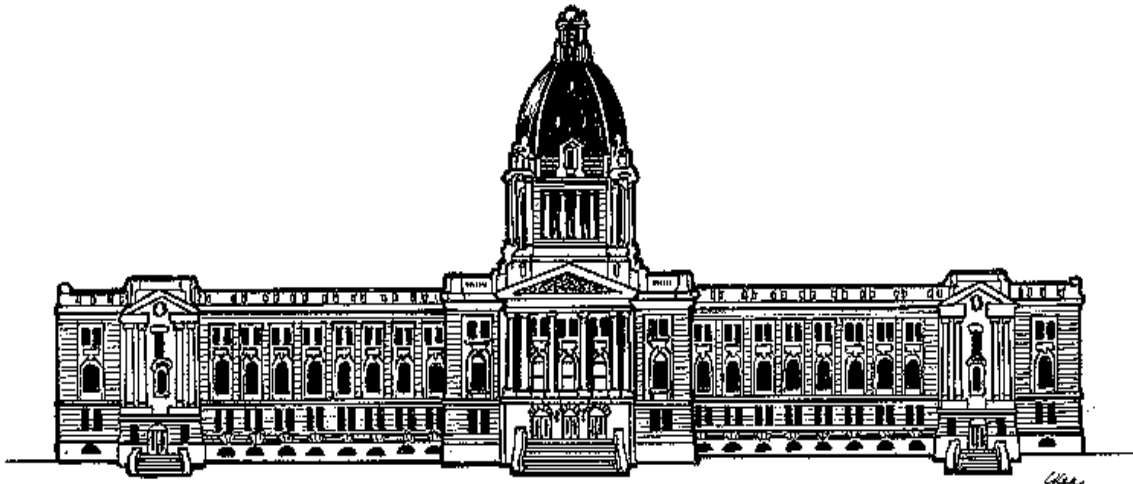




STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Mr. Greg Ottenbreit, Chair
Yorkton

Mr. Cam Broten, Deputy Chair
Saskatoon Massey Place

Ms. Doreen Eagles
Estevan

Mr. Glen Hart
Last Mountain-Touchwood

Ms. Judy Junor
Saskatoon Eastview

Ms. Christine Tell
Regina Wascana Plains

Mr. Gordon Wyant
Saskatoon Northwest

[The committee met at 16:06.]

The Chair: — Good afternoon, committee members and officials and minister and people watching at home. It is now past 3:30, the chosen hour for our committee meeting to begin, so I'll call this committee meeting to order.

We are here for deliberations of the Standing Committee on Human Services. On the agenda today we will first be considering Bill No. 168, *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2011*. And then we will be moving to consideration of the estimates and supplementary estimates for Education.

I will now introduce members of the committee. To my left is Mr. Cam Broten, committee member. Substituting for Ms. Judy Junor is Ms. Pat Atkinson today, and also sitting in is Ms. Deb Higgins. On my right is Mr. Dan D'Autremont who is substituting for Mr. Gord Wyant, Ms. Doreen Eagles, Ms. Christine Tell, and Mr. Glen Hart.

Bill No. 168 — *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2011*

The Chair: — Committee members, we will now be considering Bill No. 168, *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2011*. By practice the committee normally holds a general debate during consideration of clause 1.

The Chair: — Madam Minister, would you like to make a few opening comments and introduce your officials?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and for the sake of time I will begin with the officials that will help with questions on Bill No. 168. To my right is Audrey Roadhouse, the deputy minister. To my left is Doug Volk, executive director of Teachers' Superannuation Commission, and Brenda Maximuik, the strategic policy and legislative service branch, Ministry of Education.

I'll continue with the other introductions to save time as they will be the officials joining us in assisting with questions on the ministry budget estimates. So we also have with us Darren McKee, assistant deputy minister; Cheryl Senecal, assistant deputy minister; Dawn Court, director of finance and corporate services; Mike Back, director of infrastructure and education funding; Clint Repski, the director of infrastructure and education funding; Daryl Richter, manager of capital projects, infrastructure, and education funding; Simone Gareau, the executive director of student achievement and support; Rosanne Glass, executive director of strategic policy; Joylene Campbell, executive director, information management and support; Brett Waytuck, the Provincial Librarian, provincial library and literacy; Brenda Dougherty, the director of early years; Sonya Leib, the senior finance manager of corporate services; Brent Young, the acting executive director, HR [human resources] services, Public Service Commission. And that is the officials with us.

So good afternoon, Chair, and committee members. Today we will begin the committee by discussing Bill No. 168, *The*

Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2011. I will briefly highlight for the members the main elements of the legislative amendments being proposed by this Bill.

To begin, *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act* is a negotiable item under the provincial collective bargaining agreement. Teachers' superannuation and disability benefits are negotiated through the collective bargaining process. In the last collective agreement signed in October of 2007 between boards of education, the Government of Saskatchewan, and the Teachers' Federation of Saskatchewan, increased contributions to the Saskatchewan teachers retirement plan were negotiated. The past collective agreement expired August 31st, 2010 and during recent collective bargaining for a new agreement, it was discovered that the required amendment to *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Act* was overlooked.

Our government has brought this amendment forward now as a budget Bill because doing so will provide the correct statutory authority for the payment of an item contained in the estimates. The changes that reflect the other superannuation provisions agreed to in the provincial collective bargaining agreement received Royal Assent on May 14th, 2008. Discussions have taken place with the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and they are aware the government is moving promptly to make this amendment, and they are supportive. I am pleased to now take any questions that the committee members may have.

Clause 1

The Chair: — Thank you, Madam Minister. We will now consider clause 1, short title, *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2011*, and we'll now take questions from the floor. Mr. Broten.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. I'm pleased to hear that the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation] supports these changes. The minister described that through the process of bargaining it came to the attention that this was overlooked. Has there been any examination or discussion as to how it was overlooked? Was it a, certainly an accident, but was it an absence of doing some sort of checking, or some sort of process problem? If the minister could shed some more light on how it is that it was overlooked in the previous round.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you for that question and I will get Mr. Volk to provide an answer.

Mr. Volk: — When the collective bargaining was completed during the last round, they did get together, my understanding is, to go through the collective bargaining agreement and see what changes needed to be made to the Act.

What these contributions are for the Saskatchewan teachers retirement plan, which is the new plan. And when they went through the collective bargaining, they didn't notice that the new plan's contribution rates were reflected in the teachers superannuation Act document because the teachers superannuation and disability plan is for the old plan, the one that was closed effective July of 1980. So they didn't realize

that the contribution rates were referenced back in the old plan's Act.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. In the current round of bargaining — and we hope that a deal is reached soon, as all people in Saskatchewan do — will this matter be addressed in the current round? Will this oversight occur again or is it likely that this will handle it?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — We've been making the payments, be mindful, all along as if the Act had been amended accordingly, and so there hasn't been any loss to the teachers. I'm not aware what provisions the current round of bargaining will effect in the Act, but definitely if any do, the Act will have to be reviewed at that time and amended yet again.

