated to them?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — That information isn't generally provided to the school divisions.

Ms. Beck: — Are there any school divisions that have retained the right to collect EPT locally?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — There are three divisions that have chosen to do that. I'll just give you the three names. They were Christ the Teacher Roman Catholic Separate School Division, Light of

Christ Roman Catholic Separate School Division, and St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division. We have received correspondence, I believe, from the balance of the Catholic school divisions in the province requesting the same for next year.

Ms. Beck: — Do you have the projections in the total student enrolment from K to 12? Do you have a projection broken down between public and separate school divisions? Maybe while you're getting that, I'll just ask the follow-up as well: students projected to attend private, independent, and historical high schools as well.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I'll just give you the historical high school enrolments as of September 30th. The total number for '16-17 was 655. The projected enrolment for '17-18 . . . Sorry, the enrolment for '17-18 was 671. I think that's right. The projected enrolment increase in the public school division, the projected enrolment increase for this fall will be 1.4 per cent; and in the Catholic school divisions it's 2.1 per cent.

Did you want the breakdown in the numbers of students?

[19:30]

Ms. Beck: — Sure, if you've got it there.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So the projections for K to 12 in the public schools is . . . or pre-K [pre-kindergarten] to 12 is 132,774; and in the Catholic school divisions the total is 39,836.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. Do those amounts include associate schools?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Yes, those ones include the associate schools.

Ms. Beck: — Any number for the private independent schools?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — For the qualified independent schools, the total number enrolment as of September 30th, '17 was 834. And we don't have a projection for the fall yet.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. I think that Ms. Johnson touched on this already, but last year the cut to operational funding was announced in the budget as a \$22 million cut, which actually was a \$54 million cut, but was presented on the government's fiscal year rather than on the divisions' fiscal year. This year the decision was made to allocate the \$30 million increase to the school divisions' fiscal year. I'm just wondering why the change?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I hope this answers your question. But as you recall, we had announced seven and a half million dollars in in-year funding in February so that school divisions could start ramping up and make sure that they knew that the resources were going to be there in the fall. And then of course the \$30 million announcement was made in the budget on the school year, but the seven and a half million dollars in the in-year funding.

Ms. Beck: — And that \$30 million starts to flow in September. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So the school divisions received their share of the seven and a half million dollars in February, in-year funding, and then the \$30 million will flow out over the school year.

Ms. Beck: — In September? Okay. The \$7.5 million, was it allocated based on the . . . just flow through the funding model, or was it allocated in a different way?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — No, it was all provided directly through the funding model.

Ms. Beck: — Funding model. Okay. Was there any conditionality attached to that 7.5?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Just to clarify my last answer in terms of the seven and a half million dollars, it was flowed out pursuant to two elements of the funding model, base instruction and supports for learning. So just to clarify.

Ms. Beck: — So that was the conditionality. It had to flow into those two areas, is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — That's right. We had some conversations with the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association] about that.

Ms. Beck: — Is there conditionality attached to the new funding?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — That will all flow out through the funding model, and there's no conditionality except for the . . . As you know, we removed some conditionality in the funding in this year's budget, but generally it all flows unconditionally save for . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . So you'll know that funding for pre-kindergarten in associate schools remains conditional through the model, right? But apart from that, the funding that flows out is unconditional.

Ms. Beck: — In some of the communication around that partial backfilling of the funding, it's been stated that this funding would allow for the hiring of, for example, 400 new teachers. This has been the subject of some concern for folks in the sector, and I'm just wondering how that number of 400 teachers was arrived at.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So that number of 400 is really based on the average educator's salary, and that includes teachers and EAs [educational assistants]. And so that's what the equivalent number of people we would typically fund with that amount of money if it was all used to hire supports for the teachers and EAs. So that's really just kind of an average educator's salary.

Ms. Beck: — I guess the concern that's been expressed is that this has inflated expectations within divisions. It doesn't actually match the ability of boards to fund that many additional teachers. I'm just wondering if you're hearing those concerns and if there's a response to that.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I haven't heard that. At least I haven't heard it. But again it's the average educator's salary, and so whether that's created expectations, I can't tell you that. I haven't heard that. But it was just really a kind of a general

number with respect to how much support could be retained by employing seven and a half million dollars, but remembering it was unconditional funding. So whether it was used for supports in the classroom or not, that was up to the school divisions to decide how they were going to employ that, use those funds.

Ms. Beck: — Right. I guess I'll state it one more time and then I'll leave it. Just the concern is that the expectation, perhaps from parents or others, is that boards would be able to hire this number of teachers, for example, and that that sets up an expectation that they're simply not able to deliver on. So I'll leave it at that.

There's been some talk of funding for growth, and in fact some talk of perhaps an upcoming announcement with regard to that. Can you update me on where we're at in terms of an interim funding for growth? I think we've noted there'll be a 2,700 increase in students year over year.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well what I've said publicly is that we're going to look at the projections, the enrolment projections for the fall, and have an ongoing conversation within government with respect to further supports. So no decisions have been made. There's been no formal conversations within government in terms of further or another mid-year adjustment to the funding formula or to the amounts that are going to be distributed. But all I've indicated is we'll look at those enrolment projections and make some decisions. But no decisions have been made as of yet.

Ms. Beck: — When might boards expect that decision to be made?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I'm going to have a conversation with my colleagues in the near future. So I won't put a date on it, and I won't commit to any additional funding. But in due course we will be having those conversations and making that decision.

Ms. Beck: — With regard to the backfill, how many divisions will see an increase to funding this year?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — On the school division year, 24 school divisions will see an increase and three will not.

Ms. Beck: — Do you have it broken down which three will not?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Sure. Creighton School Division 111, Living Sky School Division 202, and Prince Albert Roman Catholic School Division no. 6. I should just point out that the principle reason for that is either flat or declining enrolment in those school divisions.

Ms. Beck: — Do you have numbers on the percentage of First Nations, Métis students within those three school divisions?

[19:45]

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I don't have any exact numbers with respect to those school divisions, principally because those students self declare. So I wouldn't have exact numbers of First Nations and Métis kids attending those school divisions. Right? Yes.

Ms. Beck: — Do you have self-declared numbers?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — We have those numbers. We just don't have them with us, Ms. Beck. So we can provide that information to you. In those three school divisions, is that . . . Just to be clear.

Ms. Beck: — Yes, that would be great. With regard to funding for vulnerability factors, can you just remind me which factors are included in vulnerability factors?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Some of those in terms of in the supports for learning component, a vulnerability includes low income, transient, children in foster care, and student refugee data. That would include some of that.

In terms of vulnerability there would be, you know, low income, lone parent, transient, foster care, student refugees would be the majority of it.

Ms. Beck: — While we're on student refugee, the funding for Syrian refugees, is that expired now, the federal government support?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — We didn't receive any direct support from the federal government with respect to Syrian refugees in education.

Ms. Beck: — The provincial government support then? There's no additional funds that are forwarded for Syrian refugees specifically?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Not from the federal government.

Ms. Beck: — Provincially?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Just to clarify, there was two years and that funding has expired now and they're all dealt with in the supports for learning category within the budget.

Ms. Beck: — Going back just for a second with regard to the divisions and increase and decrease to funding, could you provide a table with regard to the allocation for the 27 school divisions?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — We do publish that on the website, so it is available.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. With regard to additional supports for students with additional or intensive needs, how is that additional funding allocated to school divisions?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — We get the information with respect to those categories of vulnerability from different data sets. And so that funding is made available based on that information through the funding formula.

Ms. Beck: — On a per-student basis or percentage allocation?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — It's based on the underlying demographic information that we receive.

Ms. Beck: — Broken down by school division or broadly over

the 27 school divisions?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — By specific geographic area.

Ms. Beck: — So 27 geographic areas or are there fewer geographic areas that we're looking at?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — By community. So it would be the 27 school divisions, but of course they'd be congregated based on their community.

