



# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

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## STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Mr. Dan D'Autremont, Chair  
Cannington

Ms. Danielle Chartier, Deputy Chair  
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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 19:00.]

**The Chair:** — I'd like to welcome everyone here to this evening's meeting of the Human Services Committee for April 8th, 2019. At this meeting: my name is Dan D'Autremont. I'm the Chair of the Human Services Committee. With us this evening we have MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] Larry Duke, MLA Muhammad Fiaz, MLA Todd Goudy, MLA Warren Steinley, the Hon. Nadine Wilson, and substituting for MLA Danielle Chartier is MLA Carla Beck.

**General Revenue Fund  
Education  
Vote 5**

**Subvote (ED01)**

**The Chair:** — Tonight we will be considering the estimates for the Ministry of Education. We now begin our consideration of vote 5, Education, central management and services, subvote (ED01). Minister Wyant is here with his officials. I would ask the officials to please introduce themselves before they start to speak. And, Minister, please introduce your officials and you may make any comments you wish to at the beginning.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Again to my right, Deputy Minister Rob Currie is with me. And as you mentioned, the officials that come to assist us at the table will introduce themselves when they get here.

Before we start with the formal questioning, Mr. Chair, there is at least one thing that Deputy Minister Currie would like to clarify from last week and then a number of follow-up items that I'd like to read into the record. So perhaps I'll just turn it over to Deputy Minister Currie.

**Mr. Currie:** — Thank you. Last week I was providing reference to the sites for the mental health capacity building initiative. It's a joint initiative funded by Health, supported by Education. And I listed one site that was inaccurate. I said "Grenfell." It is really Greenall. So I just want to clarify that. The school in fact is Greenall High School.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Mr. Chair, so I wanted just to read into record the follow-up of the undertakings that were given at last week's meeting before it was adjourned. So I'd like to read those into the record and then perhaps table that additional information once I've done that.

We were to report back on updated demographic information stated on page 3 of *Saskatchewan's Early Years Plan*. As reported by Statistics Canada, the increase in the number of children aged four and younger in Saskatchewan since 2008 has remained unchanged with an increase of 23 per cent. Zero to four in 2008 was 63,330, and in 2018 it was 78,040 with, as I said, a percentage change of 23.2 per cent.

The early years plan, Mr. Chair, cites the 2006 census, which indicated approximately 30 per cent of children aged zero to four in Saskatchewan were First Nations and Métis. The 2016 census reported that approximately 26 per cent of children aged zero to four were First Nations and Métis. So in Saskatchewan of all ages

total population of 1,070,560, Aboriginal identity on- and off-reserve was 175,020 for 16.3 per cent. Zero to four age, the total population of 72,369, of which 19,020 were Aboriginal identity on- and off-reserve for 26.3 per cent.

The early years plan stated that for every increase of 100 children in the province, 44 are new Canadians, and that's almost 10,000 immigrant children aged one to nine arrived in Saskatchewan between 2008 and 2014. The updated statistics indicate that for every increase of 100 children in the province, 56 are new Canadians, and that approximately 16,900 immigrant children aged one to nine arrived in Saskatchewan between 2008 and 2017.

We further undertook to advise as to what percentage of KidsFirst participants who transitioned into pre-K [pre-kindergarten] programs. In '19-20 fiscal year, the Ministry of Education will begin to electronically collect the information from KidsFirst program sites about the number of children who transition from KidsFirst into pre-K programs.

We were also indicated that we would provide the percentage of new child care spaces by category for the 1,295 increased licensed child care spaces that were to be developed by 2019-20. The province's action plan for Canada-Saskatchewan Early Learning and Child Care Agreement commits to increasing centre-based spaces for children under six years of age. The breakdown of the 1,295 new child care spaces allotted through the Canada-Saskatchewan Early Learning and Child Care Agreement to be licensed by March 2020 is as follows.

In the infant category, and that's a child who is six years of age or more but less than 18 months of age, there will be 100 spaces, and that's 70.7 per cent; for toddler, and that's a child who is 18 months of age or more, but less than 30 months of age, is 426 and that's 33 per cent; and for preschool, and that's a child who is 30 months of age or more and who does not attend school, but includes a child who attends kindergarten, that's 769 spaces for 59.3 per cent. And that's for a total of 1,295 spaces.

So that concludes, I think, the undertakings that we had given at the last meeting. I'm prepared to table this report to the committee, Mr. Chair.

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

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, Minister Wyant, and Deputy Minister Currie. And I appreciate the updated numbers.

I thought I would start this evening by looking at the funding manual, starting with the very first pages, looking at some 2019-20 changes to the formula and rates. What I'm looking for here is simply a description of the changes and the reason that we're seeing those changes. One is around current enrolments. It's noted here:

The 2019-20 funding allocations are determined using projected enrolments for September 2019. [I don't think that that's a change.] . . . an estimate, which will be adjusted, up or down, once actual enrolments are confirmed. Funding model rates may also be adjusted at that time.

I draw particular attention to the word “may” and I’m just wondering if there’s any clarification for school boards. Were they to see a significant difference from their September 30ths, what’s the plan for mid-year with these enrolment adjustments?

**Mr. Repski** — Thanks. Clint Repski, assistant deputy minister. When it comes to enrolment, the ’19-20 school division budget is based on the projected enrolment as of September 2019, and has been done in the past number of years. That number does get reconciled. In the past few years school divisions are trying to project as accurately as they can. Historically they’ve been relatively close and that money is then reconciled through the operating grant in the fall when actual enrolments are determined. And the funding is up and down based on that reallocation based on enrolment.

**Ms. Beck**: — And I appreciate that there has been a fairly large degree of accuracy within those projections. When you see significant changes in the projections, are there reasons that come about that maybe those numbers got missed or misprojected? Are there certain factors that come up consistently in terms of discrepancy in those predictions?

**Mr. Repski**: — School divisions use different mechanisms to collect the enrolment information. So the information we get is based on the accuracy that divisions use. Some use demographic software and try to project as close as they possibly can. It’s in everybody’s best interest to be as close as possible, which I think divisions do.

In terms of why the numbers are up and down, I think there’d be a variety of reasons that school divisions would cite for it, but it’s based on the accuracy that they submit. That would be a range of factors why they’d be the up or down. And to be perfectly honest when we follow-up with divisions, they do their own analysis. And sometimes there’s follow-up conversations, but they’ve been very accurate to date.

**Ms. Beck**: — So there’s some room in the model, and we have seen, at different times, mid-year adjustments. Were there something significant within a school division, like a mine closure, a major mine closure or something that saw a number of students out, would there be supports available for that school division? Or how would that be reconciled?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant**: — I think it’s fair to say that we’d have to look at that particular, any particular situation, if there was a traumatic reduction or a dramatic increase in population into a particular school division. That would be something that we would look at. There’s, I think it’s fair to say, there’s nothing in the model which would accommodate an event like that, but that would be something that the government would need to look closely at.

**Ms. Beck**: — Okay, I appreciate that.

Moving on to the operating adjustment. I’ll just read it into the record:

The government is committing to increase the funding to school divisions by \$26.2 million in . . . [this] budget. The ministry has adjusted rates within the PreK-12 funding distribution model to ensure equitable distribution. The

changes will flow through the associate schools funding component as it is based on overall funding levels.

Could you describe in a little more detail what’s meant by equitable distribution, and what changes have been realized in this year?

**Mr. Repski**: — The increase in funding that school divisions received for ’19-20 — the \$26.2 million as we’ve mentioned before — 10 million was distributed for the cost of the collective bargaining agreement, 10.5 was targeted towards components with an enrolment as a factor, and 4 million was targeted towards inflation. The remaining 1.69 million was for Saskatchewan Professional Teachers Regulatory Board costs for teachers.

So for how that was distributed, the first \$10 million around the collective bargaining agreement, what we look at when that funding is rolled out is we try to hit the components of the funding model that have to do with teachers’ salaries. So the components are base instruction, supports for learning, locally determined terms and conditions of employment, and pre-K.

The 10.5 million was targeted towards components with enrolment as a factor, including base instruction, school-based support, supports for learning, instructional resources, plant operations and maintenance, transportation, administration, and governance.

Four million dollars was targeted towards inflation. The \$4 million was distributed towards components where the goods and services are affected by inflation, including governance, administration, instructional resources, plant operations and maintenance, pre-K, and transportation.

[19:15]

And the 1.69 million for SPTRB [Saskatchewan Professional Teachers Regulatory Board] fees, 1.5 million went into base instruction to cover fees for contracted teachers, and \$190,000 is allocated directly to the SPTRB for substitute teachers.

**Ms. Beck**: — Thank you for that. With regard to the 10 million for teacher compensation, you noted that there’s an SFL [supports for learning] component in there. Can you explain that for me please, the supports for learning portion that’s allocated to that \$10 million?

**Mr. Repski**: — Of the \$10 million, 2.8 million was added to the SFL pool.

**Ms. Beck**: — Okay, thank you. One of the other things that we talked about, the minister and I talked about today but we talked about last week, was around the potential increased cost to school divisions with the application of carbon tax. So I think the \$4 million was for inflation; that’s where most of those drivers would be realized by school divisions. So the 8 million that the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association] has tacked as potential costs for that carbon pricing application system-wide within education, that would be on top of all of these cost drivers. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant**: — That’s correct. There was nothing in the budget for the application of the carbon tax.

**Ms. Beck:** — One other thing that I wanted to go back to, just looking at overall operating and the funding that was announced last year, the 30 million. When that 30 million was announced, there was some indication that that would translate into potentially 400 additional staff. I'm just looking at the staffing profiles from last year. The year-over-year increase is slight: last year 2018-19 staffing complement, all school-based assignments still under the 2016-17 level. Just wondering about that assertion that that 30 million would translate into 400 additional staff within the school system.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — The \$30 million is based on an equivalent staffing number which is based on the average educator's salary. So that's where that 400 number came from. Of course the funds, it goes to school divisions. Even though we had indicated that we would like to see classroom resources as a result of that, the funds were provided to school divisions unconditionally. They can decide what they wanted to do with it. But that 400 number was based on the average educator's salary. That would be the equivalent number of people which would be retained by school divisions had all the money been deployed to hire or retain people, based on that average salary.

**Ms. Beck:** — I appreciate that. And I do understand also that it's, I think, without exception the case that boards endeavour also to keep those dollars as much as possible in the classroom. Have you had any indication from boards why that didn't translate into the 400 staff that were suggested?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — We did note that in comparing the FTE [full-time equivalent] positions that those numbers have gone up in pretty much every category. Again school divisions will have the authority to make the decisions in terms of where they wanted to place those resources, but we did note that there was a number of increases in most of those categories across the piece.

Again some school divisions chose to retain professionals. A number of school divisions had chosen to, you know . . . There's one school division that hired some bus drivers, another school division that sought to retain some people that they were otherwise not going to keep. And so across the piece, school divisions made those decisions individually.

**Ms. Beck:** — And I do see that there is some lift, year over year, from 2017 to 2018. Still across most of the categories, not reaching the 2016-2017 level. I looked specifically at EAL [English as an additional language] teaching, for example. There's a slight increase, I think, of one.

