



# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

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## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

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Regina Rosemont

Mr. Don McMorris, Deputy Chair  
Indian Head-Milestone

Mr. Greg Brkich  
Arm River

Mr. David Buckingham  
Saskatoon Westview

Mr. Herb Cox  
The Battlefords

Ms. Lisa Lambert  
Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood

Ms. Vicki Mowat  
Saskatoon Fairview

Mr. Randy Weekes  
Biggar-Sask Valley

[The committee met at 08:30.]

**The Chair:** — Well good morning everyone. We'll convene the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. Today we've got a fairly full day before us.

I'll introduce members that are here today: Deputy Chair Mr. McMorris, Ms. Lambert, Mr. Weekes, Mr. Fiaz, Mr. Olauson, and Ms. Mowat. Just as a note for committee members, I'm told that we're in the final stages of changes to the high-definition upgrade, so as a result today's proceedings are being live-streamed online on the Legislative Assembly website and will be archived and broadcast on the legislative channel at a later date.

We have the following items to table: PAC 79-28, Ministry of Finance: Report of public losses, January 1st, 2019 to March 31st, 2019; PAC 80-28, Ministry of Health: Report of public losses, January 1st, 2019 to March 31st, 2019; PAC 81-28, Ministry of Education: Report of public losses, January 1st, 2019 to March 31st, 2019; PAC 82-28, Ministry of Education: Report of public losses, December 1st, 2018 to February 28, 2019; PAC 83-28, Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan, 2019-20: First quarter financial forecast for the three months ending June 30th, 2019; PAC 84-28, Ministry of Finance: Report of public losses, April 1st, 2019 to June 30th, 2019; PAC 85-28, Ministry of Advanced Education: Report of public losses, April 1st, 2019 to June 30th, 2019.

I would like to advise the committee that pursuant to rule 142(2) the following documents were committed to the committee: Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan: Annual report on operations for the year ended March 31st, 2019; Government of Saskatchewan 2018-19: Public Accounts volume 1, summary financial statements.

I'll introduce the officials that are with us here today as well from the Provincial Comptroller's office: Provincial Comptroller Terry Paton, one of the best fishers in the province; and Chris Bayda, assistant provincial comptroller. Looking good there today, Chris. Thanks for being here. Tie looks sharp.

I'd like to introduce our Provincial Auditor, Judy Ferguson, and welcome her officials that are here in attendance here today. I will be turning it over shortly to you and you can introduce officials as the pertinent chapters are up for consideration. I'll turn it over quickly to the Ministry of Corrections and Policing, which is the first considerations here today. I'd ask for a brief introduction of officials.

I welcome Deputy Minister Larsen here today and all the officials that are here. We'll get maybe a brief introduction of everyone that's with us here today, but then we'll turn the attention back to the auditor for presentation on the chapter, and then your subsequent response.

#### Corrections and Policing

**Mr. Larsen:** — Okay. Thank you and good morning. It's a pleasure to be here today. I'd like to begin by thanking the team of the Provincial Auditor for the good work they continue to do. We welcome your reports, which serve as a helpful guide to

identify areas for improvement in our ministry. As you can see, I have a number of officials accompanying me, and they are here today obviously to discuss the progress the ministry has made on the five chapters noted in the agenda. We thought we would introduce them when they come up to discuss the specific chapter related to their area.

Many of the outstanding recommendations in front of you this morning involve complex resolutions and, as you can appreciate, these changes take time to fully implement. With that being said, the ministry feels we have made good progress on some of the recommendations with further and continued work required on others. As you already have a copy of the status update outlining this progress, I am mindful of everyone's time. Therefore for each chapter, rather than repeating what is already in front of you, I will render a few brief comments. Following that we would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much. And we'll have just a reminder to officials as well, make sure to state your name when you're coming to the microphone and presenting here today.

I'll turn it over to our Provincial Auditor, Judy Ferguson, to respond to, they're titled Justice chapters, but through some of the changes, they're now under Corrections and Policing. You can make the presentations and we'll go from there.

**Ms. Ferguson:** — Thank you very much, Chair, Deputy Chair, members, and officials. This morning I've got Mr. Trevor St. John. Trevor's a deputy in the office responsible for the portfolio that includes Corrections and Policing, and also Ministry of Justice too. So there's a bit of crossover. Behind is Ms. Nicole Dressler and Mr. Jason Wandy. They led a number of the work that's presented in the chapters before us this morning. And Ms. Kim Lowe is our committee liaison.

As the deputy minister indicated, there's five chapters for the consideration of the committee this morning. We're going to present each chapter individually because they deal with different topics. Mr. St. John will pause after each presentation to allow for the committee's consideration. Only one chapter contains new recommendations, and that's the third chapter on the agenda here. It's the only one that contains new recommendations for the committee's consideration. So the committee has seen the prior reports on the other ones.

I do want to thank the ministry and your staff for all the co-operation that was extended to us. We recognize it is an array of work that we have done, so it's touched a number of different components of your ministry. And we received excellent co-operation throughout, so thank you very much. Without further ado, Trevor.

**Mr. St. John:** — So I'll start with chapter 38 of our 2017 report volume 2. On pages 269 to 273 it reports the results of our second follow-up of the Ministry of Justice's progress towards addressing recommendations we initially made in our 2011 audit related to its processes to rehabilitate adult offenders likely to repeat crimes, including serious or violent crimes, who are serving a community sentence in the Regina Qu'Appelle region.

The Ministry of Corrections and Policing is responsible to deliver programs and services to rehabilitate adult offenders in the community. If offenders do not receive rehabilitation services that meet their needs in a timely manner, the risk of recidivism is much higher. The committee has previously considered and agreed to these recommendations.

By October 2017 the ministry had implemented three of the seven recommendations and had not implemented the remaining four. We found the ministry had made the following improvements. It established processes to monitor whether high-risk adult offenders have timely access to priority community rehabilitation programs. It established a process to evaluate rehabilitation services provided by other agencies before selecting and providing funding to those agencies. It introduced a new policy that requires the ministry to evaluate programs, using evidence-based best practices and established research methodologies.

However the ministry needs to improve the following areas. It needs to consistently follow its case management policies regarding completing timely risk assessments and integrated case plans; have sufficient contact with offenders; and prepare regular progress reports for offenders in the community. This concludes my presentation.

**The Chair:** — Thanks for the presentation and the work. Thanks as well for the work from the ministry. I'll give brief remarks to this respective chapter, or should we open it up for questions?

**Mr. Larsen:** — I have a few remarks, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Sure.

**Mr. Larsen:** — You may recall the auditor's recommendations were based on a file review from the Regina Qu'Appelle region. As the recommendations impact the entire provincial rehabilitation system, considerable work has gone into developing initiatives to improve processes to rehabilitate adult offenders in the community. The purpose of the audit is to assess community corrections progress on risk management and risk reduction activities. The overall goal is reductions in recidivism.

In 2017 the Provincial Auditor acknowledged that the ministry had implemented three out of seven recommendations and had made progress on the remaining four. Three key items that have presented issues, impacting success over the last few years, are employee turnover, vacancies in positions, and increased caseloads. Because these things will likely continue to present challenges, they will all need to be managed on an ongoing basis. The key for improvement is implementing significant changes to the way that processes are managed within the community corrections. To this aim, in 2017 the ministry explained that it would be engaging in a large-scale workload review. This important work continues with major changes planned for implementation beginning this fall. Changes will be made to requirements, allowing probation officers to complete more risk assessments and case plans.

In addition, serious violent offender response, SVOR, has been expanded to Regina and the northeast communities of Pelican Narrows, Sandy Bay, and Deschambault Lake to provide intensive supervision and rehabilitation to very high-risk, violent

offenders. It had previously existed only in North Battleford and Saskatoon. All clients serving a community disposition are supervised by a probation officer or community youth worker. In the event that a client withdraws from supervision, and contact cannot be re-established, a violation report is submitted to the police requesting that that client be charged with a breach of that order.

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, large-scale changes such as those under way take time to implement. With that said, the ministry has and will continue to prioritize providing services to high-risk clients. Some modest gains have been made in some areas, and changes will continue to be made to allow for improvements in all areas.

We look forward to the Provincial Auditor's next follow-up audit scheduled for the latter half of 2020. And at this time we'd be happy to answer any questions.

**The Chair:** — Thanks for the work. I'll also be tabling the status updates that were provided, and thanks to the ministry for providing them.

So at this point I'll table PAC 86-28, Ministry of Corrections and Policing: Status update, dated September 25th, 2019.

I'll open up for questions here. Ms. Mowat.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to thank the deputy minister and the officials for being here today, for providing the status update, and also for providing some opening remarks as well, which are always helpful and answer some of my early questions. So that's, I think, good for everyone on the committee.

Just to start, early in the chapter here, on page 270 the Provincial Auditor noted that "Management explained that its policy to use integrated case plans between custody and the community is not adhered to in the Regina Community Corrections Office." I'm just wondering if you could speak to why this wasn't the case, and who monitors case plan and follow-up, at least at this point in time?

**Ms. Graves:** — Hi. Good morning, my name is Caroline Graves. I'm the executive director of community corrections. Thank you for your question. So in the documentation we talk about the fact that we've been engaging in a very large-scale workload review over the last couple of years, and as part of that process we've been looking at case management as one component of that. So we've looked at particularly what we do in terms of developing the case plan and making sure that, as we move forward, that that documentation looks as it should look.

So along with that process, right now we will be in the throes of this fall of making changes to our case-plan documentation. And then at some point in the future we'll be implementing that same case-plan document within custody facilities.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. So you've mentioned the workload review a couple of times and in the status update as well. And in the opening comments the deputy minister indicated that there were some major changes that we should expect. I'm wondering if you can elaborate on what some of those changes will look like,

and what impact you expect them to have.

[08:45]

**Ms. Graves:** — I'd be happy to. So we have three different streams that we've looked at through the workload review process. So one is our supervision standards; the second is how we do assessments and risk assessments; and the third is, as I'd mentioned, the case planning process.

So in terms of supervision standards, we've done a very thorough review of taking a look at all of our client groups that we see. We've looked at each risk level; we've looked at each type of client. So we've looked at high, medium, low. We've looked at bail clients. We've looked at each particular group and done some work in terms of what those supervision standards should look like going forward. So that's one component.

The second that we've looked at is our risk assessment process. So really what we've tried to do in that process is to reduce redundancies in the paperwork, so to really look at how do we streamline that process and to make sure we're getting all of the information that we require, but doing it in a very thorough, consistent way. And then we've also been looking at the case management process.

So all of the pieces that I've talked about are really germane to the work that we do in community corrections. It's the work that our staff do every day. So we've really looked thoroughly at every component.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. In terms of workload demands, is there anything that has been done to address those workload demands — basically actions that have been taken now — or is this something that is waiting for the workload review to be completed?

**Ms. Graves:** — Excellent question. Thank you. We have been looking at where we can try to make some minor improvements over the last couple of years, but really the focus has been largely on this workload review and making more massive changes versus small little tweaks. And as Deputy Minister Larsen had mentioned earlier, we've been a bit challenged in the last couple of years.

One of the challenges has been in terms of caseload and some increases in numbers. One other thing that we've seen an increase of is we write reports for the court, so we write pre-sentence reports and we write bail verification reports. And in the last couple of years we saw a 30 per cent increase in terms of the number of bail verification reports that we wrote, which is a good thing. It's a good thing that we're doing that work and contributing to the criminal justice system in that way. It's a great thing, but it has presented some challenges.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. You were mentioning the fact that the caseload has increased. How many cases is each employee responsible for? I'm wondering if you have an average or how you track it.

**Ms. Graves:** — I do, and I can give you as much information as you'd like in terms of our caseload sizes. So some examples of our caseload for rural offices, for instance in Buffalo Narrows —

and this is just one example but it would be consistent across our rural offices — you could have up to 67 files for each worker, and then because they're in rural locations having to travel to see their clients, there's also extensive travel that is required.

And then in urban offices where we have intake and case management units, the intake units could have up to 102 files per worker and case management units could have up to 111 files per worker.

And then if we look at if community corrections is fully staffed, if we were in a situation that we were fully staffed — which we've been challenged to be over the last few years — on average, caseloads would range from 45 to 60 for adult clients and 25 to 30 for youth clients.

And those numbers of course can vary, depending on the location in the province. They can also vary by type of caseload. So for example, we have a serious violent offender response and we work jointly with police, prosecutions, mental health as well, in terms of working intensely with those clients. And because of that intense level of partnership, those caseloads are limited to 15 clients per staff. So it all depends on the location, the type of caseload, but overall that would be a summary of what the caseloads look like.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. And has there been any changes to FTEs [full-time equivalent] since the report was released?

**Ms. Graves:** — In last year, it would have been in 2017 I believe, we got three additional FTEs in community corrections for . . . It's called the CAR program, community alternatives to remand, so focusing on bail. But that has been the increase in that time.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Where are those three FTEs located out of?

**Ms. Graves:** — Saskatoon, Regina, and Prince Albert.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay, thanks. And what is the status of the new IT [information technology] system?

**Ms. Graves:** — CJIMS [criminal justice information management system] was implemented in community corrections, so all of our staff were trained in 2015 in relation to that system.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. There's also a mention of pilot projects, two pilot projects to allow for better coordination. What was the outcome of those pilots? Is there a plan to expand? So I'm just on page 271 as well.

**Ms. Graves:** — This I believe, if I'm following, this recommendation relates to the connection between community corrections and custody facilities. Yes. So in June of 2017 in our Saskatoon community corrections office, we began providing what we term in-reach services to offenders serving custody sentences. And there's one dedicated probation officer who goes in and completes the risk assessments on offenders who will be released to a community sentence, and they do that prior to their release from custody. The aim of that is to be able to then, when that client is released, to be able to connect them with services immediately.

So we initially operated that as a pilot in Saskatoon. We've had great success with that. So we've replicated that. It's been implemented in the Regina office in the summer and we just started in Prince Albert in September as well.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. Just in general, we're talking about rehabilitation and the overall goal of reducing recidivism. Has there been any progress toward reducing recidivism rates in the province?

**Ms. Graves:** — Unfortunately at this point . . . As I'd mentioned, we implemented the new system called CJIMS in 2015. Prior to its implementation, with the old system we were able to run reports to actually really regularly check the recidivism rates, and our folks with IT are working on getting that capability within CJIMS. It's not quite there, but they're working on getting that so we'll be able to run those reports regularly to see exactly what's happening in that regard.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay, thanks. As I understand it, so since CJIMS has been implemented, we haven't been able to track the recidivism?

**Ms. Graves:** — That's correct.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. Thank you. I have no further questions on this chapter, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Thanks for the questions. Thanks for the responses. Any other questions before we move along? I'll turn it back over to . . . Right. Well we don't have any new recommendations here; these are all outstanding. So we'll simply need to conclude consideration of this chapter. Will someone . . . Moves. All agreed? That's carried.

We'll move along back over to the Provincial Auditor's office.

**Mr. St. John:** — The next chapter is chapter 39 of our 2017 report volume 2 on pages 275 to 276. This reports the results of our second follow-up of the Ministry of Justice's progress towards addressing two recommendations we initially made in our 2012 audit related to the integrity of offender data. The committee has previously considered and agreed to these recommendations.

The ministry uses an IT system referred to as CJIMS to track release dates of prisoners. If information in its IT system is not accurate, offenders may be released at the incorrect time. By September 2017 the ministry had implemented one of the two remaining recommendations and had partially implemented the other. We found the ministry developed a policy for community corrections offices to require a supervisory review of files and data changes. The policy requires supervisors to confirm that the data clerical staff enter in CJIMS matches the information in the individual's court order.

However the ministry continues to need to follow its procedures for removing unneeded user access to its IT system. We provided a detailed update for this recommendation in our 2017 volume 2, chapter 8, page 58 as well 2018 volume 2, chapter 10, page 61. As of March 2018 this recommendation remained partially implemented. This concludes my presentation.

**The Chair:** — Brief comments from the ministry?

**Mr. Larsen:** — Sure. Thank you. The outstanding recommendation in this chapter is one that has been around for some time and affects many ministries. It relates to timely removal of user access. There really are two components to this discussion. The first being removal from Government of Saskatchewan accounts, with the secondary component being removal of access from ministry-specific IT systems.

The ministry has made progress towards implementing this recommendation by incorporating additional measures to see this issue resolved. This spring the ministry and the Public Service Commission got together to implement a process to automatically receive notification of an expected staff departure. Also in August of this year, the ministry modified its processes for removal of user access to ministry-specific IT systems.

We also recently completed an internal test of employees exiting the ministry. The results of this review indicate both ITD [information technology division] and CJIMS support are doing a good job of removing access in a timely manner when they are advised the removal is required. The issue lies with the timely notification by ministry staff to PSC [Public Service Commission] or system administrators of the employee exiting the ministry.

With that being said, I have sent out two communications. One to my direct reports emphasising the importance of protecting government information. I asked that they cascade that information down to all supervisors in the ministry. And the second communication was to the executive coordinators in the ministry as they play an important role to manage employees both entering and exiting the ministry.

The ministry understands the importance of getting this issue resolved, and our goal is to consider this recommendation fully implemented by the end of this fiscal year. We are happy to answer any questions.

**The Chair:** — Thanks for the work and the presentation. I'll open it up for questions. Ms. Mowat.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this issue of timely access yet again. But I do want to commend the deputy minister on the actions that have been taken in this area. It does look like there has been, according to the status update, a thorough set of actions and efforts to remove user access, users who shouldn't have access any more. So I just want to make a note of that.

I'm wondering if we can get an update on . . . So on page 275 in the beginning of the introduction, there's some numbers here that were provided by ministry officials in October 2017. I'm wondering if we can get an update on these numbers right now. So it says:

As of September 30, 2017, the Saskatchewan correctional system was responsible for 9,590 offenders [so how many offenders] with 1,966 in custody and 7,624 under community supervision.

So if we can get an update on those three numbers that would be great.

**Mr. Larsen:** — Those three numbers are pretty close to current. As of yesterday we had 1,970 adult offenders in custody, and the community is around the same number, I think, of 7,000. It might be a little bit higher . . . 7,393.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay, thank you. I have no further questions on this chapter, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Any other questions? Ms. Lambert?

**Ms. Lambert:** — No.

**The Chair:** — No? Mr. McMorris.

**Mr. McMorris:** — One quick one on the access to government employees that are not . . . This is not unique to Corrections; this is kind of a reoccurring thing. Is it really just a communications piece for people? I struggle sometimes to know why, you know, when a person is no longer employed, they're not taken off the system immediately. And is it just really a communications issue? Or can you give me a practical example and why the person didn't get taken off?

**Mr. Larsen:** — That's a good question, Mr. McMorris, and I struggle with that concept as well. In this day and age, I mentioned to a discussion with staff the other day regarding this issue, that you would think that once the trigger is activated for a removal, there would be an automated system that would just follow with the process and take that person's name out of any system that is in government. But I'll refer to Rick or Monica in relation to the specifics of that question.

**Mr. Davis:** — Good morning. Rick Davis, director of enterprise business support. I think your assumption is very accurate. From our findings we're seeing that, as Deputy Minister Larsen indicated, that when our systems administrators are notified, the removal is happening timely, like within a day or two.

Where there's the delay in the removal is when our systems administrators aren't notified from the people in the field at the front lines and the facilities and offices around the provinces in that timely manner. Now we've taken a lot of different steps lately and in the past to try to ensure we're getting that notification quicker, and we'll continue to monitor that now.

[09:00]

**Mr. McMorris:** — This may sound really simple and elementary, but for whoever the supervisor is that is in charge of a person and is no longer going to be coming to work tomorrow, is there a checklist that they have to follow and say, notify someone above me?

**Mr. Davis:** — No, it's a fair question. Yes, there is a checklist. And I mean the checklist includes all the steps for when somebody's leaving employment. Removing them from the systems and providing the proper notifications is on that checklist.

**The Chair:** — Very good questions, common sense. Thank you very much. Any other questions, or are we ready to conclude consideration of chapter 39? Moved by Ms. Lambert. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That's carried. We'll move along to the chapter that has new recommendations within it. So we'll have to have some motions with respect to those recommendations. I'll turn it over to the Provincial Auditor's office.

**Mr. St. John:** — Right. Thank you. Chapter 3 of our 2018 report volume 1 on pages 25 to 38 reports the results of our audit on the Ministry of Corrections and Policing's processes for the provision of primary medical care to adult inmates in its secure-custody correctional centres. This chapter includes nine new recommendations for the committee's consideration.

Primary medical care refers to first-contact care that family physicians, nurses, or other medically trained personnel typically provide. It includes medical care upon admission to correctional centres, urgent care, health promotion, disease prevention, and follow-up care. Research shows inmates are at higher risk to obtain infectious diseases than in the community. If this is not addressed prior to inmate release, a risk of new diseases and untreated conditions could decrease the well-being of the community.

At the time of the audit, Saskatchewan had about 1,800 inmates in its four adult secure-custody correctional facilities. These facilities continued to face overcrowding. Many inmates came from vulnerable backgrounds that can increase the likelihood of having declining health. Also many have untreated health conditions when admitted to correctional centres.

We concluded for the 12-month period ended November 30th, 2017 the Ministry of Corrections and Policing had effective processes, other than the nine areas reflected in our recommendations, for the provision of primary medical care to adult inmates in its secure-custody correctional centres. I will focus my presentation on those nine areas and related recommendations.

In our first recommendation, on page 30, we recommend the Ministry of Corrections and Policing deliver orientation training for the nurse manager positions in adult secure-custody correctional centres. A nurse manager is either a registered nurse or a registered psychiatric nurse that helps the medical unit provide quality care to inmates. Although each of the four correctional centres staff the nurse manager position with appropriate qualified medical personnel, nurses received little to no orientation when they started.

The working environment of a secure-custody correctional centre differs from a hospital; rather, nurse managers were expected to learn their role while on the job. In November 2017 most of nurse managers had been in their role less than two years. Without comprehensive initial orientation training, unprepared nurse managers may struggle in this key role in the correctional centre. This can lead to staff turnover.

In our second recommendation, on page 31, we recommend the Ministry of Corrections and Policing monitor the currency of first aid certifications of correctional staff from adult secure-custody correctional centres. Regular first aid training helps correctional staff possess sufficient skills to readily respond in the event of an emergency. The ministry appropriately requires all correctional

staff to hold a current first aid certification. This is particularly important because medical staff at each centre do not work during the night. Nursing staff deliver medical care from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Each of the four centres formally track when each correctional staff was last certified for first aid and the certification expiry dates. However one correctional centre was not adequately monitoring whether its staff maintained their certification. As of November 1st, 2017 only 65 per cent of staff at this centre were certified, compared to between 85 and 99 per cent of staff at the other three centres. Not monitoring whether staff maintain current first aid certification increases the risk the centre does not have sufficient correctional staff trained for potential medical emergencies.

In our third recommendation, on page 32, we recommend the Ministry of Corrections and Policing regularly update medical care policies for adult secure-custody correctional centres. The ministry's 21 policies related to medical care in adult secure-custody correctional centres are not complete and do not cover some key topics such as psychiatric care and treatment plans. In addition the ministry has not reviewed and updated policies that were assessed as important as it expected. Since 2016 the ministry updated only three policies related to medical care. It found it last updated other medical-related policies between 1996 and 2006, 10 to 20 years ago. Incomplete and outdated policies increases the risk that policies do not provide relevant guidance to staff and lead to inconsistent staff actions and operations.

In our fourth recommendation, on page 32, we recommend the Ministry of Corrections and Policing have adult secure-custody correctional centre staff regularly update medical care directives. The ministry expects each correctional centre to develop directives that help operationalize ministry policies. It recognizes the delivery of correctional services may differ between facilities because of differing inmate populations and differing genders. All four correctional centres do not routinely review and update directives related to medical care. Two of four centres do not have any directives on the medical admission process. Additionally, of the 38 medical care directives we tested, correctional centres had not reviewed over 60 per cent of them within the last 1 to 13 years.

Not having directives for medical admission increases the risk that nurses do not assess inmates' medical needs consistently at intake. A lack of or out-of-date directives increases the risk of inmates not receiving consistent and up-to-date medical care.

In our fifth recommendation, on page 34, we recommend the Ministry of Corrections and Policing require staff to transfer inmate medical files between adult secure-custody correctional centres when it moves inmates between centres or former inmates re-enter the system. Each centre maintains manual medical files on their inmates. It routinely moves inmates between centres. When transfers occur, the transferring centre transfers only nurse-to-nurse notes instead of the inmate's entire medical file or copy thereof.

Nurse-to-nurse notes are limited to information about current medical treatment and do not give information about past treatments, observations, or medical history. Having an inmate's

complete medical file available facilitates a continuum of care and avoids a replication of tests. Not transferring complete inmate medical files can increase the risk that an inmate receives inefficient or inappropriate medical care, putting their health at risk. Switching to electronic health records may be an efficient way to accomplish this.

In our sixth recommendation, on page 36, we recommend the Ministry of Corrections and Policing formally respond to adult inmate complaints about medical care within time frames required by *The Correctional Services Regulations*. The correctional centre director receives complaints and assigns the medically related complaints to the centre's nurse manager. The nurse manager is responsible for responding to and resolving these complaints. The inmate can appeal a nurse manager's decision or resolution to the correctional centre director. *The Correctional Services Regulations* require the ministry and centres to respond to an inmate complaint within five business days. When the centre cannot reach a final decision within that time frame, the regulations require to issue written interim responses to help keep inmates informed of the status of their complaint.

The ministry and the four adult secure-custody correctional centres received almost 300 medically related complaints in the 12-month period ending November 30th, 2017. Our analysis of these complaints found almost 30 per cent of the time staff responded to inmates later than the law requires. They had an average response time of eight days instead of five business days. At November 2017, only two of the four correctional centres tracked if staff sent interim responses to inmates. Not providing timely responses to inmate complaints about medical care runs the risk of an inmate's health being jeopardized.

In our seventh recommendation, on page 37, we recommend the Ministry of Corrections and Policing periodically analyze complaints about medical care from adult inmates in secure-custody correctional centres for trends and take corrective action as needed. The ministry had not analyzed complaints to identify recurring types or trends. Our analysis of 300 complaints found about 40 per cent of them were about medication. By not assessing trends and the type of complaints to identify systemic or recurring issues in the delivery of medical care, staff may miss opportunities to adjust processes or improve communication.

The next two recommendations are related. In our eighth recommendation, on page 38, we recommend the Ministry of Corrections and Policing work with adult secure-custody correctional centres to develop measures for evaluating the provision of medical care to inmates. In our ninth recommendation we recommend the Ministry of Corrections and Policing receive regular reports from adult secure-custody correctional centres on the provision of medical care to inmates.