Ms. Beck: — Right. The reason that I'm asking is one of the concerns that I've heard in conversation with some of the boards is a perceived underweighting to vulnerability factors within the funding model. I'm not sure if that's something that you've heard, Minister, with your conversations in the sector. Just wondering if there's any plans to revisit that.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — We haven't heard any specific concerns with respect to the underweighting in regard to the formula itself, but I would point out that there is a funding model review committee. So if there is a concern about this, then we should probably have a conversation about it through that committee. But I haven't heard any concerns with respect to the weighting and the formula.

Ms. Beck: — So how would those who have concerns . . . They would just make submission to the committee? Is that how it would work?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Concerns would just come forward to the ministry and be considered as part of the review.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Speaking of future considerations, I know that there's been a call for a number of years, particularly since 2009 when the funding model was changed, to exempt school divisions from the paying of PST [provincial sales tax], particularly on insurance and construction. I'm just wondering if there's any consideration for that going forward.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — It's really I think an issue that should be raised with the Minister of Finance. I think she'd be in a better position to answer that question.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. I believe a couple of times, Minister, in question period, you've noted some expectations around further efficiencies within the sector. I'm just wondering what are the expectations with regard to further efficiencies within the sector.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well we've certainly seen a number of school divisions who have found some efficiencies within the operations of their school divisions, and we've seen some work that's been done between school divisions. The joint fuel purchase contract I think is a good example of that.

I think the expectation generally across government should be that school divisions and municipalities, other government entities, should really be continuing to look for efficiencies within their operations. And so a number of school divisions have found some efficiencies as they moved forward with their operations as a result of last year's budget, and we would just continue to encourage that kind of work be done at that level.

Ms. Beck: — I think to be fair, school divisions typically are looking for those efficiencies. They didn't really have a choice with last year's budget other than to find \$54 million in efficiencies. Are there targets with regard to efficiencies?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — No, there's no targets. But I think it's . . . Again I'll repeat my comment that I think it's fair to expect school divisions to continually look for efficiencies within their operations. I think that's the expectation. They are spending taxpayers' dollars, after all. And the fact that school divisions have found efficiencies, that's a good thing. We would continue to encourage them to continue to look for better, more efficient, more effective ways of providing the services that they do provide.

Ms. Beck: — So no anticipated targets for reductions.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — No.

Ms. Beck: — Last year there were four project teams that were struck after the budget to deal with the major changes that were announced. I'm just wondering if you have a global number with regard to the resources that were allocated to these tables, both time and dollars.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Allocated to?

Ms. Beck: — The four project teams that were struck after last year's budget.

[20:00]

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So in April of '17 there were four project teams that were established to lead the EGR [educational governance review] work: the education sector purchasing and services, the organizational design and staffing, educational regulations, and the structural governance changes. And that work sunsetted in March of this year.

Ms. Beck: — Sorry, the . . .

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Sunsetted in March of this year.

Ms. Beck: — Okay, so all of that work ceased. Were there resources allocated to those tables?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — We don't . . . I don't have those divided between the four project teams, but the total amount was \$1.426 million that was allocated.

Ms. Beck: — So *The Education Act* amendments and regulation committee, was there work that was produced out of that committee?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — The regulations to support the Act were developed. The new Act and the regulations, as you know, came into force on September 1st of '17. You'll remember that the review of those regulations required a cooling-off period for former school division employees who were running to serve on the board. And we've moved forward with the repeal of that cooling-off period.

Ms. Beck: — Sorry, I didn't hear that last . . .

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — We've moved forward with the repeal of that cooling-off period.

Ms. Beck: — So with the exception of the cooling-off period, were there major amendments to the recommendations that came forth from that committee?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Are you speaking specifically of the regulations?

Ms. Beck: — I'll just add to that, with specific regard to the regulations. But also were there any suggested amendments to *The Education Act* that came out of that committee?

Mr. Currie: — Would it be possible to have the question repeated?

Ms. Beck: — Yes. What I was getting at was the work of the team, what this particular team produced in terms of recommendations and how they were accepted or implemented.

I can move on, because I have other questions.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — No, it's okay.

Mr. Repski: — So the purpose of the committee was largely in follow-up to Bill 63 where the pieces of *The Education Act* were moved to regulation. And that work was done to clarify the role of the minister as well as to simplify and clarify things that would normally be included in the regulations. The committee as a whole, it reviewed some of those changes and it didn't result in anything significantly changing.

One example I guess I could point to is, initially there was a draft to have a cooling-off period to run for a board of education, a period of two years if you're a former employee, that sort of thing. The committee reviewed that provision and the advice that they provided probably needs to be amended. And so that was a change that resulted as a work of the committee, was to remove the cooling-off period.

Ms. Beck: — Okay, thank you. I'm going to move on to the education sector purchasing and services committee. There were a number of subcategories that this committee was tasked with: procurement of IT [information technology] platforms and licences; accounting, payroll, financial reporting, and forecasting; capital planning and project management; organization design and staffing; common out-of-scope grid and benefits; board remuneration and central office staffing. I'm just wondering . . . I know that the bulk fuel purchasing was one piece that has been mentioned. Were there other recommendations or achievements that came forth from this table?

Mr. Repski: — So regarding the procurement, what the committee had worked on this year was they generated a long list of things that they could work on collectively. The very first one you had indicated was the bulk fuel purchasing across the province. That was done to expand the existing provincial tender to the school divisions which will result in savings to those school divisions. That was the first one that was undertaken.

The second one was focusing around technology. There's a lot of ideas that were generated, but what the committee landed on was to look at something called smart technology, the SMART Boards in the classroom. And what that committee did was they standardized one common pricing structure across the province.

There are certainly other ideas that are being discussed right now for further implementation, but those were the two that were deployed this year.

Ms. Beck: — With regard to the bulk fuel purchasing, are all divisions currently involved with that bulk purchasing?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — All school divisions are committed, and as their existing contracts expire, they will be subject to the bulk agreement.

Ms. Beck: — So that tender, that contract is with Federated Co-op?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — That's right.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Are there concerns about communities that don't have Federated Co-op gas in their community? How does that work?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So if there's no Co-op available, then they're entitled to use other suppliers, so they're not restricted from that. But in communities where the Co-op's available they'll be using the Co-op to provide their fuel.

Ms. Beck: — All right. Did anything come out of the common grid, out-of-scope grid and benefits? Has there been any work achieved towards that end?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — There was a . . . we kind of looked at senior management within school divisions as well as board remuneration, but it was decided that we wouldn't look at it, that we would leave that up to the autonomy of the school divisions to set those. So that was . . . While it was looked at, there was no action taken.

Ms. Beck: — With regard to accounting, payroll, financial reporting, and forecasting, any changes that are anticipated there as a result of the committee?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Not at this point.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. And capital planning and project management?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — We continue to look at the capital through the infrastructure advisory committee, but there's been . . . We're looking at it through that committee but nothing's changed.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. And finally, I know that there was a lot of concern around the table that was struck around structural governance changes. At that point they were looking at a new boundary for the northern school divisions and a new boundary for Regina and Saskatoon. That has been . . . Has that been shelved?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — There's been no school boundary changes that are being proposed. That project team did highlight some existing shared efficiencies and collaborative practices, but the determination was made that no school division boundary changes would be required.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. What about the review of school community councils and their role? Is there any anticipated change there?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So you may know that the Light of Christ Roman Catholic School Division and the ministry staff was working on some promising practices to develop opportunities to enhance school governance councils through some dedicated work that they were doing. And there continues to be an ongoing dialogue with respect to establishing best practices.

Ms. Beck: — Could you provide some of the highlights of that, or some of the changes that were made or pilots that were undertaken there?

[20:15]

Mr. Currie: — There are a few best practices that have been shared as a result of the work that had been referenced already by the minister. Number one, there are dedicated pages on the Light of Christ and Government of Saskatchewan websites of best practices.

And Light of Christ hosted a provincial workshop for school community council members, and it had . . . For the opening night it had a focus on wellness, of school community council members' wellness, as well as wellness components and aspects to consider for students within their respective schools. As well as they had a sharing, or they had the participation in the blanket exercise the second day, and they had local elders attend and spend time and lead the blanket exercise with the trustees that had . . . or the school community council members that had gathered there, as well as some officials from school divisions that were in attendance to understand what could be taken back to their own school division communities.

