



STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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Ms. Joceline Schriemer
Saskatoon Sutherland

[The committee met at 21:00.]

The Chair: — Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Seeing as it is now past 9 o'clock, the chosen hour for our committee to begin, we will call this meeting to order. I would like to welcome everyone to the deliberations of the Standing Committee on Human Services.

Tonight our members are Mr. Cam Broten, voting member; substituting for Ms. Judy Junor is Ms. Pat Atkinson; and sitting in as well is Ms. Deb Higgins. On the government side tonight is Mr. Glen Hart and Ms. Doreen Eagles, Minister Jim Reiter, Ms. Joceline Schriemer, all voting members.

Before we begin, we'll table document HUS 54/26, follow-up Standing Committee on Human Services dated May 3rd, 2010.

**General Revenue Fund
Education
Vote 5**

Subvote (ED01)

The Chair: — We are now looking at estimates for Education, vote 5, central management and services (ED01), outlined on page 45 of the Estimates booklet. Mr. Minister, would you please introduce your officials and make any opening statement. And I'd just ask officials as they come to the microphone to introduce themselves the first time for purposes of Hansard.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'll be brief in my introductions. Very quickly, my deputy minister, Audrey Roadhouse, of course on my right, and assistant deputy ministers, Helen Horsman and Darren McKee. Behind me you will find Dawn Court, Clint Repski, Darryl Richter, Sue Amundrud, Lois Zelmer, Shirley Robertson, Joylene Campbell, Darryl Hunter, Maureen Johns Simpson, Simone Gareau, Elaine Caswell, Greg Tuer, and Sonya Leib. Those are the officials that are with me, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, you have indicated that we have presented the information package that was asked for at the last session, and I'm going to be very brief because the member may want to ask more questions not. But the first sheet indicates the summary of what has happened to the licensed child care centre at Brevoort Park. The second one is the pre-kindergarten expansion for 2010-11. I indicated of course that our \$1 million allotment in this year's budget is for 18 pre-Ks [pre-kindergarten]. Those are defined on the second sheet. The third sheet, the request was where were the pre-kindergarten programs in '09-10. And the 212 programs are listed on the three long sheets that you see following that. Then there was a question about the pre-kindergarten programs across Canada as to the different provinces. That's the next two pages including the territories, not just the provinces.

The final three pages are . . . or four pages I guess, actually. The next three will indicate the ministry capital allocation dollars since actually '07-08. As you can see, it starts with the supplementary estimates of an additional \$13.1 million. The budget for '08-09, '10-11 and, sorry, '09-10 and '10-11, meaning that the total funding to date for capital is \$342.6

million. On the next page it works a bit in reverse because within the Ministry of Education it's not just major capital. There are things like block. We are doing some audits of facilities. There's early learning and child care dollars, our relocatables. And it shows the numbers that I just talked about sort of in a reverse order starting with this year's budget of 17.2 million, and the only commitment of that is 3.750 for Turnor Lake. And it goes down all the way to the point of showing where the \$342.612 million budget, we have committed \$329,195,654. And the amount that's paid out was a question I think Ms. Atkinson asked. You can see that there's \$71 million that is paid out thus far.

The next project, which is the longer sheet, shows the 23 projects that have been under way. These are the major projects. And at the top, the first three — and this is for the benefit of all members since these are projects from a while ago; in fact I believe they're 2003 projects, I think — Tommy Douglas, Bethlehem and Gustave-Dubois high schools for CEF [Conseil des écoles fransaskoises] required \$13.1 million. And that was granted in the supplementary estimates, and that's why the sheet that I provided to you shows that in '07-08 we allocated by way of supplementary estimates \$13.1 million.

So the next projects, all of the 23 projects are listed there, including the one that moved from the list which was the Holy Family project for St. Michael, which is just under way, plus the AIP [approval in principle] and detailed design stage projects which are at the bottom. Those were announced at the end of the '09-10 fiscal year. So you can see that thus far the ministry share for those projects is just about \$225 million of capital, and then the rest is block.

And the final page, Mr. Chair, there was a question on what is the debt of school divisions. And you can see that all school divisions are listed on the final page, which shows that a year ago on the 31st of August '08, which is year-end for all school boards, the debt of school boards totalled \$122,496,488. And on the 31st of August '09, that debt is at 103,772,565.

So that is the information that has been provided to all members of the committee, Mr. Chair. And I trust that if there are questions, we'll be able to explain the information that we've circulated.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister Krawetz. And as always, in the interest of expediency and flow, I'm willing to sort of bypass the Chair, but if things do get a little bit controversial, we'll have to go through the Chair. So, Ms. Atkinson, you have the floor.

Ms. Atkinson: — Yes. Minister, the last time we met I asked you for a listing of the community-based organizations that received funding reductions. And I asked if you could provide that to us during this meeting, and I'd really appreciate receiving that now.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Sorry, Mr. Chair, we missed out photocopying that, and I apologize. But that is the listing of the 10 projects under the community solution grant program that still receive dollars. But these were the numbers that are provided to each of the 10 that are no longer being provided to

each of the 10 community solution programs.

Ms. Atkinson: — Minister, can you tell me why your ministry decided to terminate this funding to these child care centres?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Well the analysis of these programs began a year-plus ago. At the budget over a year ago, we indicated to all of the projects that we needed to review mandate of the early learning and child care program. We needed to look at policy as to what was there, and we needed to ensure that the child care program was being treated the same way across the province.

So with that, we analyzed some of the programs that were being underutilized. Some of them were to a degree, I guess, what I would call a special area treatment. I can point out that in terms of the Shaunavon Children's Learning Center, that provided some assistance to specific rural families during harvest time. Those were, you know . . . The situation doesn't exist across the province. So we looked at these programs knowing that also the number of spaces in these child care centres remains extensive. We still grant 3.8. We still allocate about \$3.8 million to each of these 10. Like they're not, you know, they're not receiving zero dollars. They are still receiving significant dollars. I can go over each one of them if you wish.

But that was a decision that we made was whether or not we were going to look at seeing whether or not these projects are uniform, and then also we didn't delete those dollars. We have sort of reallocated them — \$1 million went into pre-kindergarten program and \$1 million went to add 235 additional child care spaces.

