



# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

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## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

Mr. Glen Hart, Chair  
Last Mountain-Touchwood

Ms. Judy Junor, Deputy Chair  
Saskatoon Eastview

Mr. Denis Allchurch  
Rosthern-Shellbrook

Mr. Cam Broten  
Saskatoon Massey Place

Ms. Doreen Eagles  
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Mr. Serge LeClerc  
Saskatoon Northwest

Mr. Greg Ottenbreit  
Yorkton

[The committee met at 15:03.]

**The Chair:** — Committee members, I'll call the committee to order. This afternoon on our agenda we have consideration of estimates, vote 32, Health. We have a rather lengthy agenda today although not quite as lengthy agenda as we had the last time we met. After the recess at 6 o'clock we will then move to consideration of votes 37 and 169, Advanced Education, Employment and Labour. Following that we will move on to vote 73, Corrections, Public Safety and Policing; and at 8:30 we will move to vote 5, Education.

**General Revenue Fund**  
**Health**  
**Vote 32**

**Subvote (HE01)**

**The Chair:** — So without any further delay, I would welcome the Minister of Health and his officials. And at this time I would ask the minister to introduce his officials and then if he has an opening statement, he could present his opening statement also.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Certainly glad to hear your voice this week; last week it was a little rough, a little tough to get through the committee hearings from what I was listening to. But I don't know if you had to access the health care system, but I trust that it's got you to the shape that you're in and will only continue to improve.

Thanks for the opportunity to present the Ministry of Health's estimates and answer any questions about our plans for 2008 and 2009. First I'd like to introduce senior ministerial staff who have helped shape our strategy and will assist me in answering any of the questions that come before us today. On my left is Gren Smith-Windsor, acting deputy minister. On my right is Lauren Donnelly, assistant deputy minister. Behind me to my left is Ted Warawa, executive director, finance and administration branch; and behind me to my right is Dr. Louise Greenberg, associate deputy minister.

Other officials that I have seated behind me are Brad Havervold, executive director, medical services branch; Carol Chernick-Smith, director of capital and regional services branch; Deb Jordan, executive director, acute and emergency services branch; Donna Magnusson, executive director, primary health services branch; Kevin Wilson, executive director, drug plan and extended benefits branch; Roger Carriere, executive director community care branch; Ron Knaus, executive director workforce planning branch; Scott Livingstone, executive director health information solution centre; Tyson Martin is a master's oft public administration intern position; and Lauren Black, assistant to the deputy minister. So that's lots of help behind me.

I have some statements to start with and I'll go through that and then be glad to answer any questions. I'll begin by restating our government's commitment to a publicly funded, publicly administered health care system.

The Ministry of Health's 2008-2009 budget is a record \$3.745 billion, an increase of 300 million or almost 9 per cent. Just

over 70 per cent of the budget is directed to compensation for physicians, nurses, and other health professionals. About 17 per cent covers the costs of drugs and medication, surgical and laboratory supplies. Five per cent is directed to infrastructure, 7 per cent covers general operating costs and items such as out-of-province services, extended benefits, and our air ambulance program. Thanks to Saskatchewan's strong economy, we are in a position to invest significantly in our health system. There's no question that is in badly need of renewal.

Our priorities in 2008 and 2009 include one of the largest capital renewal expenditures in the province's history. We will begin much needed repairs on aging facilities and purchase new equipment for those facilities. Equally important is rebuilding our health care workforce. We will keep that promise through aggressive recruitment, expansion of training seats, and other initiatives. Our landmark agreement with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses on recruitment and retention demonstrates that commitment.

Our other priorities include improving cancer care, expanded drug coverage, and more addiction beds. We've also provided funding to start work on a patient-first review of our health care system and on a long-term plan for capital and human resources. All of these priorities support our belief that patients must come first. We want our entire health care system to exemplify that belief.

I would like to highlight some of the key areas upon which we plan to focus. The ministry's budget provides an additional \$100 million to be used primarily to repair aging health care facilities. Another 32 million will be directed to capital projects currently under way in Regina, Saskatoon, and Humboldt. That includes 27 million to proceed with work on the new Saskatchewan Disease Control Laboratory. We've also set aside funding to plan for expansions of the Moose Jaw Union Hospital and for a maternal children's hospital at the Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon.

Human resources account for a large portion of our budget. Over one-third of the additional money available this year will pay for increases in salaries, wages, and benefits to our health care profession, health care workers.

We are boosting spending on nursing recruitment and retention to 26 million, an increase of \$20.7 million. This is over and above the \$60 million in one-time funding that we have committed as part as the partnership agreement with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses. We've also increased spending on physician recruitment and postgraduate training to almost \$70 million, up more than \$5 million from a year ago. This includes 17.6 million to open 24 new physician postgraduate training seats at the University of Saskatchewan's College of Medicine.

The budget also provides 3.2 million from the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour for 16 new undergraduate medical seats that will bring the total to 84. By the fiscal year 2010-2011, we'll have 100 undergraduates and 120 postgraduate seats, filling another commitment by our government.

We will introduce a new fiscally responsible senior drug plan and a children's drug plan. Starting July 1, medications listed under the provincial formulary will cost no more than \$15 for a child 14 and under and seniors who earn less than about \$64,000 a year. Our government is keeping its promises to expand the drug coverage. We have allotted 6.1 million to pay for new drugs under the provincial formulary.

We're also following through on our commitment to improve cancer care. Our funding to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency has increased by 10.7 million this year to more than \$89 million. Almost 4 million of that will provide coverage for the colorectal cancer drug Avastin. In addition to investing in the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, another \$2.9 million will cover the HPV [human papillomavirus] vaccine to protect women with cervical cancer. We're also investing 765,000 to pay for another drug that will help treat advanced kidney cancer.

Our 2008-2009 budget also includes 5.1 million to open 88 new addiction beds, and a 5.7 per cent increase in operating budget for our regional health authorities. RHAs [regional health authorities] will receive \$2.29 billion this fiscal year.

We have allocated 1.75 million to begin work on a patient-first review of our health care system and patient exit surveys. We have also invested funding to allow long-term planning for capital, human resources, and seniors' care. Our budget makes it clear that we are fully committed to providing Saskatchewan patients with the best health care services in the country.

Already in a few short months we have accomplished a lot. Hundreds of new nurses have been hired to alleviate the severe shortage in the numbers for health regions. A new partnership agreement between the government and the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses is paving the way for a new climate of co-operation and further success recruiting and retaining of our nurses.

Coverage is now available for new cancer drugs. Hospitals across the province have received millions of dollars in safety and surgical equipment. And a new, secure birth certificate has been introduced. Swift Current Regional Hospital has become our first filmless hospital through introduction of the new picture archiving communication system or PACS [picture archiving and communication system]. New programs are under way or being planned for patients requiring hemodialysis, bariatric treatment, or colorectal cancer screening.

We are building on our accomplishments, guided by our priorities I've outlined today. The ministry senior staff and I will now be pleased to answer any questions that the committee may have. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Minister, for those opening comments. I'd like to on behalf of the committee welcome all the officials here, and I believe Ms. Junor has some questions for the minister. Ms. Junor.

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you. Welcome to the minister and his officials. My questions are random. I don't have any plan of sort of grouping them, so they'll be all over the map, wherever my stickies take me.

My first question I think is going to focus on the regional health services. I notice all of them have increases, but I would like to ask if there are any program cuts anticipated in any of them with the funding that they've got in their plans. Have their plans come forward to reflect the new budget allocations? And do they anticipate program cuts or any closures or anything like that with this funding?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — I think the health authorities are working through their budgets right now. They don't have to supply a detailed plan till May I guess to the ministry. So it's a little early for us to determine as to whether there'll be any cuts. We don't anticipate any major cuts at all to any of the programs that they're offering, but I guess it remains to be seen. I mean they have received a significant increase and there's more money available now for capital requests, repairs. So it's not just a lift on, you know, their budget, but there's also money that will be put in for capital repairs as well as recruitment and retention initiatives too. So we don't anticipate any major cutbacks through the health authorities.

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you. Are there any authorities running deficits, that finished off the end of the '07 year with a deficit? I'm actually going to want to know which ones too.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — I guess all the health authorities are closing their books off last week so we'll maybe hear more of that moving forward. But the only one that we're aware of right now is the Saskatoon Health Authority that is, you know, projecting a deficit of around \$3 million. We haven't heard from any of the other health authorities of major pressures there, but that remains to be seen in the next couple of weeks as they finish off their books and see where they ended up.

**Ms. Junor:** — Are any of the health authorities carrying accumulated debt?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — I guess it would be safe to say that really the only one that is carrying a debt forward would be the Yorkton Sunrise Health Authority. All the other health authorities would have some form of debt management mechanisms but . . . like a carried forward debt. Yorkton's . . . And it's around the 15, a little over \$15 million that accumulated back when regionalization went on. And there's a number of health regions put together of course. One of those health regions had some debt so that's carried forward from back in the '90s.

**Ms. Junor:** — Is that debt recorded as a provincial debt?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Yes, the debt would be accounted for in the summary financial statements in that area but not carried forward as far as executive government.

**Ms. Junor:** — If we looked in the summary of financials we'd see only 15 million for authority debt?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — We can get the exact number for you. That would be in with all the other health authorities' debt I guess, but we'll get that exact number for you.

**Ms. Junor:** — So that's the accumulated debt of all the health regions. I heard something like 100 million.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Yes, we'll get that for you in a second. So what we have here is 86 million total debt in the summary financial statement on page 83 of the Estimates.

**Ms. Junor:** — So what is the plan? How are the districts repaying that? Or is it just going to sit on the summary financials?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So I guess Yorkton would be a little unique but all the other health authorities, it would be like a mortgage and they're paying off their mortgages. That \$86 million is made up of, you know, obviously various numbers from the 12 regional health authorities who pay off their . . . paying it like it is a mortgage. Yorkton's has an interest cost of about \$400,000 for its . . . 4 to \$500,000 for its \$15 million debt.

**Ms. Junor:** — That's per year? That's what they pay per year?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Yes.

**Ms. Junor:** — What does Saskatoon pay?

**Ms. Greenberg:** — I'll give you Saskatoon's total. It has a total mortgage of \$2.5 million. I don't have the amount that it's paying off each year. It also has other debt of 7.3 for a total of 9.8 million. But I don't have the information at my fingertip which speaks to the debt it's paying off. I would only know the mortgages they would be paying off. As you would as a house, you'd pay off a mortgage each year of the \$2.5 million.

**Ms. Junor:** — So the other debt that they've assumed, what would that . . . how would they have gotten that, to differentiate it?

**Ms. Greenberg:** — I don't have that with me but we could get that for you.

**Ms. Junor:** — Okay, thank you. I noticed under the regional health services page in the budget estimates under vote 32 that there are some regional program supports that must be losing some funding since there's a decrease in funding this year over last year. What are those programs? Could you give me an idea of what programs will be losing some money?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — May we have some clarification on the question? Are you looking at base operating or are you looking targeted programs? What are you looking for there?

**Ms. Junor:** — I'm just looking at the line in the budget that has about — well my math isn't that good — but it has a decrease in funding to the regional program support. So give me an idea of what that . . . of the programs will be losing money.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Okay, I think I can . . . I'll take a shot at it and officials will help me out when maybe I'm steered wrong. But overall I see you're looking at a decrease for the regional services. And it is an increase overall. There's a decrease because the ministry is transferring the tuberculosis control program to the RHAs. That is going to the RHAs which accounts for, you know, a large amount of money, which offsets the increases that . . . I mean, that would offset and create a decrease, but there's increases to the RHAs. I guess that would

summarize it.

I can give you more detail. We can certainly go through some of the increases as I go. This is the main one that is a decrease. It goes to the . . . and it's transferred to the RHAs. But we can go through some of the other ones that are increases.

**Ms. Junor:** — . . . the beginning of your answer and tell me what was being transferred? I missed the first word.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — The transfer of the tuberculosis control program.

**Ms. Junor:** — Oh, okay. Oh, you're looking at the regional targeted programs that have got quite a significant increase and what those are. And I'm not going to ask that right now, but thanks for that one. That's good.

Like I said, they're going to be random. I have had some indication that community clinics haven't received their funding, or haven't received confirmation of their funding. Could you tell me the status of that?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — I'm informed that it will be out in the next week or so. Yes.

**Ms. Junor:** — So do they know this? Some of them were saying their phone calls weren't even being returned . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . They know? Okay. Some of my stickies aren't from, like, yesterday. They're last week's.

I do have a question about when you're talking about Avastin in your opening comments. The process for reviewing drugs — I know the formulary committee process doesn't work on cancer drugs — but can you tell me the process, explain the process for reviewing cancer drugs and how new cancer drugs will be put into the mix?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Okay. Well the drug Avastin, first of all, I guess, maybe was a little unique. It came at a time when the provincial governments didn't have a joint oncology drug review. That's in the process now. That came directly through the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, that request for funding.

But moving forward, any drug such as Avastin, all those drugs will come through the joint oncology drug review, which will be a national review through the provinces and then to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency.

**Ms. Junor:** — So then my question following that would be, the formulary committee review process as I knew it that was in place before, was that still there for other drugs coming into the formulary?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Yes, that hasn't changed at all.

**Ms. Junor:** — Okay. I just want to ask about so many things. The capital projects that you were mentioning . . . I told you I was going all over. Can you tell me the list of the capital projects for this year, and if the sharing mechanism is the same or the sharing formula — the 60/40 — is the same as it was before?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So I guess, first of all I'll just run down through the facilities that are being covered this year. It's the Regina General Hospital, the maternity and newborn care; the Humboldt integrated health care facility; Saskatoon mental health; the Oliver long-term care facility; and St. Paul's Hospital renovations on the 5th floor for the MRI [magnetic resonance imaging], are the five. Three of them would be cost shared and it's at a 65/35, and the other two, the Regina General and St. Paul's would be funded through the ministry, 100 per cent.

**Ms. Junor:** — The maternal/child at RGH [Regina General Hospital] is funded fully by the department, did I hear that? RGH, the maternal/child?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Well yes it is, and no it isn't, I guess, because the health foundations certainly put money into those facilities. But I don't know if you would look at that as the cost sharing as we normally look at cost sharing with a community such as Humboldt.

**Ms. Junor:** — So can you give me an idea of the anticipated opening of the RGH maternal and newborn care one?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — 2011.

**Ms. Junor:** — How about Oliver Lodge or actually the Saskatoon mental health one? What about that one?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Maybe your . . . probably line of questioning will through each one, so why don't we just cover it all off here right now?

**Ms. Greenberg:** — I'll go through every one. The Cypress Health Region, the Cypress regional health hospital — and this is the status as of the, we call sort of our April status report — the Cypress Regional Hospital, they're up and running, they were up and running since last year, so they're doing their, there's still some finalization of small things they have to do in finishing up, the completion of some of the inside work.

The Outlook integrated facility, it's expected to be sometime in spring, construction's supposed to be finished sometime this spring, certain parts in the summer. There's been some delays because of the high activity of construction throughout the province in getting certain tradespeople at the right times.

The Ile-a-la-Crosse is finished, it's in its what we call its decommissioned stage.

Maidstone is going to have its grand opening this spring and that's an integrated facility. The Sask Hospital North Battleford, it's still undergoing its planning and that planning will continue throughout this year. We talked about Rawlco, the mother/child.

The Moosomin facility, construction is supposed to be completed by this summer. The move is not expected to be until probably September just because of working around vacation schedules. And also they probably didn't do, the completion didn't go as fast as they would have liked because of also the issue of getting crews when they needed.

Maternal/child program planning, functional planning, is still

going on. Humboldt. The tender went out last week so we're waiting for the bids to come.

The next is the Saskatoon mental health which we referred to and that the tender has already been awarded. Oliver Lodge in Saskatoon, that still continues and I believe it's going to be finished in 2010. The laundry facility, that was another project that we did earlier this year in Saskatoon and they had to do renovations to the laundry. That is complete.

In Preeceville, it's an integrated health centre. The construction started last year and it should be completed this year. That's sort of the status of all the projects that we have under way.

**Ms. Junor:** — What's going on at RUH [Royal University Hospital] in emergency with the changing of the emergency there — the MRI and the moving to get the maternal/child tower going somewhere in there?

**Ms. Greenberg:** — The MRI, that's going to be completed in the summer of 2009. The ground floor redevelopment, it's still in its planning phases so planning will continue on ground floor redevelopment there.

**Ms. Junor:** — So can you give me some idea of what's in the works new for 2009? What's the priorities? Do you have some idea yet what they are — capital?

**Ms. Greenberg:** — We've identified some planning this year with this year's budget, including continuing with Moose Jaw, starting to do planning for Moose Jaw. We will be asking the regions who are developing a strategy for the new capital plans to deal with maintenance, but we will also be asking the regions for their priorities in terms of new capital facilities for this year as part of the budget planning process for next year.

**Ms. Junor:** — There's some significant issues at RGH, Regina General here, I understand. And I have seen that there's some OH&S [occupational health and safety] concerns as well that will likely have to be dealt with in a space, with space. Are you aware of those? It's a fairly recent report.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — We're not familiar with maybe some of the concerns in the General as much as there are concerns in the Pasqua Hospital here in the city, and around for example the chillers which we're all aware of last summer weren't able to keep up with the humidity. And those are already funded through the health authority. There's some issues around the emergency room too, that again are going to be worked on and those concerns will be addressed. But it's the Pasqua from what we understand unless you've heard of something different regarding the General.

**Ms. Junor:** — I actually have heard specific to the General, and it's an OH&S report that was in March that had some fairly immediate targets to be fixed before . . . I mean these were targets set by the OH&S people that some things had to be fixed right away. And so I'm wondering if that's been moved on because there are significant issues in emergency there.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — I guess through the ministry we're not aware of those, but we'll certainly check on them. And I mean it will probably be the health region that would be dealing with

it, but certainly we'll check on it and find out and hopefully be able to answer that question, and what is being done, by the next time we have estimates in the next week or so.

**Ms. Junor:** — Thanks. I'm looking again at vote 32. And under allocations, the Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living received has less money than last year's budget. And I'm just wondering how that will impact them or where the money was coming from.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — There was a reduction I guess, a decrease. And it was due to really two areas. The one was a reduce of almost 600,000 to the base of funding because of an under expenditure, and maybe an under expenditure from last year and an under expenditure maybe from other years. But when we looked at it last year, there was an under expenditure so we dropped the base funding down to meet more what the expenditures were.

The other area that we dropped, decreased funding a little bit was regarding compression garments and, you know, targeting more to the higher need medical use. So there was a bit of a reduction there.

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you. I'm going to move on. I guess this will be a bit of a shift in focus, and maybe we'll have some concentrated questions around the nursing recruitment and retention.

My first question . . . because you did mention the additional nurses that are coming to the province, and I'm curious about the nurses coming from the Philippines. I know some have arrived from the first foray into the Philippines in November. When do you expect the first group to be coming from the most recent visit?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Just further to your question, it's anticipated that the first, kind of, group will be arriving sometime in June and then through the next three months — June, July, August. There is some, I guess, positioning because the exam that they have to write to practise as a RN [registered nurse] varies — June, October, and February. So that's, you know, will maybe determine a little bit as to . . . as they're arriving. They can operate as grad nurses but not as a full RN until they pass their registration exam.

And I think that's probably consistent when we see what Regina Qu'Appelle did as they had made the first recruitment drive into the Philippines. The nurses that they have brought back are coming at various times. They don't all come, you know, in a week or whatever. They come through various stages.

**Ms. Junor:** — So what's the immigration process? I know writing the exams is a targeted times that you can do that. But the immigration process itself, what are the hurdles that they have to go through, and what are the times associated with those time frames?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Well I guess further to the question then is that it's . . . I mean there's really kind of two pieces. It's credentialing piece, and there's the also the immigration piece. You're asking more about the immigration piece which deals

more through Post-Secondary Education.