I think the updated numbers that we just provided, that were just provided by you, Minister Wyant, were that 56 out of every 100 students or youngsters in the province now would be classified as new Canadians. I'm just wondering if there's any thought or attention being paid to investigating whether we have the EAL supports adequately funded in the province right now.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — I'll ask Deputy Minister Currie to add a couple of comments to this. But I would note that since 2011-12, we've had a 34 per cent increase in EAL teachers since we began recording that in that year. But I'll let Deputy Minister Currie just perhaps comment on where the achievement levels are with respect to those kids.

**Mr. Currie:** — Thank you. As you know, with our education sector strategic plan, one of our outcomes to which we focus and target is the reading at or above grade three level. And there have been energies in planning and resources put towards the outcome for the grade three reading achievement level of our students across the province.

And when we first started the focus on reading in 2014, we had just over approximately 65 per cent. And over the last number of years we have seen, due to the good work within our school divisions and the work in a collaborative way with the ministry in the school divisions, we've seen that climb to 75 per cent.

So our resource allocation, as well as our focus on the reading at or above grade 3 level through our strategic plan, has seen an elevation, as it were, of our students across the province who have gained from the focus on the attention for reading, approximately a 10 per cent growth over the last five years, going on five years.

**Ms. Beck:** — That certainly has been some encouraging work that's been done around the grade 3 rates.

Minister, I'm just going to go back to the numbers that I have in front of me, the ed sector staffing profile. My sheet only goes back to 2014. It does indicate a reduction of 12 FTEs between 2014 and 2018, at a time when we know that we're adding about 2,000 to 2,500 students per year, and that the majority of those students often are students who require some EAL support. So I highlight that.

I also wanted to state that I am aware that those students with adequate supports do tend to — after a fairly short time, about three years I think — tend to achieve at rates similar to those students who are born in Canada. But I just want to highlight, you know, support for properly funding those supports in a timely fashion so those students might reach their potential.

I'll return to the 2019-20 changes to the formula and rates. Around the SPTRB, there's some changes to the funding for the SPTRB. I'm just wondering if you can go through those changes and why those decisions were made.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — For the SPTRB?

**Ms. Beck:** — Mmm hmm.

**Mr. Repski:** — So the changes for the SPTRB fees relate to the last collective bargaining agreement with teachers. So when the arbiter's award was given, some of the language that was included in that document was that it would be the employer's responsibility to cover the cost of the SPTRB fees for teachers. So in doing such we distributed the funding that had previously been given by government directly to the SPTRB through the funding formula so school divisions could pay those fees on behalf of their teachers.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. And the ministry still pays directly for substitute teachers.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Yes, that was in this budget.

**Ms. Beck:** — Great. And the allocation for that 1.5, which line

does it fall under? Under vote 3, I assume.

**Mr. Repski:** — Yes, that's right.

**Ms. Beck:** — Under which line?

**Mr. Repski:** — It's under school operating. It's included in the operational grant.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay perfect. Thank you. And then the last change on this page that's noted is around plant operations and maintenance — funded space allocation. It's rather lengthy. I'm not sure that I'll read it all, but schools below 85 per cent utilization will receive a portion of utilized instructional space plus 100 per cent funding of non-instructional space. Schools above that 100 per cent utilization will receive funding for the space plus the over-utilized portion.

And then there's some explanation of the reasons for funding non-instructional space at 100 per cent. But I'm just wondering what the changes were, what the reasons were behind this change?

[19:30]

**Mr. Repski:** — So the change to the plant operation and maintenance formula was done in conjunction with the school divisions. There's an advisory committee that worked with the ministry over the past year to determine a better way of allocating plant operations and maintenance dollars.

The funded space calculation has been adjusted to reflect the updated utilization rate formula. Schools below 85 per cent utilization receive funding for a portion of utilized instructional space plus 100 per cent of non-instructional space. Schools above 100 per cent utilization will receive funding for actual space plus additional funding for the over-utilization portion of gross space. Regardless of utilization, all schools will be funded for 100 per cent of non-instructional space to recognize the costs associated with operating, maintaining, and cleaning of non-instructional space in all schools.

So it would be fair to say that this better represents the usage of schools in terms of the plant operations and maintenance dollars. And as I indicated, we did work with school divisions to more accurately create this formula.

**Ms. Beck:** — Is it meant to incentivize any action on behalf of school boards or . . . I'm trying to understand the reason for the 85 per cent utilization.

**Mr. Repski:** — What this is meant to reflect is that regardless of utilization of space in schools in terms of students per square foot, that sort of thing, the non-instructional space is the same regardless of how many kids are in it — gym space, hallway space, and the like. And so this formula is better meant to represent those schools whose costs don't change due to fluctuating enrolment.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — So just as an example for instance, there's many of the old schools have wider hallways, and they were being penalized in the formula. So this is meant to adjust for that and make the formula more equitable when it came to

non-instructional space.

**Ms. Beck:** — But if a school has less than 85 per cent enrolment then they would receive a decreased portion — is that correct? — in the instructional spaces?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Only on the instructional space. So the non-instructional space would still be funded 100 per cent.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. And what is the reason for not funding at 100 per cent of the instructional space?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well it's simply based on utilization, so to the extent that there may be classrooms that aren't being utilized, that kind of thing. So that's the justification for doing it.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. What's the factor rate applied to the portion over 100 per cent utilization?

**Mr. Repski:** — For those schools that are over 100 per cent capacity, they get a 20 per cent increase in the allocation.

**Ms. Beck:** — Regardless of how far over they are?

**Mr. Repski:** — Yes.

**Ms. Beck:** — How many schools do we have currently that are at or over 100 per cent utilization in the province?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — We're just tallying that for you.

**Ms. Beck:** — My follow-up question, or my next question was around the last paragraph here, and that's around the data for alternative schools. First, what's defined . . . how alternative is defined here? And the other question that I have is around the collection of the data around utilization and when that'll be available, what the timeline is for that.

**Mr. Repski:** — There are 70 schools currently that are over 100 per cent utilization.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you. And with regard to who's included in the alternative schools here, what's the process that's currently under way for calculating space utilization with those schools?

**Mr. Repski:** — So for the alternative schools that you're referring to, would be alternative education delivery mechanisms that school divisions have. So for example, it would be a storefront school for purposes of the funding model. Because we don't have blueprints or the footprint of those facilities, we include them as 100 per cent for purposes of the formula.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. Perhaps predictably, I'm going to move on to the final two changes within this year's funding manual, the first of those being language and culture. This is around the Conseil des écoles francosaskoises and the obligations under section 23 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I'm just wondering why we're seeing this change now and what is included in this change.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — In terms of the funding model, well we've been working closely with the conseil since February of '17 to

develop a funding formula that would meet their unique requirements. As you know we're committed to the triple mandate and so we've been working very closely with the conseil with respect to developing that formula and we're very pleased that we could come to an agreement with them with regard to having a funding formula.

The language and culture component was created for the CÉF [Conseil des écoles francsaskoises] to support the constitutional obligations under section 23 in order to prepare Saskatchewan francophone students for success in academics, identity, and cultural aspects of development, which was the triple mandate. So that factor's not new, but we were very pleased that we could finally come to an agreement with the conseil on the development of a funding formula as opposed to what we had before.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. And the final change noted is around the francophone factors, two factors that are applied: a factor of 1.5 for intensive supports; and in transportation, a factor of 1.8. Can you describe those changes and the reasons for those changes in this year's funding model?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — That's really part of the, you know, the creating of a formula that met the unique needs of the conseil in respect of learning and the transportation subcomponents of the funding model. So it was really a conversation around ensuring that we met those requirements. I'm not sure that answers your question, but certainly there's some unique needs with respect to the conseil as it relates to learning and transportation and so those are all factored in.

**Ms. Beck:** — So just to check my perceptions here, so things like drawing from a larger area, is that why there's a higher factor applied for transportation?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — That's right.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you. I just wanted to get a little more detail about instruction expenses in this year's budget. I'm just looking for some overall numbers for a number of categories under instruction as described on page 4. The amount allocated to base instruction in this year's budget, I'm wondering if you could describe that.

**Mr. Repski:** — So under instruction there's a number of sub-categories underneath it. Base instruction has funding of 831.9 million or 43 per cent. School-based support has funding of 87.3 million for 4.5 per cent. Supports for learning, as we've discussed before, is up to 285.5 million or 14.8 per cent. Locally determined terms and conditions of 135.7 million is 7 per cent. Instructional resources are 102.4, 5.3 per cent. First Nations and Métis Achievement Fund is \$3.8 million or .2 per cent.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, and that was the direction I was going with the questions. For each of those categories, I would like to know if that amount is an increase or a decrease over last year. So starting with base instruction.

[19:45]

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Base instruction did receive an increase based on the \$26.2 million increase to the formula. We don't have the detail with us, and I apologize for that but we'll

undertake to provide it to you.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. School-based supports, I think you said 87.3 million. Is that an increase or a decrease over last year?

**Mr. Repski:** — Yes, as the minister indicated, it did receive an increase as well, but in terms of the subcategory by subcategory, we don't have the breakdown with us tonight.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Is that something that you could provide to the committee?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — You bet.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you. Do you have a breakdown for the amount allocated to governance in this budget?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — It's \$76.3 million.

**Ms. Beck:** — 76.3. Is that stable or is that an increase or decrease over last year?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — It's an increase because of the . . . particularly due to the inflationary elements in the increases. Again we will undertake to give you that amount.

**Ms. Beck:** — So I will move through the other expenses as noted on page 4 and then just assume that . . . Well I should ask. I'm looking for a follow-up at a later date what the amount was provided for last year. I don't know that I have this broken down this way. Administration. The amount for administration this year?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — So governance was 8.036 million and administration was \$67.619 million, and that's the total of 76.3.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you. Same question for plant operations and maintenance.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — That was \$214 million.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Complementary services.

**Mr. Repski:** — The total complementary services budget for the '19-20 school year was 20.664 million.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. And in transportation?

**Mr. Repski:** — 127.704 million.

**Ms. Beck:** — Tuition fee expenses for school divisions.

**Mr. Repski:** — 10.071 million.

**Ms. Beck:** — That might be a bit counterintuitive for some folks. Can you just explain how school divisions would incur that tuition fee expense?

**Mr. Repski:** — The tuition fee expense line that school divisions incur is a combination of a couple of factors. One would be students leaving the school division to go on reserve for education. The other would be for them leaving the province. For example, we have students in the northern part of the province

who attend Flin Flon, and so we pay directly to the school division in Manitoba for those Flin Flon students.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you for that explanation. The next noted expense is for associate schools. What was the amount in this year's budget?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — \$21.6 million.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. The amount allocated to language and culture?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — \$3.9 million.

**Ms. Beck:** — The funding for language and culture, does that come out of the GRF [General Revenue Fund] or that comes from federal funds?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — It's all GRF.

**Ms. Beck:** — And debt repayment being the last category.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — \$14.1 million.

**Ms. Beck:** — Is that separate from the P3 [public-private partnership] joint-use schools maintenance and interest charges?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Separate from the P3 interest and service charges.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you. I was just noting on page 5, Minister, you've made mention of this prior to . . . around the unconditionality of much of the funding that goes to school divisions. There are some noted areas of conditionality, and I'm just wondering if you could describe them, around supports for learning at St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division, Oskāyak High School. You said that properly. How did you say it?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Oskāyak.