Mr. Broten: — Okay, thank you. That concludes my questions unless a colleague has something else to add.

The Chair: — Ms. Atkinson.

Ms. Atkinson: — Just in terms of process, in terms of taking three and a half years to get to the point where we have legislation, is there not an assistant deputy minister that oversees this kind of legislative change that would be required coming out of the collective agreement that was signed, I guess, in October of 2007?

Ms. Roadhouse: — I came in December 2008, and so I'm not totally aware of the processes. We have talked about the go-forward plan, and the go-forward plan with any changes would be a very detailed work plan and very diligent checking on all of the items. So that's the plan that we currently have in place for any changes that may come with this and with the contemplated agreement.

[16:15]

Ms. Atkinson: — So there must, I think . . . Is it Darren McKee who's sort of the ADM [assistant deputy minister] that's dealing with collective bargaining? Is that correct?

Ms. Roadhouse: — Darren McKee currently sits on the bargaining committee as the ADM.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. Okay. So will there be . . . Because there will be a collective agreement for sure — might take a while to get there, but there will be one — will there be someone in the ministry that will, you know, make sure that whatever is determined in the agreement that requires legislative amendments, that that work will be done? Is there someone who's responsible for that now?

Ms. Roadhouse: — Yes. Where that will occur now is . . . Cheryl Senecal is the ADM, and the branch that will oversee that is strategic policy which has legislative services.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. Right. Because what used to happen in the olden days, I guess, was we had, you know, someone who was involved in basically legislation — Michael — who sat on the committee and he made sure it got done. And I think there was an ADM that Michael reported to. So basically now, there is an ADM that is going to be in charge of this. Perfect. Thank

you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Ms. Atkinson. Any further questions from committee members? Seeing none, clause 1, short title, *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2011*, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.]

The Chair: — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: Bill No. 168, *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2011*. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Agreed. I would ask a member to move that we report Bill No. 168, *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2011* without amendment. Mr. Hart. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Thank you, Madam Minister, and officials. Any final comments on the Bill from the minister?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I just want to thank the officials and the members of the committee who posed questions. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Broten, any final comments?

Mr. Broten: — Thank you for those responses, and to the officials.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Broten. With that we will facilitate the change and consider estimates and supplementary estimates for Education.

General Revenue Fund Education Vote 5

Subvote (ED01)

The Chair: — We will now look at the estimates and supplementary estimates for Education, vote 5, central management and services (ED01), outlined on page 46 of the Estimates booklet, and for the supplementary estimates, subvotes (ED03) and (ED04), outlined on page 3 of the supplementary booklet. Madam Minister, would you like to make any opening comments?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I introduced all of the officials when we had the Bill before us, so with that I am open to questions.

The Chair: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Broten.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Looking at the budget document, I note that there's a reduction in the FTE [full-time equivalent] complement for the ministry, from 332.4 to 310.4 on page 45 as it is stated. My question to the minister is: where are these reductions taking place, and what are the implications for programs?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you for that question, and I will get my deputy minister to give you the answer.

Ms. Roadhouse: — The 22 positions are comprised of FTEs. Those are primarily vacant positions that we managed through corporate staffing and vacancy management. The three FTEs, three additional FTEs, are the result of the wind-down of the integration adviser team. That was the initial work done with the adviser groups on the funding model. And one FTE was transferred to a related government agency. In this case, it was SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] around driver education. That makes up the 22 positions.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. The term vacancy management is a nice euphemism. Could the minister please explain a bit more on what is involved in vacancy management?

Ms. Roadhouse: — In order to address needs within the ministry, we establish a process whereby any vacancy came to executive committee. That way we could decide where that, whether we wanted to fill that position or whether we wanted to move that position into an area that was maybe experiencing some pressure. And so that was how we filled the positions. And so throughout the course of a year or more, we then ended up with a number of positions that were vacant, and so we didn't need to lay people off in that case so we could primarily use the vacancy positions for the 18.

Mr. Broten: — How were most of these vacancies created? It was alluded to in the initial comment, but are most of them through retirements or is it through other means?

Ms. Roadhouse: — It was a mixture of things. It would be people who were retiring. I think there were three or four retirements. I think there were, I'll say a couple of people that moved on to other positions.

Mr. Broten: — So it's the executive committee, as the deputy stated, who determines whether or not a position should be filled or whether it should be left vacant. Is that correct?

Ms. Roadhouse: — If the process is where the executive directors submit staffing requests to the executive committee and then it is ultimately is executive committee that makes that decisions.

Mr. Broten: — With the vacancies, how does the minister ensure that in the case of a retirement, and if expertise and experience is departing from the ministry, how is the minister ensuring that individuals with the appropriate know-how, experience, and background are meeting the tasks that need to be done?

Ms. Roadhouse: — Especially around retirements, we're given

a fair amount of notice that someone is retiring so that we can do the appropriate succession planning in order to make sure that we don't lose the skills and capture the contribution that the person has made.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. I believe Ms. Atkinson has a question.

Ms. Atkinson: — Were any of these vacancies in curriculum development?

Ms. Roadhouse: — I'll get the breakdown for you.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay, thanks.

Ms. Roadhouse: — I list here one out of curriculum, a curriculum consultant position.

Ms. Atkinson: — Is the ministry doing much work in the area of curriculum any more?

Ms. Roadhouse: — We have finished now the renewal of elementary curriculum and are in the process of doing a lot of work on the secondary area. So yes, there's still a lot of work going on in that area.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. Just a quick one, quick question here. Is the work collaborative work? Or is there still a lot of going outside of the province to get the curriculum?

Ms. Roadhouse: — I would say there's a lot of collaborative work within the province. And as you know, now LEADS [League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents] has quite a different composition. They're a lot of superintendents of curriculum and instruction, and they play a major role out in school divisions in informing the ministry about what are the needs out in school divisions, what are both the curricula issues and the resource issues.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. So one of the worries — just think I'll share the worry since this is my last opportunity to do this for a long time — but one of the worries is that the province is moving away from the notion of being involved in curriculum development and that it's going to be left up to the larger school divisions who will do the work, and that the curriculum branch of the ministry is a small example of its former self, that there is a real, there has been a fairly dramatic change. And this hasn't just taken place during your administration but towards the end of the previous administration. And I'm just wondering, can the public be assured that the ministry will be in charge of curriculum and we're not going to devolve that to the larger school divisions.

Ms. Roadhouse: — The current desire is to . . . Well as you know, there's the western and northern protocols so that there's a lot more consistency now, as you know, in curriculum, and so we follow that. And then the ministry's always concerned about standards and quality control and, as you know, has spent a lot of time lately more on outcomes. Right? The curriculum hasn't changed itself so much as we've really focused a lot more on outcomes.

And so I mean it's always hard to predict the future, but I don't

think so. I can't see that. The only change that we're experiencing, and I think it's actually a pretty good one, is school divisions have asked to form with us what they call more strategic alliances. They're just saying, can we play a role in some of this. But no one's asking to take it on, and nor are we asking people to take it on.