When the recruiting was going on in the Philippines, there was, you know, a lot of the — what's the proper word? — checks, I guess, and not evaluations, but making sure that they would qualify. A lot of that work was done, so a lot of the pre-screening, I guess I should say, was done at the Philippines, which is all part of that whole process of recruiting. But we anticipate anywhere from two to six months to go through the whole process even though a lot of the work was done, you know, the pre-screening work had been done prior. So, you know, perhaps the Post-Secondary, and Immigration, Labour could answer that question a little bit better than what we can.

**Ms. Junor:** — Coming up this evening.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Great.

**Ms. Junor:** — Can you give us some ideas, since we've already had an experience with nurses coming from the Philippines, what's the retention rate of not just nurses that come from the Philippines but immigrant nurses in general?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — I guess first of all that when you look at Saskatchewan's experience — and you may be very aware of this — that we hadn't attracted a whole lot of foreign-trained nurses. There has been a couple of experiences. There have been some Philippine nurses, and there was the one I guess experience with New Zealand where a number of nurses came. The retention rate was not great on that group.

But I think, you know, the need and the reasoning why these nurses will be coming to Saskatchewan from the Philippines is quite a bit different than when the nurses were coming from New Zealand. I think it was probably looked at more as an adventure coming from New Zealand, to try a different country such as Canada and a province such as Saskatchewan.

We are expecting certainly a much higher retention rate with nurses coming from the Philippines. It isn't necessarily . . . Well I guess you'd have to ask them whether it's the adventure that's bringing them here, or the fact that of a high-paying job, and they can you know kind of start their life here or continue their life here, and quite often bring their family members over. And that's been certainly what we've seen in the experience, and this is only anecdotal from my own perspective.

I could probably name about five or six Philippine nurses I know fairly well that have come to the province and have stayed and really have loved it, and they've brought family here. That wouldn't be the same experience that we would have seen with nurses, for example, coming from New Zealand or perhaps other countries.

So we're certainly looking for a much higher retention rate on our last recruitment trip to the Philippines with 300 nurses, but we'll certainly be tracking it as we move forward because it is kind of a block that, you know, people are pretty aware of. There's been a bit of media around this one. There's a block of them coming, so we'll certainly be tracking them. You know, just also Manitoba having attracted Philippines found their retention rate was fairly good. Now did they stay in the community that they first settled in? There's sometimes

movement there, but they stayed with the province.

**Ms. Junor:** — How many of the 300 do you anticipate making it through all the hurdles — the exam, and the immigration process?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — I guess I would like to say that they'll all . . . I guess 297 will all be here and working. That's probably not realistic because there'll be some that will decide that they don't want to, you know, after the process and maybe some that come that struggle with the exam or whatever. But certainly with the work that was done over in the Philippines with the pre-screening, we expect a pretty high retention rate; you know, anywhere in the neighbourhood, 85 to 90 per cent is what is targeted for or expected.

**Ms. Junor:** — I was more interested in how many actually make it through the process, rather than how many we're going to keep. I'm thinking of how difficult is the immigration process? How difficult's the exam for the nurses coming from another country? And do we have any idea or any evidence of how many actually make it through?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Well okay we don't have any evidence because we haven't really attracted this number before. We'll be tracking it. The projection is around 90 per cent, 85 to 90 per cent will make it through all the processes. So you know, if we're at 300 that would be 270, you know, would be a target if we take 90 per cent.

**Ms. Junor:** — Before I leave this line of questioning, could you give me the names of the people who went on the trip to the Philippines, the most recent trip and what organizations they represented and how they were funded for the trip.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Through the Ministry of Health, there was two officials plus then the Legislative Secretary, Laura Ross. So three in total, I guess, through the ministry. Of course health regions and the SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] and the university had people, and we have a list here. So what we'll do is we'll provide it through the Chair to make copies for all committee members rather than me just name the names and say the organizations. Then you'll have a copy of who made the trip.

**Ms. Junor:** — Then moving on to another issue about recruitment and retention, I'm looking at the old plan — old probably being last year — about the labour force growing together. I think we saw one of these the other day from AEE [Advanced Education and Employment]. But this one I have is talking about the . . . I'm looking at the nursing education program, the NEPS [nursing education program of Saskatchewan] program, and the promises to add more seats that you have done in this budget. I'm wondering if you can tell me how many seats that you're saying in this budget will be new to your government, or will have been just fulfilling the promise of this document?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — First of all, I mean through post-secondary education, there's a bit of review. So if you're asking me where the seats will be allotted, whether it's through SIAST, whether it's through the U of S [University of Saskatchewan], you know . . . because there is a review going

on there right now to determine how that will fit together. I think maybe more of the question was, there was money put forward and seats increased last year under the previous government, under your government. Are we topping those up?

Our commitment is over three years to increase the number of training seats by 300, and this goes towards that. Certainly you know it was started . . . We were at 400 and it was started last year. We're going to follow through with that and continue to increase over the four years of our mandate to reach that target of 300 — increase training seats.

**Ms. Junor:** — So there's really no new money in this budget for new seats, or there's not new seats committed in this budget? It's more the out years?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Right. Yes, that would be fair to say. There isn't more seats added simply for a couple of reasons — just sheer capacity. You can't just all of a sudden increase the number of training seats from 400 and add 300 more because you don't have the capacity. There were increased training seats moving forward from last year which we're following through on and continuing to increase over the four-year period to achieve that. So it's an issue of capacity, both physical capacity of facilities and also faculty.

**Ms. Junor:** — Yes, thank you, I do remember that, and clinical placements as well. So what I see in this document from last year is that there's 466 nursing seats expected by 2010. Can you tell me — in your new vision — how many seats will be there in 2010? And that includes the NEPS program with the psychiatric nurses and the second-degree program, all of that.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So the projections are that by the year 2009-2010 they'll be 550 seats including the psychiatric nursing seats of 30 and 520. And then there will need to be a top-up of that by another 150 to make the commitment of 300 more training seats.

**Ms. Junor:** — That leads me to ask a question that I wasn't thinking of when I first starting doing stickies. But the status of the psychiatric nursing program — can you tell me where that is at the moment?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So the target and being on target is that 30 seats, psychiatric seats, will be offered at SIAST in September of '08. So this coming September will be the first intake and it's about a two and a half year program. So it will be starting September of '08 on target.

**Ms. Junor:** — It's a diploma program then? It's a diploma program.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Fall.

**Ms. Junor:** — No, it's a diploma program . . .

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Diploma.

**Ms. Junor:** — Rather than a degree program.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Yes.

**Ms. Junor:** — Okay. And can you tell me what's the . . . I see that there's still planning money in for the academic health sciences centre, and I know that's key to having space to do all these additions in the medical and the nursing professional increases. Can you tell me what the target date for that is? How the planning's coming along?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — I'd like to be able to answer that question, but it's really an Advanced Ed because that's where that would fall in to.

**Ms. Junor:** — I know Health had a role to play in the planning, so I thought you might be aware of what was going on as well. So is Health not involved in this at all any more?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — We would have input into the facility as it goes forward, you know, some input, but we're not the lead by any stretch. It's through post-secondary, but we would have input because, you know, a large portion affects Health.

**Ms. Junor:** — Is the funding coming through Health for the construction?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — No.

**Ms. Junor:** — Okay. I just wanted to talk a little bit about some of the things I saw in your platform that I'm wondering how they're going to roll out. I see that there is a Premier's Council on Health Care Work Place Issues to meet quarterly. How do you see that happening, or is it still something that will be happening?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — I guess I could answer that by saying work is still in process as far as the Premier's council because of course there were two committees that . . . the workforce planning committee as well as the nursing committee. And those are still in place, and we're looking at how to utilize those two committees and maybe combine it with this Premier's council. So it hasn't been set up yet.

Work is in progress though, and I don't know if there was ever any . . . I'm just trying to think back in my own mind if we had any sort of timeline. Hopefully it will take place in the next six months. But as far as campaigning document, whether we said it would be up and running in the first quarter, you know, or the first five months which we're into now, but work is ongoing on that file.

**Ms. Junor:** — Do you still have in the department a principal nursing officer or some such equivalent as Dr. Smadu had started off doing?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — The answer is yes, and it's been I guess covered off in a couple areas. Lynn Digney Davis was filling that position, and she's on leave till probably back in July. She'll be back in July I should say. And in the interim, Cathy Jeffrey is filling that role.

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you. Can you tell me — now this is a different sort of theme — your government's plans, your ministry's plans for primary health care?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So what we have operating or

practicing now, there is 56 primary health care teams in the province. Eight more are projected for the '08-09 fiscal year to bring it up to 64 primary health care teams in the province, which supply services to 26 per cent of the population.

**Ms. Junor:** — Could you explain the criteria for setting up a primary health centre?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — I think what we'll do is have Donna Magnusson come up and speak to the criteria around that.

**Ms. Magnusson:** — Basically, Judy, what we do is we use a regional health authority submit a plan to us. And in that plan, they outline for us where they believe that they've done the community development work and have developed the interest for a team to form.

Very often what we see is we see a couple of different kinds of teams coming forward. One can be what we call a central team, which would involve three or more physicians working together with a nurse practitioner and with regional health authority staff. And then the others are what we call satellite teams, and those might involve visiting services. So we do both kinds of teams and work with the regions on that.

**Ms. Junor:** — There was some question awhile ago about the rigidity of the process and how we could be more flexible. There were several . . . Somebody had said to me there was 100 actual presentations made that were turned back, so I have no idea if that's an exaggeration or not. But there were some concerns about how rigid we stuck to . . . I heard you say three physicians, and we did use to have five, I think it was. And now it's three.

**Ms. Magnusson:** — Yes, what we try to look for is basically sustainable services. So that would be the ideal, would be have three. We know lots of communities out there that have you know only two physicians in the community, and we work with those communities and try and help them you know as much as we can.

I think that the criteria used to be, I think, fairly strident. And we try to be flexible. We try to work with the communities. We try to assist them to bring the services that they can to their community. So the only real rigidity we have is if we provide the one-time funding. Those are for what we call the larger teams, and that's 125,000. That's for office renovations, equipment, and supplies.

**Ms. Junor:** — So do those three docs that support the clinic, do they have to be from the same practice?

**Ms. Magnusson:** — Not necessarily. What we ask is that they be working together in a collaborative way so that they would support each other through on call.

**Ms. Junor:** — And how about the template contract for doctors working in a primary health centre setting?

**Ms. Magnusson:** — We've been using a fairly standard contract for about the last three years now, and we've been in discussions as well with the Saskatchewan Medical Association to develop what we call a model contract. And in fact we just

met with them again last Monday to discuss that again, and we've actually got agreement on about 85 per cent of the contract clauses.

**Ms. Junor:** — Well that's probably been going on as long as midwifery, that one. Before I move away onto something else, I just was reviewing this document about the Philippine recruitment trip participant list and notice there's a person that just kind of stands out there by herself: a Linda West of the title of consultant. Who paid for her?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Linda West, she had been working on this project for quite a while through the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Authority and then no longer had that position, no longer was working for the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Authority. I'm not exactly sure how her trip was covered, whether she was doing some work with the SRNA [Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association] maybe on a contract basis. I'm not aware whether she paid for her own way. I think she wanted to see this project through, and I'm not sure whether it was on her own or through the SRNA. I don't know those details, you know, and probably nor should I.

**Ms. Junor:** — But from the details you know that the department didn't pay for her nor did the regional health authority.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — That's correct.

**Ms. Junor:** — So she would have come through some other organization or on her own?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Or on her own.

**Ms. Junor:** — On her own. Okay thank you. I'm just going to move into a couple of questions that are more senior orientated. There used to be a provincial advisory committee to the minister for seniors. I think it was called older persons advisory committee. Can you tell me the status of that committee?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — That committee is still in place. They meet about quarterly. They have a meeting coming up in the next week or two weeks or so. So it's still in place.

**Ms. Junor:** — Could we have a list of who's on it?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Yes, we'll get a list and forward it through the Chair or the Clerk.

**Ms. Junor:** — There's some interesting comments made in the Sask Party election document about long-term care that I just have a couple of questions to see if that's where you're still going to go. There's a comment or there's a promise to support non-profit agencies that provide long-term care. Could you give me an example, like who? What would be a non-profit agency that provides long-term care?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — A couple of examples, I guess it would be the long-term care that isn't provided through the regional health authorities, such as Santa Maria, that would provide you know the heavier care level 3 and 4, would fit under that description.

**Ms. Junor:** — How is Santa Maria funded now?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Okay so the difference would be is it's an affiliate of the region. It's not operated by the region.

**Ms. Junor:** — That's not new. We have Extendicare; we have several of those.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Right.

**Ms. Junor:** — So what would be new in the supporting non-profit agencies that provide long-term care? What's the thinking behind that?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — I think where that came from is that we certainly, we heard concerns from some of the affiliates that perhaps the relationship with the RHAs wasn't as strong as what it should be. We're doing some work through the ministry to clarify the roles and work on some accountability documents to try and, I guess, maybe foster a better relationship — if I can use that term — between some of these non-profits and whether it's the RHA, when they're operating as an affiliate.

**Ms. Junor:** — There's also another promise that you made, was to undertake a pilot project to provide government funding for personal care homes that provide level 3 and 4 care. Is that still something you're contemplating?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — We're just, I guess you could say that we're looking at the various options. One of the problems that, and you will know, that we have in our system is quite often in our acute-care settings. If a person is in that acute-care setting and no longer needs those services and there is no place for a person to go, maybe there's not enough room in a special care home, whether they can't find a bed, but there's none in our special care homes in whatever community it might be.

You know, we need to look at whether there's some other options — whether there's some options through personal care homes that on a temporary basis that people could be moved out of an acute care setting into a personal care home that supplies level 3 and 4, if that's what the person needs, until there's room in a special care home. You know, that's just an example. And we're just kind of starting on or looking at that type of work. I think the whole initiative was to not to have people that need level . . . [inaudible] . . . 4 care. That could be supplied in a special care home, using acute care beds because that is a problem throughout our . . . especially our tertiary care centres.

**Ms. Junor:** — I'm not sure if you're intentionally using the personal care homes, special care home interchangeably, but I'm thinking that's the level 3 and 4. I'm wondering how many level 3s and 4s are in personal care homes?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Well I mean the way I'm using it, as a special care home, is operated either as an affiliate or through the regional health authority. A personal care home can be whatever level — it can be level 1, 2, 3, or 4. There are more and more I would say just — and I don't have numbers to back this, maybe the ministry does — but just from my own experience, that there are more and more personal care homes that are offering level 3 and 4 care than what there were 5, 10 years ago. In fact I know of a couple of care homes, one very

close to my constituency, that's offering level 3 and 4 care.

**Ms. Junor:** — That's interesting because then how are we licensing them because the Act doesn't anticipate that they provided that level of care. The support on site wasn't there for level 3 and 4.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — I guess the clarification is the Act doesn't distinguish necessarily what level of care. The Act says that the care has to be provided safely. Most personal care homes will be at a level 1 and 2. There are some that are supplying level 3 and 4. And the Act does not not allow that to happen. It just simply states that it has to be supplied safely.

**Ms. Junor:** — I'll leave that for now, but that raises quite a few flags with me because that's a whole different level of care being provided in a different atmosphere entirely than what people are licensed to provide in special care homes so . . . Oh I thought you maybe had something to add to that. I'll come back to that at another time because I know my colleague from The Battlefords wants to ask a few questions.

I just have one left. The status of the maternal child hospital — or the tower or whatever we're going to call it — in Saskatoon, how's it coming along, the planning for that facility?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — I guess all I can say is that the planning is continuing.

**Ms. Junor:** — That's wonderful. We're all going to the Children's Health Foundation banquet. I think they probably will want more than that. But is there money in the budget to continue planning or to start planning?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Yes, there's money in the budget to continue planning.

**Ms. Junor:** — And so do we have some idea of when we were looking at the shovel in the ground? Or when do they think that the planning will go to tender? Or what do they think of that?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — At least another year.

**Ms. Junor:** — Okay thanks. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — I recognize Mr. Taylor.

**Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to ask a few questions. And welcome to the minister. I appreciate your availability. And also welcome to all of the staff from the ministry. My compliments to the minister, I think he has the best officials in the entire civil service here in Regina, and I continue to have a considerable amount of confidence in the staff of the ministry.

I want to go specifically back to capital for a minute, and the Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford, a number of questions there.

And my first question is basically very simple. In preamble to the very simple question, for the last two years there's been money in the budget allocated to the planning process at Sask Hospital in North Battleford. In this particular budget, there's

no funding specifically allocated. And I'd just like to establish for the record, is the commitment of the minister towards the completion of the project in North Battleford still there?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — There is still planning dollars and more planning that needs to be underway, taken before, you know, there's a shovel in the ground or any further work will be done. So there's at least another year of planning at least, I guess, from what I understand. There's also some issues around cost I believe when that project was first announced. I forget what the dollar figure was and what it was just . . . and recently it's up 200 plus. So there are some challenges that way as well. So, you know, the planning money is going to continue and we'll see where that takes us.

**Mr. Taylor:** — Okay. Can you give us an idea of what the status of that planning currently is? As I understand it, the project planning is in preparation of going to detailed plans, and I'd just like confirmation of that and what's involved in going to the detailed plans that yet has to be done.

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**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — As you know especially is that there's quite a long process, the different steps that the facilities have to go through. I believe that they're to about step 12, finish step 8 and 9 and moving on up to step 12 where it gets into the design. And so that is the next process that will be taking place.

**Mr. Taylor:** — The reason I ask that question is because a few weeks ago the Minister of Finance was in North Battleford. He was doing a presentation on the budget. Naturally because of the interest in the community, he was asked the question that I asked earlier: is the commitment to Sask hospitals still there? And the Minister of Finance said yes, and then a subsequent question was similar to the one I just asked. The Minister of Finance could not answer that question, but he deferred to the CEO [chief executive officer] of the Prairie North Regional Health Authority who amongst the number of things that he said was he was waiting on the authority of the ministry to allow the project to proceed to detailed planning.

And so my question is, are we at that stage and is authority to go detailed planning under consideration now?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — I guess it would be safe to say that, you know, the planning, the process is still moving at the normal rate, normal process that detail planning will be moving

ahead.

**Mr. Taylor:** — Okay thank you. I want to ask about funding. I am trying to determine the actual status of the funding currently. You just mentioned the cost could be approaching the \$200 million mark. That's the first time I've heard that number. We of course are all aware that construction, infrastructure projects of all kind, have escalated in cost over the last couple of years, and in some cases substantially. Has the design changed in some way that have increased the costs so dramatically, or is it simply a better understanding of the components of the project that have — with inflation, construction inflation — factored in there? Has anything changed in the actual plan itself that has escalated these dollars from 60 to 200 million?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So yes, there has been a bit of a change in the one number that I used. The 200 was just one that I pulled out of the air. It was at 150. I said about, but it was at 150 last — was it? — in October. So you know, we can put inflation on top of that. But the last estimate was about 150. So there is some change in the plan of the facility which you'd probably be aware of. I mean it started at roughly 60 to 70 million, and it's up to 150. Not all of that is attributable to inflation, although a large portion of it is. And depending on how far out this is, it's at 150 now.