**Ms. Beck:** — Oskāyak.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Yes.

**Mr. Repski:** — Regarding the conditionality of the grant, and you had mentioned Oskāyak, that's funding that's specifically identifiable to Greater Saskatoon Catholic to ensure those dollars flow directly to there. The other elements of conditionality in the grant I think you've touched on before, pre-K and associate schools.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Okay. Thank you. By now boards will be putting together their budget finalizations. I'm just going to . . . Minister, looking for a sense of what you're hearing from boards, you know, the number of boards that have seen an increase, the number that have seen a decrease, any feedback or concerns that you might be hearing from boards at this time as they prepare their budgets.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well we've certainly heard some, you know, as I go around and meet with boards of education about ensuring that they have the resources to be able to meet the

demands that are in their classroom, you know. We talk about outcomes in the classroom. And certainly we've heard a number of challenges that boards have expressed to me, and certainly teachers have expressed to me as well. And so that was primarily the reason for the funds in the formula to start talking about innovation.

I've also had a conversation, I think it's fair to say, with the School Boards Association about the formula, to make sure that the formula continues to be equitable for school divisions. We know that when there's funds that went into the formula this year and last year, a number of boards didn't get the resources which they thought they might have got because the formula is skewed to population growth. And so you could see where those additional funds may have gone and may not have gone. But we've certainly heard those concerns that boards are having with respect to ensuring that they can continue to provide the high-quality education services that the kids in their school divisions deserve.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you for that. With regard to the conversations that you've been having and the concerns that you've heard, I think I heard you say that the innovation fund was one of the things that flowed out of that. I know we talked a little bit about this last week, but how that fund, that half a million fund, how that is meant to address some of the challenges in the classroom. Or what are your hopes for that fund with regard to meeting those challenges?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well my hopes, and we talked about this last week, my hope for the fund is to be able to generate ideas, to generate some processes so that we can improve outcomes in classrooms so that we can meet some of the challenges that we've been hearing from teachers across the province.

So as I mentioned last week, it's a little bit of a blank slate. What we're doing is we're looking to get, to engage experts locally and nationally and internationally to give us some ideas how we can improve those outcomes. Is our system delivering what it needs to deliver? How can we better deliver that?

And so this fund was intended not to fund those things, but intended to provide a base so that we could generate those ideas. So it's certainly not intended to fund any things that may come as a result of this consultation. And so that's really the intent of it. As I say, it's a bit of a blank slate at this point in time. My deputy minister, Mr. Rob Currie, can comment a little bit about the work that he's started to do on this. But it's important I think from a . . . Because we've heard your comments where you've talked about spending alone doesn't deliver the outcomes that we want. I know that the leader of your party has indicated that it's not all about money, it's about outcomes. And I agree with that. And so how can we better provide for outcomes for kids in classrooms? So that's what this is all about.

But again I think I want to emphasize that while we don't have anything set in stone, I think it's important that we move forward with looking at this as quickly as possible because I think every time you kind of lose a school year, you lose a little bit of ground, right? And so we want to make sure that whatever we do, we do it as expeditiously as possible. But by the same token, we need to engage all our partners in education. Because this just can't kind of be a top-down thing. It has to be from the ground up too.



And so I made a comment today about ensuring that teachers have a voice in this. It's very important. School board trustees, parents, and even children have a voice in how we move forward, but relying on some expertise around this. And there's a lot around I think who want to provide us with some help.

**Mr. Currie** — Maybe to build upon that, with regards to generating ideas and processes to improve outcomes, we presently are in the midst of our asking our province, the good people within our province, to provide some feedback and ideas as to how we can build a framework for our education sector beyond 2020 to 2030 that will enable students to achieve and build upon, contributing members of society and within our province.

And so we've engaged the sector partners in terms of developing a process to solicit the feedback from within the province. And we presently, as of today, unveiled the online survey that is available for people throughout our province to provide feedback that will help us continue to generate ideas.

[20:00]

In addition to the . . . Within the province, we also have the opportunity that we've been soliciting and seeking commentary from successes realized throughout the world. As we are in a global society that we are tapping into the . . . Andy Hargreaves, the Canadian Andy Hargreaves, other provinces. As has been referenced, we've also kind of tapped into some of the expertise and commentary from members of the Gonski Institute who are helping other countries address and consider options within their confines of what could be improved or considerations for improvement, places like Finland, Scotland, Singapore, China, Alberta, and Ontario as well. And so we're looking to obtain that feedback.

In order to do that we are looking as well with our education sector partners specifically to generate the ideas and the processes. When we take this global information, as well as the internal-to-Saskatchewan ideas, how can we utilize this information to develop, continue the conversation, and create the processes so that we can ensure that we do in fact have in place, I would say, futuristic education opportunities for our students for a world of which we're not totally aware of what that will . . . the new world will be from 2020 to 2030?

But we're also connected to CMEC [Council of Ministers of Education, Canada], which is the deputy ministers and the ministers of Education across Canada, and we presently have representation from our ministry. Our assistant deputy minister, Susan Nedelcov-Anderson, is tied into the curriculum work that CMEC is doing as well as OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development], which has a focus on education and some assessments as it will be considered for how can we obtain from students the competencies that they will need in order to be successful and engaging in the future.

So we're looking for this money to kind of continue the conversation, solicit the feedback from so many education sector partners internally and externally and outside of our borders, as well as engage the international society as I've already referenced here with OECD as to what would be of benefit for consideration, which still ultimately comes back to here, and we

mould and format so that we will put this into a structure that will be part of our education sector.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, Deputy Minister Currie. And I do agree with you. The quote, I've heard you quote it a few times. The other part of that quote is that "funding alone isn't enough, but we do need enough funding." Where are we at? This is for you, Minister Wyant. Are we at the point where we have adequacy in funding? Are some of the challenges that we're seeing within the sector as you've noted still as a result of inadequate funding for classrooms?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well I guess I'll put it this way, that there continue to be some challenges within the delivery of public education. I've always said that I think, and I hope you'll agree, we have one of the best education systems in the world in this province. And there's always an opportunity to improve on that, and that's the work that Deputy Minister Currie is doing.

But I also think that there are different ways of delivering education. I think that there are different ways of perhaps funding education and looking at the formula to make sure that the resources that we do have are being utilized in the best possible way to provide the programming that we need. And so those are the conversations. So it's, you know, is there enough money in the system? I'm not sure I can answer that. I mean I think what I can say though is that what we need to do is make sure that we're being as efficient and as effective with the resources that we do have and analyze what other resources we do need to put into the system. And that's precisely the work that we're going to be doing.

As I've said, the \$500,000 that we've allocated isn't intended to fund whatever it is we come up with at the end of the day. It's there so that we can have access to some resources to get to that point. So that's really the goal here. Because I think that, you know, you can continually just put money into a system but if it's not . . . you're not getting the outcomes that you want, I'm not sure you're doing anybody any favours. And so, you know, add a whole bunch more money to it, but if it's not affecting kids in the classroom then it's not an effective use of the resources.

And so I think that's what we have to get to to make sure that we're getting the results. And if that requires more resources to get the results that we want, then so be it. That's a conversation that we have to have as government. But I don't think I'm prepared to sit here and say today that there is or there isn't, because what we want is outcomes and that's really what's driving this agenda I think for me as the minister and my ministry staff.

**Ms. Beck:** — And I'm certainly not here to say that, you know, that we should change a thing and then money is the only option, but . . .

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Maybe I'll add one more thing because, you know, when I'm out talking to teachers and I'm talking to school boards you say, well you know, I guess we could back a dump truck full of money up and pour it into the formula, but if it's not going to get into the school divisions . . .

We have a diverse education system, as you know, between rural and northern and urban. All the needs are different. So we need

to make sure that the formula is equitable. I think school divisions will say that the formula is equitable. But if they're not getting the resources in rural Saskatchewan to provide the same or similar services to kids in those communities that they are in urban centres, then I think we have to have a look at that. But at the end of the day it's about results. It's about grade 3 reading levels. It's about graduation rates. It's about a whole continuum of results that we want to make sure that we get. And as I say, we've got a great system here but there's always room to make it better.

**Ms. Beck:** — And certainly this was something that we heard, especially in 2017 with the \$54 million cut, was fairly widespread concern about being able to withstand that level of cut and that it would have an impact on learning in the province. I mean certainly, you know, we should always be judicious about our use of public dollars. But you know, one of the concerns that is expressed, and I share this concern, is that there are places where you can cut that will actually cost you in the long run, both in terms of outcomes but also in terms of dollars in the long run. So I guess I just present that to you as a concern that I'm hearing repeatedly is — remains — around the adequacy, the ability to keep enough teachers in front of the classrooms, to keep those supports that are needed in the classroom. And I guess I invite response to that.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well you've heard me talk about the importance of investing in public education.

**Ms. Beck:** — Yes.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — That it's not just simply a matter of what it costs. You know, when something costs a certain amount, it's probably easier to take that money away. But when you're thinking about investing in the future and making sure your kids that come out of the system are going to be valuable, contributing members to your society and to your economy, this kind of makes that economic argument that you need to make sure that your kids are properly educated. And to do that, you have to make the proper investments as you would in any other case.

And so that's really the philosophy I think that we bring to this file now with the commitments that the Premier had made last year with increasing funding to public education. The increases this year to public education I think show or demonstrate the government's commitment to that concept of investment. And so as we go through this additional process, not just the work that Deputy Minister Currie is doing but the conversations around innovation, we'll see what additional investments need to be made to get to the outcomes that we want to see.

We've seen graduation rates increasing. We've seen those numbers tending upwards with respect to grade 3 reading levels. We know how important early years are. We spent three hours last week talking about early years, so we know how important that is, making sure that kids are ready to go to school and that by the time they get to grade 3 they're at certain levels, because we can trace after that what the failure rate is going to be. So we know these investments are important but I think before you kind of make the investment, you need to know what you're investing in. And that's the whole idea with the innovation piece.

**Ms. Beck:** — And I mean I think we both know, you know, the

quality of people that we have involved in education in this province. A great deal of public support, which is a benefit. And I'll just, you know, air it because it's something that I have heard. I think that there's a lot of appetite for innovation, and I think that that is important, especially, you know, in the classroom, the local level. There's also a concern that that is code for doing more with less. And I will just, I guess, invite feedback on that.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — That is certainly not the case. This isn't an exercise in efficiencies. It's not an exercise in taking resources away. This is to ensure that the resources that we are employing in public education are being used to the best possible way. But there's certainly nothing that's foreclosing the opportunity for further investment.

And so for those that might suggest that this is kind of an exercise in finding more money, that's not the case because we know how important it is to invest in public education and to make sure that the resources that we do have — and they're precious resources — are used in the best way possible. We know that boards are pretty efficient and pretty effective when it comes to the use of the resources that they have. And we know that that's going to continue.

There were certainly some efficiencies that they found in their operations a couple of years ago. We're thankful for that. We expect that governments will look for those efficiencies as they move forward. But that said, this process is not about taking resources out of the classroom or taking resources away from boards. This is about ensuring that we're making the proper investments. And so this will lead to a further conversation in terms of those investments.

**Ms. Beck:** — I'm pleased to hear that. And just perhaps for clarification — and I do appreciate sincerely the explanation — one of the things that I was talking about when I was talking about, you know, funding not being simply enough . . . and perhaps this is something that you have noted in your time out in the sector, meeting with different stakeholders. If I may, you know, one of the concerns has been trust and co-operation and inviting partners to have meaningful input into any changes that are made to the sector, to their classrooms, for example. So I just put that out there as one of the examples that I am talking about when I'm saying this just isn't about money. This is about building trust and relationship again. My perception has been that that has been a concern within the sector, so I just leave that with you.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — That's certainly, I think that's a very fair comment. The work that the ministry has been doing, you know, we're very, very careful as we kind of move forward. Whether it's the education sector plan . . . there was lots of co-operation with respect to the development of that plan.