[21:15]

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. So let's use the example of the Stepping Stones Child Care Co-operative, which I asked you about in question period. Now \$50,000 was provided to provide family support services including parenting classes, food bank referrals, and so on and so forth. There has been a funding reduction to Stepping Stone. Mackenzie Infant Care, additional support to teen parents, as an example. The Scott Infant & Toddler Centre — I suspect that's at the Scott Collegiate — additional supports so parents could be better parents or good parents. And I'm just wondering, you know . . . The Families First Childcare co-operative or corporation in Saskatoon, once again, parent support including counselling and so on. So this was in addition to the day-to-day child care activity at child care centres. This was to support parents of those vulnerable children.

So I'm just trying to understand, was there something wrong with the kind of work that they were doing? Was it the position of the Ministry of Health, this isn't their job to be involved in parent support? It's early learning and care. Was there an analysis done? You know, what was done to say this money should be redirected into something else? And I presume you redirected the \$447,000.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Yes.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — I'll go over each of the projects, Mr. Chair, very quickly, if I could. As I indicated and the member has indicated, there were 10 projects, and I'll begin very quickly.

Circle Project Association Inc. in Regina is on a three-month phase-out. The reduction is \$15,000. The project still receives 228,000 for 60 child care spaces. And the three spaces that were special in that respect were actually underutilized. And upon moving into a new direction and adding more spaces, we felt that — and this is coming from the ELCC [early learning and child care] branch — that they've been phasing out this practice because the child care staff are not trained as social workers. So it's a little bit outside the mandate. It was probably a good mandate when Social Services was responsible for this, but not now. So that's with regards to Circle Project.

For Expressway Family Centre Inc. in Oxbow, the reduction is of \$10,000 and it's a three-month phase-out. This service, what it did was it provided funding to hire a part-time co-ordinator and summer staff to develop and deliver programs, in other words, coordinate the programs. We're finding now that the 40-space child care centre in Oxbow, that still receives \$179,000, that the people are accessing those services by, you know, seeking out the information in a different way.

Families First Child Care Centre Corp. in Saskatoon has a reduction of 170,000, again a three-month phase-out. They're still in operation. They still receive \$224,000 for the 48 child care spaces that are there. The funding has provided support services, that the member has indicated, for counselling for families and child care centre staff. And what we've determined is that the provision of service to adults isn't part of the early learning and child care mandate. So that was a reason that that one was changed.

The Learning Tree Child Development Centre Inc. in North Battleford has a reduction of \$25,000, again a three-month phase-out. We still are granting them \$252,000 to support operation of 61 child care spaces. And again the program was to coordinate the services and make them sort of . . . so that people would understand that the services were available. They're not really for the provision of services that currently exist.

Mackenzie Infant Care Centre Inc. in Regina had a reduction of 34,000. What we found out with Mackenzie, that we still grant them \$360,000 and the average amount spent on their spaces is over \$15,000, which is way more than the provincial average. And you know, the funding of teen centres again is not equitable across the province, and that change was made there.

Meadow Lake and Area Early Childhood Services, there was a reduction of 39,000, again a three-month phase-out. They still receive \$137,000 to support the operation of 36 child care spaces. Coordination of services is not part of the mandate of ELCC.

Regina Early Learning Centre had a reduction of \$57,000, three-month phase-out. The Regina Early Learning Centre receives a total of \$745,096 for their programming for this year. It's significantly higher funding per space than any other preschool. And the other thing there is that the Ministry of Social Services still provides funding to the kinds of

coordinators that are required there. So we have two ministries that were doing the same thing.

The Scott Infant and Toddler Centre in Regina, the reduction there was \$38,000. This centre will continue to receive \$273,920 to operate the 22-space centre that exists there. And of course it does provide assistance to teenage parenting. The average, as I said before, was 11,000 per space, and this is over 12,000. And the final comment I might make there is that we continue to provide the services to 28 other teen student support centres across the province to fund parent fees.

Shaunavon Children's Learning Centre Co-operative, this was a \$9,000 phase-out. We still provide 191,000 to support the operation of 46 child care spaces there. This program, as I indicated, by example, this was not funded in any other community. And what it did, Mr. Chair, was it provided for in-home babysitting services to rural family, farm families during peak farming periods, especially during harvest, so a very unique program that just is not within the mandate.

Stepping Stones Child Care Co-operative, the last one, which is in Regina, had a reduction of \$50,000. This child care, Mr. Chair, is quite large. It has 206 licensed child care spaces, and we still provide \$1.282 million to this program. What the dollars that were provided before did, it again hired a coordinator to be able to access the services and provide information. So again, Social Services is still doing some of that.

So that reviews the 10 programs that were under that category.

Ms. Atkinson: — So basically, as I understand the community solutions program, various child daycare centres had some interest particularly in supporting vulnerable families, families of vulnerable children. And as you know, there are children that are in child daycare centres at a time when the parents may be undergoing crises or difficulties. And with the support of a child daycare centre, those children can be kept out of foster care. And there, as I understand it, there were lots of supports for families, particularly at-risk families or families that had at-risk children.

And so basically what you're telling us tonight is the mandate of early learning and child care is child care only, early learning only, and it's not about supports for children. That is done by the Ministry of Social Services if they're vulnerable children or at-risk children, at risk of going into the foster care system. I know there's an entire review of the child welfare system under way. Do you have any involvement in this, given that we no longer support families when it comes to this particular program?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — The entire 10 projects, the only number of spaces, as I indicated, that became less were the three special respite care spaces. There were no elimination of spaces. So your question about whether or not the mandate has changed or the focus has changed, it is, because we're working with Social Services and we're working with Health. And as I indicated the last time we were together, in fact the four programs we currently still fund, we fund co-operatively with Health, with the two health districts. And we're still maintaining those services even though we're reviewing them this year to see

whether or not Social Services and Health will support the adults.

We're also working with the parents when there are children in need. And we're working with Social Services to determine that these people don't fall through the cracks, so that when we're going to be looking after the children in a child care space, then the parents or the adult, whether it be a parent or a guardian, can still receive support through Social Services but not through the funding that we have here.