**Mr. Taylor:** — Okay thank you. Also in terms of that funding, two years ago with oil and gas dollars, third quarter allocation of funds, the previous government set aside \$39 million to be applied against the total costs of this project. There's no evidence in this budget that that \$39 million continues to sit in a fund somewhere. Is it the minister's sense that the 39 million that was committed towards this project is still available to Saskatchewan Health for this capital or any other capital project?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — The Fiscal Stabilization Fund had money in it. That was moved over to the growth and investment fund, so that money has all moved across. So as you know that there is a large sum of money in that. I believe that under the Fiscal Stabilization Fund there were some intentions or statements more or less made where some of that money was going to go. And that's what it was, was I guess maybe a footnote as to where some of that money was allotted. It's been moved across. I'm not familiar with . . . Well I don't believe that there is any footnotes made with the fund that we have set up. I could check into that, but I don't believe that there are footnotes as was in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

**Mr. Taylor:** — I have two follow-up questions for that. The first one is just a confirmation. As I read the budget, the fiscal growth and stabilization fund has X number of dollars in it. The four year projection shows the fiscal growth and stabilization fund being used to balance the budget down to zero in the fourth year. It would appear to me that there is no — from the Department of Finance perspective — no contemplation of use of any dollars that are currently in it for purposes other than balancing the budget over the course of the next four years. Does the minister agree with that?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Okay well there's, as you know, that there is money put in for the planning, and there still is. You

know there's commitment to follow through with that, with the Saskatchewan Hospital. There's money in the growth and investment fund that will be moving forward. That money is projected in a four years to be used. There's a lot of variables that will happen between now and next year, let alone in the four years.

The nice part is that it is a four-year projection which isn't what we saw just previous. That will be determined by, by the Minister of Finance, Treasury Board, and cabinet as we move forward how that money will be utilized. We have committed to the hospital through planning money, through more planning money, and as we move forward.

**Mr. Taylor:** — Just for clarification and the second part of my question, with that commitment and an understanding of that there was an earmarking in the past and understanding the process that needs to go forward, do you as Minister of Health today give the people of The Battlefords your commitment that you will continue to argue for the types of dollars that are necessary to complete this project?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Yes, that's absolutely no question. I haven't had the opportunity to tour the Saskatchewan Hospital as it stands today, and I certainly have heard lots about it and heard some major, major concerns.

As you know, you will know, there are concerns with a number of facilities. There are some long-term facilities, long-term care facilities that we need to do some work on. But certainly the hospital in North Battleford too, the Saskatchewan Hospital, I mean it's served its time, it's served its purpose, and it's really — it needs to be moved on. And so I guess that's all I can say for now.

**Mr. Taylor:** — Okay. Thank you very much. I appreciate the minister's comments about never having toured the facility. I know that he is aware he's welcome in The Battlefords. Prairie North would have him any time, and should I be available, and the minister having any interest whatsoever, I would be happy to join him on a tour of the facility and comment upon the various reasons why this project has become of such importance, not only to The Battlefords but to the province as a whole — the only long-term institution for people of psychiatric need in the province.

At the same time, and while we're on the subject of Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford, I was pleased to hear the minister's comments earlier about the psychiatric nursing program. The Saskatchewan psychiatric nurses association was very pleased at the institution, the reinstitution of the program, and delivering of psychiatric nursing education in this province. Those 30 seats, starting intake this fall at SIAST, is welcomed by everybody that I've talked to.

That having been said, the Registered Psychiatric Nurses Association has also been interested in ultimately, once Saskatchewan Hospital is built, opened, and operating, would like to see those seats, that program, delivered at Sask Hospital in North Battleford. There have been discussions in the planning of the design of the hospital, the new hospital, to take into account the delivery of the education program there.

I'm wondering if it's the minister's commitment to continue the work that has begun to lobby the Department of Advanced Education and Learning, and the two nursing programs at the University of Saskatchewan and SIAST to ultimately be able to deliver that program in The Battlefords, where most of the clinical placements will take place and a lot of employment will take place for graduates of that program.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — That's an interesting question, and you know, the nursing council and the review of the NEPS program is all kind of underway. There are certainly more seats that we're going to be adding, as I said, 150 more seats from where we're at to get up the 300 that we said we'd increase by. And the breakdown . . . I had the opportunity of meeting with the Psychiatric Nurses Association. I believe it was last week. And one of their concerns was, is 30 enough? We maybe need to increase that. I said that after 11 years, I think, of no program, we're learning to walk and hopefully can increase.

Now the exact location of where that program will be delivered, you know, you make a very good point, a very valid point, and that does, you know, at first blush, makes sense that it may be centred out of that facility. It's pretty tough for me to say that that's where it will be. I can't commit. But it has, you know, some real merit that that would fit together quite well. I do know that, you know, a number of years ago when the program was offered, a lot of the, some of the training was done at Weyburn at Souris Valley. And I mean there's a bit of a precedent for that already, but I can't sit here today, not knowing when that facility is going to be complete even, to say that's where those seats will be. But it does have merit for sure.

**Mr. Taylor:** — Well thank you, I appreciate that as well. And certainly the psychiatric nursing program was indeed delivered in North Battleford as well in the past, so again the precedent same as Weyburn.

But the other piece of course is that the planning does call for a new hospital to be built. Having clinical space available there to take into account some new students is an important . . . of the, ultimately, the planning process, but more importantly we are leaving behind a building that the community is very anxious to find other uses for. Were we to deliver a nursing education program, there is the opportunity to do some substantial remodelling of the old building for training and, well, educational and training space, not to mention residential capacity for students who would have to move to The Battlefords for their training, etc. So there are other parts of this bigger picture that perhaps increase the merit of the proposal overall, and so I appreciate the minister's commitment and just throw those two pieces forward.

On the same subject though of Prairie North and The Battlefords and what's going on with some of the delivery of programs, I know that when our roles were reversed the minister had some questions regarding the delivery of hemodialysis services throughout Saskatchewan. Prairie North Regional Health Authority and Battlefords Union Hospital has a satellite unit for the delivery of hemodialysis. There has been talk for a while about the expansion of that satellite service in The Battlefords, and I'm wondering if the minister can give us an update on the expansion of hemodialysis services at Battlefords Union Hospital.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Well the funding is still there. I think as with all of the satellite locations, staffing and making sure you have the personnel is the biggest challenge. It's not the matter of whether it's needed. It's whether we can staff the unit to increase the capacity. So the money is there. I think it's more contingent on being able to attract proper staffing levels.

**Mr. Taylor:** — That was a key part of my next question was, is the funding still there? And I hear that loud and clear and I appreciate that. In the broader picture of course there were questions where dollars weren't quite there yet. The question of delivery of services for the Broadview area and also in a relationship in a sense, the All Nations' Healing Hospital at Fort Qu'Appelle. I'm just wondering if the minister can give us some idea of what the year ahead might hold for those two locations.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Well it's an issue that we talked about, as you said, when our roles were reversed and there's certainly a need and a demand out there. The SIRP [Saskatchewan integrated renal program] committee is still functioning and it'll be making its recommendations, moving forward for the '08-09 year.

There are huge pressures. There are huge pressures around the province. You're certainly aware, I'm very aware of the Broadview group committee that has lobbied very hard. But I'm also, you know, being made aware of and learning all the time about the pressures around the province, especially central and north, in the northern part of the province. There are some huge demands there.

So I think it's, you know, right now until I'm proven wrong — and I'd, you know, be interested in your thoughts — but I think there's a, you know . . . The SIRP committee serves well and looks at it from a provincial perspective that I think has served well in the past and we have no plans on changing it. And we're looking forward to their recommendations as they do their work and move forward from a provincial perspective.

**Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much for that commitment and those comments. For what it's worth, I had confidence in that SIRP committee; I still do.

In regards to that, a representative of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations had been added to the SIRP committee recently. Is that seat still available? Is the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations utilizing that seat on the committee?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Just further to that question is that there is one seat . . . There are two seats. One right now is being occupied by Dr. Roland Dyck, who is representative of FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations], and another seat has been added for a representative from FSIN to be on that committee but hasn't been filled yet.

**Mr. Taylor:** — Okay, thank you very much. The Chair is indicating that I have one more question and I want to take advantage of the fact that you have officials close to you who can answer this question as opposed to others that may involve some more seat changes.

There has been talk about ambulance rates, particularly in the northwest part of the province, applying paramedic rates to areas like Prairie North Regional Health Authority. Can the minister give me some idea as to what the status of paramedic rates for ambulance providers is?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Well as long, you know, as far as paramedic services and as long as there is a current contract in place and the paramedic services are needed or fulfilled there, you know, it would move forward. So I think it's an issue around contract and making sure that it's a current contract.

**Mr. Taylor:** — Okay. The Chair has signalled that I actually can have one more short question, so the short question is: therefore are there dollars available to Prairie North Regional Health Authority should they be able to meet a contract need?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So you know, I guess the additional revenues are through the rate once the current contract is . . . It's not necessarily funding through the, through the ministry. It's, you know, the current rate or the rate would be approved for a paramedic service once a current contract is in place.

**Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much. Go back to Judy.

**The Chair:** — I recognize Ms. Junor.

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you. I just want to thank the minister and his officials for being with us today and answering the questions as we went all over the map. I look forward to being back again. I think we have several more hours to be together . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Three. Oh good. Yes. I know we're all going to have fun. But thank you again to the minister and his officials.

**The Chair:** — I recognize the minister.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Well thank you. Thank you for the questions and the two hours that we got to spend together today. And I think there's two or three more. And I would like to thank the officials very much for helping me throughout this. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Seeing that it is our time for recess, that's what the committee will do and we'll be back at 6 o'clock at which time we will review the vote 37 and 169, Advanced Immigration, Employment and Labour. This committee stands recessed.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

**General Revenue Fund  
Advanced Education, Employment and Labour  
Vote 37**

**Subvote (AE06)**

**The Chair:** — Committee members, I will call the committee to order. Before we proceed with the vote 37, 169, Advanced Education, Employment and Labour, I just would like to inform the committee that we have a substitution: Ms. Atkinson for Ms. Junor for the current estimates that we will be dealing with, as I'd mentioned, vote 37.

We have the Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour with us. He has many responsibilities. It is my understanding that we will be dealing with the immigration portion of your portfolio. With that I would ask that you introduce your officials. If you have some opening comments dealing with the immigration portion of your responsibilities, I'd ask you to make those comments after you introduce your officials.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Great. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, I'm delighted to make these introductions. Wynne Young, the deputy minister within our ministry; Rick Pawliw, is right here with us. He's the acting ADM [assistant deputy minister] for immigration. Back in behind we have Mr. Mike Carr, associate deputy minister of Labour, employee and employer services; Larry Symes is special advisor to the deputy minister. We've got Trina Vicq Fallows just over here, acting executive director of corporate services. Again back in behind, Eric Johansen, director of Saskatchewan immigrant skilled worker program. Darcy Cherney also joins us, manager of the SINP [Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program] entrepreneur program, and Rachael Ratch, acting director of finances here.

And I'm delighted to add a few comments along the way. Let me begin by making a brief commentary regarding the role of immigration in the province's history. Of course with the exception of First Nations, what we've seen is practically all of Saskatchewan has been, if you want, populated by immigrants or descendants of immigrants. A little more than a century ago it was the First Nations and Métis peoples and those early immigrants who laid the foundations for this great province. Perhaps it's fitting that the First Nation and Métis peoples and newcomers are set once again to play an increasingly vital role in Saskatchewan during the 21st century.

Newcomers to our province helped to shape our governing institutions as well as the evolution of our political, economic, and social cultures. They have helped to build an early agricultural economy and more recently an increasingly diversified economic portfolio as well as enhance the communities within which we live.

As a result of immigration, our province's population increased rapidly during the first part of the 20th century. By the early 1930s Saskatchewan's population numbered close to a million, and in fact Saskatchewan for a time had the third largest population of any province in Canada after that of Ontario and Quebec. But as Bill Waiser reflects in his history of Saskatchewan, unlike half a century earlier when the last best West captured the imagination of prospective settlers, few postwar immigrants chose to make Saskatchewan their home.

Over the course of the 20th century our immigration rates dropped and population growth stagnated. Our population growth was uneven. What we've seen is even between 2001 and 2006 the province experienced an out-migration of 35,000 people. Immigrations to Saskatchewan during that period amounted to just over 8,000 newcomers. This stands in stark contrast to the numbers offered by Manitoba with over 30,000 and Alberta with over 100,000.

If we fast forward to today what we see is an expanding population base. Over the last year the province's population

grew by over 16,000 people topping up over a million reflecting elements of both continuity and change in Saskatchewan. For the final three months of the year, Saskatchewan posted the strongest population growth among all of the provinces.

This is Saskatchewan's time, and it's vital that we make the most of it. Having more people move to, settle in, and make Saskatchewan their home is vital to enhance not only our economic growth but to ensure the sustainability and vitality of our communities. Put simply, this is a vision of a more culturally diverse, cosmopolitan, and inclusive Saskatchewan. Importantly the province's long-term economic security depends on continuing to expand the number of people living and working here.

In terms of population growth, Saskatchewan is back on track, but there is much more that we can do, indeed much more that we must do to ensure that this growth continues. Forecasts suggest that over the next three to five years Saskatchewan will be short between 9,000 and 13,000 workers, and this number increases almost exponentially when we begin to factor in retirements. Our government is working to address the growing labour and skill shortage that we see across Saskatchewan by, one, creating more opportunities for young people and attracting back those who have moved to other provinces; training and educating our youth with an emphasis on First Nation and Métis communities; and finally, expanding the number of skilled immigrants coming to our province.

The key element of all of these relates to our co-operative work with the federal government. Our government believes that improving the province's ability to attract and retain immigrants is essential to building dynamic communities, sustaining economic growth, and securing a bright future. In 2006 over 250,000 immigrants came to Canada, but only 2,700 landed in Saskatchewan. That's only 1 per cent of the total immigration in the country, and quite frankly, it's not enough.

To help increase those numbers, our immigration services division is focused on some key elements. First, building capacity within the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program, and we can talk about some specific examples along the way. These will include putting renewed emphasis on the entrepreneurship category, expanding the number of international students studying in Saskatchewan, improving our ability to retain immigrants by ensuring settlement supports are in place, and collaborating creatively with our federal counterparts including work currently under way to expand access to the temporary foreign worker program for employers.

Advanced Education, Employment and Labour's total budget for the '08-09 year is \$761 million, an increase of 11 per cent over last year. The overall budget for the immigration services division is \$9.9 million. This reflects the 16.8 per cent increase from last year. Within this amount, about 4.5 million is allocated to operational funding. That includes the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program, which enables the province to provide a quicker means of entry for immigrants whose skills and abilities best fit our market and community needs; international education which works to increase international student enrolment in Saskatchewan's educational institutions; community partnerships and settlement, which administers funding programs that support the provision of

settlement services across the province; and policy and program support, which supports planning and program implementation.

In addition to the above, the division budget includes about \$5.4 million for third party transfers to settlement agencies, ethnocultural groups, training institutions, and other service providers to assist with language training, settlement services, and reducing barriers to foreign credit and credential recognition.

The budget includes the following new funding: \$200,000 to increase resources dedicated to reducing processing time for the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program, \$1 million for training and settlement support through the Canada-Saskatchewan labour market agreement, \$200,000 to fund the Going to Saskatchewan online portal, and projects related to foreign credential recognition. In addition to this, \$1 million in new funding to support employment bridging programs for immigrants administered through the career and employment services initiative.

I'd like to take this opportunity to elaborate on some of our key priorities for this division as we move forward. Within the nominee program, I'm extremely pleased to report that we're already making real progress on our plans to expand immigration. In the first three months of 2008, the immigrant nominee program issued 538 nominations. That's a jump of 48 per cent over the same period in 2007. In the '07-08 fiscal year, the provincial government nominated nearly 1,700 immigrants. That's up 35 per cent from the last fiscal year. But there's still a lot more to do.

I'll be announcing shortly an ambitious new target for '08-09. The achievement of this new target will be supported by improved internal efficiencies, increased staffing dedicated to reducing application processing time, and collaboration with employers on overseas recruitment missions, including on-site assessment of potential nominees.

Regarding international education, obviously our government also recognizes the important role international education plays and needs to play in expanding our province's immigration, innovation, cultural diversity, and trade. The international education strategy we are developing will focus on fostering a collaborative approach involving the whole education and training sector, reaching from K to 12 into the post-secondary institutions, involving the business community, and other relevant community-based stakeholders and of course various government ministries.

The government's role will include coordinating communications and co-operation among stakeholders, helping to coordinate stakeholder efforts, and providing strategic investment to encourage collaboration aimed at improving services that support the successful integration of international students. Saskatchewan offers international students high quality, competitively priced, and accessible educational opportunities. I've said before that immigration is everyone's responsibility, a shared responsibility. And as such, we'll be working in partnership with our stakeholders to increase international student enrolment by building on our province's reputation as a leader in international education.

Next, the community partnerships and settlement initiative. Community partnerships and settlement is the third key component in our immigration service division. As immigration to our province increases, settlement and integration supports will become even more important. The \$1 million in new funding allocated to training and settlement includes \$400,000 to support work-based language training programs and \$600,000 to support enhanced intake and assessment.

This is in addition to funding already in place, which includes almost \$2 million for language training, 1.2 million for settlement funding, over \$1 million for the recognition of international experience, plus \$200,000 in new funding for the going to Saskatchewan portal — bringing total funding for settlement to approximately 5.4 million. As I mentioned earlier, one million in new funding has also been allocated to support employment bridging programs for immigrants administered through the career and employment services.

In terms of settlement services and language training, our ministry's focus will be on setting a policy framework for our funding programs; '08-09 is a transition year for settlement programs. We'll be looking at ways to improve our effectiveness and ensure that we're providing appropriate support where it's needed. We'll be working with employers and community-based organizations to help determine where improvements can be made and to ensure that the funding we provide is supporting quality client-centred programs.

Importantly, we will also work better and more closely with regulatory bodies, educational institutions, and employers to help ensure that they have the ability to assess professional and trade certifications gained overseas.

In closing let me just say I'm very pleased with our progress to date, but that there's more to come. And, Mr. Chair, what I'd like to do is just simply thank you and the other committee members for this opportunity to appear before this committee, and I'm looking forward to an informed and engaged dialogue.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Minister. Before I open the floor to questions, I would just like to clarify a few things. Given that most of us on the committee find ourselves in roles that are either new or different from the ones we previously held, I would just like to take a few moments to clarify a few points of committee procedure when dealing with estimates.

Regarding the scope of questioning, the Chair traditionally has exercised great latitude. Nonetheless this latitude is not limitless, as Marleau and Montpetit point out on page 872, and I quote, "The questioning and discussion at this meeting is generally wide-ranging, although the rule of relevance does apply."

Furthermore on page 527:

The requirement of relevance is necessary in order that the House [and by extension the committee] might exercise its right to reach a decision and to exclude from debate any discussion which does not contribute to that process . . . It is not always possible to judge the relevance of a Member's remarks until he or she has made some progress in or completed . . . [their] remarks.

On June 12, '86, the Chair of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations made a ruling and quite properly stated:

Members know that the Chair gives considerable latitude regarding the year under review when it is the apparent wish of the Committee to do so. I am especially inclined to permit this when the proceedings are in the form of fact-finding questions and answers. I am less inclined to permit this when the proceedings take the form of a wide-ranging debate on policies and times far removed from the year under review. These . . . [are] philosophical debates [that] should [be] more properly take place in the House.

I will state that it is incumbent on the Chair to facilitate debate, not to curtail it. I will continue to exercise the latitude that has been shown in times past. However if necessary I may ask a member to connect their line of questioning to the estimates and the year under review. With that, I make those comments for consideration by committee members.

And I believe Ms. Atkinson has some questions, and I recognize Ms. Atkinson.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you. Thank you very much. And first of all, to the officials from the immigration branch, I want to congratulate you on all of your hard work. It's quite clear that we not only exceeded our targets last year under the immigrant nominee program and we were able to move the target up. We once again this year exceeded the target. So congratulations to all of the people in the branch that have worked so hard since 2005 to get us to where we are today. So congratulations.

My question has to do with the increase in the budget. I notice that there is a \$1.4 million increase. I'm interested in having the minister indicate to us how much is being spent on employment and language services in this fiscal year.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — I appreciate the question and share the sentiments. I think the officials are doing very impressive work on behalf of the people of this province.

