



# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

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## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

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Batoche

Mr. David Forbes, Deputy Chair  
Saskatoon Centre

Mr. Mark Docherty  
Regina Coronation Park

Mr. Greg Lawrence  
Moose Jaw Wakamow

Mr. Paul Merriman  
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Ms. Laura Ross  
Regina Qu'Appelle Valley

Ms. Nadine Wilson  
Saskatchewan Rivers

[The committee met at 18:59.]

**The Chair:** — Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the Standing Committee on Human Services. The time now being 6:59, we will begin. And my name is Delbert Kirsch and I am the Chair of this committee. And we have Mr. Mark Docherty. We have Mr. Greg Lawrence, Mr. Paul Merriman, Ms. Nadine Wilson, and Mr. David Forbes is Deputy Chair.

**General Revenue Fund  
Education  
Vote 5**

**Subvote (ED01)**

**The Chair:** — This evening we'll be considering the estimates and supplementary estimates for Ministry of Education. We now begin our consideration of vote 5, Education, central management and services, subvote (ED01).

Minister Marchuk is here with his officials. Mr. Minister, please introduce your officials and make your opening comments. And I would ask all the people the first time when they come to the mike to say their name to help Hansard keep better record of it. Thank you very much. Mr. Marchuk.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And good evening, everyone, colleagues. I'm very pleased to be here with ministry officials to speak to the Ministry of Education's 2013-14 budget, and I'm looking forward to this discussion that we'll have tonight on education.

With me today to help answer questions that committee members may have are: to my immediate right, Cheryl Senecal, deputy minister; to her right, assistant deputy minister Donna Johnson; to my left, assistant deputy minister Greg Miller; and in behind me I'll ask staff to just kind of indicate by raising their hands. We have Lynn Allan, the executive director of the early years branch; Tim Caleval, executive director, student achievement and supports; Jennifer Colin, executive director, information management and support; Rosanne Glass, executive director, strategic policy; Val Lusk, acting executive director, education funding; Lori Mann, executive director, corporate services; Sheldon Ramstead, acting executive director, infrastructure. Is Doug here? Yes, Doug. Doug Volk, executive director, Teachers' Superannuation Commission; Brett Waytuck, executive director, Provincial Library and literacy; and Angela Chobanik, director, educational financial policy, education funding.

Mr. Chair, before we discuss the '13-14 budget, I'd like to take a minute to explain how education figures prominently in Saskatchewan, in the Saskatchewan plan for growth. In Saskatchewan our growth as a province is directly linked to increasing the level of academic performance, including improved graduation rates for all Saskatchewan students. This begins with the early years through high school completion. A growing economy requires a well-educated and highly skilled workforce. High school completion is one of the foundations for further education, training, and employment opportunities.

In the Saskatchewan plan for growth, the Government of Saskatchewan has committed to reducing the graduation disparity between First Nations and Métis students and their non-Aboriginal peers by 50 per cent by 2020; to leading the country in high school graduation rates by 2020; to ensuring by 2016 all school divisions will consistently and transparently measure, report progress, and support instructional practices to achieve desired outcomes.

We know that Saskatchewan's First Nations and Métis population is young and growing, which makes it essential to reduce the graduation rate difference to help them achieve their full potential. Achieving this goal will require the collective work of the government, First Nations and Métis organizations, students, teachers, parents, administrators, and school divisions. These are challenging goals for the province but they are the right goals to set for all Saskatchewan students. We need our young people to be full participants in the future of our province.

I also want to highlight the significant accomplishments we've made over the last few years, accomplishments that are having an impact and are improving the quality of life for all of Saskatchewan people. Our government is proud of its record in supporting pre-K to 12 [pre-kindergarten to grade 12] education.

The 2013-14 budget is about balanced growth. It's a budget focused on sound economic growth and shared prosperity. It's a budget that continues to make students a priority by investing in the pre-K to 12 education system. Our education, library and literacy, early year sectors all play an important role in helping Saskatchewan people to be successful citizens. As a result, overall funding for education has increased by 6.7 per cent from '12-13. The overall funding for school divisions is \$1.775 billion, an increase of 2.3 per cent which includes a \$40.6 million increase in operating funding in the 2013-14 year. This is in the context of the government fiscal year.

In terms of the school divisions' fiscal year, funding will increase by \$54 million or 3.1 per cent. Included in this support to school divisions this year is an increase of \$17 million for enrolment increases of 1,930 students in 2012 and forecasted enrolment increases of 2,654 students in 2013.

Investment in infrastructure has been a priority and continues to be and will continue to be. Since November 2007, the Government of Saskatchewan has committed more than \$600 million towards 43 major school capital projects and approximately 900 additional projects.

The 2013-14 Ministry of Education budget also includes a commitment of \$119.6 million in capital funding, an increase of \$7.2 million or 6.4 per cent to advance a number of school projects. Included in the capital funding this year is \$36.9 million for 10 projects under construction; \$31.9 million to continue construction on co-owned projects; \$28.2 million, an increase of 9.5 million for preventative maintenance in renewable capital asset management system and new relocatables; \$18.7 million, an increase of \$14.7 million for the construction of major capital projects in Hudson Bay, Leader, and Martensville.

These projects were approved in principle in 2012-13: \$1.9 million to begin planning on new projects in Langenburg and Gravelbourg; \$1 million to automate the major capital process; and \$1 million for an expansion of 15 new pre-kindergarten programs.

This budget also provides an investment in early learning and child care which includes \$63.4 million in funding, a \$589,000 increase for funding in 15 new pre-kindergarten programs in 2013-14.

Since 2007 our government has made a significant investment in pre-kindergarten, increasing the number of programs from 155 to 301, a 94 per cent increase. The pre-K expansion will serve approximately 240 more vulnerable three- and four-year-old children and their families. Across the province, approximately 4,816 three- and four-year-old children and their families will have access to a pre-kindergarten program.

As a government, we have also made significant investments in child care since 2007, including a 48 per cent increase in the total number of spaces. Also included is the development of 500 additional child care spaces. This brings the total number of new child care spaces allocated since 2007 to 4,435. The estimated total number of spaces, when all allocated spaces are operational, is 13,740 spaces.

We also remain committed to highly literate citizens with equal access to information. There is a \$500,000 increase for CommunityNet, part of which will provide 31 new high-speed Internet and network connections for libraries in rural and remote locations. \$100,000 will be transferred to the province's library systems to support them as they take on complete responsibility for the interlibrary loan. And this budget also includes \$100,000 to provide access to online talking books for people with perceptual disabilities.

Community-based organizations connected to the Ministry of Education offer valued programs and services for our citizens. A number of community-based organizations will receive a lift in funding based on 1 per cent of their salaries. This increase in funding to CBOs [community-based organization] is part of our ongoing commitment to support a variety of programs and services such as specialized care for our most fragile and vulnerable youth.

Continuing to invest in the early years is critical to improving student outcomes. There is \$5.9 million, an increase of 3.9 million in funding for the necessary infrastructure that will enable us to share the individual student level information with parents, students, and teachers in a more immediate way so we can actually use the information to help students succeed. Let me be clear that this \$5.9 million investment is an investment in our students.

I'd like to talk a little bit more about some of the tools that will be introduced through the student achievement initiative. We know that how ready students are to learn when they first start school has an incredible impact on how well they do throughout their school career. To that end, we will be using tools in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten. One of those tools is called the early years evaluation. This is a direct, one-on-one assessment of student development in several key areas. This is

already being used by school divisions across the province and has had some impressive results.

Something else that will be introduced for the early years is the Aboriginal holistic assessment of oral language. It's an interactive, play-based assessment of language, the first of its kind anywhere. It will also include information from parents, elders, and educators. The Aboriginal holistic numeracy assessment will also be used. This will be another interactive, play-based assessment of numeracy, another first of its kind. Again it will include information from parents, from elders, and from educators.

You know, they say that in grade 3 you stop learning to read and begin reading to learn. That's a big transition for our students and we need to do everything that we can to support them in that transition. For that reason, grades 1 to 3 will see diagnostic level reading data collection. They will also see data collection of number sense.

Beyond the early years, we want to be able to provide immediate feedback to teachers so that timely results can help inform classroom instruction. For that reason, we will be using online assessments of curriculum outcomes in the following areas. Grades 4 and 7 will see assessment of treaty understandings and language arts. We are the first province to have mandatory treaty education, so we will also be the first to assess treaty understanding. Grades 5 and 8 will be assessed in math and problem solving. In grades 6 and 9, science and technology assessments will be administered. And in grades 4 through 12, a perceptual student survey called Tell Them for Me will be administered.

It's all about student success, and student achievement includes the education, library and literacy, and the early years sectors.

There are too many students in this province still not completing high school. We know that only 72 per cent of our students overall graduate, and we need to do better. And only about 30 per cent of our First Nations and Métis students actually graduate. This is something we simply can't accept.

We have set goals. Our goal as a government is to ensure that Saskatchewan leads the country in graduation rates by 2020. And that's why this budget also includes \$3 million in funding dedicated to provide a response to recommendations from the joint task force. The joint task force has conducted research and extensive consultations across the province to provide practical recommendations for improving First Nations and Métis education and employment outcomes. The \$3 million committed in this year's budget is seed money. It's meant to help move forward some of the short-term recommendations that the joint task force have presented.

Our commitment extends well beyond the \$3 million, as illustrated by our commitment to fund on-reserve driver education. That money is outside of the \$3 million we budgeted.

We are also continuing our investment in initiatives under the First Nations and Métis education and employment strategy, including First Nations and Métis Education Achievement Fund of \$3.8 million; pre-kindergarten programs of \$4.2 million, and

pre-kindergarten capital of \$1 million, summer literacy camps at \$500,000, and the continuation of the Aboriginal individual achievement accounts grants of a half a million dollars.

These are the highlights that I wanted to point out in this year's budget. And this concludes my opening remarks, and we look forward to the discussion on education and the critical role that it plays in our growing province. And I thank you for that time, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And I believe Mr. Forbes has some questions so, Mr. Forbes, you have the floor.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, and I appreciate and I want to thank the officials and the minister for being available tonight. Now I may be all over the map tonight, so in that sense if I seem to appear to have closed off one area of questioning, I may come back to it. So if officials could stay with us through to the end, that would be appreciated because I know some . . . It's a long night, but I do appreciate the expertise that the officials do bring to the table.

I want to just start by just reviewing the budget here and the estimates here, and then we'll get more into some of the specifics as we go further. I see that there is 294 FTEs [full-time equivalents] in the ministry. What do those 294 people do?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Thank you, Mr. Forbes.

[19:15]

**Ms. Senecal:** — Two positions that are referenced from last year, '12-13, 296 going down to 294, is a reflection of the centralization of website management in government. We had two positions within the ministry that have been identified as part of that centralization exercise.

**Mr. Forbes:** — What do 294 people do?

**Ms. Senecal:** — What do 294 people do? Okay.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Thanks, Mr. Forbes for the question. As you can appreciate, the delivery of educational programming in our province is a significant and monumental task. And so within the ministry there are the various departments that cover that spectrum, and so there are a curriculum and instruction component. There is a facilities component. There is a central services component. And so the work is generally spread out.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Can you tell me how many people work in the curriculum area? How many consultants who have, how many people work in the facilities area, you know, branch . . . I don't need to know what each one does, but within the group or how you organize?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Mr. Forbes, do you want to be specific with the question in terms of which particular areas?

**Mr. Forbes:** — Sure. Sure. Well we can go through this. And you know, how many people work in central management and services?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — In central . . .

**Mr. Forbes:** — Is there more than one branch in that area?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — All right. So for example if we take a look at the executive management team, there are 12.5 FTEs.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And then in the . . .

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — In central services, Mr. Forbes, there are 56.5 FTEs.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. Then within the . . .

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Within the K to 12 education sector there are 135 full-time FTEs. And those can be broken down further, Mr. Forbes, if you'd like.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Fair enough. Yes. The early years?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — In the early years, there are 50.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And in literacy?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Well that's the . . . Will you give me a minute, Mr. Forbes?

**Mr. Forbes:** — Sure.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Can we get that for you?

**Mr. Forbes:** — Yes. Can you tell me how many people work in the Provincial Library area?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — 25 people in the literacy area, Mr. Forbes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — 25?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — The next question was . . .

**Mr. Forbes:** — Into the teachers' pensions and benefits.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — The teachers' pensions and benefits, there are 12.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. And so then my next question would be to go back and really think now . . . You're at 294. And you've lost two and it's because of some IT [information technology] stuff. But you've gone through the lean process . . . or not the lean, the initiative of reducing the workforce by 15 per cent. So that would be about, I assume you've lost about 45 positions here. Where were those . . . First, is that right? Or how many positions have been lost over the past four years, and where were they lost?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Just to be clear, you want to know how many positions have been taken away in the last four years?

**Mr. Forbes:** — That's right.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — And from where?

**Mr. Forbes:** — Right.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Thank you, Mr. Forbes. The overall FTE target for the Ministry of Education was 54.

So not counting this year's two, in 2011-12 to 2012-13 there were 15.4 FTEs from the workforce adjustment. Seven of those were identified through utilization management and attrition as part of the ministry's workforce adjustment strategy. Five were identified through the reorganization as part of the ministry's workforce adjustment strategy. 2.0 were reduced due to the interlibrary loans transfer, identified as part of the workforce adjustment strategy. One was transferred to Municipal Affairs related to education property tax functions. Point four was reduced due to efficiency from accounts payable centralization, and point four was restated in the '13-14 budget due to getting transferred to the Ministry of Finance for accounts payable centralization.