Ms. Atkinson: — So maybe I'll call it the good old days. There used to be an arrangement with Social Services and various child daycare centres in the province that there would be spaces that would be available for children at risk whose families were in an immediate crisis. And I'm wondering . . . And there was lots of, there was support, and there was a relationship between child daycare centres and keeping children out of foster care. Now your ministry has decided to redirect 447,000 of the community solutions grants. And community solutions, you know, it's true. It's individual projects. Different child daycare centres came forward with ideas. And maybe this was before your time and other people's times. But it was to support at-risk families. So are there any arrangements nowadays between the Ministry of Education, early learning and child care, and Social Services, or is that gone too?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Well I think the difference is probably, as you called them, the good old days. I mean in the days past, prior to the Ministry of Education becoming responsible for child care, that entire program was under the guidance of the Social Services minister. So those things were developed through that period of time. We still have . . . We're working with the Minister of Social Services to ensure that when children who are in need of respite or crisis nursery care, we refer them to the Ministry of Social Services. And the Ministry of Social Services is going to look at providing that kind of aid.

So it's not like the program is eliminated. What we're doing, as I said, is that a staff person who would be consolidating the services that are available and telling people what's available, that is where the reduction has occurred. It's not in eliminating a service to a child because the spaces, as I indicated, we want to add 235 spaces, not eliminate. But it's only the three, and I qualify that.

The Chair: — Ms. Atkinson, if I can interrupt for a moment. Minister Krawetz, the last tabled document, would you like that tabled with the initial document that was just handed out, or should we table that as a separate document?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — No, you're talking about the one-pager with the . . . [inaudible] . . . no, you can include it with the rest. As I said, I apologize for not having it with.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay, so just to get back to this. Now one of the things that we've tried to see in government is more of a collaborative relationship between Health, Education, Social Services. And you know, there might have been some cross-fertilization of, you know, maybe Education was involved in providing some support through funding for various programs that you could say technically it should be Health or it should be Social Services.

So are we going back to the stovepipes where Education will be in their world and they're going to get rid of everything that, you know, could be seen to be Social Services and Health? Is that what we're now . . . like the mandate is becoming very focused and there isn't going to be any crossover. Is this the beginning of that?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — No, in fact I would say it's exactly the opposite. We have inter-ministerial committees that are operating very extensively. I can give an example of the Minister of Health still responsible for a significant amount of dollars that have gone into the autism program. And you know that's a cross-section that we're working with the Ministry of Health. My deputy minister meets with deputy ministers in the Human Services area on a regular basis to, I say, to do the opposite — instead of working in vertical silos as maybe things have been in the past.

You know I come from a time when we couldn't even get a home care nurse to stop in at a school to provide, you know, needles to a child who was receiving health care rather than probably education, to now more so horizontal. You know, we're still in our own ministry. I'm still responsible for early learning and child care, but there are crossovers.

[21:30]

There are things that the Ministry of Social Services has to be responsible for. There are things that the Ministry of Health is responsible for. But we've got to coordinate those services. And the thing that I'm, you know, that we're finding is that in some instances there was a duplication of services. And now we're trying to coordinate them and consolidate them to say we need to ensure that the services are provided in the most efficient manner. But also we have to continue to ensure that there are services that are there and available.

Ms. Atkinson: — Was there a duplication of services for the 10 organizations that lost their community solutions grants. In particular, let me just ask you about Stepping Stones Child Care Co-operative in Regina. Was there a duplication of service? And if there wasn't, has Social Services taken over this function now?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — The answer to Stepping Stones is yes; there was a bit of a duplication. The Ministry of Social Services in the '10-11 budget has a contract with Stepping Stones to provide support services. The amount of dollars in fact is well over \$73,000 that the Ministry of Social Services is still providing to Stepping Stones to ensure that the services can be available. So there was a duplication, but the service is still being provided by Social Services.

Ms. Atkinson: — So this includes parenting classes? Is the \$73,000, has that budget gone up?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — The answer to your question — was there parenting services provided or parenting classes? — yes there were. But the dilemma is that the child care workers are not trained to provide services to parents. Their training is in the provision of services to children. So that is why a lot of the demand by parents, we need to ensure that Social Services are going to be there to provide that because Education is not, that

is not within the mandate and therefore that is not a service that we're continuing with at Stepping Stones.

Ms. Atkinson: — So are you saying that the parenting classes were provided by the child daycare workers? Is that what you're saying, at Stepping Stones?

Ms. Zelmer: — And I would need to go back and get all of the detail around what was being done at Stepping Stones. One of the larger concerns we had was about children at risk, and Social Services is developing a crisis nursery component. We were finding in the respite and some of the social . . . some of the Stepping Stones environment, there were ECE [early childhood educator] I's and II's who didn't have training as social workers working with children in crisis with really high needs. And we felt, we and Social Services discussed that it was more appropriate to have trained social workers to support those kids. So that, I believe — and we will confirm this — continues to happen through Stepping Stones, but it's a Social Services initiative, not an ELCC initiative.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. So let me tell you what I know about this. There are children at Stepping Stones Child Care Co-operative whose parents may be incarcerated, parents leaving provincial correctional centres or federal institutions, and their biggest worry is that their children will be apprehended by Social Services. So there are parents who take these parenting courses to try and show that they are interested in enhancing and improving their parenting skills so that their kids won't be scooped by Social Services. Because if you've been in a federal or a provincial institution, jail, there may be some concerns.

So this isn't going to be available now at Stepping Stone because of the decision by your government, by you, your ministry, to delete this \$50,000 grant which went to support parents, parenting classes and so on and so forth. I'm not aware that Social Services teaches parenting classes at Stepping Stone. Maybe they do, but I'm not . . . I haven't been advised of that.

And so I guess we'll leave it at that, Minister, but there are a number of people and groups that are very concerned and upset that your government decided to remove the 447,000 and redirect it to, I understand, other child day care initiatives. But these were initiatives that supported families. So I guess I'll move it at that.

My colleague wants to talk about ECIP [early childhood intervention program] because that is another bale of hay.

The Chair: — Ms. Atkinson, if you just let the minister answer we can move to Ms. Higgins after.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — I just want to make a comment, Ms. Atkinson, if I could, that with . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Madam Member, if I could just indicate to you that there are three, there are three day care centres within Stepping Stones. And we'll be reviewing them to ensure, you know, whether or not we were providing — whether our staff through early learning and child care — were providing the services. Because as I said, for Stepping Stones, we're still providing \$1,282,000 to those 206 licensed child care spaces.