There's a \$2.4 million piece here — \$2 million through the labour market agreement. That labour market agreement is a federal-provincial agreement signed just in the new year to afford Saskatchewan \$90 million over the next six years. And \$2 million of that through the labour market agreement is for training and settlement supports. That's one key piece. We've got \$200,000 to increase resources dedicated to . . .

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Excuse me, Minister. I'm interested in . . . there was \$1.97 million last year spent on employment and language services. I'm interested in knowing how much is being spent this year on employment and language services.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — On that specific point, we have seen a \$400,000 increase on that item. And I'll ask . . .

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you. Thank you very much. I don't have a lot of time. So I just have a number of questions. If we can just answer the questions, that would be very helpful.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — I'm just wondering if you'd like some

additional detail on that.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — I'll get to that. But if you can just answer my questions, and then I'll go back, I'd really appreciate that. There is a community capacity-building fund of \$1 million. I'm interested in knowing, this year how much is being allocated to that fund or has the fund changed?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — The fund hasn't changed, but there is a \$600,000 increase. And I'll have Rick actually speak to that in some detail.

**Mr. Pawliw:** — Yes. The budget last year was roughly around \$1 million, and that's been increased by an additional 600,000 in '08-09 for expanded services — what we're calling intake and assessment referral.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you. Now last year there was 900,000 for a foreign credential recognition initiative. I'm wondering if there's an increase this year to that initiative. This was including the internationally educated health professionals and others. There was a federal contribution. And then there was some work towards skills recognition. I wonder if that's changed this year — if we've got more money added to that, or has the process been renamed?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — On that one we see continuity as far as funding with the addition of \$200,000 for the web portal.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Now is that the immigration portal? There was 150,000 that was allocated to that last year, so is there an increase of \$100,000?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — It's \$150,000 for the health piece plus \$200,000 on the portal. And that goes to a December contribution from the federal government we were delighted to receive. And that portal is separate and above.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Okay. I know that there was a federal contribution of \$150,000 for the immigration portal. We had that last year. Is it now 200,000?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — The announcement actually relates to 660,000 over three years. And so it's 200,000 new dollars and that was announced in December.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — So is that on top of the 150,000 contribution that the federal government made to the Saskatchewan immigration portal?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Just for clarification, is the \$150,000 that you're referring to part of the IEHP [internationally educated health professionals]?

**Ms. Atkinson:** — No, I don't believe so. We had \$905,000 set aside for the foreign credential recognition initiative which included \$155,000 for the IEHP initiative. There was a \$450,000 federal contribution and then of course there was 300 K for skills recognition. So there was on top of that as I understand it, there was 150 K for the Saskatchewan immigration portal. This was part of last year's budget, and I'm trying to figure out where the money is going to this year, and so there was money for the development. It came from the

federal government. It was included in last year's figures, and it was to the immigration branch, and it was to develop the immigration portal.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — What we see is an increase of \$50,000, and that accounts for the distinction between 150 that you're making reference to and the 200,000 . . .

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Okay. So there's a \$50,000 increase. Okay, thank you.

Now there also was a \$270,000 also included in the budget for an international education marketing strategy for not only the post-secondary system but also the K to 12 system, and that's how we got Dr. Symes to come and work in the department. And I'm wondering if we have seen an increase in that allocation as well.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — What we see is a modest increase to about \$300,000.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you, Minister. So it appears as though, I can certainly understand 1 million, 1 million increase, a \$400,000 increase for the employment and language services, a \$600,000 increase for community capacity building, a \$30,000 increase for international marketing, and then of course a \$50,000 increase for the portal. So I understand that. Can you explain the rest of the increase which gets us to approximately, let's say, 400 K? Can you tell me precisely what the additional 400 K is being allocated towards?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Again I'll ask Rick to walk through with some detail, actually. It's worth going through in detail, given the significance of the work underway.

**Mr. Pawliw:** — So if I can just comment there. We have \$200,000 for operating, for increased staffing. That's equivalent to three additional FTEs, full-time equivalents, and some dollars for operations there, tied to travel and so on that we'll need related to those folks.

We have 400,000 for work-based training, what we're calling work-based training and that will be added . . . We spoke to that just briefly earlier, related to our language training funding. We've got 600,000 for enhanced intake and assessment. And that will likely be — the 400,000 and the 600,000 — will be delivered by third parties, primarily. We talked about the 50 K for the enhancement to the portal, web portal, and then the balance of that will be inflationary costs related to our operations.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Okay. Thank you very much. As the branch will know or the division will know, there are funds that go out to third parties like the settlement agencies, the regional colleges and so on and others that support with the settlement and immigration of newcomers. And I'm wondering if you can indicate to me at this stage how the \$1.6 million for community capacity building is going to be allocated.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Just for the record, it's close to \$5.5 million that's going to be transferred to third parties.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — I'm just talking about the community . . . I

understand there's money through language services. I just want to get an understanding of the community capacity building fund.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — And as we work through this transitional year, again I'll ask Rick to comment more thoroughly. There was actually an initiative in Saskatoon today that was underway to help get a clearer term of reference.

**Mr. Pawliw:** — With respect to the community capacity building fund, when we initially rolled that program out last year, it was intended to be a two-year initiative. So we have basically completed the first year of that commitment and will be in the process of negotiating new agreements with the settlement agencies and other ethno-cultural groups and others that are providing settlement support to immigrants.

The new funding, the \$600,000 increase, we need to have some consultations with stakeholders around that funding. That's the requirement of the labour market agreement. So we'll be doing that in the very near future.

Today and tomorrow we have a settlement forum that's running in Saskatoon where we're having discussions with the settlement organizations around best practices, what gaps they've noticed in the service delivery, and from there moving forward.

So it's going to be a transition year for us. We want to have the opportunity to evaluate how we've done so far and where we should go in the future.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you. That's very good because this was only for two years to try and build capacity. So it looks as though at the moment we have people in Saskatoon that are consulting with the various settlement agencies. Now are these settlement agencies from around the province, or are they just the ones in Saskatoon?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — The event in Saskatoon is actually the inaugural event. We've got over 110 individuals registered from right across the province. And we anticipate again, because it's just the inaugural event, that these stakeholder, if you want, sessions are going to be continuing.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Now is this the . . . We had \$1 million for community capacity building. It was a two-year program to try and improve the capacity of various agencies to welcome newcomers to the province and to provide service. So the inaugural event, I guess, is this to talk about the community capacity building fund? Is this to talk about, you know, who gets what money? What is the inaugural event for? Because I know there have been other times when the branch has consulted with organizations regarding programming and so on. So if I could have a little more detail on that I'd appreciate it.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — The inauguration is an opportunity to reflect on best practices, lessons learned, also programming gaps and potential synergies between partners. And so the

objectives would be to build on best practices, look at lessons learned, and to enhance programming.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — So this is, I suspect, that SIAST, the regional colleges, other settlement agencies, people who are working on settlement and education and training from across the province are there. Am I correct in my understanding?

**Mr. Pawliw:** — That's correct.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you. So earlier the minister spoke about the labour market agreement between the federal government and the province and that it means about — do I understand this correctly? — about a \$2 million increase to newcomers, immigration. Did I hear that correctly?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — That's right. We see 2 million through the labour market agreement for training and settlement support.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — So this is on top of . . . This is new money. Is it replacing the old labour market agreement? Can you explain that to me?

**Ms. Young:** — It is new money. It's not replacing. The old LMDA is still in place. This is an LMA on top of it and it's a six-year agreement.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — So this is \$2 million in new money. And has all of the \$2 million been allocated to the immigration branch? Or is there some money for immigration services that would be allocated through our training organizations that are out in the field but under the umbrella of Advanced Education and Employment?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — What we see is a \$1 million increase within the branch and \$1 million going out to career and employment services.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Okay thank you. So then if I understand this correctly, of the \$1.424 thousand in increased funding to the branch, in fact \$1 million of that additional funding is coming from the federal government, from federal resources.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Well I would say that the labour market agreement, it's a partnership agreement and reflects a level of co-operation between the federal government and the provincial government.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — So of the \$1.424 million in additional funding to immigration . . . so we're talking about (AE06) subvote, of that 1.4, \$1 million of this additional revenue is part of the agreement with the federal government, so they're federal resources.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes there's . . .

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Okay thank you, Minister.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — No, thank you, Ms. Atkinson.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — The next thing, item that I'd wanted to ask about is if you can you tell me presently in the branch whether we are fully staffed. I see there's three additional full-time

equivalents, but in the past there have been, you know, vacancies. And I'm wondering if you can advise me how many FTEs [full-time equivalent] there are and at present what the staffing composition is.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes, I'm happy to do that.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — There are 60 FTEs and 53 of which have been filled. We've seen stabilizing of the human resources. That is part of the productivity challenge that we're overcoming, was quite significant turnover within the branch previously, and we've taken some specific steps to address those.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you. Well that's good work once again on behalf of the people who are administering the branch. I want to congratulate you for that.

I want to go back to the actual settlement agencies. Can you advise me at present what Saskatoon and Regina Open Door can expect in terms of funding from the branch in this fiscal year?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — I'll ask Rick to comment specifically on the Open Door societies in both Saskatoon and Regina.

**Mr. Pawliw:** — I'll have to just qualify my comments because we haven't made final, final determinations around the work-based language training or the enhanced intake and assessment referrals. So those decisions are still pending around funding.

So together we provide — and I'll just list these for you if I may — 416,000 that goes to Regina Open Door and Saskatoon Open Door for what we call enhanced language training. We have 513,000 for the immigrant internship program that's delivered by those two agencies. We have a total of, I believe it's 225,000 in terms of grants to settlement agencies and included within that is some funding for enhanced assessment referrals. And as I said there'll be the 400,000 and the 600,000 we talked about. They could be in receipt of some of those funds although that has to be determined.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — So as I recall I think there is some core funding that goes to Prince Albert settlement agency, the Moose Jaw settlement agency, and then Saskatoon and Regina. Is there any indication that the core grant will be increasing this year or is it all tied to services that are being delivered?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — We see the core programming remaining constant and increases being targeted to specific initiatives.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Okay. So I mean one of the issues that has been — certainly when it was brought to my attention — that settlement agencies had historically been funded by the federal government through Citizenship and Immigration and there was a request, given the fact that the immigrant nominee program was expanding dramatically, that there be some core supports put in place to support the existing settlement agencies. And I'm thinking of Saskatoon, Regina, Moose Jaw, and Prince Albert.

And so there was some effort made to increase the core grant even though it was minimal relative to the federal government, but we did try and keep increasing it. So then there won't be any just inflation, like the other CBOs [community-based organization] — I think it ranges from 1.9 per cent increase to 2.3. You're not anticipating any small increase in their grant to recognize inflation?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Just to confirm, there is consistency on the core funds. What we found — and the rationale for this — is that some of the agencies didn't actually, if you want, invest all their core. So what we're doing is essentially keeping that constant and enhancing the specific initiatives, whether to training or other. So that provided a rationale for turning and saying there was, if you want, there was a gap between what was being invested and what those contributions were.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — So are you saying that they were not spending their core allocation from the province on just administrative supports? I find that surprising because one of the ... Certainly what I heard was that they were being expected to do all of these things and they really needed additional supports just to keep their basic operation going, understanding that there would be project funding that they would have access to on a year-to-year or six-month-to-six-month basis.

But in terms of just keeping the doors open you needed to have a core group of people. So your argument is that the core grant — which was minimal really, relative to what they do — they weren't spending it all?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — I think on this there was a notion that this year there was sufficient. There was some slippage. That being said, what we're looking to ... Obviously there will be increased demands on these organizations, and so for this year we just said they were sufficient.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Okay, thanks, Minister. The internship program: I'm very familiar with this program and I'd be interested in hearing from you your observations on the program, whether you think it's been worthwhile. Has it led to people getting real jobs, even though you know, they're scientifically trained? How do you think this program has worked? Do you view it as a success? It's obvious that it's continuing this year. Can you comment?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — What we're basing our early analysis on is a series of anecdotal reports and feedbacks. There will be a more in-depth analysis occurring over this summer. Certainly the anecdotes are very positive, but we'd like to do a more thorough and systemic review of that.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — So I believe this is about the third year, if my recollection is correct — maybe this is the fourth year — and it certainly has been enhanced since it began. Are you saying that it's not been evaluated up until now?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — No. I'm happy to report that we'll be conducting that kind of systemic review for the first time in the history of that program.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Oh I think there's been an evaluation done

on the program. There was an initial evaluation done, so this . . . I suppose you'd now have a bit of a baseline.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes, I think this . . .

**Ms. Atkinson:** — But there was an initial evaluation done on the program. Okay, thank you.

My other question . . . There are a number of settlement committees across the province. I'm thinking of, you know, the people that brought in people in to Gravelbourg; in to the Humboldt area — the Chinese people that were at Stomp Pork; people going, I think, South Africa into Annaheim; Swift Current, the Colombians; Battleford, also a number of people . . . Moose Jaw. So there are a number of committees.

I'm wondering, did we expand those committees into Lloydminster and Estevan? Because that certainly was the thought last year. And I'm wondering how you view the committees, and can the committees in rural Saskatchewan — I'm thinking of Hudson Bay, Tisdale, Gravelbourg, Swift Current, The Battlefords, Moose Jaw, to a lesser extent Lloyd and Estevan — can these committees expect some support this year to help them do their work in terms of helping employers settle newcomers?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — I'll just, I'll go down there. To answer specifically, we've seen some movement forward in Lloydminster; in fact I was just there last weekend. Estevan, we're still working on. But it may be just worth repeating: Sunrise Community Futures, Cypress Hills Regional College; the town of Gravelbourg, as you've mentioned; The Battlefords Chamber of Commerce, and we've seen, I think, significant progress in The Battlefords. I think it's now ranking number three. As I've said, Community Futures in Lloyd, and there's certainly increased activity there. Carlton Trail, the REDA [regional economic development authority], the town of Hudson Bay, town of Tisdale.

We see the Fransaskois increasingly involved and then we have the UCC [Ukrainian Canadian Congress], the provincial council, and Saskatchewan Capacity for International Professionals also involved.

So, that's to, I guess, offer a list to . . . I think your question is really to ensure that the service is available and the distribution of newcomers to Saskatchewan have the opportunity to find home and settlement services within a variety of communities, and that continues.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Right. I'm pleased about that because we know that settlement services will vary from community to community, and there are lots of people. I'm particularly thinking of all the work that was done in Tisdale, LeRoy, small centres, where the community really stepped up to the plate, and they just needed some support from the province to assist them.

In terms of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, I know a number of supports were given to various committees across the province, and I'm wondering if that will continue this year. Because we had a number of people coming from Ukraine, and I'm wondering if it looks as though there'll be further ability to

bring newcomers from Ukraine.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Couple of pieces on that. The answer is that we anticipate more newcomers coming from the Ukraine, and there will be support offered to various organizations across the province.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Good. Thank you, Minister. Now there was another program that was done under the foreign credential recognition and this was something that was done by our branch in partnership with the College of Medicine. And it was a support program to assist physicians in preparing for their licensing exams. It was the first thing of this type, as I understand it, in the country. I think we're now into the second year. I think it started in September '06, so we're now into the second year. I'm wondering if you've got any reflections on that program.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Certainly. You're referring to the international medical graduates initiative?

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Yes, I am.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes, there are a couple of pieces here. Obviously it's to be applauded. There are approximately 25 international medical graduates that access this service on an annual basis. There are 80 currently receiving the benefits of this. I think it's one of the instruments that we still turn to. And I think there is an element of continuity and this would be an example of that continuity to turn and say, obviously a leading priority of this government is to help ensure that medical services are provided for the people of the province and we continue to utilize this instrument, which is to be applauded.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Right. Now there was also some work done with the certified general accountants. They were very interested in moving forward. I'm wondering how that's going. As well, work was done with APEGS [Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Saskatchewan], I think it is, the engineers. And also I think occupational therapy. And I'm wondering if you can bring us up to date on that.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — I'll take these in no particular order. Within engineering what we're seeing is ongoing dialogue between the two universities and APEGS, so that dialogue continues.

We see an investment within the certified general accountants of over \$15,000 from our branch aimed at specific communications course and over \$37,000 to the Saskatchewan Society for Occupational Therapists. So we're seeing some movement there, and we're delighted that it's under way. Certainly with the engineers specifically, our cabinet had a recent meeting with the association, and this issue was raised. And that co-operation especially with the two colleges is going to receive increased attention.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Very good. Thank you, Minister. Now you indicated earlier in your opening remarks that as of the end of March, we saw over 1,700 nominations under the immigrant nominee program. Can you advise me . . . Maybe you can get this to me in writing as well, and there's some other documents I wouldn't mind in writing as well. Can you advise me the

source countries of those 1,700, and is the first source country the Philippines?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes. I'll give you the brief rundown here. The Philippines is first, the United Kingdom then second, China, Ukraine, Germany, South Africa, Serbia, Montenegro, India, South Korea, and Vietnam.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Right. And from the Philippines, how many people out of the 1,700 . . . or individual nominees came from the Philippines?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes, we've got between '05 and '07 it's 28 per cent. We'll have to give you the . . .

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Can you get it for '07-08? Okay. I know you can because the branch keeps track of that. Thank you very much.

Secondly, can you tell me at the beginning of this new fiscal year how many applications we had waiting under the nominee program? You don't have to do that right now, if you can just get that to me. I don't have much time left here.

**Mr. Pawliw:** — We can answer that directly. We have about 1,800 applications in our inventory. Last year we received over 2,600 applications.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Right. Okay. Thank you. The other thing I'm wondering about, in terms of the 1,700 and some I suspect that came as of March 31 . . . So at the end of this fiscal year, how many individuals does that represent? Does it represent about 5,000 people?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — As you'll be familiar with, there's a 1.8 multiplier. So yes, between 4,500 and 5,000.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Great. Thank you, Minister. And can you tell me . . . Now I'm very appreciative that we're fully staffed but these things seem to have an ebb and a flow and I'm not going to, you know, if at some stage you're not fully staffed up I'm not going to blame you personally as the minister. I mean this is a new, this whole thing of processing is a repetitive thing. So I'm wondering if you can tell me what the wait times are at the moment to get applications through the system. How long is it taking approximately?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Skilled workers we would see about a six-month window and that could go up to close to 11 months for unskilled family members.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — That's to get a, that's to actually process the application in the branch. Okay, the family class?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes. That's about 11 months.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Okay. Family class is 11 months. And skilled?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — That, sorry, the family class without jobs about 11, skilled about six months.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Okay. So has the branch begun to prioritize?

Because there are a number of ways to come — the family class, the entrepreneur class, the skilled worker class — and so has the branch begun to prioritize who gets into the queue?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes. There are increased resources on the skilled worker category.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Okay. So are there dedicated people for the family class?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — With the exception of the overseas missions — again great continuity there — it's actually on a first-come basis. So what we see are just simply there is more work being done, but there's no, if you want, additional weight being put on. And I'll ask Rick to elaborate a little bit on that.

**Mr. Pawliw:** — Sure. Essentially, if it's . . . Easy way for me to describe this is, is we have a pull system, as the minister said, that we're treating these on a first-come, first-served basis, by and large. But if we were to pull 10 applications from our filing system, we would dedicate, we would pull five of those from the skilled worker category, and we might pull three from the family class with job offer, one from family class without a job offer, and one might be for the grad students and so on, the other categories.

Now we have the ability to shift that on any given day or week or month, depending on where we see our processing times moving.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — So then if I understand it, it's not first-come, first-serve?

**Mr. Pawliw:** — Not in that sense. We do some prioritization within the office and it's primarily geared to what the labour market demands are. And that's a decision we made roughly six or seven months ago.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Right. Okay. So that decision would've been made in November?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes. This is an element again of continuity. We saw movement towards this as early as the summer of '07.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Okay. So six or seven months ago. I think I was the minister until November. So from my vantage point, this is a bit new. So I guess we'll just leave it at that.

