



# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

## **Hansard Verbatim Report**

**No. 47 — April 3, 2019**



**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

**Twenty-Eighth Legislature**

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Mr. Dan D'Autremont, Chair  
Cannington

Ms. Danielle Chartier, Deputy Chair  
Saskatoon Riversdale

Mr. Larry Doke  
Cut Knife-Turtleford

Mr. Muhammad Fiaz  
Regina Pasqua

Mr. Todd Goudy  
Melfort

Mr. Warren Steinley  
Regina Walsh Acres

Hon. Nadine Wilson  
Saskatchewan Rivers

[The committee met at 18:00.]

**The Chair:** — Thank you, everyone. Welcome to the Human Services Committee meeting for April 3, 2019. I'm Dan D'Autremont, the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for Cannington, and the Chair. With us tonight we have MLA Muhammad Fiaz, MLA Todd Goudy, MLA Warren Steinley, the Hon. Nadine Wilson. Substituting for MLA Danielle Chartier is MLA Carla Beck; and substituting for MLA Larry Doke, we have MLA Herb Cox.

I would like to advise the committee that pursuant to rule 148(1), the estimates for the following ministries were committed to the committee on March 28, 2019: vote 37; vote 169, Advanced Education; vote 5, Education; vote 32, Health; vote 20, Labour Relations and Workplace Safety; vote 36, Social Services.

I would also like to advise the committee that pursuant to rule 148(1), the supplementary estimates — no. 2 for vote 37, Advanced Education and vote 32, Health were committed to the committee on March 20, 2019.

**General Revenue Fund  
Education  
Vote 5**

**Subvote (ED01)**

**The Chair:** — Tonight we will be considering the estimates for the Ministry of Education. We will now begin our considerations of vote 5, Education, central management and services, subvote (ED01). I would like to welcome Minister Wyant here with his officials, and I would ask that officials please introduce themselves before they speak into the microphone. Mr. Minister, please introduce your officials and make your opening remarks.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well thank you, Mr. Chair. Good evening. It's my great pleasure to be here tonight joined by my chief of staff and ministry colleagues to speak to the education budget for 2019-20.

With me today, Mr. Chair, to help me answer questions that the committee members may have: behind me my chief of staff, Julie Leggott; to my right, Deputy Minister Rob Currie. Clint Repski, assistant deputy minister, is sitting behind me; and Susan Nedelcov-Anderson, assistant deputy minister. Mr. Chair, there'll be a number of officials who, as you mentioned, will introduce themselves should they be required to support the committee. I'm very thankful that they've given up their evening to be here this evening.

Mr. Chair, it's been my pleasure to serve as the Education minister for the past year. In that time I've spent much of my time meeting with teachers, school board trustees, parents, as well as many stakeholder organizations. I've heard about the many great things that are going on in our classrooms, child care centres, early learning programs, and our library and literacy sector.

I've also heard about the challenges that teachers and trustees are facing serving our 21st century classrooms, which are full of diverse needs. I said last year that I was looking forward to re-establishing our government's relationship with education

partners, and that is something, Mr. Chair, that I remain committed to.

I know that there is still more work to be done, and I'm committed to that going forward. I'll continue to engage with parents and teachers and our other partners as we look to ensure that we are serving the best interests of our students. That's why I'm proud to say that this year's education budget is focused on finding the right balance for Saskatchewan. This includes making good on our government's commitment to deliver a balanced budget.

So this year's overall funding for education, Mr. Chair, for the 2019-20 fiscal year is \$2.48 billion. We know that supporting our education and library sectors includes ensuring that we are prepared for 21st century learning. That's why we're increasing our funding to CommunityNet this year by \$2.9 million, and this funding will allow the continuation of a strong, secure network throughout our province.

As we undertake a period of renewal in our sector, renewing partnerships, goals, and priorities, we too must renew how we think, what we do, and how we act. We must be innovative. We've heard the call to look to other jurisdictions on strategies and successes, but we can't forget that there's a great deal of innovation that we can look to right here in Saskatchewan. To support student outcomes, we need to be innovative. With that in mind, Mr. Chair, we have included in this year's budget \$500,000 to support an education innovation agenda.

The overall funding for school divisions includes operating funding, capital investments, and funding for the teachers' benefits and pensions. Operating funding for school divisions, including education property tax, will be \$1.9 billion for the 2019-20 school year, an increase of \$26.2 million. This represents the single-largest school division operating investment in the history of our province, and it's done without increasing education property taxes.

This year's increase includes \$14.5 million for enrolment and inflationary increases; 10 million to fully fund the new teachers' collective bargaining agreement; \$1.69 million to cover teachers' SPTRB [Saskatchewan Professional Teachers Regulatory Board] fees, and within this, nearly \$200,000 will be provided directly to the SPTRB for the purpose of covering substitute teachers' fees as well.

The updated pre-K to 12 [pre-kindergarten to grade 12] funding for '19-20 also includes the first-ever francophone funding model. It was developed in collaboration with the conseil to address their unique circumstances including language and culture recognition.

Supporting our students in the classroom is one of our government's main priorities. That's why we've included in this year's school operating funding \$285.5 million for supports for learning to help support the diverse needs of students. That's an increase of \$2.8 million over last school year.

Maintaining our pre-kindergarten program is important, and there continues to be an investment of \$20.7 million in the budget to support 316 pre-K programs targeted at serving more than

5,000 three- and four-year-olds throughout the province. We also continue to work to support the joint task force. That's why in this budget, it's continuing to provide \$5.1 million toward education initiatives to support First Nations and Métis-specific initiatives.

As well there's \$3.8 million for the First Nations and Métis Education Achievement Fund and \$500,000 to support the creation of these rich learning opportunities in July and August. This supports the learning needs of all students with a focus on First Nations and Métis children.

In addition to increasing our investment and operating funding, our government remains committed to providing safe learning environments for students around the province. With that in mind, we're increasing our investment in school capital by almost \$20 million for a total of \$95.6 million in this budget year.

This funding includes \$3 million in design funding for two new major capital projects, one in Moose Jaw and one in Regina. Planning will begin on a joint-use school to replace École St. Pius and Argyle elementary schools in Regina, as well as a new joint-use school in Moose Jaw to replace and consolidate Sacred Heart, St. Mary, Empire, and Westmount elementary schools. We know those are two very important projects to both divisions and to their communities.

We're also providing \$250,000 to the Greater Saskatoon Catholic School Division for the purpose of determining the scope of a replacement school for St. Frances Cree elementary school. Scoping may include determining the possible grade configuration for the school, location, and/or the size of that facility. This year's budget provides \$29 million to fund the ongoing major school consolidations currently going on in Rosthern and in Weyburn.

In addition to our major capital projects, we're continuing to invest in the improvement of our existing schools by increasing funding for preventative maintenance, renewal, and emergency funding by nearly 13 per cent for a total of \$55.9 million. We know how important PMR [preventative maintenance and renewal] funding is for school divisions, and we continue to work toward meeting our goal of funding 1 per cent of capital replacement costs.

To help accommodate the growing needs of our province, we're investing \$6.4 million in relocatable classrooms. This will allow for the purchase of 16 new classrooms and two moves. These will be prioritized based on the highest needs schools. We will also be continuing to provide \$1 million for school facility assessments. These audits help the ministry prioritize our capital investment.

The ministry is continuing to work with the CÉF [Conseil des écoles francophones] on finding appropriate institutional space for students in Prince Albert. I had the pleasure of touring a site in Prince Albert just last week and I'm looking forward to further exploring that option with the CÉF. The CÉF also has two projects, one in Regina and one in Saskatoon, on the 10 major capital list, which demonstrates our commitment to French language education, and to carry out the triple mandate of education, culture, and community.

Mr. Chair, we know that quality education and the care in our earliest years of a child's life leads to success throughout their lives. With that in mind, the 2019-20 budget provides \$72.6 million for child care funding including \$57.6 million in provincial funding for child care, an increase of \$1.6 million over last year.

This funding will be used to continue to support the more than 16,000 licensed child care spaces around the province. There is nearly \$15.1 million in federal investment through the Canada-Saskatchewan Early Learning and Child Care Agreement. This will support more than 1,200 child care spaces currently in development around the province, as well as the development of seven newly announced family resource centres in vulnerable communities. This is in addition to the three provincially supported family resource centres in Regina, Yorkton, and Sandy Bay.

This funding will also support the pilot projects for preschool-aged children with intensive needs who are deaf or hard of hearing. These are important programs, and I'm proud that we've added 202 additional spaces to support our early learners and their families.

Mr. Chair, we've heard from a number of our early years stakeholders about the pressures they're facing with salaries. We will be providing additional funding for community-based organizations. KidsFirst, early childhood intervention programs, child nutrition programs, and child care operators will benefit from that increase. This year's budget will provide \$4.3 million for early childhood intervention programs, an increase of \$300,000 over last year. Together with the CBO [community-based organization] lift, we believe these additional resources will help the ECIPs [early childhood intervention program] to continue to deliver high-quality, high-level service that they offer and help them reach more families.

We're also increasing our investment to \$15.6 million in KidsFirst programming around the province. In addition we'll make an increased investment of \$2.4 million in the child nutrition program to ensure that children are properly nourished and able to focus on learning.

We know how important libraries are to Saskatchewan people. Mr. Chair, my Legislative Secretary, Terry Dennis, completed discussions, consultations with the sector over the past year. We've heard a lot from our stakeholders and the public on this file. That's why we're investing \$128,000 more into supports for libraries in this year's budget for a total of \$11.2 million. That includes \$6 million for seven regional library systems; \$989,000 for the northern library system; \$1.4 million for our three municipal libraries; and 2.8 million to continue to support universal access to library services and infrastructure, including internet connectivity and the single integrated library system.

Mr. Chair, in conclusion, these are the highlights of this year's Education budget. Our government is proud of the investments we have made and we're focused on the right balance for Saskatchewan by ensuring that our residents continue to have access to high-quality early learning, education, library, and literacy services.

We're continuing to listen and respond to the feedback from our

stakeholders, including parents, teachers, trustees, and most importantly our students. And we'll begin to plan for the future of education beyond 2020. Hearing from these voices will be critical to ensuring our students are well served now and into the future.

So, Mr. Chair, that concludes my opening remarks, and I look forward to our conversation this evening.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Are there any questions? I recognize Ms. Beck.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Minister. And thank you and welcome to all the officials who are with you here today. I want to first say that I appreciate the accommodation. I know there was some changes in terms of setting up the meeting tonight, so I do appreciate. That change accommodated my desire and need to be up in Saskatoon at the rural congress, so I just wanted to start by saying that.

[18:15]

So tonight I thought what I would do is go through each of the votes with the exception of the amounts around capital. And I understand that all of your officials may not be here this evening, so if there's anything that we need to leave for next Monday, then I am happy to accommodate that as well.

So thank you for your opening remarks. I just wanted to look at, first of all, FTEs [full-time equivalent] within the ministry. I have a budget briefing document here indicating that within Education there's a 0.5 increase, is the net change. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — That's correct.

**Ms. Beck:** — Minister, could you describe, you mentioned a number of initiatives that are under way with the ministry right now, one of them being the ESSP [education sector strategic plan], renewing that. And we know that the early years document is nearing the end of its 2020 mandate, as well as the outreach that you have been doing with stakeholders. Can you describe some of the main projects that the ministry's undertaking within this budget year?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Sure. Well I'm pleased to have my deputy minister sitting to my right who is leading the charge in the ministry with respect to the renewal of the ESSP. So perhaps, if it's all right with you, I'll ask Deputy Minister Currie just to take us through a little bit of that conversation because he's been leading the charge.