Other than information tracked for the three-month period, the ministry did not track key medical care activities or measures. The medical units at each of the four centres do not have measures to evaluate the medical care they provide to inmates. Staff do not record evaluative information for overall medical care. Without measures to evaluate the provision of medical care, the ministry does not know whether inmates receive care consistent with its policy. Also without measures the medical units cannot identify areas of provision of medical care that they



could improve. That's all.

**The Chair:** — Thanks for the presentation and the really important focus of this chapter. I'll turn it over for brief responses from the ministry and then open it up for questions.

**Mr. Larsen:** — Thank you. As the auditor's report states, there is no expressed reference to medical care services in *The Correctional Services Act, 2012*. However, the ministry provides medical services to inmates in each of the province's correctional facilities. The ministry recognizes the importance of and accepts the auditor's recommendations. Since the auditor's report was released mid-2018, the ministry feels it has fully implemented three and partially implemented six of the recommendations. We are happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. I'll open up for questions. Ms. Mowat.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you very much. Just to start, on page 29 there is a discussion about the medical personnel that are available to inmates. I'm wondering how many hours a general practitioner is on site each week in each facility.

**Ms. Scriver:** — Heather Scriver, assistant deputy minister. So for our four facilities, the GP [general practitioner] at Prince Albert Correctional Centre is six hours a week. Pine Grove Correctional Centre, which is our facility for women, is eight hours a week. Regina Correctional Centre is 11.5 hours a week. White Birch, which is our remand facility in Regina for women, is three to four hours a week. Saskatoon Correctional Centre is eight hours a week.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. And can you also provide the corresponding wait times to see a general practitioner at each facility?

**Ms. Scriver:** — Sure. For P.A. Correctional Centre it's one to two weeks; Pine Grove Correctional Centre, 30 days; Regina Correctional Centre, two and a half weeks; White Birch, one week, depending on the day of the admission; Saskatoon Correctional Centre, two to four weeks.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you.

**Ms. Scriver:** — Just a comment, those clients that are in need of medical assistance or care, they are triaged as well. So it's not that they're waiting for the doctor to come into the facility. They'll be escorted to health care in the community if needed.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. The discussion about the nurse manager orientation that's required, on page 30 the auditor mentioned it and it was also mentioned in the status updates as well. I'm just wondering if you can expand a little bit on the information that's in the status update about how this training has been improved or will be improved. It's just it's not very clear to me what stage we're at in this process.

**Ms. Schnell:** — Hi, I'm Doris Schnell. I'm the executive director of offender services. So since this recommendation occurred we've met with the nurse managers to try and determine what the gaps in services are, what they're seeing as gaps in services.

[09:15]

A number of the issues are leadership, those types of skills that they wish they had. They're put into a position where they're supervising a group of nurses and having to interact with a group of correctional officers as well.

So they're looking for information about specifically how a correctional facility works, because some of them come from outside, and some additional leadership skills around managing people. Those are the sort of things that were identified to us.

I also want to add that our nurse managers do change over quite regularly so the nurse managers that we're working with now around the orientation package are actually different nurse managers than the ones that were interviewed during the audit as well.

**Ms. Mowat:** — So is there a thought of a specific type of course that will be provided or specific training that will be provided? Or is that information solidified yet?

**Ms. Schnell:** — It's not solidified yet. We've been working with learning and development around what sort of things are available, what sort of things we might be able to do online rather than in person. They need the training but their time is also very valuable in the clinics, so what kind of things we can offer them that's online. So some of the things we've been looking at is things like dealing with conflict constructively, some of those kinds of things as well.

There will be a curriculum completed by . . . we've got the date set for March the 31st of this year. And then we'll implement it with them.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. You mentioned the turnover. The auditor noted that in November 2017 most of the nurse managers had been in their position less than two years. How do you measure the turnover rate? What does it look like right now?

**Ms. Scriver:** — We haven't formally measured the turnover rate, but it is an issue and there is turnover within our nurse manager ranks within the correctional facilities. Some of our nurse managers, they opt to go to the Health Authority to work or in other areas of the government to work.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay.

**The Chair:** — Just on that point before we move along, do you have an assessment or an understanding of why that's happening? Is it sort of work conditions, or compensation, or what's the cause?

**Ms. Scriver:** — If I understand your question, you're asking if we've done exit interviews with the nurse managers?

**The Chair:** — Yes, so as part of understanding why there's such a high level of turnover.

**Ms. Schnell:** — We haven't done formal exit interviews but the nurses do acknowledge it is a difficult working relationship, like any working situation. Any job in a correctional facility can be a difficult situation. Those are some of the things that they identify.

**The Chair:** — It seems like an important area to focus some attention because I'm sure turnover is a challenge as well when you're wanting to have those services extended. Ms. Mowat.

**Ms. Mowat:** — So just looking at the availability of medical care, on page 33 there is a discussion about the fact that most inmates who refused the initial assessment on admission came from the same correctional facility. I'm just wondering what facility that is and whether this has been looked into.

**Ms. Schnell:** — I believe that was Saskatoon correctional facility. Yes, we've been problem solving ways to deal with that. One of the issues with the way that Saskatoon correctional facility is structured is there isn't a lot of room to do medical intake immediately when they arrive, and so they go to their home units. And then sometimes once they're settled in their home units they are less willing to want to come back to do the medical assessment so they refuse the medical assessment. So we're problem solving ways. There has been sort of a reorganization of some of the nurses' duties to try and make sure that we have nurses available initially when they come in and then we're trying to work with making space for that. But it continues to be a challenging situation.

**Ms. Mowat:** — So are they using alternate spaces for interviewing? Or is this primarily a space constraint, would you say?

**Ms. Schnell:** — Yes. No, they're looking at alternate spaces, yes.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. With regards to the eighth and ninth recommendations, that the ministry "... develop measures for evaluating the provision of medical care to inmates," so the plan is that audits will be completed and it looks like the first one will occur in December 2019. I'm wondering what that process will look like in terms of how medical care will be evaluated in the correctional centres.

**Ms. Schnell:** — So one of the things that we're currently looking at that's referenced earlier is an electronic health record. We're doing some research on that right now. Currently all of our medical files are held on paper files, so being able to evaluate the medical services would be a lot more straightforward and a lot more efficient if we had an electronic medical file.

But what we plan on doing with the nurse managers is taking a certain portion of their time that they'll dedicate to audits ... I mean they already oversee what the nurses are doing and look at their work on a daily basis, but we're going to develop a specific audit schedule in terms of things they'll look at, so the timeliness of the initial assessments that were done, whether or not the referrals were made to the practitioners that they should be made to, whether or not those were followed through, what the timelines were in terms of following those through. We're also going to look at analyzing our complaints. We're rolling those up on a regular basis now as well. So we plan to do that on a regular yearly basis to be able to evaluate service.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. I have no further questions on this chapter, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Mr. McMorris.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Just a couple questions, and I certainly appreciate the high turnover in the nurse managers. I can just imagine it can be a very difficult setting to work in. And the orientation package, whether it would help them last another year, you know, if they had a proper orientation right off the bat. Would that keep them there for an extra year? I kind of wonder if that's the case because I think it's more the environment and the conditions they're working in than whether they were properly oriented to begin with.

But having said that, we're not unique. This is probably not unique. Saskatchewan's not unique compared to other provinces. Have we looked at what is done in other provinces as far as when staff comes on? And in this particular case, it would be nurse managers, any sort of orientation that's done in other provinces that we can ... You know, we don't really have to reinvent the wheel because we've got, you know, if we just take the three prairie provinces, I'm sure the situation is very similar in Manitoba and Alberta as it is here. Have we looked at what they've done as far as best practices?

**Ms. Scriver:** — We have done a jurisdictional scan and we are a part of a federal-provincial-territorial working group on health care in correctional facilities. A number of the jurisdictions have transferred health services to the regional health authority and the Ministry of Health. So that is something that we are looking at right now in terms of providing the appropriate and adequate care to our clients in the correctional facilities.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Which, if I could, just kind of leads into my second question regarding electronic medical health records, and it's interesting that you're still on paper and talking about maybe looking at an electronic medical record. We've spent a lot of money in this province on electronic medical records, and I'm surprised that people in the corrections facilities do not have access to the provincial database. And that would seem to make a very logical step that we would access the provincial medical record database as opposed to reinvent the wheel again.

**Mr. Larsen:** — We agree.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Okay, thank you.

**The Chair:** — Good questions. Ms. Lambert.

**Ms. Lambert:** — I heard that when it comes to the adult inmate complaints, there's something like 30 per cent that surpass the recommendations for response. And so we heard about a policy refresh, so where was that in relation to that 30 per cent that still aren't dealt with in a timely manner according to the legislation?

**The Chair:** — Recommendation no. 6 I think, and I think that it was identified that they were supposed to be responded within five days. And I believe the report I heard said that I think eight was the average. So certainly that's a concerning situation.

**Ms. Schnell:** — Yes, yes, definitely. Sometimes it's difficult for us to respond in five days because we don't have all the information we need. So sometimes the complaints actually go beyond the person's stay in a correctional facility, so we're actually looking for information from previous health providers as well. And there's different reasons why we miss the five-day time frame. But what we did do is a refresh that if we're having

difficulty . . . The first direction is we need to respond within the five days. The second direction is if we can't respond within the five days because we're still waiting for information, then we need to send out that other letter that says, we're looking into your concerns and we will get back to you.

So the refresh was around both the timelines and what to do if we can't meet the timelines. So we are now monitoring that on a regular basis. We've set up a database where we collect that information in the facilities, and then also the complaints that we respond to at a central office level, we also collect those as well. Now I don't have a number for you right now in terms of where we're at. We can certainly look at the database.

**Ms. Lambert:** — Okay, thank you.

**The Chair:** — Thanks for providing some of the context there. But it calls for the communication to the inmate within five days, correct? Ideally you have resolution or, you know, that you're able to action or respond within that period of time. But I think the communication is pretty critical. What I'm hearing is that you've changed practice so that if there's complicating factors to resolve the complaint, the communication's now happening within the policy, the five days. Is that correct?

**Ms. Schnell:** — That's correct.

**The Chair:** — Would there be any examples of a breach of that or someone not having communication within five days of their complaint then?

**Ms. Schnell:** — I would have to go back and look at the database to give you that information.

**The Chair:** — Some of the context or some of the challenging factors, I think, were identified certainly by you in this work and the auditor as well and Deputy Chair McMorris around access to the medical records as well. So I think that the response from Deputy Minister Larsen that, you know, it would make sense to have access to that record. It certainly seems like a worthy area to pursue.

Any other questions? I think that three of the recommendations have been implemented as reported out by the ministry here — 2, 6, and 7. I'm wondering if . . . I see Ms. Lambert. Would you care to move that we concur?

**Ms. Lambert:** — We concur with the recommendations and note compliance.

**The Chair:** — Okay. With recommendations 2, 6, and 7, all agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That's carried. With respect to the other recommendations, 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, there's certainly been actions taken on, on all fronts. Would someone care to bring a motion to concur and note progress? Ms. Lambert.

**Ms. Lambert:** — I concur and note progress to nos. 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, and 9.

**The Chair:** — All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — All right. That's carried. Okay, we'll conclude consideration of chapter 3 at this point, and we'll move along to chapter 29 of the 2018 volume 2 report and turn it over to the Provincial Auditor's office.

**Mr. St. John:** — Thank you. Chapter 29 of our 2018 report volume 2 is on pages 215 to 219. This reports the results of our first follow-up of the Ministry of Corrections and Policing's progress towards addressing six recommendations we initially made in our 2016 audit related to processes to plan for inmate capacity at its adult correctional facilities. The committee has previously considered and agreed to these recommendations.

Strong processes for facility capacity planning is key for having safe and humane conditions for inmates and correctional officers, including allowing space for effective rehabilitation of inmates. By July 2018 the ministry had implemented three of the six recommendations, partially implemented one recommendation, and was still working on the remaining two.

Key improvements included establishing written guidance for use in capacity planning, completing an analysis of alternatives to meet the needs for facility space, and updating written contingency plans to meet unexpected changes in capacity.

[09:30]

The three areas requiring further work are:

Defining how the ministry will determine the inmate capacity of its existing adult correctional facilities to guide facility capacity planning decisions. Not defining the inmate capacity of its existing correctional facilities makes long-term capacity planning difficult. It increases the risk that the ministry may not make effective decisions about utilization, modification, or construction of new facilities.

It also needs to forecast demand for rehabilitation program space in its adult correctional facilities, including consideration for space required for housing inmates along with space required for rehabilitation programs. Not having timely forecasts for demand of rehabilitation programs increases the risk that Corrections and Policing may not have sufficient and adequate space when needed to rehabilitate inmates.

The third area is developing a written long-term plan to manage inmate capacity in its adult correctional centres. Not having a written long-term plan to manage inmate capacity in its adult correctional facilities increases the risk that Corrections and Policing may not have the right space to provide adequate housing for adult inmates at the right time. It also increases the risk of incurring higher operational or construction costs than necessary.

Our office recognizes these are areas that are complex and may take time to fully address. This ends my presentation.

**The Chair:** — Thanks for the presentation. I'll open it up to the ministry for a brief response and then open it up for questions.

**Mr. Larsen:** — Thank you. As mentioned from our last meeting with the Provincial Auditor, we had three recommendations still not fulfilled. One was considered partially implemented and two others were considered not implemented.

The first recommendation found on page 217 of chapter 29 in the 2018 volume 2 report was considered not implemented at that time. The recommendation states, “We recommend that the Ministry of Justice develop a written long-term plan to manage inmate capacity in its adult correctional facilities.” Acknowledging that final completion status is still required from the Provincial Auditor, the ministry considers this recommendation implemented at this time. The ministry completed the long-term plan document on July 31st of this year. The long-term plan includes themes such as definitions, demand forecast, and program space.

The next recommendation on page 217 of chapter 29 was considered partially implemented at that time. The recommendation states that, “We recommend that the Ministry of Justice define how it will determine the inmate capacity of its existing adult correctional facilities to guide facility capacity planning decisions.” Acknowledging that final completion status is still required from the Provincial Auditor, the ministry considers this recommendation also implemented at this time. The ministry has developed a definition for capacity that will assist in guiding our planning decisions. The ministry completed an analysis and developed unit by unit facility templates of bed-space capacity. The ministry has incorporated this information into its long-term capacity planning document, and the ministry will conduct annual reviews to confirm capacities.

The final recommendation on page 218 of chapter 29 was also considered not implemented. The recommendation states, “We recommended that the . . . [Ministry of Justice at that time] promptly forecast demand for rehabilitation program space in its adult correctional facilities.” Acknowledging once again that the final completion status is still required from the Provincial Auditor, the minister considers this recommendation implemented. The ministry has created a best practices ideal ratio of program space for offenders. This has allowed the ministry to forecast its demand for rehabilitation program space in adult correctional facilities. The ministry has included this forecast demand in the long-term capacity planning document.

Overall the ministry feels confident in the actions taken since the release of the auditor’s report in December of 2016 and in the capacity planning process we have created. We look forward to meeting with the Provincial Auditor to go over our final completion status, and we welcome any questions from the Chair and committee.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. Questions. Ms. Mowat.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. So starting out in the chapter, there’s a little bit of information about the percentage of inmates that are on remand. I’m wondering what the current percentage is.

**Mr. Larsen:** — As of yesterday the total count in adult corrections was, as I mentioned a few minutes ago, 1,970. Nine hundred and seventy of those are on remand.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Do you know what that percentage is? I guess I

can calculate it later.

**Mr. Larsen:** — Close to 50 per cent.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Yes. So slightly higher than it was in the last report because I think we’re at 46 per cent in this chapter.

In terms of the development of the long-term plan for facilities, so I see that the long-term plan was finished so there’s some planning that’s been taking place. What are some of the results of the long-term plan? Are there future considerations for adding capacity that are being discussed right now?

**Mr. McFadyen:** — Hi. Mark McFadyen, executive director of custody services. So part of the benefits of the long-term capacity plan, if approved by the Provincial Auditor’s office, does allow us to better plan for long-term capacity in such a way that when we are doing our capital planning each year, when we’re trying to determine our bed needs over the next 3, 5, 10 years, it allows us to put capital budget submissions in for that, which we have done based on this document.

The other thing that it allows us to do is, in particular for programming-space needs both in our existing infrastructure and in future infrastructure needs, it gives us a sense of what we’re requiring for programming space for our offenders.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. So in terms of the long-term plan, just to go back to the topic of the last chapter where, you know, there were existing space constraints within existing facilities and existing capacity, so is there a big challenge ahead? Like, how does this look?

**Mr. McFadyen:** — I think it would be fair to say that there is a challenge ahead. But with our infrastructure that we have now, we’re creative in using the space that we have both for occupancy and both for our programming needs. So we’ve been fortunate enough to create or empty out some program space that was occupied by beds and convert it back to program space, which we’re proud of. But then there’s other areas that we have had to put beds in which has had some impact on some sets of program. In the facilities we’ve been creative in working around it.

**Ms. Scriver:** — Just in follow up to your question, it’s any type of major capital. There’s a very long process before you get to, you know, the design and construction to a shovel in the ground. So are we going to have challenges based on our count projections? We are anticipating that and we are planning to address it.

**Ms. Mowat:** — That’s something else I was going to ask is in terms of the ability to forecast demand. So yes, it’s great that a demand forecast is part of the long-term plan. What does that actually look like? What is the forecasted demand into the future here?

**Mr. McFadyen:** — So our forecast demand which we have outlined in our capacity-planning document would demonstrate that probably in the next 10 years we’re going to need upwards of 200 beds.

**Ms. Mowat:** — In the next how many years? Sorry.

**Mr. McFadyen:** — Ten years.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. Is the plan something that is being made public or could be made available?

**Mr. McFadyen:** — I think our next step, as I understand it from the process, would be for us to share it with the Provincial Auditor's office and team, and based on the status that they give us on the plan, then that would be a discussion that our deputy minister would have as far as publicizing it or not.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay, and sorry if I missed when that discussion is going to take place with the auditor's office.

**Mr. McFadyen:** — I don't . . .

**Ms. Scriver:** — There's nothing scheduled at this point.

**Ms. Mowat:** — In terms of the recommendation that's on page 218, it's talking about the fact that in meeting needs for adult correctional facility space, some of those alternatives might be those that don't require construction. So what are some alternatives that exist? So the Provincial Auditor notes that other related actions include early case resolution, community alternatives to remand. Can you speak to what these programs look like?

**Mr. McFadyen:** — So I can explain what the early case resolution is, but it may be more appropriate for prosecutions to be speaking to the successes or whatnot in that. But early case resolution is where the prosecutions and legal aid meet prior to weekly court to try to resolve cases with the intent of maybe not having somebody sitting on remand for as long. But as far as rates go, that would be probably a question for prosecutions and on that side.

Some other, I'll say, non-capital initiatives would be we've introduced . . . well we've always had them, but we've put a greater focus on reintegration leaves. So for sentenced offenders in our facilities, all caseloads need to be reviewed for eligibility for reintegration leave. What a reintegration leave allows for is for an offender to obtain maybe more structured or more appropriate programming in the community, given that they have the necessary supports in the community — whether it be employment, whether it be education, whether it be family support, things like that — where their rehabilitation may be more effective by accessing services in the community.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. And is there any indication of what impact these programs have had on remand numbers?

**Mr. McFadyen:** — Well that's for sentenced offenders, so not for remand offenders.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Oh, okay. Okay. So remand offenders are not eligible for these. Okay.

**Mr. McFadyen:** — No. Yes, correct.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. In terms of the recommendation that's a little further down the page on 218 when we're looking at the space, in the status update you'd identified that the ministry has created a best practices/ideal ratio of programs based per

offender. What is the personal space that's required per offender? What has been deemed appropriate?

**Mr. McFadyen:** — So once again based on ideal or optimal group size, we worked with our offender services division. And the best ideal would be 16 offenders to one program room, eight offenders to one facilitator staff, which would demonstrate that in a 10-year period we should be trying to identify at least 67 to 80 program spaces across the province for our adult offenders.

**Ms. Mowat:** — And so where are we at right now in terms of those benchmarks?

**Mr. McFadyen:** — We're being creative.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Do you have a breakdown per correctional facility?

**Mr. McFadyen:** — I do not have the breakdown right now. But what I can say is that our program staff in our facilities with the infrastructure that we have are able to provide programming or are able to provide considerable programming. And they are creative — that they don't necessarily need a home base, that a lot of them have become mobile and they're taking their program services directly to the unit. There was a day where offenders would always go to a program space, which still occurs, but we're also being creative where the program facilitator is actually going to deliver some programming right at the unit level.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. I have no further questions right now, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. Any other questions on these recommendations and this chapter? Not seeing any, then I'd welcome a motion to conclude considerations. Ms. Lambert moves. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

[09:45]

**The Chair:** — So that's carried. And we'll move along to, I think, the final chapter for this ministry this morning: chapter 30 of the 2018 report volume 2. I'll turn it over to the Provincial Auditor's office.

**Mr. St. John:** — Thank you. Chapter 30 of our 2018 report volume 2 on pages 221-224 reports the results of our fourth follow-up of the Ministry of Corrections and Policing's progress towards addressing three recommendations we initially made in our 2008 audit related to its processes to rehabilitate adult inmates in provincial correctional centres. The committee has previously considered and agreed to these recommendations.

Offenders who receive rehabilitation programs have lower reoffending rates than those offenders who do not receive treatment, and they have an improved ability to reintegrate into their communities. By October 2018 the ministry has made little progress implementing these recommendations. While the ministry hired additional correctional staff in 2018 to monitor offender case management and begin tracking various information about inmates, it did not effectively monitor the proportion of inmates accessing planned rehabilitation programs.

Twenty-three per cent of inmates' information we tested had inaccurate information used to monitor rehabilitation programming.

The ministry also did not effectively monitor offender reoffend rates in relation to rehabilitation programs. Its monitoring and reporting of reoffending rates was limited predominantly to one correctional centre and only for specific programs.

Also the ministry did not consistently follow its policy surrounding assessment of inmates' needs within 28 days. About one-third of assessments we tested were completed between 15 to 120 days later than the 28 days expected. In addition the ministry did not always provide inmates with relevant rehabilitation programs consistent with those assessments. For 23 per cent of files we tested, the ministry did not provide inmates with relevant rehabilitation programs before their release into the community. That ends my presentation.

**The Chair:** — Our Provincial Auditor would like to offer something as well.

**Ms Ferguson:** — It was asked when we're planning to do follow-up last chapter. We've got it in our work plan for the next fiscal year. So we're aiming that it will probably be in the next fall's report, the 2020. So you know, the next fiscal. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — All right. Thanks for the presentation and that information. I'll turn it over to the ministry for brief remarks, the Deputy Minister or related officials, and then questions.

**Mr. Larsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. As you're aware, the ministry designs and provides programs aimed at reducing reoffending and improving the ability of offenders to reintegrate into their communities. And as you can imagine, this is not a simple task. The ministry continues to work on implementing the three remaining recommendations, and we are happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. Questions. Ms. Mowat.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you, and thank you for the status update as well. Just wondering where we should start. On page 221 the auditor notes that the first recommendations were made in 2008, and that there have been three subsequent follow-ups and that there has been little progress made. So I'm just wondering if you can speak to what the challenges are with making progress on these recommendations.

**Ms. Schnell:** — Doris Schnell, executive director of offender services. In terms of the overall recommendations, a number of them were difficult to complete due to the switchover from our old IT system to our new IT system, and being able to collect the information that we needed to collect. Two of the recommendations are around monitoring program access and monitoring recidivism rates. As was noted before, we had some capability before the switchover that we lost during the switchover which we're just regaining again.

And we're also in the process right now of working with our technology division around developing reports that will allow us to connect the needs that people have coming in with the programs that they then receive with the recidivism rates that

follow. To do that right now would be all a manual process, like it would be a very complex manual process that would be very difficult for us to accomplish. So we are looking forward to the reports that are going to be generated that will help us to be able to connect whether or not the offenders are accessing the services that they've been assessed to require, and also whether or not that has an impact on recidivism.

In the meantime we have been trying to do workarounds. So we have been trying to do some of our evaluations on a more local basis. So we did the one facility that was referenced, was the Saskatoon Correctional Centre. There was significant data collected there that was analyzed over a period of years to show that participation in those programs did reduce recidivism. We also did a very large-scale evaluation of our dedicated substance-abuse treatment unit that we have at Regina Correctional Centre, and that did show reductions in recidivism as well.

We have been working to try and fulfill the recommendations on an individual basis. We absolutely understand that what the auditor's office is asking, is that we be able to do this large scale and on a consistent basis. And that's what we're working towards with the development of the technology piece.

**Ms. Mowat:** — On page 222 there's a mention of hiring additional correctional staff to monitor offender case management in early 2018. Can you speak to how many additional staff were hired?

**Ms. Schnell:** — There was a reintegration coordinator that was hired at each of the adult facilities. They're very important in a number of ways. One of the ways is that they are tracking all of the case management of the sentenced offenders in terms of whether it's being done and whether it's being done on time, and also whether or not those individuals are then eligible for the reintegration leave which Mark had talked about earlier. So that's one of the important functions they do.

One of the other important functions they do is they've been doing training with the case managers to try and develop better case management. One of the pieces we're really trying to do is the other recommendation, which is to hit our policy requirements in terms of when the case management tasks are due.

So I think those are sort of the two main functions that they've really helped with in the facilities.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. So the case management requirements, I think you're referring to the recommendation on page 223. So this is where the auditor found that correctional staff did assessments between 15 days to 120 days later than the guidelines expected. So have those numbers seen improvements now since hiring that staff?

**Ms. Schnell:** — So 70 per cent were done within the correct timelines and 30 per cent were not. Since this report we have trained our case managers — that was in February and March of this past year — and then we have plans that they're aware of that we're going to do a full-scale audit in the beginning of 2020. So we will again have numbers that we can give you at that time.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. But you expect that it will have a positive outcome?

**Ms. Schnell:** — Yes.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay.

**Mr. Larsen:** — We're also, I might add, looking at the actual process as well in relation to that, not only whether it's a capacity issue with staff but perhaps the process that we go through, through that initial risk assessment. And a case can be shortened or improved with some efficiencies in that regard.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. That concludes my questions, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — You bet.