Those school divisions that had officials attend, who were not school community council members, were there as a result of some of their school community councils not being able to attend. So they attended to understand, connect, and realize some connections, networking, and also to understand the best practices that could be taken back to their respective school divisions.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you for that. I was just curious about the wording in terms of the direction for the structural governance changes team. And the term "consistent capacity" for community school councils, I'm just wondering what that goal is. What consistent capacity within SCCs [school community council], what's being targeted there?

Mr. Currie: — When we were looking at the school community councils, which play a vital role in working within their respective schools and school communities as well as the school divisions, they are looking to provide expertise, professional development opportunities for the respective interested parties to serve on school community councils. And

so to build capacity is to help school community council members understand the learning agenda within the school division or their respective school, and also to understand the demographics within their school community and ways that they can serve, enable, and enhance their service and support and involvement in working with their respective school community councils.

So it's a development of the people in terms of their understanding of the learning agenda, the wellness agenda of their students as well as a governance — when I use a small “g” governance — agenda that they can use to help assist and provide some recommendations for the betterment of the school and the school community.

Ms. Beck: — Okay, thank you. Going to look at allocation under the K to 12 initiatives, I'm just wondering if I could get a bit of a breakout in terms of what's funded in this allocation, by this allocation rather.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So do you want the K to 12 allocation within subvoter (03)? Is that what you're looking for?

Ms. Beck: — The K to 12 initiatives allocation within subvoter (03).

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — You'll see in the Estimates book that the allocation was \$35.776 million for K to 12 initiatives. What in particular were you looking for clarification on?

Ms. Beck: — Just what's funded by that allocation, particularly.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well I can go through the program summary and list the program, part of the program summary, if you like.

So program summary, there's a number of them here: Flin Flon, Sakewew high school, Muskowekwan, Eagles Nest Youth Ranch, PSAB [Public Sector Accounting Board], CNP [child nutrition program], Ranch Ehrlo, the historical high schools, PAGC [Prince Albert Grand Council], the alternative format materials, CommunityNet, EAL [English as an additional language] assessment, qualified independent schools, Cornwall Alternative, youth in custody, learning resources, live satellite network, Regina hospitals, Saskatoon hospitals, Prince Albert hospitals, and a multi-type database licensing. I think I got them all.

Ms. Beck: — There's a lot in there. Year-over-year funding for CommunityNet, was that up or down this year?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — That funding was flat over . . . Just give me a sec.

Ms. Beck: — Are there any anticipated changes to that?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — There's no changes to that budget line.

Ms. Beck: — Any planned changes or review to that service?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So it goes . . . I'm not sure this answers your question, but in February of '16 there was an additional

grant of \$3.4 million to SaskTel to increase bandwidth to the provincial pre-K to 12 education system.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Are there any plans for improvement to bandwidth within the K to 12 system or within the provincial library system?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So in April of '16 you'll recall that the Ministry of Education transferred responsibility to SaskTel to determine the full bandwidth requirements and support the provincial pre-K to 12 school CommunityNet and Internet connectivity. There's a conversation going on with SaskTel with respect to that particular contract.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Are you getting feedback about the adequacy of the bandwidth within the K to 12 system?

Mr. Currie: — The Ministry of Education has travelled and visited primarily the, overwhelmingly the majority of school divisions, and that question has been posed as a specific question to the administration or the trustees in attendance. And overwhelmingly we've had the response that school divisions are being served well with the structure that's in place.

Ms. Beck: — I have some questions with regard . . . Now I know not to ask questions about bargaining, so just set that off. But I'm looking . . . One of the concerns that has been brought forward generally is just getting a commitment to fully fund whatever agreement is achieved at the bargaining table, by the ministry.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — We certainly know the importance of this issue to local school divisions, and I appreciate the fact that it's a conversation that I will have to have with my colleagues as I go forward. But we certainly appreciate the importance of this particular issue to school divisions, and I have expressed that on a number of occasions.

Ms. Beck: — So I guess in absence of a commitment, what . . . Boards have no ability to increase their own funding or to generate their own revenue. Where do those allocations come from if they're not forwarded fully by the government?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So we'll certainly work with school divisions once we know what the liability is. But as I said, that's a conversation that we are going to have to have as government. But we do, as I've mentioned before, recognize the importance of this issue to school divisions to ensure that they can continue to provide the supports that they need to provide in the classrooms.

Ms. Beck: — Does it help if I exclude locally negotiated contracts? Is there a commitment on the provincial contract?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — As you know, local contracts are negotiated by the school divisions and are paid for through the grants. So that's a conversation that we need to have as well. But that's locally negotiated contracts. So how that affects the funding going forward is another conversation that we have to have.

Ms. Beck: — So just to clarify, there is no commitment to date to fully fund the provincial contract? Is that . . .

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I'm not in a position to make a commitment with respect to that funding today.

Ms. Beck: — Do you have any advice with regard to the impact to that lack of commitment to bargaining in good faith? Has there been any advice with regard to . . . Sorry, I'm stumbling. I'm a little bit surprised, frankly.

[20:30]

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well you shouldn't be surprised about the fact that I can't make a commitment with respect to this today. That shouldn't surprise you at all.

Ms. Beck: — But I've got a contract that's negotiated at a table.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well there's been no contract that's been negotiated, and I guess that's the real point to it. Once a contract's been negotiated, then that's a conversation that we will have to have. But until there's a negotiated agreement, there's nothing to talk about.

Ms. Beck: — All right. With regard to last year in committee, the minister confirmed that teachers and non-teaching staff would be subject to the then-mandated 3.5 per cent reduction. I'm just wondering if that is still the case.

The Chair: — Mr. Minister, before you respond, I just wish to caution you that any discussions that may be pertinent to negotiations with teachers under the labour agreement could raise the issue of unfair bargaining by one party or the other.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I was about to answer the question, Mr. Chair, along those lines. And I'm not prepared to answer the question given the fact that we are now in arbitration with the teachers. So we'll let that process run its course.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Does it apply still to non-teaching staff?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I'm not going to make a comment with respect to the contracts that are bargained locally. The school divisions are in the best position to be able to bargain those contracts.

Ms. Beck: — No, I understand that, Minister. But last year there was confirmation at this table that there would be an expectation that all, all employees would be subject to the 3.5 per cent reduction mandate. I'm just wondering if there's been a change to that policy.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So I realize that there's active negotiations still going on, and so I'm not going to comment on the mandate. Certainly we always want to get the best arrangement possible, but I won't comment on the mandate at this point.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Can you confirm if employees of school boards are included in the targeted \$35 million reduction in public sector compensation to your total 70 million reduction in compensation as announced by the Minister of Finance in the budget speech?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — That would be properly a question for the

Minister of Finance.

Ms. Beck: — So there was no . . . The Minister of Finance would be the best one to ask if board employees are part of that \$35 million reduction?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Just a question of clarification: are you talking about the compensation target for the public service?

Ms. Beck: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — The school divisions wouldn't be included.

The Chair: — Before we proceed onwards, we'll take a five-minute break.

[20:45]

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

The Chair: — Okay. The Human Services Committee is reconvened at 8 minutes to 9. I believe you're done, Mr. Minister, with your response.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I believe so.

The Chair: — Okay. Ms. Beck.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, the education and the support of children is a key piece to reconciliation in the 94 Calls to Action. My question is, how is the ministry supporting and furthering the goals of reconciliation?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — As I mentioned before, we've got a number of initiatives that are supporting First Nations and Métis learners in Saskatchewan. I think I've spoken before about our invitational shared services agreements with 16 First Nations. We fund \$1.6 million in Following Their Voices, which is a strategy to support teachers in understanding First Nations, Métis, Inuit culture; Help Me Tell My Story, at a million dollars, which is an assessment tool rooted in cultural traditions of indigenous people. There's a joint task force of \$6 million. So there's new initiatives in response to recommendations, like drivers in education on-reserve. And there's a Microsoft licensing agreement on-reserve. So there's a number of things that we're doing to continue to support the goals of reconciliation.