**Mr. Currie:** — Thank you. As we know, the education sector strategic plan was developed and implemented in 2014 and it has a timeline through until June of 2020. So we have begun to gather the education sector partners together to have conversation, dialogue, and engagement as to what will be the thoughts, considerations, and concepts to be discussed for an education framework within our sector to be implemented beyond 2020. So between 2020 and 2030 are the general guidelines that have been given in consideration for engagements.

Last October, we had just over 260 people gather in Saskatoon for what was called the Education Summit. These 260 people

represented 80 organizations, and they were invited from the education sector partners to come and give voice to concepts to be considered for the establishment of an education framework beyond 2020.

Those education sector partners that were part of the development of that summit and the ongoing plan of soliciting feedback from within the province included the Saskatchewan school boards, LEADS [League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents], the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, SASBO [Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials], Métis Nation of Saskatchewan. We also had, obviously, the ministry. We had the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, and we also had FSIN [Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations], and together spent a number of months preparing for this summit, as I've mentioned, that happened in October.

It's an ongoing process right now that we are in to obtain feedback from people within the province of Saskatchewan. And I'd like to acknowledge that our education sector partners have been part of that journey and are in the midst right now of obtaining feedback and engagement from our communities, our school divisions and ongoing, our businesses within our communities as well to provide feedback of what people would consider to be an effective, prosperous, and advantageous school division for children now to prepare them for the future.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. With regard to the setting of the goals and targets within the new ESSP, are you contemplating changes in terms of process and in terms of makeup of the PLT [provincial leadership team], for example?

**Mr. Currie:** — Right now it's not for the sector partners who got together to make assumptions as to what will be. We recognize that we want to have fulsome engagement by the communities and by good citizens within the province as to what an education structure would look like in the future, and so we've left it quite open.

There is a recognition that there would be continued engagement by the education sector partners in terms of ongoing presence, voice, and we still have to work out the elements of, I would say, management or even working towards how would we collectively monitor our progress. So right now the difference in this approach compared to 2014 is that there were elements identified. We're still in the process right now of engaging our sector to find out what would be of consideration for those elements for future discussion.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — I'd add as well that you'll know that the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation] is proceeding on their own with respect to their visioning. And in our conversations with the leadership of the STF, we've made it pretty clear that we want to know what the outcomes of their work are because I don't think . . . What we really expect and what we will hope is that the work that the STF is doing with the recommendations that come out of their work can feed into the work that we're doing because certainly to plan the future of public education in Saskatchewan can't ignore the voice of teachers, and so we're very anxious to get that input.

And the last conversation that Deputy Minister Currie and I had

was about a month ago with the leadership at the STF, expressing our desire to get that information and that feedback as quickly as we can so that can feed into the work that's being done by the ministry.

**Ms. Beck:** — Minister, if you could describe, to the best of your ability, how there came to be two processes and how you see those two processes melding back together.

**Mr. Currie:** — Thank you. So working back, the sector plan was put in place in 2014 and, as we've identified, it comes to its desired end in June of 2020. So instead of waiting until close to June of 2020 and beginning planning for the future, we have taken the initiative right now with our education sector partners to co-construct what the future plan framework could be. And so that's why we have the one process right now, the sector plan, which is continuing in its good work and a focus on the outcomes and the priorities that have been established within the sector.

And while we are honouring that continued work, we are also planning for the future. So we still have the continuation and the expectation that this sector plan would be in operation, continuation, focused within our sector. But in the interim, we need some lead-up time to plan what will it be beyond that one when it does in fact take its end. So that's why the planning. The two are happening right now at the same time, and that's why the planning has begun to get us beyond 2020.

What's the plan beyond that, up to 2030? And I might say that this is a realization of the minister's visits with stakeholders throughout the province as well as the ministry's visits with stakeholders throughout the province where it became evident that people were asking, what is the plan for the future, and how do we have a voice, and how do we have a say in part of that development of a vision for the future.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you for that. The specific question around makeup of the PLT and if that is something that's under consideration for changing the makeup, just confirming that that would require legislative changes.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well as you know, the STF isn't a partner, isn't a member of the PLT. When I became the Minister of Education I had encouraged, I think it's fair to say, encouraged teacher input at the PLT. I had a couple of conversations with the president of the STF over that time and recently expressing my interest in having some teacher input at the PLT. So I've had that conversation with Deputy Minister Currie about how teachers, how the STF can be engaged in that process. And perhaps what I'll do then is just ask Deputy Minister Currie to comment on how those conversations are going.

**Mr. Currie:** — As we realize that when the good citizens of our province send their children to school, they are anticipating that our education sector is preparing their students the best that they can, and we're working together. And the strength and the richness of the leadership within the sector plan and ongoing, talking into the future, the provincial education plan, is that we have people talking.

So with the education sector strategic plan we had what was known at that time as catchball. And so when outcomes and priorities were established, catchball was a systematic way of

kind of diving down into the school divisions to obtain the voice of teachers, the voice of school-based administrators, the voice of parents as well. And school divisions, I believe, did a wonderful and a masterful job of collecting that information.

As we've continued in our journey, the PLT continues to operationally oversee the good work, as given direction by the school boards and the School Boards Association, and kind of keep the operational component alive and well, focused towards the outcomes and priorities.

Right now the PLT presents, the outcome owners present to the Saskatchewan school boards periodically, regularly throughout the year to keep them up to date as to what's happening within the sector plan, and to obtain feedback as to are we going in the right direction, any course corrections, any considerations as we move forward. So that has been rich in having some feedback from our trustees and our board Chairs to help the operational side of the sector plan be authentic and true to its original course.

And in all cases, the catchball that was started before was an element of obtaining the feedback not only from administration, our school board trustees, but of the classroom teachers as well. We have expanded that this year to — it's no longer referred to as catchball; it's referred to as feedback — where again the school divisions seek the feedback from their respective employees and parents as to how are we progressing as a sector or as a school division in terms of this sector plan.

So it continues to be an element, a rich element, of the sector plan to course correction, monitor, obtain feedback from the people who are within the education sector from the classroom through to trustees, and make sure that we have that feedback there to make sure that we are in fact on track.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. With regard to the ESSP goals and progress towards those goals, if you could briefly just comment on progress towards the goals, and how that information might have informed or changed allocation within this year's budget to address some of those areas of strength or areas of concern.

[18:30]

**Mr. Currie:** — If I understand that question correctly, to make sure I'm answering it, it's kind of an update as to how the progress of the sector plan has been?

**Ms. Beck:** — Yes, most recent progress towards the goals, and if that data has informed any changes within the budget allocations this year.

**Mr. Currie:** — Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well I won't go through all the opening comments that I made originally, but you'll see in some of the budget allocations and the increases that we've . . . I won't bore you with reading that speech again. So you'll see some of the focuses in some of the budget increase lines that we have throughout here in terms of early years, in terms of First Nations, in terms of literacy and in terms of, especially with respect to early years because we know that's going to be one of our main focuses.

So I'll ask Rob to kind of elaborate on this, but certainly the increases that you see in this budget in certain lines are intended to address the goals within not just the ESSP but as we move forward with the new sector plan and it gets developed.

**Mr. Currie:** — So from a government perspective within the Ministry of Education, we have had the following allocations realized for ongoing education sector strategic plan work in the '18-19 school year. Within the Following Their Voices priority, we've had a budget allocation of \$1.416 million. Within the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit student engagement and graduation rate outcome, we've had a budget allocation of \$235,693. Within our early years outcome, new this year, we've had a budget allocation of \$10,000. Within the reading, writing and math outcome, we've had a budget allocation of \$11,295. And then the graduation rate outcome, we've had a budget allocation of \$18,000.

And these are specific amounts that are attended, as I've mentioned, and specific to those outcomes. And they reflect some dollars. But we've also had our ministry personnel on an ongoing basis, as part of their contributions or their work assignments, in a supportive role working with the sector in terms of addressing these outcomes that have been prioritized.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you for that. Maybe to clarify the question a little bit, what I'm looking for is an update with regard to each of the goals and some description of, you know, say if there's concern about progress in a certain area, has allocation been increased in that area?

**Mr. Currie:** — Before I get into the specifics of the numbers, I'd just like to provide a little bit of context if I could. So back before 2014, we had the good work that each school division was attending to and focusing on in terms of addressing the needs of students and preparing them for a world beyond grade 12. And this has unified our focus within the province in terms of our attention to reading, writing, math, engagement of our students — our First Nations, Inuit, Métis students and all students within our province. We've also had a unified focus on graduation, and we've also had a unified focus on our early years and our preparation of children as they enter the school system.

So the results that I'll share with you right now reflect a focus consistent across the province and supported by school divisions who have taken their own resources too to ensure that there's an alignment from the work that they do from the classroom through to the school through to the school division, and it's reflected in the provincial outcomes and priorities that have been established.

So the grade 3 reading levels, we have seen an increase from 2013, which was 65 per cent, and we've seen them go in 2014 to 75 per cent. I'm rounding that up; it's 74.8 per cent. So we've seen a growth in our grade 3 students who are reading at or above grade level as a result of the focus put onto this area. And as we know that in the early years we help children learn to read because once they've entered grade 3 and they learn to read, then beyond that they can read to learn from grade 4 on.

The graduation rate of self-declared First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students, when we started this journey, increased from 35 per cent in 2012 to 44.5 per cent, which has realized an increase in that area obviously.

Saskatchewan's overall graduation rate is 77.4 per cent, up from the 74.8 per cent in 2013. What is significant to note is both of these graduation rates are trending in the right way in that they are moving upwards because the 20 years before that they had been very static in terms of their numbers.

In 2017 and '18, 79 per cent of students exiting kindergarten were ready for learning in the primary grades. This is down a point two per cent from 2014-15. What we find is that children, when they arrive at kindergarten, we found that approximately 56.8 per cent of children arrived at kindergarten ready for learning. And this happens to be consistent with the same thing in 2014-15, 56.8 per cent of the children arrive at kindergarten ready for learning.

So we've seen throughout the kindergarten year, a half-time program taught by our incredible kindergarten teachers that we have the effective kindergarten preparing our children entering grade 1.

So we have the targets that have been established and we've seen growth in these respective areas. We would always like more growth but we have collectively, systematically I would suggest, through the province moved the dial in terms of a collective focus and the good work that school divisions, as supported by the ministry, are realizing to help this movement change.

I'd like to add one significant note too if I could. Compared to its inception data, that of Following Their Voices which began in 2013-2014, Following Their Voices schools have reported the following results for year three: the three-year graduation rate has increased in 67 per cent of schools reporting, these Following Their Voices schools. The number of students attaining eight or more credits in the school year has increased in 59 per cent of schools reporting. And the number of students attaining five or more credits in the school year has increased in 73 per cent of the schools reporting.

What this indicates to us is that, with a focus on how students learn, engagement of students — that we are seeing schools with their focused resources and supported by the good work of the personnel within the ministry and within school divisions — that we are seeing more and more students in our Following Their Voices schools obtaining the credits that will enable them to graduate in a very short time.

So we're excited about this and we've seen the progress that's been realized. And that's monies that have been set aside through the joint task force for the Following Their Voices program.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. Minister, you noted in your opening remarks a breakdown of the \$26.2 million in increased funds. I'm wondering if, I'm not sure I got all of the detail there, and I had some follow-up questions. The 14.5 million was for increased . . . for inflation. Could you just describe what's included in that inflation factor?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Sure. Well maybe what I'll do is I'll just reaffirm the comments that I gave you. There was \$14.5 million for enrolment and inflationary increases. There's \$10 million to fully fund the collective bargaining agreement, and 1.6 million to cover SPTRB fees. So that's the makeup of the \$26.2 million.