**Mr. McMorris:** — It kind of goes back to another question I asked. We're trying to evaluate how effective the programming that we have in our facilities; I mean we put them through programming, and how effective and are they repeating? And we're trying to do it here. I mean there's got to be, I would think there's enough research done on how effective rehabilitation programs are.

I mean I understand we need to kind of track ours, but I would think that that work has been done in other jurisdictions as well, that we could have access to. I mean, you know, what are we getting for the dollars we spend on rehabilitation? And I don't know if you can ever kind of absolute dollar-value it, but they are effective because there aren't the repeat offenders for people that have gone through the programming.

Do we again look at other provinces, or do any other provinces have good data in this area that we can also look at and perhaps reassure ourselves that what we're doing is working?

**Ms. Schnell:** — Yes absolutely. So all of the programs that we have adopted for corrections in Saskatchewan, we have either adopted best-practice programs that are used elsewhere. So one of our programs is adopted from BC Corrections with their permission. They've done evaluations. They've shown it to be effective. Another one of our programs is adopted from the National Institute of Corrections. It's been evaluated several times and shown to be effective, typically in the area of 20 to 30 per cent reductions in recidivism.

The dedicated substance-abuse treatment program that I referenced earlier, we developed in Regina. And that was a development between us, the Ministry of Corrections, and the Ministry of Health, and at the time, RQHR [Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region], the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority]. We've evaluated it and we have in the order of 30 per cent reduction in recidivism as well when we compare it against a sample of people who were queued up for the program but did not get in for a number of reasons.

So we are very conscientious about trying to ensure in the best ways that we can, that we're able to do at this point, that our programs are effective. I understand this recommendation is just to make sure that we can continue to evaluate how they're actually being run, to just sort of validate that, yes.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Yes, I would have a question to the auditor then. So what exactly are we trying to get at here when we're bringing programs in from other provinces that have proven . . . where, you know, the programs are identical. I guess my question is to the auditor then. What are we exactly trying to get at here?

**Ms. Ferguson:** — Excellent questions. And I think, you know, if you go back to the original audit we had some of that information in there. And we looked elsewhere, and you're right, there is tracking elsewhere. We're bringing the programs in. There is a recognition that the manner in which the programs are delivered can differ. As indicated to staff, they have staff been indicating in this meeting, they've had to be creative in terms of their delivery mechanisms because of space constraints.

Also in the original audit what we heard is that the composition of your inmate population may differ from one jurisdiction to the next. There could be impacts, cultural differences in terms of how you should be delivering programs and how well programs are received.

So it's a case of looking at those programs that, you know, may in fact have been adopted from elsewhere. Which is great because not reinventing the wheel is always positive, and just seeing how are you doing relative to the others and what adjustments do you need to make for your particular situations. It's not unlike the ministry right now issuing policies wide and letting each facility to develop its own directives because it recognizes unique situations in each facility. It streamlines in terms of that philosophy of the ministry, you know, that you have unique populations, unique needs, and particularly your delivery mechanisms may vary from elsewhere.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Okay, I'll leave it at that for now. I could probably go for a long time on this. Thanks.

**The Chair:** — Any other questions? Yes, it certainly does stand out that, and I note there is a response coming together here, but being able to track recidivism is pretty foundational to understanding the effectiveness of programs. So it seems that it was a real gap that it wasn't, you know, being monitored or being reported out, and I'm glad that that information is going to be collected and organized in a way that can be put to use by the ministry.

It seems as well throughout, you know, many of the chapters that we've had, including this one, that just space is a real challenge in this system. And you know, it speaks to me when I see that around the rehabilitation space and the challenges and pressures there, but as well just the number of folks. I think it was the Saskatoon audit around why folks aren't . . . why inmates aren't doing their medical assessment. And there's just not sufficient space, I think, which was identified for privacy in that sort of disclosure. And it's pretty important stuff.

Anyways we'll leave it there for today. There's other places that we can focus on those conversations. I would welcome a motion to conclude consideration of chapter 30. Mr. Weekes. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

[10:00]

**The Chair:** — That's carried. So I'll just flip it over for final comments. But thank you very much to the officials that are here today for their time, for their attention to the questions, and to all officials for their work on these very important recommendations and their work on behalf of Saskatchewan people day in, day out. Any final comments from the ministry here today?

**Mr. Larsen:** — Other than thank you as well to the Chair, Co-Chair, and committee. Thank you to the Provincial Auditor. I think, as mentioned at the onset, that what you evaluate and assess in relation to our policies and what we do operationally is a really good benchmark for us to look at improvements and possibility of change.

And I also just have to thank my team, your team, for what they put together in relation to this response today, as well as what they were able to put forward in relation to the questions that came from the committee. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. At this time we'll take a brief recess. We were scheduled to hear the Water Security Agency or to have them before us at 10:30. We've put the call out to them for them to appear sort of sooner if possible. So we'll take a brief recess and reconvene when they arrive.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

### Water Security Agency

**The Chair:** — Okay, we'll reconvene the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. We have the Water Security Agency with us here this morning. And relevant chapters for consideration, I think we're going to bundle the first few together for consideration. We'll focus then on the other chapters separately. I think chapter 12 is the only one with new recommendations, quite a few recommendations within it.

So thanks for joining us this morning. I'll ask president and CEO [chief executive officer] Susan Ross of the Water Security Agency to just briefly introduce who's with her here today. And then I'll turn it over to the Provincial Auditor and her office to make presentation to those reports, and then you'll have a chance to respond to that.

**Ms. Ross:** — Thank you, Chairman. It's our pleasure to be here. With me today are a number of WSA [Water Security Agency] officials: Sam Ferris, senior vice-president, regulatory division; John Fahlman, senior vice-president, technical services and chief engineer; Marjorie Simington, behind me on my left, senior vice-president, corporate services and general counsel; Patrick Boyle there, executive director, communication and client services; Clinton Molde to his right, executive director of integrated water services; and Kendra Altwasser-Mang, director of financial services, just behind me to my left.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much. Thanks for being here. I'll turn it over to the Provincial Auditor. At this time I'll table as well PAC 87-28, Water Security Agency: Status update dated September 25th, 2019. That's the status updates that were provided. And I'll turn it over to the auditor's office.

**Ms. Ferguson:** — Thank you very much, Chair, Deputy Chair, members and officials. I'll just quickly introduce who's with me

this morning. Mr. Kelly Deis. Kelly leads the work that includes the Water Security Agency. And behind is Ms. Jennifer Robertson. Jennifer led the work that's on the agenda this morning. And Ms. Kim Lowe is our committee liaison.

The Chair pretty well did my opening comments, so I won't repeat what he just said in terms of how we're structuring the presentations. I do want to pause and extend a thank you to Susan, yourself and your team there, in terms of the co-operation extended to our office in the course of this work. So with that I'm just going to turn it over to Mr. Deis to present.

**Mr. Deis:** — Thank you, Judy. This part of the presentation, I'll cover three chapters that relate to our 2016, 2017, and 2018 annual integrated audits of the Water Security Agency. And that's chapter 22 of the 2016 report volume 2; chapter 18 of our 2017 report volume 2; and chapter 19 of our 2018 report volume 2. These chapters contain no new recommendations.

At March 31st, 2016, 2017, and 2018, the Water Security Agency had effective financial-related controls and complied with financial-related authorities other than having a complete and tested business continuity plan. At March 31st, 2018 the agency continued not to have a complete and tested plan. Without a complete and tested plan it is at risk of its IT systems and data not being available. And that's our presentation.

**The Chair:** — Thanks for the presentation. I'll open it up if you care to offer some brief remarks to those chapters, and then we'll open it up to questions.

**Ms. Ross:** — I have prepared remarks to address all the chapters. May I do that, or do you just want me to simply deal with the . . .

**The Chair:** — We'd prefer you'd focus on the . . . If you're able to, break them down to the chapters that have been presented. Thank you.

**Ms. Ross:** — I'll just locate it. Okay. We agreed with the auditor's recommendation to create an effective business continuity plan for WSA. We have 16 physical offices that can function to varying extents if we lose operational capacity in one of our offices. However, if there's a data breach or loss affecting our electronic data systems in our Moose Jaw head office, it would be difficult to maintain service capacity for our multiple offices.

Now to mitigate the risk, we moved our email to a Canadian cloud location and intend to move other electronic data to the cloud as well. We weren't able to do that two years ago when there was no Canadian location; we wouldn't move our data to the United States. In the meantime all of our data is backed up to tape and the tapes are stored off-site. If backup tapes are required, the maximum loss of data could be up to 11 days, though, so that is an issue.

We've now issued a request for proposal for the design and development of a disaster recovery plan, which is recognized as the first step in a business continuity plan. That's our presentation.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much. I'll open it up for questions. Ms. Mowat.



**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you very much. So I want to thank Ms. Ross and the officials for being here today as well and being available to answer some questions. One of the first questions that I have on the business continuity plan in these three chapters . . . It looks like the first recommendation came from 2010, so I'm just wondering sort of what the delay was in getting the process moving forward. Was it based on the fact that you were waiting for a place to store your data in Canada, or what was the delay as we're looking at this now nearly a decade later?

**Ms. Ross:** — I'll just ask Marjorie to answer that, please.

**Ms. Simington:** — We had started with a plan but technology has changed a lot, as you probably are aware. And we had started with a number of things. We were using tapes. We had started to put backup equipment into one of our other locations, the Regina office. In the meantime, with the technology changes and with the Canadian cloud, we weren't able to put material into the cloud because it was all subject to the US [United States] *PATRIOT* [Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism] *Act*. And so now that we can put it into the cloud, we've basically started over to get a better technological solution. And that's just with respect to the technological part of the disaster recovery.

With respect to the business continuity, the physical locations, because we have 16 locations and we have extra space in three of our larger locations, we feel we can put the essential services into the larger locations and we have remote access from pretty much anywhere. So unless we have a data breach . . . That's really our biggest concern.

**Ms. Ross:** — We actually experienced a disaster, a flooding disaster in our Swift Current location quite recently, about a year ago, and our other regional offices were able to step in and actually implemented the incident command training that we had just undertaken, 21 of us. And so they were able to manage. I mean it's a physical issue. We had the data but the office was in a disaster situation. And we managed it, so baby steps.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thanks. And thanks for providing that clarity as well around what the process has looked like. You mentioned that an RFP [request for proposal] has been issued. What is the closing date?

**Ms. Simington:** — It has closed and we are in the process of evaluating the submissions.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. And I see that from the status update it looks like the proposals . . . the plan is to consider them before March 31st and then work toward implementation.

**Ms. Simington:** — That's right.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Just in terms of the amount of time between now and March 31st, what needs to happen in that consideration process before you can go ahead with one of the vendors?

**Ms. Simington:** — What needs to happen? Well the proposals themselves have to be evaluated and then we will have to figure out what solution is going to work for us. And then the consultant will have to interview each one of the heads of the various units and come up with a solution that's going to work for the whole

organization.

[10:30]

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. That concludes my questions on these chapters, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Are there questions from other committee members? Mr. Olauson? Mr. Fiaz, are you good? Good. There's no new recommendations in these chapters so I'll welcome a motion to conclude consideration of chapters 22, 18, and 19 from the reports 2016, '17, '18 respectively.

**Ms. Lambert:** — I will then.

**The Chair:** — Ms. Lambert. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That's carried. We'll move along now and focus our attention on the 2018 report volume 1, chapter 12, and I'll turn it over to the Provincial Auditor's office.

**Mr. Deis:** — Chapter 12 in our 2018 report volume 1, starting on page 179, reports the results of our 2017 audit of the agency's processes to regulate the drainage of water on agricultural lands in the geographic areas assigned to the Yorkton and Weyburn regional offices.

At December 2017 the agency was in the early stages of implementing its new strategy for regulating the drainage of agricultural land. This strategy reflected a significant change in the regulation of drainage of water in Saskatchewan. It required a shift from reviewing drainage as a homeowner's right, to considering the broader implications of drainage and water flows. We realize changes of this magnitude take time to implement.

With this context in mind, we found the agency's processes were effective to regulate the drainage of water on agricultural lands in the geographic areas assigned to the Yorkton and Weyburn regional offices, except for the areas reflected in our 11 recommendations.

On page 186 we recommended that the agency approve finalized policies related to its regulation of drainage of water on agricultural lands. The agency had draft policies and developed a compliance framework to support the new agriculture water management strategy but had not approved and/or implemented many of them. Of the 16 policies we examined, eight were draft and not approved at February 2018. Not having approved and/or implemented policies and a compliance strategy increases the risk of not having a consistent or clear direction. The importance of clear direction and prioritization increases when the agency is going through a significant organizational directional change.

On page 189 we made two recommendations. We recommended that the agency require documentation of all aspects of watershed risk before approving applications for drainage works. We also recommended that the agency formalize a process to periodically reassess watersheds in the province for risk of flooding. While the agency has developed a risk assessment framework for identifying higher risk drainage works, it had not clearly defined

key aspects of risk of the framework or approved it.

Our testing of 30 drainage approval files found the agency often considered only the local impact of the proposed drainage works when assessing drainage approval applications. While staff may have considered watershed-scale impacts, they did not document this consideration. It is important for the agency to consider all aspects of risk and documentation it considers, both local and watershed scale, before approving proposed drainage works. Lack of such consideration may result in the agency approving proposed drainage that it should not. This could result in more water going to a receiving body of water than it can handle.

We also found the agency doesn't have a formal process to update its watershed vulnerability map for key circumstances that affect water flow and levels. The watershed vulnerability map was last updated in April 2018. This map is not only used to assess risk of drainage works seeking approval, but the agency also uses it to assign its limited resources to high- and extreme-risk areas. Without periodic updates, the agency may not identify the highest risk areas and may not effectively allocate resources based on risk.

On page 190 we recommended that the agency develop policies on water quality and wetland requirements to use when assessing risk of drainage works. Even though the agency informally considers water quality and wetland retention risks of proposed drainage works when reviewing drainage approval applications, the agency has limited policies around wetland retention and water quality. By not having processes on wetland retention and water quality, the agency increases the risk that staff may not adequately consider these aspects and approve drainage works that may negatively impact water quality and may reduce wetlands.

On page 191 we recommended that the agency publish expected time frames to resolve requests for assistance on unapproved drainage works. The agency had not set out clear expected time frames for resolving requests for assistance even after the Ombudsman of Saskatchewan made recommendations in 2016 on the agency's old complaint system; for example, setting expected time frames for resolving complaints.

Of the 32 requests of assistance files we tested, 13 files had requests for assistance that had been outstanding for greater than 20 months. The longest outstanding file we tested had been in progress for four years. Without clear, documented time frames for resolution of requests for assistance, staff may not complete work to resolve requests for assistance timely, which could increase the result of further damage to neighbouring farm land and downstream.

On page 192 we recommended that agency staff consistently follow established processes to document risk assessments when reviewing applications for drainage works. The agency has a well-defined process for its staff to assess the downstream local impact of a drainage works prior to approving a drainage approval application. However, documentation of the assessment was lacking or not always complete. In 11 of the 30 drainage approval applications we tested, we found that not all regional offices were using the technical review checklist template to complete their assessment of risk. We also found that documentation of how staff arrived at the risk level assessed was

lacking.

On page 193 we recommended that the agency consistently follow established processes when assessing requests for assistance on unapproved drainage works. The agency has established policies and clear processes to handle requests for assistance, but staff are not always completing the steps outlined in these policies. In 8 of the 32 requests for assistance files tested, we found files did not have support to show staff reviewed the validity of the requests. Without performing this review, staff who are already overwhelmed with a backload of requests for assistance may be spending time and resources on requests that are not valid.

Another policy requires staff to notify these landowners who have unapproved drainage works about how to obtain compliance; for example, seek approval or closure, including the method of closure, via recommendation letter. In 4 of the 32 request for assistance files tested, we found files did not contain a recommendation letter and staff could not provide a justification as to why one hadn't been prepared.

Agency staff must also verify adequate closure of drainage once the landowner has finished. Our testing found that agency staff had not completed closure inspections as expected for five requests for assistance files examined. Timely inspections verify closure of works according to requirements so that further damage to neighbouring landowners and the receiving water body will not occur.

On page 194 we recommended that the agency staff follow established processes to escalate identified actions on unapproved drainage works within a reasonable time frame.

The agency enforcement policies include key responsibilities both internal and external to the agency, expected time frames for key enforcement steps, and qualifications of staff responsible for enforcement.

During our testing, we found that one file had an order issued in June 2016 with a draft compliance plan in place at December 2017. We expected, based on the agency's draft policies, drafting and finalization of compliance plans to occur at the same time as the order issuance.

Not taking timely enforcement action on unapproved drainage works increases the risk of landowners not achieving compliance or not changing the culture. In addition, further damage may occur to surrounding landowners and receiving water bodies if resolution does not occur timely.

On page 195 we make two recommendations. We recommended the agency develop a prioritization plan to identify and bring unapproved, high-risk drainage works into compliance. We also recommended that the agency periodically report to senior management on actions taken to address non-compliance of unapproved drainage works.

While the agency's policies and the 2016-17 work plan reflects a focus on bringing high-risk, unapproved drainage works into compliance, the agency had not set out by when it expected all high-risk drainage works to be in compliance or closed. Leaving unapproved drainage works in high-risk areas increases the risk

of flooding of neighbourhood farm land and the receiving water body, water quality issues in the receiving water body, and the loss of wetlands.

The agency routinely reports activity-based information to senior management — for example, the number of approvals to operate issued by region, number of requests for assistance received — but does not provide written reports on whether regional offices are meeting targets set out in the annual work plans, analysis on enforcement activities related to high-risk basins, or the number of unapproved drainage works brought to compliance in high-risk basins by location. Such reporting would allow senior management to assess the effectiveness of enforcement actions taken and help them make resource allocation decisions.

On page 196 we recommend that the agency report to the public on its regulation of the drainage of water on agricultural lands. The agency provided some reporting on its new strategy in its annual report, but the information was very general. We expected the agency to provide statistics to the public on the number of drainage approval applications received and approved, the number of requests for assistance received and resolved, the average time of bringing drainage works into compliance.

Improved reporting would help senior management determine if its strategies and staff actions were focused in priority areas as it expected. Improved reporting to the public would help landowners and the public understand the importance of new strategy and the agency's progress in implementing its new strategy. And that concludes our presentation.

**The Chair:** — Thanks for the presentation, the focus of the report, and recommendations. There's a lot there. There's lots to this report. Would you care to provide a response to this chapter right now, and then we'll open it up for questions?

**Ms. Ross:** — Yes, please.

**The Chair:** — Okay.

**Ms. Ross:** — Thank you. Thank you very much. WSA worked extensively with the auditor's team in 2017 while reviewing the then, as you say, relatively new agricultural water management strategy. The auditor covered the early stages, as you say, of the development of the strategy, and based on the timing it was very helpful to WSA in bettering the overall program.

I think people appreciate that drainage in Saskatchewan is very complex, and with diverse stakeholders with strong and often conflicting opinions, clarity and transparency are essential. It was clear to WSA, as the provincial water manager, that it was important that the auditor understand the complexity of the history, the current circumstances, and the challenges. And we appreciate the time the auditor took in doing that.

An essential element in creating the strategy is finding the right balance between the needs of the agricultural sector and the environmental considerations. Saskatchewan has half of Canada's arable acres, which is more than Alberta and Manitoba combined, and we have a higher proportion of undeveloped lands. We are unique compared to other jurisdictions. Among other things, the scale is unique here.

Again, the auditor's recommendations were made early in the development of the strategy which, as we know, is attempting to resolve a problem of 100 years in the making. And that problem was brought to a head by a series of very wet years, starting in 2010. WSA agreed with all of the auditor's recommendations, and we were in fact beginning to implement them at the time they were made. They were also apparent to us.

We've made substantive progress on all of the recommendations and many are fully implemented. However, as we've continued our consultation and our pilot projects, we continue to develop and refine some of the subject matter of the recommendations. So some of it's still in flux. Having said that, I believe we're satisfying both the letter and the spirit of the recommendations made by the auditor.

[10:45]

Several recommendations surrounded the need to bring more projects into compliance, as well as to accelerate the process of handling requests for assistance. At the time of the auditor's report and during the first three years of the strategy, from the 2014-15 fiscal year through the 2016-17, just 601 quarter sections were brought into compliance. However as of March 31st, 2019 WSA has brought an additional 2,219 quarter sections into compliance for a total of 2,820 since the strategy was launched. This shows significant acceleration in progress over the last two years as we've refined this.

We've focused on some of the highest risk areas of the province through a network multi-producer approach. It's often through requests for assistance that these networks are initiated, but they also come to us voluntarily, groups of people wanting to bring a network into compliance. Of those brought into compliance over the last two years, approximately 8 per cent have come into compliance through closure, and the remainder have come into compliance through approvals.

The auditor made several recommendations with respect to the drainage policies and business processes, and we've made substantive progress in both regards. As recommended, senior management does receive regular reports on considerations in addressing non-compliant works, complete with performance measures. And WSA provides public updates on drainage regulations through our annual report, our website, and press releases. A request-for-assistance policy is complete, and the manual is in its first draft. This will help address the auditor's comments regarding time frames and escalation procedures for unapproved drainage works where a request for assistance has been tendered.

We're also finalizing a process to assess flood risk and watershed vulnerability on a five-year cycle. We've fulfilled the recommendation to document all aspects of watershed risks before approving drainage applications, as well as ensuring staff are consistently documenting the risk assessments while reviewing applications.

To better identify and bring unapproved high-risk drainage into compliance we have developed procedures to outline the decision-making process, including a compliance policy and compliance plan templates and related fact sheets are published on our website.

And to ensure the protocols and processes are consistently followed throughout the province — a very difficult matter during the inception of this thing — we're centralizing decision making and developing quality control mechanisms and heightened training for our personnel. We're making drainage specialists out of our personnel. We're also developing heightened training for qualified persons to assist producers in obtaining approvals within the program in a timely manner. This strategy requires a paradigm shift in thinking, and it'll take time before it's completely developed and understood; there is no doubt about it.

Consultation occurred over a two-year period through an advisory committee. But in the last few months we've engaged in heightened and direct consultation with all interest groups and we continue to consult. The ongoing consultation has resulted in refinement and further development of the documented policies and procedures, and we intend now to proceed with further pilots, concurrently beginning to implement but also ground testing our thinking to make sure it works. We appreciate the input of the auditor in helping ensure our plans and activities were robust and well developed and taking the time to understand this. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Thanks for the presentation and the time here today and the work on these important fronts. I'll open it up for questions. Ms. Mowat.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. And thank you for the detailed verbal report as well just now on what actions have been taken and what you're planning to do as you continue toward implementation.

A couple of follow-up questions from what you just presented. You mentioned that, sort of, this is an ongoing process of refinement. Can you provide a couple of examples of areas that you have had to refine and continue to develop recently?

**Ms. Ross:** — Okay. One of the things that has happened is we've gone out to environmental groups, government agencies, and agriculture producer groups and just described to them what it is we're trying to achieve and why and what the stakes are. And sometimes the reaction is it starts out being very skeptical, and then by the end of it, people start to think about ways to make it happen.

And so for instance, we're thinking right now of expanding the mitigation policy in terms of wetland retention to include some upland acres. We're trying to figure out ways to make this thing actually work for both the agricultural community and the sustainability of the environment. And the more we have consulted, the more ideas we've gotten. So this is one of the ideas, is to use upland acres in addition to wetland acres and broaden our idea about what is mitigation and what isn't mitigation. That's one. Sam?

**Mr. Ferris:** — On the other hand, we've updated some of our pre-existing policies and protocols that deal with drainage overall, one example being the term length of drainage approval policy has been updated to help advance longer term approvals for farmers that's engaged.

One of the other things that we've worked on recently, and we will be working on more in the future, is enhancing educational

efforts for both farmers and qualified persons, which integrates not only drainage-related aspects but also climate change-related aspects. And so this is known as the BRACE [building regional adaptation capacity and expertise] program, building resilience and expertise climate change-type activities. And so those are another couple of ideas that we're trying to integrate into our overall drainage and water management programming.

**Ms. Ross:** — And if I could say, I think one of the biggest changes that has occurred over the evolution of this policy — and I think since the auditor was involved has really passed that for the most part — is that we are working . . . our unit of regulatory activity is now in networks as opposed to single quarter sections.

When we first went out onto the landscape to try to understand how we could solve 100 years of non-regulation, we thought we were going to do it on a quarter section-by-quarter section basis. And it doesn't work at all, because what's happened is over decades these things have evolved in large networks. And so you can't really deal with a quarter section without dealing . . . If someone is complained against or an RFA [request for assistance] is filed against them, you can't just go to the quarter section upstream of them and close those works, because there are five people draining onto that person. And so you finally end up finding a network of drainage, and then what you need to do is you need to bring the whole community together to solve the problem.

And it can be done, because we're doing it. I think the first one we did successfully was in 2017. And following that one, we've refined how we're managing this. It just takes a long time, that's all.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. You mentioned a couple of pilots that you're looking into the future on. Can you provide us with a little bit of detail?

**Ms. Ross:** — We've decided to go into some parts of the province where people are really unhappy with what we're doing and try to share the information and educate and make it less scary and find solutions and see how this looks on the ground. Because I think there's more heat than light out there on what we're trying to do.

And we think that if we go into some difficult areas on a reasonably small basis, like maybe 20 quarter sections as opposed to . . . One we're working on right now is 160 quarter sections. But if we go to a smaller area and examine how this looks on the ground and what the implications are for everything — for the environment, for the producers — we can then . . . We want to ground truth it and at the same time convince or try to convince people if it's appropriate, that this is going to be okay. It's going to work.

**Ms. Mowat:** — In your estimation, how is success going to be measured? So you've talked about the number of quarter sections you've brought into compliance. Is it also about, like, less complaints coming forward? Or, you know, what does success look like when you talk about folks getting on board with the new strategy?

**Ms. Ross:** — Well I think it's all of those things. I think it's bringing people into compliance. It's going to take a long time.

There's a lot of province here. It's bringing them into compliance in a way that mitigates downstream impacts. And it may also have something to do with lessening tensions on the landscape, because unauthorized drainage was creating a lot of bad feeling among producers. And so that would be part of it as well.

**Ms. Mowat:** — I was going to ask as well if there is any mechanism in place to provide feedback. So you've mentioned a lot of, I'm assuming, formal consultations that have taken place. If producers have feedback or, you know, anyone who's sort of involved in the landscape has feedback, what mechanisms do they have to be able to provide their thoughts on the new strategy to you folks?