We've developed a website supporting reconciliation in Saskatchewan's schools. It allows for collaboration and sharing of resources and projects across the province. That can be accessed from the curriculum website. And the ministry's partnered with the U of R [University of Regina] to list curriculum connections for *Shattering the Silence* resources, so there are a number of things. We continue to work with the Office of the Treaty Commissioner on a number of other initiatives as well.

Ms. Beck: — Are there any collaborative initiatives — and maybe you did list some there in the list — collaborations with the FSIN [Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations] towards the goals of reconciliation?

Mr. Currie: — The Ministry of Education has had the opportunity to work with other ministries to have meetings throughout the year with representatives from the FSIN to talk about, within our respective ministries, ways to address the truth and reconciliation Calls to Action.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. You'll remember that there were some very concerning comments that were made by a former minister regarding the validity and value of treaty teachings in schools, and as you know this caused a great deal of hurt and concern and an erosion of trust, as relayed to me by a number of folks. Can you tell me what efforts have been made towards reparation and the rebuilding of trust with regard to treaty teachings in schools and what assurances can be provided?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well I think it's fair to say that the Ministry of Education and the Government of Saskatchewan is fully committed to treaty education in the classroom. We see it as an important part of reconciliation, as is the ongoing consultation with respect to providing citizenship education in classrooms. So this government continues to be committed to that and to the education strategic sector plan as well. So we are fully committed to continuing to ensure — and that's part of our relationship that we have with the Human Rights Commission — to make sure that treaty education continues to be a priority in our classrooms.

Ms. Beck: — Another key component of the TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] findings and recommendation is the retention and recovery of language. What support and effort has been made by the ministry regarding the funding of First Nations language teaching?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So in the provincial grades K to 12 there are Aboriginal language curricula which is currently available. There's also Cree language available. Cree 10, 20, and 30 curricula are available, and there's also locally developed courses that are available for Cree cultural programs. And Dene, Michif, Nakawe, and Saulteaux, in 10, 20, and 30 level.

Ms. Beck: — So higher-level courses. Does this support include support for expansion of immersion Cree preschool, such as the immersion program in Saskatoon Catholic schools?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Sorry, can you just repeat the question for us? Is it, in addition to the Cree program, is it available in Saskatoon Catholic?

Ms. Beck: — Yes, and expansion of that program. I understand at this point that demand is outstripping the spaces that are available. I'm wondering if there's any plan to expand upon immersion programs at the early years, such as Saskatoon Catholic has offered.

[21:00]

Mr. Currie: — The boards are in the best position to determine the interest and the viability of Cree immersion programs. And so much like Greater Saskatoon Catholic has its Cree immersion program that's very successfully run there, we look for the other — if there are other — boards to determine their interest and viability of those respective programs. The funding for the Cree immersion programs realize additional funding in

the tune of 33 per cent for instructional resources as well if they do in fact develop one.

Ms. Beck: — Okay, thank you. I'm just wondering about conversations that might have happened with regard to the latest federal budget and policy changes with regard to First Nations, Métis, Inuit education. Which conversations have happened? If there'd been any commitments and any updates with regard to Saskatchewan students?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I hope this answers your question, but there have been some conversations between the ministry and the Department of Indigenous Services Canada. But any federal funding, as I understand, that was dedicated in the federal budget goes directly to the bands.

Ms. Beck: — No, I understand that. I guess what I'm asking, if there have been any conversations with FSIN for example, or provincial stakeholders. Of course this is funding for on-reserve education, but there's a great deal of back-and-forth in terms of student movement. I'm just wondering if there's been a provincial strategy or conversations that have occurred between the ministry and those who are administering those funds on-reserve.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — There are meetings that have been scheduled between the ministry and groups like the FSIN, the Saskatoon Tribal Council, and Métis organizations to talk about, you know, what's possible. But I'll repeat what I had said earlier with regard to the invitational shared services initiatives, which are conversations that happened between local school boards and local bands. And there was, I think I mentioned that there was 16 of them, and that's where that investment takes place.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. And any further updates with regard to conversations with the Prime Minister or the federal minister with regard to making good on the federal government's promise to end the educational funding gap between provincially funded and students funded in band schools?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well as I mentioned in the House, we certainly continue to express our ongoing concern with respect to that funding gap. I've authored a letter to the federal government to both Minister Philpott and Minister Bennett, to continue to express our concern and offer that I would be prepared to meet with them at the earliest possible date to continue to have that face-to-face conversation to make sure that we continue to emphasize the federal government's responsibility with respect to funding First Nations education. So we will be following up that letter in the next couple of days and trying to arrange a meeting as quickly as possible.

Ms. Beck: — Have you received any response or any indication of their willingness to meet?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I have not yet.

Ms. Beck: — Okay.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — But we will continue to be very insistent.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. I wanted to take the opportunity to ask if

there were any updates with regard to La Loche. Of course there was . . . Well we all know the tragedy that happened there two years ago. I'm just wondering if there's any ongoing support available to students and staff who were involved in that incident, if there's been any capital funding allocated to repairs to the building as a result of the damage caused by that shooting. Just an update on where we're at with that recovery.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — The renovations to the school will be completed in the fall, so that will be completed. But the ministry continues to be involved in providing support and work in partnership with the local school division through schools in the northern village of La Loche, the Clearwater Dene Cree Nation, and multiple government ministries. There's been a lot of work done between the ministries, including Advanced Education, Economy, Government Relations, Health, Justice, and Social Services. So there continues to be support that continues to be provided to the community and to the school division.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Of course, well everyone who was witness was impacted. Is there any ongoing support that's available either through the ministry or other ministries to those who have been unable to continue their employment due to the shooting?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — The school division, as I understand it, continues to work with those individuals. I might point out that there was recently \$810,000 provided for work to be done with the community on a healing plan. 810,000. Sorry, it's \$10,000 for the healing plan, not 810,000.

Ms. Beck: — And was that allocated through the Ministry of Education or another ministry?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — There was \$24,000 that was provided through the ministry to support mental health supports in the community. So that came from the Ministry of Education.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. I'm going to move on to the ESSP [education sector strategic plan]. Of course this is the fifth year of that six-year plan. I came across a quote on the Internet; it was attributed to you, Minister Wyant, saying that "I think we do a disservice when we implement a strategic plan and don't resource it properly." I guess my question is, have we properly resourced that ESSP?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So I think one of the things that, you know, in terms of funding the ESSP you'll recall, and I've spoken on this on a number of occasions, the additional \$30 million which is provided to the school divisions in this year's budget which is, of course, is intended to help support supports for learning and through the ESSP. So we continue to review the plan. We continue to review it and make sure that we are properly resourcing it. So I think the additional funding that was provided through this year's budget will be quite helpful in terms of helping to support that plan and the ongoing conversations that we will have.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. The first outcome, strategic outcome is that by 2020, 80 per cent of students will be at grade level or above in reading, writing, and math. Can you report progress towards that goal?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Sure. Well as of June of '17, 74 per cent of Saskatchewan grade 3 students are reading at or above that grade level. So that's where we're at in terms of the goal.

Ms. Beck: — So that target was by June 2015 was 78 per cent, the interim goal. So by 2016 we'd achieved 74 per cent. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — June 2017.

Ms. Beck: — Oh, 2017. Okay. And is that sustained progress? Has that been year-over-year increases?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Since June of 2013 that's been a 9 per cent increase from '13 to '17.

Ms. Beck: — And increases in each of the interim years?

[21:15]

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — 9 per cent over those years.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Just looking at the . . .

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So for instance, in 2013 it was 65 per cent. It was 70 per cent in '14; 73 per cent in '15; and 74 per cent in '16. And that number stayed constant through '17.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Thank you. There's also an interim target that by this year — sorry, this print is small — by June 2018, 80 per cent of grade 5 and 8 students will be proficient on identifying numeracy outcomes on the provincial math assessment. Can you report progress towards that goal?