Ms. Atkinson: — And then I'll just ask, and this is the question I should have asked a couple of years ago, but I'll ask it now. I am told that there is a textbook or a book that is out in our school divisions. This would be in the middle years, I believe, that has the photo of the previous minister of Education in the book. Is that true?

Ms. Roadhouse: — Oh, there is a book. I think it's either a science or social studies resource that at the very front of the book has a picture and a few words from the previous minister.

Ms. Atkinson: — Okay. Is that usual that the minister's smiling face would be in a book that is in our classrooms? I've been involved in education for a very long time, and is this usual? And then the second question is, is this going to be the position of the Ministry of Education that the minister's photo will be in any of the new books? Because it's highly unusual and it's observed to be somewhat political.

Ms. Roadhouse: — I can't . . . As you know, before I took this job, I was out in school divisions, and honestly I just can't remember if, sort of looking at the front of a textbook . . . I don't know. You know, that was a special resource, and so that was what we did around that particular resource.

Ms. Atkinson: — Can you tell me who made that decision to have the minister's photo in a book that students have in their classrooms?

Ms. Roadhouse: — That book was in development, I'm going to say, started at least two years, three years . . . I'm going to say probably around 2005, 2006. So I don't know how the initial documentation was set up.

Ms. Atkinson: — Well I guess, you know, I'm a former minister of Education. We've got another former minister of Education. I can assure you that none of us had our mug shot in the book in the classroom. And I just wanted to put this on the public record. I think it's inappropriate. You know, ministers send letters. Ministers interact with teachers and school trustees and directors of education and so on. Ministers are in classrooms, as the minister will know. Ministers make announcements. I find it highly irregular to have a minister's photo in a learning resource in the classroom. It's unusual because ministers change, as the present minister will know.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Textbooks too. Thank you . . .

Ms. Atkinson: — So, Minister, if you going to promise me that your mug won't show up . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Well taken on advisement, and I assure you that yes, my mug is not in a textbook.

[16:30]

Ms. Atkinson: — Yes. You know your name could go on the new school. That's okay. But I think it's really inappropriate in a textbook.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Advice well taken.

The Chair: — Mr. Broten.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. My next question is, looking at the budget document, there's a significant reduction in accommodation costs listed on page 46 from \$5,360,000 to \$3,640,000. It's a reduction of 32 per cent. My question is, how is this 32 per cent reduction in accommodation expenses being achieved?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you. The reduction is due to the elimination of the one-time capital asset acquisition funding provided to consolidate accountability assessment and records resulting from the expansion of the nursing program at Wascana Parkway.

Mr. Broten: — So the reduction is a one-time expenditure for the nursing program at Wascana Parkway? And that's why it larger the one year, and that's why it's smaller this year?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Precisely.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you very much. I'm curious about the operational support for pre-K to 12 [pre-kindergarten to grade 12] on page 46. There is an 18 per cent reduction in that line item from 12,147,000 to 9,931,000. Can the minister please explain what this line item involves, please?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The reduction in the operational support, there's 1.499 was the wind-down of the integration advisory team; 502,000 is related to a workforce adjustment; 150,000 is a reduction to the education finance general contractual services budget; 44,000 to reallocate of an in-scope level 6 from education finance to financial planning and management as part of the outcome from the contract and grant payment of the lean event; 40,000 was operating savings from an FTE reduction; 25,000 is a reduction to regional services management operating budget related to the provincial teacher bargaining, which is offset by a \$44,000 in reallocation of resources, which is an increase reallocation of resources within the ministry.

Mr. Broten: — Sorry, what was the first item that the minister listed . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Largest item was 1.499 million which was the wind-down of the integration advisory team.

Mr. Broten: — Could the minister please state what the integration advisory team did if it no longer is doing it, please?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — That was the team that was initially put together to begin the consultation on the new funding formula.

Mr. Broten: — And their budget was 1.499. What was the line item amount attached to that, to the wind-down of that?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The amount?

Mr. Broten: — Yes, the amount, rather.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The amount, yes, 1.499 million.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. And so that, if I understood correctly, that was the money that was to facilitate the consultation process for the funding formula? . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Okay. Is the consultation process for the funding formula, is that complete now?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — That was a question you asked the initial night, and there's some small committee work still being done as well as sort of a focused . . . of chief financial officers from school divisions that are actually doing more of a number analysis.

Mr. Broten: — So the 1.499 million, that facilitated the many . . . the groups that you listed and the cascading subgroups and all the different sub-working committees and such?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Precisely.

Mr. Broten: — So 1.499 million, what was the breakdown of that with respect to expenses? How was that money used? What accounts for almost one and a half million dollars?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I will get the deputy minister to answer that question.

Ms. Roadhouse: — I'll provide some explanation, and then if you need more detail I can certainly send this to you. But as you know, there was an advisory team made up of the stakeholder groups that oversaw the process. And then there were I think eight, and I could get you more detail, smaller technical committees. And all of those committees met mostly face-to-face meetings, some conferences and so forth, and many of those meetings were half- or full-day meetings.

Mr. Broten: — So, meetings . . . I heard the minister there saying something there off mike.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I'm sorry. I was just suggesting that would be all of accommodations, meals, travel. I'm assuming there was per diem for the stakeholder group members that partook in the consultation.

Mr. Broten: — What would be the per diem honoraria for that?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I'm sorry, I'm corrected. There isn't per diems for the members.

Mr. Broten: — So the 1.499, that's travel costs for members travelling to meetings, and it's booking of rooms where our meetings were held, and it's associated meals and that kind of thing. Is that a correct understanding?

Ms. Roadhouse: — About 300,000 of that money was staffing money for the integration advisory team. And the rest of the money was the other codes that are primarily travel and meals and those kinds of things.

Mr. Broten: — Can the minister provide a breakdown of the 1.499 million?

Ms. Roadhouse: — Yes, we can. It had its separate process for that one. Yes, we can.

Mr. Broten: — You can table it later in a written format?

Ms. Roadhouse: — Yes.

Mr. Broten: — Okay, thank you very much. The \$300,000 for staffing that was just mentioned, is that staffing? Was that paid to consultants to facilitate the process? Or was it to offset expenses for ministry employees to be involved in it? Please provide some detail on the \$300,000 for staffing.

Ms. Roadhouse: — I could provide you with some brief information now, and then we can include that in the information that we send you. Those positions to the integration advisory team to support that work, those three positions were filled within the ministry, and then they were backfilled, and so that primarily is the money to backfill those positions.