The new work that Mr. Currie is doing, we can't . . . I've often said that, you know, we're all partners in education and no one's more important than the other partners, and I put the ministry and the minister's office in that category. And so I'm not sure how you go ahead and plan for the future of education if one of your key partners isn't there, if the school board trustees weren't there, if the parents weren't there, if the teachers weren't at the table.

I must tell you I was a little disappointed when the STF

[Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation] decided that they weren't going to further participate in the planning work that the ministry is doing on the future of public education. But I was quick to comment to the STF that we're very interested in seeing the results of the work that they are doing because that voice can't be silent when it comes to planning how we're going to move forward with the education plan that the ministry is working on. So I'm anxious to get that information. We're anxious to get that because it's got to be a key part in how we plan for the future of education.

[20:15]

So while I was disappointed, we're certainly not . . . was certainly very clear with the STF about my being anxious in getting the results of the work they're doing on their Re-Imagine campaign.

I might also point out there's a number of things that have been going on within the ministry. We have an operating grant advisory committee. We have an infrastructure advisory committee, a number of committees that all people are partners of when it comes to talking about public education. So as I say, we all have to move together.

And I think I've seen some light when it comes to, you know, trying to restore some trust in the sector, and I think we've been somewhat successful in that. There's a lot of work to do because it's important and, you know, a lot of people bring their hearts to these conversations and I do too. I think we all realize the importance of this sector to our economy and to our society. And so the more we work together, the more we talk, the more we have conversations . . . You hear me talking about conversations all the time. And sometimes those conversations aren't the easiest conversations to have with people, right. But you have to have them because I think that's the key element in restoring an element of trust in the sector.

**Ms. Beck:** — I appreciate those comments. I'm going to get out of order with my notes here, but you mentioned the reimagine process and the importance of the input of front-line teachers. What do we know about how teachers are experiencing the classroom today, be it in terms of, you know, satisfaction, work satisfaction, or stress levels, or mental health concerns, violence in the classroom, things like that? What is it that we know about teachers in the classroom today and some of their concerns?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well I'll let Deputy Minister Currie kind of further comment on this, but I've met with lots of teachers since I became the minister. I've met with not quite all the locals, teacher locals across the province. I don't have the number, but it's been a lot of them. That's why I kind of commented on some difficult conversations, right.

So we hear those things. You know, we hear about safety in the classroom. We hear about administrative burden. And those are issues that I brought forward to Deputy Minister Currie to start thinking about that. And that's really kind of what led to this whole conversation about innovation: hearing some of the concerns that teachers have had in the classroom.

We have, as you pointed out, a dedicated group of professional teachers in this province who are responsible for educating the next generation of kids. And they have a huge responsibility. And

we have a responsibility to make sure that they're properly supported in that job. So you know, when I was out . . . there's certainly some recurring themes. And those are the kinds of things that we need to get to, to make sure that teachers can be as effective as they can be in a classroom by meeting some of the challenges that they have.

**Mr. Currie** — Thank you, Minister. So to help ensure that we are hearing the voice of teachers, support staff within school divisions and in some cases trustees, the ministry, under the support and the direction of the minister, has visited all 27 school divisions within the province over the last year, since January of 2018. And we have also visited with a number of First Nations and Métis education authorities.

We have also continued in our planning with a provincial education plan in mind for 2020 to 2030 where the initial planning, which began last May with our education sector partners coming together, we talked of issues within education and how we would look to address them here, solicit the voice from members of the community across the province to help us address them.

As well, the ministry has ongoing meetings with our education sector partners. The Ministry of Education officials meet with executive directors from Saskatchewan School Boards Association, from LEADS, [League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents], from STF, and as well from SASBO [Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials]. We have also reached out and have continued meetings with our First Nations education authorities' representatives. We have meetings with our representatives from Métis Nation education authorities, as well as we have meetings with the Office of the Treaty Commissioner. All of these are wrapped around seeking understanding from those with responsibilities to lead education within the province, and we all have our various roles and responsibilities attuned to that. But we take the position that in order to develop an education plan or a structure within the province that will be of benefit now and into the future, we need to hear the voice.

So each of these entities that I've referenced bring a voice. In addition to what the minister and his visiting of teachers and education sector partners throughout the province, in addition to what he's doing, we have in concert our respective meetings taking place too. And then we have collaborative gatherings, the minister's office as well as ministry officials, to exchange the information that's been expressed, all with an intent to understand what's happening in the sector, all with an intent to ultimately be responsive to it.

I would say that one thing that we heard when we visited the school divisions specifically — and school divisions had the option of who they would have in those respective meetings — we were looking for information of what's working, what's not working, and recommendations, and many of the school divisions invited representation from their elected officials. Some of the school divisions just had the senior administration. But that was kind of the start of the engagement where, you know, it was left up to the school divisions per se as to how they would like to inform the ministry and ultimately provide that information to the minister of what in fact was happening successfully, or should have an eye towards change in the future.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. Minister Wyant, so I guess what I'm looking for are the places where teacher voice is being recognized in this very important discussion. And you had mentioned going out to the locals and a willingness to engage with the re-imagine project, and you also mentioned some sort of qualitative items that had been expressed to you.

I'm just wondering, in terms of quantitative information that we have about teachers — like the number of teachers leaving the profession or early retirements or rates of teachers expressing, you know, concerns about unworkable stress loads and things like that — do we have data about those things?

**Mr. Repski:** — So regarding the number of teachers and the consistency, what we find is — this is fairly consistent — is that every year approximately 800 teachers leave the profession and do not re-enter after five years. It's very difficult for us to track specific teachers as they can take leaves throughout their career. But what we find is about 800 teachers leave per year and don't come back after five years. Half of those are due to retirements, and that level has remained very, very consistent over the last 10 years, as far back as we've got here.

**Ms. Beck:** — As a percentage or as a straight number?

**Mr. Repski:** — As a percentage.

**Ms. Beck:** — As a percentage. Okay. I understand that at one point the ministry did some work around having a five-year plan for staffing within education, so working with the partners in post-secondary institutions, looking at the needs, looking at retirement rates. Is that something that still happens within the ministry?

**Mr. Currie:** — I will get to that answer. Just referencing a little bit to . . . It's important that within the sector of education, relationships are key. And to understand the components within education, effective education, and those who provide for the learning environment, I just wanted to, if I could, go back to what are we hearing from our meetings with our education sector partners. And it's important that we provide the option and opportunity of meeting. And so I know that our ministry officials meet with officials from the STF, Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, to talk about what is it that gives voice to the teachers in a way that hears what their interests are.

And one of the things that I could say is that we hear that teachers want to be resourced in the classroom. Teachers are looking to be supported in the work that they do and, I would say, affirmed for the good work that they do in the classroom as well. So our ongoing dialogues, we meet regularly with the representatives from the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation to have ongoing conversations about the aspects that I've just referenced and how we can look to make that heard.

That also ties into our Saskatchewan School Boards Association and listening to our trustees who, I believe, give voice to teachers within their school division because they have school community council meetings. They meet with their locals and we hear through that channel how they are giving voice to interests to provide a quality education. As well our business officials, as well as our LEADS, which are our superintendents and directors of education, also have their mechanisms in place to listen to the

people in the classrooms as to what are their issues, interests, and affirmations that we would continue.

Those are elements that we utilize to collect the information and to keep ongoing dialogue to meet the needs within the classroom. And after that, if I could ask you to repeat your question please.

**Ms. Beck:** — You're assuming that I remember what that was.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — I know Deputy Minister Currie didn't mean to overlook this, but certainly the relationship that the ministry has with the universities and the two colleges of education is very good. And I know that officials within the ministry meet on a regular basis with not just the deans but other individuals within those colleges to ensure that there is good lines of communication.

When I referenced earlier on about, you know, experts in the field of education that we need to be consulting with if we're going to innovate, certainly the universities and the deans of the two colleges here in Saskatchewan will be key to that. And I know that Deputy Minister Currie and his team work very, very hard in ensuring that that relationship is good.

**Mr. Currie:** — In addition to that, we do engage in conversations with our First Nations education authorities as well as our Métis Nation education authorities too. And they provide significant feedback for us to consider as part of the relationship component that I referenced earlier.

I'd also like to make mention that within the Ministry of Education we have our OurSchool, it's called. These are teacher perception surveys, and we have had over 4,800 teacher responses. This gives direct feedback to us within the sector of education to understand perspectives of the teachers. And also the teachers are surveyed through the Following Their Voices surveys. This is where we meet regularly with teachers and respond to their needs through this initiative as well. So we're always looking for opportunities to engage and understand.

[20:30]

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you for that. The OurSchool responses, are those reported out anywhere, or those are internal?

**Mr. Currie:** — Those reports are given out at the school division level. I'd just like to just maybe reference one more component.

**Ms. Beck:** — Sure.

**Mr. Currie:** — I've mentioned that we have regular meetings with officials from the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation also has a presence, an involvement in our infrastructure advisory committee as well as our operating grant advisory committee.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. One of the things that you noted, Deputy Minister Currie, was around the Métis Nation education authority and involvement of First Nations educational authorities, which leads me to ask a question about teacher education in the North. I know at the start of the school year there were some notable vacancies within the North, and I'm just wondering about measures that have been taken perhaps in this

year's budget to address some of those teacher shortages.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Maybe I'll just start this while we look for some information. We've certainly had a number of conversations with the school board in northern Saskatchewan about the teacher shortage in the North. And we know that it's not an issue that's unique to Saskatchewan. We know that there's a number of teachers who have come to Saskatchewan who have ended up going back to their communities in other parts of the country where there were teaching opportunities. But we have been having these conversations and I know Deputy Minister Currie has been having some conversations with the director of education in terms of trying to find some help.

One of the challenges that we've had in a number of communities, of course, is around housing. You'll know that a couple of months ago we were in La Loche to announce some housing. There'll be six new housing opportunities for teachers, six for nurses up there, to make sure that we can provide the appropriate accommodations to ensure that it's one less thing that a teacher needs to worry about when they're going to northern Saskatchewan. But perhaps I'll ask Deputy Minister Currie just to kind of comment on some of the conversations that he's had.

**Mr. Currie:** — We have found that in our conversations directly with the directors of education — and in some cases in our engagement meetings, there have been elected officials there as well from school boards — we have spoken of the challenges of the North. We have found that our challenges mirror the challenges across Canada in northern education sectors. We continue to talk about methods or opportunities to address those challenges and inform people as such.

I would like to acknowledge that Northern Lights School Division this year, which I think was prominent in making awareness of its teacher shortage, had reached out to other school divisions in terms of making known space that was available for teachers that might want to move to the North. They also engaged with LEADS, the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents, that they would look for discussions and opportunities to advertise that there were in fact positions available in the North or, in some cases, some of the substitute teachers who may not have a full-time job in their respective community, that there would be opportunities up north. And in our tours up north, we did in fact meet some of the people that had, in hearing the notices and the media coverage, had taken the opportunity to relocate to the North to take on those positions.