Ms. Nedelcov-Anderson: — I'll take that one. Good evening, Susan Nedelcov-Anderson. We're just starting on math right now with the sector plan. It's not a math assessment. School divisions will use a variety of assessment tools in the school division and then will report on student achievement using a rubric that was developed across the province.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. So the individual testing at the school division level will vary?

Ms. Nedelcov-Anderson: — Correct. Yes. It will be determined by teachers, by schools, by school divisions.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Is that rubric is that available publicly or is that private?

Ms. Nedelcov-Anderson: — Yes, it's posted. I believe it's posted on our assessment website.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. So currently we're not tracking towards that goal?

Ms. Nedelcov-Anderson: — Not yet, no. Next school year.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. The final interim goal there is that by 2020, 80 per cent of grades 4, 7, and 10 students will be proficient on the provincial writing assessment. Is there any progress to report towards that goal?

Ms. Nedelcov-Anderson: — The first time that we'll have data will be June of this school year.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Thank you. The second strategic outcome is that by 2020, collaboration between First Nations and Métis and non-First Nation and Métis partners will result in significant improvement in First Nation, Métis achievement and graduation rates. First question is how we're defining significant improvement, and second is report towards progress on those goals.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — In '16-17, First Nations and Métis, the on-time graduation rate is 43.2 per cent, and the extended time graduation rate is 59.8 per cent. And that's higher than the '15-16 graduation rates of 41.9 and 59.6 per cent respectively, and higher than any other reported year.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. I believe there was a recent report by the child advocate expressing some concern about the ability to reach those targets. So I'm just wondering if you share any of his concerns and if there's a response.

Mr. Caleval: — Good evening. I'm Tim Caleval, executive director of the priority action team. I work on the Following Their Voices priority, which was referenced in the child advocate's report. Following Their Voices is an initiative that started a number of years ago with the sector strategic plan and it's been running for about three years now in schools. We now have 26 schools that are involved, with over 3,800 First Nations, Métis, or Inuit students in those schools, and about 430 teachers are involved in the initiative.

So in terms of impacting outcomes for indigenous students, we've been able to see some I think some positive effects on changing teachers' instructional practices, first of all and first and foremost. So since the onset of the initiative, we've seen an increase in engaging instructional practice or a change in instructional practice of over 17 percentage points. So at the beginning we were around 27 per cent and now we're about 48 per cent of engaging instructional practice that's gathered through our tools.

We've also seen significant change in terms of student engagement in learning, as measured by surveys that we use within the initiative itself and also using OurSCHOOL survey data. So with OurSCHOOL survey data, which is a national survey that's done across the country, all of the results from the students that are participating in the initiative demonstrate on six different measures. They demonstrate that the students are self-reporting. Their engagement level is significantly above national median scores and replica school scores, which in essence says that students in these schools are much more engaged than other schools that are like them. And they are scoring significantly above national median scores as well.

So we know that engagement begets success in terms of credit attainment and then graduation rates. And we're beginning to see some of those changes right now. Of the 16 schools that participated last year, 14 of the 16 schools showed increases in credit attainment, in graduation rates, and in attendance. So there's been some positives there.

And also when we did some further analysis on the data, we

found that average credit attainment by indigenous students in the 16 original schools, 11 of those schools showed increases in average credits attained and five of those schools saw an increase of one credit or more a year — which is pretty significant — across the school and across the initiative. So there's been some positives in the initiatives thus far. Thanks.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. Just a follow-up question: do you have information on the overall provincial average of credit attainment for First Nation and Métis students versus non-First Nation and Métis students?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I hope this answers your question. In 2016-17, First Nations and Métis students in grade 10 to 12 averaged 4.6 credits per year with fewer than one-third of them achieving 8 or more credits per year. And that compares to an average of 7.9 credits per year for non-First Nations and Métis students and about 71 per cent of non-First Nations and Métis students achieving 8 or more credits per year. And those numbers are virtually unchanged from the previous year.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. So that would have significant impacts on the on-time versus five-year graduation rates. Okay.

I think that Tim answered a number of the questions that I had. One of them was just, what have been effective strategies towards the goal of both increasing credits and graduation rates for First Nation and Métis students.

Another question I did have, though: the increase in engaging instructional practices, I think, how are those measured and tracked? Just a follow-up question to that.

Mr. Caleval: — Yes, thank you. So that data is collected through observations that are done by school-based facilitators on participating teachers that are within the initiative. So there is an online observation tool that we use that collects that data. And different teacher interactions are coded in different ways, so they're either coded as being traditional teaching or coded as being interactive or discursive. And so that data, over time we're able to track the degree or the proportion of traditional teaching versus discursive teaching. And we provide professional learning and development to teachers around discursive, using discursive teaching strategies within the classroom. So we're able to track that progress over time in terms how teachers and students interact within these observations in classrooms.

Ms. Beck: — You're correlating the interactive teaching with increased student engagement?

Mr. Caleval: — Yes.

Ms. Beck: — The next outcome, strategic outcome is this: that by 2017 the increase in operational education spending will not exceed the general wage increases and inflationary costs within the sector while being responsive to the challenges of student need, population growth, and demographic changes.

I know that initially I believe it was a \$5 million target that was attached to that goal, that was exceeded I believe before the budget cuts last year. I'm interested in the improvement target and that is this, that accumulated operational savings by 2016

are to be reassigned to system strategies. I'm just wondering if you can unpack that a little bit, what those system strategies would be and how much of those savings were reallocated to system strategy.

[21:30]

Ms. Johnson: — With respect to that particular outcome, the way in which that outcome was worded when the plan was first drafted is as you described. In the second year of the plan, the wording of the outcome changed to simply focus on finding province-wide efficiencies. The intent is still the same of course, that any efficiencies found would be held onto by the school divisions and the school divisions would make their own decisions with respect to how they would reinvest their savings, much like what they're doing now with the fuel purchase program. So each of the school divisions are saving some amount of money for having participated in that province-wide efficiency measure, and they are choosing how to take that money and reinvest it.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. So what you're saying is that, if they find efficiencies at the board level, that those will be . . . they'll be allowed to retain them and reallocate them?

Ms. Johnson: — That's correct.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Do you have a number with regard to the year-over-year inflationary costs that are realized by the sector? So just taking into account things like power increases, price of gas, parts, PST, growth.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Over the system?

Ms. Beck: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I don't have an education specific number, but certainly it would be well under 2 per cent.

Ms. Beck: — Does that include student growth?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — No it would not.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. With regard to the provincial graduation rate being 85 per cent by 2020, I'm just wondering progress towards that goal.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So we don't have '17 and '18 data yet, but for the school year '16 and '17, the provincial on time through your graduation rate is 76.5 per cent, and the extended time is 84 per cent, slightly higher than the '15-16 results.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Thank you. One of . . . Another concern that has been brought forward with regard to board funding is the cost of local improvements levied by municipalities. Is there any commitment by the ministry to fund boards for cost incurred due to the levy of local improvement by municipal governments?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — That is an ongoing conversation that we're having with the Ministry of Government Relations.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Thank you. Just to get a sense of changes

in demographic, the makeup of the student body, how it's changing. Is it changing over the last five years, the percentage of First Nations and Métis students, those children who have English as an additional language, children with intensive or special needs? Do we have data about children requiring mental health supports? Do we have data in terms of the changes in those areas or others?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — We don't have any specific data on that here, but we'll put together what we can and provide that to you.

Ms. Beck: — Okay, thank you.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — You know . . . [inaudible] . . . in terms of what you want. There's a lot of information that you've requested.

Ms. Beck: — Yes, okay. Perfect, thank you. And the final strategic outcome is this: that by June 2020, 90 per cent of students exiting kindergarten will score in the appropriate range in four of the five EYE [early years evaluation] domains. My first question is, are all school divisions administering this assessment?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Yes, they are.

Ms. Beck: — Do you have any data with regard to the current numbers of children in the appropriate range of each of the five domains of the EYE assessment going into kindergarten? This assessment is administered twice a year, am I right? On entry and exiting kindergarten? Okay.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — That's right.