Now whether or not other individuals from Health or other individuals from Social Services or whether there were anyone, anyone else was involved in provision of services for parenting classes . . . In fact my notes indicate that there were even discussions about referrals to food banks and the like. So those are things that Ms. Zelmer has pointed out.

ELCC staff, that's not within their training. Their training is within dealing with the child. So whether or not Social Services is still continuing with the same amount of services, we'll look into that to see whether or not the three homes are receiving less, and we'll check into that.

Ms. Atkinson: — Just a short question. You know, there are a lot of teachers, it's not within their training either to refer people to food banks and to work with parents and so on and so forth. Sometimes you just do what you have to do in order to support families and children. And it may not be your area of expertise, but you do what you have to do to support children and families. And so I hope we're not becoming so narrow, so narrow that a child daycare worker can't support families in sort of directing them to the local food bank or whatever.

So I'll turn it over to my colleague.

The Chair: — Mr. Minister, you care to respond?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Yes, just to the point, and Ms. Atkinson, you know your comment about teachers is of course that, you know, teachers are responsible for the classroom and they provide all kinds of services. Ms. Zelmer points out that we're probably looking at 40 staff members at the three centres. Those centres will continue to become involved by providing the occasional advice. What this did was create another person to coordinate the services. And we're saying that that is outside the mandate and therefore we're going to look at it, provision of service, in a different way.

The Chair: — Ms. Higgins.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I just have a few questions for you this evening. How many ECIPs are there across the province?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Chair, I can report that there are 15 community-based organizations throughout Saskatchewan that provide early childhood intervention services.

Ms. Higgins: — And how many families or children would be supported through those ECIPs?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Seven hundred and twenty children are provided services. I don't have the number in terms of how many families that 720 children would be.

Ms. Higgins: — I wasn't sure how you would keep track, whether it would be services to families or by individual children, so that's fine.

I've met with a number of these groups over the past year and they've expressed a bit of concern. And it gets back to your earlier comments about working across departments. And one of the questions that I received from a number of folks that

work with ECIPs is, why would we be developing — we being government — why would the government be developing a whole process to deal with autism when some of the training for these workers was being done through their local ECIPs? Why would they not just be building on the ECIP program and working across the departments?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Well I think there's maybe three parts, and I'll ask for some additional comment. The problem with provision of services to families where there is an autistic child is you're dealing with them at the very early age, and the intervention really . . . You can't really begin with intervention until you've identified and that might not occur until at least two years of age. You know, the evidence is showing that the actual detection of an autistic child is somewhere in that neighbourhood of two to three years of age, so now you're outside of the kindergarten to grade 12 mandate.

Now the child care, the child care ECIPs, the interventions that occur there will deal with children like that. But then the children become . . . Because there's some very serious needs, they may require some health services. So we have the program that now is a pilot in the province and we're going to be looking at that. In education of course then when the children are into the school system, we're looking at, through our intensive support needs for teachers and the schools, is to actually provide assistance there.

So we're looking at again the question that Ms. Atkinson asked about whether or not we're looking at sort of cross-referencing. The answer is yes, we are. And I think the people that will be trained to deal with autistic children are going to be in many fields. They may be in health. They may be in the ECIPs or they may be in child care or they may be in the schools.

Ms. Higgins: — But currently it looks like instead of building off of ECIPs, which are really a proven program that has been very successful, Health is looking to establish a separate program for autism supports.

So my question, and the question that came to me a number of times is, why are we not just building upon the ECIPs that are already in existence, have a structure, have a location, have a good complement of staff in many areas? Why would you just not add to that program to support the autism, whether it starts earlier with the children or works later?

I mean the ECIP also provides transition into education, is my understanding. It isn't just pre-school. They also stay with the family and stay with the child for a little bit of overlap to make sure that that transition into the education system is successful. So the question is, why not build a program that encompasses autism also, instead of going through the process and spending the money on a different set of location and facility and all of the things that are needed to run a successful program? Why not build it in conjunction with ECIPs?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — I'm going to ask Elaine Caswell to comment further, but that question is like the question that we're having at the school board level when we talk about intensive supports. Do intensive supports recognize autism? And the answer is of course. Yet we're ensuring then that there is still some research that's going on, some additional funding

through Health that is looking at dealing with, how do we develop the best program for providing services for autistic children? That's a similar question.

Now your comment about what ECIP workers do, I'm going to ask for an explanation from one of the people that is responsible.

Ms. Caswell: — Elaine Caswell. A part of the answer to that question is, the focus of ECIP programs have certainly over the years looked at child development, family, sport, and community involvement.

And with creation of the autism support workers, you will see that there is a lot of collaboration between ECIP and the support workers. The support workers may be providing a different support to parents, whereas the ECIP workers would be supporting individual children. So I think throughout the province there's various ways that the support workers and ECIP are working together. So I don't think we have an either or; I think we look at the skill set that's required and then build on the programs.

[21:45]

Ms. Higgins: — The comments that I'm getting is that they're being set up and established as two separate programs. And I guess that's the question, why there wouldn't be more coordination between ELCC and Health, to be able to build a program that provides the services that are needed by children. When you have the ECIPs in contact with many families, they're established in the community, they have workers that are available, it gets back to this original question about not working in silos but having the ability to work across department and be able to provide the services that are needed.

And it really doesn't have a lot to do . . . Well it may have something to do with the school board or the school division. But I mean this is truly something that's preschool — begins with — and provides that solid base for children to enter the education system with supports that they need.

So it's just, I mean, it was just a question — why couldn't these programs be housed together? I mean, all the old clichés, economy of scale, yada yada, all that kind of thing, but also coordinate and network when they're dealing and supporting families in our communities. You know, it would be something to work towards and it would provide some stability for the ECIPs but also I'm sure for a new program starting with the autism.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — I think, Mr. Chair, if I might, the coordination of the services by all branches of the ministry is very important. Because I think when I mentioned . . . your question was how many receive support through the ECIPs, and I indicated that that answer was 720; 720 was the answer there.

In Saskatchewan, I just wanted to point out that, you know, we have school divisions that have 7,204 students that have a need for intensive supports. Of that, 1,065 students had needs related to autism, to ASD [autism spectrum disorder]. So clearly the 720 children that are within ECIPs, not all of them have an autistic problem. Some will, but there are students who have

ASD that are beyond and outside of that. So we need to ensure that we're researching and developing it.