But I think what's clear is, it's not first-come, first-serve. It appears as though the wait time for skilled workers is shorter than if you are a family member and you're coming under the unskilled category or you don't have a job. It sounds as though if you had to draw, there'd be four people that would come from the skilled, maybe two from the family class, whether they have a job. But if you don't have a job, you might pull one.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Well there's a bundling really is what we're talking about. And again this reflects great continuity in initiatives that began before the previous election.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Well I won't challenge you, Minister, because I don't want to get into a difference of opinion here.

But certainly there might've been some thinking from that way on that part, but it was not the policy of the former government.

So I guess my question is this: can you tell me whether people who are coming through the door with family members — they're trying to get people into the province — whether they're being told that we have this pull system now? And that's point number one. And point number two, can you tell me, of the 1,700 people that came under the nominee program, how many people came under the family class?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — The answer is to your first question, yes. Communications is clear about wait times. And on the specifics, 866 skilled worker nominations and 587 family member nominations.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Okay, thank you. Now I want to talk about the trip to the Philippines. Can you tell me — this is the last trip with the health regions — can you tell me who the officials were from the Department of Immigration.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Again I think, I think it's probably best if I simply say we sent two officials, rather than get into specific names.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Fair enough. Can you provide me with their names in writing? Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — You know, I find it very curious that question, as far as identifying individuals.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Well it's done all the time. If you could provide me with the two names of the individuals, I'd really appreciate that. And secondly, can you advise me whether the branch paid for anybody other than those two individuals to accompany the group to the Philippines?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes, the two individuals were the only individuals paid for by the branch with an approximate cost of about \$6,500.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Can you tell me who organized . . . Was the branch very involved in the organization of this trip?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — The leadership came from various health stakeholders and we supported and obviously advised.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Given that it was the branch that had done all of the previous work with the Government of the Philippines, that they knew the territory, are you suggesting that the branch did not facilitate?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — No, I'm not suggesting that at all. I'm suggesting that there's a different conception. That is how do we, how do we . . . sorry.

**The Chair:** — Go ahead, Minister. Finish your answer.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes, it's actually about the role of the state and that is we heard and responded to various health stakeholders. I think it would be a misrepresentation to suggest that we didn't maximize our knowledge on the ground. What we were able to do is actually use our resources, especially our

human resources, efficiently.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Well there are people from the branch that have been to the Philippines on a number of other occasions. They've assisted employers in recruiting workers from the Philippines. And so I was curious to understand the role of the branch in terms of the support to the Ministry of Health and the health regions on this recruitment mission.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — The mission obviously drew on the expertise within the branch, for example, on official meetings in the Canadian embassy. And we worked with other health stakeholders.

**The Chair:** — Order. In order for the committee to conduct its work later this evening, we need to conclude our consideration of these estimates. I'll allow Ms. Atkinson one short question with a short reply.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — I'm sorry. I thought I had until 15 after.

**The Chair:** — No.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Oh, okay. Thank you. Then my final question is this: what is the policy of your branch in terms of going on missions with immigration consultants?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — The defining feature is that we would go with employers. That's not exclusive; that is, as you know, sometimes the employers will have consultants. But the primary imperative here is to ensure we're working closely with employers.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — So the best of your knowledge then, on this mission over to the Philippines there were no people on that mission that are immigration consultants at present?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Chair, I'll say in my last statement, nothing in my last statement would allow for that conclusion to be drawn.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — So the answer is?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — On the specific reference to the trip, the recent mission to the Philippines, we worked very closely with the health authority. The health authority may have had within their employ or by contract a consultant, but our principal point of contact related to the employers.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — So okay. So then there was no one that was on this trip, that you know of, that was a consultant?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Chair, I'm not certain of our time here, but I will just simply reiterate, our principal points of contact were with employers. And as I've said previously, some of the employers have employed or contracted consultants. So I wouldn't want to offer a categoric statement beyond that.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — So you don't know then. Okay, if I could, Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the officials for their information, as well as the minister. And this will conclude our estimates for Immigration.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much, members. Minister, you have a short final comment.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Indeed. I would just like to echo my appreciation for, not only for the committee members, but for the tireless effort of our officials, and Saskatchewan has a new place in Canada and the world because of their work. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — The committee will take a short break to allow for the change of ministries and officials. We will resume our consideration of the next item on our agenda, which is Corrections, Public Safety and Policing, in 10 minutes from now.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

**General Revenue Fund  
Corrections, Public Safety and Policing  
Vote 73**

**Subvote (CP01)**

**The Chair:** — Okay. I'll call the committee back into order. We will commence our consideration of estimates on vote 73, Corrections, Public Safety and Policing. We have with us here this evening the minister, and he has a number of officials with him here this evening. And I would ask at this time for the minister to introduce his officials.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to be back here tonight for the one-hour session of our estimates. With me from the ministry are Terry Coleman, my deputy minister, to my left. I've got Mae Boa, executive director of corporate services, to my right. In the back, I've got the assistant deputy minister of corrections, Maureen Lloyd. I've got Tom Young, executive director of protection and emergency services; Duane McKay from the fire commissioner's office; Murray Sawatsky, executive director of policing services; Chris Selinger, the manager of codes and standards compliance, licensing and inspections; Bob Kary, executive director of young offenders programs; Marlys Tafelmeyer, director of human resources; and Sandy Tufts, executive assistant to the deputy minister.

If I can have a few minutes, I'll just do a preamble as I did last time and we'll get into this. This apparently is going to be more or less about policing, so I'll hit the highlights on the budget of both policing again and start taking questions.

We'll start off with the Saskatchewan Police College in this budget, and my ministry is responsible for an additional \$290,000 that'll be allocated to the Saskatchewan Police College. It will be used to provide resources to the police college for a curriculum development, and it will also go toward enhancing the capacity for professional learning and in-service for municipal police officers. College funding will increase capacity for providing both basic training to meet the demands of hiring additional officers and to ensure ongoing developmental learning needs are met in the future. This will help keep Saskatchewan's municipal police current on contemporary policing practices.

Increase in municipal policing. An allocation of \$270,000 will increase the number of municipal police officers by six during this fiscal year. This funding will help the province advance our commitment of adding 120 new police officers over the next four years.

We're going to increase the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] capacity within this budget as well. Another \$400,000 will increase RCMP capacity under the provincial police services agreement by four officers, and again will count towards the government's commitment of an additional 120 new police officers over our term.

The provincial police service agreement will have \$7 million going towards funding Saskatchewan's provincial policing service agreement with the RCMP. The funding will be used to cover the increased costs of salaries, pensions, and benefits, as well as other per officer costs associated with contracting the RCMP as our provincial police service.

Additional officers for street gang investigations. CPSP [Corrections, Public Safety and Policing] will see an additional \$920,000 directed to funding an additional nine police officers to conduct street gang investigations. This funding delivers two ways — again to advance the commitment of 120 police officers over four years, and to address another important promise calling for increased funding to combat organized crime and gangs in Saskatchewan so we can reduce violence in this province.

The initiative enhances the combined forces special enforcement unit by providing one province-wide surveillance team of six RCMP officers and the associated operating resources for that team. As well, one additional municipal police investigator will be provided to each of the three units to increase their capacity — one in Regina, one in Saskatoon, and one in Prince Albert.

Internet child exploitation units. Under this final budget item for policing, again I will repeat the details of the announcement I made in Prince Albert on Friday, March 28.

The provincial budget provides for an allocation of \$1.12 million to CPSP to fund the establishment of an 11-police-officer Internet child exploitation unit. Once again it advances our four-year goal of 120 additional police officers. Just as critically, it delivers on the government's commitment, outlined in the ministry's mandate, to protect children from sexual exploitation over the Internet. These resources will establish an ICE [Internet child exploitation] presence in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert so all parts of the province are served.

And if I can just go on, I guess quickly. The police services budget provides funding to support municipal policing in the province. It also provides funding to manage the province's policing contract with the RCMP, enhance and support Aboriginal policing programs, regulate private investigators and security guards, operate the SCAN program — safe communities and neighbourhoods — the Saskatchewan Police Commission, and as I already mentioned, the Saskatchewan Police College.

The RCMP provides policing services for the province as mentioned, serving in 79 rural detachments and on 44 First Nations communities. The RCMP also provides service to 34 municipal detachments, including 27 administered by the RCMP cost redistribution program. The Aboriginal policing program administers agreements related to 34 community tripartite agreements, or CTAs for short, and one self-administered police service. These agreements provide police service to 52 First Nations communities and covers 78 per cent of the on-reserve populations. The program is also involved in developing and implementing a First Nations recruiting strategy for police officers in this province.

The SCAN program provides funding to improve community safety by targeting and if necessary shutting down residential and commercial buildings that are used for illegal activities such as producing, selling, or using illegal drugs; prostitution, gang-organized crime activities, child sexual abuse, solvent abuse, or the unlawful sale and consumption of alcohol.

Funding for the Saskatchewan Police Commission provides civilian oversight of municipal policing and promotes effective policing in Saskatchewan. Funding for the Saskatchewan Police College provides basic recruit and advanced in-service training to the Saskatchewan police community as mandated by regulation. And in that closing, I'll take questions from anyone who wants to ask questions right now.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Minister. Before I open the floor for questions, I'd just like to inform the committee that we have a temporary substitution, Mr. Yates for Ms. Junor. With that I will recognize Mr. Yates.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm going to confine my questions tonight strictly to the policing portion of the budget. I'd like to start by getting a little more detail as to what the new \$290,000 going into the police college is going to, where it's going, and is it going to result in any additional FTEs or employment as a result.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Thank you for that question. Right now there'll be no new FTEs assigned to that 290,000. We will be doing some contracts with some retired members of police services to bring in their expertise as we develop the curriculum.

Policing is a very interesting fluid science in this country right now. With the change in crime trends, the old day of going to police college and getting some basic courses to upgrade your skills have changed. We have criminals getting smarter, much more efficient in how they do their business. So we have reviewed the curriculum at this time and after consulting with the chiefs of police and the staff at the Saskatchewan Police College, we believe that this allocation of money right now will start the process as we move forward, recognizing a continuous commitment to the police chiefs in this province and to our policing service community, municipal police forces, and our new recruits to ensure that we get them capable to tackle the crime trends that we see right now.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. My second question has to do with, will this increase the capacity at all of the number of recruits that are eligible or able to go through the

college in a year?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Thank you for that question. What this particular money is going to be allocated for is the development of a more streamlined curriculum process. The police college is mandated to have a certain timeline for recruits for basic recruit training. With the allocation of seats by municipal police forces, there'll be a maximum number that can be held in each classroom. There are two classrooms.

What we will do is that the money will be able to be used to really process a lot of our in-service training. What we see now happening in our police services is a big void of officers in the management administrative level, commissioned officers who will be leaving. Who is ready to step up and take that leadership role? There are many young men and women right now who I know personally would be very capable of jumping in with the appropriate level of courses.

We also are going to be allocating the funds in a manner that will allow for in-service training to actually mentor new officers through a process. If they self-identify, they wish to aspire to the rank of a commissioned officer, we want to make sure that they're ready for that challenge at the particular part of their career when it evolves in their service. Understanding that, adult basic education levels in policing and how their curriculums were developed in the past isn't effective to actually get men and women ready for the leadership roles of the future in policing.

So as we move forward, we have the recruit numbers will remain. We will build capacity for the future as we see our police services requiring that need to take leadership. Thank you.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. You had indicated that there would be \$270,000 allocated and that would result in the increase of six municipal police officers; and \$400,000, which would result in an increase of four RCMP officers. Could you share why the discrepancy with us?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Absolutely. Let's start with the second part of the question first. The \$400,000 for the RCMP will provide in fact two new Aboriginal police officers on two First Nation communities and two experienced senior crime investigators. I'm just going to refer to my deputy minister for the title they're going to have . . . major crimes investigators. And that money will flow out for those four positions.

The first part of your question about the 270,000 will hire six new police officers — the allocation of those resources will take place in the latter part of this fiscal year because they will be brand new recruits. In fact, they have to be processed through police college, and the classes run and start again in January . . . in August, sorry, for a December graduation, and then again in January for a graduation in May. So those allocation of those resources will flow that way. That's why it's 270,000 for municipal seats.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Can those municipalities expect then an increase in funding to fully fund those officers in the next fiscal year?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Yes.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you. My next question has to do with the 920,000 being allocated for gangs. You indicated that six of those would go to an RCMP unit and three would go to, one to each of the municipal departments. Would this include coverage for the North and other areas of the province which are experiencing — La Loche and other communities — that are experiencing gang issues as well?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — I'll have to confer with my executive director of policing services to ensure we have the right answer for you, if you'll just bear with us.

Thank you for that question, and thanks for the time to confer with my officials. The answer is going to be that the six-person surveillance team will in fact be all RCMP officers that will be utilized to combat organized crime and gangs. The officers that will be allocated to the other three major units — one in Prince Albert, one in Saskatoon, and one in Regina — are mobile. They are not site specific. Those officers will flow between units and they will be allocating their resources within their units to tackle the ongoing problems with gangs and organized crime and drugs, I might add as well.

So the teams will work jointly between RCMP and municipal police forces. And as they identify through source information, organized crime, gang operations, and drug operations, they will be working together as one major unit in the province. The northern part of the province is more covered through the Prince Albert combined force, the special enforcement unit. But resources have been allocated from the South to assist in that battle.

As we move forward and see the continued crime trends developing involving youth, organized crime, gangs, how they'll be using, possibly using drugs and other activities to in fact bankroll their operations, I can see a need for those operations to be much more fluid. And again we'll be conferring with the chiefs of police, RCMP "F" Division commander, and the ministry officials to ensure that we adequately resource those individuals to tackle crime.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. Now moving on to the Internet child exploitation officers. These officers will require unique skills — skills not usually taught in front-line police colleges. They will likely require extensive computer experience, probably one or more degrees in computer science or large amounts of practical experience. What qualifications are we asking for these officers? And how are we going to go about ensuring that we get the types of recruits we need?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Thank you for the question. What will happen is that these units right now will be taking experienced investigators from either their criminal investigations divisions, their street crime units, or their current child sexual abuse units who've already got some very good groundwork laid for the investigative skills. From that point on, a computer degree is not required for this particular program. I won't go into detail as to what the expertise level will afford these officers, for basic reasons that I think are pretty obvious.

The Canadian Police College in Ottawa offers the preliminary

course for these officers to train and then access mentorship opportunities. Toronto metropolitan police service had a very instrumental part in starting a lot of this program in the bigger centres. A lot of that resource that they have will be tied into this training, I'm sure, with their officers coming forward and helping out.

I would also suggest that a lot of these officers will be able to access international courses. The funding is going to be provided to the agencies to in fact give them the opportunity to get the basic training, give them money for their infrastructure needs for specialized computers and lines, and then to advance the development of those officers as we move forward into this project.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. How long will it be before these units be up and operating at full capacity and we can expect to see their input make a significant difference in our province?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Give me a second. Thank you for that. The timeline for this is going to be critical that we give the . . . Municipal police forces will have more of an opportunity, more so than the RCMP, to staff these positions. It'll also be interesting when they look at the Canadian Police College for seat availability for this particular, this unit, knowing full well that this is a major problem in our country. Other major police forces and the RCMP have ongoing training needs.

We are allocating the money to them this fall for their seats, to be trained and to bring them into operational standards by the end of the fiscal year. The idea for these officers is that they will be able to hunt those who hunt our children. That's a fact I don't want to be too light on either. These officers will be highly trained and specialize in this particular skill set. So we're going to phase them in.

We're going to tie into resources nationally, internationally on this, to go after those people who right now seem to have a lot more freedom than they should in this province. And that's a commitment from the Premier and myself and this ministry.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. My next questions are going to deal with SCAN. I'd like some overview of the effectiveness of SCAN, and if you could, some breakdown in number of arrests, closures of buildings, and so on and so forth that have resulted from their work.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — I'll just confer with my official first.

Thank you. As a preamble for the SCAN, the unit was in fact set up under the previous NDP administration and it's a very effective tool. It actually does allow for experienced police officers to use their highly trained skills in investigations and surveillance work through covert and overt ops to assist municipal police forces when they get complaints of reoccurring issues within criminal activity or alleged criminal activity. It's a very detailed unit that spends many hours sneaking and peeking around, gathering up intelligence and evidence to go forward to the justice system to hopefully be able to gather enough information to lay information and actually have the home or the building shut down.

So right now the statistics for SCAN, since SCAN became operational in January 2005, it has received over 1,500 complaints up to and including January 17 of this year, 2008. Of the over 1,500 complaints, just over 1,100 were reported as drugs, 116 as prostitution, 93 as gang organized crime, and 56 as grow operations — illegal drug grow operations. The remaining 151 complaints fell within other specified activities such as alcohol and sniff houses.

In relation to enforcement actions, the two main forms have been evictions, which total 215, and CSOs, community safe orders, which total 15 with 30 successful applications and two unsuccessful applications resulting. There are currently three CSO applications pending before the courts.

On April 19, 2007, The Summary Offences Procedure Act was amended to allow for the issuance of a summary offence ticket information for an offence under 60.1(2) of the SCAN Act, wearing gang colours in any permitted premises. Subsequent to the amendment coming into effect, members of the Hells Angels, Regina and Saskatoon chapters, and Freewheelers, Saskatoon chapter were charged with separate offences under this section.

The charge against the Regina Hells Angel member was subsequently stayed on the advice of the public prosecutions office in order to allow for the significant time and effort that will be required to prosecute the charges originating out of Saskatoon. So the charges involving this is not just local gang activity. We're talking international gang activity as well. So this particular unit is well resourced and will continue to be so under this government.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. The next question then to the minister is I guess somewhat hypothetical but only from the point of view that as the criminal element and gangs get more sophisticated of course we have to give those who are dealing with them new tools, new powers. Are there any concerns at this point that there is a need for new legislation, new regulations, new rules to help deal with this activity in our communities?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Thank you for that time. I guess it's a broader scope when you talk about legislation. It isn't just Saskatchewan specific. Ministers will have the opportunity through Justice and through my ministry and myself to talk to the federal government officials as well. At this time the federal government is taking a very tough-on-crime stance which is very much a nice dovetail into what we're doing, what we want to do in this province given our atrocious crime rates — violent crime rates — over the last nine years.

What's critical in this is that we talked about curriculum development with the police college. We'll be tying into resources from the federal system through the Canadian Police College. And with the new law changes that the federal government will enact I'm sure in short order as they ramp up their activity, their very effective campaign on this tough-on-crime stance, we'll see changes in this province as well which this government will definitely adopt and welcome with open arms, at least in this ministry's aspect and from the government I suspect as well.

It affords us more opportunity to ensure that our officers are trained and ready for the enactment of these laws. When it comes to organized crime and gangs, it's very fluid. The gangs come and go. What they wear, what they do for activities hasn't changed a lot, but we have to make sure the officers understand that in the international world of crime and gang activity, they are also very fluid. There's mobility issues in this province that we have to make sure we're resourced properly. And on that note, we'll be looking to the federal government for assistance in the legislation especially.

And one thing as well that I will also talk about because it gives me the opportunity now is the mandate under this new government and the Premier to build a Western Canadian gang database. That's critical. The database itself has been talked about now for a while, I understand. The police agencies in Western Canada have the CPIC [Canadian Police Information Centre] system right now at their availability when they check on and query people's names, and there is of course criminal backgrounds and histories that come out of that.

We're looking for a specific database as we dovetail our activities in this province with our western counterparts through liaisoning through the corrections systems that are happening now, to our local municipal police forces, to the RCMP to ensure that we have the right information in the database and compiled. So if a person is in BC and comes to Saskatchewan and they happen to be subsequently stopped in a roadside check for a driver's licence or a vehicle registration, which is allowed by law, and the name is queried through the system and they in fact come up as on this database, then that particular gang member will then be flagged for the units within their current municipal police agencies and the surveillance teams available to track and to actually look at why they're in our province. It will afford, in fact, our province a much safer kind of umbrella as we look at gang members coming and going from our province.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Part of the reason I asked the previous question was over the last number of years there's been various times when the policing community has come forward asking for additional, for lack of a better word, authorities or tools in order to perform their job and deal with the issues as they come forward. I just was looking for some sense from you that that type of commitment would continue — if our police agencies come forward indicating they need things from us, that the new government would be committed to ensuring that those agencies have what they need to do their jobs.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Absolutely. This question's easy to answer. I don't even have to confer with my officials on this one.