Ms. Mitchell: — Janet Mitchell. For the current year, '17-18, during the fall screen we had 56.8 per cent of children were at tier 1, 27.3 at tier 2, and 15.9 at tier 3. So the children who were assessed at tier 1 in the fall aren't assessed again. Those who were at tier 2 or tier 3 would be assessed again in the spring.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. And is that . . . Year over year, is that an increase in the number of students arriving already at tier 1, or do we have data year over year for that?

Ms. Mitchell: — We have data year over year. Those numbers are quite stable.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Of the five domains, are there particular domains that children are coming with challenges or lower achieving, or is it right across the five domains?

Ms. Mitchell: — We certainly do see challenges for some children in each of the domains. When it comes to looking at the links between readiness for school and grade 3 reading, we certainly recognize that the cognitive domain is the key one.

Ms. Beck: — And how many children, or percentage of children, are scoring below tier 1 on the cognitive domain? Do you have that broken out that way?

Ms. Mitchell: — I don't think I have that with me.

Ms. Beck: — Okay, that's fine. Thank you. So that's . . . 43 per cent of students are coming to kindergarten with some deficits. The numbers exiting kindergarten, do we have the percentage of students at each of those tiers upon exiting kindergarten?

Ms. Mitchell: — Yes. Of course just in the collection period right now for this year, but for the '16-17 year, we were able to bring up children to tier 1. 80.2 per cent of children are assessed at tier 1 by the end of kindergarten, 13.3 are at level 2, and 6.5 are at level 3.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. So there's some good movement within kindergarten there. Is there anything that's . . . Or, the strategies that are being implemented to increase the number of children who are arriving at school in that tier 1, assessed at tier 1, are there supports that are particularly effective with regard to school readiness that we've identified?

Ms. Mitchell: — This is an area that's identified in the education sector strategic plan, early years outcome. So one of the actions is to work with other partners around, you know, how to ensure that children are able to come to school better prepared. Certainly within the Ministry of Education, we fund the pre-kindergarten program, so that reaches over 5,000 children each year.

[21:45]

Ms. Beck: — Yes. I guess I'm wondering the level of support from other ministries. I know there's been a lot of talk over the years about breaking down silos and inter-ministerial co-operation with regard to this goal. I'm just wondering what the other ministries are bringing to the table with regard to supporting this goal.

Ms. Mitchell: — So this has been something we've been working on through the early years plan over the last two years. So the early years plan was introduced in May of 2016, and certainly planning an alignment is one of the key pillars of that. So an example of how we're working on that, we are working with the Ministry of Social Services to ensure that families that have been involved in the child protection system, you know, have an easy access into the pre-kindergarten program. So just making sure we make those connections as we can.

Ms. Beck: — What would be some of the strategies to help foster that easy entrance into the pre-K program for those who had involvement with the Ministry of Social Services?

Ms. Mitchell: — So the most important point on that is really to make sure that we make the connections so that . . . For example, in the pre-kindergarten program those intake committees do their work in the spring, so we need to make sure that we've got good communication from the Ministry of Social Services around identifying who those children are and make sure that our priorities — highly vulnerable children — are on that list.

Ms. Beck: — Is transportation a barrier to pre-K programs for those children?

Ms. Mitchell: — We do hear from programs that transportation can be an issue for families. In particular in the winter months,

it's hard sometimes for families to bundle up their younger children and whatnot. But that can happen whether it's just a few blocks or whether it's a longer distance.

Ms. Beck: — Okay, thank you. I guess I'm curious to hear, perhaps from the minister, if there's ongoing talks with other ministries with regard to supporting the goals, over all of the ed sector plan goals. Certainly it's ambitious targets and there are pieces that, you know, are in our schools for sure. But is there talk of ongoing community support from other ministries towards the goals as outlined on the ESSP?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — There are certainly other ministries that are working with the ministry to help achieve the goals in the strategic plan. That's certainly an ongoing conversation that I'm having with my colleagues in cabinet about how we can best support each other with respect to achieving our goals across ministries. And so it's certainly a dialogue. And when you, you know, talk about reducing silos, that's certainly an important piece of the conversations, the ongoing conversations that we're having in government. So I think the answer to your question is yes, and we're kind of encouraged by some of the conversations that we're having.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Any progress to report?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well I think, you know, we do a lot of work with our family resource centres. There's other discussions that we're having on mental health. You'll note that, in the conversations that we've been having in the House, work that we're doing with the Ministry of Health in terms of delivering some programming within the schools in consultation with the Ministry of Health. I think we talked about the program that we've looked at in Alberta and more conversation about that, too. But I think those are some pretty tangible examples of how we're starting to work together and look to how we achieve our goals collectively.

Ms. Beck: — Yes. Glad to hear it. Has there been talk or any planning started with regard to the next ESSP?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Yes, there has. I think perhaps I'll let Deputy Minister Currie just comment on that because we have been having some ongoing conversations. Certainly when I meet with school boards, when I meet with the SSBA, we're starting to have that conversation. But I think Deputy Minister Currie would probably be in the best position to kind of comment on where we're at and where we're going and how we're going to get there.

Mr. Currie: — The ministry has reached out to school divisions over the last number of months to meet to talk about the progress of the sector plan and to also talk about options for beyond 2020 which had the sector plan targeted in terms of its respective outcomes. And we're encouraged that there is significant interest within the education sector to continue to work together to create a plan that takes us beyond 2020.

And we have talked to a number of our major education sector partners. They have indicated significant interest to be a part of that, to co-construct and to begin the planning for beyond the year 2020. As there has been significant momentum created with the education sector strategic plan thus far, which was

started a number of years ago, a number of school divisions have indicated to us an interest to build off of the momentum that's been created, the resources that have been allocated and realized, and also have an eye to the future.

So we have our major sector partners who have indicated an interest, and we are looking at gathering together with them to, as I've mentioned, co-construct and then build beyond that one group gathering, so how we can engage other sectors within our respective communities to have a voice in terms of education meeting the needs of our Saskatchewan students beyond the years 2020.

Ms. Beck: — Great. Certainly one of the more frequent concerns that I've heard with regard to the ESSP has been that the PLT [provincial leadership team] didn't include representation from SSBA and the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation]. So I'm hearing you say co-construct. Are there any commitments with regard to who will be at the table when the new ESSP is created?

Mr. Currie: — We're in the initial stages of developing the model and engaging our sector partners, one of whom you've just referenced, to sit at the table to co-construct a template, and then from there, go on out a number of months down the road to engage in a broader circle, an inclusionary model and methodology that would obtain other voices.

What we're quite appreciative of is the support of our school boards to enable our respective officials from the school divisions to have an eye on the operation's focus of the sector plan to be engaged and to lead and to create a common language and a common direction for education within the province. And that has been realized here over the last number of years. And we look to maintain connections with our education sector partners, one of whom you've just referenced — the Saskatchewan School Boards Association — who have looked to be a participant, a leader as it were, as part of the education sector partnerships to, as I've mentioned, co-construct such a plan to take us beyond the years 2020.

Ms. Beck: — Okay, thank you for that. I did mention two bodies. I mentioned the SSBA and the STF. There are no plans to include the STF?

Mr. Currie: — As I've mentioned . . . Thank you for that clarification. We have mentioned that we've reached out to all of our sector partners, and the STF is one of those who has also indicated to us an interest to co-construct and be a part of creating a vision beyond 2020.

Ms. Beck: — Okay, thank you. I'm wondering if you could provide an updated copy of the education sector staffing profile. I'm not expecting that tonight, but if that's something that could be provided. I have, I think, a dated . . .

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I believe those were ordered with written questions if I'm not mistaken.

Ms. Beck: — Yes they were.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Yes.

Ms. Beck: — That's the most updated copy?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Yes.

Ms. Beck: — Okay, thank you. One of the questions I had about that, there was a question that was posed with regard to ratios, PTR [pupil/teacher ratio], and one thing that was noted that in the calculation of those ratios were included those who perhaps had a teaching certificate but weren't actually in the classroom, superintendents or ed pyschs. I'm just wondering why that decision was made to include those folks who had teaching certificates but weren't actually teaching in the classroom, in that ratio?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — They are included because they provide direct support to the classroom. So that's why they're included.