So my understanding with Ministry of Health is that the direction that is being taken by the Ministry of Health in this year's pilot project is strictly that, to determine what may be the best approach in Saskatchewan. I don't think we're going to be eliminating the provision of services at that ECIP level, because clearly they're still going to be dealing with some of those children and those families that require those interventions.

Ms. Higgins: — Let's be clear here. I'm not advocating or suggesting that there was any intent to get rid of ECIP in favour of the autism program, because they're quite different and there's a variety of issues that need to be dealt with when it comes to children and families.

What I was suggesting, that instead of the Department of Health building a separate program to deal with children in the early years — autism — getting ready for school or building the supports, whatever is needed for them to enter the education system and be successful, why could it not be done working with the ECIPs or working through the ECIPs and expanding the ECIP program at that level for that early years.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Well the services that are provided by ECIPs, as I said, will deal with the children that are within those families. They're not going to deal with everybody. So we still are going to have to develop supports for the child care bases because those facilities are going to continue to receive a child who may suffer from ASD. They won't be in the ECIP. That's also possible.

The other thing is we're looking at it from an education point of view. We had a pilot project that I just had a report on, in fact last week from the Northwest School Division, a pilot project that has been under way right now with Carol Forsey. And Carol has developed a program of, I'd refer to it probably as a professional development program, of not only teachers and educational assistants, but she's also working with some parents who have children that have autism.

So her focus currently right now is with the ABA [applied behaviour analysis] program and how that might be an effective program. And we're going to look at that. Education is going to look at whether or not that is going to be able to be enhanced across the province or into a greater number of school divisions.

Health is looking at what they can do in their area. And ECIPs are going to continue to look at what they can do in their area. So I don't think we're going to rely on any one. I think we're going to do a broad cross-section and be able to ensure that we can develop a strategy that's uniform across the province.

Ms. Higgins: — I don't know whether we're understanding each other here or not. I mean I'm just suggesting that instead of building a brand new infrastructure to support a program, that there is current ones out there that we could utilize. Whether they need expanding, but there is a great deal of experience and resources already in the community, that we don't need to build a brand new CBO [community-based organization] or brand new program. We can add to the ones that are there to provide some comprehensive services.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — There's no question we're on the same wavelength, okay. The 18 support workers that Health is currently putting out in the field to look at how they can provide the intensive supports to those families, that's being coordinated by Health but they're still working with ECIP workers. They're providing some guidance to some of our school people as well. So we haven't created a separate bureaucracy if you like, or a CBO as you referred to it that is doing something different. We're trying to coordinate the services to families.

Ms. Higgins: — One of the things that, I mean I'm always surprised that ECIPs are funded purely through the department of Education. When you look at KidsFirst, their funding comes from Health, Education. I think there might even be others involved, not positive on that. But I know the ECIPs also deal a lot with the health side of issues also, whether it's the various therapies or rehab. Has there ever been a consideration for the ECIPs to receive any type of additional funding through the Department of Health?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Ms. Caswell indicates to me that the responsibility for the ECIPs was moved to Education in 2006 and that there are continued discussions with Health in terms of ensuring that the therapist does the analysis and recognizes what special needs should be provided, and then the ECIP workers are the ones that are delivering those services at that family level. So there is continued discussion with Health. Your question is do we get any financial dollars? No, strictly Education so far.

Ms. Higgins: — . . . advice from Health. You don't get any dollars yet.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — But no money.

Ms. Higgins: — Advice, Mr. Minister, should also always come with financial contributions too. Mr. Minister, what are your views of ECIP and what do you feel the future of ECIP is?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Well ECIPs provide a great need. I mean, the purpose of ECIPs, very, very clearly in the description of any ECIP, is that they identify areas of development and provide programming that improves children's skills related to the areas of development. That's the focus. ECIP fosters smooth transitions for children who are developmentally delayed, and their families, into the education system. So that has been the role of ECIPs I think probably since they were created. They play a very important role.

I think as we expand our pre-K program — I mean whether or not we have a universal pre-K program in the future is something that I hope, that I hope we can do but — the role of ECIPs is extremely critical.

I just received . . . Just to tell you how, you know, Education I think in Saskatchewan, where we've become responsible for the child care programs and ECIPs, I received a letter from the ministry of Ontario just last week indicating that the ministry of Ontario now, the responsibility for child care has been moved to the Minister of Education. So clearly I think that's where we're going to see the development. We're going to see the needs.

We're going to see the needs for all children, you know,

whether they're very young, at that ECIP level when the provision of services are at the home level, or as they move into the child care centres or then they become part of pre-K. The Ministry of Education, I think, is going to be one that is going to be handling these files, not only here in Saskatchewan but in other provinces as well.

Ms. Higgins: — Well I'm very glad to hear that other provinces are moving on board and moving ELCC into departments of Education because it's a much more appropriate fit. And I know Saskatchewan was a leader when the move was made here and I know it was one that many people supported and felt it was a more appropriate fit to recognize the importance of the work that was done, and just gave a different profile to it. So I'm really pleased to hear that other provinces are finally getting on board. It's about time.

Mr. Minister, I was glad to hear you also make the comments that ECIPs do a very important job and they have an important role to play in our communities, and for families and children especially. Is there any consideration in the department to cutting ECIPs back to a 10-month program?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — The answer to that is there has been no discussion at all about policy regarding that. Information about certain ECIPs is that they only operate 10 months at the moment . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Some. Some do only operate 10 months. And the allocation of funding is to the board and the board determines whether or not they're operating at 12 months or whether they're operating at 10. But there's definitely there has not been discussion about whether or not all should be at 10 months or all should be at 12 months. It is left at the discretion of the board.

Ms. Higgins: — Okay, thank you. One other quick question. Last year in the budget, just hearing through the community, there were a number of programs that were shifted from Social Services to the Department of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Last year?

Ms. Higgins: — Yes, last year. They were done in June . . . Oh sorry, Education. Whatever. You knew who I was talking about. There was a number of programs that were shifted. Now some of them that were a little, I thought, unusual, and I questioned how they fit in the Department of Education, can you answer what dollar value of programs were shifted into the department last year, if the funding came right off the top of Education funding or how it was allotted, and if there were any programs shifted this year into the department?