Mr. Broten: — I know in *Hansard* the many subcommittees and the committees were listed. We went over that. So basically although there is not yet a long-term funding formula that is available to the school divisions, the wind-down of this 1.499, is the ministry of the position that it has the necessary information that has occurred through consultation so there will not be another type of consultation requiring this type of expenditure?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The consultations that took place to date until a few months ago was quite broad and quite wide, and it included members from SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association], members from LEADS, members from SASBO [Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials], members from STF, members from FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations], and members from MNS [Métis Nation of Saskatchewan]. And what that then provided us with was a fairly detailed framework. And so now what's happening is a little bit of windup of the subcommittees of the committees, but as well as an intensive, now a numbers analysis of this framework with existing budgets. So it's a much tighter, more detailed analysis. And we need, sort of, the final outcome to be brought to the school divisions one-on-one, individually so each school division can see what this will look like for them. And that will be the final input, will be the specifics for each of the different school divisions.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you very much. Moving on to another item in the budget, there's a 23 per cent reduction in curriculum and instruction, on page 47, from 3.367 million to \$2.564 million. I know in earlier remarks the minister made, I believe she said there was on FTE that was removed out of there, but I don't think that accounts for the entire reduction. So if the minister could please state why this decision was made and what it entails.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Your question was on the curriculum and instruction?

Mr. Broten: — Yes, the reduction from 3.367 million to 2.564

million.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — There was an increase of 54,000 which was a transfer of a position to the instructional resource from network services, and then that was offset by a \$403,000 reduction which was the elimination of the career development action plan program. 224,000 was related to a workforce adjustment. 172,000 was reallocation of resources within the ministry. 25,000 was a decrease to the Hutterites' budget targeted for development of cataloguing guidelines for school libraries . . . oh, humanities, I'm sorry. 23,000 was a reduction to curriculum distribution budget, and 10,000 was a reduction of the operating savings from FTE reductions.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. The one item of the reduction that the minister stated was a workforce program. What was that name of that?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Adjustment.

Mr. Broten: — Yes. What . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes. That was 224,000.

Mr. Broten: — 224?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes.

Mr. Broten: — What did that program entail?

Ms. Roadhouse: — The workforce adjustment is the reduction of the footprint each year, the number of positions.

Mr. Broten: — So is the 224,000 saved in . . .

Ms. Roadhouse: — In this particular area.

Mr. Broten: — Okay, I may have . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Were you referring to the career development action plan program or the workforce adjustment?

Mr. Broten: — Actually I meant the career development action plan but I read the wrong line. I apologize.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — No, and that's just fine. We'll give you a detailed explanation of the career development action plan. Mr. McKee will give that explanation.

Mr. McKee: — Sorry, Darren McKee, assistant deputy minister. With respect to the career development action plan, we did a review with school divisions around the uptake of the career development action plan. It was designed with the intent of providing an opportunity for school divisions and the sector on a short-term basis to engage in more thought process around career development for students. So it did provide an opportunity for a number of school divisions to get engaged in a number of activities. Those activities, some of which are continuing . . . school divisions have taken on the role of doing some of those activities that came out of the career development action plan. As we reviewed the process, there was an under-spend in that area and we reduced the program as a result of that.

Mr. Broten: — So if I understand, some school boards picked up the work, and in other areas where it wasn't occurring or there wasn't interest it ceased?

Mr. McKee: — Yes, that's correct. And as I said, there were a number of examples of some of the programs coming out of there that school divisions continue to utilize.

Mr. Broten: — In the areas where school boards picked up the program, was there financial consideration given to the school boards to continue running programs or was it simply a downloading? Were there dollars attached to the downloading of the role and the job?

Mr. McKee: — Well an example might be career development software, as an example, for students. And part of the dollars went to creating a Saskatchewan context for that software. Normally schools would have been using it anyway, but they wouldn't have had the capacity to work on that side of it. So the work was done, that work was completed and school divisions continue to utilize it in the same way they were using it before. So there wouldn't be an additional cost necessarily to the school divisions.

[16:45]

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Another reduction was reallocations within the ministry. How much was that amount, please, again?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — That was 172,000, and that was a reallocation of resources within the ministry.

Mr. Broten: — Could the minister please provide some more detail on what the reallocation was, what it looked like, or what it involved, please?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes. It was a shift, a reallocation of salaries. Some salaries in some area with the reorganization had higher salaries, and this unit had less. So it's a shift of salaries from one area to another, salary dollars.

Mr. Broten: — So it was dollars that were under this category not . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Under spent, under spent in this unit.

Mr. Broten: — Salary dollars.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes.

Mr. Broten: — That were not being used because positions weren't filled or were part of vacancy management?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Weren't filled or a lower paid position came when a higher paid position left.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Ms. Atkinson has a question I believe.

Ms. Atkinson: — Yes, a couple questions. When you go through the budget submission, no doubt you were asked to find some money. I think Finance usually asks ministries to find money. And then you have to, you know, allocate how you intend on finding the money. So in this case, how much money

did the ministry have to find in order to satisfy the budget?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — We had to find 6.959 million.

Ms. Atkinson: — So, okay, I understand that. So where did you find it?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Much of where we found it actually, your colleague has touched on. The 1.70 million was the elimination of the one-time capital acquisition funding. 1.5 was savings as a result of winding down the advisory team. 1.2 — and I'm rounding off a little bit — is savings resulting from the workforce adjustment. 1.2 was a decrease in the school capital spending that we thought we had. Point four was the transfer of the community access program to SILS [single integrated library system] consortium. 403,000 was the elimination, again we talked about this at the career development action plan, and then there was about \$425,000 worth of savings in areas that we hadn't spent the amount that we thought we would the year before so we just reduced.

Ms. Atkinson: — So, Minister, were you allowed to redirect any of your savings into some priorities of the ministry.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The number one off the top of my head — and I will get the officials to help me — one of the savings that we redirected was to the digitization of library material. And the other place will be directed, that's right, redirected some savings was to have another year of the literacy camps that we started last year and demonstrated very good results. So we're going to fund literacy camps again this year.

Ms. Atkinson: — So if I could, Mr. Chair, because our time is running out, is it possible for the ministry to provide us with the redirects? Just a synopsis, not a synopsis, but sort of line-by-line item of the redirects and then how some of the redirect went into some new items for the ministry — the digitization and the camps — and then tell us how much that cost.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I know the digitization off the top of my head was 400,000. But yes, we can provide that.

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes.

The Chair: — Mr. Broten.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. Looking at the budget document once again, there is a small reduction in student support services listed on page 47, from 715,000 to \$680,000. I guess that's about 5 per cent. What was this money devoted to?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — 102,000 was related to the workforce adjustment, 8,000 was operating savings from FTE reductions, and 75,000 was a reallocation of resources within the ministry.

Mr. Broten: — So a similar rationale, I suppose, to the previous answer with respect to the reductions?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes.

Mr. Broten: — Is it anticipated, since the line item is student support services, is it anticipated that this will affect the support given to students?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — We don't anticipate it reducing supports, but we will watch it closely and ensure that the supports that were there are not reduced.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. I see there's a 20 per cent cut in funding devoted to the literacy office listed on page 48, from \$468,000 to \$371,000. Could the minister please state what the mandate is for the literacy office, and how does it seek to fulfill that mandate?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — We'll get the officials to answer that question.

Mr. McKee: — Again, Darren McKee. The numbers being referred to are again consistent with the other line items that have been asked. In terms of the literacy office reduction, 35,000 was transferred to the Provincial Library and 62,000 was an internal adjustment to reallocate resources within the ministry. And then certainly, if you need more information, Brett Waytuck can answer that.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. And I will get into the numbers, but if just it could be stated what the mandate is for the literacy office and how it meets that mandate, please.