And then from 2010-11 to '11-12 includes another 22 FTEs from workforce. Eighteen reduced, identified through FTE utilization management and attrition as part of the ministry's workforce adjustment strategy. Three FTEs were a wind-down of the integration advisory team, identified as part of the workforce adjustment. One full-time FTE transferred to a related government agency. Point six FTE restated in '12-13 budget due to getting transferred to the Ministry of Finance. Two FTEs restated in '12-13 budget due to mailroom staff transfer. And then of course the two for this year, for a total of 53.7.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So can you explain now, I'm not familiar with that utilized management . . . There was a term you were using that had the word utilized or utilization.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — You want an explanation of utilization management. Mr. Forbes, the utilization management term can also be defined as a vacancy management term.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. Now do you have a sense of where many of these vacancies were? At the end of four years, were they in Central Management Services or were they in the K-12, early years, or any particular spot?

I guess the question . . . If I asked you to go back four years back and ask you how many people work in central management services, how many people worked in K-12 education, early years, and so on, would there be one of those areas that would have been reduced more than the others?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — The answer to the question is that there was no one particular area, Mr. Forbes, that we would, that we could identify. There have been restructuring initiatives within the ministry, and as positions would become vacant, we would look carefully at where the need was within the ministry. For example, if a vacancy became evident in curriculum and instruction, we would want to make sure that that vacancy was filled. Obviously there are some critical areas that we need to maintain a full complement of, and so to try to target a particular area or pinpoint is very difficult to do because there was not one area that showed any remarked vacancies.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So how much restructuring has gone on within the ministry?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — I think no. I think that in terms of actual restructuring, that's an ongoing process.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So I'm not sure if I'm following you. Restructuring, I usually think, are very significant changes. In fact there may be changes in the title of even the ministry or within the branch — might be called a different thing. Because I am new to this area as a critic, I haven't . . . I don't know what the titles were, say four or five years ago but I assume the Provincial Library has always been the Provincial Library. Has it gone through some significant restructuring?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Mr. Forbes, I'll let the deputy minister respond to that. I too would agree that the restructuring indicates one kind of process and the deputy can kind of expand on that.

**Ms. Senecal:** — Thank you. Certainly in the past few years, there has been and more. Significantly in the past two years, there has been some restructuring of the ministry to include a number of areas that perhaps were separate stand-alone entities before. For example we had a French education branch which now has been integrated throughout the ministry. So we have French language expertise as it relates to curriculum, assessment, and instruction. We also have French language expertise as it relates to strategic policy.

And we are looking at other ways in which we can ensure that we have the right complement of analysis in our ed funding area, as well as infrastructure, as well as our stakeholder relations branch to ensure that we're able to more effectively respond to the needs of the CEF [Conseil des écoles francophones] and the minority language in our province. So there is one example that previously it would have existed as a separate entity. Now we've taken that previously separate entity and made sure that that work is being integrated throughout the organization.

[19:30]

As well, as I think I mentioned in just my previous statement, we have created a stakeholder relations branch. That is new, and that is something that we see as being particularly significant for our sector because of the number of stakeholders that we work with and the relationships that we have with not only our key partners that we outline as being the Saskatchewan association of school divisions; the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association]; SASBO [Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials], which is the association of business officials; of course the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation; as well as the other sectors that we work with, including the early years as well as First Nations, Métis education and some of our critical partners in that field which includes the FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations]; and as well of course the stakeholders who we work with out of the Provincial Library and the office of literacy.

So we know that we have a broad range of stakeholders that we have to connect with and engage with in a meaningful way. We felt that as a ministry it was important that we have an entity within our ministry that is able to dedicate its time and attention to making sure that we are communicating in a clear and open way, that we have opportunities for engagement, and that those

opportunities for engagement are being done in a way that ensures the issues that are relevant to each of those stakeholders are being brought forward to the ministry, as well as to the minister's office, in a timely and effective way. So that's one particular area that we've added.

We have moved as well to have an integrated branch that includes the intersection of those who work in the curriculum area as well as assessment and as well as instruction. And as you can appreciate as an educator, I'm sure that you see the connection between curriculum, instruction, and assessment. And we wanted to bring those three entities together within one umbrella so that they could work more closely together and emulate that seamless kind of interplay of those three streams that we know as being the educational experience.

And I'm just going to ask one of my ADMs [assistant deputy minister], Greg Miller, to comment on that because Greg is responsible for SAS [student achievement and supports]. And he might be able to provide some insights as to the rationale around how we came to bringing those three streams together, and you might find that helpful.

**Mr. Miller:** — Thank you. Greg Miller, assistant deputy minister. The branch that has curriculum and assessment and instruction in it represents an effort to bring those three faculties together to provide an integrated workspace so that they could work together to develop and to ensure that the perspectives of those three lenses are brought together in the day-to-day work.

As well in that area, because there's language support for the work in both French and English, we're leveraging the capacity of our French-speaking employees as we develop all the work to ensure that, as the work proceeds, there is that integration across the piece.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So I'm interested in the stakeholders branch. How many FTEs and what's the cost of this?

**Ms. Senecal:** — Currently there are three FTEs associated with that. The relative cost of that, we'll look that up for you, but it was a realignment of resources that came from other areas so there was no new funding for that. And we will double-check that amount in the budget for you.

At this point we are in the process of coming to a definitive number on the amount, on the exact number of resources or amount of resources that will be realigned. In a rough estimate, considering that there are three FTEs, we would be looking around \$300,000.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. And where are they located in these . . . Are they in the . . .

**Ms. Senecal:** — They would be part of central services, which also includes HR [human resources], communications, strat policy, corporate services, and infrastructure.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So is there any other . . . You talked about the French program. Was there any other restructuring that you've done in the last . . .

**Ms. Senecal:** — Yes. We also included, along with the separate

entity that I spoke to in terms of French education, there was also previously a First Nation-Métis education branch. And that branch was also looked at in a similar way to how we viewed the French education branch, in terms of wanting the ministry to demonstrate that First Nation-Métis education is a responsibility of the entire ministry. It isn't something that just exists within one particular entity.

And I think, as you can appreciate, you know, certainly at one point in time I believe that there was good thinking that went into the structure that would have seen some specific staff identified with First Nation-Métis education and put in a separate entity. We felt that it was extremely important that there was more synergy being brought to those positions. And so now we have those positions embedded within student achievement and supports, which is in the curriculum assessment and instructional area. We also have resources embedded that focus on First Nation-Métis education within strategic policy, where we also see there being some important work to do, particularly as it relates to analysis and some of our inter-ministry work that would involve the joint task force, for example.

We also have, we made, an additional change that we made in terms of structure was in regards to the information management services area, which includes information management, our IT and network services for the sector; data analysis, so looking at the ability to use data from school divisions to understand what's going on in school divisions; and as well to also include a focus on teacher and student services, which would include teacher certification as well as student transcripts. So that particular area brought together some previous separate entities and brought them together under one umbrella.

**Mr. Forbes:** — How many people were working in the First Nations and Métis branch prior to it being disbanded?

**Ms. Senecal:** — In '10-11 there were 10 FTEs in that entity.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Were they fully utilized?

**Ms. Senecal:** — I think that it was certainly positions that we continued to have effort put into ensuring that they were fully staffed. We certainly have experienced turnover in those positions. And we understand the significance of having permanent employees, and we continue to work diligently to make sure that we have our First Nations positions filled.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So my question was, at the time when that branch was still in existence, there were 10 FTEs. And you're saying generally they were 10 people there to work.

**Ms. Senecal:** — Correct.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And are those 10 people that would have . . . Did they get lost in the vacancy management or are they within the ministry still?

**Ms. Senecal:** — Right. Those positions were not part of vacancy management. Those positions were realigned throughout the organization. We've been very conscious, and certainly, you know, perhaps there will be some other

opportunity to talk about our First Nations-Métis education direction and the significance of that file. But to the ministry, those positions are extremely important to us. And we wanted to ensure that those resources, as I said, were working within the broader organization to ensure that there was greater synergy coming from the work that they were doing. So we were very mindful of ensuring that we were not targeting those positions as part of workforce adjustment.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — [Inaudible] . . . if I may just add, I think it's important that with the goal of incorporating First Nations ways of knowing and culture and language into all areas of the curriculum, I think it's important that colleagues work side by side in the implementation of that overall philosophy. And so my experience with that is that it makes a significant contribution to the non-First Nation educator in development to work side by side with First Nations leaders to incorporate those ways of knowing into every aspect of the curriculum.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And I would ask this . . . And I understand that there has been a reference made, we're both former teachers and administrators and we know this. But we know that one of the dilemmas we have when we're asked to integrate things — and I can think of the perfect example of an art project and a math project — the math overrides the art.

We have to ensure that there is an accountability or some sort of transparency around the fact that the needs of the First Nations and Métis are being met, the needs of the French language, the French culture are being met, that they're not being lost or being blended too much.

And while your point is very well taken, that all of us can benefit from the learnings of, you know, particularly First Nations and Métis and French because of the important roles they play in our culture, that we have to make sure that the reason those offices were put in place in the first place was because serious neglect had happened over generations and the fact that . . .

And that would be my question. How do you, through this integration process, be able to pull back and ensure that the First Nations and Métis students are getting what they need? Understanding the benefits of the integration, but the fact is you cannot lose sight of what the original intent was, was to meet the needs of a specific vulnerable group.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — My deputy can add, but essentially my experience is that we have come a long way. We have grown exponentially in terms of our delivery of First Nations and Métis content across the curriculum, and it's because of initiatives just like this where First Nations understand as well the term "walking in two worlds" and so do non-First Nations. And so I think we've come a long way in terms of that initiative.

There are many examples, Mr. Forbes, of integrating First Nations ways of knowing into the math curriculum, the storytelling, the problem solving, etc. There are just many examples where we have learned from First Nations ways of

knowing. And it's through the work of the people working side by side with non-First Nations in a curriculum and instruction area that we're able to develop that kind of strategy and that kind of knowledge and expertise.

We have a long way to go, obviously, and I think that this is the more inclusive way of moving that forward.

[19:45]

**Ms. Senecal:** — I was going to perhaps pass the baton to Greg who I think has some things that he would like to raise because we have really made some significant inroads this year to working more closely with certainly our schools in northern Saskatchewan and our divisions there.

And we've really made a conscious effort and we are certainly going to be going forward into the coming year using a different model of supporting our school divisions in the North because we do recognize the various challenges that they face. And we are really trying to leverage the knowledge and experience and expertise that perhaps other school divisions will be able to support them in doing their work.

And some of that work is, as I said, leveraging what other schools divisions are doing but some of that is about the presence of the ministry and recognizing that we need to be much more visible in the North and we need to be visible in school divisions, working with administrators and teachers in a way that will support them in the classroom. And I think that that really is, you know, somewhat of a different approach in terms of recognizing that this is the work of the ministry as a whole and I think that that's what Greg will speak to.

**Mr. Miller:** — Thank you. In terms of specific monitoring, government has outlined, really starting with the plan for growth, specific targets for the achievement of First Nations and Métis students. We also in the ministry work on a continuous improvement and accountability framework. A great deal of that work is around the understanding success and barriers for Aboriginal students.

In terms of the work of folks within the ministry, we have many examples of integrated work across the branches, student achievement and supports, information management, strategic policy branches working together, and the support of the Aboriginal holistic assessment development. That is an example of the ministry partnering with school divisions and communities to develop instruments that are acknowledging the holistic world view of Aboriginal people, and working from that perspective to come up with a system of measurement that's provided back to the students, to parents, to elders in the community in that holistic way to build success early on for students.

As the deputy indicated earlier, part of this integration has really been to ensure that across the ministry there's a balanced focus between specific strategies at the higher level and then opportunities for our folks in the ministry to work with schools, school divisions, and partners on projects that are targeted in this area.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. So then are you saying that that was a



problem before — it wasn't holistic — that you were working in stovepipes and people within the ministry weren't understanding the First Nations, the needs of the First Nations and Métis folks? So then you disbanded the office and that then dissipated through and was a better understanding — you're getting these kind of initiatives happening and the success rate is increasing?

**Mr. Miller:** — Certainly the challenge of achievement for Aboriginal students is long-standing, as you identified earlier, and this is an attempt not to address a specific problem rather than to look at new ways to work together, innovative ways for the ministry to work with its partners to take on the challenges and to build on the success of the system. And certainly working together in collaborative ways would be consistent with that approach.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I'm curious if you could speak more about the northern initiative and the visibility aspect of it. Like is the ministry going to be more visible in schools? Is that what I'm hearing?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Can I just . . . Going back to what Deputy Minister Miller was saying on the previous question, Mr. Forbes, for 10 years I worked alongside a First Nation woman in Fort Qu'Appelle — a First Nation woman from Peepeekisis. The transfer of knowledge that I was able to get from her in listening to her stories and getting to know her family and the inner workings of life on-reserve . . . And I obviously grew immensely in that understanding. And I propose that that same transfer takes place in the workplace when you're working alongside your colleagues, no matter what culture. That process of osmosis takes place and you learn and you become better informed.

And I think that was the intent of that shift. I think it was a matter of growth, a factor of growth in terms of the whole understanding. We have come a long way in that understanding. We have a ways to go obviously, but the more we can sit beside each other and students can sit beside each other in that environment, I think we make considerable more headway than working in isolation. That transfer is automatic, it's obvious, and it takes place regularly so that you're able to share that knowledge. And I know that you understand that.

**Ms. Senecal:** — In response to your previous question, I just wanted to clarify that what I was referring to is the fact that, as part of this year's First Nations Achievement Fund and of course, the school divisions' identification of a plan around how they intend to address First Nation and Métis achievement within their school division, of course, Northern Lights has a very high percentage of First Nations students. And it became clear to us that in terms of being able to articulate a clear plan and a clear sense of direction as to how this might be approached, we realized that there was certainly a need for the ministry to be visible working and working with them.

And so what we have done in the past year is that Tim and a number of his staff have worked closely with them to be able to develop a more succinct understanding of what their plan is and what it might contain, and how they might approach the work. And what became clear to us is that that was very positive for them to have that level of support. And we recognize that we

need to ensure that there is that continued level of support when we look at particularly our northern school divisions.