**Ms. Beck:** — I missed the same number this time. The amount

for the teachers' contract that you had booked within that 26 million was . . .

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Ten million.

**Ms. Beck:** — Ten. Okay. So within the inflation factor and enrolment, what assumptions are made there? And I know the budget document, I believe, pegs inflation at 2.2 per cent. And what assumptions are being made about enrolment, or projections are being made there?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — There was 4 million was targeted toward inflation. Of that amount, 4 million was distributed toward components, goods and services, which were affected by inflation including governance, administration, instructional resources, planned operation and maintenance. So you know, general inflationary pressures that the school divisions would be . . .

That \$4 million breakdown, I can just give you some more specifics. There's 3.23 million for non-salary general, so governance, administration, those kinds of things; \$670,000 for electricity and energy; and 100,000 for a bus purchase, bus licensing, insurance, fuel, and transportation.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. And the projection for enrolment increase that's assumed in that amount?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Sorry, just repeat the question for me.

**Ms. Beck:** — The enrolment that is projected within that number. You said the 14.5 was a number allocated to inflation and enrolment increases. I'm just wondering what the projection increase is in this budget.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — It's 1,941.

**Ms. Beck:** — Has there been discussion or allocation . . . It's a bit unclear in terms of the application of carbon tax on school divisions. What assumptions have been made in the budget or has there been any allowance for that?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — We at this point are unsure what the carbon . . . there's a number of assumptions. We aren't fully aware of what the full impact of the carbon tax is going to be. We have some numbers that were provided to us, but I'm not sure what the basis of the assumptions were or the number that was provided to us by the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association]. But having said that, there's still some . . . we don't know what the basis upon the application of that tax is going to be yet.

[18:45]

**Ms. Beck:** — Has there been some planning or discussion about what happens if sort of the worst-case scenario is realized within education? I know that there has been some indication that direct cost to institutions like hospitals and schools will be refunded, but what's the plan B if some of those concerns that the SSBA's expressed are realized?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — We'll have to evaluate that once we know what the full impact is on the school divisions.

**Ms. Beck:** — Is there a timeline as to when you might know what the full impact would be?

**Mr. Repski:** — Clint Repski, assistant deputy minister. Regarding the carbon tax, as the minister indicated, I think it's fair to say that we're going to have to evaluate what the overall impact is going to be. We don't have a full understanding of the impact that school divisions are going to face. There's been again some preliminary information provided around what it is, but the full impact won't be known for a period of time — costing around natural gas, power, that sort of thing, diesel fuel. But there's going to be other secondary costs potentially that school divisions might face and it's going to take some time for us to work with the school divisions to figure out what the full impact is going to be.

**Ms. Beck:** — Have there been any assumptions with regard to, for example, the inflation amount that school divisions might have increased incurred costs because of this? Or we're waiting to see what those costs will be?

**Mr. Repski:** — So as we've discussed, I mean the impact is going to have to be assessed around the carbon tax. The inflationary amount, as we've cited before, has been provided around \$4 million for school divisions, and we've run down how that's been allocated for the year.

**Ms. Beck:** — So that 4 million doesn't include increased cost incurred because of carbon tax.

**Mr. Repski:** — So the way that the funding formula works for school divisions is, as this is rolled out to school divisions, it is a factor-based model. It's not targeted funding. So as part of the \$1.9 million given to school divisions, the \$4 million is included as part of that, and school divisions will budget accordingly based on the distribution model.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. With regard to direct rebates, do you have any indication how those rebates will be allocated? Will they be allocated directly to school divisions or to the ministry? And is there any thought as to whether school divisions will have access to that rebate?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — I'm not sure we can assume anything at this particular point in time. We're going to have to see how this works. Presumably, you know, if there's rebates that are available, they'd go to the school divisions. They're the ones that are making the expenses. But again it's pretty difficult at this point in time to know what the impact is going to be or what the potential benefits will be to school divisions as a result of that. Of course we're very hopeful on our challenge with the Court of Appeal, so we might not have to worry about this at all.

**Ms. Beck:** — I understand that. What I'm wondering about is the plan B for how school divisions will deal with the costs. And the reason I asked a question about the rebate of course is because there is some precedent with WCB [Workers' Compensation Board] rebates, for example, that weren't allocated to school divisions. So that was the reason that I asked the question. Is there a timeline with regard to upcoming consultation or communication with the federal government about when you might have some of these details made more clear for boards or for the ministry?



**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — As far as I understand, there has been no conversations or any scheduled conversations with the federal government as of yet.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Have there been conversations with the school boards about what they're anticipating with regard to these costs and how they'll be realized?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — I've had conversations with the president of the SSBA around this issue, general conversations about it, nothing particularly specific although it is a topic of conversation that we speak about on a regular basis.

**Ms. Beck:** — What is the number that they've pegged the potential cost of the application of this first level of the carbon tax to the education sector, or their costs as school divisions?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — I think the number that I've used before was \$8 million at \$10 a tonne, which was the number that . . . an estimate which we had received from the SSBA. But again, that was their estimate and there was a lot of, I think, contingency, if you will, in terms of what it gets extended to, how it gets applied. But that was the number that they had given me.

**Ms. Beck:** — Have the school boards made any expression about their ability to absorb \$8 million in additional costs? Have you had that discussion with the school boards?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — It's certainly been a concern that's been expressed to us by the SSBA in terms of the impact of the carbon tax on their operations, and it's been a topic of conversation that I've had with my colleagues as well.

**Ms. Beck:** — All right, I think I'm going to move back to some more general questions with regard to vote (ED01). Have there been any staff seconded to Executive Council within the ministry?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — There are no secondments from the Ministry of Education to Executive Council.

**Ms. Beck:** — And with regard to travel and conferences, anticipated travel for this year upcoming, is that expected to be greater or less than last year? Any out-of-country travel expected in the upcoming year?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — You know, it's hard to say. You know, what I want to make sure of is officials within the Ministry of Education get access to the best possible resources when it comes to ensuring, you know, how the ministry moves forward. We don't anticipate anything greater or less than next year, but as matters come up, as conferences or other learning opportunities come forward, I will give those due consideration. But certainly we've been very careful over the last number of years to ensure that only, you know, required travel happens where there's good learning opportunities for ministry staff to bring back new ideas.

I can tell you though that we have \$500,000, as I've mentioned, in the budget around innovation. And part of that innovation is really about bringing together, you know, some experts in the field — not only local, national and international experts — to help us look to see what other jurisdictions are doing to adapt best practices to what we're doing here. Because we've often

talked about results in the classroom, and some of the things that I've heard from teachers and from school board trustees is ensuring — and we've heard it in the House too — ensure that we are doing the best we can in terms of results for classrooms.

So we want to talk about delivery models. We want to talk about funding. We want to talk about these things that impact learning in the classroom. If that requires travel, then that will happen. But at the present time I'm not anticipating anything any more significant that's happened over the last year.

**Ms. Beck:** — Just to clarify, so I'm hearing you say that there are no planned out-of-country trips at this point?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Not that I'm aware of.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. And if you could just unpack the \$500,000 innovation fund that you've described a little bit. What are the goals? What are the deliverables on that?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — You know, it's . . . I'll let Deputy Minister Currie further comment on that, but the real challenge here is how do we convert that into ideas that result in better outcomes?

So when I first started talking about this, I'm not sure . . . What the goals are of course is to not only increase capacity in the school system to ensure that we have better outcomes in our classrooms, but help try to deal with some of the challenges that we have in the classrooms that I've heard from classroom teachers. And so how do we adopt, you know, best practices to redefine perhaps delivery models? How do we deliver education in our classrooms? How do we fund it? What's the art of the possible when it comes to these kinds of things?

And so I think it's instructive that we enter into some conversations with people who can perhaps add some, you know, help us in that direction. I think it's the goal of everyone in the ministry — it's certainly my goal — to work on outcomes to make sure that our kids are getting the best possible education. And are there innovative delivery models? Are there innovative solutions to some of the challenges that we're facing in our classrooms as opposed to just kind of pouring more money into it? How can we better ensure that we're achieving those outcomes? And so that's really the focus of it.

And when I first said that . . . when I first announced that we were going to do this, the ultimate delivery, the ultimate goal here is to increase, is to have better outcomes for our kids. That's the ultimate goal. And so you do that in a number of ways. You can talk about decreasing workload for teachers. You can talk about dealing with the diversity in the classroom. What kind of models are available for helping teachers deal with those kinds of things?

So this is really kind of starting a conversation about what the art of the possible is on those kinds of things and, I think, having an innovation fund to help drive an agenda which we will develop with our education partners. Certainly this isn't something that's going to be a top-down process.

The ministry will engage all our sector partners in terms of trying to move forward and rely, I think, look for some good advice from experts in the field, look to see what other jurisdictions are doing who have similar demographics. How are they delivering

education? Are they delivering better education? Are their outcomes better? We have a great education system in Saskatchewan, but certainly we're not averse to looking to ensure or to find improvements so that we can better the outcomes. I think that's the ultimate goal for everybody.

Perhaps I'll let Deputy Minister Currie comment a little bit further on that.

**Mr. Currie:** — Thank you. So we have heard, in meetings that the minister has had with education sector partners and entities as well as the visits, that the school divisions have provided information back to the ministry in terms of outstanding options and considerations and programming that they are utilizing within their respective school divisions. And they've also made suggestions of options that are being utilized successfully and effectively elsewhere outside of our borders.

[19:00]

And so in those conversations we are quite interested and excited in exploring what are those effective practices that are being utilized or approaches that are being utilized that we could consider here in Saskatchewan. So we have the benefit of listening to our own internal education authorities for successful practices that are being utilized in their respective school divisions, and we also have the benefit of connecting with entities outside of our borders who have found success and effectiveness, not only in other parts of Canada but in other parts of the world. Because when we are developing our education system and our programs here, we are preparing our children for a global world, and so it's nice to tap in to the ideas, the concepts, and the successful, the best practices that are being utilized.

As the minister has already expressed, we see the success of an innovation approach and focus being even stronger with the conversations and the collaboration with our education sector partners. So we look forward to addressing the challenges that we presently face in Saskatchewan, and understanding what are the practices or promising practices that are effective being used elsewhere, so that we can ultimately enhance our student learning and outcomes in their preparation.

And that ties in, I believe quite nicely, to our visioning a co-construction of a framework for the 2020 to 2030 framework as well. So we look to what have we done now, what could we do differently, and this allocation is something that creates a different conversation because there are some resources behind it to realize those opportunities.

**Ms. Beck:** — A few follow-up questions. First of all, which allocation under vote 5 do we find the \$500,000?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — It's in (ED03). It's \$293,000 for the fiscal year but it's in (ED03).

**Ms. Beck:** — Which line specifically?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Achievement and operational supports.

**Ms. Beck:** — And thank you for the response both to the minister and Mr. Currie. You noted this was intended to address the challenges that we presently face. How defined . . . Which

challenges specifically is this fund meant to address?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well, you know, one of the things . . . We heard a number of things when we're out talking to teachers. We heard a lot about administrative burden; we heard a lot about diversity in the classroom and the challenges that teachers are facing as a result of that. And so while it's not intended to address any one particular issue, those are certainly two of the most prevalent things that I had heard talking to teachers and in our continuing conversations with teachers.

So it was really intended to help develop some strategies with some help about how to address the things that we're hearing from teachers. Because at the end of the day, the challenges that teachers are facing in the classroom have a direct impact on the results that the students are having in those classrooms. And so that's really part of it. Safe environments was another element of that.