We have made a very clear statement to the chiefs of police in this province that . . . Luckily there's two of the three here have just left policing. The other person at the table left a little while ago. But we're still very much involved in the crime trends. We understand how they work in this province. But as we move forward, we need to have the experts, who are the chiefs of police, to tell us what they see in the communities, liaisoning with the RCMP nationally as well, as they see their crime trends evolving and move forward.

The purpose of the consultation process is to ensure that as we put forth our budgets year in and moving forward to the next three years, that we in fact are tackling our commitment properly. We understand that some of the police chiefs and the "F" Division commander may be better served by having just recruits, pay for recruits to hit the street and they can promote within to specialized sections. They may come to us with requirements for specialized sections, operational needs, and additional resources for those needs as the crime trends change.

This government of course and this ministry are very committed to that protection of the people in this province, safer communities. Safety of our children is paramount. So we will definitely be advocating for those at the budget table.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. My next question, I'm going to deal with the commitment for 120 new police officers over four years, 30 of which are here this year. There has been some indication in meetings with some of the municipal police associations that one of the difficulties that's coming — and has been for some time — is when we get overprescriptive of where jobs should be that we may not be giving municipal police chiefs and the RCMP some of the flexibility they feel they need to deal with their policing needs moving forward.

So in this first 30 officers, we've been quite prescriptive. Is that the intent moving forward, or will it be flexible, based on the demands raised and the needs raised by both the chiefs of police in the province and the RCMP?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Give me a second, please. I have an answer; I just want to make sure it's on the right path for you, so we're not going to be delaying this process any longer.

Thank you for that. It's actually ongoing. For this particular budget cycle this process of consultation took place prior to our election win. And they've come to us and said, this is what we wanted to see in this budget. And we're using their consultation, their recommendations, their advice as we go forward on this.

And I have to say that in my experience in policing, that the way the allocation of resources were this time, it's a good cross-section to cover off new boots on the street, new recruits that go out and do the basic patrol duties. We're seeing officers go into advanced, high-crime kind of priorities. And that's critical.

As we move forward, we have a futures of policing initiative that we've started, working with the RCMP especially and as we identify our needs within the province. This particular group of chiefs, commissioned officers, and the "F" Division commanding officer and his 2IC [second in command] will be very critical as we move forward. And I'm prepared to take their advice. I trust them. I trust them with my life, being a former police officer. They know what's best, and I'll definitely be there to advocate for them on that.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. My next question then has to do with the federal funding that has been allocated to each of the provinces in Canada for policing. Could you give me an overview of how much that is for Saskatchewan and when we'll receive, incrementally, when we'll receive that

money?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Thanks for the question. Again thanks for the time to confer with my deputy minister on this one. I pretty much had the answer. I wanted to make sure I had it right for you though.

It's actually \$11.7 million over five years. The drawdown of that particular fund can happen at one time — we could draw the whole amount down if we so choose — or we could take it in incremental chunks as we need. It's not sustainable funding. It's not going to go on for time. We know that. Right now the legislation has to be drawn up by the federal government to in fact move the money to a third party trust, the Bank of Canada. Then we can make our allocation from that fund as we see fit.

Moving forward with that money, we'll be using and targeting specific needs — again after extensive consultation with those chiefs and "F" Division commander and his officers — to ensure that the money, although not sustainable, definitely puts this province at a very proactive approach as we examine previous history and liaisoning with international crime trends and experts, moving forward to ensure that we can do whatever we can do to make our communities as safe as possible and reducing the violent crime rate.

It's going to be a very demanding job to do. I do believe that the experts we have right now in the administrative roles and leading our departments, both RCMP and the provincial municipal police forces, know what to do best, and we'll be looking to them for advice.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. My next question has to do with the . . . It's a combination question, I guess, between the 120 new officers and the \$11.7 million. This \$11.7 million will not be used to offset the expenses for the new 120 officers, will it? It'll be new money above the cost of the 120?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Well I'm very proud to say that as a new government we have in fact earmarked the four-year budget cycle with adequate resources as we move forward to ensure that we committed ourselves to 120 over the four years.

This new money is at our discretion to — and the Minister Day and I have talked about this — if we want to use it to simply backfill some of resources now, financial resources, to possibly fan out that money to other particular policing needs, we can. The ministry and I have talked about it briefly with Minister Day.

We also have the opportunity to move forward and actually work on new initiatives over a very short timeline to, as I've said before, look at strategies to reduce crime rates in this province.

It gives us a lot of latitude. We have the provision, like I've already said, to use it as we want to, again recognizing it's not sustainable. But it does give us the opportunity to put this province in better financial shape over our four-year cycle, understanding we had a very solid financial plan moving forward as we budgeted for these additional 120 new officers over the four-year term of this government.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. I'm not quite sure I got an answer. The 120 you've indicated is budgeted for. The 11.7, I asked if it's above that. I think it's yes, but it's not real clear.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — The answer isn't as simple as yes or no. I know you're probably after that, but how it works is that there's extensive consultation at the deputy ministers level with the federal government right now. We know we have 11.7 million over five years. We also know and recognize that we were very proactive in our approach to developing out-year budget plans, projections for the officers after consulting with chiefs and Saskatchewan Federation of Police Officers and looking at costing of the 120.

So the money itself is a federal initiative which is in addition to what we have budgeted and will be budgeting in the out years. So that kind of answers the question.

But we can use it to offset some of our costs if we so choose at this time as we move forward to pay for the 120. It's a nice, fluid agreement that will be negotiated at the deputy minister level, and then the ministers will be talking about it — and the Minister of Justice — at their forum in September, I'm sure.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. That is my concern. At a cost of about \$3 million a year, the 11.7 in effect could pay a good portion of the costs going forward of the 120 officers. I think it's important for the people of Saskatchewan that this money makes a difference.

I guess I've read in an Alberta newspaper that Alberta's looking at using the money to build a new police college. I wouldn't want to see us spending the money in that way, but actually spending it in a way that is in the best interest of the people of Saskatchewan, providing safer communities, providing police officers in the police community with the resources they need to more effectively do their jobs, rather than a building.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Good question and thanks for that. Actually it's a double answer that I'll come back at you with. The 120 new officers will be not just funding for positions. We're going to be putting 120 new police officers into the system. What the additional 11.7 million does is allows us or affords us the opportunity for numerous initiatives that can come forward from the chiefs of police and the ministry officials that are seated with me today, given their extensive expertise in policing in the community through both levels, RCMP and provincial-municipal policing.

That brain trust that we have in this province is something that I look forward to tapping into as we move forward to plan for the \$11.7 million from the federal fund initiative. So we will be actually putting 120 new police officers in already. If we use 11.7, I would make a very clear statement: as long as I'm the minister, that will not go to buildings.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. My next questions, Mr. Minister, have to deal with — through the Chair of course, Mr. Chair — have to deal with essential services and where you view police services in the continuum of essential services in our province as we move forward.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Well I will be very, very honest with this

answer. Although it has nothing to do with the estimates at this time, I don't have a problem with answering the question to a certain level if the Chair wishes to let me.

**The Chair:** — I believe the normal or the procedure in the past is that questions that can be tied into estimates, even though they may be somewhat perceived as somewhat outside the purview of estimates, have traditionally been dealt with in committee. And I believe the question would meet that criteria.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Thank you. I have no problem answering that question. I would have to ask the member that, would he not think that police officers are not essential services through the public safety component — what they do and the jobs they run and the calls they go to? I feel very confident.

And I'll draw on my experience as a police association president that the men and women who are in law enforcement and specifically the municipal policing in this province, but the RCMP officers as well who have a different set of rules — I understand that, respect that, and definitely understand that, the role they play — we, and I say we as law enforcement police officers, are committed to the safety of our communities. We also as police officers had a very strong commitment to that cause.

Understanding now as a minister that there is a provision within the new Act that has not been passed yet that talks specifically to police commissions, police boards, and how they will be tied to the same 90-day negotiation stance process prior to a contract expiration of their respective police associations to identify essential services, I understand that they still have a particular right to strike. However I really do believe that the officers and men and women right now who join police services do so for the simple fact that they want to serve and protect. And they understand that there's a process that can be involved with that as they move forward for contract negotiations.

Having negotiated contracts myself, I feel very confident that the law enforcement community and policing would rather not leave a community hanging without their police service, but as a public safety measure it definitely would meet that umbrella.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. My next question I'm going to ask about where we are in Saskatchewan around the utilization of tasers in municipal police forces, fully realizing that today the RCMP can in fact utilize them, and understanding fully that special weapons and tactics teams can in fact use tasers as well. But where are we in regards to development of a provincial protocol that would see taser utilization by front-line municipal officers?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — I'll just have to confer with my officials for one second. I have the answer, but I want to make sure I give you the right information.

Well thank you for the question. I guess the question is somewhat historical in its perspective. In October 2007, when the former Justice minister . . . Actually I'll back up to 2005 first. The Police Act did in fact allocate under the . . . The Police Commission gave the allocation of the conducted energy devices to the special equipment provision of the Act, which afforded the chiefs of police that wished to use these conducted

energy devices the opportunity to deploy those to special weapons and tactics team, SWAT teams, as well as individual officers who had received the training through the police college.

What had happened is then out of that provision the chiefs of police left it there and certain officers were in fact able to carry the conducted energy device after they had adequate training level. In October 2007 when the former Justice minister under the previous administration announced that all police officers can carry and utilize the conducted energy device, the Act had to be revised. To make it very simplistic, it took the special equipment provision where the chiefs could allocate that resource, that particular tool, to SWAT and then to other individual officers trained, it separated that now as a special level of force within the Act but it had to be approved by the Saskatchewan Police Commission.

So immediately upon taking over the ministry, I asked my executive director of policing services to brief me on what the standard was and what was the timeline, what we were looking at — somewhat because of what happened in Vancouver. But in spite of what happened in Vancouver I wanted to ensure that there was some continuity and some legislation, some provision in the Act that safeguarded the officers. Because I had been told to a certain level that there was some void area, some grey area now with the former Justice minister making a very clear statement prior to the election. And true to my information that's exactly what happened.

So no police officer, no chief of police in this province could carry a conducted energy device because the Act did not allow for it, because the chiefs of police had not submitted — as the Act was now prescribing — their very detailed policy statement, direction, and regulations surrounding how the use of that weapon or that particular tool would be put into play in the local police forces who wished to use it, as well as the training requirements that had to be provided to the Police Commission to ensure that now the commissioner felt that there was adequate training provided to the use of the level of force.

So we as a ministry decided — and I'll take responsibility for this one because I felt it was paramount — rather than leaving the officers in our communities, municipal police forces, out there with a tool on their belt that was not allocated, not properly sanctioned as a level of force in the continuum of the use-of-force model, because of the discrepancy created by the statement made by the previous Justice minister, I felt that it was imperative that I remove those particular devices off of the general patrol duty provisions until we had the chiefs of police submit their detailed policies as per stated already.

However we were able to make a special provision in the meantime to allow the special weapons and tactics teams to in fact carry those conducted energy devices, only at the time of a call-out, as a level of force that could be utilized, because the officers on those teams are very highly trained in the deployment of levels of force to ensure the safety of all citizens, even a perpetrator. So where we're left at now is that because of the glaring oversight, we now have had police chiefs who want to use the conducted energy device submit those policies and procedures to the commission.

The head of the Police Commission, through my executive director of policing services, has informed us that the policies and regulations for use were inadequate. They didn't go into enough detail to some extent to satisfy the commission. And they've been sent back now for revision and for additional information.

In May of this, upcoming here, we will see the Police Commission sit and I feel confident that at that meeting the Police Commission will come out with a very detailed approach to the allocation of the conducted energy devices to front-line patrol officers, then put it in the Act so that in fact the police chiefs can carry on with the allocation of that particular tool and the use-of-force model in our communities.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm not sure if you're aware of this, Mr. Minister, or not, but is it the intent that all the municipal forces in Saskatchewan have an interest in these devices?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Thank you. How it works right now is that because the Act talks about the allowing of the actual use-of-force level, individual police chiefs and municipal police services and police boards will make the decision if they want to in fact put that as a level-of-force option for their particular officers.

There is no need for every police force to carry them if they so choose not to. It's their decision. The chiefs of police have the say if they want to equip their officers with that level of force. The Police Commission has the . . . The Act will be changed to allow for that to happen. We cannot provide that direction. The separation of state from policing services is paramount in any democracy. We can't dictate to them how to do their job. They know their job very well. Highly trained officers understand their role in our societies.

If the chiefs of police wish to not adequately equip their officers with another level of force out there that's certified by the Police Commission for use operationally, if they don't want to, nothing says they have to, understanding that they have to answer possibly to their police boards if something was to happen.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. But as you are aware, or you will become aware over the next couple of years, those same groups, men and women who protect our communities, come to this building and wish to meet with both members of the government and the opposition about what their needs are.

And I have clearly heard over the last two or three years, maybe four years, the need or the desire to have this particular tool made available to them. They believe it will provide additional opportunities to subdue somebody in a less harmful way than other alternatives and at the same time protect themselves. So I just want to go on the record saying, you know, we're supportive of that. We were when we were the government and remain so. And I have no question on that point, but I wanted to make it clear.

I do have one final question as we wrap the evening up. There was 1.1 million additional dollars allocated to the municipal

police forces. I'm fairly certain I know what it was for but if you could just give us — it's bullet number three on page 18 of your document — if you could just update us what that particular funding is for.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Thank you for that question. I do want to address your statement though because I think it neglects the simple fact that the understanding, having been a member of the Saskatchewan Federation of Police Officers executive board, that in my time on that board we never ever advocated for particular tools involving use of force. We recognized that — and as they do today — that that particular decision is at the discretion of the local chiefs of police which they have to in fact approach to ask for that provision to be allowed and given to them as a tool in the use-of-force model.

The biggest concern and it still is to this day, after meeting with the Saskatchewan Federation of Police Officers last week, was the fact of the funding commitment of police officers in our communities. And we're not talking funding positions, we're talking boots on the street, new officers, advocating for some specialized sections, replacing them with some, recruit new officers — not a promise to fund and not fulfill it. That's where our commitment is right now.

And when it comes to police officers advocating for training and levels-of-force options, they know that that is in fact within their realm to discuss it with the local chiefs of police. I respect that they may come to us and ask for that provision for hardline provisions in The Police Act for certain equipment usages. Respecting that, we also understand again separation of police and state, that chiefs of police are involved with the management of their police forces and the tools are allowed to them through the Act. Whether or not they wish to provide their officers of the front line with those tools, those resources is still up to them. So that's where we're going to be going with that.

Now to talk about your \$1.1 million. There are some provisions how it totals out, and if you'll bear with me I'll answer the question. There are some increase for salary adjustments of taking out-of-scope and in-scope staff; the six new police officers for \$270,000; the gang suppression units as talked about with the officers, one in Saskatoon, one in Prince Albert, one in Regina of \$135,000; the ICE unit of \$650,000 as well to staff that unit up now with their allocated officers. That's the 1.1 you're talking about.

There's also 1.12 allocated solely for the ICE unit which is the \$650,000 plus the new allocation to actually staff officers that never were staffed prior to this government taking office. I believe I've answered your question.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Just a point of clarification. So the 1.1 million was to fill, and the additional indications we had earlier about the 270 and the 400, that's all above that, right? The 400 was RCMP, pardon me, so not the 400.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — It all depends how you want to ask your question about it because within the police funding, the numbers I ran through before of the 270,000, the 400,000, the 1.12 for ICE, that would be the 1.12 you might be asking about, Mr. Yates. I would have to say that if we look at some other

additional funding requirements that come into play here, we do have the allocation for 920,000 for the specialized surveillance team along with the three new units. So I guess it all depends how you want to break down your question to be more specific if you want an allocation.

**Mr. Yates:** — What I'm trying to ensure is you're not double counting between the 3 million in funding for the 30 additional officers and the 1.1.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — So I've answered that question initially, then.

**Mr. Yates:** — Yes, right. Thank you very much. I was going to conclude my questions but I understand that I have to utilize up another three minutes or so here or somebody will lob you a softball. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

What should be my final question has to do with the relationship between RCMP and municipal policing in northern Saskatchewan. You talked about the integrated Prince Albert unit. Could you just explain that in a little more detail for us?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Absolutely, sure thing. In Prince Albert right now there is an integrated unit involving RCMP officers and city police officers from the Prince Albert Police Service. That integrated unit is not unlike the one in Regina or the one in Saskatoon. It's a combination of resources allocated highly trained officers specializing in investigations involving gangs, drugs, organized crime. And to look at the northern part of the province, north of Prince Albert, that's the responsibility of the Prince Albert unit for the most part, but they will draw resources from the other two units in this province as well.

That particular unit is fluid. It can flow in and out of communities. They utilize their RCMP officers in current detachments as well for support purposes. They can also draw on other specialized sections to support their operations as we go out into the community to look after these organizations that seem to be cropping up in the northern part of our province occasionally.

So the North is covered off by the local detachments gathering information intelligence, bringing it down to their detachment commanders and down to the divisional commanders within the subdivisions like in Prince Albert. And those people then will allocate the resources to do surveillance, tying into other allocations or resources as well on an as-needed basis, moving forward. So the North is covered through that unit of integrated police officers.

And we should also tell you that how that is actually is operationalized is that municipal police officers become sworn in as RCMP special constables to get province-wide authority, so they can then act throughout the province. There are provisions under The Police Act to allow sworn police officers in municipalities to enforce the laws in Saskatchewan, but this gives them broad ranging authority as a sworn-in special constable now to do cross-border business as well. So that's how we cover off the North, and we liaison with other parts of the Western Canada provinces.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. My

understanding is that the municipal police officers have province-wide authority, and they're not special constables of the RCMP.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Municipal police officers are sworn as regular members. We're talking about the provision within the RCMP under these specialized units to allow them for interprovincial jurisdictional authority. So there's a lot of times when these officers have to cross the boundaries, the borders of our provinces as part of their job, and that gives them authority then to act under that provision.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much for the clarification, and that makes good sense. I'd like to at this time to thank the minister and his officials for coming and answering our questions tonight. It's been very, very helpful, and with that I will conclude our questions.

**The Chair:** — Minister, do you have any concluding comments, any short concluding comments?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Well thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to say it's been a pleasure working with the committee, with my ministry, in developing the budget. We have a commitment as a new government to protect our communities, protect our children, and to provide the resources to the men and women in law enforcement and in corrections, I might add as well. We can't forget that. They're a component of this moving forward as we tackle our violent crime and crime rates in this province, and we see the economic momentum continuing. We will see our province prosper to the point where we have these resources in place to deal with those who tend to prey on the people in this province. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Committee members, I believe we have concluded for this evening the consideration of vote 73. We will take a 10-minute break to facilitate the changes of ministers and ministries. When we resume, we will be considering vote 5, Education. We'll take a 10-minute break from now. Thanks.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

**General Revenue Fund  
Education  
Vote 5**

**Subvote (ED01)**

**The Chair:** — I'll call the committee back to order. Our next item on our agenda is vote 5, Education. We have with us tonight the Minister of Education, and he's brought a number of officials with him. At this time I would invite the minister to introduce his officials.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and good evening to committee members. I'm pleased to be able to introduce a number of individuals from the Ministry of Education. Seated to my right is Deputy Minister Audrey Roadhouse, to my left is Assistant Deputy Minister Helen Horsman, and to her left is Assistant Deputy Minister Darren McKee.