We also have an ongoing conversation and a deployment of interest to the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada. And this is again an ongoing conversation and a reality that we have northern challenges. And so we have referenced across Canada opportunities that teachers might consider coming to Saskatchewan, and in an ongoing conversation, I would say, with our northern partners within education, to seek ways that the ministry might play a part in helping that information be communicated or that we might be able to assist in some way to have those shortages filled.

We also recognize that the local school divisions have interests, and to ensure that those positions are filled soon and to the best of one's ability. So they're looking for qualified teachers to

assume these positions, to integrate into the communities, to be a part of providing a quality education for the children to whom they're entrusted care.

So we continue to talk with our northern school divisions. We continue to talk from a provincial perspective that there are opportunities for teachers in the North, and we continue to talk across the country and share examples on how we can support one another in enabling our teachers to be giving eye to teaching opportunities in the North.

That doesn't stop there. As the minister has already referenced, we have conversations with our colleges as well as our universities, our post-secondary institutions, that we encourage them to encourage the students who are taking the education programs to consider northern opportunities as well.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you for that. Two questions that I have that arise from that. The first is around the housing allocation, the money that was noted for teacherages in La Loche. Does that money come out of the education budget or is that allocated elsewhere?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — That doesn't come out of the education budget. You know that there is a housing supplement though that's for . . . and the northern teacher allowance, which are part of the compensation package. But with respect to the particular teacherages, that's not part of our budget.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you. The other is around what we know about retention rates for teachers who move into the North from away, as opposed to teachers who are from the North who go through a training program like we had with NORTEP [northern teacher education program] or now with Northlands or some similar program. What are the rates of turnover with regard to each of those groups?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Apparently we don't have that information. But certainly the anecdotal information that we do have, as I mentioned before, was that there was certainly a number of teachers who were working in northern Saskatchewan that came from other parts of the country and who ended up going back to their home provinces, their home communities to teach when there was opportunities there. So we don't have any information now in terms of answering the question. I don't know if we'll . . . We'll certainly undertake to try to find you the information that you need.

I note that there's . . . At the beginning of the school year, we were short 14 teachers in northern Saskatchewan. We're down to nine, and I understand that there is a number of resumé's that continue to come in and so we're hopeful about that.

But as Deputy Minister Currie mentioned, Northern Lights School Division has and is in the process of developing a strategy around recruitment and retention and that will get the support of the ministry as that moves forward.

**Ms. Beck:** — Do you have any indication if that strategy includes an increased number of teachers who are from the North trained in education?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — I understand that the division is working

on strategies around recruitment and retention for teachers in the North. I can't comment on it any more than that. So that's, you know . . .

**Mr. Currie:** — With regards to the focus given on recruitment and retention, we are presently working with our education partners in supporting their plan for recruitment and retention. And as the minister has already referenced, we on an ongoing basis look for their feedback and look for their ideas, and we look for opportunities for the ministry to play a part in supporting them in their recruitment and retention programs.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — We do provide \$6.4 million in the budget to deal with the local issues, as you know, through the LINC [local implementation and negotiation committee] agreements. We do, so there is resources that are available to the school division. We also have the Dene teacher education program, which is operating between Clearwater Dene First Nation. So there is certainly opportunities.

I think that there's between 24 and 25 people that are in their third year of training for that program. And so that will be an important I think element, component to ensuring that there is more recruitment in the North from locally, from northern-trained teachers who come from the North.

**Ms. Beck:** — With regards to . . .

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Just so you . . . To be clear, that was funded in partnership with First Nations University.

**Ms. Beck:** — Right. What would be an example of a locally negotiated benefit that would play a role in teacher recruitment? I'm just wondering about what measures might be in there.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — As I had mentioned before, there's the housing supplement and the northern teaching allowance that come out of the local agreement, and that's part of their compensation package.

**Ms. Beck:** — Then there's the northern factor that's applied as well?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — There are additional benefits for leaves to come down to the South, you know, a number of things like that. So there are . . . We can certainly get you some further commentary on the list of additional benefits that might be unique to the North.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. I think we're getting close to potentially a break here. But one of the things that has been mentioned a couple of times is the importance of board voices, you know, both in this issue and other issues, and we were talking about voices. And I think that there was a very measured expression of concern that was expressed by the SSBA.

And I just wanted to ask you to respond to this. This is that there's little left in the budget for boards to enhance supports for early years, mental health and wellness, diverse classrooms, intensive needs and staffing levels, and development. These had been previously identified as priorities for boards where new investments in students would benefit Saskatchewan's economy.

The boards did indicate appreciation that the priorities are being heard, though levels in this budget will not enable school boards to make significant new investments in these areas and boards will be challenged just to maintain stability. And that's certainly what I'm hearing is, as boards are putting together their budgets. So I just leave that there as a piece of feedback. I know we've had conversations about adequacy about the funding model, but I felt that was a fairly measured and thoughtful entrance into this by the SSBA.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Yes, we were happy to hear it. Maybe I'll make two comments before if we want to have a break. There was a considerable increase in mental health funding in this budget through the Ministry of Health. And you'll recall that we are moving forward on a pilot project in a number of high schools around mental health programming, which will be very helpful, and that's in conjunction with the Ministry of Health. That's being funded by the Ministry of Health.

So the Minister of Health and I are having some discussions about how can we enhance mental health services to youth, whether that's at the school or whether that's otherwise because certainly that's the focus of his ministry. And so how can we continue to work together to enhance mental health supports in our schools? So you'll hear more about those kinds of conversations we're having. Certainly we know that there is some significant challenges around mental health in our youth and so I think the fact that the government has committed additional funding to mental health supports is a good indication of where we want to go with this.

[20:45]

And so and again, not to sound like a broken record, but some of these issues that have been identified by the SSBA in their comments are precisely the reason why we want to talk about innovation in the education sector, and they will be part of those conversations. And so that's precisely where we want to have it.

**The Chair:** — Okay, thank you very much. I'd like to inform the committee that the minister has tabled the document that he read at the beginning of his presentation, and it is tabled as document HUS 46-28. And at this time we will take a five-minute recess.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

**The Chair:** — I'd like to call the committee back into session again. Ms. Beck, if you wish to proceed.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. We've spent a fair amount of time talking about the innovation fund, and I think we've got a few more details about that. But I just wanted to delve into if there are any specific promising practices or specific challenges. I understand that it's still being developed, but any specific promising practices or challenges that we're looking to address with that innovation fund.

**Mr. Currie:** — Some promising practices, it might be a little early to define what exactly they would be because I think that, as referenced earlier, we still benefit from having conversations with our sector representatives. But I think that the ideas are affirming what we're doing right.

And I know that Pasi Sahlberg, who has presented to the Saskatoon Teachers' Association last summer at the end of August, spoke quite eloquently on Saskatchewan is a leading education entity in the world for an education system that provides an equitable opportunity regardless of socio-economic background. And his insight to the teachers, the 3,500 teachers that were gathered for the two school divisions, Saskatoon Catholic as well as Saskatoon Public, he was affirming what we're doing right. Our challenge is to understand what of that affirmation is getting us there.

So that's one thing, to speak to our affirmations. The other one is to . . . I think the promising practices is to understand what other education sectors — whether they be from across the country or within the other global entities — are doing to speak to their successes. And I think that they take a focus on intensive needs. They take a focus on English as an additional language. They take a focus on self-declared Indigenous students. They take a focus on ensuring that there is a range of education opportunities that will serve the needs of students as they present themselves in school divisions from those strong achievers to those that will need some extra support in order to enhance themselves in terms of their education system.

There's also the practice of engagement of families and parents in an education system. I think that's a promising practice that's been referenced significantly, that when parents are engaged and involved with their children's education, that there is significant growth that's realized, and support within the school as well.

As well as, I mean we always come back to not only their engagement but also the, I'd say the governance component, whether it be a school community council that is active within a school on the learning agenda as well as the special days, but the learning agenda significantly, as well as ensuring that the staff working within the schools — from the classroom teacher to the support staff to the school-based administrators — are feeling strengthened and affirmed in the work that they do to meet the challenges that they face head-on.

So I think that's a wraparound that we're hearing in terms of those promising practices from engagement of parents, supports within the classroom, attending to the achievement of students. This is one that I believe that high-performing countries, high-performing provinces, high-performing school districts, high-performing schools, and I'll take it even down to the grassroots level of a high-performing classroom, is one that looks to the achievement and the outcomes of their students, of their school, of their school division, of their province, of their country, and attend to that evidence that speaks to affecting the instructional system so that it can be effective in its approach and its utilization.

**Ms. Beck:** — This is going to be fairly philosophical, but I mean the extent to which we can extract student achievement as separate from student well-being. Is that notion part of it as well, that achievement derives from well-being of students? And what are we doing to attend to the well-being of students?

[21:00]

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well I think it's both. I don't think that you can take achievement on the one hand and well-being on the

other hand and consider them to be mutually exclusive. They're not. And so outcomes in the classroom, work that's being done within the system, has to look to both those elements because you can't have one without the other.

**Ms. Beck:** — Right.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — It's fair to say.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. And I certainly appreciate some of the work as you mentioned with regard to things like parent engagement. I think of the work of Debbie Pushor at the University of Saskatchewan. Yes. So certainly we have all measure of people doing good work in the province and I appreciate, you know, pulling out the things that we are doing well. Sometimes we don't always examine our own practice that way because it's just what we do.

In terms of specific practices that came out of the trip to Australia, I understand there's a bit of a pilot in Saskatoon around learning sprints. And can you just explain what those are and what they're meant to achieve?

**Mr. Currie:** — Thank you for the question. I will share with you that both Greater Saskatoon Catholic School Division and Saskatoon Public School Division are engaged with what's called learning sprints, highlighted and kind of facilitated by Dr. Simon Breakspear. And what it is, is a model and an approach that has teachers getting together in a learning community sort of manner to exchange ideas and concepts to develop units that would have a starting point and an ending point and milestones to be measured along the way.

It's like a learning community of teachers so that they can continue to be effective and efficient in their instructional practices and in a learning community as well. So they set up a starting point. They set up an outcome to which they would like to target their energies and resources, and then develop in milestones, short-term milestones which would be anywhere from four to six weeks in duration. And at the same time as they've established this for teachers, they also have the students understand the sprint that's being emphasized so that the students are learning and are a part of the structure of the learning, so that they can realize the accomplishments along the way.

If I could as well to highlight how do we know practices and how do we know that there's engagement that's effectively taking place is — again, I referenced it early — our school is a tool that's heavily utilized by school divisions as well as the ministry in terms of obtaining student feedback as to the effectiveness of practices within their schools or classrooms, as well as we have evidence realized through the Saskatchewan Alliance for Youth and Community Well-Being, perceptual information that's from a student survey that's provided that way as well.

So in addition to the good work that Dr. Simon Breakspear and the two school divisions are utilizing in Saskatoon, we see these learning sprints as being an effective tool, as I've come to know and learn, in terms of engaging the teachers in a learning community structure, as well as helping students understand that they are in fact what they are learning, and they are in fact effective in their learning. These learning sprints are also an effective tool utilized in a number of school districts within

Alberta and have been experienced as well in Ontario.

**Ms. Beck:** — So if I heard you correctly, the teachers set the objectives, or those objectives are set elsewhere?

**Mr. Currie:** — Teachers set the objectives always in alignment with the curriculum. They follow the provincial curriculum, but they have a methodology and an approach to ensure that they are working together effectively — I will call it efficiently — to enable the students to succeed.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you. There are a few things that I just came across that I wanted to check in about. One of them was around the Mother Teresa Middle School social impact bond. Just wondering if you could provide any update on that social impact bond, if there's any plan to add additional social impact bonds within the sector, and how success of that social impact bond is going to be evaluated. I think we still have some time before that bond comes due.