And so this really wasn't directed at one particular thing. It was really intended to kind of look at a broad range of topics that are affecting student outcomes and find, perhaps, new and innovative ways of dealing with those. At the end of the day we might not find them. You know, we might find that we have to resort to what we've always done. But I think it's an intelligent way to go in terms of looking to see how we can be innovative and, you know, use some ingenuity in helping address those challenges. Because they're real challenges in the classroom. You know that and I've seen that talking to teachers.

And so how can we better improve student outcomes? And I think dealing with some of the main issues that teachers have talked to me about is a key way of doing that. And what kind of programs, how innovative can we be in helping solve those? So that's going to take the collective voice of all our education partners from teachers, from the SSBA, from trustees, from parents, from the STF. This has got to be a collective conversation, and I think it falls in line with the kind of collective conversations that I've been encouraging over the time that I've been the minister. You know, bringing some collaboration, having some consultations.

The best way to solve the challenges that we have and the differences that we have is sitting around a table having conversations. I believe that. And so how can we bring everybody together, bring some expertise around this in addition to the expertise that we have locally to help deal with some of these issues? Because I don't think — and you've talked about this — that it's about the outcomes, not necessarily about just kind of throwing a whole bunch of money and hoping the problem goes away, because we've been doing that.

And we have to find good responsible ways of trying to address these problems — real problems that are being felt in the classroom — because that's how we'll change the outcome for students, and that's how we'll better equip teachers for handling the classroom challenges that they have. So it's not a specific answer to your question, but certainly the start of a conversation and I think that that's important.

**Ms. Beck:** — Is the intent to look at something that's scalable provincially or to address innovation in specific communities that might face specific challenges? Or are both of those on the

table?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well, yes, I think it's both. I mean there's certainly some challenges. When I've travelled around talking to teachers, there's a consistent theme in my conversations among a lot of teachers. But there's also localized challenges too. Certainly challenges in delivering education in the North is a different challenge than delivering education in the South. Delivering education . . . You were at the rural congress. Delivering education in rural communities is different than delivering education in the cities where you have, you know, large . . . you have, you know, strategic resources which you can deploy and with less resources.

So these are all real challenges and we know that these are kinds of challenges that have been faced by other places around the world that have diverse populations like we have. And so what are their experiences? How have they dealt with them? Perhaps we've dealt with them better than they have. I suspect that there's things that we can learn. And I think when we open our minds and our ears to other people, we can learn from their experiences. And so it's both. I mean there may well be some innovation that we can bring provincially, but a lot of it will be localized because the challenges are local.

**Ms. Beck:** — Are there specific jurisdictions that you're looking towards to find this innovation?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — I'll let Deputy Minister Currie just kind of talk about some of the work that he's been already doing on this.

**Mr. Currie:** — Thank you. Last summer at the end of August, I had the opportunity to attend the Saskatoon Teachers' Association convention where they had some world leaders in education present. There was Adrian Piccoli, who is executive director of the Gonski Institute in New South Wales, as well as Pasi Sahlberg, who is renowned for his work within Finland and their education system, as well as Andy Hargreaves, here a Canadian who is located in Toronto working with the University of Toronto.

And in hearing what their work involves, and I would say an affirmation of the work of Saskatchewan education, in showing and highlighting that Saskatchewan education is actually a world leader in terms of its providing education on an equitable basis. And they're speaking of all children within the province are eligible for an education in the publicly funded schools, and that's not realized all across the world.

What it shared with us is, getting to know and meeting these people, is the Gonski Institute is a research institute that has these members that I've just referenced as well as Simon Breakspear, who's also contracted to work with the Gonski Institute, that they are connected with education systems across the world. They are connected to Scotland, Finland, Singapore, China, obviously Australia, New South Wales. And they are also connected to provinces within Canada — Alberta and Ontario. And they have collectively brought their wisdom to these various education entities and shared best practices. While they are sharing with us practices known in other parts of the world and within Canada, they're also sharing Saskatchewan's success, as I've referenced just a few minutes ago, in terms of those parts of the world in terms of the leaders that Saskatchewan is providing.

So we are interested in creating a relationship with the Gonski Institute so that we can learn from them as well as from outside borders as well as learn from within. And there are good examples happening across our province within any one of the 27 school divisions, and we can get into kind of examples of them too, just to help our students if we're going to create an education system that prepares our students for the future.

It's a global world, and so while we're knowing what's happening within our province and within our borders, and helping understand and reflect our promising practices, it's incumbent upon us to understand what's happening on an international scale too. And these world leaders, advisers to many, many different education authorities that I've just referenced, are interested in talking and helping Saskatchewan grow in terms of its provision of an education program for our children now and also in the future.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — I'm reminded of the old adage, you know, it's tough to be a prophet in your own land. But we have to make sure that we engage our local experts too. We have great relationships with the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina, who will be able to provide some guidance and support in this as well. And so we're looking forward to this. I think it's a great step forward.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. And I'm glad you noted . . . I think what was a central piece of what Pasi Sahlberg had to say was the unique position that Saskatchewan is situated in with regard to the fact that unlike many places in the world, we still have the majority of students from every socio-economic background who attend publicly funded educational institutions in the province.

And you know, seeing that as a strength and the ability to move change when you have, you know, every cross-section of the population with, for lack of a better term, you know, skin in the game, that this is important to everyone. There also are, you know, forces at play. I can think of a recent letter to the editor, for example, encouraging more private education. Charter schools, for example. Any direction there? Any thought around changing the way that education is delivered, you know, be it voucher or charter? Or are we taking Pasi Sahlberg's direction or advice with regard to ensuring that we bolster our publicly funded system?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — We have a very strong public system as he has said, and so it's certainly the intention of the Ministry of Education to continue that work to continue to support, as fully as we can, public education in Saskatchewan. We think that that's one of our key strengths, as he's noted and certainly kind of talks about that when he travels around the world and you heard him when he was in Saskatoon last year. So that is certainly our focus to ensure that we continue to support the publicly funded education system in Saskatchewan.

[19:15]

**Ms. Beck:** — Just to go back to the fund a little bit, who can access the fund? What is the process for accessing the fund? What's the criteria for accessing the fund? I'm just trying to flush that out a little bit.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well we're currently working out all that.

When we put it in place, we purposely didn't put any criteria in place. It was set aside so that we could start to have a conversation about precisely those things. How does it work? How can you access it? How is it going to be accessed? And how's the ministry going to deal with requests for it? And so this is really an open-ended conversation at this point in time, so I'm not going to put any boundaries around it. But this is precisely the conversation that we need to have with all our partners in education as to what are we going to use it for? How are we going to best utilize those funds this year to ensure that we can deliver outcomes? So it's kind of a blank page and a work-in-progress.

**Ms. Beck:** — So things like travel to the Gonski Institute or to other jurisdictions by ministry officials, does that come out of this fund? Or this is separate? This is for those outside the ministry?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Again the parameters haven't really been determined yet, but certainly what we would like to ensure to the greatest possible extent is that these funds are used to develop these innovative strategies and not to travel around. But again we haven't made those determinations yet in terms of how it will be utilized. But we want to make sure that they are utilized in a way that we can help develop a strategy so that we can affect outcomes in the classroom. So there may be part of that. But again it's a work-in-progress.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — And I might say just to add to that, it is our intention to ensure that we provide regular updates in terms of where we're at with this. We want to make sure that not just the partners in education are aware of what we're doing but that the public is aware of what we're doing. Because this is important to the entire province and it's important to teachers and it's important to parents. And so that's the intention.

**Ms. Beck:** — Is there an allocation within this budget for communication? And if that's the case, is that an increase or decrease?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — There is nothing specific in the Education budget with respect to communications. As communications are required, they're funded within the branch of the ministry.

**The Chair:** — [Inaudible interjection] . . . If you have a problem with your electronic equipment, would you please take it outside.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Minister, you noted in some of your preamble to some of the questions or some of the answers, that some of the issues that we find within education aren't going to be solved by, I think you said, pouring money into them. I'm just wondering . . . I know the last couple of years with regard to our time at this table in committee some directives with regard to public sector wage decreases. I'm just wondering, any efficiency initiatives within this year's budget that we find.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — There are no efficiency targets that are set out in this budget with respect to the sector.

**Mr. Currie:** — I'd just like to, if I could, add to that. I know within the ministry there is an expectation and there is a . . . that we lead in terms of being as efficient and as effective as we can

be. And so there has been a constant review of what we're doing, resource allocations toward that, and to ensure that we are, as the sector is, as effective and as efficient with its resource allocation as it possibly can be. So that's a constant, I would say, paradigm and mindset that we bring to our work and in sharing with our education sector as well, that we have that expectation in terms of how we conduct ourselves and the resource allocations as well.

**Ms. Beck:** — So nothing like a hiring freeze or vacancy management, out-of-province travel limitations, nothing like that?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — No.

**Ms. Beck:** — I'm going to move into some questions around (ED08), the early years. The first question is just in the description under (ED08). This is on page 45 of the Estimates document. I just wanted to clarify. It notes that within this allocation, there's funding for the management of pre-kindergarten program and support for kindergarten programs. I'm just trying to pull out how much of this allocation goes towards support for kindergarten programs and what that looks like and how that distinction's made from the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] vote, the (ED03) vote, and this vote.

**Mr. Repski:** — You had asked about kindergarten funding in (ED08). We don't fund kindergarten programs through (ED08). It's done through the K to 12 line item.

**Ms. Beck:** — Yes, that's what I thought, so that was the reason for my question. It notes underneath the (ED08) description, and I'm quoting, ". . . as well as management of the Prekindergarten program and support for the Kindergarten programs."

**Mr. Repski:** — The notation for the description would be about the salaries within the early years branch that go towards supporting but not direct dollars. It's a staff complement.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you for clarifying that. The first line under allocations is for operational support and I note that there's a slight decrease there this year. I'm just wondering if you could lay out for us here what is included under that allocation and why we see that decrease of, I think, about \$100,000 there.

**Mr. Repski:** — So the decrease is 0.033 million for a general salary increase and 0.125 million for a general operating reduction. So it was just a small reduction to the internal operations.

**Ms. Beck:** — So reduction of staff within operational support?

**Mr. Repski:** — It was within the branch allocation. So that would be a mild reduction in things around PD [professional development], travel, just a general overall reduction to branch activities.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. What else is included under that allocation?

**Mr. Repski:** — So the listing of what's covered off is early learning and evaluation at \$1.008 million; early childhood programs policy and design, \$411,500; early years administration, \$332,000; integration and community programs, \$523,500; ELCC [early learning and child care] service delivery

in the North for \$148,000; ELCC service delivery in the Central, 760,500; ELCC service delivery in the South region for 1,144,500. So a variety of things.

**Ms. Beck:** — So the reason for the decrease, is that decreased need, or is there another reason for the decrease?

**Mr. Repski:** — That would be us comparing ministry expenditures to actuals and what's being required. So when we look at . . . To fund the branch, this would be a slight reduction to the internal spend.

**Ms. Beck:** — So one of the things . . . In addition to the ESSP coming to conclusion in 2020, the early years plan also comes to conclusion, the 2016 to 2020. I'm just wondering about plans towards renewing that plan and who is doing that work if . . . What work has been done towards that at this point?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — The ministry has been quite focused on federal participation so the renewal is at an early stage.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. So by focused on federal participation . . . the bilateral agreement? Or what is it exactly that we're waiting for there?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — That's right, yes. The bilateral agreement.

**Ms. Beck:** — And the term of the current bilateral agreement is set to expire — just pulling it up here — 2020, is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — It's March 31st of next year.

[19:30]

**Ms. Beck:** — March 31st. So I'm wondering, Minister, if you can describe any progress towards a new plan or what the timelines will be in terms of creating that new plan for early years?