[22:00]

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you for that question. And no, I knew you would have a, hopefully, a smile about Learning. This year it would be a final RIC [regional intersectoral committee] coordinator was moved from Social Services to the responsibility of Education. So the full numbers are now under the Ministry of Education, whereas before one of the RIC coordinators was not, it was still Social Services.

Last year, the program that was shifted from Social Services is the child nutrition development program to the amount of \$2.3

million that was shifted to Education. And that is under the integration of services under the Ministry of Education, and that's where we coordinated that program.

Ms. Higgins: — So it was the RIC coordinators moved to . . .

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — The last one.

Ms. Higgins: — So over the last two years, last budget and this budget, it would have been all of the RIC coordinators. Child nutrition program at \$2.3 million. So RIC coordinators would be how much?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — For the RIC coordinators, I'm told that the average is about \$100,000. So the final RIC coordinator would be about a \$100,000 price tag and that has been moved into Education.

What we also did this year is that we have expanded the North. The North had only one RIC coordinator, and what we did was we've divided that northern region into two and we actually have added a second RIC coordinator for the North. So there's an additional person there that provides that service to the North.

Ms. Higgins: — How many in total then? That would make 10?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Ten.

Ms. Higgins: — Okay. So no other programs were shifted this year? Nothing else? That was it?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — None known.

Ms. Higgins: — And the Department of Education would have regained some money because of no longer contributing to SAMA [Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency] and the cost of SAMA? Or did that go back to the GRF [General Revenue Fund]?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — That dollar figure was not included as an expenditure this year. So, you know, it was an in and an out for school boards. So this year we haven't included that expenditure for SAMA as either a revenue or an expenditure. We didn't get the revenue from the GRF, nor do we have the expense.

Ms. Higgins: — Okay.

The Chair: — Thank you, Ms. Higgins. Ms. Atkinson?

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you. Minister, there are two issues I want to talk about, and one of them has to do with the Regina Catholic school board and its funding relative to the Regina public school board. And I know that you have a different point of view.

The latest information I have is it's the view of the Regina public school board that, based upon their funding for last year, and there's no . . . I get the sense it hasn't changed this year. There is a \$275 difference between what they get per pupil versus what the Regina public school board gets per pupil. And I know you have a different point of view, but I'm wondering if

you could share very specifically with the committee why it's your view that there is equity in funding between these two boards.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Chair, what I'm looking for is a very specific sheet that I had given to me — and I just can't put my hands on it right now — regarding the comparison of the funds that are allocated in the number of different lines. The provision of services by a board of education includes everything in administration. It includes instruction. It includes transportation, and I can't, I can't find the numbers exactly. My staff are looking for those numbers for the Regina public and Regina Catholic boards.

But in the area of student instruction, which are the provisions that are the things that we compare . . . because the Regina systems are both very different. Regina public has well over 50 schools, and Regina Catholic has considerably less. So as a result of that, of course, costs are different.

We know that in the area of — I've just found the sheet, thank you — in the area of governance and administration and instruction, the number of dollars that the Catholic School Board in Regina spends in comparison to the Regina public, on those three specific areas, Regina Catholic actually spends \$222 more. So the question that, you know, I was receiving from people who were sending me letters — saying, you know, there's inequity, you're not funding the Catholic students at the same level — the answer is no we're not because in fact the board of education for the Catholics is spending more money. And we're providing, government is providing more money to the Catholics than what it's providing to the public board of education for those particular things — governance, administration and instruction.

Now in the area of plant operation, which are the buildings, the amount of dollars that the government allocates, the cost per student, Regina public is actually spending \$386 more than the Regina Catholic. Again that's based . . . That's the schools. That's the maintenance of the building. And as I said, there are many more schools, and some of the schools are older in Regina public and as a result there is a greater cost to maintain those buildings.

In the case of those two boards as well, tuition is very close . . . or sorry, tuition. Transportation is very close. The difference there is that the amount per student at the Catholic level is about \$65 more. In the area of again capital, surplus for capital, the provision of money into a capital account, the public board was setting aside about \$74, and the Catholics weren't having any expenditures.

So I think when you add all those numbers up, the positives, the negatives, that's where the number comes out that the Catholic board feels that they're getting \$281 less per student. But in the area of instruction, which is the most important commodity or the most important entity, in fact there are more dollars being spent on the students at the Catholic schools than there are in the public.

Ms. Atkinson: — So, Minister, what do you include under governance? Administration? You say that in fact the Catholic School Board in Regina is spending more. What do you

include? And, Minister, does this not point to the need to be as transparent as possible in terms of putting information in the public domain so that school boards can take a look at what they are receiving, how it's determined, and compare themselves to others instead of just looking at the grant, the number of students and dividing it by the number of students and saying, you know, we've got a \$275 difference.

Is there not a way that, to be open and transparent, all of the information is available so that people who are sitting in the Catholic school division or a public school division can look across the pond and see where the differences are and make the determination based upon information?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Absolutely. No disagreement with you in that respect. We need to ensure that — and I've used this expression many times, Mr. Chair — we need to ensure that we are comparing apples to apples. And that is why my officials have been working very hard with boards of education for the last year and a half since we've moved to this new model of funding to ensure that we take out the capital costs because a board of education may incur capital costs this year and next year they may incur none, and yet we look at the entire budget of the board of education and that distorts the number.

Now your question about governance, the governance numbers at the Catholic school for the year — and this is the year '09-10, the budgeted number that we have right now — the governance was \$567,750. The public had \$503,235. Now there's a big difference in the number of students at both the public, but that's the board operation, okay. That's everything that happens at the board.

The administration level — that's your directors and superintendents and everything else that's going on at each of those, at those levels — here's where the difference is significant, but again you have to remember that the enrolment for the Catholics that I'm working with, as far as the '09-10 enrolment, was 9,317 and the public enrolment was 19,516. So for administration the Catholics or the Regina Catholic board is showing an administrative cost of about \$992,880, whereas the Regina public board has \$1,916,845, okay. Considerably more because, of course, they have double the students.

On the governance side, because it's the board, the boards are basically the same size so costs, as I pointed out in my first two numbers, are fairly similar.

In the area of instruction for the Catholic School Board, their budget for this year was \$65,667,580, just over \$65 million. The public board of education — got to make sure I read this number correctly; just wanted to make sure I had the right number here — it's in fact \$134 million. It's just over 134 million. So that number is less per student than is the Catholic number.