Ms. Beck: — So . . .

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — That certainly hasn't changed in the way that those numbers are expressed over time, so it would have been the way that it's been . . .

Ms. Beck: — It has or hasn't changed?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Has not changed.

Ms. Beck: — Has not changed.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So that would be the way that it would have been, the ratio would have been calculated, as I understand.

Ms. Beck: — Okay.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — It's not new.

Ms. Beck: — So maybe average class size would be a better question to ask.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Yes. Yes, I suppose it would be. But I guess it really depends again on who's included in that ratio and who's not included in the ratio.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Yes, I think the intent is just to get a sense of how many students the average teacher is tasked with in the classroom. So I will endeavour to ask a more precise question.

I'm going to move on — just looking at the time here — to the allocation for literacy on page 45 of the budget. I'm just wondering what programs are supported by this allocation.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Are you looking at subvote (17)? Is that . . .

Ms. Beck: — Yes I am. Sorry. Subvote (17).

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Right. Okay, so there's four different elements. There's literacy office, there's family literacy, there's literacy initiatives, and then there's literacy camp. And that's for a total of \$1.855 million.

[22:00]

Ms. Beck: — Okay. And we saw a slight reduction year over year in this budget year. If I look back to 2012-13, that number was 2.7 million. I'm just wondering, given the . . . I'm reading from the ministry plan: "The literacy and library sectors play a key role in developing Saskatchewan residents' literacy skills, as well as supporting lifelong learning and student success." I'm just wondering about the reduction in support for that subvote.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well the reduction was \$3,000 year over year, and that was a very small reduction in the literacy office. If your question is with respect to the earlier budgets . . .

Ms. Beck: — I guess a historical trend is what I'm looking at.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I don't have any information with respect to the historical trends or why those numbers have been reduced. It could be a programming issue. I'm not sure, but I'm certainly prepared to get the information for you.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. That would be helpful. And is there . . . It's salary reduction in this year's budget that accounts for the reduction?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So just to clarify, I will still get you the information, but adult literacy is now the responsibility of the Ministry of the Economy. So that's one of the reasons why you see a downward trend.

Ms. Beck: — So that's a major piece of that million dollars?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — But we'll still get you the additional information.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Perfect. I'm going to move on to subvote (15) which is the Provincial Library. Maybe have a few fewer questions than I had last year.

Just wondering, the funding for libraries — again I'm going to ask you a bit of a historical question — has been completely flat since 2014-15, and I think there was a half-a-million-dollar increase above the 2011-12 level, so seven years. Just wondering what the plan is, I guess, with regard to this subvote. I know that the minister last year announced a full review of library funding and delivery within a year. That didn't happen. I'm just wondering what the plans are going forward with regard to libraries and library funding in the province.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well we're just in the process. We've been having some conversations within the ministry about what the consultation will look like moving forward. I've met with a number of organizations and certainly met with officials within the ministry to decide how we're going to do that, because we made a commitment that we were going to move forward with a consultation. And I want to see that happen as quickly as we can, making sure that we're fully identifying the participants that want to participate in that consultation and making a meaningful consultation. And that means really kind of going to the groups that are going to be affected and having those conversations.

So we're fully committed to having that consultation and, as I said, I'd like to move it forward as quickly as I can. And that

was one of the reasons that, very early on, part of my responsibility when I became responsible for the Ministry of Education, it was one of the priorities that I wanted to see happen. So we're having those discussions. So you'll hear more from us with regard to that.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Do you have an indication of stakeholders who will be involved or have expressed interest of being involved in that review?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — This won't be an exhaustive list, but certainly we want to talk to the regional libraries; we want to talk to the municipal libraries, SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] and SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association], the Provincial Library librarian. That's certainly not an exhaustive list, and it is important that we note how important libraries are to communities. And we want to make sure we get as broad a consultation as we can to make sure that we . . .

Ms. Beck: — And trustees, the library trustees?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — We'll talk to the trustees association of course.

Ms. Beck: — And do you have a set of goals? What do you hope to achieve with this review?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — We haven't fully determined the scope of that, and that's kind of one of the elements of this initial conversation. But you know, as part of that we want to look at a legislative review, see what's working, what's not working. So as I say, we haven't really fully scoped out what the consultation will look like. We certainly have no preconceived notions of what we want to see happen at the end of this, because I think it's important that we kind of have this dialogue.

I know that doesn't really . . . isn't specific enough to answer your question, but I think we certainly are bringing an open mind to the consultation and want to make sure that we're spending enough time talking to those stakeholders to make sure that we have a meaningful consultation and meaningful outcomes.

Ms. Beck: — I guess probably one of the biggest concerns would be we saw a signal to cut half the funding last year. Are there targets with regard to reduction in costs for this subvote? Is that part of the goals?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — There are no targets. As I said, there's no preconceived notion, no preconceived goal as to where we want to get to.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Just curious how the provincial interlibrary loan program, how they are distributing books around the province now.

Mr. Repski: — For the interlibrary loan system, they're using the same provincial courier system that we use within the provincial government, so that's system to system. Internally within the library regions themselves, it's whatever local courier that they decide to use. But for the rest of the

interlibrary loan system, it's the provincial system.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. And that system, it services all the communities that formerly, that have used the interlibrary loan program?

Mr. Repski: — Yes. It's not to every community, but it's to the headquarters, and then they distribute within their own systems.

Ms. Beck: — Okay.

Mr. Repski: — The same as been done in the past.

Ms. Beck: — Right. Yes. Yes. Okay thank you. Curriculum review and renewal. Can you provide an update with regard to where we're at with curriculum renewal?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — As you know, we've stopped the stop/pause on curriculum renewal, and we're leading a conversation with respect to curriculum renewal. So perhaps I'll let Susan answer that.

Ms. Nedelcov-Anderson: — We currently have four subject area reference committees under way, one in the area of physical education 20, 30. We have drafted curriculum documents for both of those courses, and they're currently being piloted with the intent to implement next school year in the second semester.

The second reference committee is in the area of arts education, secondary arts education. We are in the process of drafting documents for dance, drama, music, and visual art at the secondary level for all four of those strands.

We also have a reference committee in the area of practical and applied arts. That area right now is drafting financial literacy at the 20 and 30 levels, robotics that incorporates coding at the 10, 20, 30 levels.

And we also have a secondary social sciences reference committee, which has not made any formal recommendations at this point, but has had a few meetings to discuss where they think that they would like to see secondary social sciences go in the future.

In addition to those areas, we have some work under way in French language arts at the secondary level, both for immersion and for fransaskoise.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Thank you. I'm just wondering how long was the stop/pause on? I forget.

Ms. Nedelcov-Anderson: — From August 2013. It was about four years.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. So obviously there's a lot to catch up on. How were the four areas, how were they arrived at for those to be the first four areas to undergo the renewal?

Ms. Nedelcov-Anderson: — A couple of reasons. One, those are areas in the secondary level that had not been renewed, whereas some other areas had been, such as mathematics and language arts. Another reason is because some work had started

in those areas prior to the pause.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Thank you. I'm sure that you're aware that there was a resolution that was passed at the SSBA in the fall assembly with regard to a mandatory secondary level indigenous studies class. Is that something that's being considered under the social sciences review?

Ms. Nedelcov-Anderson: — We have had meetings with the SSBA about their vision for the mandatory course but, as I mentioned earlier, the secondary social sciences reference committee has not made any formal recommendations at this point.

Ms. Beck: — Okay, so under consideration. Is there a difference in how the curriculum renewal and review process has rolled out post-stop/pause, as opposed to before 2013?

Ms. Nedelcov-Anderson: — One of the recommendations from Lisa Lambert's engagement sessions, Legislative Secretary Lambert's engagement sessions, was around the principles for curriculum development, which include ensuring that we use a collaborative approach, ensuring that the needs of all Saskatchewan students are being met, and ensuring that we support implementation. So our work moving forward is guided by those three principles.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. With regard to that report-back by MLA Lambert, were there written recommendations that were supplied to the minister? It's not something that I've seen, those recommendations.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — There wasn't a formal report that was tabled with the minister.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Were there any other recommendations that came out of that work?