Mr. Waytuck: — Brett Waytuck, Provincial Librarian. The literacy office has a mandate to look at literacy services within the Government of Saskatchewan overall. And to that end, we are currently working on a literacy strategy framework that will meet the commitments that the ministers of Education of Canada have made. We also provide base funding for family literacy organizations throughout the province, as well as some funding for adult basic education and non-curriculum environment in the province.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. It was mentioned in an earlier response by the minister, there was talk of redirection of funding for the literacy camps. Is that something that falls under this banner?

Mr. Waytuck: — The literacy office also does work with the school divisions, who are actually responsible for expending the funds for the literacy camps. So we are their contact within the ministry, but in fact they work directly with Frontier College to deliver those camps.

Mr. Broten: — Okay, thank you. The literacy work that is done, obviously there is many components to supporting literacy. What types of interaction is there between your ministry with other ministries, whether it be Advanced Education or whether it's Social Services? Could the minister please describe what sort of co-operation there is in efforts to improve literacy.

Mr. Waytuck: — The literacy strategy actually was written in co-operation and in partnership with the program innovations branch of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, and part of that strategy is actually to work on a much broader level with ministries such as Health, Justice, Social Services,

and others that have an interest in literacy.

Mr. Broten: — Okay, thank you. Do any of my colleagues have a question on this item? No. I'll ask a question on a different item, if I may. As the minister know from being in the House regularly, during petitions I often present a petition concerning the construction of an elementary school in my constituency. While most of my questions have had more of a provincial focus, I do want to ask one specific to my local area.

It's my understanding that the public and the Catholic school board both have the construction of a school in Hampton Village as a priority. I recall hearing the Chair of the Saskatoon Public School Board speak to that issue in a CTV [Canadian Television Network Ltd.] news piece. So based on what school boards have said and based on feedback I've heard from constituents in this neighbourhood of Saskatoon, there's a real desire for a new elementary school in the area.

Currently most of the children in the area either go to Dundonald School or St. Peter School, which is in the neighbouring community of Dundonald, which are fantastic schools. I've only heard positive things from the parents. But I've also heard from the parents that they have to take shifts for Christmas concerts. And the relocatables are already maxed out and teachers have told me when they come to the legislature for tours that they're running over capacity as it is. They're certainly stretched. And when I go door to door in Hampton Village with the petition, most of the households, many of the households have toddlers and babies, and there will certainly be more young people in this particular area of Saskatoon. So while the school boards are doing a good job of managing the increased students right now in Dundonald and St. Peter to the best of their ability, the demand will be increasing. And while busing can be part of the solution in the short term, it's not a long-term solution.

So my question about the construction of an elementary school . . . There's land set aside by the city in the area for a possible joint facility. My question to the minister: when might funding be provided to help the Saskatoon public and Saskatoon Catholic with the construction of an elementary school?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you for that, and I would have been disappointed had you not asked. We are proud of our record in capital spending for schools. We have spent a record amount of 422 million to date but, as you well know, there's pressures, amazing pressures to get schools built.

What the previous ministers will know — and you may not be aware of, but it's a resource that you may want to access going forward — is there is a capital request list and how the ministry prioritize them, and it's a public document that you can access. So at any given time when you're asked by your constituents, it will be the renewed list and how it's prioritized will be public in June or July. And so that you can always be seeing where a school that's of special interest to you is on the list in priorities. And so that list is being composed as we speak.

We have received the five-year proposal construction plan from the Saskatoon Public School Division, and I do confirm that the Hampton Village capital project is included. And the school division lists the need for this school as no. 2 on their priority

list, and in 2010 the public school division had ranked it as no. 6 so it definitely has risen considerably in the Saskatoon Public School Division's priorities. We have not received the five-year plan yet from St. Paul's Catholic.

Once all of the different school divisions have submitted their requests, there is a number of criteria of how they're prioritized, health and safety of course being number one. And so that weighing of priority will take place and the new list will be published, and that's when all of the school divisions will know where their priorities fall within that list.

[17:00]

Mr. Broten: — I thank the minister for that answer, and I am familiar with that document. But it's certainly something my constituents want me to bring forward on a regular basis, and that's why I do it.

The no. 6 ranking that, I believe it was no. 6 ranking that the minister referred to . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Was. Now it's no. 2.

Mr. Broten: — Yes. That group, am I correct in understanding that includes new builds as well as other capital projects such as renovations and improvements that are required?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Major, what we call major projects as opposed to small repairs such as roof repairs, etc., which is deemed the block funding. Of course there's your smaller repairs. Any major repairs, expansions, or new builds are in this capital list.

Mr. Broten: — For the current ranking of no. 2, could the minister please state what project has the no. 1 ranking?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Willowgrove. The next stage of Willowgrove would be their no. 1.

Mr. Broten: — All right. Well thank you for that information, and my constituents and I look forward to good news in June. With that I will go to Ms. Higgins who has some questions at this time, or I'll allow the Chair to go to Ms. Higgins at this time.

The Chair: — Ms. Higgins.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Watching estimates . . . And I know people are probably saying get a life, but as I was home early Monday evening I was watching estimates. I have a couple of other questions when it comes to early learning, child care. First off on Monday night . . . Now I went in to look at the verbatim but it wasn't up yet on the computer, but I believe you made the comment that there had been some substantial increases to wages that have occurred in the sector over the last couple of years. Could you give me a breakdown as to what the increases were?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — In 2008-09 budget, we increased it by 2.3 per cent. And then in the spring of 2008, there was a 4 per cent increase. In January of 2009, 6 per cent.

Ms. Higgins: — Okay, hold it. You said '08-09, 2.3 . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Within the budget, it was a 2.3 per cent. In the spring of 2008, it was a 4 per cent. And if I'm not mistaken — I wasn't the minister at the time — I think that was unique only to child care centres. It wasn't an increase that was right across government for all CBOs [community-based organization]. I believe that increase was only to child care centres. That's true, I'm being told. In January of 2009 was a 6 per cent. In the '09-10 budget was a 3 per cent. In the '10-11 was 1 per cent, and in the '11-12, this budget, there's a 1.5 per cent increase.

Ms. Higgins: — So then the 2.331 per cent and 1.5 in this budget year, those are to all CBOs?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The 1.5 per cent is to all CBOs across the entire government budget.

Ms. Higgins: — So then the other night you said there had been substantial increases to wages, I believe. Now were these directed as general increases with flexibility from the boards as to how they were applied, or were they directed to wages for ECE [early childhood education] various levels?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Because of the structure of the boards and their governance abilities, they're encouraged — and I had that situation in the past with different organizations when I was the minister of Social Services — they're encouraged, but we can't direct them to use it for wages.

Ms. Higgins: — So then all of these increases can be utilized however and may not go to wages. Okay. I mean what I'm hearing in my community is that there hasn't been a lot of improvements in wages and especially on some of the initial positions that don't have the training behind them. Many people that have been there for 18 to 20 years and have seen 10 cents over the last . . . I mean it's . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — It is within the governance of the board.