**Ms. Mitchell:** — My name is Janet Mitchell. I'm the executive director of the early years branch. Your question was with regard to the progress to the next phase of the early years plan? I think you could say at this point we're at a very preliminary stage with that. We do know that in 2021 there will be a need for a new early years plan.

**Ms. Beck:** — So I appreciate that we're at early stages here. And with regard to the next bilateral agreement, has any of that work started in negotiation with the federal government, or consultation?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — No, not yet.

**Ms. Beck:** — How about work with regard to assessing progress towards a current plan? Is that work under way? And if you could describe that progress.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — We have made progress, significant progress on 38 of the 47 action items that were in the plan.

**Ms. Beck:** — So the action items in the plan are cross-ministry. So of those . . . Did you say 41 action items?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — 47.

**Ms. Beck:** — 47. How many of those belong to Education, if I may? There are action items that are for Health; there are action items that are for Social Services, for example. How many of those are directly within the purview of the ministry?

**Ms. Mitchell:** — I'm not quite sure of the answer to that. I think it's at least a half are education related, and many of them are shared.

**Ms. Beck:** — Right.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — I might make a further comment on that. Certainly there are a number of the action items that are shared between Health and Education. And you know, that rub between those two is an issue which we really want to get to the bottom of and see how better we can coordinate the work between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health.

You've seen a little bit of this work already on the pilot projects for mental health in terms of how we're going to break down silos. But when it comes to the early years, there's more work that needs to be done between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education and so we want to pay some particular attention to that. And we were just talking about this this morning, about working on developing an action plan on how we can kind of address those, that inter-ministerial challenge, when it comes to some of the goals in the early years plan. So it's certainly a topic which we have a lot conversations about, and I think you'll see some specific action coming as a result of the conversations that we've started to have.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. Are there any goals or timelines that have been set with regard to establishing some of that inter-ministerial work to look at, I guess broadly speaking, child well-being or child readiness for school? How far along the path are we?

**Mr. Currie:** — I'll reference it as inter-ministerial work, I have three examples I'd like to bring to your attention.

The first is the assistant deputy ministers' shared agenda. And these are the deputy ministers from our human service ministries that gather and talk of shared interests, review of existing resources, and allocation of those resources to ensure there's a focused approach and no redundancy. And so that's the ADM [assistant deputy minister] shared agenda.

We also have the deputy ministers as well from the human services that meet and have been doing the same in reviewing, in terms of initiatives and projects that might be of shared interest and resource allocation, again in an effort to avoid, reduce redundancy. I will give to you an example of the mental health capacity building as one such example that the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education worked on together to benefit the students of our province. And this was one such example that's been effectively realized within five of our sites.

And the other inter-ministerial work has been shared focus on the social innovation hub where there's again a review as to how can the ministries work together to address the needs of our children, our families, and our students in the schools.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — I might just make one quick comment because you had talked about the renewal of the bilateral agreement. The agreement's quite clear that Canada commits to the annual allocation for the renewal period but no less than the annual allocation of the current agreement. So there is certainly an intention of the federal government to continue with the bilateral understanding, and we'll set some goals and some progress based on that. But having the commitment of the federal government with respect to the renewal of the program is pretty important.

**Ms. Beck:** — So a few questions coming out of that. It's been mentioned a couple of times, but the pilot project for mental health, I think there are five sites within the province where this has . . .

**Mr. Currie:** — Correct.

**Ms. Beck:** — Can you describe (a) the funding and where the funding comes from — you know, portion for health, for schools, for the federal government, provincial government — and what are the deliverables or what's being measured out of these programs? What can we expect from them?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — I'll let Deputy Minister Currie kind of follow up on the answer to that, but the funding for these pilots is being provided by the Ministry of Health. And the programs, as I mentioned before, are modelled after the programs that have been successfully delivered in Alberta in a number of their high schools. And so we're expecting to see some similar results. We'll assess the efficacy of the pilot projects, of course, in Saskatchewan in the five locations where we have. But they will be funded by the Ministry of Health.

And I've said this before, I think it's a pretty good example of how our ministries need to, you know, kind of work together in terms of trying to break down the silos to do what's best for the kids in our classrooms, and not necessarily burden one ministry or the other with that responsibility, that it's a joint responsibility. But I'll let Deputy Minister Currie just kind of comment a little bit on the programming.

**Mr. Currie:** — I think that the minister has already referenced it. We're piloting it here and it's been witnessed and observed successfully in Alberta. And while this is funded by Health, the success and the strength of this, the richness, is that we have working in concert with Health is Education. And the benefactors of these resources in the five pilot sites are the students and the staff who are there and ultimately the families as well.

So they are extra human resources that are provided to these five sites, and they are available to help the students in addressing their mental health successfully and effectively so that they can continue in their education journey. We are quite appreciative that Health has kind of been holding the funds for this, and as is wished by a number of our education stakeholders, is an evidence of inter-ministerial walking together to support the students and the families within these respective communities.

So the five sites for the mental health capacity building include Sandy Bay, include Dr. Martin LeBoldus Catholic High School here in Regina, Grenfell High School, as well as the two high schools in North Battleford.

**Ms. Beck:** — And I think that that is positive. I remember recent conversations about the non-attendance of community appointments, mental health appointments, and how that might be improved by delivering those services within schools. So I mean, I do see that as positive.

I guess the first question is, how are we measuring success with these pilots? You know, I assume when we have pilots that we're measuring to see if this is something that's scalable province-wide, for example. I believe that some of the money, and I could be wrong, or a significant portion is from the federal government's mental health strategy funding. When are we measuring, when are we deciding, what's the criteria for deciding if this is something that (a) is successful? How are we measuring that success and then deciding when to roll this out into communities across the province?

**Mr. Currie:** — I don't want to take away Health's thunder on a wonderful initiative. We as a ministry are pleased and quite excited to be a part of any initiative that will benefit the students and the families within our province. And so, just very scratching the surface of this, the Health Authority contracts with the school divisions for this initiative. In terms of schools, we use our existing student perception survey that is called the OurSchool, and we have that as kind of an indicator as to the needs. And that's from the Ministry of Education that we provide that OurSchool assessment, perceptual student survey that's given in the schools. And then Health has another assessment tool that it uses to underscore the effectiveness and the impact that it has.

So I know that from an Education point of view, we are growing in terms of our partnership with Health. But, as I mentioned before, I'd kind of leave it up to the funding, the resource allocation, and the impact there, that I'm not wanting to take too much away from their opportunity to share this initiative too from their perspective.

**The Chair:** — Okay. It being close to halfway through the committee hearing, we will take a five-minute recess.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

**The Chair:** — Okay, the committee will reconvene. Ms. Beck, go ahead.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. One of the things that I wanted to ask was with regard to the . . . After the 2017-18 budget there were cuts to a number of pre-K programs for children with special or additional needs — I think specifically of Discovery Preschool's programs for students with hearing loss, students who are deaf. I know that there are some pilot projects that were implemented with the bilateral agreement funding, or at least in part or large part.

I'm just looking for an update with regard to those pilots. How many students are in those spaces? Has it fully backfilled the number of students that were cut out of those programs initially, and what the plans are with regard to those pilots beyond March of next year.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — I'll let Ms. Mitchell answer those questions.

**Ms. Mitchell:** — Thank you. So just to be clear, there were no provincial cuts to preschool programs. There were some school division cuts that were made. As part of the Canada-Saskatchewan Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, we were able to develop an early learning intensive support pilot. There are 120 spaces available in Regina and Saskatoon for that pilot. We have just had an expansion of that. There are 50 more spaces that are available in other centres in Saskatchewan.

**Ms. Beck:** — Funding for those spaces is allocated in this budget, the 50 additional spaces?

**Ms. Mitchell:** — Yes.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. So that is contained under which allocation line?

**Ms. Mitchell:** — That is with the federal dollars.

**Ms. Beck:** — I'm just asking where it shows up under (ED08).

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — It's the child care budget line.

**Ms. Beck:** — Child care budget line?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Yes.

**Ms. Beck:** — And what's the amount that is allocated for those additional 50 spaces?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — It's \$500,000.

**Ms. Beck:** — I know this is a question that I asked in the budget briefing. One thing that stands out when you look at page 45 in the child care allocation is a significant decrease. Now I understand that's because of dollars that had to be spent last year. So we now know that there's an additional 500,000 that's going to 50 spaces within child care. What are the changes year over year that accounts for the different allocation under the child care line? Were there programs that were cut, or how were those reductions realized?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — So there is a net decrease, you know, and I'm just looking for the variance explanation. There was \$750,000. There was an increase to provide base operating funding for the three family resource centres in Sandy Bay, Yorkton, Regina. There was a \$464,000 CBO lift for the child care centres. There was \$350,000 increased annualized funding for the 800 utilized child care spaces in the joint-use and the new traditional schools including Scott, Connaught, and Sacred Heart; \$300,000 increase for the early childhood intervention programs for the ECIPs; \$120,000 for the CBO lift for KidsFirst; \$33,000 for general salary increases; \$32,000 for the CBO lift for the ECIPs. There was a \$5.684 million reduction and a 1.5 FTE increase for the federal Early Learning and Child Care Agreement that was to align with requirements, and that was a carry-over which you've already noted that reflects the fact that there's no more carry-over. So that was the reduction.

And there was \$125,000 general operating reduction. By the way, I'd also add that does not include 42 additional child care spaces in Saskatoon that are funded by the ministry for the deaf

and hard of hearing program, for autism, and general delays. There's five spaces in Saskatoon Catholic and up to six in Regina Public for \$449,000 which is funded by the ministry.

**Ms. Beck:** — And that's funded out of the K to 12 vote?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — That's correct.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. So you noted a reduction in operational support. What accounts for that reduction specifically?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — The \$25,000 that I indicated? It was what the assistant deputy minister was speaking to earlier. It was general operating reduction, efficiencies within the ministry.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. KidsFirst, there is . . . How many spaces or participants in this year versus last year with regard to the KidsFirst funding? Or is that increase for the centres entirely?

[20:00]

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — The program serves approximately 1,700 vulnerable families annually with about 1,000 participating in any one particular time.

**Ms. Beck:** — So if we could break that down a little bit with regard to families, the number of families in KidsFirst targeted programming, how many families are there this year over last year?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Oh, year over year? '17-18 . . . The pool is fairly stable in year over year. So as I said, 1,700 vulnerable families annually, which would be kind of a constant number.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. So the increased funding was not for additional spaces or additional home visitors for example?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — No.

**Ms. Beck:** — No. Okay. Is the need for those programs or let's say wait-lists or requests for those programs, is that stagnant or declining? Or it's the funding that's not increased?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — No one gets turned away by this program. It's not as if we just kind of have a cap and then once we get to the cap . . . Everyone that presents themselves gets service through the program.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. So without increased funding, how does that get accommodated? A reduction in the number of home visiting hours? Or how does that get absorbed?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — They've just been able to manage within their allocation. So there's been no reduction in any services. They've just been able to manage.

**Ms. Beck:** — Is there any tracking of the number of hours that home visitors spend with families year over year? Do we track that at all?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — The programs track that, but we don't have that information.

**Ms. Beck:** — Is that something that they submit to the ministry or they keep that?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — They don't submit it to the ministry.

**Ms. Beck:** — They don't submit it. Okay. So the increase then was . . . So the number of families is relatively stable. The number of communities that have targeted KidsFirst funding, is that stable? I have a number of nine from 2017-18.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — It hasn't changed.

**Ms. Beck:** — Same. Okay. And northern communities who receive KidsFirst funding, I have 12. Is that stable as well?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Yes, 12.