So that was a lesson for us when we were able to realize and understand the influence and the positive impact that our presence made in terms of supporting the good work that school divisions are attempting to undertake, and knowing that they have certainly a huge job. And part of our job is to support them. And so we made the conscious decision, and we will continue to do that, in terms of being more visible in terms of working with them.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Through that contact and being there, what were some of the supports that they identified and that you identified that you could be more supportive in? Can you name some specific areas?

**Mr. Miller:** — Thank you. Specific examples in the work with the school division in the North were around support specifically targeted at literacy development and support. Career education was an area of interest to them. Certainly on-boarding staff, they have concerns around the number of staff and the on-boarding process. And in other ways, just supporting initiatives that they see as having impact on student achievement.

**Mr. Forbes:** — What is on-boarding?

**Mr. Miller:** — Oh sorry. That's the hiring, hiring teachers.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Hiring teachers. Okay. Thank you. And the other, I have to say that we were just up at the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation] spring council and I was talking to the Northern Area Teachers' Association. One of the things that they identified was English as an additional language. Many of the students in the northern school divisions, English is not their first language and this is a concern for them, because they feel that this is a, this is becoming more and more an important area of support, particularly in the South, but actually they were saying, don't forget about the North. EAL [English as an additional language] is a very important area and so I don't know if you've talked to them or what your thoughts around that.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Yes I have. Actually I spent a very good, a very good day up in Ile-a-la-Crosse and we had discussions around that exact topic. And I would concur that obviously when English is not your first language, the whole language, the whole notion of that support comes into play and certainly we will continue to work with them to address that.

Obviously the first languages of the North are very important, very dear. And as you know, one of the recommendations out of the task force is to bring some formal recognition to that process and we're committed to engaging with leaders to begin a process to discuss that. Quite frankly, that's very exciting, I think. It's an area that I believe that we can make some significant inroads to. That's notwithstanding the importance of recognizing English as a . . . English second language supports in the classroom.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Was there more to add to this?

**Mr. Miller:** — I would add in terms of EAL support, the ministry provides in this budget \$600,000 for language assessment for students to all school divisions, including the North. As well, support is provided through EAL webinars where teachers from across the province and resources from across the province can access webinar and conference presentation.

In terms of FTEs, the ministry is intending to increase staffing by 1.0 FTE in the 2013-14 school years to ensure support for EAL. And those are just some of the direct supports that have been put in place.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. Getting back to the Estimates here, on page 56 under educational agencies under K to 12 education, it looks like the educational agencies have been reduced by \$200,000. Can you tell me a little bit more about what are educational agencies and what do they do and why the reduction.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — I'll defer to the deputy.

[20:00]

**Ms. Johnson:** — Donna Johnson, ADM [assistant deputy minister]. So you were asking the reason for the decrease in funding on the educational agencies. And the decrease is related to the planned ending of the distance education adult subsidy. So there was a subsidy program that the ministry exited from on a two-year notice, essentially. So '13-14 is the year in which that is complete.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So what are educational agencies?

**Ms. Johnson:** — Well educational agencies are including the Council of Ministers of Education Canada, the Canadian Education Association, the heritage language grants. So those are examples of the recipients that are receiving funding, that are receiving the \$775,000 that's in the estimates this year.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So it's like memberships or different partnerships, that type of thing? So who, when this subsidy ended for distance education, who was receiving the subsidies?

**Ms. Johnson:** — So the distance education adult subsidy, who was receiving those subsidies?

**Mr. Forbes:** — Yes.

**Ms. Johnson:** — The recipients there would have been the school divisions, and the school divisions would have been providing the distance education programming to the students who were taking courses, essentially distance courses, through those school divisions.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Now why was that ended? You gave two years notice. What would be the reason for the end of that?

**Ms. Senecal:** — So this is a specific program that is targeted for 18- to 22-year-olds. And in the course of various conversations that would have started with Advanced Education at the time — now it would be Ministry of the Economy that's responsible for this area — it was determined that those resources were really

kind of doubling up with programs and services that were already available through Advanced Ed originally when we started this conversation, and now part of the Economy. And these resources flowed to . . . I mean, they came out of our allocation. They would flow to a school division, and in turn they would flow to a regional college. So what we've done by this is to really clean up this convoluted nature of money flowing indirectly through a school division to a service provider that would be working with some of these 18 to . . . or with these particular cohort, 18 to 22, which is typically done through the regional college system.

So it was really identifying where those individuals could access the resources most expediently as opposed to having the somewhat convoluted process that flowed through school divisions and then to the ultimate service provider, which is regional colleges in this instance.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Now would it be GED [general equivalency diploma] that . . . It would be a high school programming that was going through or through distance ed? What kind of programming was it that was being provided?

**Ms. Senecal:** — Adult basic education. It would not be GED.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. But it was still getting a high school diploma.

**Ms. Senecal:** — It was working towards a high school credential . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, for an adult 12.

**Mr. Forbes:** — An adult 12. And so I guess my concern, especially if the mandate then and the thing that you're working towards is getting more people to get their grade 12, this isn't something . . . an unintended consequence. Or they're still able to get that program? That program is still available? And maybe even easier because you've taken some of the red tape away. Is that what I'm hearing?

**Ms. Senecal:** — That was certainly the findings of the research that we did or the review that we did. And as I said, I know that this was certainly an ongoing conversation with Advanced Education at the time, now the Economy, to ensure that what we were doing made sense, helped to expedite the process for individuals, but that being clear about the fact that, you know, certainly there is the expectation that the regional college system is part of Advanced Ed. And certainly the Economy, and some of the programs and services that it provides, is the entity that is mandated with supporting adult learners and supporting them to achieve the appropriate credentials. So this was certainly a long, involved conversation with our counterparts to ensure that there would not be people falling through the cracks.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And so you feel that that's . . . How many students were involved in this 200,000 that you were providing services for?

**Ms. Senecal:** — It was 142.

**Mr. Forbes:** — 142. And you probably know where they are in the province?

**Ms. Senecal:** — Now to correct that, it was affecting 142

student courses. So that doesn't necessarily equate on a 1 to 1 ratio with students because a student may be taking more than one course.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Absolutely.

**Ms. Senecal:** — So I would suspect that it would be less than that. But that's only based on the information that we have here tonight.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Sure. Yes, okay. Now the other question I have, so are you involved in any lawsuits? Is the ministry being sued by anyone at all?

**Ms. Senecal:** — We have the list of litigation with us and my ADM will provide that detail.

**Ms. Johnson:** — So we have a couple of files here that are being managed by our Crown counsel at the Ministry of Justice. So there is a case with York School Division and the Theodore Roman Catholic School Division with the government. There is a class action suit related to alleged abuse at the Ile-a-la-Crosse School going back as far as 1937. There's another suit on the list here with the provincial school for the deaf and a lawsuit that's relatively recent with the Conseil des écoles fransaskoises. And the last on the list is the Timber Bay lawsuit.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Could you just give me an approximate date of when the lawsuit was initiated, if you have that information, and just a really brief description of what . . . You did in a couple, but in some you didn't say what the nature of the lawsuit was.

**Ms. Johnson:** — Well I don't have the date that they were all initiated, that each of them were initiated, so I'd have to come back with that information.

**Mr. Forbes:** — [Inaudible] . . . if it's not available, just say unavailable, and then we would know that.

**Ms. Johnson:** — So in the first one with the York School Division and Theodore Catholic versus the government, that claim was related to a claim that the ministry should not pay grants to the separate school division for non-faith students attending a faith-based school. And I don't have the date for that claim but it was about 2010.

And the class action suit, I've mentioned what that was with regards to. I don't have the date that one was initially filed.

The lawsuit including the provincial school for the deaf, again I don't have the date that was initiated, but that was another class action lawsuit initiated regarding alleged abuse of students at the school.

And the Conseil lawsuit was initially filed on April 27, 2011, and it is a case in which the Conseil is asking the courts to consider whether or not they have been appropriately funded.

And the Timber Bay lawsuit is another class action lawsuit respecting alleged abuse.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you. Is the ministry . . . How much do

you spend on outside consultants generally in your budget, and what would be the nature of their work?

[20:15]

**Ms. Johnson:** — We'll have to get back to you with an answer to that. I mean the ministry does engage consultants from time to time and over the course of the years, but the exact amount in any particular year, I don't have that information with me tonight.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well do you have any IT contracts, major IT contracts that have been let?

**Ms. Johnson:** — Well I think again it would probably be best for us to get clarification to you either following the meeting or at the next time that we meet. But again, just to give a general answer for now, the ministry has certainly engaged consultants in the IT area. When we do enter into those arrangements, we do so through ITO [Information Technology Office], and the consultants that then provide us with service in some cases are employees of the ITO and in some cases they're contracted from outside of the ITO's staff complement. But yes I mean the ministry certainly has acquired consulting services through ITO for IT-related projects.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Do you have a threshold or benchmark — or threshold would be probably a better word — in terms of when you tender contracts and when you just award them on a sole-source basis?

**Ms. Johnson:** — Well we follow *The Purchasing Act* requirements in that regard, and certainly the Agreement on Internal Trade and the New West Partnership Agreement set thresholds. And so we are in compliance with those thresholds and in the acquisition of those services we take ITO's advice with respect to whether or not we would hire a consultant from one of their standing orders, for instance, or whether we would go to a tender and a full RFP [request for proposal].

**Mr. Forbes:** — Now today there was an article in *The StarPhoenix* and the *Leader-Post* about the provincial test development. The rollout begins and it talks about that there will be . . . And the minister alluded to the \$5.9 million that will begin the standardized testing process. Under which category here does that fall under? K to 12 education? And what line would that 5.9 million fall under?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — It would be K to 12 education, (ED03), the first line, achievement and operational support.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So looking at that, if my math is right, that you've allocated 5.9 and maybe some of that was already in there or some of it's new money, but it would almost look like if you took 5.9 away from 29.7, that is 23.8. Is that right? I'm doing that in my head. So it almost looks like there has been a reduction in other areas of achievement and operational support.

**Ms. Johnson:** — So in this case when you . . . If you don't mind, I'm going to explain it in this fashion. When you look at the achievement and operational support budget, we have 29.7 million this year versus the 25.1 million last year. So a \$4.6 million increase. And 4.3 million of that relates to the renewed

approach to student achievement.

What we had in the previous year was about a \$2 million budget, \$1.9 million budget for student achievement. And then that was increased to the 5.9. But the 1.9 base was not only in the \$25.1 million figure here. It was in other areas within the ministry.

So in the current year, the 5.9 is fully within the \$29.7 million amount . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I am corrected. The 5.9 is including 400,000 for communications. So the amount in 29.7 is actually about 5.4.

**Mr. Forbes:** — 5.4. But it doesn't look like it's all new money. Is it?

**Ms. Johnson:** — No, only 3.9 was new. That's all.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Only 3.9 million was new. And so the other 1.5 was taken from somewhere else.

**Ms. Johnson:** — It was in the ministry's budget in the previous fiscal year, and so it was continued in the current fiscal year. So there was \$1.9 million in the '12-13 budget that was directed towards student achievement work.

**Mr. Forbes:** — What did that do last year?

**Ms. Johnson:** — What did it do last year?

**Mr. Forbes:** — Yes.

**Mr. Miller:** — So of the dollars expended last year, approximately half were spent on the old assessment for learning program and half were directed toward the initiation of the new program.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So about \$800,000. No, that would be 950, hey? \$950,000 was spent last year on this new initiative that you've . . . How did you spend \$950,000?

**Mr. Miller:** — That would be the beginning of the development that would include . . . Just let me check.

Thank you. So those costs last year would have included the business case development of the project, as well as costs associated with contracting teachers to begin development of the assessments. And the other component would be the EYE, early years evaluation software.

[20:30]

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. How much did the EYE software cost?

**Mr. Miller:** — It was 291.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thousand?

**Mr. Miller:** — Yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And where's it from?

**Mr. Miller:** — The EYE is an earlier instrument developed out

of New Brunswick.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And how much did the . . . [inaudible] . . . business case cost?

**Mr. Miller:** — Just let me check that.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Is it finished? The business case.

**Mr. Miller:** — The business case is ongoing. The initial development's finished. Last year it was 200,000.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Two hundred thousand. And who did it?

**Mr. Miller:** — The business case was developed internally by the ministry, along with consulting support.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And so can you tell me how much was the consultant paid?

**Mr. Miller:** — So the 200,000 includes the in-kind from the ministry, and 200,000 for the consultant.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Who was the consultant?

**Mr. Miller:** — This would be Sierra Systems.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Sierra Systems? So what is the business case? This is kind of, you know . . . Maybe the ministry does a lot of business cases, but I've not heard of a business case for curriculum development. So what does that business case . . . Can you tell me more the business case?

**Mr. Miller:** — The ministry works with ITO around the development of significant initiatives, and the ITO sets out a number of guidelines for the development of business cases. And that would be the scope of the project, the intended outcomes and those types of things.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Where's Sierra Systems from?

**Mr. Miller:** — They're a Canadian company with a branch office here in Saskatchewan, Saskatoon.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And their head office would be in . . . ?

**Mr. Miller:** — I believe their head office is in Calgary, but we'll have to check that.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And was this tendered or was there an RFP for this, or how did this process roll out?

**Mr. Miller:** — So this process would have used the ITO business case development framework and procurement.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. And so was . . . This is the software element of it? Tell me more about the business case. Is it designing the assessment part of it? Or what is the business case?

**Mr. Miller:** — The business case supports the whole student achievement initiative. And the primary section of the overall student achievement initiative that this would deal with would

be around the IT procurement and the scope of the IT infrastructure.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Now do you have a sense of what this project is going to cost as a total project? This is rolled out over three years. At the end of 2016 it should be totally up and running, I understand? That's the goal?

**Mr. Miller:** — That's the goal.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And I assume that's June of 2016, is it?