**Ms. Ross:** — I'll just ask Clinton to address this.

**Mr. Molde:** — Good morning. As far as feedback, some of the things that we've implemented over the last year is debriefing sessions. And Susan spoke of QPs [qualified person]. These are the people that are technically able to go and help producers work through the approval process. So we've sat down with them and talked with them in length about what's working, what's not, what needs to be improved.

We've also done this with our staff. And again, to get it from the ground level. What's working, and what's not, and how can we improve it? So we've got that feedback from QPs and our staff. When we talk to QPs, a lot of times that feedback comes directly from the clients they're working with also.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay, but there's no, sort of, process in place if a client wants to provide feedback directly? It sort of flows through these relationships?

**Mr. Molde:** — A lot of times when there is feedback, there's a lot of back and forth on a drainage approval. It can take time and a lot of questions are being asked and answered. So throughout that process there's a lot of feedback from the client, the producer, through the QP, and maybe directly from the client to our regional staff.

**Ms. Ross:** — People are more than welcome to contact us. I mean, all you have to do really, you can contact any of the regional offices — or maybe even the Regina office is the place or Moose Jaw — and speak to somebody involved with ag water management. If people want the presentation, we are more than happy to come out and give it. Takes a while though, couple hours.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thanks. In terms of the qualified persons, so you've mentioned them a few times. I see that there were 21 qualified persons in 2017. So that was at December 15th, 2017. What's the number of qualified persons today?

**Mr. Molde:** — One second. I have those numbers here. Yes. I'm just trying to remember more of the details, but we have about 286 people that have gone through our QP training. I believe it's been about 13 workshops that we held. Our 14th's coming at the end of this month. Of that there's approximately 30-some that are listed on our website that are available to do the QP work.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thanks. And in terms of agency staff, has there been a reduction in the number of agency staff as a result of

relying on qualified persons as well?

**Mr. Molde:** — I don't believe so. No.

**Ms. Mowat:** — What about the annual cost of contracts for qualified persons? Do you have the annual cost for the last fiscal year?

[11:00]

**Mr. Molde:** — Not right now but we can provide that.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thanks. Yes it would be great if it could be for the last three fiscal years, just so we can get a sense of what the cost is for providing that service. I think those are my qualified persons questions.

In terms of, on page 190 under request for assistance resolution time frames not clearly documented, so the Provincial Auditor talks about the fact that:

Of the 32 request for assistance files we tested, 13 files had requests for assistance that had been outstanding for greater than 20 months. The longest outstanding file we tested had been in progress for 4 years.

I'm just wondering if you can speak to some of the challenges behind dealing with files in a timely manner.

**Ms. Ross:** — Thank you. The request-for-assistance process is one of those things that we have developed as we've proceeded, as we've learned. So there's sort of two kinds of ways to deal with a request for assistance. One is through, if it's a simple matter, it really should be documented and done within our time frames which is like, I think, 30-30-30 days, until you either get the thing in compliance, meaning you have to get land control from the person that you're putting water on, or you close the works. So that's a very, very simple situation however . . . And we will always act on a request for assistance. We will always do it but it won't necessarily always be the same.

This is one of the things we learned as we went is that the situation where someone files a request for assistance . . . So you can say to the upstream landowner, close the works or get into compliance. But then you really need to address the upstream landowners. Again, I'm going back to the five people draining on the person complained against, and the next, and the next. So what you have to do is you have to get the whole network, whether it's 20 or 100 quarter sections, into compliance really at the same time. So just closing, going into the middle of the network and closing one set of works doesn't work. So we learned that. You have to learn.

And so that's why we've used some flexibility around the request-for-assistance timelines. It's not thoughtless. Now at the beginning we were floundering a bit. There is no doubt about it. And some of these old complaints were from the old complaint system, which made it really confusing because there was an 18-month deadline for that, though that could be extended by six months. And then we're into the new system and we've got this 30-day system. And it will work for simple things, but what I'm saying is there will be some flexibility around the time constraints. It always has to be reasonable, but what's reasonable

in the circumstances.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Well it certainly makes sense in terms of the overall timelines and whether those targets are being met. Are you seeing that improving now already?

**Mr. Molde:** — Yes. I would say, yes. We can see that it's improving. It would be reflected in our approval numbers over the last two years, where we have 10 times what it was five years ago in regards to quarters coming into compliance.

**Ms. Mowat:** — I also had a question about how folks are brought into compliance. I know there's been some discussion about this, like it's supposed to be voluntary and there was training on enforcement and how that should work. I'm just wondering if you can speak to that a little bit and sort of where we're at in the process.

**Mr. Molde:** — Certainly it starts with our RFA policy which we have completed now. And in that it talks about the processes, what certain steps, and the timelines in regards to those steps. Then it goes to our RFA manual. Our RFA manual, our complaint manual, right now we have a first draft complete and we are targeting to have that complete in the near term. And that will allow us to have procedures as we go forward that staff can follow.

Part of that is also our compliance policy, which Susan mentioned here. And in that compliance policy there's three parts. It talks about the roles and responsibilities. It talks about the core principles and their framework. And it also talks about the priorities and what steps we do take in responding for compliance. So that again is in a policy that's in draft format now.

**Ms. Mowat:** — And presumably the staff that are going out and the qualified persons, like they're all aware of the draft policy at this point? Or what are they operating under in the meantime?

**Mr. Molde:** — So certainly our staff, yes. They've been involved with it. They've seen webinars. We've talked with them. We've brought them in and talked with them about what are in certain policies. We've gone through them within the RFA manual. They have a good sense of what's in there. So we need to do more work on that, but it's coming along.

**Ms. Mowat:** — When we're talking about recommendation no. 3, I'm just looking at my status update now, that the WSA "... formalize a process to periodically reassess watersheds in the province for risk of flooding." It says under the timeline for implementation, completed review of watershed flooding risk by 2019. I'm wondering if you can elaborate on this work a little bit.

**Mr. Molde:** — No. 3? Okay. So we've revised the policy to include ongoing assessment and review. We haven't looked at updating that risk assessment of the watersheds yet. Things change as we go forward. We're learning more, and as new data comes in we'll reassess that vulnerability map.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. But the plan is that that work will be done by December 2019, or am I maybe not following?

**Mr. Molde:** — That's what our forecast is, yes.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. Thank you very much. I have no further questions, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Good questions. And again there is lots to this. This is incredibly important work and some of the most contentious sort of conversations. And you know, to address and then to bring land into compliance is . . . We recognize the heavy lifting and the hard work that's required. I'm sure there's other questions. Mr. McMorris.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, and thanks for the time today. It's been very educational. You had mentioned that this has been 100 years in the making, and it's been at least that, I think, 100 years in the making.

And I've always found that it's really easy to sit around these tables and you say, well why can't this happen and why can't that happen, until you go out there and you start talking from one farm landowner to the next landowner. And you know, we used to say in Saskatchewan the biggest battles were small town to small town during the hockey season. That was nothing compared to the springtime when the water started to run. And I mean, those channels that were developed run deeper than anything else. And I mean this is generational stuff that you're trying to change, and I really applaud you for the work that you've done and the compliance that you've been able to achieve.

When you say a quarter has come into compliance, can you give me an example of what that would mean?

**Mr. Molde:** — So it would come in through being approved. So the works have been approved there, or there's no works, and we've determined that. But also if there's a complaint against that, that the works again have been approved or closed.

**Mr. McMorris:** — So an example of it wasn't approved and the person that owns that quarter has to close, has there been examples of where they've actually had to fill in a ditch, for lack of a better term? Because let's cut to the chase, that's what it is.

**Mr. Molde:** — So of our 1,507 compliance quarters last year, 8 per cent were through voluntary closures. So they would've had to have put ditch blocks in to re-establish the natural spill point of sluice.

**Ms. Ross:** — Although in those cases there have been hardly any actual enforcement activities. People have closed voluntarily. Once they've accepted this is the law and you can't flood downstream, they're closing their works.

**Mr. McMorris:** — But okay. So come into compliance, closing a ditch is just one example of coming into compliance, and 8 per cent have voluntarily done it. How many of the complaints would be, you know, they need to close that ditch in, and we've got to 8 per cent, in other words 92 per cent are not compliant and won't close in that. You know, they're not doing it voluntarily. Yes, maybe explain that better to me.

**Mr. Molde:** — So if I can go back to the numbers, sir, 1,507 quarters came into compliance last fiscal year. Of that, 1,381 were through approvals. They got approvals for the works in place. The remainder, 126 quarters, were through voluntary closures.

**Mr. McMorris:** — I see. So in other words before when there was a complaint, it didn't have approval. Then WSA looked at it and said, yes this can be approved, much to the chagrin probably of the person that put in the complaint. Am I reading that right?

**Ms. Ross:** — I would say not necessarily. I think it would have been to the satisfaction of the person who filed the complaint because now the person who wants to drain has gotten the land control from his downstream neighbour.

This is just one element of a drainage approval, but first and foremost you can't flood somebody else's land. And if you want to pass your water on somebody else's land, you've got to get their permission. And if you get their permission, often it's for fair compensation. Or it's just an agreement, as opposed to just dumping your water on somebody else's land. So I think where there is an approval given, I think both parties should be satisfied.

**Mr. McMorris:** — One last comment. Having spent a little more time out around the area that I grew up just recently, the whole landscape has changed. I mean drainage was always a problem before, but now with the producers the dollars that they're paying per acre and the dollars that they need to get off of each acre has, you know, exponentially exacerbated this problem into the future, I think. So good for you guys. It's tough, uphill work I'm sure. But yes, it's good work. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Good questions. And just on the point around the permit, you know, permitting 92 per cent of the projects and 8 per cent that have had to be filled or have some sort of effort to stop that water flow, that's within all those that are brought into compliance. Are there quite a few other lands where recommendations have been made that the drainage has to be filled that just haven't yet been acted upon?

**Mr. Molde:** — Certainly there are some outstanding RFAs. And part of that process is that when we have that complaint we go out and look to determine if there is works in place and, if there's works in place, are they approved. And if they're not approved, then we say to the landowner, we'll give you a certain amount of time to come into approval.

We want the landowner to come into approval. We don't want to have to close the works. But as time goes on, a month or so, if he cannot get land control downstream, that permission-to-drain water crosses downstream neighbours, then the other option would be consolidate the water onto your own land or you would close your works.

**The Chair:** — Right. So you've referenced the 2,000-and-some quarter sections that were brought into compliance and how there's exponential growth to that permitting. How do you account for . . . Like how many quarter sections right now are in question? You're not aiming to permit every quarter section out there, correct? It's ones that there's been drainage . . .

**A Member:** — Outstanding RFAs.

**The Chair:** — Outstanding RFAs. What's our total number of quarter sections on that front?

[11:15]

**Mr. Molde:** — Well certainly we estimate or we ballpark what the number of quarters in the province that may have unapproved drainage works, we estimated that to be from 100 to 150,000 quarters.

**Ms. Ross:** — But over time, you know, as people start to understand and accept that this is the law, voluntary compliance is always 80 per cent of following the law. I mean most people comply voluntarily.

**The Chair:** — Well thank you very much. Ms. Lambert, I believe you have a . . .

**Ms. Lambert:** — Yes, I basically was interested in that as well with the 2,820 that you had mentioned, quarter sections coming into compliance under the new strategy. And now you've mentioned how many we have outstanding. How does that relate to, you had also mentioned since 2010, hundreds of complaints. So is this based on those hundreds of complaints that you've come to this estimate of the quarters outstanding? No.

**Mr. Molde:** — So certainly after large runoff events, we do have more RFAs that we need to deal with, and we are working through them as we go. What we're finding is in some areas there are a large number of drainage complaints, and so these are where we actually go out and are more proactive in addressing that network. So it's a proactive network. There are a number around the province where we actually go in and try to resolve the complaint history or a flooding history in that area.

**The Chair:** — Thanks so much for the responses. Any other questions at this point? Really a lot of important work here, so thanks for the attention to it. I guess we'll deal with these recommendations. I think it's been noted that there's progress on recommendations 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9. Ms. Lambert, would you care to make a motion to that effect?

**Ms. Lambert:** — Yes, I concur with the recommendations on nos. 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 and note progress towards compliance.

**The Chair:** — All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That's carried. Would someone care to bring a motion forward with respect to noting compliance for those recommendations where implementation's been expressed? I think that's 2, 6, 10, and 11. Mr. Olason's ready to go here. He makes that motion. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Okay, that's carried. We'll conclude consideration of chapter 12, and we'll move along to the 2019 report volume 1, chapter 43.

**Mr. Deis:** — Chapter 43 of our 2019 report volume 1 starting on page 363 reports the results of our second follow-up of two recommendations made in our 2014 audit of the agency's processes to coordinate flood mitigation. By early April 2019 the agency had implemented both recommendations made in our 2014 audit. The agency made the following improvements: it appropriately updated its record of communities with an ongoing

risk of damage from floods, and it evaluated gaps in flood mitigation initiatives for the communities with an ongoing risk of damage of floods.

Coordinating flood mitigation activities in communities that are continually at risk of flooding can prevent or reduce flood damage, which can reduce impacts onto health and safety of residents, and reduce costs to government for disaster assistance. And that concludes our overview.

**The Chair:** — Thanks for the presentation and the work. Any responses to that? Otherwise I'll open it up for questions.

**Mr. Ferris:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the auditor's review. We continue in the work related to flooding, flood plain mapping, for example. I think previously it was noted in 2017 that there was 75 communities that were identified as being flood-prone. Earlier this year it was noted that the number had increased to 98 and we're currently sitting at 117 communities that are subject to flooding. And right now we've initiated work related to flood plain mapping. The plan is to have flood plain maps completed by March 31st, 2020 for 20 of those communities within the province.

You may have heard some time back that we have a budget of \$500,000 to commit to that work, and we receive some share funding from the federal government to help with this work. We continue with it. It looks at collecting lidar, so light-based topographic mapping work is undertaken, and we're presently in the process through a contractor to complete the flood plain maps for these communities, these 20 communities mentioned. There is no cost to the communities. That's where we're at right now.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. Committee members, questions? Ms. Mowat.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you, and thanks for providing that update as well. On page 363 in the main points before the introduction, it says, "Management indicated it planned to complete its assessment of the remaining 12 communities during 2019." And so I'm just wondering if this was accomplished.

**Mr. Ferris:** — I don't have the recommendations in front of me at this time, but it's my understanding that through that re-evaluation and going from 75 to 98, that we looked at those 23 communities. There was some that came off the original larger listing of over 100 and some that have been added to the listing. But we can certainly get back to you with an answer on that if you like.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. Thanks. Yes, and I'm not seeing the 23 communities either. We're on chapter 43, right? Okay. I just want to make sure I'm in the right place. So it said:

We found that the Agency determined 98 communities had ongoing flood risks. It further assessed these risks and evaluated where additional flood mitigation activities would be beneficial for the 98 communities. As of early April 2019, the Agency evaluated 86 of the 98 communities. Management indicated [that] it planned to complete its assessment of the remaining 12 communities during 2019.

So since April 2019 . . . That was the question that I had, so just

in case that was unclear.

**Mr. Ferris:** — Yes. So I think the answer to that is yes, we have.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Fair enough. And in fact you've added to that by stating that the number has now grown from 98 communities to 117 that are subject to flooding. Okay, thank you.

**Mr. Ferris:** — Yes.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. We're all on the same page now. In terms of community uptake for the flood damage reduction program, so at the end of the chapter, page 366, it says:

During 2018, 16 communities applied to participate in the Flood Damage Reduction Program. The Agency assisted these communities by evaluating flood risks and actions to take to help reduce the risk of damage from floods.

The additional communities that you have mentioned that were determined to have ongoing flood risks, are these new communities that you have discovered? Or are these communities that have come forward to you and volunteered to participate in the program? Or how does it work?

**Mr. Ferris:** — I think for the most part it's communities that we've undertaken work to assess flooding potentials. The material I have here with me today would suggest that that's quite often in and around resort communities, close to lakes and whatnot, so obvious locations.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thanks. So the flood damage reduction funding program, says it was created ". . . in 2018 to provide funding to encourage municipalities to seek detailed flood risk assessments . . ." So at this time there were 16. Do you know if there are more that have come forward to participate in the program voluntarily without prompting?

**Mr. Ferris:** — There have been a number that have come forward this fiscal year. So there's three programs at work here. There's the emergency flood damage reduction program/flood damage reduction program. This year we received a million-dollar budget for that combined program. What we do is that if there's floods that arise in the spring of the year effective April 1st, we roll that EFDRP, emergency flood damage reduction program, out until the end of July. Because when do we get rains? When do we get runoff? It's in the spring and it's in the summertime when the thunderstorms come by.

Any money that's left over from the emergency flood damage reduction program that's not used in those first four months of the year is converted and used for the flood damage reduction program, which provides a 20 to 30 to 1 benefit over spending money to address flooding on an emergency basis versus flooding preventative, proactive measures. It seems to me just from recall that — and these are forecast figures — that we have spent \$87,000, give or take a couple hundred, for the emergency flood damage reduction program as a forecasted expenditure for this year. It should be pretty close because we're in September now. That part of it ended in end of July. And I think we're up to about \$400,000 — \$410,000 — for FDRP [flood damage reduction program] work.



So it talks about four streams here below your recommendation for this year plus another \$200,000 for engineering work to help define this stuff. So that's two of the three programs. The 117 that I mentioned was related to the flood plain mapping initiative. That's the third program for which we received \$500,000 this year and which we got a matching contribution from the federal government for another 500,000. We're looking at 20 of those 117. So it's kind of spread all over the place but we're at it.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. I have no further questions, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Any further questions with respect to chapter 43? I would welcome a motion to conclude consideration of chapter 43. Mr. Olauson moves. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That's carried. And now we'll move along to chapter 44. And I'll turn it over to our Provincial Auditor's office.

**Mr. Deis:** — Chapter 44 in our 2019 report volume 1 starting on page 367 reports on the results of our sixth follow-up of two recommendations made in our 2005 audit of the agency's processes to ensure the safety of its four major dams. By March 2019 the agency had not fully addressed the two outstanding recommendations. The agency needs to complete testing on its emergency preparedness plan at the remaining three major dams, for example the Grant Devine, the Qu'Appelle River, and the Gardiner dams, and finalize these procedures manuals for the four major dams. Not having tested emergency preparedness plans increases the risk of plans not working as intended if an emergency were to occur, such as a dam failure. Having complete and current manuals supports the safe operation of dams. That concludes our presentation.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much. Would you care to provide a response at this time? Go ahead.

**Ms. Ross:** — Yes, thank you. Yes, these two of the four of the auditor's recommendations following the 2005 audit are matters of continuous activity. And to some extent they're always going to be in the process of implementation. I'll try to explain that.

At the time the auditor recommended WSA have up-to-date and tested emergency preparedness plans for its four major dams. At that time in 2005 those were Rafferty, Grant Devine, Qu'Appelle River, and the Gardiner dams. And we were also asked to set processes to ensure that the operating and maintenance manuals at the dams were complete and updated. And we agreed with those recommendations of course and we have been in implementation on a continuous basis on our original infrastructure component. Our activity though has been intensified as we've taken on additional infrastructure from the federal government. WSA now owns and operates nine major dams and 72 dams overall.

We've completed the emergency preparedness plans, which I'll call EPPs, for each of the original four major infrastructures, and 25 of the 32 manuals for the original 49 dams are complete. We continue working toward having 30 of the manuals done by the end of this fiscal year. The manuals are fairly complex depending

on what they are, but some of them require communication and consultation, even internationally. So they're not something that we can just sit down and write on our own. And we are working with AAFC [Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada] concurrently, so Agri-Food Canada, to advance the needed manuals for the 23 new dams. So we're working on a number of things at the same time. Everything seems to have evolved for us.

[11:30]

The emergency preparedness plans were rolled out to relevant local governments in 2014 and '15 and updated versions on two of them were done in 2017. Now continual updating of these plans is required and updates will be completed on all four of the originals between 2020 and 2022, and we have a plan for testing the EPPs that will be finalized this year. We did complete one test exercise of the emergency preparedness plan for Rafferty dam and we followed the incident command protocol in January of 2018, the results of which are informing our future work.

We've also had 21 staff members, including almost all of our executive team, complete a two-day course in incident command training. We will continue this training across the relevant parts of the organization in 2020.

We have a robust 10-year rolling capital infrastructure program related to our full complement, and in 2018 we created a dam safety unit to advance work on all nine of our major dams. And that unit will be fully staffed by March 31st, 2020. We concur with the Provincial Auditor that this is very high priority work for WSA and it needs detailed, thorough, and continuous work. And that's my submission.

**The Chair:** — Thanks for the work on this front and the report you've presented. I'll open it up for questions. Ms. Mowat.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you, and thank you for the update before we started as well. In terms of the timeline between . . . I can certainly appreciate the complexity. In terms of the timeline between the update and the testing, can you speak to why there's a year planned between the scheduled update and the testing? I'll start with that.

**Mr. Fahlman:** — Can you just repeat the question? Just so I can . . .

**Ms. Mowat:** — So in the status update on page 19, it shows the update for Gardiner dam is expected in 2022 and the testing in 2023, Qu'Appelle River 2020, 2021 for testing. So why is there a year between the update and the testing?

**Mr. Fahlman:** — Okay, I think I understand what you're asking now, is why is it taking . . . Okay. So I guess my answer to that would be that this work is, beyond the complexity involved, is it's the same people doing the same work. And so this group that Susan had mentioned that we're building to do our dam safety program is also dealing with the 50 per cent expansion in our number of dams, plus at 70 per cent expansion in our kilometres of conveyance channel.

So our infrastructure portfolio has grown a lot and so we're establishing this group. We've got seven people identified, and some of them are staffed, but not even all of them are staffed yet.

So at the same time that we're building this group, they are also executing the completion of the manuals and developing a dam safety roll-out program that is, you know, responsible and sufficient for our infrastructure. Does that answer the question?

**Ms. Mowat:** — It does, yes. And so you said some of the folks of this group are staffed and some of them aren't. Can you explain the "aren't" folks?

**Mr. Fahlman:** — Okay. The "aren't," I'd love to have them all on right now, trust me. The "aren't" are . . . Our philosophy is we hire the managers and let them choose their people in a lot of cases, and plus we've also had to go from 220 people to 270-some people over the last few years. So even though we've resourced our HR [human resources] department to try and help us with this load, there's some physical constraints as to how fast you can actually get these people on board. So we're dealing with that. And plus we have to find the candidates.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay, so the people aren't physically there yet. I was like, are they volunteering? What is happening?

**Mr. Fahlman:** — It's essentially five professional engineers and two technologists. We have the manager in place and two of the professional engineers. We have another engineer coming on in March and we have three more people to recruit.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay, so the rate of hiring is catching up with the plan.

**Mr. Fahlman:** — It is.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. Okay, that makes sense. In terms of prioritizing sort of which dams went first, is that based on a risk assessment?

**Mr. Fahlman:** — I would say, getting into fine tuning of risk between the four majors that we were supposed to do. So it was more based on where the EPP was at and is it ready to test and implement as opposed to, you know, this one is absolutely the biggest one or not. And so we chose Rafferty because it was advanced as far as the EPP being developed, but also because it wasn't the biggest one and it gave us an opportunity to take some lessons learned.

So Susan mentioned the tabletop exercise that we did with all the RMs [rural municipality] and the responding agencies and the other entities around Estevan and downstream that are responsible to responding to a dam failure. Okay? So we brought a consultant in to help us do that tabletop exercise — this is what happens; this is what we need to do. And we took from that, we got 13 lessons learned and we're in the process of starting to implement them. We've done one; we've got a ways to go. But before we were to say roll out to do a test, say in Saskatoon, we think there's real value in taking the lessons learned from Estevan.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay, thank you. I have no further questions, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Thank you for that. It makes sense that you're choosing a dam by way of scale and some of the lessons that can be learned to apply to the testing on the future ones. How will

you prioritize those future ones once you've sort of, you know, learned some lessons around how to go at this? Will it then be based on sort of greatest risk around the dam? Or how will you prioritize which dam is next?

**Mr. Fahlman:** — For the remaining three we actually have the schedule set out from 2021 to 2023. And I don't know if I have that in front of me.

**The Chair:** — You've included it here. I appreciate it. I just flipped my table here. Thank you. And, you know, we've tabled that as well, so that's available for all. So thanks for that. Any other questions from committee members on this chapter? Certainly very important work to see through to completion, so thanks for all the attention to it.

Yes, and at this point I would welcome a motion to conclude consideration of chapter 44. Mr. Fiaz. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That's carried. Yes, so if there's any final comments, thank you so very much to all the officials that are here today and all those that work in Water Security, and of course all those landowners, all those partners, all those stakeholders that have been a part of this very important work. And of course thanks to the auditor's office for the attention and focus on this file. No closing remarks from the Water Security Agency?

**Ms. Ross:** — No. Well we do enjoy a respectful and professional relationship with the auditor, and we really appreciate your work.

**The Chair:** — Thanks so much. At this point we'll recess for lunch and we'll get back at it at 1 o'clock with the Ministry of Education and various school divisions.

[The committee recessed from 11:38 until 13:02.]

### Education

**The Chair:** — Okay, folks, we'll reconvene the Standing Committee on Public Accounts here this afternoon. Our focus will be on the Ministry of Education. A lot of that work focuses on respective school divisions from across the province. I know a lot of the leadership has joined us here today, so thank you to those folks that have joined us.

I will ask Deputy Minister Currie to maybe introduce who he wants to introduce at this point and then we'll turn it over to the auditor's office. I think we're going to focus on chapters 2 and 1 at the top of the list there together. We'll do that first. Maybe you can contain your comments right now to just introducing officials and then we'll deal with each of the chapters as we go.

**Mr. Currie:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to introduce to my right, Rory Jensen, executive director of corporate services within the Ministry of Education; and behind me, to my right, to your left, Bev Hungle, director of finance, corporate services. And we will introduce the other school division officials as they come up to respond.

**The Chair:** — Maybe just as a reminder to all those that are here,

when you're coming up to a microphone, just state who you are before you speak.

At this time I'll table PAC 88-28, Ministry of Education: Status update dated September 25th, 2019. I'd also like to thank all the school divisions and everyone involved in putting together those status updates. Those are good updates and they really allow us to focus in on our questioning. And there's been a lot of work that's, you know, brought a whole bunch of those recommendations into compliance, so thank you for that.

At this point I'll turn it over to the Provincial Auditor's office, and we're going to deal with the first two chapters together.