**Ms. Beck:** — Oh, okay. And those communities that benefit from regional programming, about the same at 175. Is that . . .

**Ms. Mitchell:** — There's been no change.

**Ms. Beck:** — No changes.

**Ms. Mitchell:** — There's been no change to KidsFirst at all.

**Ms. Beck:** — No changes. Okay. With regard to the number of licensed child care facilities in the province, is there any change year over year?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well the number of licensed child care spaces in operation as of December 31st, 2018 was 16,523, and another 1,295 which we expect to roll out over the next year.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. So can you speak further to the plans for that rollout over the next year? Where will those spaces be found? Plans for staffing? I know sometimes that has been an issue with finding staff.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — So there's 1,295, as I mentioned. I'll read into the record the communities: Beauval had nine allocated; Delisle had 32; Fort Qu'Appelle had 20; Humboldt, 21; LeRoy, 15; Moose Jaw, 36; Nipawin, 13; North Battleford, 51; Prince Albert, 109; Regina, 461; Saskatoon, 468; Swift Current had 30; there were 2 in Vonda; and 28 in Yorkton. Some of those were of course new space; some of them were just expansions of existing facilities.

**Ms. Beck:** — Existing facilities. So I have the number for the number of licensed facilities in 2017 at 564. What's the number this year?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — As of December 31st, it was 560 licensed facilities.

**Ms. Beck:** — [Inaudible] . . . hundred and sixty?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — That's the number that I have, yes.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Okay so that's a reduction.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — That's not just centres. That includes homes as well with licensed spaces.

**Ms. Beck:** — Oh, I see. Okay. Facilities, okay. I'm going to skip down to the pre-K [pre-kindergarten] programs and allocation for pre-K programs in this year's budget. How many pre-K programs are funded in this year's budget?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — The number of programs, and since 2008 there's been an expansion from 155 to 316 programs, for 5,056 spaces.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. So that's stable since 2017-18, that number?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Yes.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. One of the things that has been noted and is something that's tracked within the ESSP but also within the annual report is around the EYE [early years evaluation] testing and the readiness for students entering kindergarten. Deputy Minister Currie alluded to this. The number of students who fall in that red, not ready, or multiple concerns with regard to readiness for kindergarten, that number has remained relatively stable or increased slightly. I'm just wondering about some of the . . . I'm interested in comments about that and some of the strategies that are being employed to address that number.

**Mr. Currie:** — Thank you for the referencing. So the sector plan, as you know, has the focus on readiness for children entering grade 1. And so as a result of the data that's been collected over the last number of years, it's been created as a priority this year to put greater emphasis and focus on it.

As I referenced earlier tonight, there was an early years gathering that took place and there were some resources allocated to that. That took place and I think I shared earlier the monies that were dedicated to that. As well as we have an inter-ministerial focus through the assistant deputy minister shared agenda group. The human services have come together to speak to how can readiness for children entering school be targeted and focused with our collective resources.

As well as we have the social innovation hub that is another inter-ministerial — I've referenced that earlier too — that's focused. I think what's happening . . . I don't think. What's happening is that the human services ministries are spending time targeting, focusing, and speaking about their respective involvement with preparation and readiness in support of families, so that children entering the school division and their school experience will be prepared as best they can.

So there's the inter-ministerial focus. There has been resource allocation through the sector plan as well as there's been the establishment of a priority to have a different lens on the preparation and the focus of students so they're prepared when they come into school.

**Ms. Beck:** — What do we . . . Oh. Go ahead.

**Mr. Currie:** — If I could add to it.

**Ms. Beck:** — Absolutely.

**Mr. Currie:** — One of the priorities that came about as a result of this discussion is we've had an engagement with the University of Saskatchewan. And in our conversations through



the sector plan preparation and working with the education sector as well as other ministries, there's been an interest to prepare our teachers who are in the schools effectively so that they can provide for the students.

And so the University of Saskatchewan, in partnership with the ministry, has worked to have one of our ministry staff seconded to the university and has been working on courses so that students going into Education can target and focus their Education training on the early years, which before now has not been as focused and as targeted.

So we are quite excited about this partnership and the targeting that's enabling students who are going into their university career to consider Education, to work on education, that they can be skilled and expert practitioners in terms of addressing the needs of children in those early years as opposed to more of a generalist and less training in that skilled area.

**Ms. Beck:** — And that's part of that suite of additional certificates that teachers are able to take sort of concurrently or after a degree, in specializations around mathematics or EAL [English as an additional language] teaching? Is that a similar program?

**Mr. Currie:** — No, this is focused so that the University of Saskatchewan . . .

**Ms. Beck:** — I see. Oh, right.

**Mr. Currie:** — With the early years, elementary, and high school.

**Ms. Beck:** — Early years, elementary. Right. Right. Right. That is promising. That is one indication of something in terms of promising and best practices. What else do we assume or do we know in terms of best practices with regard to ensuring children are ready when they enter kindergarten? I mean I think you've provided evidence that schools do really quite an exceptional job in terms of, you know, moving the number of students who are not ready to learn into that ready-to-learn category, into the green category over the course of one year. What do we know or what do we see as promising practice in terms of ensuring those kids, before they enter kindergarten, that we reduce the number of kids who are in that red zone?

**Ms. Mitchell:** — Thank you. This question has been of great interest to the education sector plan, the early years outcome team, and they have identified a number of strategies and we have been working of course closely with them to discuss those. So of course the early years evaluation is very foundational to the work, to really understand what is going on. As an outcome team, they have been focused on developing practical materials for teachers and school-based administrators. So for example they produced last year a document called *Responsive Teaching, Practice & Assessment in Early Learning Programs*.

[20:15]

This unifies a number of pieces so that they come together in a very practical and tangible way for teachers, lots of links within that to electronic blackboard tools so that teachers will find it very easy to get the information that they need. So in other words

just really make it simpler for those early years teachers to access the resources that will make a difference for them.

We are embarking on a priority project through the ESSP around early years data. What is it that we know about children and families, and what exists already to support them in communities? So that's a priority of the ESSP that will take place over the next school year, yes.

**Ms. Beck:** — Glad to hear it. One of the things that had me thinking about that question was looking, I believe it was at the early years plan, and there was reference to the universal screen at birth and then the pre-K program or the kindergarten program. There's a lot of years in between there, and I appreciate that the Ministry of Education has a specific mandate within the pre-K, early learning, and up to, you know, the K to 12 system. But I'm thankful to hear about the inter-ministerial co-operation that is happening, you know, to ensure that those kids in that piece in between, that we've got eyes on them and that we're doing everything that we can for them.

I mean we know things about children in the province. Like a quarter of the children in the province experience poverty, for example, and of course that has implications here. So all that to say that I'm glad that the work is ongoing and that, you know, excited to hear about some of the ideas that come forward and will be asking questions about, you know, allocation in the budget with regard to supporting those best practices to ensuring that all kids get the best start in those formative years. So thank you.

With regard specifically to the early childhood intervention programs, there is a little bit of a lift year over year within the allocation. I'm just wondering if there are any, what that increase is attributed to, and if there are any changes in terms of the delivery of the ECIP programs in the province.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well there's a \$332,000 increase; \$300,000 of that is an increase in the program and there's a \$32,000 lift for the CBOs in that. That probably wasn't specific enough for you.

**Ms. Beck:** — I'm just wondering if there . . . I mean if it was just an increase for operating and, you know, wages, or if there were any significant changes with regard to how the program's delivered.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Yes, the \$300,000 was an increase for, you know, operating, not operating but for programming costs, and then the \$32,000 for wages.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. I'm going to move on to some questions that I had specifically with regard to the early years plan. Page 4 of that plan there's a note that "Since 2008, there's been a 23 per cent increase in the number of children age four and younger in Saskatchewan." I'm just wondering what the updated demographic information is for the number of children four and younger in the province.

**Ms. Mitchell:** — As the population of Saskatchewan increases, the number of young children has increased as well. So the population of children aged zero to five in '18-19 was 199,575.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. I'll work out the percentages after. In 2006,

looking at the same page on page 4 — I'm just looking to update the numbers and see if anything has significantly changed with regard to the landscape of early childhood education — approximately 30 per cent of those zero to four in the province identified as First Nation or Métis. I'm just wondering if that is stable or if we've seen an increase or a decrease in terms of the population.

**Ms. Mitchell:** — We don't have that with us today.

**Ms. Beck:** — Is that something that's collected though that we could get it later?

**Ms. Mitchell:** — Yes.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — We'll use our best efforts to get you that information.

**Ms. Beck:** — For sure, for sure. And this may be another one for later. Again on the same page, looking at a percentage of every 100 children in the province, 44 would be identified as new Canadian — if that amount or that percentage is stable, or if we've seen an increase or a decrease.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — I would think it would be fairly stable, but again we'll get you the information. I don't think we have that with us today.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay.

**The Chair:** — Any information that you might be providing, please provide it to the committee.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. The other piece then was with regard to — and this may be counterintuitive, I'm not sure — the greatest overall number of children who are not ready, fully ready for school, not in that green zone I assume, are found in the middle of the socio-economic status range. What do we know about kids who . . . the most recent data, about the kids who are being assessed in the red or yellow or green range?

**Ms. Mitchell:** — There are children in all socio-economic groups that come to school not ready to learn.

**Ms. Beck:** — Of course.

**Ms. Mitchell:** — When we say that the greatest overall numbers of children who are not fully ready for school are in the middle class, and that's of course because that's where the most children are.

**Ms. Beck:** — Makes sense. Thanks.

**Ms. Mitchell:** — I wonder if I could clarify. I misspoke earlier about the number of children. What I give you was the number of children that were age zero to 12.

**Ms. Beck:** — Twelve, okay.

**Ms. Mitchell:** — Yes, sorry about that.

**Ms. Beck:** — No, that's okay. What I was looking for was just comparison and updating of the plan. So again on page 4, had noted that since 2008 there had been a 23 per cent increase in the number of children aged four and younger, so I'm just wondering about the most up-to-date numbers with regard to the number of children who are age four and younger. So that's something that we'll get later? Okay.

I'm looking now at page 5 and I think these are some of the deliverables that you talked about previously, Minister. "Through the early years plan we will . . . improve parent choice and access to high quality early learning and child care opportunities." Within the context of this budget and this plan, I'm just wondering what that means with regard to improving parent choice with regard to child care and early learning opportunities.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well there's a number of things. First of all, certainly the number of spaces has increased significantly since 2007, but there's a number of specialty programs I think that we can always point to: the deaf and hard of hearing, programs for kids with intensive needs. So those are some of the priorities that we had and certainly that were funded within this budget. So that's kind of how that plays together.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. So I'm looking at page 6 and when you talk about the progress towards the goals of the plan, I assume that this is what is meant with regard to those goals. Regard to working with First Nations and Métis organizations ". . . to improve the reflection of culture in early learning programs." Just wondering if that's one of the goals that has been met, and if so, what the progress is and if there's a supporting budget within this year's estimates.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Specifically with respect to early years?

**Ms. Beck:** — Yes, this is under early learning.

**Ms. Mitchell:** — The action is one that is very important to the ministry. It's work that is so important and it may never be fully done, but we continue to work on it. So just to give you an example, we are just rolling out April, May, and June, Aboriginal awareness training throughout the early years sector. So it's focussed primarily on child care, but all of our other early years stakeholders are invited to participate as well. This is really high quality training and we think it's a really, it's a really important step.

**Ms. Beck:** — When you say the other early years stakeholders, who would that include that would be able to take this training?