**Mr. Miller:** — I'll just have to check whether it's June or the school year. Yes, I believe it's going to be the school year.

**Mr. Forbes:** — What would that be? I usually think the end of the school year is June.

**Mr. Miller:** — Yes. So that would be . . . End of school year would be June of 2016.

**Mr. Forbes:** — All right. So you've got three years to do this. What is the total cost of the project then?

**Mr. Miller:** — The projected costs over the term of the project is anticipated to be \$12 million. However the process is such that there will be checks and balances along the way. And that was an anticipated cost that is also, in terms of the scope of the project, not just related to the development of assessments. It's around the supports for learning. It's more than just the IT component.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And to date, there was 5.4 that is in the budget, plus well 950,000 from last year. So you're about halfway through that. Okay. Well I have several questions more on this, but I know my colleague has some questions as well. So I'm going to let her ask a few, and then I'll pull it back from that, if that's okay.

**The Chair:** — I recognize Ms. Sproule. You have the floor.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And good evening, Mr. Minister, and your officials. This is still in relation to standardized tests, but I'm referring to the article from *The StarPhoenix* this morning. And I have some questions coming out of that. First of all, were other provinces with experience in standardized test creation consulted prior to coming up with a plan?

**Mr. Miller:** — So as part of the developmental work, the ministry officials used research and best practices, which include jurisdictional scans of other provinces' practices around large-scale assessments.

**Ms. Sproule:** — So what provinces would you have looked at as part of that?

**Mr. Miller:** — Those would include but not be limited to Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you. The pilot tests that you're going to be rolling out, I understand in the article you're referring to it as field testing them. How will they be tested to ensure fairness?

**Mr. Miller:** — The intention of field testing is to ensure fairness, reliability, and validity. That process involves having the folks, the teachers that developed the instruments along with ministry staff, working with schools and school divisions to ensure that what's being assessed, what's being questioned is actually how the children are responding. That process is an iterative process. So you go out and you ask some questions. You test then the instrument statistically to make sure that the reliability is there.

**Ms. Sproule:** — How do you factor in cultural differences or I'm thinking community size differences and things like that when you're doing that iterative process?

**Mr. Miller:** — So that's addressed by ensuring that the field tests occur in a variety of contexts across the province, so right from large urban schools to small schools to schools in the North that are diverse both in terms of their location in the province and the students that are in those schools.

**Ms. Sproule:** — This is bringing back some memories of when I was in the College of Education back in the '80s, and some of the classes we took on developing proper testing questions and things like that and the difficulty of doing that in an objective way as possible. When you have such a diversity and variety, how do you ensure that they're fair for everyone? Like would you have the same tests across the board? I mean they're standardized, right? So how do you account for diversity and variety when you come up with that final test? Can you . . . If you have a test with questions that are more suitable for rural students, do you just discount them in the urban context or how do you manage that?

**Mr. Miller:** — So Saskatchewan has a distinct advantage in this area because we have one provincial curricula. And that curricula is developed with the ministry and with school divisions and teachers, and those are the things that we've agreed on that are important for our students to learn and to do well on. So this large-scale, standards-based assessment program is tied to that curriculum. And despite whether I live in Regina or in the North, that's the same curriculum that we want the students to be successful on. So just as we used teachers in the development of curricula, we'll ensure that we use teachers in the development of these assessments because it's teachers that bring an important context to the work of the ministry.

**Ms. Sproule:** — But I recall my days of teaching English and using the curricula, well the English curriculum. And there was plenty of options, and obviously I didn't teach everything that was in there. So that's the concern I guess is, you know, I may choose, as an urban teacher, to focus more on materials that would be appropriate to my class whereas in a rural context, a northern context, I would choose other materials. How do you test for that? On what basis?

**Mr. Miller:** — So the standards-based assessment again ties to whether or not a teacher uses a specific resource. There are elements of the curriculum that are intended to be covered, and there's a variety, and teachers are doing a wonderful job of contextualizing those fundamental elements to the context that the children find themselves in. So that's again part of the field testing question, to make sure that we capture a variety across the province to make sure that, again, that fairness and that

reliability and validity is in place.

[20:45]

**Ms. Sproule:** — So on that basis, would each student who's being tested, when you have your final product, be required to answer all the questions? And then would you factor out the diversity or cultural diversity or community diversity? Or would they still answer every question? How would you score that?

**Mr. Miller:** — So in terms of the assessment, what's anticipated, these assessments are still being developed, and we'll be relying on the feedback of the field as well as the ministry to get down to scoring. So it's a little premature at this time to determine finally how it will be scored, but it will be scored on a rubric and that rubric will be tied to the curriculum outcomes.

**Ms. Sproule:** — The next question I wanted to ask was in relation to educating the teachers on how to administer the tests. How are you planning to do that and how much will that cost, and then finally how much time will they be away from their classroom in that training?

**Mr. Miller:** — So certainly it's . . . The value of assessment for both teachers, students, and parents is significant. And in terms of working with teachers, part of the student achievement initiative is to provide supports for instruction. Because as we know, when assessments are completed, it's really what's done with those results that helps students to be successful. In terms of specific enhancements to the proposed agenda, providing the information back on individual student results is significant. That will provide the teacher and the student with a report of what the student was successful on, areas that they need to develop so that that can be incorporated into the instructional program.

**Ms. Sproule:** — One of my questions was, how much do you anticipate that will cost, that type of training and preparing the teachers?

**Mr. Miller:** — So that professional development will be part of the ongoing work of school divisions, as it has been in the past. In the past, school divisions have been involved in workshops with . . . the ministry has facilitated across the province to deliver back the results of the assessment. We anticipate that a mechanism similar to that will continue. Of course the details of that are being developed, as we've committed to working with the sector to ensure that the assessments themselves and the results that they support are delivered back in an effective way.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Okay. So if I understand correctly then, what you are anticipating is that the costs of this training would be incorporated as part of the professional development budget of the school divisions themselves?

**Mr. Miller:** — I think that would be part of it. However as I said, part of this process is still developing, so there's work to be done yet on that.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Fair enough. Thank you. Do you know yet whether the teachers will be marking the tests written by their

own students or there's . . . Will there be a committee of teachers marking based on exemplars?

**Mr. Miller:** — As part of this initiative, both of those. Both of those will occur.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Okay. That's it for me, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Forbes, go ahead.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So what will the majority of the \$12 million, what will be the . . . Where will that be going to?

**Mr. Miller:** — During the development phase, the largest component will be the item development cost. The cost associated with developing the instruments themselves, in an ongoing way, the cost will be primarily associated with costs associated with software licenses.

**Mr. Forbes:** — But how much is a software licence . . . [inaudible] . . . that to be?

**Mr. Miller:** — The costs associated with software to date have been around the Tell Them from Me perceptual software and the early years evaluation software. Those two are approximately \$900,000. In terms of the ongoing development and costs, we haven't gone to RFP yet for procurement of the solution that will be the online component of the provincial assessments.

Those solutions will consist of three areas. The management and construction of items, so that will be where the items that have been developed by teachers will go into. The second component will be the actual delivery, the online mechanism to deliver the online assessments in schools, the data collection piece. And then the third component of that will be analytics and reporting.

**Mr. Forbes:** — The vision is that this will be all online, more or less. And so there will have to be, obviously, the software and the hardware. And you're confident the schools are able to do that, to do testing that way? Are they doing testing right now, online testing?

**Mr. Miller:** — Yes they are.

**Mr. Forbes:** — You know, I did have some test questions or written questions. I didn't get the answers back, and so I'm just curious, what kind of tests are being done in this way in Saskatchewan schools?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Certainly we have experience with the Tell Them from Me student engagement survey. I have personal experience with that tool, and it's online as we were talking about. And the results are virtually immediate so a classroom . . . Or when a school actually completes the survey, and let's say we're doing it from grades 4 to 9 in a particular school, when the principal signs off that all of his students or classrooms are completed, when he signs off on that, virtually within 24 hours to 48 hours, there's a profile directed back to the school based on the responses. And that perceptual survey can be completed at home, at school, and there are components that involve parents and teachers.

And so it can be done any time, and you don't have to do it all at one sitting. You can start, stop. Because you log in, every student has their own password and ID [identification] to get in, and it can be done at any time on any computer anywhere.

So it's a very good investment in terms of determining student engagement, how students perceive their school environment for all kinds of factors. There is an academic component again embedded in the tool so students have access to . . . Or the program will take students' perceptions of how well they're doing for example and then the teacher can match that with what they perceive to be where they're headed. It's a very interactive process and very confident in its application.

It's developed by Doug Willms, a Canadian educator out of New Brunswick, and has gained wide acceptance across our country.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So now when I go back to the original question . . .

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Sorry, David, or Mr. Forbes. That would be one tool.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay.

**Ms. Senecal:** — And I think we have some additional information that our executive director of student achievement and supports is going to speak to as well.

**Mr. Caleval:** — Tim Caleval, student achievement and supports, executive director. So, Mr. Forbes, you asked a question regarding the number of assessments that are taking place and the ones that perhaps are online. Currently 20 of the 28 school divisions are conducting the early years evaluation in schools right now, so that's an online assessment.

Many of them have been doing it for up to four years now. Saskatoon Public for instance has been doing the online component of that assessment for four years now, some for obviously for less than that. Every school division in the province is undertaking their own assessments, locally developed and purchased assessments, that they're doing right now in subject areas like reading, writing, mathematics, science, and obviously in readiness like the early years evaluation. They're also using other purchased assessments like the CAT [Canadian achievement test] 4 test or the CTBS [Canadian test of basic skills] test. So we have several school divisions that are using those. Like the use of the CAT 4 is used in 12 school divisions, as an example.

[21:00]

**Mr. Forbes:** — Are they done online now?

**Mr. Caleval:** — Some of them . . . I don't have that information for you, but many of them are paper-based. So there's what I would say a plethora of different assessments that school divisions are undertaking right now. Some are online; some are paper-based.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And so how will you provide for that difference within three years? Some are very advanced doing

different things, and maybe even might be the majority, I'm not sure. But there will be some that, for whatever reasons, may not be able to do the kind of things that you require in three years. What will happen then?

**Mr. Miller:** — So as part of the developmental work of this process, we worked with school divisions conducting a readiness survey around their assessment practices. And we're engaging with school divisions around the balance of provincial assessments done at the division level and assessments done at the classroom level to ensure the correct balance to make sure that students and teachers get the right balance of information that they need. Mr. Caleval will talk about some specific examples.

**Mr. Caleval:** — So for instance, the diagnostic levelled reading assessment that the ministry will be implementing province-wide, there are diagnostic levelled reading assessments that are used by many school divisions already. What we'll be doing in terms of an online component is putting the data into our student data system, and that data will then follow the individual student. So if the student moves from school to school or school division to school division, that data set will follow that child, and therefore will help inform the student's next teacher as to that student's reading, the reading skill that they have and therefore there won't be any gaps in terms of understanding or helping support that child.

Other assessments, the plan is to have an online administration of those pieces much like other international and national assessments are all moving in the direction of online delivery of assessments. So the PISA [programme for international student assessment] study that's coming up here again in 2015, I believe, will be online as will the PCAP assessment [Pan-Canadian assessment program]. PISA's the programme for international student assessment which is an international assessment done by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. And the PCAP assessment is the Pan-Canadian assessment program which is done by all the jurisdictions in Canada. So those assessments are moving in that way as well.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So when you have this follow students, is this like the cum [cumulative] folder following the students? Are they electronic now, or what happens with their cum folder? Are you going to go to that next step or does that exist right now?

**Mr. Miller:** — Cum folders are not electronic right now and that has not been a part of this particular discussion.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Would that not make some sense if you're . . . Why just marks and not the information in cum folders?

**Mr. Miller:** — Certainly. We take your point that the more descriptive information that can follow a child from grade to grade or perhaps school to school would be beneficial but that's part of a, perhaps part of a later discussion in this particular initiative.

In terms of the assessments, as Mr. Caleval described, the levelled literacy assessments, where school divisions have a levelled literacy assessment in place now, they will continue to

use that. What's happening here in this initiative is that the province will bring that data together to leverage provincially.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Are you saying that if one school division is using one type of test for reading and another school division is using another test, but they're both measuring the outcomes as a grade equivalent, all you're interested in is a grade equivalent? The score? You're not interested what the test is to get that score?

**Mr. Caleval:** — First of all, I wouldn't say it's a grade equivalent score that we're measuring. We're measuring end-of-year outcomes based on the curriculum. So the work that we're undertaking with the diagnostic levelled reading assessment is work that we've just engaged school divisions on. What we're looking for is the end-of-year expectations for students, a range of end-of-year expectations across a variety of different diagnostic levelled reading tools. So that if one . . .

**Mr. Forbes:** — So that a criterion type of thing.

**Mr. Caleval:** — Exactly. So that if one school division is using, say, the Fountas & Pinnell assessment and another school division's using the DRA [developmental reading assessment], two different tools, we've equated those tools so that what would be one level in one would be the same in another. So the expectations are the same across a variety of tools, therefore meeting the needs of the individual school divisions and their own practices and the work that they've been doing, but creating that consistency across different assessments. So we are working with school divisions to do that and support them in the work that they've been investing in for several years now.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So what is the value? I mean with school divisions, many school divisions have set out on this kind of work in terms of standardized or you call it standards-based or whatever, some sort of measurement. And that's within an area that seems to make sense because it's the school division. But now you're reaching out across the province and you're saying that this travels with the student. And I guess I do have some questions about when you start to do that.

But you're really essentially creating electronic partial cum folder. I mean I wonder if you've consulted with the Privacy Commissioner because this is data that's travelling and it's not staying with the student. And so I would have questions about that because as a parent I'm familiar with a cum folder. And I know my child's scores and they all have their folders, teacher has his folder, her folder, you know, and as well as the cum folder. But all of a sudden you have these other things that are happening. And in this day and age, when we're kind of nervous about what's happening out there with our private information in terms of (a) identifiers . . . Are you using social insurance numbers? Are you assigning student numbers? How are you ensuring privacy for this?