So that's the point that I was trying to make with people that have been writing the letters and anyone that has called, is that for the area of instruction, again the Catholic system is operating at a higher cost than is the public system because they're spending about \$222 per child more than what is spent by the Regina public.

But when you add in a number I think that distorts this switch, as I indicated, is the surplus for setting aside for capital. The Catholic board for '09-10 didn't budget any. The Catholic board budgeted a significant amount, in fact \$1.450 million, so as a result they're budgeting \$74 per child, and it's built into their budget . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Public board, I'm sorry, the public board is built that into their budget. So as a result, when you just look at the bottom line of the entire budget of the Regina public, the entire budget of the Regina Catholic, divide by the number of students, you get one number. You divide by the number of students in the Regina public and you get another number that's higher. And that number's about, for last year, was about \$280 higher.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. So in terms of the future, Minister, is all of this information going to be available for each school board, so every school board can take a look and compare themselves to each individual school board? Is that information going to be available so that we're not in this boat again?

[22:15]

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Well a couple of things. The budgets were built based on the budget of the year before. So we didn't use the manual because we're into developing of a new funding formula. We have met twice with the Regina Catholic Board of Education. In fact we're going to be meeting with them again to ensure that they understand. My officials have met with them. We don't want, we don't want confusion, and we want to make sure that boards understand that the funding that each of the boards, the 29 school boards, is probably going to be different because there are different needs at each board table.

And even in the city of Saskatoon, you can't compare the cost per child at St. Paul's to the Saskatoon public. They are different. There are different programs. Here in Regina, we have a large cost that the Regina public board incurs for their adult program that they have downtown; just about 400 students I think in the adult program. Just about 400 students in the adult program, so significant cost is being provided to them.

The ability for the boards to understand one another, to understand the dollars, the technical committee that we have set up to develop the financial formula is working on that to ensure that boards of education are able to share information and be able to understand one another. And I see no problem in boards understanding what the other board is receiving because they will hopefully understand the formula, and then they'll be able to ensure that they can compare.

Ms. Atkinson: — So for the purposes of this year, you read into the record the grants to each of the school divisions, and I think it's on the website now. I'm told it is. I haven't looked, but I'm told it is. But there used to be a time when basically each school division could see what other school divisions received based on the foundation operating grant, and there were a number of factors.

So for this year, no doubt money has gone out to each school division, and there are various, let's call them, factors. Is that information going to be made available? Every school board will be able to look and see what other school boards are getting. Are we talking about open transparency at the moment?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — My official indicates to me that as soon as the budget is passed, the information that was provided to each of the school boards on budget day will in fact be on the website.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. Now I want to talk about this technical committee that you've established. There's 10 people on the committee. The Saskatchewan Catholic School Boards Association does not have a voice on that committee, and I'm wondering if you are prepared to add a Catholic, representing the 22 per cent of the student population in the province because they do not have a voice representing officially the Saskatchewan Catholic School Boards Association. Are you prepared to add a member to that committee?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Could you just clarify, Madam Member, which committee you're referring to?

Ms. Atkinson: — I'm talking about, you've got a committee that is now going to be determining what the new funding should look like for the province when it comes to education. This is supposed to be done by next year, but I gather it's going to take another year after that so we're going into 2012. It is a committee of 10. There is no voice from the Saskatchewan Catholic School Boards Association. I'm asking you if you're prepared to add someone. Or maybe you have in the last few weeks, but there is no voice that officially represents the Saskatchewan Catholic School Boards Association on that committee.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Well I'm going to review a couple of committees with you and we'll see if there's . . . because we have the advisory committee and then we have a number of subcommittees and technical committees. So we'll go over a few of them.

Now first of all your comments about whether or not we're already looking at going beyond next year, my hope is that we still have the formula ready for next March, March of 2011. And we hope we'll have all the kinks out and we'll be able to have it in place.

Now on the advisory committee — which of course the school board reps are Sandi Urban-Hall, Janet Foord, and of course Ernie Cychmistuk — on that committee also is a representative from SASBO [Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials], which is Gerry Gieni, who is from a separate board of education. On the data systems subcommittee we have Brendan Bitz, who represents St. Paul's, who's on that committee. On the accountability, evaluation, and reporting committee, Don Orr from Prince Albert Separate is on that committee.

On the pre-K to 12 [pre-kindergarten to grade 12] strategic framework, we have Bev Hanson from St. Paul's Catholic is on that committee. The one that I just talked about who's providing a lot of advice on the financing committee, from LEADS [League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents] we have Herb Sutton who is from Light of Christ Separate. And from SASBO we have Don Lloyd from St. Paul's. So we have two members on the financing committee. On the facilities capital technical committee, we have Gerri Gieni again from Holy Trinity. And we have Rodd Hoffart from

Regina Catholic, who are the SASBO reps.

So we tried to ensure that there was representation on the committees from all aspects. Whether it could have been a LEADS member or a SASBO member, there are people that serve on this committee.

The other thing is of course we as a ministry, our meetings are with the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association], which speaks on behalf of the public, the Catholic, the CEF, you know, all of the school divisions. And those are the reps that are on the committees.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. But I know, Minister, you've been asked if there can be an appointment from the Saskatchewan Catholic School Boards Association to the advisory committee, officially from the Saskatchewan Catholic School Boards Association. And I'm just asking if that's a possibility.

But I have one more item, and we've only got a few minutes — and that's special ed — because I'm told we're done at 10:30. So I just want to ask you some questions about your special ed policy. And I have copies of letters that you sent out recently, Minister, regarding educational assistants. It was sent to school division board Chairs with a backgrounder and your letter.

And I have a question because last year when your government made the determination to take away schools boards' ability to tax, you sent out a funding guide. And in that funding guide, your ministry laid out expectations in terms of what was expected of school divisions, and there was some key expectations when it came to the implementation of school division service delivery models and staffing profiles. And the same ratios that are referred to in *Enhancing Opportunities*, which was a document from last November, is contained in the March 2009 expectations to school boards.

So I know you've sent the letter out. But I just want to know, what is your government's position when it comes to educational assistants? Is it your position that over time the number of educational assistants will reach the staffing profile that you have in your funding guide for 2009-10 and your *Enhancing Opportunities* document that was released in November?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Well I'm going to clarify again, Mr. Chair, for everyone who reads the verbatim of this committee report, is that there has been no change to the policy regarding educational assistants. And boards of education are provided the funds. We've provided, for this year, we've provided the funds that we provided last year because we used the same budget. And the direction has not changed.