Ms. Higgins: — Actually the main area that I wanted to focus questions on was ECIPs [early childhood intervention program]. There sounds like there has been a number of changes taking place over the last little while. ECIPs are now under the early years branch, that's my understanding. So did staff move also or is this just a shift of programming?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I've been informed that there was no dedicated staff to ECIPs.

Ms. Higgins: — No dedicated staff working with the ECIPs?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Right.

Ms. Higgins: — Okay. One of the very first things your government did when you were elected was pull the funding for the provincial ECIP board, which was one of the few opportunities for provincial ECIPs in the various communities, gave them a chance to get together, network, look at best practices, and have some support, I think, for the work they did. I guess I'm curious as to why.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — You'll have to forgive me because I wasn't the minister at the time, and that's not this budget item. So I'll get one of the officials to give the history of that.

Mr. McKee: — I'm not aware of the reduction in that funding. I know that we continue to meet fairly regularly with boards, both individually and as a group. We do get them together.

Ms. Higgins: — Okay. If you know of anything else though, I'd appreciate knowing.

This spring there was the whole issue of the Weyburn ECIP being moved under the jurisdiction of the school boards in that area. It did send a bit of a shudder, I think, through the ECIP community. And there is concern, especially with the changes to coterminous boundaries with the school divisions, that this is a direction that you are heading. Is that accurate?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — No. There was issues with the southeast ECIP. And so therefore the Weyburn ECIP, to my understanding, agreed to take on the responsibility of the programming of the southeast ECIP but expressed — it was an agreement — expressed desire that the school divisions become involved in this situation. I don't believe it was directed at all. I could be corrected. But no, I'm being told it wasn't directed. It was kind of on a mutual agreement with the school divisions and the Weyburn ECIP. The Weyburn ECIP didn't want to continue, so it was the school divisions then have interviewed and worked with the workers that were employed by the Weyburn ECIP, and it's going to transition to the school divisions. But it wasn't a direction or one that I'm looking at doing province-wide. It sort of was a snowball effect from difficulties with the southeast ECIP.

Ms. Higgins: — So you're looking at this being a permanent solution for that ECIP, not looking at it . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Temporary.

Ms. Higgins: — Yes.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I'm hoping that this works well. And bottom line, the most important thing is that the children get the programming they need. And so if it does work well with the South East Cornerstone and the Holy Family school divisions, I don't foresee that we would be looking or actively seeking for changes to that.

Ms. Higgins: — On Monday night also, when Ms. Atkinson was asking questions about ELCC [early learning and child care], there was a number of initiatives that Ms. Zelmer was talking about that are on the go and in the works. One of them was a human resource plan. Now it just kind of sparked my interest. Does this human resource plan that has been developed for ELCC also cover the ECIP program?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — We will get the official to respond. I don't believe so. The official confirms what I had thought. The ECIPs wouldn't be included in anything that was discussed.

Ms. Higgins: — But then is there a human resource plan being developed specifically for the ECIPs?

Ms. McKee: — There isn't a human resource plan developed with ECIPs, but we have been in conversations with ECIPs on an ongoing basis about program review, and that does have some conversations about what the current complement is out there and needs and gaps and those sorts of things.

Ms. Higgins: — So then the one document that is on your . . . I guess maybe I'm just calling it the wrong thing. When we look at the documents that are on the Minister of Education's website, the Ministry of Education, there's ECIP generally accepted personnel policies and procedures. I guess I was looking at that as human resource. And is this similar to what's been put in place for ELCC or different?

Mr. McKee: — Well I can't comment on the ELCC because those were different processes in place prior to April 1st. But for that particular document, that is the work that we have done over the past year and a half with ECIPs on developing a bit broader than just human resources because it talks about some of the board processes, etc.

Ms. Higgins: — So then if you're looking at putting in place personnel policies and procedures, and I also noted on Monday night's estimates that there were exceptions or exemptions that were allowed for ELCC to accommodate staffing where staffing prescribed by the policies was not available, so are those same type of exceptions or exemptions, whatever you want to call them, are they being allowed for the ECIPs when you're initiating new programs?

Mr. McKee: — I think we're . . . In the conversations that happened there were certainly a reflection of a desire to move towards what the guidelines and policies that were developed were. But there was a recognition that there are differing circumstances, and so those will be treated uniquely as they come forward.

Ms. Higgins: — When you're putting in place policies . . . Like I don't know what the requirements would be currently for ECIPs, but I know there was in ELCC accommodation and in fact some supports for workers to reach the requirements that were put in place, kind of, because of all the difficulties that kind of go along with it. So are you looking at doing anything like that when it comes to the ECIPs?

Mr. McKee: — Again, I can't speak specifically to any situation, but I can say that in looking at programs across, whether it's ELCC or others, it's important to look at unique circumstances that may come forward. We certainly wouldn't want to clearly articulate a prescribed direction that wouldn't allow us to have some conversations about the effects that it may have on ECIP boards.

Ms. Higgins: — Okay. Well one of the things that I've been hearing, and this has been for a while, is that when we look at the ECIPs and the service they provide and the support they provide, it — I mean your own documents speak to it quite clearly when you look at the website — and it supports not only for the child but for family. A lot of it's in-home. A lot of it's outside, and supports that are needed by that child and their specific needs as their program has kind of been developed.

What I'm hearing now though is that soon as . . . Well I guess

backing up a bit, when ECIPs were first put in place, the whole initiative was to fill some gaps and make sure that children and their families were supported from zero to seven. And I mean, seven was chosen — not just pick a number out of a hat. It was to make sure that children had the supports they needed to be able to transition into the school system but still maintain those supports, not only for the child, but for the family. Because you have to know . . . I mean a lot of the work that the ECIPs do is in-home.

[17:15]

And what I'm hearing is that there is direction now that, soon as a child is in kindergarten and attached any way to the education system, that they no longer qualify for support from the ECIP. And this becomes even more distressing when we look at the push for . . . well, or the direction — I shouldn't say push — the direction for pre-kindergartens. And I am hearing from a number of folks that when, if a child is accepted into a pre-kindergarten, three or four years of age, then they will no longer qualify or have access to the ECIP supports that are so important to their family, that everything will move over to the education system.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I'll just briefly speak to the pre-K that you mentioned. I will agree and I'll get an explanation then of the services on the ECIP. But I agree. Our government is moving toward universally available — not mandatory but universally available — pre-K programming for three- and four-year-olds in our province.

Having attended — and obviously, and the member from Nutana mentioned the other night — a UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization] conference on early learning, listening to different speakers, and now doing quite extensive reading on the notable results of having that universally available, I do think it's a direction that, yes, I do want to see us move in as a government. But I am uncertain to the withdrawal then of the ECIP services, so I'll get Darren to address what's happening on that front.