And there's always the question of reason. Like what is the reason for this? There has to be . . . And I know the minister has said many times about being able to explain to the parent where the child is in terms of progress, and I think that quite often we've been able to do . . . I've been able to do that quite effectively based on the testing and criteria testing or whatever type of assessment you want. But my question would be, what

is the overall reason for doing this because at the same time I think that there is a laudable goal, a good goal, in terms of increasing our graduation rates. That is something that we need to do in Saskatchewan and we need to really tackle that issue. So what is the reason?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Two reasons actually. Transitioning . . . Well first of all, student engagement is one. Part of the student achievement initiative is to find out what it is that will keep students engaged. We know, and my colleagues have heard me talk about the fact that by age eight, nine, students make the transition from learning to read to reading to learn. And if that transition doesn't take place, then student engagement begins to manifest itself in different ways. And so transitioning is critical.

One of the transitions that's critically important is when students move from community to community or from grade to grade. It's important, as you well know, being an educator, that on a standards-based basis where students are measured against a set of criteria and have met certain levels of expertise, it's important that those are the same from classroom to classroom, school to school, division to division, and across the province which really facilitates that student transition.

So the more readily students can transition and parents and students feel confident that what they're taking with them to the next place is the same as where they left, that provides all sorts of levels of security and confidence for the child going forward. I believe that fully. So it's about engagement and it's about transitions.

One of the largest contributors or one of the most common comments that I've heard working in reserve schools is that there was always this comment that what they received in one school didn't mean much when they went to the other school. And so that was . . . Those are the kinds of things that trouble parents and cause students to become disengaged.

And so that's one of the reasons, Mr. Forbes, that we want to go to a province-wide systematized assessment program, student achievement initiative, that allows for student engagement, maximizing student engagement, and certainly ease of transition from grade to grade, school to school, classroom to classroom.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So what is the research? What forms your belief or causes you to believe this? Now you've talked about your own experience, but you've talked about student engagement and then, you know, and doing it through an online program. You know, when I talk to teachers they're not saying we need this standardized testing. They're talking about more funding for English as an additional language. They're talking about class sizes. They're talking about a whole host of things, but this is not the one thing they say, we need this. This is not the thing that's coming through, and even parents.

So the student engagement or transitions, and you've talked about moving from school division to school division. So other than your own personal experience, what is the research that leads you to this, to say this is what we're going to do, this is what we're going to do? I mean other than the announcement made a year ago, the ministry has been relatively silent on this,



you know, other than improving, you know, through their assessment, that type of thing. But clearly now this is the number one priority, it seems, of the ministry. Why is that?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — This is not, this is not an either-or. It's all, it's all . . .

**Mr. Forbes:** — I asked about the research.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Sorry.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Let me be clear about the research.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — There is, there is plenty of research and I'll have deputy Miller refer to that, but there is plenty of research that supports regular, and regular feedback on student assessments to help validate curriculum and inform instruction, that will allow resources, appropriate resources to be applied to situations of remediation and situations of enrichment. And I'll let Greg expand on that.

**Mr. Miller:** — Thank you. So the large-scale research on the purposes of assessment at this level is clear and overwhelming. It's a pervasive body of research worldwide.

**Mr. Forbes:** — We've not heard one name of a researcher. People keep saying that, but we say, show us the research. Other than talking about it, show us.

**Mr. Miller:** — So researchers such as John Hattie who worked on the meta-analyses on what are the effects of different interventions that can be done.

[21:15]

**Mr. Forbes:** — [Inaudible] . . . the research?

**Mr. Miller:** — Sorry. John Hattie, *Visible Learning*, would be one. That's research that talks about the impact that assessment can have and the feedback that assessment can have specifically. Regular feedback associated with specific interventions tied to student success is a powerful . . .

**Mr. Forbes:** — No one's arguing with that. We're talking about this large-scale provincial, you know, real, half a day a year in schools, testing kids for a provincial database.

**Mr. Miller:** — The purpose of this initiative is clearly to deliver student results back to the student. This is not assessment towards a provincial database. The purpose here is to assess students individually on the curriculum, a curriculum that's designed by Saskatchewan teachers and is delivered in every corner of the province here in Saskatchewan. It will be developed, these items will be developed by teachers here in the province. So this will be a large-scale assessment that assesses the curriculum that's intended for our students to be successful.

**Mr. Forbes:** — How is the STF responding to this?

**Mr. Miller:** — So the STF is part of the ongoing dialogue around the development of this work and sits at our advisory council.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Were they part of the process of hiring? You've talked about six teachers. Are they going to be part of nominating the six, the teachers that are going to be involved in this?

**Mr. Miller:** — So the teachers that were contracted are through school divisions, directly through school divisions.

**Mr. Forbes:** — How does that process get done? Were they, when you seconded, were they recommended? They're obviously working teachers. Is that correct?

**Mr. Miller:** — Yes, they're working teachers. So the process was an open letter was sent out to directors of education for . . . a letter of interest, I would call it, to school divisions.

**Mr. Forbes:** — A letter of interest to directors. Okay. So you're, you're . . . Let me be clear then. So you're feeling the STF is pretty much on board with this then?

**Mr. Miller:** — What I spoke to was the STF's involvement. I wouldn't speculate on the STF's position per se. But certainly the STF is a part of the advisory committee, and that advisory committee has been struck around the implementation of this student achievement initiative.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So who's involved? Is there a person representing the STF and who's that person?

**Mr. Miller:** — So the STF is a member of the advisory committee. The representative that's been appointed is Tish Karpa from the STF.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. So I want to get back to . . . Now have you done any research . . . You know, one of the things this government has done is it's lowered the age of workers in this province to 14. You can now work in this province at the age of 14 as long as you meet certain requirements, and that was done about I think it's three or four years ago now. It could be as many as five. What has been the impact of that?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Can you repeat that, please?

**Mr. Forbes:** — I believe it was about five years ago, this government lowered the age young people could work from 16 to 14. They had to meet some requirements. That was taking an online labour standards and occupational health and safety thing. Have you done any research on the impact of what that has had and how many students are actually working now at 14?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — No.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Do you think that might have an impact in engagement and graduation rates?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — My understanding, Mr. Forbes, is that there's a threshold of about 10 hours I guess in terms of that impact.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So my question . . . So I'm not sure I understand your answer. My question was, do you think that has any impact on the graduation rates? And so I guess I'm

looking for a yes, no, maybe so; that would be worthwhile to look at. It's something new that we've done as a province.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Yes, I don't have a clear answer for that.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Have you thought about this?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — I mean there's been discussions around that in different circles I have participated in, but there's no definitive . . . I don't have anything definitive on that, David.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Do you think it might be worthwhile looking into? Now we're starting to see a cohort of young people who have started to work at different places. What is the impact on that on our graduation rates?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — I think it would be safe to say that there would be some impact. The level of impact, I wouldn't have a number on that. It may be a positive impact. They may take those opportunities to work and all the more reason to come back and complete school and make sure that I get the job done. So there's perhaps two ways to look at that, but I would say that there's some impact.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And I would suggest that that might be, if you're looking at ways or reasons or potential causes for one of the lower graduation rates across Canada — I don't know of other provinces in terms of working age — but it was lowered, and we should take a look at that kind of thing. And you know, and I think it would be really worthwhile, particularly since this government did that kind of initiative to say, so what is happening to our young people, and this type of thing, when we have this kind of economy that they can work now. We see the impact around temporary foreign workers. Will you rule this out or will you consider this?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — That's a fair comment, and I think that when we have full implementation of the Tell Them from Me survey, I think those are the kinds of . . . that's the kind of data that will be forthcoming from that tool. It's a very powerful tool and will provide all kinds of insights into how our young people perceive what's being offered to them at the secondary level, especially as it relates to graduation rates, and certainly will provide some insights as to what we can do to look at looking at high school completion in a different light. You know that we have a high school infrastructure, a secondary school infrastructure that's pretty traditional. And I think you'd agree that for literally decades, if not more, that high school timetable has not changed in appearance a great deal. Would you agree?

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well you know, I know Saskatoon Public's really been working hard on this, very hard.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — But nonetheless, nonetheless, if you look at a high school timetable, essentially it's a timetable geared to post-secondary education. Would you not agree?

**Mr. Forbes:** — You know, and I think . . . I look at Mount Royal. My own experience is that there has been a lot of work done in this area over the last . . . I mean there is that basic building block of 9 to 3:30. And then I see the government actually moving back towards that in terms of some of its recent

announcements, particularly around minutes of instruction, that type of thing. So I mean, I see mixed messages. I'm not sure where you're going with this.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Well what I'm saying is that by looking at some of these different structures and how we might complete high school differently will provide some impetus into the kinds of programs that we're able to offer. And a lot of that information will come out of the student achievement initiative, particularly as it pertains to the Tell Them from Me survey. There is a great deal of information that we'll be able to gather from that tool.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I want to go back because I don't recall if I got a complete answer around the \$12 million budget. How will the \$12 million be spent again?

**Mr. Miller:** — Thank you. So in terms of the overall investment of the projected \$12 million, that will go into project management which is management support for the initiative. The development of assessments, those assessments were outlined earlier in terms of the scope of the particular assessments. Software licensing, including analytics and reporting, including assessment delivery and data capture, including assessment construction, those were the three primary IT components. The implementation of the business case and the analysis of the business case along the way. It would also include assessment development, and piloting would be part of that, and support for instructional practices, as well as external field expertise and a communications budget.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Could you provide me how much each one of those categories will cost? What is the number that goes with them?

**Mr. Miller:** — So project management would be 700,000. Assessment development, 1.08 million, those would be costs associated with teacher secondments. Assessment development for staff FTEs within the ministry would be 1.56 million; analytics and reporting, 332,000. Assessment construction, 3.1 million, that's the data capture aspect of it. Assessment construction item bank, 2.3 million; business case implementation, 847,000; analysis and business solution transition, 500,000; functional skills assessment, development, and piloting, 1.08 million; supporting instructional practices — this again would be the requirement around the teachers, requiring six teachers for secondment-type activities — 1.08 million; external field expertise, 90,000; and the communication budget of 1.6 million.

[21:30]

**Mr. Forbes:** — Now in the software licences you had . . . In one of the lines from the software licences, about 900,000 was it?

**Mr. Miller:** — Just let me check. 890.

**Mr. Forbes:** — 890? Thank you. Okay, and now these six teachers, I just want to go back to that. You've seconded them from six different school divisions. Can you tell us what the school divisions are?

**Mr. Caleval:** — We don't have that information right now just on hand, so we can get that to you and provide that to you.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. And what's their background in terms of are they elementary, high school . . .

**Mr. Caleval:** — There are two separate tasks that folks are engaged in right now, our teachers are engaged in. One, we're doing assessment or item development right now for the treaty understanding and language arts assessment. So those people have specific background in teaching language arts and understanding treaty education and treaty outcomes. So they have that background and they are at the grade levels that we're actually assessing in grade 4 and grade 7.

And the other piece of work that we're currently working on are departmental exams, which are grade 12 exams. So they have background in the actual area that the tests are being developed. So for instance we have people that are doing mathematics and biology and chemistry and whatnot. So they have to do with those assessments.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Is the assessment all post-teaching or is some of it pre-teaching?

**Mr. Caleval:** — I can give you a fairly detailed answer regarding that. Many of the assessments that we're conducting are actually . . . the timing is mostly near the beginning of the year, or sometimes they're administered at the beginning and then again later on. So I'll sort of go from pre-K through to the work that we've got all the way to departmentals.

So in pre-K with the early years evaluation, in pre-K the assessment is done early in the school year, and done early in the school year in order to inform teaching and learning and the work that's going to be done and the interventions that would be necessary for students that have been identified as having learning needs.

In kindergarten the EYE again is assessed early in the school year for all students, and then for the students that have been identified as having significant needs are reassessed again in the spring. So it's a pre/post assessment, and again the idea being that the assessment happens to help inform instruction and intervention that's necessary.

In grades 1 to 3, with the reading assessment, the diagnostic levelled reading assessment, it's administered twice a year, again early in the . . . about October, November, and then again in late spring. The idea again is to inform instruction and practice and then assess again to see growth and then help inform next year's teacher as to where they're going. Same thing with the number sense assessment. It's a minimum of two times that they're going to be doing the data collection, again in the fall and then again in the spring. So again, diagnostic informative in nature in order to inform that.

The grade 4 and 7 treaty understandings and language arts assessment is administered at the end of the school year. That's one that will be done near the end of the school year because of the open-ended component that has to be scored by teachers. And the way that we want to score that piece is through a summer scoring session. So we don't want to be pulling

teachers out of classrooms when they're needed in classrooms. We can do that work with them in the summer, much like the assessments that we've been doing for a number of years.

Any open-ended components that we've had have been done in a summer scoring session and we've never, ever had a problem filling those opportunities. Teachers look upon it as an opportunity for professional development. So that is one of our assessments that's going to be administered at the end of the year.

Our mathematics and problem-solving assessment at grade 5 and 8 is administered early in the school year, again on outcomes from the previous two grades. So at grade 5, the students will be assessed on outcomes that would be in grade 3 and grade 4 in order to inform how well students have done the previous year and help inform teachers as to where they need to go and what gaps they might have, and help plan for intervention if necessary, and where kids' strengths and areas for improvement would be.

The science and technology assessment again is at the beginning of the year with the same idea that it will help inform instruction going forward.

The other assessments are our departmental exams and those exams are in grade 12. And those exams are year-end . . . Actually, pardon me. I apologize; they are not. I cannot believe I didn't . . . They are administered six times a year.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I just read that.

**Mr. Caleval:** — Sorry, yes. I don't know why I was thinking that. I apologize. But nonetheless, they're administered six times a year.