**Ms. Mitchell:** — Sorry I should be more specific about that. So we would include early years stakeholders such as KidsFirst programs, early childhood intervention program, ECIP. We may have some pre-kindergarten or kindergarten teachers participate in some of that. So we try to be as inclusive as we can of the early years sector that are part of the education community.

**Ms. Beck:** — Great. Looking specifically under child care now, again still on page 6 of the early years plan, one of the key indicators here was around simplifying the child care subsidy process for parents. I'm just wondering if you could speak to any progress towards that goal or if that's something that's still . . .

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — That's administered by the Ministry of Social Services, and so Ms. Beck, those questions should be better directed to the Minister of Social Services.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. I mean one suggestion that has been made is perhaps moving all of that into a single ministry. Has there been any discussion about moving the subsidy and child care under the same ministry or . . .

**Mr. Currie:** — Thanks for the question. Circling back to some of the committees I referenced earlier, there are the deputy ministers, Human Services . . . deputy ministers of Human Services have been doing some significant collaborative work in talking about meeting the needs, and so that's been, as I've mentioned earlier, kind of put on their . . . in front and how can we work collectively and collaboratively to ensure that we are targeting appropriately without redundancy and overlap, unnecessary overlap.

[20:30]

As well as I think I'll go back to those three groups I referenced. One is a social innovation hub where we are looking at, again, families with young children and how do they prepare or are they prepared for when they enter the school system, and working to ensure that, whether it be any of our human service ministries, that we are allocating our resources in an effective manner that will prepare the children.

And the last I would also reference is, there's a significant focus being placed on our early years through our assistant deputy minister-shared agenda. And what this is, is again, another element of the respective human service ministries that are having the conversation in a very specific, targeted, and strategic fashion that would enhance our respective resource allocations and our focus on serving the needs of our citizens.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Forgive me if you did mention this before. Those who participate in the social innovation hub, who does that include?

**Mr. Currie:** — Members of the human service ministries as well as immigration and career training as well. And so they are coming together again to, as I've referenced, to ensure that we are supporting one another in our respective mandates in serving the needs of our province and of serving the citizens.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you. I think the last reference I'm going to make . . . No. But I do want to spend some time here around the key indicator under child care again, and that is around supporting child care centres to recruit and retain staff. This is something that comes up fairly consistently when talking with those in the sector as being a challenge to not only find qualified staff, but to retain them. And I'm just wondering about initiatives within this budget, promising practices, or any supports towards that goal of helping those centres recruit and retain their staff.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — There was a lift for the CBOSs this year in this budget. There's also training and leadership training for individuals within this sector. And so I think that that will be, you know, alleviate. We appreciate the fact that some of this is a barrier. I think there was some things that were done in this

budget that will help alleviate that barrier. Certainly it was recognized as being a challenge and that's why there was a lift.

**Ms. Beck:** — No, and I do appreciate that. In terms of the funds available for wages and the number of child care workers in the province, what's a ballpark in terms of what might be available for wage increases for those that work in the sector?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — If you're . . . I apologize if I didn't hear your question properly but, as you know, child care boards are autonomous and they'll set their own wage scales and that's not set provincially. So in those licensed centres, those boards will set those rates of remuneration.

**Ms. Beck:** — Yes.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — But I'm not sure that was your question.

**Ms. Beck:** — Well I mean, I know that to be true. I also . . . Is there an expectation that that funding would provide a lift to wages within the sector?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — That was the intention of the 1 per cent lift, was to deal with wages. So that was the intention of that lift.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Are there other cost drivers within those centres that might be above the rate at which they're being compensated, or the grants that are flowing to those centres? For example, and I didn't ask this before but it just occurred to me, while schools and hospitals and those institutions have some assurance of rebate with regard to the carbon tax again, are our child care centres likely to see increased cost with regard to the application of the carbon tax? And is that accounted for in their grants?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — I think our answer is the same as with respect to the school divisions. We're not quite sure what the impact of the carbon tax is going to be on these facilities, on whether or not there's going to be any rebates or credits payable to them as a result of the imposition of that tax.

**Ms. Beck:** — I guess there's even less reassurance for child care centres than there are for schools, for example, that there may be some sort of a rebate.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — There may well be. I'm not aware of whether there is or not or whether or not there's any policy changes coming from the federal government.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Have you had opportunity to gain any feedback from those centres with regard to their ability to pass this increase on to wages of their employees?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — So with the announcement in the budget, there will be communication going out to each one of these facilities indicating the amount of the increase. And of course then it will be up to the boards to make the determination as to how that's allocated within their budgets.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. I'm wondering about any data that you might have with regard to rates of attrition or turnover within the child care sector, indication of, be it in raw numbers or percentage of staff turnover, that . . . even within the licensed

centres.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — We don't have those rates. They're of course autonomous boards and so we don't have that information. They don't give it to us.

**Ms. Beck:** — They don't provide numbers of their staff?

**Ms. Mitchell:** — They do provide the numbers of the staff. We're not necessarily always aware of the turnover in staff. So we don't collect that detail of information.

**Ms. Beck:** — Anecdotally, Minister, you indicated that you had evidence or you had heard that this was a concern within the sector, the turnover of staff.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well just anecdotal comments that we've heard. But we don't have any specifics in terms of numbers.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Okay. So then I guess I'm wondering how, with the key indicator about . . . one of the key indicators being to support child care centres to recruit and retain staff, how we're measuring the retention of staff within those centres.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — As I mentioned, you know, we've got some anecdotal information with respect to the challenges around retention and recruitment, especially facing larger community-based sectors. But I think, as I mentioned before, we had the 1 per cent lift this year, which we expect will be used to help retain and recruit. And I also mentioned the issues with respect to training and that leadership training I think that Janet had mentioned already. So those are the kinds of tools, I think, that we need to employ to make sure that we keep qualified people within this sector, and supports for training as well in terms of those child care workers who are in the sector.

**Ms. Beck:** — What is the dollar amount of that 1 per cent lift again? Sorry, I think you did mention it.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — \$464,000.

**Ms. Beck:** — And how many early childhood educators are employed in those facilities that will receive that 464,000?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — As of September 30th there was 3,611 staff that worked in those centres that we had indicated earlier. And that covers those 14,357 operational child care spaces.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you. Okay again at . . . I think this is my last . . . No it's not. I've got two more pages here. I don't have anymore stickies, but I do have notes.

I'm looking at page 7 and looking under the last paragraph, the heading is we will give vulnerable families continuous support. It refers to realigning home visiting programs for vulnerable families to make sure that more children benefit from programs like pre-kindergarten as they become eligible. I'm just wondering how that's tracked, the number of vulnerable families who are accessing pre-kindergarten and what some of the strategies that have been employed around increasing that number.

**Ms. Mitchell:** — So the intent of this action is to make sure that we are serving people as best we can and not overserving some

while we're underserving others. So just making sure we make the best use of the resources that we have.

So an example of what we have done is we have worked with KidsFirst and the pre-kindergarten program to make sure that when children graduate from the KidsFirst program that they make an easy transition to pre-kindergarten. And so we've worked with school divisions and with the KidsFirst programs to try to make that happen. So that's just one example.

**Ms. Beck:** — So when the KidsFirst program provides services for children up to age . . . I'm just wondering about the percentage of those who make the transition from KidsFirst into the pre-K program, if that's something that's being tracked.

[20:45]

**Ms. Mitchell:** — I don't have that information with me today.

**Ms. Beck:** — Is that something that you would have?

**Ms. Mitchell:** — I'll tell you what. It is something that we . . . We did not use to track this and as we developed this protocol arrangement between KidsFirst and pre-kindergarten, we are starting to collect that information.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. And I guess my follow-up question was there, but maybe this is . . . It was just around, you know, if there is not the level of uptake that might be expected, if there are barriers to attending things like the pre-K program. One of the things that we hear is transportation, for example, to pre-K program . . . or other children in the home, difficulty getting children to those programs. But thank you.

Under child care — and this is on page 9 — the parent mentoring program, is that delivered with Education dollars or is that funded out of another ministry?

**Ms. Mitchell:** — Can I just clarify, are you speaking under the healthy beginnings area?

**Ms. Beck:** — Page 9, it says child care and it talks about investing “. . . in families and children by supporting . . .” and then there's a list of programs that are supported under . . . I suspect that not all of them are Ministry of Education-supported programs.

**Ms. Mitchell:** — Yes, these are some examples of programs across the sectors.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. And the other one I wanted to ask some questions about was around trauma-informed practices and if and how that's being implemented, and how that is informing programming or decisions within the ministry.

**Ms. Mitchell:** — A number of our early years programs have taken a keen interest in this. So for example, the KidsFirst targeted program has a great need for this area and they've done significant training.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. One of the issues that arises within child care from time to time is around the issue of rates of taxation of child care centres, and one of the things that those . . .

I've been presenting petitions, for example, with regard to an exemption for child care centres similar to that of schools, something that I understand is done in other jurisdictions. I'm just wondering if there has been any discussion about that issue and anything that can be reported.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well, I think it's fair to say that the Ministry of Education supports the position of the Ministry of Government Relations, that the role of providing property tax exemptions is the municipalities' and so we'd leave it to them.

**Ms. Beck:** — Is that variance, is that something that's accounted for then in funding for those centres, or it's not?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well, I think the answer to your question is no.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Some questions with regard to the demand and availability of spaces in different categories. First with regard to infant spaces, I'm looking at, I believe this is the 2000 and . . . Of the increased spaces, I guess what I want to know is percentage of the new spaces that are infant spaces in the province.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — We have that information but regrettably we don't have it with us. We're certainly prepared to provide it.

**Ms. Beck:** — You'll provide it to the committee. Okay. Similar questions to . . . Forgive me, Minister, I don't remember the number that you used with regard to the increased number of spaces, but what I'm looking for is a percentage breakout in terms of the number of school-age spaces, the number of toddler spaces, the number of infant spaces, a breakdown of percentage within that global number.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — In licensed child care centres?

**Ms. Beck:** — That's right.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — We'll get that information to you, if that's all right.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you. The other thing that I'm looking for is an indication, any indication that you have or data that's collected — and I think I ask this every year — around wait-lists or availability of spaces versus number of spaces available. So do we have an indication of wait-lists for infant spaces to start?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — We don't have a very accurate count in terms of the wait-list because a parent will, you know, register at a number of different facilities. But the ministry is working on developing an online tool so that we can get a better handle on what those wait-lists are, if there are any wait-lists. But regrettably the way that it's set up, it's pretty hard to determine now. But we're hoping that this tool is going to be helpful in making that assessment.

**Ms. Beck:** — Do you have any indication in terms of whether there are wait-lists or not? There's certainly indication for infant spaces. Sounds like there can be long wait-lists.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well we know that there's many centres have wait-lists, but again we're not sure whether or not

somebody who's on that wait-list has been picked up by, you know, another centre. But we are aware that there are wait-lists.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. One of the things that was noted in the latest annual report, the latest Ministry of Education annual report, was that the ministry conducted a review of existing grants and implemented recommendations to reduce the number of grants to child care centres. I'm wondering if you could speak to that.

There's also some indication that the ministry is continuing to examine its approach to licensed child care funding in order to ensure fiscal sustainability. I was wondering if there are any changes anticipated and if any of that is reflected in the budget.

**Ms. Mitchell:** — The ministry completed a program review of the child care funding model, which was completed in two phases. Recommendations from phase 1 are completed, and recommendations from phase 2 are in various stages of implementation or remain under consideration.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. The phase 1 recommendations, what were those that have been implemented?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — The changes, the specific changes that were implemented in '17-18 and '18-19 as a result of that review, the home alternative program was discontinued July 1st of '17 due to underutilization. The block inclusion grant was discontinued on July 1, 2017, and that grant was supporting only 10 of 310 child care centres.