**Ms. Ferguson:** — Thanks very much, Chair, Deputy Chair, members, and officials. I just want to take a moment and introduce who I have with me this afternoon. Trevor St. John has joined us again; he was here this morning. Behind him is Mr. Jason Wandy and Ms. Michelle Lindenbach. She's smiling away here. And Jason and Michelle led a lot of the work that's presented this afternoon here on the agenda. And in addition, Ms. Kim Lowe is with us. Kim is our committee liaison.

As the Chair indicated, we're going to group the first two chapters together into a single presentation. The other ones are actually stand-alone topics so we'll be presenting them individually, allowing the members time to deliberate and discuss the chapters.

There is four chapters on the agenda — I think four is right — that have new recommendations for the committee's consideration. So 4 out of 14 chapters this afternoon, so we've got our work cut out for us.

Before I turn it over to Mr. St. John, I just want to take a moment to thank the officials from the ministry and also from the various school divisions that are not only here, that have joined us this afternoon, but in your workplace too, for the co-operation extended to our office during the course of our work. We greatly appreciate the co-operation. Thank you.

**Mr. St. John:** — Thank you. Chapter 2 of our 2018 report volume 1 is on pages 19 to 22, and chapter 1 of our 2019 report volume 1 is on pages 15 to 18. Each report the results of the annual integrated audits of the 28 school divisions at the time for the fiscal year ended August 31st, 2017 and August 31st, 2018 respectively. Each chapter includes new recommendations for the committee's consideration. Since chapter 1 of our 2019 report provides an update on recommendations included in our 2018 volume 1, we've combined these presentations.

Chapter 2 of our 2018 report volume 1 recommends improvements at five school divisions and highlights improvements at two others. It includes four new recommendations for the committee's consideration, and I will focus my presentation on those.

On page 20-21 we recommend that Ile-a-la-Crosse School Division independently review and approve bank reconciliations. During '16-17 Ile-a-la-Crosse did not follow its policy to prepare and independently review and approve monthly bank reconciliations. They instead prepared bank reconciliations yearly. As reported in our 2019 report volume 1, in 2017-18

Ile-a-la-Crosse fully implemented our recommendation.

On page 21 our second new recommendation: we recommend Prairie Spirit School Division independently review and approve all purchase-card transactions. The school division did not independently review or approve monthly purchases made using credit cards, referred to as purchase cards. This is particularly important as school principals can approve their own purchase-card transactions. As reported in our 2019 report volume 1, in '17-18 Prairie Spirit fully implemented our recommendation.

On page 21 our third new recommendation: we recommend Prince Albert Roman Catholic School Division follow its purchasing policy. Prince Albert Roman Catholic Separate's policy requires staff complete a purchase order for purchases over \$500. The audit identified three instances where the school division did not complete purchase orders as expected. As reported in our 2019 report volume 1, in '17-18 Prince Albert Roman Catholic Separate School Division fully implemented our recommendation.

On page 21 the fourth new recommendation: we recommend Saskatoon School Division follow its purchasing policy. Saskatoon School Division's purchasing policy requires approval of purchases prior to payment. The audit found the school division to have not approved the purchase of a tangible capital asset prior to payment. As reported in our 2019 report volume 1, in '17-18 the Saskatoon School Division fully implemented this recommendation.

I can pause now to allow the committee to consider these four new recommendations.

**The Chair:** — Thanks for the presentation. Deputy Minister Currie, do you care to have a brief response, or do you want to open it up for questionings now?

**Mr. Currie:** — Ready for questionings.

**The Chair:** — Sure. So, committee members? Ms. Mowat.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you very much to the deputy minister and to everyone who's joining us today. I want to just first note that between the two audits it's really encouraging to see implementation of most of the recommendations. So I would say, good work to all the divisions who were involved in all those processes and leadership at the central level.

A couple of questions. On the 2019 report on page 15, there's a tracking of total revenue and expenses for 2017-2018. I'm wondering if we have the numbers for 2018-2019 as well.

**Mr. Currie:** — At the moment we don't have that with us, so we would like to take that information back and then submit to committee.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. In terms of the recommendation that was partially implemented — so I'm on page 4 of the status update — the recommendations on page 22 that Sun West School Division formally document its IT disaster recovery plan, I'm wondering if you can speak to what some of the challenges are that Sun West has faced in being able to implement this

recommendation.

**Mr. St. John:** — So the Sun West School Division has not fully implemented our 2017 recommendation about formally documenting its IT disaster recovery plan. By August 2018, Sun West had drafted an IT disaster recovery plan. They expected to finalize and approve this plan during 2018-19. Yes, so that's the update for Sun West.

**Ms. Mowat:** — I can defer my question to the next presentation if you'd prefer, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — No, I think we should be okay because it's contained in chapter 2 and it's contained in the next one. We can get to it in the next chapter if that's preferred. But it's an outstanding recommendation; it's not one of the new ones. And it pertains to Sun West, so maybe we'll see if the DM [deputy minister] or if officials are in a position to respond to the question. We're happy to have it brought in a few minutes here as well, if that's the preference.

**Mr. St. John:** — I'll continue with chapter 1 of our 2019 report volume 1, pages 15-18. This chapter highlights concerns of 2 of the 28 school divisions during 2017-18. It contains two new recommendations for the committee's consideration. Page 17 we recommend that Lloydminster Public School Division independently review and approve monthly bank reconciliations. During the year, Lloydminster Public School Division did not independently review and approve monthly bank reconciliations. Reconciliations help check the accuracy and reliability of the accounting records.

On page 17 we recommend that the Lloydminster Public School Division independently review and approve journal entries. The audit identified there was no independent review and approval of journal entries. Two school staff were responsible for making the journal entries. Not having an independent review and approval of journal entries increases the risk of the division using inaccurate financial information and not detecting fraud or irregularities.

The 2019 report volume 1 also provides the status update of the Sun West School Division which remained partially implemented, which I've already provided an update on. So that ends my presentation.

**The Chair:** — All right. Thanks for the presentation. And I guess we have a question that's still on the floor with respect to Sun West, and we'll deal with that. Then we'll continue to move along.

**Mr. Currie:** — Thank you. I'd ask Rory Jensen to respond to this please.

**Mr. Jensen:** — Rory Jensen with the ministry. Sun West School Division is working on the disaster recovery plan, and they're also refreshing server and network equipment at the same time. The disaster recovery plan is tied directly to this equipment. The IT department have scheduled meetings in August to help deliver a fully-documented plan of this refresh of equipment. And once they have this refresh of equipment, they anticipate that they can complete their disaster recovery plan. And they've indicated that this will be done by the end of October.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. Thank you. Yes, I did see the timeline for implementation was coming up quite quickly, so I expected that probably these challenges were being overcome right now. But that's good to hear. In terms of the other recommendations, I'm not sure I have many questions. It looks like everything else has been implemented already. So thank you.

[13:15]

**The Chair:** — Any other questions from committee members at this time? Okay, good. Not seeing any, thanks again for the very clear status updates. It makes our work simple here. So with respect to the first chapter there, 2018 volume 1, chapter 2, recommendations 1, 2, 3, and 4, let's deal with them maybe as a motion. Mr. Olauson, that we concur and that we note compliance. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — All right. That's carried. Moving along to chapter 1, volume 1, 2019 report and the two recommendations, I'd welcome a motion that we concur and note compliance.

**Ms. Lambert:** — Yes.

**The Chair:** — Ms. Lambert moves. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — All right. That's carried. We'll move along here now to chapter 7 of the 2018 report volume 1, and I'll turn it back over to the Provincial Auditor and her office.

**Mr. St. John:** — Chapter 7 of our 2018 report volume 1 on pages 87 to 101 reports the results of our audit of Prairie Valley School Division's processes to monitor the educational progress of home-based learners. While home-based learners represent a minority of total students in this province, Saskatchewan has the third-highest proportion of home-based learners in Canada, and the number of home-based learners is growing. It had almost 2,500 home-based learners as of September 2017, an increase of 103 per cent over the previous decade.

School divisions are responsible for monitoring the education of home-based learners. As of September 2017, Prairie Valley had 143 home-based students. Over three-quarters of these students were in kindergarten to grade 8. Inadequate monitoring of home-based education programs can increase the risk of home-based learners not receiving a proper education, negatively affecting their ability to succeed and reach their full potential in the future. We concluded for the 12-month period ended January 31st, 2018, Prairie Valley School Division did not do enough to fulfill its regulatory role of monitoring the educational progress of its home-based learners. We made eight new recommendations for the committee's consideration.

Our first recommendation is on page 94. We recommend Prairie Valley School Division revise its home-based education templates, forms, and checklists to better align with the Ministry of Education's policy requirements. While Prairie Valley has standard forms, templates, and checklists for registering and monitoring home-based education, some may not align well with legislative and ministry requirements. For example, the

division's education plan template did not specifically require educators to identify three goals for each of the areas of study as required by the ministry's home-based education policy. Also the division's checklist used to assess education plans and the educational progress of learners did not require documentation of its assessment of the consistency of the education plans with the goals of education for Saskatchewan and the appropriateness of the plans and progress reports for the age and ability of the home-based learners.

Complete and well-designed forms help home-based educators comply with legislation and ministry requirements. Also having checklists that include documentation of the division's assessments would help the division show it has fulfilled its regulatory role in relation to home-based education programs. The division may wish to consider publicly available templates and checklists that align with provincial legislation and requirements.

Our second recommendation is on page 96. We recommend that Prairie Valley School Division only renew the registration of a home-based education program after it receives all required documentation from the home-based educator and confirms that the program complies with the law and related policies. Home-based educators must register their programs and students with the division each year. The division must determine whether the information submitted complies with the law and related policies. This includes information such as an updated registration form, an updated education plan, and the student progress report that demonstrates a student's satisfactory educational progress during the previous year's program.

We found the division inappropriately renewed the 2017-18 program registrations for 21 learners without receiving the previous year's student progress reports. Of these 21 learners the division registered four of them without receiving updated registration forms and education plans. The division did not follow up on the status of the missing information for these inappropriately registered learners. The division cannot effectively regulate home-based educators if it renews program registrations before assessing educational progress of learners in the previous school year. This could result in home-based learners not receiving an adequate education.

The next two recommendations are related. On page 97 we recommend Prairie Valley School Division give home-based educators written confirmation of program registration within the required time. We also recommend Prairie Valley School Division maintain correspondence with home-based educators about the registration, monitoring, and renewal of home-based education programs. Once satisfied that a home-based education program meets ministry standards, the division must give educators a written notice of program registration within 30 days of receiving the request for registration. The written notice of registration advises an educator that their home-based education program is legally registered.

For files for 30 home-based learners we tested, because of insufficient documentation we could not determine whether the division gave educators timely notice of their 2016-17 program registration. The division did not date stamp documents received or maintain correspondence with educators. Also for five files we tested, the division did not give educators a written notice of

registration at all. Not issuing notices promptly or at all increases the risk of home-based learners receiving education programs that are inconsistent with the *Goals of Education for Saskatchewan* or inappropriate for their age and ability. Not maintaining correspondence with home-based educators not only violates the regulations, but increases the risk of division staff not having information to monitor home-based education programs.

The next three recommendations are related. On page 98 we recommend that Prairie Valley School Division obtain a better understanding of the extent of school division authority to monitor home-based education.

The second recommendation is, we recommend that Prairie Valley School Division actively assess whether home-based education plans and annual student progress reports meet the requirements established by legislation and the Ministry of Education when registering programs and monitoring learner educational progress.

And the third related recommendation: we recommend Prairie Valley School Division promptly give educators feedback for all home-based learners following review of learners' annual progress reports.

While we found the division had well-established policies and procedures to determine whether home-based education programs comply with legislation and establish policies, the division did not consistently follow them or effectively exercise its authority to monitor home-based education programs. Our testing of 30 2016-17 school year files of home-based learners identified numerous instances where the division did not follow its processes. For example, it was not aware that it did not obtain annual student progress reports or educational plans as it requires. As such, it did not ask home-based educators to submit missing information. Also the division did not always give educators feedback on learners' annual student progress reports.

Effective monitoring involves actively assessing information submitted and obtaining missing required information. Our interviews with division staff found staff did not have a good understanding of the extent to which they could question information when exercising their authority to regulate home-based education. In addition we found staff were hesitant to question the completeness and quality of information that home-based educators submitted.

If the division does not fully understand the extent of its authority to monitor home-based education, it cannot effectively hold educators accountable for complying with the related legislation and policy requirements. Ineffective monitoring can result in the division not providing home-based educators with timely feedback concerning their home-based education program, which can result in learners not attaining sufficient educational progress for their age and ability.

On page 99, our last recommendation in this chapter, we recommend that Prairie Valley School Division consider the use of incentives to encourage educators to comply with all home-based education documentation requirements.

Unlike some other Saskatchewan school divisions, Prairie Valley did not use incentives to encourage home-based educators to

submit all required documentation. Some school divisions do not give educators full reimbursement of eligible educational expenses until the educators have submitted all required information. Implementing incentives to encourage educators to comply with the home-based education requirements can foster educators' compliance and reduce levels of resources needed by the division to follow up with educators on missing documentation. That concludes my presentation.

**The Chair:** — Thanks for the presentation. Would you care to provide a brief response, Deputy Minister Currie, before we open it up for questions?

**Mr. Currie:** — I appreciate the auditor's noting of the school division having . . . update clear policies to regulate home-based education programs and also an approach to register, monitor, and support. The auditor has made the eight recommendations and, as has been noted, the school division has taken steps to implement, fully implement seven of them and has a plan in place to address the eighth.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. We'll open it up for questions. Ms. Mowat.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you very much. And thank you for the detail in the status update around each recommendation. In terms of when we're talking about home-based learners, so we understand that the school division had almost 150 home-based learners in 2018. How many home-based learners are we talking about across the whole province?

**Mr. Currie:** — As of September 30th, 2017, the province had close to 2,500. We had 2,483. To have a present update as of end of '18, we'd have to come back to you with that specific number.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. And I should have been more specific that I was looking for the 2018 number because yes, I see the 2017 number is here. So it would be great if that could be provided. And is there any indication of a change in the number of home-based learners within the school division?

**Mr. Lermينياux:** — Good afternoon. I'm Luc Lermينياux. I'm the director for Prairie Valley School Division. And I guess just before I answer the question, I do want to thank you for the opportunity to address these. I want to thank the Provincial Auditor and the committee for the work that they did and the ministry for the support that they did in helping us come to terms with this and addressing the needs. And we certainly took the feedback very seriously, and I hope that you see that we put a lot of effort into addressing the recommendations as they are.

In relation to your question specifically, in 2018 we had 158 students registered for home-based education, and for the current year we currently have 177 students. So there is an increase and has been a slight increase over the course of the last three years.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you, and thank you for your comments as well. In terms of the overall cost that's been provided for home-based education programs, on page 90 of the report the Provincial Auditor says that in 2016-2017 the division reimbursed over \$60,000 for home-based education programs and 2015-2016 over 25,000. Do you have these numbers for 2017-2018 as well? I'm assuming they would probably be

slightly higher if we've seen an increase in student enrolment.

[13:30]

**Mr. Lermينياux:** — So our spending for 2017-18 was \$70,512, was our actual expenses.

**Ms. Mowat:** — And is there an expected number for '18-19 as well? Or do you have that finalized?

**Mr. Lermينياux:** — For '18-19 it's just shy of 60,000. It's 59,788.

**Ms. Mowat:** — In terms of the idea of providing incentives, I don't know if . . . like it looks like there have been financial incentives applied again, so is that going to impact what this number looks like going into the future?

**The Chair:** — I'll just make one point here just from a technical perspective. We don't need to hit the button on our microphones. It just throws off Hansard. If you're going to speak, you'll be recognized by folks, so no need to hit the mikes.

**Mr. Lermينياux:** — Okay. In terms of the recommendation, so we've returned to the practice of reimbursing expenses after we have approved their year-end progress reports and plans. And as far as would we anticipate an increase in our expenses, our answer is — now that's a speculation — but our answer is no. We just want to make sure that the plans that are submitted are compliant, and in which case then we would happily reimburse them their expenses.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. On page 94 it's looking at the supports readily available to home-based educators but limited use of non-financial supports. There's mention of a home-based education consultant within the division. Is this consultant still in this portfolio? Does someone still exist that does this work?

**Mr. Lermينياux:** — We did not have a consultant that was exclusively tagged to home-based education. It was part of the portfolio of another consultant. And because of the seriousness that we took in relation to this, we actually asked a superintendent of education to oversee the restructuring and the implementation of our processes for home-based education — and in fact he's sitting behind me, Mr. Mike Embury — because we wanted to make sure that we addressed all of it. And so currently we don't have a consultant that oversees home-based education. It's a superintendent of education.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. And in terms of splitting an FTE or splitting a portfolio for home-based education, perhaps the deputy minister can answer, but is this something that sort of consistently happens across divisions where there will be someone that has this as a focus as part of their portfolio?

**Mr. Currie:** — We see that the responsibilities borne by the respective school divisions will have a mechanism or a structure in place to address, support, monitor, and evaluate the home-based education program. So there will be somebody within each school division who would be given the opportunity and the responsibility to oversee such a program.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Just getting past the fourth recommendation

here, so getting into the fifth, page 97, the auditor goes into some detail to talk about basically what happens when required information such as progress reports are not made available. I'm wondering, from the division's perspective, what risks are associated with failing to track student progress.

**Mr. Lerminiaux:** — I think for us the biggest risk is quality of programming for home-based education. One of the recommendations is that we exercise greater oversight for that, and so correlated to that is the integrity of the programming as well. So those would be the two that we would identify as the greatest risks.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. And would you say that, with the new processes that have been implemented, you have confidence in the reporting that is being presented now?

**Mr. Lerminiaux:** — Absolutely. And for year-end reports that don't meet our standard, we actually quarantine the files to ensure that they don't get accidentally re-registered for the fall until they've been able to satisfactorily report on the progress of the student for the previous year.

**Ms. Mowat:** — So I think one of the last, recommendation no. 8 it's talking about implementing incentives and what incentives could look like, financial and otherwise. I see that timeline for implementation, I think, is November 2019, so we're not quite there yet. But I'm wondering if you have some sort of idea of what these incentives would look like and if there is relative confidence in the processes that have been, say, set in place so far. Is there a requirement to continue to explore other methods of incentivizing?

**Mr. Currie:** — In terms of the incentives that have been referenced and established, there's been a follow-up in terms of providing reimbursement to the home-based educators only after the year-end reports have been received, evaluated, and finalized.

As has already been referenced as well, November '19 is when look to fully actualize and realize these, I think with an eye towards — and I'll let the school division speak further to this — to also consider other potential incentives that might be of strength and enabling for the families to provide that home-based education structure so that they can be compliant and realizing the reimbursement of their respective funds.

**Ms. Mowat:** — One of the challenges that certainly comes to mind for me is if folks don't have a lot of cash on hand but are doing home-based learning but don't get their reimbursement until after, if it's not until after year-end, I could see that becoming a barrier for folks. So yes, I'm certainly interested to know what other incentives would look like as well.

**Mr. Lerminiaux:** — Perhaps what I would add is that's why we felt it was partially implemented. And one of our plans moving forward is to contact other school divisions to problem solve to see if they have practices that we might adopt as well too, that might help encourage both compliance and perhaps even address the issue that you raise as well.

**Ms. Mowat:** — For sure, yes. One might expect that if your school division is encountering these issues, well yes, they exist elsewhere too. Thank you. I have no further questions, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Any other questions?

**Mr. McMorris:** — I just have one small one. This may not apply to the divisions, but the auditor, you say, should "... consider the use of incentives to encourage ..." So if they considered them and didn't move forward, is that not implemented? Or if they've considered them ... The word "consider" is an interesting term for a recommendation from an auditor.

**Ms. Ferguson:** — Thank you. That's a really good question, and it's actually, you know, one that we deliberated carefully on. In this area, what we realized is that when we looked across the piece we saw that other school divisions were doing things to try to encourage people to submit. But if they got to a point where people are submitting and they don't need incentives, you know, as long as they pursued them we're not going to say, you didn't do an incentive. Because you might not need it, right?

So yes, so we land on "consider." So does it work within your situation, right? So give thoughts in terms of what you can do because at the endgame what we want to do is create an environment where the educators are submitting their information, and proper information. So yes, we landed on a softer spot, in essence.

**Mr. McMorris:** — So whether they do or whether they don't, it's implemented.

**Ms. Ferguson:** — As long as they have careful consideration and they can show that. So yes.

**A Member:** — So we could totally take all-day tests.

**Ms. Ferguson:** — Sure, if they want to.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Well I don't know because they're still in the process of considering if they're talking to other school boards.

**The Chair:** — Either way there's a check and balance that goes back with the auditor, and the division will make their decisions. So they're considering it.

I do have one question. Thanks, Director Lerminiaux, for your responses here. My question would be for the deputy minister. Just in the sense that I was looking at those numbers, 2,500 students being home-based educated isn't a large number. I think it's just over 1 per cent of the student population. But it has grown significantly over the last decade; it's doubled over the last decade. What factors would you attribute to that significant increase, 100 per cent increase in home-based students?

**Mr. Currie:** — In my experience I have found that our home-based educators programs throughout many school divisions in the province are quite strong. They have a very significant network of support and access to the resources through the existing school divisions. And as we know, that they are connected to their home school division and enabled to access resources, educational resources, access extracurricular activities and stay connected in that way.

The home-based network structure of the province is one that they reach out for each other's support from a home-based perspective throughout the province to inform and educate and

work together as to how they can individually and collectively provide a quality education to their respective children.

**The Chair:** — And so do you see that network as becoming more active in promoting the option of home-based education?

**Mr. Currie:** — I can't qualify that it would be more active. I believe it's an established structure that for those who are interested in seeking out the opportunity of home-based education, there are people available with whom they can speak. From experience, I've not known of the proactive engagement of come, consider home-based education. It's more, I think, of an individual choice or small-group choices, that way. So the resources are there if wanted.

**The Chair:** — Thanks again to the division. I see a question from Ms. Lambert.

**Ms. Lambert:** — Now that we're on this subject of the increase, 103 per cent increase in the last decade, I've read articles that parents have chosen home-based learning as a result of bullying in school. And I'm wondering if you have a comment on that, whether you think that that is reflected in the increase in the home-based choice.

**Mr. Currie:** — I believe there's an element to that, and the exact . . . how much, I am not informed to indicate or to consider. But there is an element of that. And based on experience and our conversations with school divisions or our own personal experience is that that would be a part of it but not the major part of it. I believe that the home-based education interest is based on a quality education provided by the home-based educators, and they seek to structure a network to provide. But there is an element of, as you've referenced, of the bullying aspect and an interest to change the education structure for one's child so that they don't continue to exist in that element.

[13:45]

**The Chair:** — I'm not seeing any other questions at this point. Again thanks to the division for all the work to implement these recommendations. Shall we deal with a motion that deals with the first seven? Okay, so 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Mr. Olauson, you'd make a motion that we concur and note compliance?

**Mr. Olauson:** — Yes.

**The Chair:** — All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — All right, that's carried. And with respect to recommendation 8, does someone want to bring forward a motion that we concur and note progress? Ms. Lambert. All right, all agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — All right, that's carried. Thanks again.

We'll move along now to chapter no. 11 in the 2018 report volume 1, and I'll turn it over to the Provincial Auditor and her office.

**Mr. St. John:** — Chapter 11 of our 2018 report volume 1 is on pages 157 to 178. This reports the results of our audit of the Saskatoon School Division's processes for supporting learning of kindergarten to grade 8 students with intensive needs. This chapter includes 11 new recommendations for the committee's consideration.

In Saskatchewan, school divisions must accommodate students with intensive needs in their regular program of instruction or provide special programming to meet those students' learning needs. Students with intensive needs are those assessed as having a capacity to learn that is compromised by a cognitive, social, emotional, behavioural, or physical condition. In 2016-17, 7.3 per cent of kindergarten to grade 8 students in the Saskatoon School Division were identified as having intensive needs.

We concluded that, for the 12-month period ending December 31st, 2017, Saskatoon School Division had effective processes for supporting learning of kindergarten to grade 8 students with intensive needs other than the areas of our 11 recommendations.

Our first recommendation on page 167, we recommend Saskatoon School Division formally estimate the future enrolment of kindergarten to grade 8 students with intensive needs. The division informally expects 5 to 7 per cent of students to have intensive needs. It does not update its estimate annually or estimate the number of students with intensive needs for an upcoming year. In 2015-16 and 2017-18 we found the actual enrolment of students with intensive needs exceeded the upper range of the division's estimate of 7 per cent.

Reliable estimates of enrolment numbers of students with intensive needs would give Saskatoon Public better information to determine the resources necessary to support those students. Without reliable estimates on future enrolment of students with intensive needs, the division may not determine the amount of resources it needs to provide those students with sufficient support.

Our second recommendation, on page 169 we recommend Saskatoon School Division analyze trends in the number of kindergarten to grade 8 students with intensive needs and their categories of intensive needs. Saskatoon Public does not analyze its population of students with intensive needs to identify changes or trends. Our analysis of records in the division's student supports IT system found the student information was entered inconsistently, with some students being recorded in the system twice. We also found that prior to the '17-18 school year, the division retained records on students receiving additional supports who are not designated as students with intensive needs. Inconsistent entry of student information can make analysis of trends or changes in students with intensive needs difficult.

The next recommendation, on page 169 we recommend Saskatoon School Division document its determination of staff needed to support kindergarten to grade 8 students with intensive needs. The division had not documented its determination of number of staff needed to support kindergarten to grade 8 students with intensive needs. The increase in actual number of students with intensive needs over the last three years has outpaced the increase in the staff providing supports to these students, in most cases. The division determined staff to support students with intensive needs primarily through its annual



budgeting. The division indicated that it decides on the nature and the number of support staff along with other tools and supports for these students. However, the division cannot show us how it links increases in support staff to increases in number of students with intensive needs and the change in their needs.

Our analysis found that the combined increase in staff used to support intensive needs students has increased 8.5 per cent in the last three years, while the number of students with intensive needs had increased 9.2 per cent. In addition to this we found that the number of intensive needs students who needed one-on-one support from an educational assistant increased 31.6 per cent over the last three years. Without a documented assessment of students with intensive needs and staff needed to support these students, the division cannot show that it is making sufficient programs and supports available to these students as *The Education Act* requires.

On page 171, our next recommendation, we recommend Saskatoon School Division require schools to consistently document key consultations, decisions, and action items resulting from their meetings for kindergarten to grade 8 students with intensive needs. The division makes schools' Teams responsible for deciding appropriate intensive learning supports for students identified as potentially having intensive needs. These Teams are comprised of school staff and division professionals and consultants.