**The Chair:** — Excuse me. The time is now 9:37, and we're going to pause for a 10-minute break.

**Mr. Forbes:** — That will be added on?

**The Chair:** — That will be added on, yes. The time will be added on. 9:37.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

**The Chair:** — Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. The time is now 9:46, and we will turn back to Mr. Forbes and his questions. You have the floor, sir.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And to continue the questions, I was curious about the treaty in grade 7 tests, particularly the treaty ones. Now treaty classes are taught in what grades?

**Mr. Caleval:** — The treaty understandings are taught at grade 4 and grade 7.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Four and grade . . .

**Mr. Caleval:** — Not taught. They're assessed at grade 4 and grade 7.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I'm actually talking about the instructional part. The curriculum requires that it's part of the grade 4 curriculum and grade 7 curriculum?

**Mr. Caleval:** — There's a set of treaty outcomes and indicators that are from kindergarten to grade 12.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay.

**Mr. Caleval:** — So those have been released to teachers and are publicly available.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. And is there a main year or years where it's highlighted? So you're talking these indicators are integrated as part of the social studies or English curriculum, but is there any main thrusts in any specific year around treaty education?

**Mr. Caleval:** — Actually, they are . . . We have within our curriculum the infusion of First Nations and Métis content perspectives and ways of knowing. We do not have the infusion of treaty education. So what we've developed is a set of treaty education outcomes in four different areas, so a set of outcomes for all the way from kindergarten to grade 12, outcomes with a set of indicators that demonstrate the breadth of the set of outcomes that we have that are used in conjunction with other curriculum. And they are across all curricula and interdisciplinary in nature.

**Mr. Miller:** — In terms of the integration there, the research perspective on that, what we've developed is outcomes across the K to 12 piece. Your question was specifically, is there years of focus? The focus is across the piece, with a focus on assessments in each one of those pieces in the years that have been outlined in the treaty essential learning outcomes, which will be grades 4 and 7.

**Mr. Forbes:** — That'll be evaluated in those years, 4 and 7, at the end of the year. And then what will be . . . How do you then see the information being used that you'll gather?

**Mr. Miller:** — So the information will be used to provide, again, data back at the individual student level. So that's where we work with a body of research that we've used to ground our work. Some of the grounding research here is Black and William, *Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards Through Classroom Assessments*.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Now you're . . . What question are you answering right now, then?

**Mr. Miller:** — So I'm answering the question of what will we do. But I'm . . . You asked earlier for a perspective on the research.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Right. Yes. And I think you're going down that line. But I'm asking specifically around the results that you will get around the treaty tests that you will be doing in grades 4 and 7. So I think those are two different questions.

**Mr. Miller:** — So we can certainly address the treaty . . .

**Mr. Forbes:** — So what do you expect teachers and . . . You'll

be sharing the information with students and parents, but will you be expecting teachers to use that information if it's not part of a regular program?

**Mr. Caleval:** — Treaty education is mandatory in Saskatchewan. It's expected . . .

**Mr. Forbes:** — You know, I don't have the curriculum in front of me. Maybe I should take a look at this curriculum. But you're telling me it's integrated?

**Mr. Caleval:** — Yes I am. Yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — That there is no treaty classes? There's no subject called treaty education.

**Mr. Caleval:** — There are no treaty classes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay.

**Mr. Caleval:** — There's never been treaty classes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Right.

**Mr. Caleval:** — What we have is a series of outcomes that are very developmental in nature from kindergarten to grade 12 that are in four different areas. An example would be treaty promises and practices. So we have outcomes that are in that area of treaty promises and practices that go from kindergarten all the way to grade 12.

Those outcomes have a set of indicators which demonstrate the breadth of that outcome, and we also are in the process of connecting those to a series of other outcomes within all the other curricula that we have within the province.

So in essence this is something that teachers have been engaged in and working on for a number of years in this province, is mandatory treaty education. So it is something that's not new and something that's been an ongoing process in the province. So much like assessing language arts, we're assessing a set of outcomes and providing feedback back to teachers and back to parents regarding students' understanding of the outcomes at that grade level.

So that's what we're intending to do there and then the data is then used by teachers to help inform, to inform their practice and understand where kids are being successful and maybe have some areas where they need more focus.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay, and that was my question. So when they get that information back from these tests, so you'll be sharing that with the teachers and with parents and the students. But what will you be expecting the teachers . . . Do you have specific outcomes of what you will be expecting teachers to do? And how will they be able to do that? So my question really is, will there be increased resources? Will there be increased supports? So if you do find out, like you're saying that you're doing the testing. This evaluation, this assessment is already ongoing. And so how will this be different than what's already happening?

**Mr. Caleval:** — We work and have been working with the

Office of the Treaty Commissioner on an ongoing basis for a number of years. I could probably get that information and get that back to you regarding the number of years we've been in a working relationship with the Office of the Treaty Commissioner. However, just last year we signed a three-year agreement with the Office of the Treaty Commissioner for \$1.2 million to continue to develop outcomes and indicators and develop resources, and update resources that we've got. And those resources are available to teachers. We also work with the Office of the Treaty Commissioner around providing professional development to teachers around the resources that are there. So we've put tremendous support in place for treaty education and in essence what we're doing is . . . This assessment is a snapshot in time regarding a set of outcomes that are within a set of outcomes that are anticipated to be taught at that grade level.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. And if the deputy minister had wanted to answer another question about the research.

**Mr. Miller:** — Thank you. So the answers are absolutely related. It's the research, the foundational research of the initiative overall. The initiative is about the support of students primarily, classroom teachers, parents, and the use of that data is critical.

I'd like to refer to this list about some primary research that's shaped this up: Black and Wiliam, *Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards Through Classroom Assessment* is one of these pieces; Duschl et al, *Strategies and Challenges to Changing the Focus of Assessment and Instruction in Science Classrooms* is another piece; McKinsey & Co., *How the World's Best Performing School Systems Come Out on Top*; Phelps, *The Effect of Testing on Student Achievement*; Reeves, *Ahead of the Curve: The Power of Assessment to Transform Teaching and Learning*; Ross, "Effects of running records on assessment in early literacy achievement"; Schatschneider et al, *Kindergarten Prediction of Reading Skills: A Longitudinal Comparative Analysis*; Slavin et al, "Effects of a data-driven district reform model"; Stiggins and DuFour, *Maximizing the Power of Formative Assessments*; and Supovitz et al, *In Search of Leading Indicators in Education*.

So these are some of the bases that this initiative around the assessment components of this initiative have been built around. This is, of course, not an exhaustive list.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So I'm just curious. And I know the minister was at the Saskatoon Teachers Association annual convention and Pasi Sahlberg made a presentation, talking about Finland's experience with how they conduct assessments and how they work with their school system. What is your thoughts on that Finnish . . . that experience?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — I'll start, and then Greg or Tim can. I think it's important to, I think it's important to note that this is another tool, another source of information that we can use to help allocate resources at the individual level for our students.

I did listen to Mr. Sahlberg, Pasi Sahlberg. And obviously there are differences in the systems, and those need to be taken into consideration, so it's not comparing apples to apples in this situation. And the situation there is considerably different than

what we have here.

And let's not forget that they do some form of standardization anyway because they do participate in the PISA program. And so I would ask the question, if it's not important, why are they doing that? So I think it's important that we understand that we need to be able to compare apples to apples. Greg?

**Mr. Miller:** — Certainly.

**Ms. Ross:** — I'd like to maybe call a point of order only because . . . And I know it's really important that we never stifle a good fulsome discussion. However as our time is coming, you know, closer to the end, one of the things that concerns me is that you will not have had the time to focus in on maybe consideration of estimates. So I would like you to maybe focus in on that.

**Mr. Forbes:** — If I can reply, clearly the minister . . . This is a major initiative of which they're spending money, so it's clearly part of the estimates. We're talking about testing and assessment of which they're paying 5.9 . . . So, Mr. Speaker, clearly the point is not well-taken.

**The Chair:** — We will continue the questioning and see how far it goes. You're reaching the limits though of getting into what should be in question period.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. Thank you.

**An Hon. Member:** — It's true.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Pardon me?

**The Chair:** — Carry on, Mr. Forbes, with your questions.

**Mr. Forbes:** — This is clearly our . . .

**The Chair:** — Carry on with your questions.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. And I will say this is clearly within the mandate of Education to be talking about assessment. And if we're not talking about assessment and if the government side wants to limit the discussion around assessment . . .

**The Chair:** — Mr. Forbes, I've cleared the way for more questions, not for a statement. Now make questions.

[22:00]

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Then I will talk about another initiative of the Ministry of Education a few years ago, provincial panel of student achievement of which the minister has referenced in terms of the estimates in the budgetary process, And I'd be curious to know (a) what is happening with that initiative?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Thanks, Mr. Forbes. With reference to the question, the provincial panel on student achievement, it's my understanding that there was not a formal response to the provincial panel. However the document and the work therein certainly does provide a framework for us to move forward. And truly I reference the provincial report as it pertains to

assessment but now I just lost my . . . Somebody help me find that back? But surely there are other areas that are guiding our work, for example the work that we're initiating around the early years learning, around pre-kindergarten and kindergarten and other early years programming. Certainly it's informing work that we're doing around community engagement. And certainly it's informing the work we're doing around First Nations and Métis education.

So it was a very comprehensive report, and it certainly does serve the ministry well and our province well, and we will continue to use it as an instrument to guide.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Now on page 2 of the document, under recommendations, the first . . . It talks about having two important features, and it says:

The recommendations are interconnected and interdependent. Each builds upon and strengthens the others and together they will significantly improve student learning. The recommendations are designed to be implemented as a whole, not as independent pieces.

And I think that's a pretty critical piece, and I know there will be times to profile one over the other. But from what you're saying that you are still looking at this, you're using parts of it, are you using . . . How's your approach to this?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Well I think generally we would use the entire report. As I said, there's a great deal of information in there that guides the ministry and guides educators as well. I think the report was well done, and I would agree with your point that there are many things in there to consider, and not in isolation. However we will want to be able to refer to it as we move forward.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well there was never a formal response given to it.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — That's my understanding.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Do you intend to do that? Because you are referring to it. And I know and we've heard from, I've heard from stakeholders that this is a little disconcerting because they thought that there was a period where it wasn't being used. Now it's being brought back up but only for selective pieces. Will you make a statement about the report and that you are intending to use the report as a foundational document?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Again thanks, Mr. Forbes. My answer to that question is that the government will continue to use the document as a guide going forward to inform the work that we will continue to do around a number of the recommendations.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you. Now I just want to do a couple of other items. We've had a lot of discussion in the House around anti-bullying. We have an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] who's named as Legislative Secretary for this. I'm talking about Jennifer Campeau. Is she working under or with the Ministry of Education? Is that the connection to Executive Council?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — She is the Legislative Secretary

assigned to the Ministry of Education to work on an anti-bullying strategy.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And I see that there is material up on the website?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Correct.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And I did see the GSA [gay-straight alliance] material up.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Yes, I looked at the website today actually. And I must say that there is a wealth of information on that website, greatly enhanced. I think it's important to note that I had a very nice meeting with the young lady that came to the Assembly and thanked her for the work that she brought. And as I said in the House, for me it's all about respecting differences. And I think we've enhanced our website to ensure that we are respecting differences with the entire spectrum.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So that's very good. So thank you for that. Much appreciated.

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Yes. I am curious, in terms of Ms. Campeau's work — and we can't ask her questions; there's no way of doing that — but I understand she's taking some time to meet with people. Are you familiar with what her plans are?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Very loosely. They're still very much in the formative, in the formative stages. But she is putting a plan together in consultation with the ministry for us to be able to engage various communities, student communities, and the community at large in terms of gathering information. But the plans for that are not finalized. And as soon as they are, they will be made available, is my anticipation.

**Mr. Forbes:** — What is her budget that she has for this work?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Mr. Forbes, there is no line item. She will be working within the budget of the ministry.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So I would urge any support that you can. I think it's a very important area and I think it's important that her work get done. And it's a diverse, wide-ranging area and I would hope that there's a lot of success in that. It's a huge, hugely important area.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — It's our anticipation that there will be considerable success, and that's already evident. And I would, without precluding of course — and you've heard the Premier speak to that — without precluding anything that Ms. Campeau will undertake, we sincerely want to come to the point where we have an action plan on the whole issue of bullying that's for Saskatchewan students as we look after the safety of all of our children.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I want to switch gears again, this time to talk about capital funding, which I did raise some questions in the House today. And I have a few questions about that. So the question just right off the bat was about the community school, Sacred Heart Community School. And now I'm looking at —

we've got this off the website and it was October 31st — the major capital request list. Has this changed or is this significant? Is this more or less the same? And I can see there's a couple of schools that I want to reference, but Sacred Heart was on the section from the major . . . What category would that be under? Repairs?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Sacred Heart was on the critical space, was it not?

**A Member:** — That's correct.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. I'll see if I can find it here. And so . . .

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Mr. Forbes, sorry. The answer to your first question is that the list is being developed as we speak. There is work to be done in that area. And as I am on record of saying that the current process needs some modifications because of some of the dynamics that we're facing within the sector, so the list and process are being worked on as we speak.

[22:15]

**Mr. Forbes:** — So what are your concerns about how the list is developed?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Well certainly one of the areas — and I'll defer to Sheldon here in a second — but certainly one of the areas of course is the significant growth that communities in Saskatchewan are facing. And we need to be able to identify that growth factor, certainly in the capital prioritization process, much like we identified the growth factor in school operating. As you're well aware, that was a factor that came upon us last year. We heard loud and clear from the sector that that process wasn't meeting the new reality. And we needed to make an adjustment there and we did that. And we intend to make adjustments to the capital prioritization process as we go forward as well. But I'll turn that over to Sheldon.

**Mr. Ramstead:** — Okay, so Sheldon Ramstead, executive director of infrastructure. And right now we are reviewing the process, as Minister Marchuk mentioned, and we'll take into various considerations for publication later this year. Was there a specific question?