**Mr. Repski:** — Yes. Thank you for the question. We recently had a follow-up meeting with the partners on the Mother Teresa social impact bond. Right now they're progressing fairly well through the bond. It's too early to say at this point in time whether or not the "success" of the bond is going to be there or not.

I mean the ultimate success of this is seeing these kids graduating on time. But in terms of will they hit the full per cent, we don't know that yet. It's too early to tell. But in terms of the progress they're making, they're doing amazing things for these kids. I think that's fair to say. In terms of other social impact bonds in the sector, this is the only one that we're working with right now.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you. I have some questions about facilities. So specifically my first question was around portables. I believe there are four portables allocated in this budget. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — There's 12 new ones and two moves in this budget.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. How many were requested this year? How many new portables?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — The number that the ministry uses in terms of utilization, as far as the existing facility, was 120. At 120 utilization, there was 20 requested and 12 are in the budget. That does not include the four for the joint-use school projects, so there's four additional ones that are part of that. But of the 20 that were requested for schools, over 120 per cent utilization, 12 were allocated, and then the four.

**Ms. Beck:** — And an additional four for the joint-use schools?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — That's right. Yes.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Can you describe how the process is different for portable allocation with regard to all other schools in the province as opposed to the portable allocation for the P3 schools. How those processes are different?

**Mr. Repski:** — There's really no difference between the joint-use schools and the traditional. It's still based on utilization.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. My understanding is that there is an increased cost associated with the portables being placed on the P3 schools as opposed to the traditional build schools. Can you explain that cost difference and the reason for that difference?

**Mr. Repski:** — So the main reason for the pricing difference between the P3 joint-use school relocatables and the traditional relocatables is, part of the agreement that we have around the P3 schools is they always have to maintain the school to the existing condition, structure, landscape as was originally anticipated. So when you're doing the relocatable add-on to the P3 school, they have to spend some additional time to do some of the landscaping to bring it back up to that original condition, whereas with the traditional we don't have those same caveats.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — It's also important to note that, in respect of the relocatables in the contract, those numbers are all calculated into the value-for-money report which is online. I think we've commented on that before. So in respect of the \$100 million that we're saving on the joint-use schools, over the term of those contracts that includes the portables.

**Ms. Beck:** — So how much is allocated per portable, the 12 portables for the traditional-build schools, and how much is allocated per portable for the relocatables, portables for the P3 schools?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Is your question the amount allocated per portable between traditional versus joint-use?

**Ms. Beck:** — Yes.

[21:15]

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Okay. In a traditional build, the allocation is approximately \$360,000 for an urban relocatable, \$440,000 in rural Saskatchewan. And for four P3 portables, it's \$1.9 million, so just a little under \$500,000.

**Ms. Beck:** — So some of that cost is attributable to landscaping. What is the other increased cost attributable to?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — I think it's fair to say that there's a greater degree of integration in a P3 portable into the school project than there is with respect to a traditional build, whether it's IT [information technology], sprinkler systems, those kinds of things. There's certainly a greater degree of integration, given the design of the facility. Landscaping is part of that too.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. So the first number was between 36 in rural Saskatchewan . . .

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — In urban.

**Ms. Beck:** — Urban.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — 440 in rural.

**Ms. Beck:** — 40 in rural. So even using that 40 number, we're looking at about half a . . . Okay.



**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — \$175,000, I think is the number.

**Ms. Beck:** — Yes, for the 12. And 1.9 for the four. Okay. So those costs are completely reimbursed to the divisions? That amount is just transferred to the divisions?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — That's the amount of money that goes to the school divisions for the cost of relocatables.

**Ms. Beck:** — And that fully covers their costs?

**Mr. Repski:** — In terms of the cost to school divisions, as the minister indicated, these are the dollars that we roll out to school divisions. Because of the nature of the market and the cost of these, sometimes this is a little additional support, sometimes it's a little bit less. But it is something that we continue to review on an annual basis.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay, thank you. I mean, that's a fairly, fairly significant difference in costs. I've heard concerns about some of the other increased costs associated with the P3 schools, like the installation of basketball hoops for example, or boot racks for example. Is that something that you're hearing feedback from divisions in terms of this increased cost associated with changes to the P3 schools?

**Mr. Repski:** — We're committed to covering the cost of these items for the first two years so school divisions wouldn't be put out for the costs of these over the next little while. And we also continue to work with JUMP [Joint Use Mutual Partnership] on a go-forward basis to see how we can manage the costs in a more effective manner, for example school divisions doing the installation as opposed to a separate contractor.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. The amount, the 1.9 for the four portables, which allocation does that come out of? Is that out of the school capital, the 95.6; or under the P3 joint-use schools maintenance and interest charges?

**Mr. Repski:** — Yes, it's under the school capital.

**Ms. Beck:** — Under school capital. Okay. Maybe if I could ask for just a detailed breakdown of what all falls under that school capital line. We have some funding for detailed design for the four joint schools in Moose Jaw, the Pius and Argyle build, some funding for St. Frances.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — I'm not too sure. Perhaps I'll just go through the estimates for '19 and '20, and I'll start with the projects that are currently under construction. There's \$16.3 million for Weyburn. For the Rosthern school project, there's 12.6 or \$12.7 million approximately for that project. So that's total ongoing capital of almost \$29 million.

For St. Frances school, you'll note that there was \$250,000 which was provided for scoping money on that particular project, and we can talk a little bit about that if you have some questions. For Sacred Heart, St. Mary, Empire, and Westmount schools, the consolidation in Moose Jaw, there is \$1.150 million which is set aside for planning. And for St. Pius and Argyle in Regina Lakeview, there is \$1.9 million. So that's the ongoing capital.

**Ms. Beck:** — And I do have some questions about St. Frances.

So scoping is different than detailed design. What's the difference between the allocation for the Moose Jaw schools and the St. Pius and Argyle as opposed to the St. Frances project?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well there's two primary reasons. First of all the school division, I think, in concert with the family and perhaps tribal council aren't quite sure what the scope of that project will be — whether it's a K to 8 [kindergarten to grade 8], whether it's a K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12], where it's going to be located — and so we wanted to give an indication to the school division that we were very supportive. That's a Cree program in Saskatoon Catholic and a very successful program. Certainly they need a new facility, but I don't think we were quite at the stage where we could commit planning money.

The other element to this is that there is a potential for some federal money under the bilateral agreement, and under the terms of that agreement we're unable to kind of announce a project before we have that commitment. So for the two reasons, first of all was the scope and second of all, we want to make sure that to the extent we can secure federal money on this project, we wanted to do that and we didn't want to foreclose that opportunity. But that said, I think it certainly shows the government's commitment to this program. It's a very good, very successful program in Saskatoon Catholic. It's a very impressive program if you haven't had a chance to see it.

So we wanted to give an indication that we were supportive, but they do need to figure out what the scope of that project is, and we weren't prepared to commit capital to planning something that wasn't quite there yet. I mean with respect to the projects that we're doing in Regina and Moose Jaw, we pretty much know what we're going to do there and so subject to finding the locations for those schools, we need to, you know, we pretty much know what we need to do to plan. But this one was a little unique and so that was the indication that was given in the budget, identifying the . . . recognizing the uniqueness of it.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. So I understand then that locations have yet to be found for both the Moose Jaw location and the St. Pius and Argyle.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Yes, those are conversations which the school divisions are having with their respective municipalities. I think it's fair to say . . . And I'm corrected that Moose Jaw, I think, has a pretty good idea where they want to build that. They have a number of locations, a number of options. Not quite the same here in Regina. I think there's some conversations with the city of Regina that we need to have and the school division needs to have to find the proper location for that facility.

**Ms. Beck:** — And the funding for Rosthern and Weyburn, that is the final . . . that'll take them to opening day for both of those projects?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — There'll be additional funds in next year to complete those projects. They won't be completed this year.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Estimated or anticipated opening day for Rosthern and for Weyburn?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Rosthern is September of '20 and Weyburn is September of 2021.

**Ms. Beck:** — And how are they coming along in terms of on time, on budget? Was that what was anticipated?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — They're both on time and on budget.

**Ms. Beck:** — I did ask this question in the budget briefing with regard to the joint-use schools, both in Moose Jaw and in Regina, about whether a P3 model was being anticipated. I believe that the answer was, at that time, that there is a \$100 million threshold for the economies of scale to be realized. But then there was a bit of a caveat that perhaps that model could still be looked at for design and build. So I'm just wondering about what's being considered there?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — It's our intention to proceed to do these as traditional builds.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay, thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — They certainly wouldn't get to the thresholds that we've normally applied to those kinds of projects even though . . . But they're just not that scale where we would see any economies of scale by going through that kind of a project. So they'll be traditional builds.

**Ms. Beck:** — Do you have the level of detail for those schools for opening day enrolments, or what enrolment those schools will be built for?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — For Weyburn and? Or for all four of them?

**Ms. Beck:** — Well let's say all four of those projects.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — The capacity that we'll build in Weyburn is 750; in Rosthern it will be 500; in Moose Jaw, with the consolidation of the four schools, that will be 900; and we'll build the capacity for St. Pius and Argyle to 1,050.

[21:30]

**Ms. Beck:** — That is a big school. Okay thank you. This is a bit of a non sequitur, but are there any anticipated changes to the way that LINC agreements are negotiated in the province? There had been some previous musings about that from previous ministers. I'm just wondering if there are any anticipated changes there.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — There's no final conversations going on around LINC. You know, I have great respect for the local school divisions to negotiate those locally negotiated contracts. So there's no conversations going on around this.

**Ms. Beck:** — Not to that specifically, but is that part of the larger . . . one of the items that is part of this larger project of education visioning for the next decade?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — It's certainly not a specific item for the provincial education plan. So I'm not sure that answer . . . There's nothing specific about this in terms of the ongoing conversations that the ministry's having.

**Ms. Beck:** — And I hadn't heard anything for a while, but it was, at one point, was something that we were hearing potential

changes around. So I appreciate that answer.

I am going to move to the library review and some questions about funding for literacy and the Provincial Library. I'm just looking at a news release from January 10th of this year: Province seeking public input on report on Saskatchewan libraries engagement. Just wondering if that report or the report of that survey was reported out. I don't think that I have seen it. Has that been reported out, the results of that survey?

**Mr. Repski:** — Yes, the results are on the government website.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. My mad Google skills failed me. All right. And what was the broad strokes result of that review? Maybe what I didn't see was a news release about it. Was there a news release about the . . .

**Mr. Repski:** — No, there wasn't a specific news release, but the results, the summary document, was put on the website.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Can you provide some high-level detail in terms of what the survey results were?

**Mr. Repski:** — So as you know, the results of the survey came in. There was 5,800 responses received. And the summary of it was there was general support for all of the eight themes identified in the Legislative Secretary's report. So the initial report highlighted eight themes that emerged from the sessions in the fall: funding structure and predictability; provincial public library strategic plan; one card, one province; communication with the Provincial Library; governance training; indigenization; value of public libraries; and legislation.