Seated behind me to the left is Val Lusk, who is an executive

director within education finance and facilities. Directly behind me in the first row is Lois Zelmer, who is the executive director of early learning and child care, and seated next to Lois is Dave Tulloch, who is our director of financial planning and management.

Behind, starting over on the far left is Christina Stanford, who is with education finance and facilities. Seated next to her is Clint Repski, also a director within education finance and facilities. Then we have Shirley Robertson, who is the acting executive director of the Teachers' Superannuation Commission, and then Sue Amundrud, associate executive director of curriculum and e-learning. And next to Sue is Rosanne Glass, who is an executive director of policy and evaluation. And I don't think I've missed anybody, Mr. Chair, and that's the officials that are with me tonight.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Minister. I believe there are a number of committee members that have some questions for you, and I believe Mr. Wotherspoon has some questions, so I recognize Mr. Wotherspoon.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, and thank you for your officials, or the ministry's officials, that are in attendance here tonight, and I appreciate the opportunity to ask questions of this budget.

I'll start off here with some broad ones here around the essential service legislation. I'm just wondering if our minister could describe who would be included potentially within the essential service Bill 5 legislation that's proposed, within the Ministry of Education.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Well first of all the Bill is still before the Legislative Assembly, and it contemplates that there will be a negotiation between the employer and the employees. And currently that has not even, not even been contemplated, so that will occur once the employer and the employee representatives have an opportunity to sit down within the various sectors of Education to determine what employees would be required to provide essential services.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — This has been kind of a consistent question that we've asked to various ministries, and we've had various answers back and forth. Most have already identified some roles within their organization or within their structure that would likely fall into essential service legislation. Are there any right now that you would know that would definitely fall into essential service legislation?

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — No, we have not done that, Mr. Wotherspoon, at all. We have not identified any of the specific employees or any of the sectors.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Has the Minister of Labour consulted with you in this regard as to the scope or the possibilities of roles that would fall within the essential service legislation?

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — No. There's been no consultation with me directly or with any of my officials to my knowledge.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — So we haven't named any or you aren't able at this point to name any roles. But at this point right now,

we have teachers. We have professional education workers. We have educational assistants. We have custodians. There's no one that you would be willing right now to rule out of any application of essential service legislation.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Well as I understand the Act, there will be a negotiation to determine what employees will be necessary to provide that essential service. And that will take place at some future point. There has been no discussion with any of the sectors or any of the groups representing those sectors, I guess.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Minister. Maybe looking at a piece of the budget here, we look at the literacy budget. There's been dollars that have been reduced within the literacy budget. And it's happened, as I can see anyways, in two places, the first being the literacy office. And it's lost, I believe, about \$70,000. I'm just interested in the rationale and how that efficiency — if that's what it is — is going to be realized.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you for that question, Mr. Wotherspoon. Within the Literacy Commission's office budget, the entire budget was reduced from \$3.127 million to \$2.622 million. So that is about a \$505,000 reduction. And if I can break that down for you, there will be a position that was vacant, that there was no individual there, that is being eliminated. And that position will result in a saving of \$64,000. And then the program that was called the SmartPack program is not going to be continued with. And that is \$441,000. So if you add those two numbers together, that totals \$505,000, which is the amount that the entire budget was reduced.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Minister. You mentioned a vacant position. What was this role? How long had it been vacant? What was its original purpose?

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — It was an administration position within the commission. There were five full-time equivalents within the literacy office and that has been reduced to four. That administrative position was a position that didn't have a person there last year. It was a vacant position and that is being eliminated.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Could you just describe, if possible, the SmartPack program and I guess its original rationale and then your rationale for no longer continuing it.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — As I understand it, the SmartPack program was announced as a one-year program and there was a distribution of about 9,000 packs, as they were referred to, to families.

That is being replaced within the commission. We're looking at now a numeracy initiative and we're going to work with kindergarten and grades 1 to 4 to improve numeracy skills. And we're looking at doing some kit distribution there as well. We're looking at about 375 schools in communities in the cities of Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, North Battleford, as well as in the North. So we're sort of attacking a different skill set, if you like, and that's going to be referred to as a numeracy initiative.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — The numeracy initiative sounds good and has value and is important. I'm just wondering, was it an

either-or when you were coming down to budgetary decisions as far as choosing literacy or numeracy? Or looking at the literacy program, did it feel as though it had run its course or its effectiveness? I'm just wondering your position on why it was no longer continued.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Well a couple of things have happened, Mr. Wotherspoon, as you are aware. We've brought the Literacy Commission back within — the literacy office, I should say — back within Ministry of Education space. We are going to be using some administrative personnel and that's the reason for explaining the reduction of the full-time equivalent, because we do have the staff that currently exists within the building.

As far as the literacy initiatives, I would suggest that in light of some of the work that Assistant Deputy Minister McKee has been doing on Aboriginal literacy and you're, I'm sure, pretty aware of the literacy forum that we just had as an initiative of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, we're not lessening the importance of literacy.

We're going to probably use different initiatives. We recognize that the First Nations, Métis, and across the North, of course the Inuit, achievement levels and the literacy skills need to be enhanced. We have talked about the gap that exists between those First Nations, Métis, Inuit and non-Aboriginal achievers and it is too big a gap.

So we're still continuing to focus on literacy. It is a high priority and in fact in the province we should see other initiatives that are going to be done with the existing personnel that's there — whether they're within the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation or within my ministry. So the change that you are going to see is not really . . . The reduction of one administrative position is not going to affect, you know, the delivery of literacy programs. I think you are going to see more initiatives as we move forward, and one of them has been the literacy forum that was just held in Regina here, which I think was very well received.

You know, I want to again commend Susan Aglukark for being our keynote speaker. It was just an opportunity, a tremendous opportunity . . . I know Mr. McKee has indicated to me I think we had over 325 registrants at that forum, 325 registrants and the opportunity to link up with the forums across the nation were just a tremendous ability for students to recognize what is going on in other parts of the nation and to recognize that we need to ensure that literacy and in fact First Nations and Métis and Inuit achievement levels in literacy remains a focus.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — I commend the ministry, as I have prior to this, for the forum. And I do look forward to the investment and implementation of some of its recommendations as we go forward. But just to go back quickly here, so we've eliminated 9,000 packs that went home to families here. Do we have these numeracy booklets or packs ready to go here this year or is there going to be a gap?

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Yes, my deputy minister tells me they are ready to go. The cost to them, and maybe I'll even jump ahead to your next question, my understanding is that the cost will be about \$40,000 for those kits that will be distributed to

about 375 schools.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — That's wonderful, and in the end when we're talking 40,000 or the 400,000 with the SmartPack literacy packages, well I guess we're really talking about small potatoes, aren't we, Mr. Minister, when we're looking at the sort of revenues for which we've been granted here as a province of late, with \$1.3 billion in the bank? So I encourage you to invest in these initiatives that allow the tools to be in the homes of our young families.

And I guess I haven't got from you yet, Mr. Minister, and maybe I just alluded to it, is we do have 9,000 families that will no longer be receiving literacy packages. Did you deem these no longer effective or was this a budgetary decision?

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Wotherspoon, what the packs did was create an awareness in families across the province. And now because the pack is there, because the information is within a family or within the community or within the school, there's the ability to copy it and to distribute it.

I don't think the information is suddenly coming to a stop. I think you're just going to see that information probably distributed in a slightly different fashion to families through schools, through the pre-kindergarten programs, through the early childhood learning programs — that this material is there already. It's been distributed, as you've said, fairly extensively, to 9,000 families and that was a good venture. But now we're trying something different and we're going to pursue other initiatives.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Minister. If we look at the pre-K [pre-kindergarten], the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] budget, and we look specifically at French education, French education has taken a significant hit in the budget here this year. Over \$2 million has been taken from its budget, looking at its previous year of '07-08. I'm just wondering, I'm looking specifically to . . . That comes out of the third party grant area. And I'm just wondering your ministry's justification for eliminating over \$2 million from third party grants.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — That's a good question, Mr. Wotherspoon. I can tell you that there was a federal-provincial agreement that was signed to fund the renovation of two schools in Saskatoon, and that was an elementary and a secondary school. That was to be completed by June 2008. So as a result of that monies coming from the federal government and the province, and these projects about the elementary and the secondary in Saskatoon being completed, there is an amount of money of \$2.237 million for '07-08 that was received for that capital construction that the project's finished. So that explains \$2.237 million.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Minister. We found those dollars and that makes sense. So the project itself, it's complete?

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — My officials tell me that both of the schools in Saskatoon have been completed.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Now those dollars . . . So those indicated a one-time funding there so we're not seeing any

year-over-year change in, or reduction there other than the fact that these were allocated for a project; project's complete. And now of course you're moving forward and the budget is maintaining all other programs, third party grants that would have been there in the past.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Correct. There was a transfer of that \$2.237 million from the federal government that was received in the '07-08 budget, and for '08-09 there is no money coming from the feds for these two schools because they're complete, so as a result it's not on that line any more.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — We will take a quick time to look at the school capital investment, or the infrastructure investment, and I do commend the ministry for stepping forward significant dollars to move ahead projects that have been prioritized for some time.

I guess my first question to the minister is just, the projects that have gone ahead, to the best of my knowledge in looking at things, it looks as though they've come directly off of the priority list. I just would like to verify with the minister: can you state that the projects that have been prioritized have come off in accordance with the priority capital list that's been established for some time?

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — While my officials are finding some information on the capital, Mr. Wotherspoon, I do want to clarify one answer that I just gave regarding the completion of the secondary school in Saskatoon. My officials indicate that the estimated completion of the project is October 15, 2008. It's not completed yet, and they're expecting it to be completed by October 15, 2008. So I want to clarify that to make sure that you have the correct.

Now your first question on capital was regarding whether or not the projects are within the assessment procedure, and the answer is definitely. The ministry has, as you are aware, there are four levels of projects. The four levels of projects are 1, 2, 3, and 4. And within the first level of 1, within the first level there are a 1A, a 1B, and a 1C.

Now the prioritization is to rank the projects according to, in no. 1, the health and safety school projects will fit into no. 1. No. 2, they're basically determined as a result of enrolment pressures. In 3 they're called non-life-threatening building structural issues. And 4 are new school requests where enrolment pressures can be addressed with busing or there may be some building code infractions.

So those were the projects. I can tell you that within the announcements this year these are all priority 1 projects. We have not been able to move to any priority 2 or 3 or anything like that. So those projects that are identified in this year . . . Do you want me to go over the projects?

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — I'm satisfied at this point, but I thank you. Thank you, Minister, for offering. I know we're short on time and long on questions, and I appreciate that.

Now our minister has verified the number as well that we have slightly over \$1 billion of infrastructure deficit within school projects within the province of Saskatchewan. We know that

construction inflation is extremely high now and has been for some time. I believe that we're looking likely around 20 per cent this year. This has been a significant investment into school capital projects this year.

I certainly wouldn't want to minimize an investment of over \$100 million. However, when you take 20 per cent construction inflation and look at a deficit of \$1 billion, we're accruing likely over \$200 million of further deficit costs as we go forward. So I know my wife and I certainly can't maintain our credit cards at home in that fashion. And I'm just wondering. We've got a challenge ahead of us, and as I know, the minister's spoken to, and I know he's addressed part of that with his budget.

The \$100 million investment doesn't keep pace with the accruing deficit growth that we're going to see here this year. By this time next year our infrastructure deficit is going to cost more than it does here today, even with this significant investment. I'm just wondering if I could have a comment from the minister on this problem.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Well you know, I guess you've identified a long-term problem. We're trying to deal with a portion of that problem in a short-term solution, and that is to throw . . . to have \$117 million allocated to capital for this year. As you are aware, at the end of the fiscal year '07-08 we also added an additional 13 million into capital for the previous year on top of what had been budgeted. So really we're putting about \$130 million worth of capital in the last month and a half.

Now you're right, you know, the question about what is the capital requirement. I think before the ministry right now, I believe, our projects are somewhere in the area of \$555 million of which we're going to be able to do about 130 million of that. Now as we move to next year and the year after and . . . I'm sure that there's a school division that's going to submit a B-1 or maybe has submitted it already that will appear on this next major capital list in the month of June that we haven't even seen yet.

So what will happen I think, Mr. Wotherspoon, is that the amount of money . . . I don't believe I'll be able to tell you that, well there was a list of 555 million and now we've done 130 and now the list is down to 425. That's just not going to be there because, two years from now, you're right. If a school is estimated today to be able to be a renovation and an addition at a cost of \$10 million today, I'm sure that by the time we are able to allocate the resources to complete that project, if it's three years from now, it isn't going to be \$10 million. It's going to be maybe \$15 million.

So there will always be a shortage and that is why we as a government saw this as a priority, was to attack the infrastructure deficit with some pretty significant dollars.

It's, you know . . . Some individuals have said, well you know now you've made great headway. We've made some headway. But it's not great when you look in the scheme of things that you've identified, you know, whether it's \$1 billion or whether it's the 550 million that's before the ministry right now. We're trying to address some of the concerns but, as you are aware and I've pointed this out to you before, like you know, of that

130, 27 million of it — 13 into last year and 14 into this year — of this year's budget goes to complete the projects that were identified in 2003.

So you know, it's not as if we're able to suddenly say, well these are all brand new projects. We're in fact doing the multi-year projects that were announced by the previous government in communities like College Mathieu and Prince Albert Collegiate. That's costing an additional 4.6 million to finish those projects. So we're sort of taking care of almost \$35 million of projects that are already announced and now we're moving to some new ones.

My hope is that we're going to be able to provide additional infrastructure dollars to Education for next year, because we need to keep moving a pretty significant contribution to that budget.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — That encourages me to hear that, Minister. And you know of course, our incredibly strong economy which has so many benefits also has some, creates some challenges. And I guess, you know, an accruing deficit of infrastructure and also the challenge of getting even the trades and the construction to complete the projects is a challenge. And on that note, I'm just wondering if you have, your ministry has set out a bit of a timeline for the project completion of what's been announced.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — I think two things, Mr. Wotherspoon, I can say to that question. We're going to work with the school divisions to ensure that the projects move forward as quickly as possible. We want the project design and the tendering to happen as soon as possible because, you're right, whether it's a 1.5 per cent inflationary per month or 2 per cent, that's large dollars. So the sooner we can go to tender on the projects, the better. The construction industry we know is busy in the province, but we're told that there's excitement from the large contractors in the province who are looking forward to these projects.

So we haven't set a timeline that says we want these schools finished by, you know, the middle of 2009. We want them to finish as quickly as possible. And we're going to assist, my officials will assist with the school boards and the facility planners within the school board offices to make sure that we do all of the analysis, that we do all of the studies, that we do those as quickly as possible and get these projects to tender as quickly as we can.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Am I correct, Minister, that by looking at the value of each one of these projects that that comes directly off of the priority list whenever they went into the queue and were waiting their time for funding? So the budget that we've allocated might not be near enough to even address the schools that we've announced here today. Is that fair?

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — You know, that's always a guesstimate when you're talking about inflationary pressures. We have built in contingencies, contingency amounts of dollars on each project. Now in some we may have some leftover dollars, and in some we may be short. But that's not going to be known until you see the actual contract go to tender, and you have the ability to see what design is occurring.

You know, in a project as large for instance as the Scott Collegiate project here in Regina, it requires a lot of assessment and a lot of planning because there's a lot of partners; there's a lot of input from different sectors. And that's not going to be a project that's going to be able to move forward as some of these others who have already been through the design stage, have been through the design stage. And they already know, they already know what kind of school they want to build in Oxbow. So we're going to be able to move through on some of those kinds of projects much quicker. And they should be close to the amount of monies that have been projected as costs.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Minister. And your commitment to the contingency or the potential overrun is good to hear. And I'm glad you of course are on the same page with that.

Switching gears just a little bit here, something that I haven't been able to find within the budget document, but of course estimates provides a nice opportunity to be able to find out where a ministry's at on a particular issue, and that issue in this case would be provincial bargaining for school board support workers. And I know and I believe our minister has met with these individuals prior to being elected.

And just to give, I guess, a bit of a perspective here, CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees] represents over 70 per cent of the 8,850 educational support workers within the province. Their membership is growing. And they've been working for some time, working to advocate and to be a voice with government to work towards a goal that they would have provincial collective bargaining similar to our teachers in their manner with the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation].

Now I guess just to give a bit of background on this, Mr. Chair, and Minister, you know we do talk about this economy we have right now, and almost on an annual basis or a weekly basis we're hearing about a new investment in the potash industry or other pieces. And what that does is it creates real opportunities for our rural economy, but it also places constraints and challenges on our schools in retaining and holding those individuals that are so valuable within those schools as educational assistants, as custodians, making sure that the supports provided for those students that need them and making sure that the environments are worthy of the students that are within the building.

Right now we don't have equal pay for equal work across the board. Each board is very different. And as I look at these documents, they're significantly different. Someone working for Regina public might be making an hourly rate that might be \$10 an hour higher than someone in a rural environment. This isn't the case for teachers. And I'm just wondering where your ministry's at, if you've had time to establish a position on this. And I don't mean to put you on the spot, but I know that the provincial bargaining team's interested in hearing where you're at.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Wotherspoon, for that question. You're right. I haven't had time in the five months to spend significant time determining what approach our government would take on that. There has been a lobby for many, many years by the workers who I think are largely if not

all I think are represented by CUPE within school divisions. And as we've moved from, you know, 118 or 119 school divisions down to 28, there's been consolidation within the divisions.

So there's been some movement in that respect. I know that there's a process under way right now between the Saskatchewan School Boards Association and the CUPE group, the leadership within CUPE, to begin some discussions on what they might see. And I know that there's been some involvement of the ministry of which Assistant Deputy Minister Helen Horsman has been involved, so I'm going to ask her to maybe make some comments that can provide you with sort of the latest update on what's occurring.

**Ms. Horsman:** — Sure. This process began just over a year ago and at that time the ministry did begin discussions with both CUPE and the School Boards Association and the ministry did offer to provide a facilitator to begin those talks. And that did not occur prior to the election. And since the election our ministry has, or our minister has agreed that those talks would continue.

Many of you may know that the leadership at the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association] has changed within the last six weeks and I believe their new acting executive director just started work last week. So we're just giving him a little bit of time on the job before we go forward to talk to him about this issue again, but it's still there on the table and has not been forgotten about.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — That's really good to hear. I know that CUPE for provincial bargaining campaign or their team will be quite pleased with that because it's important to them and I know they're, basically where they left off in having that approval of having a facilitator funded to come in and work with the school boards and with the provincial bargaining team was really an important process for them, and I think it will be really valuable for the ministry as well. So thank you for continuing that process.

Of course in bringing this topic forward too, I think it's also important and prudent of the ministry to be of course vigilant that they do not pass any of the associated costs of such a provincial bargaining back on to school boards, that it would be something that if it was to proceed, that it would be absorbed from the provincial government itself. Was there any other comments that the minister would like to make before we make move to . . .

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — No I won't make an additional comment, but I'm going to ask Ms. Horsman to complete that comment that she had started.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Please.

**Ms. Horsman:** — Okay so I think I had indicated that the ministry has agreed to provide a facilitator. We have names of facilitators, and we are just waiting for responses from them and I guess, you know, an opportunity for them to come forward to see how they would go about this, and we will provide funding for that.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — I will also add, Mr. Wotherspoon, that, you know, as whatever the final decision will be between the Saskatchewan School Boards Association and CUPE, you know, when we arrive at . . . If there is such a thing as a provincially-negotiated contract, there will be first . . . before we even move in that direction, I'm sure that both sides will be wanting to determine, if there was a contract, what would be the cost of moving in that direction.