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well again, being relatively new to this, when is the usual publication of the list? I imagine people look forward to seeing how it's coming out and that type of thing.

**Mr. Ramstead:** — Generally it's the summer of every year. Last year it was published October 31st of 2012 so we could further review a few things. This year our goal would probably be . . . The fall time frame actually lines up better with the timing in going to treasury board, so we can work with the school divisions over the summer to prioritize the project requests we have. And also if we're implementing a new procedure this year, we'll need to have further consultations with each school division to make sure we're incorporating everything correctly.

**Mr. Forbes:** — When you're referring to the new procedure, are you referring to some of the things the minister . . . Or what are you talking about specifically?

**Mr. Ramstead:** — That is correct, yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Yes, okay.

**Mr. Ramstead:** — Taking into consideration what he mentioned.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So what's happened at Sacred Heart is an unfortunate thing because it just happened. It seems to have . . . It was on the list for several years, but what's happened recently is . . . You know, as things go and we know that in our own homes . . . and different things like that. So is there anything that can be done about that? It's on the list but clearly it's not. There are schools above it, and what can be done about it?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Well you're correct. There is a capital prioritization in place. Sheldon can elaborate on some of the details, but that's one of the difficulties, of course. When these emergent situations happen, it requires emergent action. Now the ministry does have some emergent funds and, as I said in the House today, our officials are working with the Catholic school board officials to come to some emergent solution. Obviously it will be a short-term fix until we can allocate the proper funds for the permanent fix.

I know the community very, very well, and it's a vibrant community. And so we want to do everything we can to ensure (1) the safety of students and staff, and (2) obviously the physical education component of . . . well, not just the physical education component but the other activities that go on in a gymnasium that enhance student learning. So we will do everything we can to work with those officials to come to some resolution. And Sheldon, you might be able to elaborate that.

**Mr. Ramstead:** — Absolutely. We're in discussions now with Regina Catholic just to decide what are the best short-term options that we can deal with immediately. And obviously as we come up with the new list, we want to make sure they're prioritized correctly, taking into consideration the health and safety issue the school has right now.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So what are some of those short-term solutions or options that you might have?

**Mr. Ramstead:** — Well obviously the immediate one is a busing option. Right now the school division is in negotiations with various options. I'm not sure what details those are right now. We'll be having some further meetings this week with them to see what we can do in the short term.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Is this unusual for having a gym fail so dramatically, so quickly, even though, I mean, it has been on the list, but to have lights fall off the ceiling, the scoreboard fall off the wall?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — My understanding, Mr. Forbes, is that the — and Sheldon, you can provide the exact detail — but it's just within in recent time that some of the structural deficiencies became apparent. When the information came to the ministry, it was always cited as critical space and not anything structural. That's my understanding.

**Mr. Ramstead:** — Yes, that's correct. Again, you know, it has

been around for six years and as a critical space shortage. And just recently, within the last couple months, when they had the lighting issue and when they also most recently had the scoreboard issue, those were never identified as issues in the past. And they've had a further more detailed engineering report done on the structural foundation of the school, and that's identified further risks. This was never identified when they had the feasibilities done originally, so it's . . .

**Mr. Forbes:** — When did they have the feasibility study done? When would that have been done?

**Mr. Ramstead:** — I'll have to double-check on the exact day on that, but it was I would say within the last year or two.

**Mr. Forbes:** — A couple of other schools that I would want . . . I'm curious about, and this is Pleasant Hill School in Saskatoon Public and of course Connaught School here in Regina. Pleasant Hill has an issue with asbestos removal, and there seems to be two schools that have asbestos. Now I see, and the minister has alluded to, Gravelbourg and Langenburg. Are they the ones just above Pleasant Hill School? Am I reading this list right?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — They're one and two on the list, are they not?

**Mr. Forbes:** — I'm not sure I'm reading this . . .

**Mr. Ramstead:** — Yes. You are correct.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. So am I assuming that Pleasant Hill is near the top of the . . . should be moving up that list, in theory?

**Mr. Ramstead:** — Based on the most recent prioritization, they're third on the list for health and safety, yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And I think that's pretty critical when you deal with asbestos.

**Mr. Ramstead:** — Absolutely.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And I know that this is something that they're very anxious about. Clearly this is an important one. And there is one other school, Yorkton Regional High School, that has the same issue, from what I can read quickly, that has asbestos. Now will you folks be participating in the asbestos registry? And how will you be dealing, working with that?

**Mr. Ramstead:** — I'm on a roll here, I guess, so . . .

**Mr. Forbes:** — Yes, you are.

**Mr. Ramstead:** — We are continuing work with each school division on the asbestos registry. We have received some preliminary information from a number of the school divisions, not all of them, and we're trying to tabulate it into a common display so it can be posted up.

More importantly, I think, we want to work with each school division to have them actually get in and do some more detailed analysis around the asbestos risks in each of their school divisions so that we can present a proper picture now that it's

moving into law.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And I think one of the things . . . And I know Regina Health Region, the Qu'Appelle health region, has done a very good job in terms of how their work is able to be read or searched or whatever, and others are not quite as user friendly. And I would really encourage you folks to look at how to do that in a way that would be helpful as opposed to being a hindrance and trying to not help people understand what they're trying to read.

**Mr. Ramstead:** — Absolutely. What we've seen on the health regions' submissions is actual specific rooms and what's in those rooms of asbestos issues. So we would like to see something similar on the school divisions' side.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Have you had a chance to talk with the school divisions? How are they responding to this? Are they concerned? Are they willing partners in this?

**Mr. Ramstead:** — School divisions are definitely willing partners in this situation. They want to, you know, work with us and make sure the right thing's done.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Good. That's good to hear. A couple of other questions in terms of capital funding. I know my colleague from Rosemont has often raised the issue of borrowing for school divisions and how they are — and this is a new field for me — but they're often asked to borrow a higher level. They can't access government-secured loans, or I'm not sure what the terminology is. But it can make a big difference. And we still think that's an issue, that if this essentially is a public building, that in terms of being able to secure loans at a better rate, it's in everyone's interest.

We're all taxpayers in one way or the other. Whether we pay provincial taxes or municipal taxes or federal taxes, it comes out of the same pocket at the end of the day. So when we're building public buildings, it's a good thing to do this in the most expedient way or cost-effective way. And he's raised this, and I'm not sure if you're aware of that, Minister, because this would have been in the previous minister's time. Has there been any more thought about how the ministry can help the school divisions secure more cost-effective loans?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — I think the government position is that third party entities arrange for their own financing.

**Mr. Forbes:** — But this can be often at a significant cost. It's not necessarily a high cost. But I know that there's been other examples given — and I don't have them with me right now — but where local school divisions have to borrow to come up with their share. And usually, I understand, it's about 35 per cent or something of projects, and it can be considerable. And yet it just seems to me when we're all in . . . This is a public building, at the end of the day, of which the government is making a significant contribution. And as you said earlier, that we're trying to get as many new buildings up as possible. And if we can do this in a way that it can create some cost-effectiveness, this would be a good thing.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — I'm going to have Donna respond to that one.



[22:30]

**Ms. Johnson:** — With respect to the effective borrowing rates, I understand that the current year provincial borrowing rate for a 20-year debt instrument is sitting at about 3.3 per cent. And from the information that we gather from school divisions from time to time over the past year, the interest rates that they've had on loans that run a 20-year period is ranging from 3.6 per cent to 4.2, so anywhere from point three per cent to point nine per cent different from the government's rate.

So you know generally, certainly in these times, that's a very small differential. Well and the other thing that I would point out too is that the school divisions are arm's-length entities. They are operated by their boards. And as such, it's incumbent upon them to make those decisions about borrowing and to take the actions that they need to take to get their debt in place.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So I'm curious. Are you thinking that the interest rates will stay this low for a significant number of years?

**Ms. Johnson:** — Well I'm not an economist, so I would not want to speculate on that. Certainly back in 2008 I don't think anybody anticipated that the interest rates would continue to be as low as they currently are. So whether they'll be going up five years from now or 10 years from now, I don't know. But it would seem that the near future is that in the next two years the interest rates will be staying pretty close to where they are.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And this is probably as close as these two will get. I mean, I don't think you'll see a local borrowing rate lower than the provincial government rate, do you think?

**Ms. Johnson:** — It would be unusual to see school divisions being able to borrow at a rate that would be less than what the government can borrow. That would be unusual.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And I would also suggest that, you know, with this government, and rightly or wrongly, but the nature of school boards has changed dramatically in the last five or six years. And again I just make the point that we're all public entities, and clearly the mandate of the provincial government through the Ministry of Education is . . . I mean the Ministry of Education, we've been talking about it all night, you know, how the ministry is becoming much more visible, if I were to borrow a phrase, in getting involved in local things. So it's in their interest to see schools being built and being repaired, as we're seeing with either Sacred Heart or Pleasant Hill. So I think this is something that should be thought of if it can make a difference in a decision. If it's a tipping point, then it's a good one.

I know the other area, and this is one that I'll ask the question about because we are having a bit of a rambling debate about capital, but it is a big one. It's a huge issue because we see schools that are overcrowded, and then we see some that are underutilized. But there's still the safety, health and safety function. No matter what building you're in, no matter what age you are, every child deserves to be in a safe school. And that is around P3s [public-private partnership], and what is the ministry's work to date in that area? Has it set any money aside to explore the concept of P3s, or is this . . . What is the

approach here?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Basically the answer to that question is that the whole P3 initiative is under the purview of SaskBuilds, and they would be in the best position to respond to that, Mr. Forbes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Then I guess I would . . . And I respect that, and I won't get into a debate about their questions. But clearly schools have been identified as, I believe in the budget, as a potential for P3s and bundling schools, that type of thing. Am I right in hearing that?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Certainly the concept of bundling has been articulated, but there's been no decision in terms of which, where, or how. I think, Sheldon, you can . . .

**Ms. Senecal:** — Actually Donna is going to respond. There is some work that the ministry's involved in, and Donna can outline that.

**Ms. Johnson:** — Yes, so it's correct. You have heard of the possibility of schools being bundled and considered for P3s. The officials at SaskBuilds have been working with ministry officials to determine whether or not there's value in having schools procured in that fashion.

And so at this stage what we need to do is confirm whether or not there is in fact a bundle of schools that should be reviewed for a P3 purchase arrangement. We are not far enough along to say anything about where the schools could be or what the final outcome of any of it would be, but certainly the process that SaskBuilds would be engaging in is doing some value-for-money work to determine whether or not using a P3 model would in the long run be financially effective.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Now what kind of committee is struck? Is there a committee at the deputy minister level, assistant deputy minister level? How are these discussions happening and what role or what connection does the Ministry of Learning or Education have in that?

**Ms. Johnson:** — Well and again it's very early stages. At this stage we certainly have had meetings at the deputy minister level and at the ADM level. SaskBuilds is . . . I think it's fair to say that they are still getting their organization in place. Because as far as staff of SaskBuilds go, they're very small at this point and I expect that they are building their operations. So once they've gotten their staff in place, that would be when we would begin to have the working group and the steering committee kind of meetings that you would expect to see with a P3 initiative.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So does the Department of Education, or Ministry of Education, have a timeline over this budget year of how they're approaching P3s? Is there an expectation that this time next year you'll be talking about a certain group of schools or certain set of criteria? Is it a part of the discussion that we had earlier around the capital list?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Again, SaskBuilds is taking the lead on this, Mr. Forbes. And as you've heard ADM Johnson state, that we have some input into that process. So in terms of the

timeline, I can't comment on that exactly, but obviously SaskBuilds is working with the ministry to come up with some proposals.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So I'm hearing a couple of things. One, you don't have a timeline. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — At the moment we don't have the timeline.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. And that the capital list that will come out, that we were talking about earlier, won't be impacted by the work of SaskBuilds this summer or this fiscal year?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Yes. I wouldn't go so far as to say that it could.

**Mr. Forbes:** — How would that happen?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Well when we . . . When SaskBuilds completes their work and the ministry completes its work on the capital prioritization process, at that point in time we would get together to make decisions around the proposals.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And so will there be any kind of public notification that . . . Do you anticipate how the public will become aware that schools will be being considered for P3s? Because I mean part of this is we only get one chance to do estimates, and as far-ranging as they are, we only get to do it once a year, hopefully. We could do it twice a year, but that's when there's a problem. And so that's why I'm concerned about this is that we're not here talking about it as an after the fact, that actually that there were plans happening.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — I think you can appreciate that there's a great deal at stake here. And so when the two processes marry, we will be able to better ascertain that. I think that we're, you know, the growth that we're experiencing is quite significant and quite new and we're developing together a strategy to move forward.

We have some situations that are quite . . . that are putting significant stress on our systems and we need to work together with SaskBuilds to alleviate that. And certainly if a bundle of schools does come out of the capital prioritization list, potential, that certainly has an impact on the list as it exists. And so the work is going on in earnest in that respect in order for us to be able to deal with the growth and provide the environments that are necessary.

**Mr. Forbes:** — As the Minister of Education, do you have any concerns about P3s? What are the things that you're looking for that you want to feel must be dealt with before we go too far down this road?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — At this point in time as the Minister of Education, I'm very excited about the growth we're experiencing in the province and certainly being able to come up with the facilities to provide the learning environments that our children need. That's what's exciting to me and that's what's important. And we will do everything we can to make sure that fiscal probity is assured because we need to make sure that the whole realm of publicly funded education is sustainable

over the long term. So all of those considerations will be applied to the process.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Now in terms of your staff, are you being or have you been briefed in terms of any potential concerns as a ministry in terms of capital, in terms of P3s? I mean as you're part of the discussions, clearly you must be prepared for the discussions, I would think. So I'm curious. Has there been briefing notes developed for you in this area?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — I don't have a briefing note but discussions are ongoing and the ministry keeps me apprised.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. And it's all verbal? It's not . . . They have not provided and they have not done any research in this area — P3s in educational buildings?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — I don't have a briefing note on the P3.