So what we had heard overwhelmingly from the public engagement was that they were supportive in terms of did we get these themes correct? Is that what's important to you? And yes, overwhelmingly that's what the public said, is that we did get the themes correct.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. So when the review was initially announced, if I remember correctly, of course it flowed out of the turning around of the cuts to — significant cuts — to the provincial library system. At that time I understood that this would be a review of the role of libraries into the future. At some point along the way it seems to have changed and sort of pulled into this more narrow focus. Was there a reason that that happened, that the focus became more narrowly focused on these eight themes that we see here?

**Mr. Repski:** — So I don't think there was a specific outcome in mind when Legislative Secretary, Terry Dennis, went and engaged in this work. These weren't predetermined themes that we were getting specific comments on, the panel was getting specific comments on. This is what the library sector had to say. So when we look at the themes that came out of it, it wasn't the predetermined. This is what was on the minds of the library stakeholders, so that being the regional, municipal, northern, as well as the governance associations. These were what they wanted to talk about, and I think that's what you'll find in the report. Whether or not there was an initial, this is what we're going out to do, this is what they had to say and this is what was reported.

**Ms. Beck:** — Minister, I read from *The Trustee* from spring of 2019. One of the things that was noted by the president was a somewhat measure of disappointment about “. . . the narrow focus of the engagement process.” And I’m quoting, “We pointed out [that] when the process was first mentioned, the focus was to seek . . . input about the Library System. This has since narrowed to a review of [the] Library Act.” There was some expression of disappointment that the general public were not included in the consultation. I’m just wondering about that perceived smaller scope with regard to this library review.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well perhaps I’ll just reiterate what was already said. I mean there was fairly broad themes that were canvassed and the results of the work that was done were in response to those themes. And so I think there was some breadth to this. The themes were broad and the response to those themes were what we have in our report. So I’m not sure what more I can say about that except to say that it was fairly broad in terms of the themes that were addressed, and they were addressed quite well through the consultation.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. When the initial cuts were made, the announcement of those cuts were made in 2017, there was a lot of talk about the role of libraries and the changing role of libraries in our province and in, for lack of a better term, in modern society. There was, you know, musing about bricks and mortar and a number of things. And so I think that’s where some of the expectations about the library review having some significant changes to how library services are delivered in the province might have come from.

So I guess my question then is, with regard to these eight areas and the broad affirmation that these are the right priorities, what if any changes have been made in this budget or what initiatives are under way or ongoing to achieve these goals as stated in the review?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — The plan going forward now is to consult with the sector on the development of a strategic plan. You opened your comments by talking about what the future of libraries will look like. We certainly have, I think . . . understand that libraries, there’s a changing role of libraries in our communities. We’ve heard that loud and clear. And so as we move forward with the development of the strategic plan based on the consultation with the sector, I think you’ll see some things come from that work. But certainly it’s fair to say, and you’ve rightly pointed out, that there is a changing role for libraries in our communities, not just bricks and mortar with a bunch of books on the shelf like it may have been many, many years ago. There’s a lot more happening within a public library than has traditionally happened there and what most people might assume is happening in a public library.

And so that’s why the work that needs to happen now in the development of a strategic plan in consultation for the sector is very, very important, so that not only do we understand what the important role of libraries is in our society, but making sure that we’re continuing to focus on what that role is and understanding what those changes in their traditional roles have been so that they could be properly supported. So that will be the focus of the consultations in the development of the strategic plan with the sector.

**Ms. Beck:** — And perhaps in supporting broader goals within the sector in terms of literacy and early learning.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Sure. I mean there’s lots of different things that are happening in public libraries around literacy, around numeracy, around . . . Well there’s many other things that are happening as you know. And so that’s why this engagement on the strategic plan is important, so that we can map out the future of what public libraries will be, what they are, what they will be, and how they can be properly supported.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. I note in the estimates for this year over last year, there is a small lift under vote (ED15). Just wondering what changes account for that lift, and if there are any significant changes within that allocation.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — There’s a \$128,000 increase to provide a salary bump for the Provincial Library system, and then there’s a \$18,000 general salary increase. So that explains the variance of \$146,000.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay, so it’s all in salary? Is that what you said?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Yes, \$128,000 which is unconditional funding intended to provide that salary bump, yes.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. What was the cost of the review?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Just a little shy of \$40,000.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. Has there been any change in, significant change in scope within that allocation for libraries? Anything additional that libraries are being asked to take on? Any changes to significant funding within the library system?

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

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. So the next steps for the strategic plan, what are the timelines and what are the resources allocated to that strategic plan?

**Mr. Repski:** — So we’ve had an initial meeting with the library stakeholder group, including board chairs and the library directors, and it was again a very, very good conversation. It was in reflection of what the report had said. The next step is to continue to work together to determine what the strategic plan looks like. I believe the next meeting that we have scheduled for this committee to continue that work is in the beginning of June.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you. And when do you anticipate having a finalized strategic plan?

[21:45]

**Mr. Repski:** — I think it really depends on what the contents of that strategic plan are going to be. Given that we’re doing this in conjunction with the library stakeholders, we want to hear where they’re wanting to go on this.

As you indicated, the scope of libraries are broad and they’re continually changing. So for us to get a handle on what is that strategic direction, what does the strategic plan look like, I think it would be really preliminary to comment on what kind of a

timeline we'd be looking at. It really depends on the areas of focus.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Are there any resources allocated to the strategic planning process?

**Mr. Repski:** — At this point, there's no additional dollars that've been allocated for this process.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you. One of the questions that I did have was around a comment that came to me from a constituent about delays in the interlibrary loan process, that it was taking longer to receive that material from other libraries. Have you heard anything about this, and if so, what do you attribute that to?

**Mr. Repski:** — Regarding the interlibrary loan system, the funding level hasn't changed. It's remained static. But the issue that you've cited in terms of delays is something that has been raised to our attention as well.

The ministry staff and the provincial literacy and library office are continuing to work with Palliser library system to determine what that looks like. So we're having conversations to try to identify why those delays are happening.

**Ms. Beck:** — And how are those interlibrary loans, how is that system, how is it being distributed around the province? Couriers or what's . . .

**Mr. Repski:** — Yes, it's done through courier.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you. I think that I'll just move on to (ED17). So that is the vote for literacy. And I do note a fairly significant decrease year over year in funding this year under that vote or subvote. I'm just wondering what changes we're seeing in the realm of literacy that have caused that decrease in funding.

**Mr. Repski:** — The reduction in (ED17) was due to the elimination of the Community Literacy Fund of \$500,000.

**Ms. Beck:** — Can you remind us what was previously funded under those community literacy dollars?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — The grant was provided one-year funding which was application-based. There was no mechanism for ongoing funding for programs, so it was difficult to support successful programs beyond the single year. So while the sector plan is being developed with our libraries, this is going to be a conversation that we have with respect to ensuring how we provide literacy programming in our communities.

So really at the end of the day these were just simply one-year funding programs without the ability to kind of continue those year after year. So it was felt that it was, as we move forward with the consultation on the sector plan, and we start talking about providing literacy programs to our communities and CBOs [community-based organization] is part of that.

**Ms. Beck:** — How many communities and how many programs received that grant, will no longer receive it?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — There was 14 grants that were made last

year. I note that there was just over \$100,000 which was spent on administering this program last year. So that was one of the other reasons that we had decided to remove it and start thinking about how we're going to deal with this through the sector consultations with the libraries. But a significant amount of that, at 20 per cent, at that point was the administrative cost of the program.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — It's certainly kind of prohibitive.

**Ms. Beck:** — With that funding, those 14 programs, what sort of services and programs were they mandated to provide in those communities?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well each different application had different objectives. There's no specific mandate set for these, but a lot them focused on family literacy programs. And as I say, they were one-year programs.

**Ms. Beck:** — Mmm hmm. Is there someone who will be providing those family literacy programs this year, now that those 14 programs . . .

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — These grants will continue to be made until . . . Well it will fund the programs until the end of June. There are family literacy hubs and summer literacy camps and programs and services to enhance literacy within the communities which will be on an ongoing basis, which isn't part of these projects, so those will continue. It's just the SCLF [Saskatchewan Community Literacy Fund] projects which won't continue after June.

**Ms. Beck:** — So the \$500,000, has that been reinvested elsewhere in other literacy programming in this year's budget?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — No, it hasn't been reallocated.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Is there work towards improving family literacy or initiatives that you anticipate coming? I assume that the need for family literacy programs hasn't gone away.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well as I say, it certainly hasn't gone away and there are a number of programs that support family literacy that are funded by the ministry. As I say, these were one-year projects, but as we move forward with our conversations around the strategic plan with the sector, this will be part of that conversation.

I think it's fair to say that when we have family literacy programming that is successful, we would like to see those continue on an ongoing basis. And so the way that these projects were funded, being application based and one year only, if there was a successful program there was no ability to continue that program save for an additional grant application, which wasn't necessarily supported. And so I think that's kind of the idea about, as part of the conversations around the sector plan, to ensure that family literacy programs that are successful will be part of that conversation.

But it's certainly fair to say that there are family literacy programs that are funded within the ministry, and I've made

some comments about those.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. So the problem . . . So I would assume that when the grants were provided that there were some objectives that these literacy programs would have been asked to report on.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — There's no real outcomes. There's some reporting that's required as a part of the grant application, but there's no real outcomes that are set out with respect to these grants. And that's kind of one of the challenges, because to have an ongoing program that has objectives that you need to meet to get ongoing funding, that would be the normal course of events. But at the end of the day here, without any formal outcomes, that's part of the challenge with this program. And that was one of the reasons that it's been reduced.

But again we're going to have a conversation as we go forward with our sector plan to ensure that we're supporting family literacy as part of that.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Do you have a list of the 14 programs that will see their funding ended at the end of June?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — We have a list. I can certainly table that with the committee if you like because it'll take a while to read it in with the 14 of them.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — But I'll certainly table that.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you. I think I want to spend some time just talking about funding for mental health initiatives and for both students and those working within the education sector. I know that we've spent some time discussing the five pilot projects. I'm just wondering about . . . I think we have established this is an area of priority, that this is an area of concern that has been brought up by a number of stakeholders in education.

I guess what I'm looking for, two things: a little bit deeper level of detail about the mental health initiatives, the pilot projects; and then also other measures within the ministry, within the sector to address — which I think we can have agreement on — the increasing needs and concern with regard to student mental health and perhaps addictions as well. So if we could just get some detail on that.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Assistant Deputy Minister Nedelcov-Anderson.

**Ms. Nedelcov-Anderson:** — Good evening. Susan Nedelcov-Anderson, assistant deputy minister. So in terms of the mental health capacity-building pilot project, what that . . . It's based on the Alberta model that's been in place in Alberta for about 10 years now, and it provides staffing and related support required to implement and integrate its school community-based mental health promotion and prevention programming. And so it facilitates access to early intervention and treatment services for children, youth, and families when needed.

The Ministry of Education is working with the Ministry of Health and together we're working with the Saskatchewan Health

Authority to implement this initiative. And as Deputy Minister Currie mentioned the other night, we have five schools that are piloting the model this year.

[22:00]

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. How many students will be served by this model in those schools?

**Ms. Nedelcov-Anderson:** — Sorry, we don't have that information.

**Ms. Beck:** — That's okay. Within these pilot projects, I guess I'm trying to get a sense of what is, what's being measured and how those successes might be rolled out to other schools in the province and what the plan is for that.