You've identified the different sectors that are within CUPE, and to determine how great a differential there is between an employee and school division X versus that same work that's being done by another employee in school division Y; I don't believe that those things have occurred yet. And that's a process that is, I'm sure, is going to be undertaken by not only the facilitator, but the groups involved, to determine whether or not there is a huge cost that will be borne if indeed a provincial contract is negotiated, or will it be, you know, a cost balance. We don't know that.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — The ministry . . . No, that's good. That's good to hear. And I know that as far as looking at the costs, with the amalgamations, I believe some of this cost is it's tightening up because naturally with the amalgamations no one is going down in pay, so there's sort of a move along to a more equitable circumstance. And I believe the annual cost right now would be under \$25 million, but CUPE, and in conjunction with the facilitator and the Sask school boards, would be able to work further on that. I'll move on to . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . You bet.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Wotherspoon, could you clarify? You indicated a number — 25 million. Are you talking about that from some study that says that that's an additional cost or is that the total cost?

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — And I might not . . . I don't want to speak with complete confidence here. Following a couple meetings, I have a number here written down of \$25 million as the high end of what provincial bargaining would cost and I'm not sure then. I would assume that that would be the cost to take and to provide the equal pay across the board, the 9,000 workers across the province. But I haven't done any math myself and don't have a solid verification of that. CUPE would be able to provide you what that number means.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you for that.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — If we move and take a look here at the teachers' pensions and benefits vote (ED04), there is a significant increase in the allocation to the teachers' superannuation plan, statutory. It's an increase of roughly \$80 million — I'm doing my math in my head as we speak — \$60 million, I apologize. It's a significant increase. I'm sure it represents . . . there's a justification behind it. I'm just wondering what that is.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Well as we move forward for the next number of years, Mr. Wotherspoon, you're going to see significant dollars necessary from the General Revenue Fund because it's a statutory obligation.

And as I've indicated in questions that you've asked before, I

think, is that the old teachers' plan, which of course closed in 1979-80, most of the teachers that will teach a 35-year career are going to be superannuating in 20, anywhere from about 2014 to 2018. That's going to be the bulk of the teachers that are going to leave as retired teachers. Now as these increasing numbers come into play, then we're going to have to fund according to that basis.

Now there's going to be a peak in fact — I think it's going to be about 2021 is the information that we have from one actuarial study — where the contributions from the General Revenue Fund are going to peak so that that line item that you currently see within this year's budget is going to be up around \$260 million.

That's where we anticipate that we'll peak, in the year 2021. It will decline a little bit because there will still be some assets within the Teachers' Superannuation Commission. And then by the year 2031, the Teachers' Superannuation Commission will have no assets, and as a result then any of the funding of superannuated teachers under the old plan will be 100 per cent the responsibility of government, and as a result then we're going to see a jump back up in 2031 to probably something like \$270 million. So it'll be pretty high in 2021. It'll drop about 50 million as we move through the next five or six years. And then as we get back to 2031, it'll again peak. After that it will decline, and by the way, the anticipation is that the government in the year 2056 will not have a line item there at all because all of the superannuated teachers will no longer be collecting pensions, unless somewhere else.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you for the description, Minister, I knew it was going to be tied back to the end funded liability there, and I know that provinces across our country have wrestled with this one here and tried to deal with it in different ways, and it's good to hear that in 2050-something there — that we see light at the end of the tunnel.

Moving on to the topic of Aboriginal education and First Nations-Métis education, I should say, looking at the tracking system, individual tracking system for students, I'm wondering how . . . Well first of all, I guess, my first question is, can you separate data on that for First Nations-Métis students?

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — I think we've moved a long way in being able to identify . . . there's excellent co-operation from most schools. And I'm going to ask assistant minister McKee to comment. He's been very involved in the tracking system and in trying to ensure that we know whether or not students are in school, whether they're Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, but he's been very involved with them. So Darren, if you would please.

**Mr. McKee:** — Yes actually we can separate the data. We also actually have 98 per cent now voluntary participation of First Nations in the province on-reserve in the program which is just unheard of in other jurisdictions.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Excellent. Do you have any specific intentions on how you'll use First Nations and Métis data?

**Mr. McKee:** — Actually it's been helpful for us initially to look at issues of kids not in school, and that was the primary purpose initially was to look at that. However what it's done is

it's allowed us to have significant collaboration with First Nations on other opportunities such as transitions between on-reserve and off-reserve education systems, and so we're exploring those opportunities with First Nations now.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you. It provides, certainly provides some opportunities and it's a pleasure, it'd be nice to chat further with you, but I know time is of the essence here tonight. Something important, I believe, in education, when we're looking at First Nations and Métis education, is a representative workforce. So I guess where it falls back onto the provincial government is looking at things such as teacher supply and ensuring that young First Nations and Métis students within the classroom have the possibility of proportional representation of First Nations and Métis teachers and educational assistants and school-based administrators and so on.

Just wondering if the minister or the ministry has an assessment of the work that SUNTEP [Saskatchewan urban native teacher education program] and NORTEP [northern teacher education program] has been doing.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — I'm going to ask Darren again to comment on this. You know there's been some great things have happened within the creation of the branch — the First Nations and Métis branch within the ministry — excellent initiatives to continue with many of the good things that have happened with those programs. And I'll ask Darren to comment on some of the other more significant recent things.

**Mr. McKee:** — Well as you're aware, with the creation of the First Nations and Métis education branch, we've been able to address a number of issues. And we have the capacity now within the ministry to do that. Of course you've touched on a couple of those issues, one of which is working closely with the TEP [teacher education program] programs and working with school boards in the province.

We actually have an agreement — the Aboriginal employment development program partnership with the SSBA — in which they're looking at creating representative workforces within the education sector. And we're not just talking about, you know, entry level positions. We're talking about across the board. Maureen Johns Simpson, our executive director, is working very closely with them on that issue.

As well we're aware of the TEP programs and the work that they're doing. We actually have all the TEPs sit at the advisory panel to the minister to provide information on an ongoing basis about supply for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit teachers in fact, which is a growing sector also in this province. So we are very aware and are continuing to look at ways of growing and expanding school divisions' use of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit teachers in ways that make them feel comfortable, not only in the pre-service but in the actual service in the province here.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — I commend you on those efforts. I believe there's still possibly a bit of a void or challenge, and these things can only go so fast at times too. But in around secondary education on the First Nations-Métis preparatory . . . [inaudible] . . . for addressing supply, wondering if you have a

plan around that.

And you've discussed the value this ministry places on supply. I guess another way of indicating value is through funding. Funding wouldn't come directly through the Ministry of Education of course for SUNTEP or NORTEP or for further broadening of secondary programs, but it would come through Advanced Education. And I'm just looking for this minister's perspective. Of course for him to effect meaningful change on the supply end, he's going to have to have an awfully strong voice with his Minister of Advanced Education. Wondering if he has a position he could offer us.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Well I can tell you, Mr. Wotherspoon, that the training of teachers — you were right — is under Advanced Education. What I have done with the co-operation of Minister Norris, who is the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, as well as Minister Draude, who is responsible for First Nations, we've already had a number of meetings where we have what I'll call inter-ministerial meetings to discuss initiatives to ensure that the concerns of the First Nations and Métis people, through Minister Draude, are understood by . . . First of all if they're reflective of the K to 12 system, then I need to know what those concerns are. And then, secondly, we've also involved Mr. Norris so that we can deal with some of the skills training issues for Aboriginal people as well as the teacher training.

So I think that will allow us to, if I can use the term, have a little bit of a different approach. Rather than working within a vertical silo, we want to sort of work more horizontally so that the ministries are connected together to understand, you know, the solutions. We've talked about pre-kindergarten programs on-reserve, and we've talked about meeting the needs of Aboriginal children. And at the same time we're talking about role models, and we're talking about ensuring that there are adult educators that are First Nations and Métis who will be able to fit into the system.

If we believe that the Aboriginal population is a key to many of our solutions regarding the labour force and moving this province forward, we have to involve them, and that's my goal — to ensure that all ministries are working co-operatively on these topics.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Minister. I would encourage you to work as much as you could on that initiative. We do have a couple of questions from my colleague, Ms. Higgins, and I'll pass it over to Ms. Higgins.

**The Chair:** — I recognize Ms. Higgins.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, earlier this month there was a fairly strongly worded memorandum that came out from the Prairie South School Division. A copy would have been sent to you. There was a number of us that received — SSBA, SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association]. Your deputy minister received it, the Leader of the Opposition, the Premier. It went to the STF, SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], all mayors and reeves in the Prairie South region.

For one thing this is a bit of a surprise in how strongly worded it is within the education sector, in my mind anyway. And I think it speaks to the frustration of the board and the division, feeling that the foundation operating grant doesn't appropriately recognize the actual costs of educating a smaller student population in quite a large geographical division.

I know previously there were meetings held with the three divisions across the south of the province. There was comments from the divisions in the South that they feel they should be treated in more of a similar fashion to what the northern constituencies and divisions are because of the distance.

I know specifically from Prairie South there is some great distances, the concerns with the grant not actually recognizing the costs of operating a school in a rural division and not having those economies of scale that the bigger city divisions have.

But it's fairly strongly worded. It talks about the rhetoric of saving rural schools as just that — as rhetoric — and that it's not been backed up with changes that will make a real difference to these schools. There are also a few comments about the \$1 million that was set aside for the schools of opportunity which we know won't be in place probably until the fall by the looks of it. So any round of changes that are happening right now, the schools of opportunity will not be available to them.

So I mean there's a real concern and a real frustration, so this is a concern to me. There was a second page that came with that memorandum and really touches on a number of issues that they feel are unfair. And I think Prairie South, quite clearly for them, they talk about their enrolment dropping by 3.8 per cent which was less than what it was expected. But their grant was almost cut by 6 per cent. So there's many factors and frustrations from Prairie South, and especially when the school divisions on either side of them this year received increases. And I think a school division like Chinook they would consider to be quite comparable to Prairie South.

So some frustration . . . Well actually not some frustration, a great deal of frustration, especially being we are the highest assessed school division. We have the highest mill rate across the province and are still struggling delivering educational services to the students right across the area. So do you have any comments on the memorandum? I'm sure you've seen it.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Ms. Higgins. Yes of course I've seen it. We've had the opportunity to assess some of the concerns expressed by Prairie South. There are . . . As you are aware and I'm sure everyone involved with this committee is aware, there are many people, there are many factors that determine the amount of money that a school division receives in the way of a foundation operating grant.

The year before, the enrolment within Prairie South, I think, suffered probably one of the largest declines of any school division. And it dropped 437 in the year 2006-07 to '07-08. And the grant decrease last year, under your government, was in fact \$1.8 million. That's the amount of money that, less money that Prairie South received.

This year there is a significant enrolment decline as well.

There's an enrolment decline of 275, again a very significant number. There are other factors that have contributed to this. Now you made mention about a school division that has 6,810 students projected for this year's budget, and the costs that are associated with delivering that. That has been something that has been discussed very broadly in the province. And that is why the additional dollars were put into the geographic factor.

The geographic factor was enhanced by \$4.6 million for this year for all school boards, and in the case of Prairie South in fact that amounted to an additional \$347,000 extra grant that was given to Prairie South. Because of the recognition that for the last 18 months, as there's been, you know, analysis of the amalgamation process and the things that school divisions are recognizing, there was a need to adjust the geographic factor. And it was adjusted to the benefit of a school division like Prairie South, and they received \$347,000 more.

Now you asked me this question, I think, the last time we were in estimates regarding, you know, why they lost this specific amount of money on diversity. And in fact Prairie South is one that has had a decrease of over \$223,000 in its grant money for diversity, because within the Prairie South school division, the incidence and the amount of children that are there, the vulnerable children, isn't as great. So as a result of that kind of an assessment of that school division, their grant monies are less.

It should not have come as a surprise to the school board because they clearly knew . . . They knew that the previous government in fact had mitigated the sort of, the negative changes by falling by 1.8 million, by adding I believe it was just about \$400,000 worth of one-time funding to lessen those blows. Now for this year, that 300-and-some-thousand dollars had 150,000. So if you look at what they received last year in the way of an allowance, we're now reducing that to 150 because they are still being negatively impacted, but we're trying to lessen that by applying \$150,000 to that system.

So across the piece, the Prairie South board has had its ups and downs regarding the factors. They received some additional monies for rural transportation. They received some monies in that respect. They've lost some monies in some of those key areas that I've identified.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Well the difficulty is, is that if we purely base it on the number of students and we continue to see a drop in student enrolment and when you're covering an area from Craik all the way to the American border, that's a lot of miles to travel.

I mean it's a huge division, and it has taken a number of hits over the last three years. And I mean this year when you look at the '08-09 budget and you say, well there's enough money put in the grant to cover the cost of teachers' salaries, well you look at Prairie South is expecting the increase in teachers' salaries to cost them \$1.4 million. And they've also seen a drop in enrolment and a drop in their foundation operating grant of \$1 million, so there is \$2.4 million that they need to either replace or find somewhere.

So I guess, where do you find it? When you are delivering education to that dispersed of an area and that dispersed of a

student population, where do you find the money? And I have to say that many of the pre-election and post-election comments by not necessarily yourself but I know MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] closer . . . The member from Thunder Creek attended a variety of public meetings for the Prairie South School Division, and said, there's changes coming; the minister's going to make some changes that's going to help the rural schools. But we haven't seen that in Prairie South. And there is some real frustration with that.

So do we keep whittling away at services? I mean there comes a point where you can only cut so much without real damage to students and communities in the area. So where does Prairie South find another \$2.4 million to continue to deliver education in this huge area that they have to cover?

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Well, Ms. Higgins, having been a minister of Education before, you would understand that the foundation grant and its calculation is universal. That is what is used to calculate the grant across the piece, whether it's Prairie South or whether it's Good Spirit. The foundation grant is used to make those calculations.

Now as I've pointed out to you, in this particular school division it's not just enrolment that is causing them to have some less grant money. And I do want to indicate to you that the amount of additional dollars that they will receive from their tax base without changing taxes is in fact \$228,000, because their assessments have changed due to some growth in some of those communities, due to some reassessments, etc.

So as a result of applying the foundation grant uniformly across the school division and using that foundation operating grant to distribute that additional nearly \$35 million to all boards of education across the province, there were some boards who received more and there were some who received less.

And I have in fact indicated to you that it's not just a rural board of education like Prairie South who's now, their grant is less. In fact the largest board in the province of Saskatchewan — the Saskatoon public board — because of the fact that it is getting nearly \$6 million more from taxation revenue because of its growth in the city of Saskatoon, their grant is less.

**Ms. Higgins:** — So then would you feel quite comfortable to say that you feel that the foundation operating grant recognizes accurately the costs associated with delivering education in small rural communities as it recognizes, or that it treats that as fairly as it does for larger divisions in urban areas that have more of the advantage of economies of scale? You feel the foundation operating grant accurately covers and recognizes the actual cost of delivering education in small communities.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — There have been some changes this year to the transportation grant because it was felt that the transportation grant did not adequately address rural transportation. There was some concern that since amalgamations have taken place, that the geographic factor, which is exactly what you're referring to, did not address the need to deliver education in those fairly sparse school divisions — or large areas I guess is maybe a better way — because they still have a large student base. So those kinds of changes were made.

Is the foundation operating grant absolutely perfect? It is not. There needs to be reviews. There was a phase 1 and phase 2 review that was already conducted before I became minister and in fact we're now moving through with phase 3.

We are looking at some of the concerns. You've mentioned concerns around schools of necessity and distance factor. And currently as per our last discussion, I did not adjust the rates for schools of necessity and I did not adjust the distance factors. The 40-kilometre zone is still there now . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well you gave me a long question. You gave me a long question. I have to give you a long answer.

You know so there are many different things that have to be taken into account to determine what amounts of monies are allocated through the foundation grant. Can it be continued to be improved? Sure, and that's why we have a consultation process with all the stakeholders, to determine what is working well and what deficiencies have been pointed out.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Well what I asked was, do you think the foundation operating grant actually recognizes the cost of delivering education in smaller, rural communities? So you gave me the changes for this year and you talked nicely all around it, but you didn't answer the question.

And that's Prairie South's concern is that the grant doesn't actually recognize the actual costs of delivering education in a school division where there is such great distances between. And I have met with Prairie South on a number of occasions . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I know. Sorry, I apologize. I apologize, Mr. Minister. We've just got a couple more questions so we asked the Chair if we could run over, so you're not getting out yet. Just, just a sec.

But no, so I mean it's a problem and to say we . . . I know how it's done. I know how the factors are applied. But you know what? One size does not fit all. It does not. And I mean I know there are many ways that the factors are adjusted. I know there are many ways which they are applied. I know there are many things that can influence them, but there are just some school divisions that it is not working for, and I would just say to you there needs to be a look at some of these school divisions, because it's . . . No, I know you can give me all kinds of arguments but . . .

Well do you know the people in Prairie South, we have the highest mill rate in the province of Saskatchewan? And I believe that we all need to contribute to the cost of education; I don't have a problem doing that. But do you know what does bother me? It bothers me to see the school divisions struggling through all these changes. They have done their work. They're providing the best services they can in Prairie South, working hard for the students, and it's just one more year of getting a kick in the kneecap. And there's got to be a better way to do it.

And I know we'll talk about this for a long time, but I'll leave it at that, Mr. Minister. And I mean it's just, it's a huge concern that something is not working, and I would say to you again, it does not work perfectly for every school division.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — I agree with you, and I'll give you a short answer. There is an external reference committee that

involves the partners and the stakeholders and they've been making recommendations to try to address the costs that are associated in school divisions. And they're getting to as close as possible to the costs of delivering those services, whether they're intensive supports or whether they're, you know, other programs that are within rural and urban centres.

So it is not like there hasn't been input from Prairie South officials and other officials through this external reference committee, and that's what the ministry relies on is the external reference committee to identify these challenges. And that's why the geographic factor was amended, because it was school divisions like Prairie South who said, that's not fair and we need to adjust it. And it was adjusted to the tune of \$4.6 million added to it. Was it enough? I guess you're saying it wasn't.

**The Chair:** — Committee members, we have passed the time, the allotted time. I understand Ms. Atkinson has a couple of very short questions. If the minister is in agreement, we can take two very short questions with short answers. If not, we'll have to delay those questions to another time. I see the minister is nodding that he is in agreement, and we will . . . Let's try and keep them very short because other people have other commitments and we need to adjourn in a fairly prompt manner.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Sure.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thanks. Two questions. First question, teachers' superannuation plan. How many teachers retired in '07-08, and how many teachers do you anticipate that will retire in '08-09?

**The Chair:** — Order. Order.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Chair, I can supply, I think, part of the answer that Ms. Atkinson has asked. In '06-07 there were 391 superannuates, and in 2007-08 there were 472 superannuates. And of course we don't know the exact number — we know there'll be more — but we don't know what the '08-09 will be because teachers will decide whether or not they're going to superannuate over the course of the next couple or three months.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — So in the name of time, can you provide a written answer to how it is you've arrived at this determination, that we move from 63.5 million to 122.4 million in terms of increases in superannuation? And can you also in that context advise us, for the last five years, how close has the commission been in terms of hitting their estimate? Because my sense is there have been times where they haven't been. Do you understand what I'm saying?

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Yes.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Okay. You don't have to answer tonight.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — No. I will undertake to provide that. I understand what your question is. We'll do a five-year analysis as well as we'll project what we see. By the way, we're using a new actuarial study to determine what the projections will be. That's the short answer. But we'll supply you with that for the next . . .

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thanks.

**The Chair:** — I recognize Mr. Wotherspoon.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — I'd just like to extend thanks to our minister and to the ministry officials and to fellow members for their patience, time, and going a little bit overtime. These are actually — with no lie — actually all of my questions. So I think I hit about a third of them. Anyways I think I prioritized the ones we wanted to get in there. Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** — Committee members, this brings us to the end of our agenda for today. And what I would require is a member to move that we adjourn. Mr. Allchurch. Mr. Allchurch has moved that we adjourn. Are committee members agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — This committee stands adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 21:41.]