The division gives each school guidance on both conducting Teams meetings and recording information about these meetings. However schools do not always follow that guidance. For 11 of the 36 student files with intensive needs we tested, records of Teams discussions and consultations on that student's challenges, options, next steps, and resolutions were incomplete or there was minimal documentation.

Incomplete or minimal documentation on Teams consultations, decisions, and actions on student supports may result in students not receiving timely support. Consistently documenting these decisions would help ensure continuity and consistency of supports provided to support a student's learning needs.

On page 171 we recommend Saskatoon School Division maintain in student cumulative files assessment information related to kindergarten to grade 8 students with intensive needs. The division uses a standard assessment approach for any student identified as requiring an assessment. School staff are to complete an assessment and consult with division professionals as needed. The assessment documents each student's needs and recommended supports.

For the 36 files of students with intensive needs we tested, each student had an assessment profile completed and approved by the division. However, for 2 of the 36 files, the student assessment information was not in the student's cumulative file. Maintaining assessment information on student cumulative files allows this information to be accessible to parents and to school staff in order to provide sufficient supports to students with intensive needs.

On page 172 we recommend Saskatoon School Division provide guidance on expected timelines for completion of assessments of kindergarten to grade 8 students with intensive needs. Our testing found division professionals track when they receive a request

for an assessment and assessments completed, but they do not track the date on which the assessment is done. Management indicated it typically takes four to six weeks for speech language assessment, and 6 to 10 weeks for a psychologist assessment. Good practices support a quicker assessment time of around two weeks.

The division does not have guidance on how fast staff should complete assessments with kindergarten to grade 8 students with intensive needs. Completed assessments are a prerequisite to identifying intensive learning supports for a student. Delays in completing assessments cause delays in implementing learning supports for students.

On page 173 we recommend Saskatoon School Division retain evidence of agreement on learning plans for kindergarten to grade 8 students with intensive needs. School staff are to retain a copy of the learning plan of a student in the student supports IT system. Once a learning plan is drafted for an intensive needs student, staff are to discuss the plan with the student's parents and sign off on agreement with the plan. Collaboration and agreement between school staff and parents on kindergarten to grade 8 student plans is not always documented. Thirteen per cent of the 36 files we tested were missing learning plans and 17 per cent of student files had plans that were either not signed by parents or not signed at all. Documenting agreement of the learning plans shows that school staff and parents agree on the approach that is being taken to address the individual students' needs.

On page 174 we recommend that Saskatoon School Division require consistent and accessible documentation of key discussions, decisions, and steps taken to implement learning plans for kindergarten to grade 8 students with intensive needs. One-third of the 36 files of students we tested did not contain evidence of discussions with parents. For the other two-thirds of files we tested, discussions with parents were noted in the Teams meeting notes, but these notes are not maintained in the student cumulative files.

Also the division did not consistently maintain documentation of its discussions, decisions, and steps taken to implement student learning plans. One-third of the 36 files we looked at for students with intensive needs did not contain evidence of discussions with division or school staff. Keeping consistent and accessible documentation would assist school staff in monitoring steps taken to support students with intensive needs and help avoid repeating intervention strategies found ineffective for students who transfer between schools.

On page 174 we recommend that Saskatoon School Division regularly monitor students' progress in achieving goals set out in learning plans for kindergarten to grade 8 students with intensive needs.

For students with intensive needs, school staff are to regularly monitor students' progress at least three times a year and prepare reports on student progress in achieving goals. We found that the school staff did not consistently complete progress reports on student goals for students with intensive needs as often as expected.

Also school staff did not always keep evidence of parent sign-off

on progress reports. For the 36 files of students with intensive needs we tested, 63 per cent of files did not contain a progress report for the first term of the 2017-18 school year. Further, 52 per cent of the 2016-17 year-end progress reports were not signed by parents or were not signed off at all. Not having documented progress reports, including student progress against goals, increases the risk of differences of opinion on progress of students with intensive needs.

On page 175 we recommend Saskatoon School Division centrally monitor whether schools sufficiently support kindergarten to grade 8 students with identified intensive needs to enable students to work towards their individual learning goals.

The division does not formally monitor on a division-wide basis or on a school-by-school basis whether it is meeting the identified needs of kindergarten to grade 8 students with intensive needs. Of the 36 files we tested, one student was receiving less support than what was outlined by the student's assessment. Upon further examination of the allocation of educational assistants within that school, we found the school had not allocated those educational assistants based on the assessed needs of its students. That is, it had provided other students assessed as having lesser needs with educational assistants before the student we tested.

The division does not require schools to report whether students with intensive needs are progressing against goals as expected. Such information would help the division determine whether it's providing sufficient support to students with intensive needs. The information would also help the division evaluate deployment of resources to schools to support those students.

In our 11th recommendation, on page 177 we recommend the Saskatoon School Division provide senior management and its board of education with enough information to determine the sufficiency of learning supports for kindergarten to grade 8 students with intensive needs. Senior management and the board receive high-level, activity-based information instead of results-based information about intensive learning support programs. The reports do not indicate whether the intensive needs support programs or schools are sufficiently meeting the identified needs of students.

Although division staff centrally monitor wait-lists for its specialized programs, management and the board did not receive written reports about waitlists for the division's specialized programs, or the trends in the number of students with intensive needs, or types of their needs. Receiving information on intensive learning support programs would enable senior management and the board of education to evaluate whether the division is meeting its legal obligation with respect to students with intensive needs. That concludes my presentation.

**The Chair:** — Thanks for the presentation. Deputy Minister, would you care to offer some comments, or should we open it up for questions?

**Mr. Currie:** — Just offer some comments to start. Thank you very much.

So Saskatoon Public School Division has seen its number of kindergarten to grade 8 students with intensive needs increasing.

And we are pleased that the auditor concluded that for the 12-month period ending December 31st, 2017 that Saskatoon Public School Division had effective processes to support the learning of students in kindergarten to grade 8 with intensive needs.

Of the 11 recommendations made by the auditor, the school division notes that progress has been made on all of the recommendations. The school division has fully implemented three of the recommendations and has partially implemented the remaining eight. And some of the recommendations, as one would appreciate, involve a significant amount of work and also require time to collect and analyze the data. The school division anticipates that they will have all of the recommendations fully implemented by January 2021.

**The Chair:** — Thank you for that response. We'll open up for questions at this time. Ms. Mowat.

[14:00]

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thanks. I guess we'll start on page 157, the first page of the chapter. In the opening remarks the Provincial Auditor provides the percentage of K through 8 [kindergarten through grade 8] students in Saskatoon public schools that were identified as having intensive needs. So in 2016-2017 it was 7.3 per cent. We know that the number is increasing, but I'm wondering if we can get an assessment of what that number looked like for 2017-2018 and 2018-2019.

**Mr. Currie:** — As has been noted, the '16-17 percentage was 7.3. We are still working to determine the specific numbers for the '17-18 and '18-19 years.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. Thank you. And so the same can be said for the forecast for the future, I assume, is that the forecasted numbers, we're not quite there yet in terms of being able to forecast?

**Mr. Currie:** — Correct.

**Ms. Mowat:** — We are going to continue with the assumption that need is increasing though?

**Mr. Currie:** — We will continue with that.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. Without having the numbers in front of us . . .

**Mr. Currie:** — We will continue with that.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. And that's certainly what I've heard anecdotally as well. But I just haven't seen any numbers, so I just wanted to check on that. In terms of province-wide though, the number of students with intensive needs, is there a way of us comparing the Saskatoon Public to what's happening with the rest of the province?

**Mr. Currie:** — There is. There are mechanisms to make those respective comparisons.

**Ms. Mowat:** — So they were at 7.3 per cent in 2016-2017. What does the province-wide average look like?

**Mr. Currie:** — I'd like to return that information at another time. We don't have that with us right now.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. I've heard that if folks are living in rural areas and know that supports can be provided in bigger centres, that that can sometimes be an incentive for the families to move. So I would suspect that it's a little bit higher, but we'll look forward to seeing some of those numbers.

Is there anticipation that those numbers will continue to grow within the school division as well, based on the fact that the children's hospital is opening up?

**Mr. Benning:** — My name is Garry Benning. I'm CFO [chief financial officer] for Saskatoon Public Schools. So to answer your question, yes we foresee increased growth with the children's hospital coming in. We don't have the numbers yet because it just opened up recently. But we do have care homes in the city of Saskatoon, probably like Regina does, where people from outside the city come and stay there. So that adds to our numbers. But I can tell you that Saskatoon Public as a whole, we grow by about 2 per cent per year. But within that, intensive needs is growing a lot faster and then there's different levels of needs that are required.

**Ms. Mowat:** — In terms of the levels of needs and the challenge within Saskatoon Public specifically, can you speak to how John Dolan School interacts with this equation?

**Mr. Benning:** — For those who may not know, John Dolan is a unique school. It's kind of a blend between health and education because there is hospital beds in there, IVs [intravenous]. And actually we've got a special-needs playground there that's been donated too, so we can have children in wheelchairs actually go on swings.

So what was the question again about John Dolan?

**Ms. Mowat:** — It seems to me that it would put Saskatoon public in a unique position, given the fact that the school is delivering education with high-intensive-needs students.

**Mr. Benning:** — Yes, that's correct.

**Ms. Mowat:** — In terms of, just broadly, a little bit about the need increasing, perhaps this is a question for the deputy minister. Is there an assessment overall on why we have more students with intensive needs and is there some sort of analysis happening at the provincial level?

**Mr. Currie:** — In connection with our school divisions we are continuing to look and monitor the needs that are presenting themselves of intensive-needs students throughout the province. And in those conversations with our school divisions as to the uniqueness of areas of the province which may be referenced, i.e. as already been spoken to here that Saskatoon has the resources that other centres may not, so that might draw more families and children to their respective school divisions.

So I don't believe it's one size fits all, that there are elements within each community or respective communities where there may be the resources available that would draw families there. So we continue to have conversations, through the reflection of

annual reports of school divisions as well as their allocation of resources, how they attend to those supports for learning and how they are responding to the needs that present themselves.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. In terms of the funding formula and how funding is allocated, how does that work with respect to the percentage of children with intensive needs in different school divisions?

**Mr. Currie:** — As part of the provincial funding formula, we have in excess of \$250 million that are allocated to the supports for learning. And these resources are distributed to the respective school divisions based on demographics, based on student enrolment, and the school divisions will then distribute those resources within their division based on the needs that have been identified. We continue to monitor this allocation and this distribution of resources and the use of resources on an annual basis to respond and to provide as best as can be with the resources and the uniqueness of individual communities.

**Ms. Mowat:** — So Saskatoon Public is tracking their IS [intensive supports] numbers. Is that true of other divisions as well? Or how does that look in terms of the ability to centrally monitor going forward?

**Mr. Currie:** — Thank you for the question. Yes, all school divisions are expected to monitor and identify their intensive needs students and the needs of those students.

**Ms. Mowat:** — So potentially, once those numbers get ironed out and this monitoring is stabilized a little bit, there would be an opportunity to use those IS numbers and forecasts, and for that to be reflected in the funding formula in the future rather than a broader sort of look at demographics?

**Mr. Jensen:** — The funding formula is designed to take into account past enrolment, projected enrolment, population demographics based on Statistics Canada. So we feel that the funding formula already is addressing the areas that intensive needs and supports for learning needs to be distributed.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. What demographics are captured that are reflected in the formula that represent this? Maybe I just don't understand.

**Mr. Jensen:** — So those would be the demographics identified through Statistics Canada, through the information that's gathered through the various environmental scans that the province is doing, through population census information to identify the percentages, not necessarily the exact number, but the percentages of the population and where the funding is best suited to be distributed.

**Ms. Mowat:** — I'm just trying to recall back to what types of questions we get asked on the census. Yes, it strikes me that there would be some room for, if we had this information locally, for it to be factored in because I suspect that a school division has more information about the learning needs of my child than, like Stats Canada when I'm doing my census. My fictional child . . . I don't have a real child; I don't think dogs count. But yes, it strikes me that there might be more availability of information there. That's not really a question; it's a comment. Okay. I was wondering if you were going to respond anymore, but I can move

on to another question.

**Mr. Currie:** — I have one more thing. The funding formula allows for the aspect of the unconditional funding for supports for learning and the utilization of resources. So they can respond to known and unanticipated needs that present themselves throughout the school year. So that's another element of the formula that enables flexibility there to address that. And then each year, as one knows, that information is then solicited and understood by the ministry in the work with the school divisions. So when we draft the next year's information regarding resources, that's taken into account as to what the specific school division needs are.

**Ms. Mowat:** — On page 166 where it's talking about better forecasting, it mentions that division management indicated they expect about 5 to 7 per cent of students enrolled to have intensive needs. I'm wondering where these assumptions come from.

**Mr. Benning:** — So it's based on previous years and then extrapolating forward in pre-K to 12 [pre-kindergarten to grade 12].

**Ms. Mowat:** — There's a discussion about staffing on page 167, that the increase in the number of intensive needs students has outpaced the increase in staff providing these supports. Is this a matter of resources? Or what would you attribute this to?

[14:15]

**Mr. Benning:** — Yes, to be resource driven.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. And is there a plan to be able to address this concern going forward if we see the increasing demand coming?

**Mr. Currie:** — We recognize that resources are required to address the needs. And the work of the Saskatoon Public School Division is utilizing the resources that have been made available to them through the funding formula to address the needs that they have. And so it's an annual situation where the resource-based allocations will enable and . . . as best structured can be to respond to the needs. I think that the question posed was, would more resources enable? And that's a very interesting question, and it's one that . . . We work with the resources that we have to enable the best programming possible.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. In terms of one-on-one EA [educational assistant] support, there's a couple of different times that it's mentioned in the chapter here. So the first one is on page 164:

One-on-one support assigns a specific educational assistant to a student on a full-time basis. The Division processes and approves requests for one-on-one support centrally.

And then again on page 168, sorry, in figure 10 it talks about the number of K through 8 students requiring one-on-one EA support. It shows that it's increased from 2015 through 2018. Is there a number for what that student number looked like in 2018-2019?

**Mr. Currie:** — Thank you for the question. The reference there

on page 168 shows the kindergarten to grade 8 student numbers as you can see there for 204. What we have are the kindergarten through to grade 12 numbers which have increased. But I don't have them broken down into the same K to 8 that's been referenced here.

**Ms. Mowat:** — But there's still a trend of increasing pre-K to 12.

**Mr. Currie:** — Correct.

**Ms. Mowat:** — What did that number look like over the past three years, then? Like if you had that number in front of you, I'll hear that one if that's okay.

**Mr. Currie:** — We have the number of 391 for 2019-20.

**Ms. Mowat:** — '19-20. And what was it like a few, three years prior? Like '18-19?

**Mr. Currie:** — For '18-19 we have 352.

**Ms. Mowat:** — '17-18?

**Mr. Currie:** — 336.

**Ms. Mowat:** — And what about '16-17? Do you have that?

**Mr. Currie:** — 315.

**Ms. Mowat:** — 315. Okay. On to the issue of inconsistent entry of student information in terms of the ability to see trends and changes. I'm wondering if someone can speak to what the obstacle was here in terms of being able to consistently record student information. I'm looking at the second . . . It's right above the second recommendation on page 169.

**Ms. Sajtos:** — I'm Gail Sajtos with Saskatoon Public Schools. You're asking about the categories and analyzing trends in category, or documenting in the learning plans?

**Ms. Mowat:** — Yes, documenting in the learning plans, yes.

**Ms. Sajtos:** — Right, so the learning plans or the IIPs [inclusion and intervention plan]. Because we have moved over the last few years into the Clevr software as a way to maintain those learning plans, in some situations I think there was issues around people understanding the format and then recording progress. Some of the term 1 progress reports were not found because we had four tabs on the Clevr software, but we have three reporting periods. And so some people, rather than using term 1, term 2, and end of year, were using 2, 3, and end of year. So there was just a lot of inconsistency with the move to the software. So we have done a lot of work to make sure that people consistently are recording those accurately.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. So you'd say it's a learning curve in terms of being able to utilize the new software?

**Ms. Sajtos:** — That's right.

**Ms. Mowat:** — And that's what it was attributed to?

**Ms. Sajtos:** — That's right.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. When we look at page 172 just as it regards the sixth recommendation, so we're talking about expected timelines for assessments. Here it was noted that it typically takes between four to six weeks to complete a speech-language assessment and 6 to 10 weeks for a psychologist assessment. Is this still a comparable wait time for these assessments within the division?

**Ms. Sajtos:** — Yes. No, we're always trying to do things in a more timely fashion. And of course we take note of that. In that gold standard of the 10 days, often that's found in the United States where caseloads are quite a bit lower. Our speech-language pathologists and educational psychologists do more than just assessment, and so they do consultation, parent meeting, interviews, professional development. So we are aiming for a 20-day turnaround as opposed to the 10, and we're feeling like that's fair.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Would you say you're getting closer to that now that . . .

**Ms. Sajtos:** — Yes. We're kind of in that stage of doing that since the audit. I don't have the information from the other coordinators how that looks, but they are keeping stats to monitor that, and so we should be able to know by the end of the year how that looks now.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. And what would you say are the barriers to achieving more timely assessments?

**Ms. Sajtos:** — Well I think it's a number of things. One is caseloads are quite high. Each of these consultants, support services consultants, have a number of schools and every student within that school could be a potential candidate for assessment. And so that's why they do a lot of the prioritization rubrics and things to determine who will get those assessments in a timely manner. Otherwise the referrals would just pile up.

So I think it's caseload, number of people to do the requested work, plus we like to do a more . . . We don't want these people to just do assessments and have no programming come out of it, and so they do devote some of their time to the programming, staff development, communication with parent, and so we don't want to lose those elements either.

**Ms. Mowat:** — You mentioned caseloads. What would a typical caseload look like for a speech language pathologist and ed psych?

**Ms. Sajtos:** — If it's okay, I'd prefer to check with the coordinator who oversees those consultants and get that information to you, because I don't know it.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Sure, if we could get it back, that would be excellent.

I'm just about done here. In terms of recommendation no. 3, I'm just seeing on the status update that the timeline for implementation . . . So I'm looking at, we recommend that they document its determination of staff needed to support K through 8 students with intensive needs. The timeline for implementation

is January 2021. I'm just wondering, is this because the other data that needs to be collected won't be in place before that? Or what's the timeline for it being pushed back?

**Ms. Sajtos:** — There's a few layers to this. So we do have the rubric for the elementary resource teachers as you see. So we've been using that for several years. So that one is obviously done. We're trying to refine the EA determinations for that staff component, and as you can see, a lot of our data over the years — and the auditors would concur that this was a frustration — has been collected from the pre-K to 12. And so we're, in the context of this, going to K to 8.

We're also trying to find ways to use the new Clevr software so it's automated and it's generated easily and accurately for some of the EA requests and that kind of thing.

As far as the support services consultants, the SLPs [speech-language pathologist] and the ed psychs, they are trying to do some work around determining how to even come up with a formula, if you want to say that. And I think that's going to be a difficult task to find something that represents what could be a useful ratio of staff to student that can actually be afforded. So I think that will be the harder piece and that's why we give the longer timeline. Some of these will be easier. Some will probably take a little more thoughtful reflection, I think.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Just as you're . . . In your question there was a commitment to get information back to the table, and thank you very much for that. Just so you're aware, the Committee Clerk will supply sort of the process to that, where to send it, and it'll be part of the record. Thank you.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. My last question. So on page 177, the last page of the chapter, it says, "For example, we found that in February 2018, the Division requested funding for additional educational assistants to support students with intensive needs." I'm wondering if this funding was provided when it was requested.

**Mr. Currie:** — Thank you for the question. The division, as is referenced here, had made a request for additional funding, and if I remember correctly, at that time there was extra money . . . There was additional money made available to all school divisions in terms of staffing. And so while I can't speak with certainty, there would've been extra resources made available to the school division to utilize and potentially address this situation.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. Thank you so much for your patience, Mr. Chair. That's all my questions for this chapter.

**The Chair:** — Any questions? Mr. McMorris.

[14:30]

**Mr. McMorris:** — I just have just a couple questions and you know, you may have answered it. You were flipping back between K to 12 and K to 8 and when the last statistics were put together. So it's not necessarily to the Saskatoon Public School Division; it could be to the deputy minister of Education. What

are the last numbers that we have knowing the number of students with special needs within our school system, be it in Saskatoon School Division or in the province?

**Mr. Currie:** — We would have the most accurate and recent numbers of September 30th, 2018.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Right, September of 2018.

**Mr. Currie:** — September 30th.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Not June of 2019?

**Mr. Currie:** — For reconciliation purposes?

**Mr. McMorris:** — Well we just would have, I mean, the intake would be in September that you finish . . . We finished the year in June of 2019. We don't have a hard number sometime through the summer knowing what the 2019 numbers would be? I'm just asking. I don't know. I'm just asking.

**Mr. Currie:** — Our most accurate information would be September 30th, 2018. Our assumption would be that those numbers would have been maintained throughout the year, through to the end of June of 2019. So that's why we wait until the end of September then, to see with certainty whether there's been a change. That's the end of September 30th of any given year is the new enrolment numbers.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Right. And so I guess, and maybe there isn't a need to do a — in lack of a better term — but an exit in June as to what your actual numbers are so you're more accurate going into September of this year.

**Mr. Currie:** — Thank you for the question. We have the enrolment figures of June 30th, I'll say, of any given year and so we can look back to see how those compared to September of any given year. Yes, we do have that.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thanks.

**The Chair:** — Any other questions?

**Ms. Sajtos:** — I have one other bit of information that might be of interest. Every year mid-December we do submit our extraction of number of students with intensive supports to the ministry. So we kind of . . . When I'm comparing annual to annual, I do the mid-December number and that allows for anybody new in the fall to get onto the system and be counted. Other than that, I'm sure divisions do it differently. Since our audit, we do maintain monthly total IS numbers September through June . . . or through May. June is a bit of a wonky month with children everywhere, so some divisions may have that also. But we only submit once a year.

**The Chair:** — I just want to say thank you so much to the Saskatoon School Division for all their work on this front. There's a lot to this chapter and such complexity in your classrooms and classrooms across the province, so this is not easy work. And it's a requirement of *The Education Act* and certainly it's something that . . . It's the kind of education that you want to provide to students.

I think that a fair or interesting audit, whether it was done by the Provincial Auditor or whether it was us in a different way is, you know, making sure we have a better assessment of the actual dollars that are coming to divisions when you're talking about intensive needs or that supports for learning, and how that tracks and aligns with the trends and realities in school divisions and the adequacy of those dollars. And that would be I think a very interesting audit and certainly work that we can take on. And of course there's debates beyond this table that we won't have with the good deputy minister who's fulfilling the work with the resources he's allocated, but one we can take on when it comes to budget allocation with the minister responsible.

Thanks to all that are involved in this very challenging work and I would say, you know, commonly heard across the province, short of the resources that are required. So thanks for the work that you do.

Looking at the recommendations, I think we have some that have been implemented, that there's compliance in place. Recommendations 4, 6, and 8 I believe have been identified. I'd certainly welcome a motion that we concur and note compliance with those recommendations. Ms. Lambert. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That's carried. With respect to recommendations 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, and 11, I'd welcome a motion that we concur and note progress. Mr. Weekes. Great to hear from you; good to see you. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That's carried. Okay. Well thank you to the Saskatoon School Division for their time here today and their attention. Thanks for all those within the division as well for their work on this front in classrooms every day and throughout the community.

We'll shift our attention to . . . Oh, you know what we'll do? I'm told by the Clerk we're going to take a brief recess. We don't have any more reports with new recommendations, so we can't assure . . . Ms. Mowat always has good questions, so I'm not sure of the pace of the rest. It might move along a little bit quicker on some fronts. So we'll take a five-minute recess, and I see Deputy Minister Currie has a comment he'd like to make.

**Mr. Currie:** — I might have a few of our school division personnel leave, so I'd just like to acknowledge and thank them for making their presence known and be able to respond to some questions too. So I want to thank them and acknowledge them. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Thanks so much. All right. Brief recess.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

[14:45]

**The Chair:** — Okay, we'll reconvene the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. We'll reconvene at this point and we'll turn our attention to chapter 44, procuring goods and services. Again the attention on this one is the Saskatoon School Division No. 13.

I'll turn it over to the Provincial Auditor's office for their presentation. We'll go from there.

**Mr. St. John:** — Thank you. Chapter 44 of our 2018 report volume 2 on pages 293 to 296 reports the results of our second follow-up on the Saskatoon school division's progress towards addressing five original recommendations we made in our 2014 audit related to its procurement processes. The committee has already previously considered and agreed to these recommendations.

By August 2018, Saskatoon Public improved its procurement processes by implementing four of the five remaining recommendations and was working on the final recommendation. The division had yet to follow its established procedures to check the validity of new suppliers. It did not complete due diligence checklists for 40 per cent of the new suppliers we tested. Not following the established procedures to check the validity of new suppliers increases the risk of having inappropriate suppliers within its financial system. Use of inappropriate suppliers increases the risk of making fraudulent payments. That concludes my presentation.

**The Chair:** — Thanks for the presentation. Do you care to provide a brief response? And then otherwise we'll open it up for questions.

**Mr. Currie:** — Very briefly. Thanks to the Chair for this opportunity. We are pleased that the auditor found in their second follow-up audit on this topic that the Saskatoon Public School Division had implemented four of the five outstanding recommendations. And we're also pleased to note that the school division has taken steps as of October 2018 to address the final outstanding recommendation. Open it up for questions.

**The Chair:** — Sure. Thank you very much. And thanks for all the actions that have been detailed here for us as well by the Saskatoon school division. I'll open it up for questions. Ms. Mowat.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. So with regards to the final recommendation that wasn't noted implemented by the auditor but is being noted as implemented in the status update, I'm wondering if you can speak to what some of the challenges were or are here in terms of the due diligence checklist not being completed.

**Mr. Benning:** — There's not really any excuse for that. It should've been done and wasn't. And steps have been taken to ensure that won't happen again.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay, so it was just something that . . .

**Mr. Benning:** — It was an omission.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Yes, an omission you weren't aware of until the auditor pointed it out and then kind of got to work on it and have since been able to remedy it.

**Mr. Benning:** — Yes.

**Ms. Mowat:** — And I see in this status update that there's a bit of an update in terms of what actions have been taken on this

front. So it says you've set up a two-stage vendor set-up process that has been established.