**Ms. Nedelcov-Anderson:** — Well in terms of success from the perspective of education, helping one student, one child, one family would be a success. In terms of requirements, the Ministry of Health would have the information in terms of what they're required to report back to the federal government.

**Ms. Beck:** — I guess what I'm asking is, you know, if there are practices that we find within the pilot that show great benefit to students. Is there a path to scaling that to other communities in the province with or without the federal funding?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — That's certainly the intention. We've seen some great success in this program from Alberta and that was one of the reasons that we chose to model it here in Saskatchewan. But it would certainly be the intention to scale it as we see successes come forward and that's the whole reason for having the pilot. So the answer's yes.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Which I think is promising. And I look forward to seeing what good work comes of those pilots. I am wondering about supports in schools across the province that maybe don't have the pilots and what sort of supports are available to students in those schools. Will we wait for the successes of the pilot?

**Ms. Nedelcov-Anderson:** — So we have more than \$545,000 available to support initiatives that are related to bullying prevention, positive mental health, and student safety. And that's in addition to of course the supports for learning, funding that we've talked about.

So some examples of items that we have to support our schools, we just recently posted an RFP [request for proposal] for respectful school environment online training and that would be for all staff in school divisions whether that be teachers or educational assistants, bus drivers, etc. We also provide access for students to the Report Bullying Saskatchewan student online reporting tool. We partner with SaskTel to implement the Be Kind Online website to host the online reporting tool. We link students, teachers, families, and community members to reliable resources through that partnership with SaskTel and explore opportunities including grants for youth-led initiatives to make positive change in their schools and communities.

We contract the Saskatoon restorative action program, RAP, to provide students in nine Saskatoon schools with conflict and

relationship management and leadership skills. We also have contracted the Canadian Red Cross society to deliver training workshops and distribute Be Safe kits, which is a child abuse prevention kit for children ages five to nine years. We also contract the Kids Help Phone for the purpose of ensuring greater awareness and easier access to their counselling services for Saskatchewan students. We have updates to the existing Always There, which is a Canadian mobile application which is available on Apple and Android mobile devices to help students access the Kids Help Phone counselling services.

And all school divisions were also offered \$9,000 in grant funding for personnel to receive training in areas related to blame prevention, positive mental health, or student and school safety. So some examples might be a traumatic event systems training, a mental health first aid training, a violence threat risk assessment training, and applied suicide intervention skills training.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. Sorry I missed the details on the amount allocated, \$9,000, was that per school?

**Ms. Nedelcov-Anderson:** — Per school division.

**Ms. Beck:** — Per school division, okay.

**A Member:** — Is that not exciting?

**Ms. Beck:** — Yes, things we didn't have. One of the things that I do note, Minister Wyant, with regard to the partnerships — and I thank you for the list of the partnerships — some of the school-based staff . . . I think look specifically to the number of school-based psychologist positions, which is still in a fairly sharp decline to where it . . . 2018-2019 number is a full 10 FTEs under the 2014-15 number for those specialists. I believe that the number of social workers in schools has also declined. It's down seven from the 2014-15 numbers.

I'm just wondering if you have any feedback or if you've heard feedback with regard to the impact that that has had, this decrease in those professionals who would be implementing or providing support around student mental health. Has there been impact and have you heard anything about that?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — So we know that school divisions are working very, very hard to support the well-being of their students. Last year there was \$31 million that was spent on salary expenses for nearly 400 counsellors, psychologists, social workers in the education system that were supporting students. I think it's fair to say that one of the things that we hear from school divisions is they could use more support in these areas. And that's — again I'm a broken record — that's why we're having these conversations within the ministry and that's why I think the conversations are important and timely, to make sure that we're providing the right supports. But I think, to be perfectly honest, certainly that's a concern that's been expressed.

**Ms. Beck:** — Mmm hmm. Okay. Thank you, and I appreciate that. One of the other areas that I do hear a lot from parents and from those teachers and those who work in schools is around EA [educational assistant] support in classrooms. Again I'll refer to the same education sector staffing profile. There's a small amount, small increase from the 2014-15 level, but it's less than 50 increase at a time when we've seen thousands of additional

students.

I'm just wondering if there are any . . . if that's feedback that you're also hearing from parents, from those in the classroom, and if there are any plans to also look at the level of staffing with regard to EAs in the classroom.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — There's 3,560 EAs that are working across the system now. But one of the things that we have heard, and I don't think it's a secret, about the challenges that some teachers are having in their classrooms and who could use more support in the classroom. And again that's part of this whole conversation about how we deliver education in the classroom. How do we affect outcomes? Is it more support in the classrooms? Is it how we deliver? Is it where the kids are located? These are all conversations I think that we need to have to make sure that we're having the right outcomes for our students in our classrooms.

So certainly there's a lot of EA support in the school systems now. Do we need more? I think some people would argue that we do. But again it's part of the discussion that we're having with the ministry, not just with respect to the education plan, but around innovation. These are all things that we need to be looking at to make sure that we're delivering the right services at the right time to the children that need them.

**Ms. Beck:** — Mmm hmm. Okay. Thank you. I'm just looking at . . . Coming up to the last 20 minutes here. I did want to spend some time on the survey that was introduced today. I just want to make sure that I've . . . So I think I will start asking some questions about that.

Of course, as you've mentioned, the survey for education launched today looking for public feedback in two categories, student and non-student feedback. I'm just wondering. A few questions: first of all, if there are resources in this budget allocated for that survey and the processing of the data that's collected with that online survey.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Yes, the cost of doing this survey will be covered internally through the ministry budget. There's no special allocation within the budget for it.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Do you have expectations, or how many responses do you anticipate to this survey? Do you have ballpark numbers?

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — The survey is open till May the 10th. Be pretty difficult to give you an idea of how many responses we're going to get. We're hoping that we'll get a lot as this is very important in terms of moving forward with . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, that's good. So we got 425 today.

**Ms. Beck:** — 425 today? Okay.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — And we just opened up. So I guess that gives you kind of an indication of where this response is going to go.

This is very important in mapping the future of public education in Saskatchewan, and I have to commend the ministry, led by Deputy Minister Currie, for taking this on because this is very important. So if that gives you any indication of the response that

we're going to get, I think it's going to be . . .

So we're expecting quite a few and we're quite anxious actually to read all the responses that we do get. So it just shows you that there's going to be some significant engagement from the public, especially teachers and . . . well parents and students particularly.

**Ms. Beck:** — Yes, I have no doubt of it. So with that type of response already, there's been some staffing allocation dedicated towards this survey if someone's going to have to codify it and present it.

**Mr. Currie:** — We have, again with regards to the online survey for students and non-students, is we have the staffing within the ministry that will attend to the collation of the feedback that's been provided on the online survey.

[22:15]

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. So there are some specific questions that are asked in the survey. I understand that they follow along the themes that came out of the Education Summit. I believe there are eight, just like in the library survey there are eight themes. Can you just provide some detail how those eight questions or those eight themes were arrived at for the survey?

**Mr. Currie:** — Thank you. So last October, the 11th and 12th, there were over 260 people representing 80 organizations who gathered in Saskatoon. And over the course of a day and a half, time was spent to initially solicit from the attendees, if they were to look at up to five concepts for education in the future to be considered, what would those be. It started with an individual reflection. It then advanced to share with your partner. It advanced to table discussion and then it advanced to group discussion, a larger group, a couple of tables gathered together. Those thoughts were then shared through an electronic . . . It's called Mentimeter.

Those thoughts were then shared through a mechanism to gather all the over 900 considerations given by the 260 attendees and from there it was . . . Those over 900 responses were then kind of categorized and they were found to be, as you already referenced, within those eight areas thematically placed. Those themes were the drivers of the continued conversation after the establishment of these eight themes.

Then the rest of the summit, as it was called, spent time with people attending having a choice to go to any one of the . . . They had time for three sessions to go and talk about up to three of the eight themes. Based on time, we weren't able to attend to a session for all eight. And that generated more conversation and focus on those specific themes. That is how the eight themes were derived.

We have heard from our continued planning to engage the good folks of our province in terms of other considerations. We wanted to reflect that these were the eight themes that evolved out of the summit of last October. We're not just stopping there though. If there are other themes that surface from our online surveys or for the work that the Saskatchewan school board's doing in terms of its engagement sessions offered throughout the province, the planning committee has kept it open to . . . This was a start but any other themes that present themselves will be taken into

consideration if they don't fall within one of those eight themes.

**Ms. Beck:** — I appreciate that level of detail. One of the things that I'm wondering about, and again it's, you know, the first day of the survey, but just around how these various conversations and the summit and the Re-Imagine project and the survey results, how that'll be weighted. I think, you know, in one hand you have the summit where you have some of arguably the most engaged stakeholders in the province who have defined these themes and then, you know, surveying the broad public who might have varying . . . well will have varying degrees of knowledge and of engagement with the process. I'm just wondering how these things will be weighted, some indication of that.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Sure. I'll let Deputy Minister Currie kind of chime in on this too, but there's no specific weighting to any one of the particular components of this. Everything has to be considered in context and weighted kind of equally, I guess, depending on what kinds of comments that we get. But you know, to suggest that any one element is going to be weighed heavily or differently than another one I think is premature to say that.

**Mr. Currie:** — We would like to respect and honour the feedback provided, from an individual to an association's perspective. As we are looking to cast the net, as I call it, throughout the province of Saskatchewan, we're looking for the business community. We're looking for the parent community. We're looking for the students of the province, as well as our education sector partners as well, to provide feedback.

So what we would do is collate the feedback, whether it'd be from the STF or through the Saskatchewan School Boards Association or through SASBO [Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials] and our online surveys, to see if there are consistencies or thematic consistencies that we might be able to put together, and then put that into a template, again working with our sector partners, as to how to reflect the feedback received, whether it be from any individual or any group, and so kind of based on thematic and providing that information in a collated summary at the end.

I will reiterate what the minister has shared here, that operating in good faith with our education sector partners, we see the benefit of itemizing what the reflection has been as opposed to weighting one over another.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. I appreciate the response. So the timeline for the survey, it closes in a month, and then how long will it take to codify, collate the responses and provide some sort of a report to that?

**Mr. Currie:** — Thank you for the question. So our timelines as we have worked with our planning partners in this, the education sector partners, is to receive this . . . As you know, the online survey closes May the 10th. Saskatchewan School Boards Association is still facilitating and conducting engagement sessions through the school divisions throughout the province. We also look to host some regional engagement sessions that would be outside of the good work that the school divisions are conducting, and those would be facilitated through the month of May as well.

We look to early June, hope to invite all engagement session feedback to be submitted. And then we have our education sector working committee, which is given direction and oversight from our planning committee, the provincial education planning committee, that would then spend time to review the feedback.

We look to put it into a form — an understandable form, I would say — from what we hope to be significant response from within the province that we would then, sometime in the fall, present to the minister who would take this information and we would spend some deliberation and time on that. And then whatever processes that are required there to continue our focus on a co-construction of a provincial education plan, so that that could be realized for the fall of 2020.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. I think I'm done.

**The Chair:** — You're done?

**Ms. Beck:** — Yes.

**The Chair:** — I'd like to inform the committee that the document tabled by the minister dealing with the SCLF projects is HUS 47-28.

Now being near the time of adjournment, if someone would move that the committee do now adjourn. Mr. Steinley again moves adjournment. All in favour?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — This committee stands adjourned at 10:23.

[The committee adjourned at 22:23.]