The employee-sponsor grant was discontinued in April of '17 as the uptake was sporadic; it was a consolidation of the start-up and the enriched learning environment grants. It was to consolidate the northern training, equipment, and transportation grants, and refocus the equipment grant for family child care homes.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. And the second phase recommendations, when do we expect those to roll out?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well they're still under consideration. So the ones that have been . . . there's been decisions and implementation. There was a financial piece. There was a regular collection of financial data from child care centres. There was a focus on inclusion through the Canada-Saskatchewan Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, including full participation of sector-wide training pilots for preschool-age children and supports in rural and remote communities. There was a reward model that continues through the Canada-Saskatchewan Early Learning and Child Care Agreement in developing a differential monitoring system.

On the human resources side there's, continue to provide grants to support human resources in child care; and centralized child care wait-lists, which we talked a little bit about; and property tax to continue to support the position of the Ministry of Government Relations with respect to providing property tax exemptions, which we've already talked about. Under consideration there was a piece on utilization to implement a child care space management strategy and improve affordability for child care through either enhancing the existing child care subsidy or develop a new approach considering options for cap fees, etc.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. And these have been communicated to the

sector or in various stages of having been communicated?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — They've been communicated.

**Ms. Beck:** — They've been communicated. Okay. All right.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — For clarification, phase 1 certainly has. Phase 2 hasn't been, so just to clarify my last answer.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Okay. Thank you. I'm just looking at the time. I think that I have concluded the bulk of my questions at least for this evening with regard to early learning and child care. So thank you.

**The Chair:** — Do you have other questions? Okay.

[21:00]

**Ms. Beck:** — I'm just trying to gauge . . . But a question that I wanted to ask was with regard to the percentage of funding within this vote allocated from GRF [General Revenue Fund] funds and education property tax.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — The numbers are very close to 60/40 between the government share and property tax.

**Ms. Beck:** — So within decimal points to 60/40 or . . .

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Yes.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — It's very, very close.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. One of the things that stands out, looking at vote (ED03), is the year-over-year reduction in the school operating allocation. Now I understand that that is due to a difference in the collection or retention of education property tax by the Catholic board specifically. Can you speak to that?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Yes. Every school division, every Catholic school division now in the province has exercised their constitutional right to collect their own property tax. So that's why you see a general reduction in the property tax.

**Ms. Beck:** — Right.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — That's changed over the years. I believe it was last year there was three, and now every Catholic school division collects their own tax. So that's why you see a general reduction.

**Ms. Beck:** — Right. And that is booked at about 60 million. Is that correct? The retained EPT [education property tax]?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — It was 60 last year and this year it's about 120.

**Ms. Beck:** — Oh, 120. Okay. Looking at that school operating line with the information that you just provided, could you provide a breakdown of what is all funded under that and any significant increases or decreases in the year-over-year allocation within that line?

**Mr. Currie:** — Would it be possible to just clarify which line?

**Ms. Beck:** — Well I was looking at specifically school operating, but that's fine. I think that that's clear. The K to 12 initiatives, let's move on to K to 12 initiatives. There's an increase that's represented there. Can you speak to what is being funded or added within that allocation for K to 12 initiatives? I believe there's about a slightly under \$4 million increase there.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well in the K to 12 initiatives there was \$2.9 million increase for CommunityNet. We've talked about that. There was \$879,000, which was an increase for qualified independent schools; \$68,000 increase in CBO funding; and a \$66,000 increase for Eagle's Nest Youth Ranch.

**Ms. Beck:** — And that funding increase for the qualified independent schools, that was due to enrolment increases?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — That's correct.

**Ms. Beck:** — Yes. What was the number for those schools, the increased enrolment for the qualified independent schools?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — There was 89 additional students and, as you know, those are funded at 50 per cent.

**Ms. Beck:** — Right. And how much was allocated for supports for learning within this budget?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — It's \$285.5 million, about.

**Ms. Beck:** — I don't have the figures for last year in front of me. What was the number for supports for learning last year?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — That was . . . There's a \$2.8 million lift, so 285 minus 2.8.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — \$283 million.

**Ms. Beck:** — Sorry?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Almost \$283 million.

**Ms. Beck:** — 283, okay. One of the . . . As I mentioned, I was recently at the World Congress, and one of the topics that kept coming up was around accessing Jordan's principle funding for students of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit background for additional supports. Within the context of education, the provincial education system, how are those funds being accessed and what are they being used for? And do we have a number in terms of how much of that Jordan's principle funding is flowing into provincial schools?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — That's not part of our budget estimates in terms of . . . but we do . . . There's a coordinated effort with the Ministry of Government Relations and Social Services with respect to accessing and toward the full implementation of Jordan's principle. So that's not a number that's otherwise included within our budget estimates because it's federal funding.

**Ms. Beck:** — Mmm hmm. So maybe then speaking to process, how are those funds accessed from within provincial schools?

**Mr. Currie:** — This is an application process through Indigenous Services Canada. And so it's a direct application process and then that reimbursement or payment will be made directly to the entity that made the application, not us.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — There is a kind of a coordinated effort between a number of line ministries which kind of collaborates to encourage federal and provincial co-operation with respect to . . . with Indigenous Services Canada to encourage work toward the full implementation of that. But as Deputy Minister Currie has mentioned, it's application based. So there's certainly work to be done in terms of developing more coordination, but ultimately it's an application-based process.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. So that work is ongoing then, with regard to coordination?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well I think it's fair to say that the province is anxious to work on protocol for full implementation of an agreement with the federal government as to how this all works. But there is coordination between line ministries in terms of the application, but ultimately it's the federal government that needs to fund this. And so we work collaboratively in terms of trying to get them help with those applications to the federal government. But ultimately it's the federal government that will fund them and who's responsible for funding the principle.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. So is it the families who are making application to Jordan's principle? You mentioned that it's application-based. I guess the question I'm asking is, who is making application for this funding?

**Mr. Currie:** — The ministry has regular meetings with ISC, Indigenous Services Canada, and this is an ongoing topic of discussion on our respective agendas. And so we know that and we believe that applications may be made by an individual or a family or a school division or even specifically a school to those. So we are continuing in our meetings with ISC to understand how this is ongoing to be created, crafted, and made into an application that would be well known and effective and efficient in terms of its application or understanding of how the resources are made available.

We do know that the resources are being made available to provide for mental health supports or medical equipment, speech therapy or special education supports as we know it. So there are kind of ongoing conversations and discussions to clarify and to seek understanding so that there is clarity in terms of how this is applied for and the funds allocated based on. So we continue to have those conversations with ISC.

[21:15]

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — This might be somewhat helpful, but just in terms of statistics, during the '18-19 fiscal year, as of May 18, '18, which is the last numbers that we have, there was 631 individual requests that have been reviewed — now we don't know if those are individuals or individual organizations — with approved funding of \$2.158 million and 34 group requests have been reviewed with funding of almost \$11 million. There's been

approximately 2,500 Jordan principle cases that have been resolved in Saskatchewan since '16, primarily in the areas of mental health, respite care, and speech therapy, but we're not aware of whether those are individuals or whether those are organizations that made those claims. But it gives you a kind of sense of where the numbers are.

**Ms. Beck:** — Mmm hmm. So it's an area that's evolving and changing. There's still some clarity that's left. Yes. Okay.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — I think it's fair to say that the clarity really needs to come from the federal government because I think that there is a pretty good coordinated effort here in Saskatchewan with respect to how those claims go forward. But it's fair to say that if there is any kind of chink in the armour, it's with the federal government.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. And certainly there have been some significant changes, not just with regard to Jordan's principle but with regard to funding agreements with bands around education and Métis Nation funding. I'm just wondering the extent to which those conversations are going on and the capacity of the ministry to engage in which are very, very complex discussions, a lot that's going on right at the same time.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — So with respect to funding generally from the federal government on First Nations and Métis education issues, I'll let Deputy Minister Currie kind of elaborate a little bit more on this. But I can tell you that we've had a number of conversations with federal ministers about this, specifically with respect to the funding gap between on- and off-reserve First Nations education funding. So the last conversation that I had was with Minister Philpott when she was the minister of Indigenous Affairs, and so conversations around moving an agenda forward to help fill that gap. And so we're hopeful. I'll let Deputy Minister Currie kind of elaborate on that to see what he's heard from an official's perspective, but certainly a desire by the federal government to move forward on this.

**Mr. Currie:** — Thank you. We have had, much like with the Jordan's principle, we've had ongoing meetings throughout any given year with Indigenous Services Canada officials to understand the approaching change in terms of the funding for our First Nations authorities. And so we are seeking to understand so that we can be fully apprised and in terms of any respective, prospective changes or continuation of existing structures so that we understand if there are any implications to the work that we do within the ministry or the impact that might have on relationships or partnerships between our provincial school divisions and also our First Nations education authorities.

So we have also had opportunity to meet with some of our First Nations education authorities to understand what they understand the change in the financial formula to be, and solicit from them implications that might have in terms of their existing funding allocations or programming needs for the future.

As you know, a number of our First Nations education authorities have partnerships with our provincial school divisions. So not only are our school divisions seeking to understand what impact, if any, that will have in terms of these changing formulas, also our First Nations education authorities are trying to understand what impact they will have, not only within their own school,

education authority, but also with their respective partnerships, established partnerships.

So we continue to have those ongoing conversations to understand impact and clarity in terms of the funding changes that have just been realized here a few days ago.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Are there any . . . As you noted, you know, these are some significant changes that came into place April 1st. Are there any scheduled meetings with either the FSIN or the federal government with regard to gaining some clarity about these changes?

**Mr. Currie:** — As we are kind of waiting for some of the impact and the realizations and the understandings of what's been happening, we have, in our ongoing dialogue, I would suggest, with our First Nations education authorities, been respectful of letting the reality of the change be understood. And we have left the invitation open that we would like to meet when it's respectful and when it's opportunistic so that there is understanding from their side as well as from the ministry side, so that we can have a conversation to discuss impacts or what the new changes might be.

So we have had ongoing conversations on a number of education topics over the last year. And as the deadline of April 1st approached, we were asked very, very respectfully to please give some space and give some time so that the realities could be understood, and we've left it open that we are more than willing to meet at their convenience and when they are ready to talk more from a fulsome point of view in terms of understanding and clarity as to what the new structure might involve.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you for the update. I don't think I'm going to pull in too much additional, just noting that we are scheduled to wrap up in about 10 minutes. One question that I did want to ask though, was around mandated treaty education within schools. Are all school divisions participating in the province with regard to implementing treaty education?

**Ms. Nedelcov-Anderson:** — Good evening. Susan Nedelcov-Anderson, assistant deputy minister. Yes. All school divisions are required to teach treaty outcomes from kindergarten to grade 12.

**Ms. Beck:** — The reason that I ask was again, out of Saskatoon, that there was some concern that that wasn't the case. But you're indicating that all school divisions are . . . I understand are mandated but they have implemented treaty education within the school system.

**Ms. Nedelcov-Anderson:** — Correct. Mandatory treaty education has been around since 2007.

**Ms. Beck:** — Right. Yes. Great. Okay. Thank you. I think that's a good spot to wrap up for tonight.

**The Chair:** — So you'll give us credit for the eight minutes of recess?

**Ms. Beck:** — I will.

**The Chair:** — Okay. Hey, thank you very much to the minister

and officials. Thank you, Ms. Beck, and the other MLAs that were patient here this evening. And if someone would like to move a motion to adjourn? Mr. Steinley. All in favour?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. This committee now stands adjourned to Monday.

[The committee adjourned at 21:23.]