**Mr. Benning:** — Yes, two stages. So purchasing clerk reviews it, enters the information, compiles it, checks to make sure the website's authentic, phone number, and if it's local in the city of Saskatoon they do a drive-by to confirm that the business does exist. And then that's reviewed by the procurement manager. So hopefully we have it covered off now.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. Thank you. And those are all my questions, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Thanks for the direct answers as well and the work. Question period would be boring if that was the approach folks took in question period. But thanks again for all the work on this front and for the time that you've shared with us here this afternoon.

Not seeing any other questions and we don't have any new recommendations here, I'd ask a member to move that we conclude considerations of chapter 44. Mr. Fiaz. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That's carried. We'll move along to chapter 14 and I'll turn it over to the Provincial Auditor.

**Mr. St. John:** — Chapter 14 of our 2018 report volume 1 is on pages 203 to 212. This reports the results of our second follow-up of the Ministry of Education and five school division management's actions towards addressing seven recommendations directed to the ministry and 15 recommendations directed to five school divisions.

We initially made these recommendations in our 2012 audit related to improving their processes to safely transport students. The committee has previously considered and agreed to these recommendations.

I am pleased to report that by January 2018 the ministry had implemented all seven recommendations and the five school divisions had implemented all 15 of their recommendations. That concludes my presentation.

**The Chair:** — Thanks so much for the presentation, the focus of your work, and thanks of course for the work that's implemented these recommendations. We know it might be a quick report, but there's a whole lot of work to make that happen. I'll turn it over to Deputy Minister Currie if he has some brief remarks. Otherwise we'll open it up for questions.

**Mr. Currie:** — We are pleased again that the auditor found in their second follow-up audit on this topic that all the remaining recommendations for the ministry and the five school divisions that were included in this audit have been fully implemented. We sincerely appreciate the great work done by the school divisions, taking these recommendations seriously, and acknowledge the work of the five school divisions along with the ministry staff, to address and implement all of these recommendations.

**The Chair:** — Questions. Ms. Mowat.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's certainly good to see when there's implementation widely across the board. So I won't spend too much time on this chapter as we're not looking at any new recommendations here. On page 205, close to the bottom of the page, there's a discussion about the — at the time — new transportation funding formula for the 2017-18 school year. It says that it bases the majority of urban transportation funding on walking distances of 0.5 kilometres for pre-K, 1 kilometre for kindergarten to grade 8. I know that there have been a number of questions that I've received about how the funding formula was determined, so I'm wondering what the decisions to determine these distances were based on.

**Mr. Currie:** — I would respond by . . . I would like to get back with certainty as to the response. There are a couple of issues that drove this — pun intended — drove this situation. One is that at that time there was a review of the funding formula, the work that was done with the ministry and also with school divisions, and that information was shared by school divisions on how they had existing structures in place and efficiencies that might be considered or realized should there be consistency in terms of transportation distances. But there had been a review significantly of the funding formula at that time and I believe that that was a major impetus of these numbers that you see before you.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. I was just wondering in terms of, there's discussion about a transportation working group survey and consultation, so I was just curious if any of those were drivers of decision making.

**Mr. Currie:** — Yes, yes they were. Again consultation and engagement with the school divisions to understand, and there had been smaller group conversations that had taken place, whether they be urban or rural.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. That concludes my questions, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Any other questions from committee members? Not seeing any, I would welcome a motion that we conclude consideration of chapter 14. Moved by Mr. Weekes. All agreed? That's carried.

We'll move our attention to chapter 23 and I think it involves the North East School Division.

**Mr. St. John:** — Chapter 23 of our 2018 report volume 1 is on pages 263 to 266. This reports the results of our first follow-up on North East School Division's progress towards addressing five recommendations we initially made in our 2016 audit related to the processes to increase the percentage of grade 3 students reading at grade level. The committee has previously considered and agreed to these recommendations. By January 2018 the division had implemented four of the five recommendations and partially implemented one.

Key improvements included the following: North East has documented all of its key risks and strategies for managing its risks related to increasing the percentage of grade 3 students reading at grade level. It also developed sufficient guidance for exempting students from provincial reading level assessments, and it publicly provides data analysis of grade 3 student reading

levels in its annual report and through publicly accessible board of education meeting packages.

However the division had not yet evaluated the effectiveness of one of its two tools it uses to assess student reading levels. Evaluating the effectiveness of assessment tools reduces the risk that teachers and students are inefficient and spend time on assessments that do not help to significantly increase student reading levels. That concludes my presentation.

**The Chair:** — Thanks for the presentation. Deputy Minister Currie, do you care to respond?

**Mr. Currie:** — Thank you. The school division does continue to work towards implementing the outstanding recommendation, with the goal to have this recommendation fully implemented by March 2020. And I'd also like to give recognition to North East School Division, which was just referenced in the local media here within the last week, in their reports to the board as to how they are meeting this outcome that was identified and the progressive work that they have realized over the last number of years as a result of the focus and the work with the auditor on this recommendation.

**The Chair:** — Great. Questions from committee members? Ms. Mowat.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. In terms of a grade 3 reading level . . . So there's a note from the auditor here that in June 2017, 74 per cent of North East grade 3 students were reading at or above grade level. So it's noting the improvement from June 2015. Do we have the number for 2018 as well?

**Mr. Currie:** — We do. I will have to get that for you. I don't have it off the top of my head but we do have that number.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. That would be great to see. In terms of sort of how they compare, it's evident that there's an improvement to themselves in the past but what about across the rest of the province? Do we know what the reading levels look like for grade 3 across the province?

**Mr. Currie:** — We are in the midst of having that data analyzed from the results of June 2019 and so we are in that process. Anecdotally though, from last year there are a number of school divisions who have seen increases, and there are a few school divisions who have maintained their existing levels of reading levels at grade 3. So we're in the process of just finalizing that information now that will be made available as a result of the assessments that were provided in June of 2019.

[15:00]

**Ms. Mowat:** — If those numbers aren't available, what about for 2018, the average across the province percentages? Is that available?

**Mr. Currie:** — The average of 2018 at the end of June was 74.8 per cent.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay, so we saw . . . Yes. So this is putting North East basically on par with the rest of the province, is what we're looking at here. Has there been a change, has there been much



change across the province in the years prior to that? So we had 74.8 in 2018. What did 2017 and 2016 look like?

**Mr. Currie:** — You're testing my memory. When I go back, we have started, as is referenced here, 65 per cent provincially from back in . . . It was 2013 was provincially 65 per cent. It moved up, I believe, in three years later to 70 per cent and then has crept through to 74 per cent two years ago and then last year the 74.8.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. So in terms of . . . There's a goal here of 80 per cent of grade 3 students reaching grade level by 2020 in the education sector strategic plan. So it would be safe to say we're not quite there yet. Again I'm on page 263.

**Mr. Currie:** — Right. At the moment, we are not at the 80 per cent. We are, as I've mentioned before, looking to finalize the data that we have from June of 2019 and then respond accordingly to how can we look to realize or aspire to realize our goal of 80 per cent in June of 2020.

**Ms. Mowat:** — And in terms of lessons learned within North East School Division, is there any discussion about taking some of the successes that they've seen and applying it to the broader province? Or is it sort of something that needs to be looked at on a division-by-division basis?

**Mr. Currie:** — There's a group that's been established since 2013, beginning of 2014, the provincial leadership. And these are the directors of education from our 27 — at the time 28 school divisions, now 27 — as well as our First Nations education authorities. And the establishment of that group was to share promising and best practices throughout the province. So there is an expectation that there is a response and there is time spent reflecting upon successful and promising practices from any school division and enabling and assisting those that are looking for opportunities to advance their reading levels too.

So there is in existence a structure right now that meets a number of times a year to review existing structures, promising practices, and a sharing of those so that school divisions can solicit and seek out opportunities of growth, a learning for growth, and also for opportunities of school divisions to share what has been an established structure that is seeing benefits for the student learning.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. I have no further questions, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Thank you so much. No further questions? I'd certainly thank the North East School Division for their work on this front, and I would welcome a motion to conclude consideration of chapter 23. Mr. Olauson moves. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — It's carried. We'll move along to chapter 24 and I'll turn it over to the auditor's office.

**Mr. St. John:** — Chapter 24 of our 2018 report volume 1 on pages 267 to 270 reports the results of our first follow-up of Prairie South School Division's progress towards addressing four recommendations we made in our 2015 audit of its board's processes to equip itself with the knowledge and competencies

necessary to govern the division. The committee had previously considered and agreed to these recommendations.

By January of 2018 the division had implemented all four of the recommendations we made. Prairie South set out the baseline knowledge and competencies necessary for the board to govern the division and began maintaining a listing of the competencies possessed by its board members, individually and collectively. Prairie South gave board members opportunities to learn from each other by deliberately partnering experienced board members with lesser experienced ones. In addition, the board Chair monitored whether the board is addressing gaps in individual and collective board knowledge and competencies. Board members periodically self-assess their knowledge and competencies, the results of which help the board determine its progress in developing governance knowledge and competencies. That ends my presentation.

**The Chair:** — Thanks so much. Deputy Minister Currie.

**Mr. Currie:** — I'd like to concur. We acknowledge the significant efforts that Prairie South School Division has made to address and implement all of the recommendations.

**The Chair:** — Noted for sure, so thank you to them. Questions from committee members? Not seeing any, I'd welcome a motion to conclude consideration of chapter 24. Ms. Lambert. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That's carried. We'll move along to chapter 25 and I'll turn it back over to the Provincial Auditor and her office.

**Mr. St. John:** — Chapter 25 of our 2018 report volume 1 starts on page 271. This reports the results of our first follow-up of Regina school division's progress towards addressing five recommendations we initially made in 2013 related to the processes to promote positive student behaviour. The committee has previously considered and agreed to these recommendations.

Positive student behaviour facilitates student success at schools and provides a safe learning environment. By March 2018 the division had implemented two of the five recommendations and partially implemented the remaining three. Annually the division communicates to staff its training expectations on key initiatives to promote and support positive student behaviour. The division implemented software to track which school staff are trained in these key initiatives.

In 2017-18 the division started collecting data on behaviour incidents and supports. It plans to use this information to determine goals related to student behaviour. Once its goals are determined, the division plans to report to its board of education on the overall success of initiatives to promote positive student behaviour.

The division had yet to complete its review of administrative procedures related to student behaviour. As of March 2018 the division has reviewed and updated five of the nine administrative procedures. Periodic review of administrative procedures helps ensure continuing relevance and applicability. The division had not yet required consistent and accessible documentation of key

discussions, decisions, and steps taken to support positive student behaviour as it relates to addressing attendance issues.

During the '16-17 school year, while it improved documentation in its IT systems to monitor student behaviour, schools did not consistently document contact and communications with parents related to attendance issues. Without documentation regarding actions to address attendance issues, the division may have difficulty monitoring steps taken to promote attendance. That concludes my presentation.

**The Chair:** — The public might be observing that there's a fair amount of irony in sort of the parliament having someone report to them about positive behaviour. We probably could take a few lessons from the Regina Public School Division. But thank you for the report. Thank you as well for being here today. I'd turn it over to Deputy Minister Currie for brief remarks and then open up for questions.

**Mr. Currie:** — We do recognize the importance of promoting positive student behaviour and concur with the auditor that poor behaviour can affect a student's success rate. We are pleased that the auditor found in their follow-up audit that the Regina Public School Division had improved some of its processes to promote positive student behaviour. And as noted in the status update, since the follow-up audit, the Regina Public School Division has taken steps to fully implement the remaining three recommendations.

**The Chair:** — Thanks so much, and thanks to Regina Public for all the work on this front. I'll open it up for questions. Ms. Mowat.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you, and thanks for providing the status update as well. In terms of the first recommendation that we have in front of us, on page 272, "that Regina School Division . . . review and update policies . . . on a regular basis as its policy expects," when the Provincial Auditor was going back to create this 2018 report it was noted that it had been partially implemented but on the status update it says that it's fully implemented now.

The note from 2018 was that:

We found that of the nine administrative procedures related to student behaviour, the Division updated five, with two of those procedures updated twice in the past five years. For the other four procedures, the Division has not yet prioritized the procedures for review . . . [and had] last reviewed these procedures approximately 10 years ago.

I understand that there is a process that has been implemented. I'm wondering if you can speak to what obstacles existed in terms of implementation here, and then what the process looks like now.

**Mr. Enion:** — Thank you. Greg Enion, director of education with Regina Public Schools. I think the obstacle in this work is in total we have 181 admin procedures, and so we do ongoing work each year with those procedures. But what the auditor suggested is that we put in an annual review process where at one time we review all 181 admin procedures. So we have put that in place. Obviously we would not be updating all of those

procedures in one year. We're usually doing about 30 to 40 in one year. So we're trying to be more proactive on looking at all procedures and reviewing them each year.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. In terms of not having the capacity to . . . How many procedures did you say?

**Mr. Enion:** — 181.

**Ms. Mowat:** — 181. To go through them in a fulsome way, is the intent that certain procedures are prioritized or that it's sort of a . . . there's a work plan over the years as to which ones probably will get updated that year but everything gets a cursory glance?

**Mr. Enion:** — Yes, that's correct. We did our review this month and we've prioritized about 40 procedures that we're looking at updating during this year and some of our planning staff that have been tasked with doing that work. So they do that work and then that work is returned to our admin executive council for review. And then after they're reviewed by our admin council then they're put in place.

**Ms. Mowat:** — In terms of the two procedures that were updated twice in the past five years, just to provide us with a tangible example of what some of these challenges are, can you speak to what those policies were?

**Mr. Enion:** — Yes. We think those were mostly wording, would have been some changes in some of our wording around we had some restructuring of departments. As well we have implemented, as Saskatoon Public had mentioned earlier about, the Clevr student system. We've implemented that. So we're thinking that the majority of those changes were around wording with some of the changes with departments and delivery.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. I'm just wondering if the Provincial Auditor's office remembers anything more. Sometimes they have a keen memory on these things.

**Ms. Ferguson:** — It seems like in this case we don't. But we do . . . We are supportive of taking an approach where you prioritize, you know, all of your procedures and then create a plan from there. So you know, it's not an expectation that you'd review all of them in a given year. But you do take a priority approach and make sure everything's prioritized and then you're managing in that regard.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. Later on, on page 273 it says, "The Division has determined that key initiatives to promote and support positive student behaviour are Mandt training and Violence Threat Risk Assessment." Has the division noticed any increase in violent incidents?

**Mr. Enion:** — No. I don't think that there's been an overall increase. We're doing a lot of proactive work with many community partners around the violent threat risk assessment protocol. In the city of Regina we've implemented, I guess, a community protocol where we work very closely with those human service partners.

So we have seen some increase, and I don't have the number in front of me, but we have seen some increase with the number of

reports to the VTRA [violent threat risk assessment] protocol. But that's to be expected. When a new protocol is put in place, people are more diligent around making reports. But we're feeling that our community is safer because this protocol has been put in place and it's something we're very proud of.

[15:15]

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. In terms of being able to measure positive student behaviour, what sort of indicators do you use to indicate that you're on the right track, that there's a positive learning environment and so on?

**Mr. Enion:** — Yes, well one of the things that I report to are a board of trustees. Each year there's a number of student suspensions, so we take a look at everything from one-day to 10-day suspensions. I provide data on that, and our admin team looks at that each year and see if there are any trends. Certainly our school superintendents with their school teams would also be looking at incident reports and looking at if there are trends that we should be working on.

So one of the things that comes to mind is that certainly we're having many students that are experiencing challenges with mental health and anxiety. So we're putting increased energy into trying to help with some programming for those students that are experiencing that. So that's something that's really important as a school division that you currently look at what is happening in those trends and try to put actions in place to help remediate it.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. Any indicators that come directly from the students themselves? Any feedback that comes directly from them?

**Mr. Enion:** — Yes. We hold two annual student forums where we would have approximately 75 to 100 students come in, and we do focus sessions with those students, ask those students for their input. So we have one forum that's for high school students and we have another forum that's for students of Indigenous ancestry. And our trustees and administration attend those and then also review all the data collected through those focus sessions.

And that's one of the things that we look at when we anticipate changes as we go forward. And that's certainly the example that I gave previously about mental health and well-being. That was feedback that you see through those student forums that that certainly was an increasing challenge for students and their peers.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Do you have in-house folks that run those forums, or is that something that's contracted out?

**Mr. Enion:** — Yes. No, we would have our staff run those. We have two superintendents that are in charge of organizing the forums, and then we would have staff that would lead that work.

**Ms. Mowat:** — In terms of the elementary school attendance strategy, I was just wondering if you could speak to where that is at in terms of its development and what it looks like.

**Mr. Enion:** — Yes. The deputy and I were just at the annual opening luncheon for the United Way of Regina, so we've worked very closely with the United Way of Regina on

Attendance Matters campaign. And we have put forward a poster campaign, a social media campaign, and then we have built in a number of different incentive programs at the elementary level, so everything from students having the opportunity to win a bike if their attendance improves to, you know, other smaller incentive programs. So we have some community partners and sponsors that are involved in that work, and again the United Way of Regina has been very supportive as well through their campaigns.

And we continue to try to put a huge emphasis on that, because we know attendance is directly attached to achievement. And when you look at — as talked about in one of the previous audits — when you look at reading results, if you look at the reading results and you compare it to the students' attendance, there is quite direct alignment. So that's something that we've felt has been very important and we've put a lot of energy into that in the last several years.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. Is there any evidence that the attendance strategy is making a difference? Have you seen movement in your attendance numbers?

**Mr. Enion:** — Yes. I'm happy to report that our graduation rate has held strong now at 79 per cent over the last three years, and we've had about a 6 per cent increase from a time period before. And it's directly related to when . . . We believe one of the important factors in that is the work that we've done around attendance. So we've seen, as the time . . . We started our work around attendance in 2013-2014, and since that time we've had a steady increase in graduation rates. So we believe that's one of the factors. There's other things that we've done that's led to the increase in our graduation rate. But we believe the focus on attendance has played an integral role in that.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. That concludes my questions, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Good questions. Thanks for the responses. Any other questions at this time? Ms. Lambert.

**Ms. Lambert:** — Just wondering, when you mentioned suspensions can go up to 10 days, could you give me an example of where you would use a 10-day suspension?

**Mr. Enion:** — Yes. A 10-day suspension would be for a fairly serious incident at a school, so it might be a violent incident and there could be police involvement. And very often we're looking for families to gain some other support, whether that might be through the Health Authority, their family doctor. And so very often a 10-day suspension allows for some of those things to be put in place. And the 10-day suspension as well, sometimes for a violent incident or a serious incident, it allows for some further planning to be put in place by the school division as well on how we can support that student and keep everyone else safe upon their return.

**Ms. Lambert:** — And I just had a comment regarding attendance, and kudos to you for your work in this area. I was in Chicago attending a conference this summer and one of the presentations was, that I attended, was how Chicago had really turned around the results in their education system, which was in dire need of some assistance. And one of their key strategies that

they found to their success was tackling their attendance question, specifically with grade 9. So they've put in a tremendous amount of resources. They say that's the key year as they transition from grade 8 to what we'd call high school. And grade 9 attendance is basically, she said, the number one factor to success in improving their academic performance. So well done.

**Mr. Enion:** — Thank you. I would just add that regular school attendance makes our communities healthier, whether that be for our health regions, for our justice system. We know that when students are in school on a regular basis they have fewer disruptions in their life outside of school.

**The Chair:** — Well thanks so much, Director Enion, Deputy Director Boldt. It's great to have both of you at this table. Thanks to you and all of the entire team across Regina Public for the work on this front and for the time here today. At this point I would welcome a motion to conclude consideration of chapter 25. Ms. Lambert moves. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That's carried. We'll move our attention to chapter 37 and I'll turn it over to the auditor's office.

**Mr. St. John:** — Chapter 37 of our 2018 report volume 2 starts on page 253 and it reports the results of our first follow-up of Regina Roman Catholic School Division's progress towards addressing four recommendations we initially made in our 2016 audit regarding providing English as an additional language programming to support the academic success of immigrant kindergarten to grade 8 students. The committee has previously considered and agreed to these recommendations.

By May 2018 the division had implemented one of our recommendations, partially implemented one, and made no progress on another. We also found that one of our recommendations we believe was no longer relevant. By May 2018 Regina Catholic rationalizes in writing the number of EAL [English as an additional language] staff needed monthly. The division also reviews monthly reports to determine whether it is providing sufficient EAL support. However it had not yet periodically analyzed the results of kindergarten to grade 8 of the EAL program, nor provided its board of education with periodic reports on the success of kindergarten to grade 8 EAL program.

The division's IT system did not have the functionality to compile and report data. Thus management indicated that it plans to start analyzing the results of the EAL program when the new student data system becomes available, and report results to the board at that time.

We also found it no longer relevant for Regina Catholic to annually reassess its estimate of EAL student enrolment. The division does not use its estimated EAL student enrolment to allocate staff. They instead use a reactive approach by allocating EAL staff at the beginning of the school year and reallocating staff as needed.

Thank you. That concludes my presentation.

**The Chair:** — Thanks so much for the presentation. I'll turn it

over to Deputy Minister Currie — I see director Dom back there too; great to see him here today — for brief remarks, and we'll have whatever questions.

**Mr. Currie:** — We are pleased that the auditor found in their follow-up audit that the Regina Catholic School Division had implemented one recommendation, and as has been previously noted, one recommendation was deemed no longer relevant. So since that follow-up audit the division has taken steps to address the two remaining recommendations with a goal of having both fully implemented by 2020.

**The Chair:** — We'll open it up to the committee for questions. Ms. Mowat.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and appreciate the information that's provided in the status update as well in terms of us being able to keep track of where folks are at here. In terms of being able to anticipate demand for English as an additional language programming in Regina Catholic, the auditor noted in this 2018 report that Regina Catholic was responsible for educating about — it's funny that it's an approximation but it's a very specific number — 3,350 EAL students. Can you provide an update on what that number looks like now?

**Ms. Gherasim:** — Hi there. Stacey Gherasim, superintendent of education services for Regina Catholic Schools. As of June 2019, we had 3,727 students designated as EAL learners.

**Ms. Mowat:** — That was as of June, you say?

**Ms. Gherasim:** — Yes.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. And how many EAL teaching positions as of June? Because we had 12.5 at the time that the auditor was creating the report.

**Ms. Gherasim:** — So as of the end of 2018-2019 we had 15 EAL teachers and one full-time EAL instructional assistant.

**Ms. Mowat:** — And would that be the same number of EAL teachers and instructional assistant ... Is that the same complement forecasted for this year?

**Ms. Gherasim:** — Actually we had to increase it. It's an increase of 1.2 teacher FTE and we also increased our consultant allotment. It was at 0.5 FTE for EAL consultant and it is now a 1.0 FTE.

**Ms. Mowat:** — So 1.0, and so the teaching allocation would be 16.2?

**Ms. Gherasim:** — That's right.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. I love the 0.2 allocation. It's like one day a week. Okay, thank you. And that was adapted due to increased demand, I'm assuming.

**Ms. Gherasim:** — Yes.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. In 2017-2018 Regina Catholic spent about 1.2 million on EAL instruction and support staff and 54,000 on other EAL resources. Do you have the allocation for 2018-2019?

**Ms. Gherasim:** — I don't have that allocation. The budget part of it is not my area as much, but we can get those numbers for you for sure.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Sure. We would definitely appreciate that. In terms of resources and allocation, is it safe to say that everything increased though?

**Ms. Gherasim:** — Yes, I would say so, especially with the increase in teachers. We would have an increase in that allotment for sure. Resource allocation would be fairly similar, I would assume, but we can get those exact numbers for you.

[15:30]

**Ms. Mowat:** — In terms of the outstanding recommendation that was deemed no longer relevant, I just want to make sure that I'm clear on why that happened. And maybe this is a question for the Provincial Auditor, because it came through in the report. Is it because these numbers are constantly being reassessed that an annual reassessment is not required? I just wasn't very clear while I was reading through it. Because it seems assessment is happening often based on the actual numbers on the ground, but I just want to get some clarity.

**Ms. Ferguson:** — When we did the audit we made the erroneous assumption that they would use the forecast to rationalize the resources or teaching resources. When we went back and did the follow-up, management made it quite clear to us they don't use that information for decision making in terms of rationalizing the resources. So you know, we didn't want to, frankly, waste management's time gathering information they weren't going to be using.

**Ms. Mowat:** — In the status update there's a discussion about an Excel spreadsheet that's being used to track all of this information, and I would say kudos to you for taking matters into your own hands to make sure you had the ability to track some pretty important resource information. I guess this is probably a question for the deputy minister: is this type of spreadsheet and modelling being utilized in other jurisdictions as well? Or how are EAL supports being tracked across the province? If we see one division coming up with something that works for them, is that being shared across the province?

**Mr. Currie:** — Best practices and promising practices are being shared through the provincial leadership team which is a role-alike gathering of directors of education of our provincial school divisions, all 27 of them. Many times those directors will bring superintendents of responsibility in these respective areas, such as Stacey Gherasim here who has been brought to some of those meetings to learn about it. And the expectation is when these gatherings take place, and they take place five times throughout the year, is that there is a sharing of promising practices.

English as an additional language has been a discussion point and a sharing of opportunities, challenges. It's left up to the interest and devices of the school division as to what methodology will be used to monitor and track. But information has been shared.

**Ms. Mowat:** — So do we have a current number of how many EAL students we have across the province?

**Mr. Currie:** — I would have to get that information back for you.

**Ms. Mowat:** — But it is available. It is something that is being tracked province wide?

**Mr. Currie:** — Yes.

**Ms. Mowat:** — So the Provincial Auditor mentions that the division expects to start analyzing progress of EAL students on an overall basis when a new student data system becomes available for use in the fall of 2019. It seems that we're coming into the fall of 2019 right now so I wanted to know whether this system is becoming available. Because it seems to me that what's being reported in the status update is seen as a temporary solution and the data system is sort of seen as a more permanent solution. Is that correct?

**Mr. Currie:** — We have 13 of our 27 school divisions who have begun using this new student information system this fall with the intent of the remaining 14 coming on board in the fall of 2020, so that we would have all 27 school divisions then utilizing the same student information system. It's called MySchoolSask, and the ministry would be utilizing it as well, the idea being there would be a lot more effective, efficient, and smooth flow of information to support students all across the province and also means of monitoring their respective progress as well for the use of school divisions, classroom teachers, parents, as well as the ministry.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Would this system, MySchoolSask, would it have the same functionality as the Excel system that is being utilized right now?

**Mr. Currie:** — I would say yes and then some, significantly then some.

**Ms. Mowat:** — And so you said 13 out of 27. Is that based on . . . What is that number based on, I guess?

**Mr. Currie:** — The opportunity for divisions to consider onboarding this fall was provided to all school divisions, and recognizing that school divisions were at different places in their use of student information systems. Thirteen at this time felt it was a good fit for them to onboard and pursue this MySchoolSask option, and the other school divisions, for whatever their respective reasons were at the time, chose that there would be a different time frame for them to consider onboarding.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Was this school division one of them?