Mr. McKee: — Yes, I think certainly from our perspective, our intent with continuing to support ECIPs in a direction of not duplicating services, and so part of I think what we're trying to do is to ensure that the services that are provided to families continue, whether that's in the ECIP program or whether that's through the education program. And certainly it's not the intent to somehow stop any service. But certainly as we look at this, it will be important to reflect on what services are being provided by whom to ensure there is a continuance of service to both children and families.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I'd just like to add, and there has been no increases to ECIP programs in this budget. But we have, in the last three, we increased the number of ECIP programs from 635 to 736. So we have been expanding the availability of ECIP programs as well as the pre-K. So we haven't withdrawn the number of programs, although they're still centred in the core communities that they were previously, which is as you're familiar.

Ms. Higgins: — Well I mean, when you look at your own website and it talks about the ECIPs, and it talks about working

collaboratively with child care providers, speech-language pathologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, nurses, physicians, early childhood psychologists, teachers, school administrators, I mean it just goes on and on. These organizations do a wonderful job in some families that are facing some pretty severe difficulties in many cases and just some challenges to provide support, to make sure children are getting the service they needed, to make sure that families are getting the service they needed. And it is causing some concern that, once I'm in the school system, well oops, it's up to the school system. And we all know that the school system does not have the scope of services that are needed by these children and families in many instances. So there's a concern.

I mean, even comments that I've heard, that school divisions, professionals have told parents, physical disabilities are not a priority. They don't have the services to deal with physical disabilities in the school system. They are looking at the intellectual learning. So here you have students that need physical therapies to be addressed. You can't just cut off one and put them into the school system because they are left. I mean there's numerous occasions that I've heard of. So parents are worried.

So other than not duplicating services, I guess I need to know, have you moved the years? That ECIP target was zero to 7 years of age. Have you reduced the age or changed those years that were first established for the program?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I'm being told no, that that has not been moved.

And again I would like to express, although we perhaps haven't expanded the ECIP as aggressively as we have child care and pre-K, we've only expanded the ECIP spaces by 16 per cent. And you're well aware in the past, being a minister, having this portfolio . . . I mean, you do prioritize. And we have definitely identified child care and pre-K as two priorities, but it isn't to the reduction of the ECIPs. We have still expanded ECIPs as well, although I did not expand the number of spaces in this particular budget.

Ms. Higgins: — Well I think many ECIPs also have wait-lists. And I mean, that's . . . I don't know whether you keep track of wait-lists or do kind of a phone-around through the various organizations to see what their wait-lists are. But it is a concern for families that they are being reduced and cut off from the ECIP supports and services as soon as they hit school age.

And I mean there's all kinds of comments that I've heard that you are moving the money from ECIPs into school divisions, but they're afraid that children aren't getting the services. I mean it just goes on and on. You know the concerns that are out there. And these parents have to be very dedicated to making sure that their children receive the supports they need. It's not an easy process for any parent or for any child.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — All I can say is the money has not moved and we have expanded the number of spaces.

Ms. Higgins: — Well I guess what I'm looking more for is a guarantee that ECIP supports will continue even as the child transitions into school, if they're needed. I mean that's what I'm

looking for is that these children just aren't moved from one program to another. You're five years old, off you go. You're three years old, you've been accepted into a pre-K. And your comments the other night even said that pre-kindergartens have the play and learn program but it's optional. So for a parent of someone with disabilities to go into an optional program that may not suit the needs of my child gives me a bit of pause for thought.

So I would truly hope that ECIP, even if you feel it's overlapping, that ECIP would be allowed to support that child and family to the age of seven. Those early supports are so important. And if we truly want these children to succeed, I think we need to just suck it up and let the overlap go, if there is perceived overlap. But cover the children to seven at least. I mean it's important. That's the concerns that I'm getting in my community and outside of my community.

Anyway, I know you've got time constraints. Thank you.

The Chair: — Mr. McCall.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, officials, a quick question on the status of the First Nations, Métis education branch. I know it's now in with the community branch as well. What changes have taken place in this year's budget with First Nations and Métis education as administered through the department? What has happened with the FTEs? What has happened with people in scope, out of scope? What has happened with the administrative capacity for First Nations and Métis education within the Ministry of Education?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you. I will get the deputy minister to answer that question.

Ms. Roadhouse: — The First Nations and Métis relations branch has been integrated primarily into the student achievement and supports branch. And there have been no reductions that, I believe in any of the staff numbers. And the mandate of integrating First Nations and Métis, all those priority policy issues are still very much at the forefront.

Mr. McCall: — So it's been integrated within the broader framework of the ministry. With that amount of mainstreaming, the goals previously set out for the First Nations, Métis education branch . . . Or how does that work?

Ms. Roadhouse: — Sorry. I didn't quite get the last part of what you said.

Mr. McCall: — Well time is dear of course, Madam Deputy Minister, so we're just trying to go as fast as we can. But in terms of . . . Does this amount to mainstreaming the goals that had previously been set out for the First Nations and Métis education branch in the Ministry of Education?

Ms. Roadhouse: — If you mean by mainstreaming, making this everybody's business, yes.

Mr. McCall: — So it wasn't everybody's business before?

Ms. Roadhouse: — You know, the reality is, in many cases, I

think we hope that it was everybody's business. But sometimes, when an item would come in or surface, there's a temptation to send it to the branch that's called First Nations and Métis relations rather than making it everybody's business. And so this is the . . . The integration of this is to make it more everybody's business.

Mr. McCall: — So in terms of the administrative capacity within the new configuration, have you moved people in scope, out of scope? How's that impacted the administrative capacity?

Ms. Roadhouse: — That has stayed the same as far as the in scope, out of scope. And certainly the work plan that's going forward right now is around all the new initiatives that we announced as part of the 2E [education and employment] dollars.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of making certain that . . . One of the reasons why the First Nations and Métis education branch emerged to begin with was to ensure that you had leadership within the department on an important set of issues and goals for the Ministry of Education. One of the things that can happen when you make it everybody's business is that it goes back to being nobody's business. So what safeguards is the ministry taking to ensure that that does not happen?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I'm going to take that question. We made it a priority as a government. And so not only is it everybody's business within the Ministry of Education, it is going to be the Minister of FNMR [First Nations and Métis Relations] and the Minister of Advanced Education and myself working together along with First Nations. So I hope to have a very good announcement for you soon on how we are moving forward with that.

We have already initiated some meetings with Chief Lonechild, and with an agreement we had hoped, we had hoped we would have the federal government more engaged. We have not succeeded in that to date. However both the First Nations and ourselves as a province, we are going to continue to pursue that, but in the meantime we want to move forward with First Nations. And it will not only be everybody's business in the Ministry of Education. We want it to be everybody's business in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. McCall: — Well we, as the opposition, will be watching very closely to see how that plays out, Madam Minister. I cede the floor now to my colleague from Nutana.

The Chair: — Ms. Atkinson.

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you. Minister, I want to talk about the Teachers' Superannuation Commission. I want to know, yes, I want to know why in the last . . . I guess, June 30th, 2010, there was such a huge number that was considered a contributions receivable from the GRF [General Revenue Fund] of close to \$58 million. This has grown massively in the last couple of years, and I want to know why.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I will get the officials to answer those questions.