Ms. Nedelcov-Anderson: — So the other recommendations would be to resume curriculum development, in other words to cancel the pause, to start work on the four subject areas that I mentioned earlier, as well as the formation of a curriculum advisory committee.

Ms. Beck: — Are there any particulars with regard to the scope of that review in terms of who Ms. Lambert met with, what recommendations, or were there any written recommendations that came forward?

[22:15]

Ms. Nedelcov-Anderson: — The consultations were mainly face to face, but certainly the stakeholders were invited to submit written feedback as well if they thought of something after the sessions ended.

Ms. Beck: — And was that something that stakeholders pursued, the written submissions?

Ms. Nedelcov-Anderson: — We did receive some, yes.

Ms. Beck: — Is there any indication after these four curriculum areas what the next priorities might be?

Ms. Nedelcov-Anderson: — It was mentioned, one of the recommendations from the Legislative Secretary Lambert, was the formation of a curriculum advisory committee. And the intent would be, once that committee is formed, that that committee would make recommendations for future curriculum development.

Ms. Beck: — And who would that curriculum advisory committee be comprised of?

Ms. Nedelcov-Anderson: — I can give you the names of most of the organizations. So that would include organizations like the STF, it would include the SSBA, LEADS [League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents], post-secondary institutions, the Human Rights Commission, Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, child and youth advocate, FSIN, GDI [Gabriel Dumont Institute].

Ms. Beck: — They'd all play, I guess it's an advisory role to look at further areas for development. Okay. Any plans at staffing that committee or timeline on that?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — The hope is that the work will start this fall and the staffing and support that's going to be required will be provided through the ministry.

Ms. Beck: — Through the ministry.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Yes.

Ms. Beck: — Okay, thank you. I think that's all I had for curriculum. Thank you. Now I'm really having to prioritize.

Some questions with regard to board governance. Of course there was a lot of concern expressed last year around Bill 63 and the sections of *The Education Act* that were repealed and put into regulations. There was a resolution at the SSBA fall assembly to restore funding to boards to a level more reflective of the fiscal constraints applied to the overall sector and restraint measures at provincial level. What was the response to that resolution by the SSBA?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So in the '17-18 school year, conditions were placed on government spending, including the amount for board member professional development. But we've removed that conditionality now.

Ms. Beck: — There were significant reductions and then conditionality placed. Is there any increase in those allocations in this year's budget?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — There was an increase in the governance allocation in the formula.

Ms. Beck: — Which allocation is that included in? And what's the amount of year-over-year increase, please?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — It was travel and professional development. We'll get some numbers right away.

The number went from \$7.268 million to 8,035,500 in the . . . That was the amount that was set out for governance in the budget.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. But that increase was specifically to be applied to travel and PD [professional development]?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — It was generally with respect to governance, and conditionality was removed so school divisions would have the ability to use those funds as they saw fit in respect of those categories.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. So there was increase to travel and PD, but if boards chose to use that elsewhere, that was fine.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — We removed the conditionality on that so the boards could make adjustments with respect to travel, PD, or whatever they wanted.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. Okay. Thank you. I'm going to . . . I'm looking at the time here. Minister Wyant, one of the things that you've talked about both in the media and in the Assembly is a desire to reset the relationship with the sector. I'm just wondering how you would characterize relations in the sector currently and what are plans towards reparation of that relationship.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well relationships are always in the eyes of the beholder, as they would say, right? So one of the things that I've done since I've been the minister is we're reaching out to our sector partners. We're talking to school boards and we're talking to teachers. We're talking to parents. We're talking to anybody . . . reaching out and talking to any partner that we have, talking to the STF. We've had a number of meetings. So I think that's how you kind of engage: go out and talk to people, make sure that you're listening to them. And so I bring their ideas back and have consultation with the ministry.

So I think in terms of kind of resetting a relationship with the education sector, I think it's really all about relationships and I set a goal to do that. And I think, at least so far, I think we've been pretty successful in terms of having those ongoing conversations with school divisions and with the STF particularly. So I think that's really how you reset it.

Ms. Beck: — I do hear a lot about trust in the sector. Some of the, you know, some of the concerns around not fully funding teachers' contracts, the surprise of Bill 63, a lack of consultation with stakeholders, the broken promise not to allow cuts to special needs pre-K to stand, the surprise cuts to library funding. Trust . . . How do you go about repairing trust in the sector? I mean it's something that has been characterized as being foundational to our education sector in the province. And I'm not sure if you agree that there is an issue there. How do you go about that and what resources are available to support that work?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well I think having trust in any relationship is important, no matter what relationship it is, whether it's interpersonal relationship, whether it's with organizations, whether it's within government. And so ensuring that we're out having conversations with people, make sure that organizations, make sure individuals feel valued in terms of their contribution I think is very, very important.

And I think you build that by having conversations, by having dialogue, by meeting with people and listening to their

concerns. And I think that as a ministry we're doing a pretty good job of that, especially lately. And so we're going to continue to do that. We're going to continue to reach out and meet with all the school divisions in the province, meet with any organization that's involved in the delivery of education services in this province, and make sure that they know that my door is open to have those conversations with them any time they want. And so I think that's really how you do it. And I very much believe that, as a foundation of any relationship, trust is important. And so those conversations, those conversations are critical to make sure that that happens and I'm committed to continuing to do that with all partners in education.

And one of the comments that I've made whenever I go to speak to everybody, we talk about that. We talk about being partners. It's not us versus them. We want to build partnerships. We want to build relationships. And as long as we continue to do that, I think we're going to be successful in terms of meeting the needs of children in the classroom because that's really what we all have in common, right?

Ms. Beck: — Absolutely.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — We have that in common and I respect you for your commitment to public education. And so that's what we all share in common and I think we have to be cognizant of what our ultimate goal is. We may have different views on different things, but I think having a conversation, listening to people . . . And sometimes "no" is an acceptable answer in a relationship as long as you understand I think where people are coming from and what those conversations are like.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. One last question. I saw the news article and release around mental health pilot, a \$1.2 million mental health pilot for mental health workers in schools. I know that it's through the Ministry of Health. How is this different from co-operative arrangements that had been in place between school divisions and child and youth? And will this restore the program that was cut in P.A. [Prince Albert] Catholic schools?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — You know, I mentioned this a little bit earlier in terms of, you know, what we're doing inter-ministerially. And I think that in order to . . . And this is a good example when you want to build mental health capacity. And we want to use this model that's come out of Alberta. I know the Ministry of Health has looked at it. I know my ministry and the Ministry of Health are working collaboratively in terms of looking to see how the program can be best implemented in Saskatchewan. So we're pretty excited about it.

But any time that we can introduce a program that has a proven success in a school in terms of building capacity, I think is an important step forward. And again, as I've said this before, it's another example of how our ministries are working together to provide the right resources to kids in schools.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you.

The Chair: — We have now reached the hour of 10:30. Ms. Beck, if you have any final closing, short comments, you may do so.

[22:30]

Ms. Beck: — I just wanted to thank Minister Wyant for your time and your answers here today. And a sincere thank you to all of your officials who are here this evening. Thank you for your commitment and your knowledge and your spending time in this hot, stuffy room on a warm spring evening. I do sincerely appreciate it, and thank you. Thank you to committee members, Hansard, all the folks again who make this happen.

The Chair: — Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I just have a couple of final comments, Mr. Chair. First, thanks to you and the committee for your patience this evening. I do want to thank all the officials that are here today. I certainly can't provide full and frank answers to the questions that have been asked by Ms. Beck without having their support. So I'm very, very thankful for all their support and to you, Ms. Beck, for your very respectful questions tonight. I know and I very much appreciate your passion for education so thanks very much for that. And to Hansard for their participation as well, so thanks very much for that.

The Chair: — Okay. Thank you. Now I would like to thank the minister and Ms. Beck for their questions and answers, and to the ministry staff for diligently sitting through two long nights on this.

It now being after the hour of 10 o'clock, this committee is adjourned to 6:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[The committee adjourned at 22:31.]