**Ms. Gherasim:** — We did not move to MySchoolSask this year so we are continuing with the Excel document for this year.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay, thank you. That concludes my questions, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Good questions. Any other questions at this time? Mr. McMorris.

**Mr. McMorris:** — But the assumption is that all school divisions will move to it?

**Mr. Currie:** — The assumption is yes, and then we continue to work with the school divisions to ensure that there's a transition that will meet their existing and future needs. And so we're working in that direction, yes. That would be the benefit and that was the rationale that was part of the driving force for this across the province, student information system being of value for all school divisions. This also came up through the work that was established through the education sector strategic plan, and the provincial leadership team, the PLT, had made a recommendation that this be a focus. And so resources and energies have been put towards it.

We do respect that various school divisions, i.e. Regina Catholic, they're at various places in their respective journeys, so we're looking for timelines that would meet everybody's needs as well as have everybody on this system. That's the intent, as well as a number of options and opportunities for our First Nations educational authorities as well so that all 190,000 students of the province would be able to be on this system.

**Mr. McMorris:** — You know, I would certainly agree with that. I also know that at times with the autonomy of certain divisions that that may be difficult at times. But you would say that there's buy-in from the education system; it's just more of a timing thing than it is we just want to do what we've always been doing?

**Mr. Currie:** — No, I would say that there's a buy-in for this. There's an interest to make sure that it's a seamless and a smooth transition of transference of data and training of personnel as well as preparations in terms of their respective school division scheduling. So there is interest. There is significant . . . All 27 were very much interested in this.

**The Chair:** — Thanks so much to the officials that are here today, superintendent Gherasim and director Dom. Thanks for being here and to everyone across Regina Catholic schools. Certainly the growth in numbers of EAL students is significant and a really important part of our community and our future and our province, so you're doing very important work in the division and thanks to everybody.

I would welcome a motion to conclude consideration of chapter 37. Ms. Lambert. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That's carried. And I think we're around to our last item of the day . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well good Lord, yes. We'll focus in though on to chapter 43 here and we'll just keep moving along with our day. And I'll turn it over at this point to our Provincial Auditor.

**Mr. St. John:** — All right, thank you. Chapter 43 of our 2018 report volume 2 starts on page 289 and reports the results of our second follow-up for Saskatchewan Rivers School Division, progress towards addressing four recommendations we originally made in our 2014 audit of the division's processes to maintain its facilities.

By August 2018 the division had implemented all four recommendations. I'll keep my presentation short. Thanks.

**The Chair:** — No. Good focus, good presentation. Thank you

very much. I'll open it up to Deputy Minister Currie. No rush at all. It's all very important work here so go ahead and offer your remarks and then we'll open it up for questions.

**Mr. Currie:** — Thank you to the Chair. We do acknowledge the work done by Sask Rivers School Division to ensure they have effective processes to maintain their facilities. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. I'll open it up to the committee for questions. Ms. Mowat.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. It's certainly good to see that all of the recommendations have been deemed implemented. I do have a couple of questions. In terms of the facility maintenance priorities for the school division, what are the division's major infrastructure priorities?

**Mr. Currie:** — We would have to respond to you, get back to you with that one, to confer with officials to ensure that we have the priorities as requested accurate.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Sure. In terms of the facility condition index, one of the division's goals was to have the FCI [facility condition index] less than 12 per cent. And at March 2018 the division's facility condition index was 11 per cent. What's the average FCI province wide when we're looking at education facilities?

**Mr. Currie:** — I do have that from infrastructure but I'll have to return with that information.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. Yes, it would just be useful in terms of being able to see how they're doing. What about the estimated deferred maintenance costs for the division?

**Mr. Currie:** — We would have to get back to you on that one as well.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay, and then province-wide as well. Okay, thank you. Those are all my questions, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Good questions, and again we'll make sure the Clerk supplies the process to get that information back to the committee. So thanks for undertaking to get that information back. Any other questions from committee members? I would welcome a motion to conclude consideration of chapter 43.

**Mr. Weekes:** — I so move.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Weekes. All in favour?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That's carried. And thank you as well to the Sask Rivers School Division for all their work on this front here. We will now move along to chapter 32, and I'll turn it over to Trevor from the Provincial Auditor's office.

**Mr. St. John:** — Thank you. Chapter 32 of our 2019 report volume 1 starts on page 305. It reports the results of our first follow-up of Living Sky School Division's progress towards addressing four recommendations we made in our 2017 audit of its processes to engage grade 7 to 12 students. The committee has previously considered and agreed to these recommendations. By

February 2019 the division had implemented two of the four recommendations and partially implemented one and had not implemented the fourth recommendation.

Living Sky obtained input from its Indigenous advisory council to help increase the engagement of First Nations and Métis students. It required its schools to use an action plan template to develop clear and timely responses to the OurSchool survey results for student engagement. Each of the three schools we tested completed their action plans in a timely manner and included specific actions to address priority areas.

However while the division analyzed the year-over-year survey results at the division level, schools did not conduct a year-over-year analysis of the results at the school level. Also the division and schools did not establish interim targets related to the survey results. Establishment of interim targets and in-depth analysis at the school level can help the division to measure the success of specific student engagement initiatives. Doing so may help schools focus their resources on initiatives that are making a difference in student engagement. That concludes my presentation.

**The Chair:** — Thank you for the presentation. I'll turn it over to Deputy Minister Currie for remarks and we'll open it up for questions.

**Mr. Currie:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair, for this opportunity. We are pleased that the auditor has noted in their follow-up audit on this topic that the Living Sky School Division has improved its processes to engage grade 7 to 12 students. And we recognize that having engaged students increases their success rate and positively impacts future employment opportunities for them.

[15:45]

As noted in the status update, since the follow-up audit was completed, the Living Sky School Division has taken steps to implement the remaining recommendations and plans to have recommendations fully implemented by the end of the '19-20 school year.

**The Chair:** — Thank you for the presentation. Thanks for all the work going on out at Living Sky and the report here today. I'll open it up to the committee for questions. Ms. Mowat.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you very much and I bet you would've been very disappointed if we would have turned it in for the day. It's okay; we have to give them our time. It's flipping over a sheet of paper. So I do have a couple of questions here.

So first of all there's a discussion on page 306 of the auditor's report that talks about the division's grade 7 through 12 survey results in 2016-2017, saying that the results were worse than the Canadian norm in terms of a positive sense of belonging, positive relationships, positive homework behaviour, level of anxiety, and level of depression. So clearly Living Sky students are facing a lot of challenges. I'm wondering what type of targeted supports are being provided with these challenges in mind.

**Ms. Lehman:** — Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. My name is Tonya Lehman. I'm a superintendent of learning. We do have many challenges before

us at Living Sky, as many of our school divisions do in the province, and we have put many supports, especially into the area we heard earlier from Regina Public, around the area of mental health.

And we do have many initiatives. One is the mental health pilot that the province has supported in funding. That's begun in the North Battleford area at our comprehensive high school. And we're seeing, you know, lots of support to support our students in the area of mental health.

When we work at our positive relationships — both with one another as student to student and teacher to student — and sense of belonging, that really goes to working on the culture of our communities and developing meaningful relationships with partnerships in our communities and partnerships within our school. And that's a big piece of our strategic plan currently, and we're going into a new strategic plan process. And we'll continue to be hearing from those partners as we move into the future.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. I've had a chance to tour the program in North Battleford so yes, it seems like there's some really good work going on there. You can definitely see in figure 1 that Living Sky is not at the Canadian norm in a number of different areas. So some of them are positive and some of them are negative, so you kind of have to look at each factor to understand which direction the chart should be moving in.

But what it does look like is that there has been some improvement in, it looks like almost all categories, like positive homework behaviour is pretty close. But positive relationships, moderate to high level of anxiety is higher. So that's a challenge and so is high level of depression. But in terms of the positive relationships, there was some improvement there and year to year. And I don't know if it's enough of an improvement for you to be able to forecast or look back and look at a reason why you think that improvement would have existed. But if you had to attribute that to something, what would you say has led to that?

**Ms. Lehman:** — It's been a big piece of our graduation plan as well is that every student has an advocate. That's a piece that we would say has been a critical part; that every student's story is known by our high school staffs and that there's a plan around helping our students that are disengaged become more engaged. And that comes through relationship.

We also work greatly on attendance, trying to ensure that students are attending regularly and again that has to go a lot with the relationships that they have with the adults in the building as well as their families. We've done lots of work around family engagement. We've done some work with Debbie Pushor and helping our 7 to 12 schools move around that family engagement as well.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. Have you seen your attendance rates improve as well?

**Ms. Lehman:** — They're fairly flat right now to be honest. And it continues to be an area that we say is an area that we as a group need to continue to hear about promising practices and things that we can do around that. We also know that we have a K to 6 group of students and families that we need to work with to help develop some strong practices when they move into high school.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. I have a question about the recommendation to establish interim targets related to the OurSchool survey. And then in this status update I see that Living Sky implemented its own engagement survey. So I'm wondering sort of what the rationale is for this deviation or how this evolved.

**Ms. Lehman:** — Sure. So we have included for the 2019-20 school year interim targets in the area of positive relationship, positive student-teacher relationships, and sense of belonging into our strategic plan under the area of meaningful relationships.

And then what we like to do is . . . So the OurSchool survey is very large and all of our students do that in 7 to 12 in the fall. What we want to do is to be able to take a portion of that OurSchool survey and look at those interim targets at the end of the school year. So that's why we've created a much shorter, a much more concise around some of the promising practices that we feel may be making a difference. But then that data that we'll collect will hopefully help us be able to make some of those decisions at the end of the year to see if the actions that we implement are making a difference to those areas in the interim targets.

**Ms. Mowat:** — That certainly makes sense. So it allows you to test the variables you're looking to test instead of spending more time on gathering information that's not relevant as often. Thank you for that.

You mentioned a little bit about some interim targets that you've set. I'm wondering if you can elaborate a little bit on that and talk about how you're measuring success.

**Ms. Lehman:** — Sure. So our interim targets are . . . What we've always looked at is we've looked at closing the disparity gap between our First Nations students and our non-First Nations students in those three areas that I mentioned. But a piece of that, we not only want to be closing that gap but we also want to be increasing the amount of students that are feeling the sense of belonging and relationships with the adults and with each other.

So now we've set an actual number to that to show that we're looking at the data to say, are we at 70, now we're at 75. So we're looking at a target of 80 per cent of all of our students have the sense of belonging, positive teacher relation, and positive relation-to-relation. And then we've developed some action plans around that. And then our survey is again what we'll be looking at to see if those action plans have had an impact or not.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. Switching gears a little bit to talk about the input of the Indigenous advisory council. Can you speak to the structure of this council, composition? Is it voluntary? Is it division funded? How does it work?

**Ms. Lehman:** — It started off as originally just as an elders council . . . Not just. It started out as an elders council that's been very involved with Living Sky School Division for a number of years and we have up to 10 members on that elder council over year-over-year. And although they only have to serve for a two-year term, we've had the same elders continue to be on our council so we have developed a wonderful relationship with them.

We've expanded that elders council though so that we include

students as well. So we have the Indigenous voice at the table as well, as well as some of the knowledge keepers in our area, to try to expand and have representation from across our division. We meet three to five times a year, depending on the need. We spend time looking at data. Their role is to advise and to support, and they've made some great advances and impact. Last year they took on the area of attendance and supported the area of attendance. And so they did an elders campaign where we have pictures of our elders and their words about the importance of attending school on a regular basis and they are found throughout our school division.

**Ms. Mowat:** — And are the elders provided with an honorarium for their time?

**Ms. Lehman:** — We do give them an honorarium, yes, for attending the day.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Where do the meetings typically take place? You meet three times a year, you said?

**Ms. Lehman:** — They take place at the division office most often. Sometimes we'll meet at a school if there's something to celebrate there.

**Ms. Mowat:** — I have no further questions. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Good questions. Thanks so much for the time and the responses as well. Any other questions from committee members with respect to chapter 32?

**Mr. McMorris:** — I just have one real quick one. You did do a couple of examples like but if you could just, you know, you're talking about meeting with families and teachers to student relations and all of that, making them feel comfortable. What would an exercise be for that to actually happen?

**Ms. Lehman:** — For our families or with . . .

**Mr. McMorris:** — Either one.

**Ms. Lehman:** — I think families . . . Lots of things have to be around what your community needs. So you know, we are very diverse in our community structures. We're rural; we're urban, you know. North Battleford's very urban. But it's meeting sort of around what each school needs. So some schools can have something like a literacy night where they celebrate literacy and they have lots of families, where the next school, that isn't something that's really going to meet the needs of those people. So I think it's that each school would be very unique in how they do that.

But what the important piece is is that engaging our families is a critical piece because they are our children's first teachers and they are part of that learning journey that our schools are really going through. And sometimes we miss knowing that we have to engage families along the way, and especially for high school students. So you know, we're just looking at our graduation plans right now, and part of our plan is for working with our grade 9 families for them to really understand the pathway to graduation. And do they really understand what that means and does every parent really understand the pathway and the choices that our students have to graduate and then what that means beyond



graduation.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Just one last question. And you know, this takes time but it would be interesting, when you're talking to those parents, how many of them had graduated and what their truancy was like. And so it's evolving, but it's going in the right direction. It's evolving. It's just, it's time.

**Ms. Lehman:** — For some of our schools and some of our families, their children will be the first to walk to the stage. So it's lots of celebrations too, and lots of hope that education provides lots of places for those students to be successful.

**The Chair:** — Deputy Minister Currie.

**Mr. Currie:** — If I could just build upon this, and a little bit of a shout-out and recognition to Living Sky School Division. So they are a pilot, one of the school divisions that are a pilot for the mental health capacity building, which is a joint venture between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health. And one of their high schools has this initiative. They also do work in the mental health first aid.

One of their senior administrators, most recently on Saturday, was recognized for a Caring Award, and this was based on her work professionally with the staff as well as students on addressing student wellness and engagement and addressing their mental health. So those are three that I would just like to have acknowledged, three ventures that they do have in terms of their engagement, which are significant and, I'd say, models of the province.

**The Chair:** — Thanks for taking the time to recognize that effort as well. I just want to say thank you so much to the superintendent and the director for taking time to be here today, for all your work and leadership. Certainly Living Sky, I know it to be, and I know many others do, to be a very dynamic, progressive division with a very diverse catchment area; a rural, strong Indigenous population; the urban centre there as well. And a lot of really harsh challenges that are highlighted that are in the lives of young people are on these pages here, but a tremendous effort within the school division and the entire community as well to respond to some of those real challenges. So thank you very much for that work.

And I would at this time welcome a motion to conclude consideration of chapter 32. Mr. Fiaz. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That's agreed. That's carried. And we'll move along to chapter 33, and I'll turn it over to the auditor's office.

**Mr. St. John:** — Chapter 33 of our 2019 report volume 1 starts on page 311 and reports the results of our first follow-up of Prairie Spirit School Division's progress towards addressing seven recommendations we initially made in 2016 related to its processes to maintain facilities. The committee has previously considered and agreed to these recommendations.

[16:00]

By February of 2019 the division had implemented one of seven

recommendations and partially implemented the remaining six. We found that in late 2018 Prairie Spirit began using a template to guide and document its maintenance cost estimation process for facilities' projects. The division used this template to document the preparation of cost estimates and the review by someone other than the preparer of the estimates. However, the division had not yet fully established service objectives for each type of facility and significant related components or developed a maintenance plan for all of its facilities and their significant components, including short-, medium-, and long-term maintenance priorities, and plan preventative maintenance strategies.

It continues to need to set out in writing what minimum information it expects staff to gather and record about its facilities and significant components; provide staff with written guidance on the nature, extent, and frequency of inspections of all of its facilities and related significant components; as well as track maintenance completed on facilities and significant components, or provide its board with periodic comprehensive maintenance reports to informed decision making. Effective maintenance processes would help enhance the safety and service life of schools. That concludes my presentation.

**The Chair:** — Thanks so much for the presentation. I'll open it up to the deputy minister for some remarks, then we'll get to questions.

**Mr. Currie:** — Thank you. We do recognize that effective maintenance processes are important to keep our schools safe, protect against loss, and limit repair costs. And since the follow-up audit, the school division has taken steps to address the outstanding recommendations and plans to have all the recommendations addressed by December of 2021.

**The Chair:** — Thanks for the report. Thanks for the status update detailing all the actions that the division has undertaken as well. It's really helpful for us as committee members. Questions. Ms. Mowat.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. And thank you for providing some information in the status update as well. The overall maintenance plan that was under development in February, in the status update — I think it's on page 43 — it says that it will sort of be continued to be developed. I'm just wondering, I understand that these things are sometimes very fluid documents and continue to be developed over time, but was there a first sort of completion of the manual, or is it still under development? I'm just not incredibly clear.

**Mr. Roche:** — Noel Roche, deputy director with the Prairie Spirit School Division. It is still under development. We're in the process of focusing on that and focusing a key staff member on finalizing that document.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. So in the auditor's report it mentioned that you had planned to complete it by spring of 2019. So I'm just wondering what obstacles stood in your way.

**Mr. Roche:** — I think one of the obstacles for us as a school division is that we've been a growing school division, and we've had a lot of capital projects in our school division. We presently have one on the go right now with a new school at Rosthern. So

that's where our focus has been, but I think we're at a place right now where we can start dedicating resources to complete the recommendations. And I think that's been a key piece for us, is just to dedicate those resources to it. And that's what we're planning on doing.

**Ms. Mowat:** — I'm not sure if you will have these numbers because I asked for them for another division earlier today and they weren't on hand. But do you have the FCI, the facility condition index, and the deferred maintenance costs for the division?

**Mr. Roche:** — I expected you to ask this question, and I don't have the answer. I was trying to remember because the ministry sent us some numbers about two weeks ago. And I believe we were at 17 per cent, I think, was our FCI value. But I'd have to confirm that. And the other number I don't have.

**Mr. Currie:** — We will provide that for you.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Okay. Thank you. I expected you wouldn't, but I also thought that I should ask anyway.

**Mr. Roche:** — I gave half an answer.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Yes. Approximate is a good marker for the conversation, which I appreciate.

On page 315 at the bottom of the page the Provincial Auditor noted that the division hadn't completed about one-third of the total preventative maintenance tasks that have been scheduled between December 2016 and January 2019. So it's about 300 preventative maintenance tasks. I'm just wondering if you can shed some light on what explains that.

**Mr. Roche:** — Further along there it speaks to a significant portion of the outstanding maintenance was due to staff using a system-generated report that did not include all outstanding maintenance, and it indicates that we fixed that report problem in January 2019.

**Ms. Mowat:** — That's good to hear. I'm certainly interested in hearing about what deferred maintenance still exists, but I look forward to that information coming forward. In terms of the status update page 45, the outstanding recommendation refers to page 316 of the auditor's report in providing the board with periodic comprehensive maintenance reports. It indicates that the status has been implemented, but it also says this timeline for implementation was April, May 2019. So I guess, which month did it happen in?

**Mr. Roche:** — So when the auditors came to visit with us, they were with us in January, February, and we were on track to implement this recommendation in April. We welcome the auditor visit again next time out, and if they had been with us in April, it would have been implemented. We did provide our first report to the board in April. I've got a copy of it here. And we plan on going forward to provide a semi-annual report to the board.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. On the last page of the status update, or I guess page 47, the recommendation that talks about . . . Oh, never mind. Page 47 is a different chapter. That concludes my

questions, Mr. Chair. I was just about to ask you about something that had nothing to do with you. Okay.

**The Chair:** — You took a page out of the Chair's book there here today. Thanks so much director and deputy director that are here today with Prairie Spirit and for all the work. Any other questions from committee members before we conclude consideration of this chapter? Not seeing any, I'd welcome a motion to conclude consideration of chapter 33.

**Mr. Weekes:** — I so move.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Weekes moves. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That's carried. And I would look at this a couple times before I announce this, but I believe this is our last item of the day here. We'll move along here to chapter 40, and I'll turn it over to Trevor St. John of the Provincial Auditor's office.

**Mr. St. John:** — Thank you. Chapter 40 of our 2019 report volume 1 starts on page 347. It reports the results of our follow-up of St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division, its progress towards addressing five recommendations we initially made in our 2015 audit related to its processes to promote good student health and physical fitness. The committee has previously considered and agreed to these recommendations.

By February 2019 the division had implemented four of the five recommendations we made and partially implemented one. The division established a way to centrally monitor partnerships and community relationships at the school level. St. Paul's was more actively monitoring initiatives used to promote good student health and fitness. It set a regular process to review and update administrative policies and updated its policies related to promoting good student health and physical fitness in February of 2017.

St. Paul's set clear expectations for promoting student physical activity and making school-level decisions about which health and physical fitness initiatives to select. However the schools were not consistently using the guidance. Not consistently using the guidance increases the risk that the division will not meet its strategic goal of promoting good student health. That concludes my presentation.

**The Chair:** — Thanks for the presentation. I'll turn it over to the deputy minister for response.

**Mr. Currie:** — Thank you. We are pleased that the auditor has noted in their follow-up audit on this topic that the St. Paul's Catholic School Division has generally improved its processes to promote good student health and physical fitness. Since the follow-up audit was completed, the school division has taken steps to implement the remaining recommendation and plans to have it fully implemented by the start of the next school year.

**The Chair:** — I'll thank you for that and thank you to St. Paul's, all those involved in that important work. I'll open it up for questions. Ms. Mowat. Page 47.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. I'll start with page 47 then. This

particular recommendation, which is actually a carry-over from page 46 . . . The recommendation is on page 349 and that is recommending that the school division “. . . provide principals with criteria to guide their assessment and selection of health and physical fitness initiatives at the school level.”

The planned actions right now for implementation are talking about the nutrition policy at the school, so it's focused on the food that is in the school environment. I was wondering if there are any planned actions within this recommendation as they relate to physical fitness initiatives and if there's any consideration to . . . I know you can't directly monitor what kids are bringing in their lunches, but if there's any consideration to the foods that are being brought from home, guidance being provided to families, you know, suggestions. I know there can't be hard and fast things and there's socio-economic factors, but acknowledging that those foods also enter the school environment.

**Mr. Jensen:** — So when we discussed with the school division, with St. Paul's School Division, the committee is focused on nutrition policy for the '19-20 school year. The committee is going to meet several times, has several scheduled meetings throughout the year to determine the appropriateness of their policy and the food options that are delivered in schools. They plan to have any changes that come out of these meetings and recommendations implemented by September 1. And that was what their focus for the '19-20 school year is.

**The Chair:** — The Provincial Auditor just has something to add here.

**Ms. Ferguson:** — If I could point you to page 349. Their physical activity policy actually is quite recent. They renewed their policy in February 2017, so at that point in time they did a refresh on that physical activity policy. Our review of that found that it aligns with good practice and they were rolling it out, so they have considered that area in the past.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you. I think the initial audit here started in 2015, or the report was in 2015, so the initial audit might have been earlier than that. And the focus here seems to be on physical health and fitness, but now there's more of an acknowledgement of mental health's role in the overall health of the individual. So I'm wondering if there are any separate strategies in the division to promote and support mental health and if those could be described.

**Mr. Currie:** — The Greater Saskatoon Catholic school division has accessed resources from the ministry with regards to the mental health first aid. They have established the VTRA protocol and they continue to have their professional development and convention days that are focused on helping teachers understand signs of mental health concerns or student illness as it would be, and being proactive towards that. I know that the recent convention that was held here at the end of August was specifically targeted towards conversation and workshops, as well as keynote speakers, specifically on student well-being and ways to interact with students and support them in their time. So outside of that we would have to come back to you with more specifics on what they offer programming wise, too.

**Ms. Mowat:** — On page 349 there's a discussion about a guidance document from the Ministry of Education inspiring movement towards comprehensive school community health guidelines for physical activity in Saskatchewan from 2010. It indicates that the ministry expects daily physical activity and inclusion of daily physical activity in all subject areas. I'm just wondering if you can provide some detail about what that looks like and if there's confidence that that's happening. So like the way it's worded, it makes it seem like there's an expectation that there's physical activity during a math class. So I'm just wondering is that the expectation and is that happening.

**Mr. Currie:** — Yes, it's the expectation and yes, it is happening. So there presently is within the ministry a review of our guidelines for physical activity within subject areas. And again this is a sharing of promising and best practices of how to actualize that regardless of the subject area, so whether it be student movement, brain breaks, something aligned to their learning objective that could be active and activity based. Just recently that is a review and updating of the physical activity presence in schools that's taking place right now with the engagement of school divisions. And there is an expectation that there is movement associated with student learning.

**Ms. Mowat:** — When you put it in those terms it makes complete sense to me. Like I'm very aware of brain breaks and all of these types of things. It just didn't align with me when I was reading through it, so yes, that sounds great. And I hope that it's being implemented on a wide scale because we were making jokes about being able to stand during committee here. But like yes, sitting is not helpful for us even as adults.

That concludes my questions on this chapter and I guess my questions for today, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Thank you for those questions as well, and thanks for the remarks. Any other questions for the deputy minister or for officials here? Certainly thankful for Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools for their involvement in this and all their work as well, and the commitments they've undertaken that will benefit students. Not seeing any, I would ask that someone provide a motion to conclude consideration of chapter 40. Ms. Lambert. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That's carried. Yes, so I guess just briefly, thank you very much to Deputy Minister Currie and for the officials in the Ministry of Education, and all those others that might be patched into the work here today. I know that's many certainly through the ministry but also across divisions across the province, and many other stakeholders as well. So thank you very much for your time. Do you have any remarks you'd like to offer before we shut this down?

**Mr. Currie:** — I appreciate the work of the auditor and engaging in our school divisions to help us provide an education throughout the province, an engaging education, and our school divisions are putting resources into responding to the work with the auditor. And so that we are enabling any one individual to be responsible for the leadership in a particular area, that resonates with other school divisions as well. So thank you.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much. I'll note as well that Deputy Minister Currie was out at the Queen City Marathon with a team from the Ministry of Education. They looked really fast out there. So good job out there as well, sort of living up to that piece around health and fitness and wellness and incorporating that into the work team.

At this point I'd welcome a motion to adjourn. Moved by Mr. Fiaz. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That's carried. This committee stands adjourned until tomorrow morning, September 26th at 8:30 a.m.

[The committee adjourned at 16:19.]