**Mr. Forbes:** — But my question is, have they done any research in terms of P3s in educational buildings?

**Ms. Johnson:** — Yes we've begun our research.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Your own research?

**Ms. Johnson:** — Yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Right. And that is comforting because I mean I hope everybody's . . . When they're a player, you should go in with eyes wide open. And I mean you can have your own ideology but you should have your eyes wide open and not . . . So I really do encourage you to have that because I think how what an important role schools play in our communities, in all our communities, large or small. They have to be solid. They have to be strong. And they are centres of our communities. And you know, we've just talked about funding and arm's length. But yet P3s, what do they really mean?

So I really do want to encourage you to be as fully briefed as possible. And we'll be watching very carefully with that too to make sure that good full value for our money. But yet we can be expecting as many new schools as possible, as quickly as possible.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — If I may, Mr. Forbes, I have every confidence in the ministry staff to keep me briefed and informed of all of the issues with regards to major capital going forward.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I want to spend a few minutes talking about funding inequity amongst school divisions. And that's often a topic that we hear, particularly when schools are overcrowded and different things are happening. What is the view . . . How are the school divisions and funding in terms of the equity among the school divisions? How is that happening at the current time?

[22:45]

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — I'm going to let Val Lusk respond to that, Mr. Forbes.

**Ms. Lusk:** — Valerie Lusk, acting executive director, education funding. I'm just going to . . . In terms of the funding distribution model that we have, it is guided by a number of principles: mutual responsibility, accountability, transparency, equity, and stability. And so equity for us is that boards of education will make decisions that support all students in reaching their full potential. So that means we will recognize cost differences among boards of education in providing the goods and services that they provide to their students. So the formulas within the funding distribution model recognize the cost or consider the cost drivers for the delivery of the education programs.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So how does that play out per school divisions? Are there some school divisions who are receiving more funds than other school divisions?

**Ms. Lusk:** — Yes. Yes there are. There are differences in funding that do occur. For example, one example, a familiar example may be transportation in that, if you have a rural school division, you have transportation and likely more expensive than an urban where the geographic dispersion is not anywhere near what it is in a rural area.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So what is the range of funding? What would be a highly funded school division in our province?

**Ms. Lusk:** — Highly funded in terms of magnitude?

**Mr. Forbes:** — What school division gets the most money in our province right now?

**Ms. Lusk:** — Saskatoon Public receives 200 million.

**Mr. Forbes:** — How much does that work out per student?

**Ms. Lusk:** — I would have to do the calculation per student, although we're trying to get away from per student, Mr. Forbes, because we've tried to, under the funding distribution model, to move to more of a per-school model, recognizing that there are costs associated with running a number of schools. Now there still is some per-student components and subcomponents in the funding model, but we are trying to get away from that notion.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well then tell me about some per-school funding. Do you have some data around that you can share?

**Ms. Lusk:** — Not offhand, I don't believe we do. Oh, per-school funding. Yes, pardon me. I apologize. Per school on budget day . . . And I'll talk about funding in terms of the school division fiscal year, which is September to August, because that's what school divisions are most interested in.

As was mentioned earlier, Saskatoon receives \$213 million. I can go to a very small school division. Creighton in the North receives 5.6. To summarize or in general terms, your four urbans — Saskatoon Public, Saskatoon Catholic, Regina Public, Regina Catholic — would receive the highest amount of funding.

**Mr. Forbes:** — But I'm curious now. You were talking about per-school funding.

**Ms. Lusk:** — I'm sorry. It's 125,000 in multiple components. The funding distribution model has a number of components that are factor driven or empirically driven, and that's how we fund school divisions. There are factors such as governance, administration, instruction, transportation, plant and maintenance. And these are the subcomponents that drive how we fund schools.

**Mr. Forbes:** — But now I just heard you say 125,000. What number does that relate to?

**Ms. Lusk:** — Which one. That is in . . . Yes, approximation of governance, administration, and instructional resources together.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So is that Saskatoon Public is 125,000, or is that across the province? Every school is 125,000.

**Ms. Lusk:** — It would be every school. Yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And is there a variance from that amount?

**Ms. Lusk:** — The variance will occur in other subcomponents of the factor. For example you may have geographic dispersion built into a factor. You may have things such as square footage for utilized space within a school division, that kind of thing.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So in Saskatoon there's 40, Saskatoon Public there's 40-odd schools, I think. Are you then saying that they're all funded at the same level, 125,000?

**Ms. Lusk:** — There is a base part to a lot of . . .

**Mr. Forbes:** — So I'm trying to get to the equity, and I'm getting drawn in, because we have parents who come up and they say, hey lookit, there's one school division that gets \$11,000 per student, and there's another one that gets 6,000. So how do you answer that?

**Ms. Lusk:** — It depends on the particular school division and their circumstances. For example, and you have to look at each of the . . . or part of the discussion relates around the factors and how do we try to achieve equity within each factor.

So for example, supports for learning might be a good one because in supports for learning we have . . . I'm just going to make sure that I'm quoting the right numbers, but . . . And Mr. Forbes, just so you know where I'm pulling my information from is from the '13-14 funding manual. You can find that on our website. We're very transparent in terms of funding. So this tells you how schools, how the funding distribution model works. And indeed school divisions use this extensively in terms of the funding that they receive to ensure that they understand how they're being funded.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So the '13-14 funding manual?

**Ms. Lusk:** — Yes. And it's on the ministry website. It's released budget day. So one of the examples is supports for learning, and in supports for learning, this is a subcomponent of the funding distribution . . . Okay, this is the funding distribution or this is a factor in the funding distribution model. And in the supports for learning, we look at various factors:

intensive supports, enrolment, geographic dispersion, and vulnerability.

And then we dive even further. So in terms of vulnerability, we will look at, within a school division, data that tells us low income, low education, low parent, non-official language, and immigration. So if you have a high incidence of those factors, you will tend to receive more funding.

**Mr. Forbes:** — How do you get that data?

**Ms. Lusk:** — Right now — we're reviewing this factor this year — a lot of the data comes from census data, which is . . . We're looking for more current sources of data to help us with that.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I'm just wondering about the long form.

**Ms. Lusk:** — And that's, you know, to your point. That's why we're looking for more current . . . In terms of equity and differences per student, we have differences that will occur in transportation, in plant operations. We look in instructional costs depending on school size. We have a sliding scale in the basic construction that is dependent on the size of the school, and so that's another way we try to achieve equity under the funding model.

**Mr. Forbes:** — You know, and I appreciate that. And I know that there was a huge redo of the foundation operation grant because it got very convoluted and tried to meet many of the factors that you described. And from what I understand, that was supposed to be simplified. But I guess I'll have to look at that manual to see because I'm just not seeing the . . .

I understand what you're saying about equity because you have to recognize these factors, but there was supposed to be a simpler way that students would see and families would see some sense of equity in terms of relatively the same amount of money. Because from what we understand and we hear — and I'll take a look at the data that you've talked about — but there is a wide range of systems in terms of school systems or divisions that have, seem to have more resources than others.

And there are pressures, and I know the government is working hard to recognize those pressures ahead of time but, even so, not quickly enough. As the minister alluded to earlier, there was a projection of what the school systems will be this fall, but I don't believe — now maybe correct me if I'm wrong, Mr. Minister — but you're not recognizing those numbers until further into the school year, even though you know that the schools will be having more students in them on September 1st.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — The money that's set aside for current enrolment will be released at September 30th when current enrolment is actualized. That's the first time that's ever happened. As you know, the foundation operating grant always worked on the previous September 30th, so in fact school divisions were getting their money a year later. This process will allow school divisions to have immediate access to those students that are there on their doorsteps September 30th, 2013. And that's a significant shift in funding.

And just to add to what Ms. Lusk is adding, is talking about, all

of these . . . It is an intricate process, but it really does address equity across the system. You can always figure out a number per student. And that's just not . . . I mean that's one way to portray the information, but it doesn't consider all of the factors that went into arriving at that number.

And so I can understand when other publics would say, well you get this much for this, or this school division's getting this much per student and this one's getting this much. But when you consider geographic location, is it fair that or is equitable that students in northern Saskatchewan, there should be a little bit more funding because of distance, because of isolation, because of those kinds of vulnerability factors. There should be some more money there, I would argue.

And that there are economies of scale in the large urban centres, so the per student rate may rationally be somewhat less because the factors don't apply in the same manner, urban, as they do in an isolated community. But you can always come back to a per-student grant.

**Mr. Forbes:** — No. But I do, as somebody who represents a very urban riding . . . And I've taught in very . . . I won't say remote or northern, but close to the North. We did get northern housing for a couple years. There are challenges. And I mean and we know, the joint task force identifies poverty as one of the issues that students, some students face that's incredible. So we need more. We need supports.

And often, often — and I come from a rural background and have taught in rural Saskatchewan and have taught in urban Saskatchewan too — the challenges we have in urban cities can be really significant. And I know and I often hear this: economies of scale. And that works to a certain extent, but boy when you get to downtown or the core communities, it can be . . . And not just that, but there's some real challenges in urban settings. Not to say, not to say there isn't in rural Saskatchewan, but I think urban communities are often just thought of, they can just walk to school or they can just do this or they can just do that. It's not quite as simple as that.

[23:00]

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — No, it's not. And I would agree with you that the challenges in urban Saskatchewan are significant. I understand that fully. And the funding distribution model is just that — it's a model to distribute the pie. The old system had its disadvantages because those areas that had access to a tax base and taxed to create programs unique to their particular communities, although beneficial, certainly didn't allow for equity across the system. And when we talk about publicly funded education, we certainly want to be as equitable as we can. And this funding formula is an attempt to do that.

We have work to do on the funding formula. We've stated that. We'll continue to work with the school divisions to come up with those solutions because they're pointing out the same kinds of issues that you are. We do have some issues around transportation, and we do have issues around supports for learning.

However we listened to the sector when they told us that we needed to do something about current enrolment. We did that,

and obviously the sector is responding because it's a significant shift. And in that current enrolment of course is an increase in dollars that go to some of the factors Ms. Lusk is talking about. And that would be supports for learning. That would be increased amounts for transportation. That would be increased amounts for intensive supports and other resources. So although not perfect, and we're into year 2 of it, we are making some headway in terms of providing quality education for every student in the province. And I think we've made some headway there.

**Mr. Forbes:** — But you know, but it's been very clear that — from some of the major stakeholders, the STF, and the SSBA — that the funding that you've provided this year for operating for schools is not as significant as it should have been. And some of the other initiatives that you have, they have questions about because it's just . . . The needs in the schools are really growing, and that's a good thing. But if there's a time when we should be able to afford it and make those choices, then we should be making those choices.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — We increased operating by 2.3 per cent. It's an increase; it's not a cut. And we needed to make decisions within our balanced growth agenda, and we did that. And we're asking our sector partners to look at how they do business and make decisions that are fiscally responsible as well, and I know that they are doing that.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I want to ask . . . I do have a note down here for Connaught School. That was the third school. And now Connaught School is a unique school, the challenges they have particularly, and the parents and the community has been asking for special consideration primarily because it's just had its centennial. It's in fact a heritage school, and many would say that.

And it's interesting. Somebody asked me to ask this question because we see this happening in other parts of Canada where we see schools, such as Connaught, that probably present challenges because of the way the building is. It's a heritage building. It's much more . . . I shouldn't say . . . Actually in many ways it's not as expensive as people think, but it can be perceived to be expensive to keep old schools. It's better just to rebuild or redo or build a new school.

Has the ministry, in its facilities branch, considered what to do with older schools? Because you have a lot of them and to just say, what we're going to do is build new schools all the time, is doing away with a lot of our heritage. I can think in Saskatoon, St. Mary's School, we had this same debate, what to do with St. Mary's School. And it was decided to demolish the school and build a brand new school, a very nice school, and that's a good thing. But there is something about our communities that talk about heritage and especially schools that are centres of our communities.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Well as you know, school divisions are elected to make decisions around schools in their division. As it pertains to Connaught School, a process was undertaken. And they recommended, that community in . . . That school division in consultation with their school communities made the recommendation. And the government, if the school comes up for construction, we'll consider the recommendation that comes

from the board of education. In that, the ministry is committed to working with the stakeholders, the school community council, and the board to provide the best facility for the students in the Connaught area.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So have you been consulted or asked about Connaught School and other schools? Now this would have been before your time but, as you are minister, you assume all the stuff from previous ministers. I'm not sure if you were asked about St. Mary's School in Saskatoon or any other school that has significant heritage property or value?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — I have not. I was not consulted on St. Mary's School.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Connaught School, have you been, have you received letters or any . . .

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — I've received correspondence from Connaught community.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And so it is the position . . . And you don't have a position. You've done no research about schools as heritage properties. Or has the ministry done any work in that area?

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Historically there may have been some information, but we haven't done, we haven't done that, and Mr. Ramstead just informed me that we don't have a historical designation. We don't believe there's a school with a historical designation in the province. Is that correct?

**Mr. Ramstead:** — I'm not aware of any.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And I appreciate that answer. It's a good answer to a good question. But I was thinking more whether you've done a policy paper, any kind of research, or have a statement about what happens if a school . . . if that does happen and the implications for the ministry.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — No, we don't.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. With that, Mr. Minister, I think we've reached our time for this time but we'll meet again. And I want to thank you, and I want to thank your officials for their answers tonight. Thank you very much.

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Thank you for that, Mr. Forbes. And I too would like to thank my colleagues who've stayed with us, and certainly to the excellent work and responses by the staff. So thank you, everybody, for your work. Thanks, Mr. Forbes. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. If there are not any more comments or remarks, the time now being 11:09, that being past the hour of adjournment, this committee stands adjourned until Tuesday, April 30th, at 3 p.m. Good night one and all.

[The committee adjourned at 23:09.]