Now I must say, though, that the one-pager that was included in last year's funding manual — last spring's which would have been March of '09 — should not have been in there. There's no reason why that piece of paper . . . because that is not, that is not the policy. In fact I've said this. I don't know why it was included. And I have indicated in my letter to boards of education to indicate that there has not been a change in the policy.

Boards of education, in fact we know that some of the boards

have had a small increase in the number of educational assistants this year over last year. Others have had a slight decrease because the needs change. Currently we have about 3,400 educational assistants in the province. Will that number become slightly smaller or slightly bigger? I would suspect it probably is going to become slightly smaller. And I think we've heard from school divisions who have been able to add additional specialists to the team approach in providing services.

And this was a model that was started a long time ago under the former government, as you are aware, where we went from a medical needs model to an assessment model or a needs-based model of the entire demographics of the school. And as a result of that change, the school boards are looking at how best to provide the service to the child. The personal program plan is developed with the individual. It's developed with the special education teacher. It's developed with the principal. The classroom teacher, the educational assistant, the parent, the student, all of those people come together to develop the individual PPP [personal program plan] for that child.

I personally, in many schools, do not see any reduction in the educational assistants. The only time that, you know, there may be a reduction in some of the schools is when the child moves through the school system, as I know has been pointed out to me by some schools that I have gone through in the last couple of months, that there was a reduction in some school divisions of two or three or four individuals, EAs [educational assistants], because the students are no longer in the school systems.

So that's the purpose of my letter was to clarify this because it was misinterpreted, and I know that you asked and made some comments about misinterpretation of my letter or my comments. There was never — and I say this — there was never an intention to move a policy in the direction of the ratios that you talk about. And that is not my policy. I don't believe that we will be able to move in that direction because the educational assistants are a requirement of providing services. So the reason to clarify all this was to say no. The misinterpretation that people may have taken from the fact that that one-pager was included in the funding formula has clouded everything. And we definitely are not moving in that direction.

Ms. Atkinson: — So minister, on page 7 I think it is, under intensive supports, it says clearly that the "Key program expectations for 2009-10 associated with Intensive Supports Level I and II recognition include," and there's a number of bullets. But one of the bullets is this: "Continue development and implementation of a school division service delivery model and staffing profile that supports learners requiring intensive supports, utilizing research-based ratios of appropriate supports and data-guided decision making."

And I just wanted to make this point to you, Minister, that while it may not be your intention, that there is a view regarding research-based ratios that is in some quarters of the special ed community and it . . . And this is how I understand the whole situation goes, that there is too much of a reliance on educational assistants that make children dependent and not independent, and we don't have enough professionals that can support children in terms of being independent. And that the research-based ratios . . . And of course research is one of those

things where you have people who agree with it, and then you have people who can point you in a different direction in terms of the research. And so I just want to make sure that I understand this.

It is the Government of Saskatchewan's position, through the Ministry of Education, that we are not moving towards reducing our numbers of educational assistants and moving towards more psychologists, speech and language therapists, so on and so forth. It's not a matter of having both, it's . . . replacing EAs with these others. It is a matter of having both supports for students. Because the other thing that has become quite evident is that teachers are very concerned that while they may have professionals down at head office, they won't have those professionals in the classroom supporting teachers.

[22:30]

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — A couple of points I'd like to add to the comments I made earlier, Mr. Chair, is that the ratio of, you know, the number of speech therapists and the number of psychologists and all of the other professionals that have been, you know, suggested around other provinces, you know, we're not going to meeting that. And that comment in that manual is not, not just a ratio of one particular group; it's both professionals and paraprofessionals. So we're not moving in that direction.

Now you did say that, you know, that I would be making the decision that one wouldn't be replaced by the other. The boards of education are going to make that decision. And here in Regina Public, we know that last year there were about 20 less educational assistants.

In the Good Spirit School Division, I checked, because there was a mailout done by a particular group of individuals who did a mailout and said the Good Spirit School Division had reduced 18. In fact they have six more than what they had three years ago. So there are 151 full-time equivalent EAs in Good Spirit School Division. It's a number greater. Yet the information that was circulated to teachers . . . And of course teachers in Good Spirit School Division were calling me and saying, you know, why are you, why did you reduce the number by 18? The fact is there was no reduction. There was an increase.

So we tried to clarify that by getting this letter out, and I hope it's posted on bulletin boards in every staff room so that EAs understand that there is no policy change. There has been no decision to reduce one at the expense of others. The team, we want to improve the team.

If a board of education can allot the finances . . . And you called them a central office person. I look at them as a professional that can provide support to the teachers and the TAs [teacher assistant] that are in, the educational assistants that are in the classrooms. Those professionals, if a board of education can hire them on a broad-based level to provide help to six or seven or eight schools, I think those are the . . . how we're going to go. And I know the member has another question, I think.

Ms. Atkinson: — Yes, one quick. So, Minister, there's no one in your ministry that's going to be encouraging school divisions to meet these ratios. Is that what I understand you to say?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Absolutely you have understood that correctly. No, I have instructed my ministry to not circulate another paper like was circulated last year. That will not happen and we have not . . . In fact I have asked the exact opposite. Helen Horsman has been out speaking with directors of education to say the exact opposite — that it is the development of the team and it is the school division that has the ability to do that and there is no direction from the ministry that says there must be a reduction or a ratio of any kind met.

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Ms. Atkinson. Any closing comments?

Ms. Atkinson: — Yes. With that, Minister, I want to thank you very much for your discussion tonight. And I want to thank your officials, and I guess I look forward to seeing you next year.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Ms. Atkinson. Thank you to yourself and to Ms. Higgins for your questions tonight and the other committee members for staying, you know, on top of all of the material that was provided. Glad to see that intent. And I want to thank all of my officials for being with us on three different occasions now to ensure that the material that I was able to provide to the members' questions was in fact accurate. So thank you to all people.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And I thank your officials as well and committee members as well, the Clerks, and the Hansard people for staying up to 10:30 and working with us tonight, and thank you ladies and gentlemen at home. I need a motion to adjourn the committee. Mr. Hart. This committee now stands adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 22:33.]