Mr. Volk: — Okay. Doug Volk. Are you referring to the

annual report as of June 30th, the receivable?

[17:30]

Ms. Atkinson: — Yes.

Mr. Volk: — Okay.

Ms. Atkinson: — This has become a real problem. And I note in '08 it was 27.6 million; '09 June, 47 million; and last June, 57.752 million. Why?

Mr. Volk: — Well how the funding works for the teachers' superannuation plan is you have your monthly payroll, and then what offsets the monthly payroll is teachers who retire and their contributions plus interest to their credit. So it depends on who retires and at what time and what their balance is.

Our fiscal year is July to June; government fiscal year is April to March. So when you look at it as of April . . . or pardon me, as of June 30th, that's what is what we deem to be receivable at that time. When we ask for monies from the GRF, it's very dependent on who retires and at what point. So that determines the level. So we are very cautious at the beginning of the year not to draw too much because we don't want to go over. And there was a circumstance where we did go over, where we took too much. Then we had to give it back in.

So near the end of March, when we have a better idea of what our number is, is that's when we top it up. So we take, my words, baby steps towards the funding. Because if we put in there that . . . I'm going to use a simple example. We'll just say the annual payout is \$300 million. And we'll just say that we have 300 teachers who retire, and all their contributions plus interest add up to \$200 million. So we would need \$100 million from the General Revenue Fund.

Ms. Atkinson: — I understand how this works. I understand that there have been some fairly significant retirements from teachers, but it's starting to, I think it's starting to decrease. So there was, you know, it's like a curve. June 30th, 2006, the contributions receivable from the GRF were \$14.1 million; June 30th, 2007, 18.9 million; June 30th, 2008, 27.6 million; June 30th, 2009, 47.7 million; June 30th, 2010, 57.7, practically 57.8 million.

Now we inherited a tremendous pension problem in 1991, and it seems to me that while baby steps are being taken, the accounts receivable or the contributions receivable are going up each year. And so there needs to be some work done so that this gets fixed. It's grown usually. So that's my . . . I'll just let you crunch on that one. I just wanted to put that on the public record because there are people watching this and, even when I leave this place, I'm going to watch that one.

Okay, second thing: the minister earlier said that her government had 427 or \$428 million in capital. I think we established the other night, Minister — this is earlier in reference to some comments made by previous colleagues — that \$72 million was sent back to the GRF. So shouldn't you be saying that your government spent about 300 — and I'll be nice here — about \$380 million in capital? Not 380, 350 million.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you. The \$422 million was sort of . . . When the announcements are made, there's estimates of course of each and every project of what it will cost. The bulk of what was returned was the Scott Collegiate project. The Scott Collegiate project was to be a large, integrated facility, but other partners were supposed to come to the table. That didn't come to fruition although the design is going to still hopefully have that happen. And I know your colleague was at the announcement. We decided that it shouldn't wait for the other proponents to come to the table, that we were going to ahead with the scope . . . [inaudible] . . . so that it would be designed. So there's adjustments as appropriations go forward. So that was the bulk of what was returned, was the initial, what was allocated for Scott Collegiate.

Ms. Atkinson: — Minister, last time you submitted a document — which I thank you very much — to the Chair of the committee, and in it I had asked for a summary of capital transactions for projects up to November, which you kindly provided me. And I don't want to take up too much time of the committee, but you indicate all the projects and then you indicate that there was \$72.1 million returned to the GRF.

So if you sort of take the ministry's share and then you minus the amount that was returned, you have a number. And the number isn't the number that your government regularly says has been spent on capital. So I just think you have spent a lot on capital. I agree with that but I think it needs to, when you're telling the public how much your government has spent on capital, I just think it needs to be correct. And my colleague wants to ask questions, so I'll leave it at that. Thank you.

The Chair: — Mr. Broten.

Mr. Broten: — I know the buzzer is about to go, so I will ask a brief question. Would the minister be willing to table the ministry's records on the number of educational assistants in each school division, as it currently stands? We don't need to go through the entire list right now, but if a document is prepared or if one could be prepared where it could state, according to the ministry's understanding, how many educational assistants are currently working in each school division. Would that be possible?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I believe so. I could be corrected if it's not. So the stats per se are done end of December, so that's the stats we would have. I'm being told that we just keep provincial numbers, but we can make the calls to each division. But just so that you know that that's . . . so it's well enough into the school year that it should be fairly solid number.

Mr. Broten: — So you have, you said the December figures on hand? And that, well that's . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The provincial number.

Mr. Broten: — Yes.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I could give you the number from the fall, but the school divisions don't report to us till December.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So I suppose whatever the most recent numbers you have on file or on record, if that could be

provided, and if that could be provided in the near future since it's probably more or less ready, that'd be great. And I mean, also if you are willing to contact school divisions to see what the most recent figures are according to your understanding, and if that was a bit of a longer project other than right away, that would be fine too. But if you'd be willing to do that, that would be appreciated.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — We will endeavour to do that.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Broten.

Seeing no more questions, we'll move to vote 5 of Education, page 45 of the main Estimates book. Central management and services, subvote (ED01) in the amount of 13,654,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Pre-K to 12 education, subvote (ED03) in the amount of \$1,136,057,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Early learning and child care, subvote (ED08) in the amount of \$63,525,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Curriculum and e-learning, subvote (ED10) in the amount of 4,792,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Literacy, subvote (ED17) in the amount of \$2,458,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Provincial Library, subvote (ED15) in the amount of \$12,261,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Teachers' pensions and benefits, subvote (ED04) in the amount of \$28,716,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Amortization of capital assets. This is for informational purposes only. There's no vote needed in the amount of \$1 million.

Education vote 5, \$1,261,463,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolve that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2012, the following sums for Education in the amounts of \$1,261,463,000.

Mr. Hart. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[The committee adjourned at 17:47.]

The Chair: — Carried.

[17:45]

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — March
Education
Vote 5**

The Chair: — Vote 5, Education, page 3 of the supplementary book. Pre-K to 12, Education, subvote (ED03) in the amount of \$68,274,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Teachers' pensions and benefits (ED04) in the amount of 340,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Education, vote 5 in the amount of \$68,614,000. I'll now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2011, the following sums for Education in the amount of 68,614,000.

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I so move.

The Chair: — Mr. D'Autremont. Carried. Thank you committee members. Ms. Minister, any final comments?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes, I would to again thank the officials for all of their help, not only for the estimates but throughout the entire year in keeping our education system strong and moving forward. I would also like to thank all of the committee members for their questions and their interest in education.

The Chair: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Broten.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. I'd like to thank the minister for her responses and thank the officials as well for their input and work, and to the Legislative Assembly staff for all they do, and my colleagues who helped with questioning. Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Broten. On behalf of the committee, I'd like to also thank the minister and officials for appearing before the committee today and the staff of this building as well that makes this job so much easier for us all and the people at home for taking the time to take an interest and watch today's proceedings. I'll ask for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Hart. With that this committee stands adjourned till tomorrow morning at 11 o'clock.