



# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

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## STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Mr. Delbert Kirsch, Chair  
Batoche

Mr. David Forbes, Deputy Chair  
Saskatoon Centre

Mr. Mark Docherty  
Regina Coronation Park

Mr. Greg Lawrence  
Moose Jaw Wakamow

Mr. Paul Merriman  
Saskatoon Sutherland

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. Welcome to the Standing Committee on Human Services. My name is Delbert Kirsch, and I am Chair of the Human Services Committee. With us tonight is also Mr. Mark Docherty, Mr. Greg Lawrence, Ms. Nadine Wilson, and Mr. Kevin Phillips and Mr. Trent Wotherspoon.

Tonight we will resume consideration of the estimates for the Ministry of Education, and then we will discuss the estimates for Labour Relations and Workplace Safety.

**General Revenue Fund  
Education  
Vote 5**

**Subvote (ED01)**

**The Chair:** — We now will begin our consideration of vote 5, Education, subvote (ED01). Minister Morgan is here with his officials. Mr. Minister, please introduce your officials and make your opening comments.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Thank you again, Mr. Chair. Good evening. I am, my notes say, delighted to be joined by my colleagues. In fact I am joined by my colleagues, and in any event pleased to be here to present the continuation of the Ministry of Education's 2014-2015 budget.

Mr. Chair, before I introduce the officials, I would like to make a minor correction. Last time we were here, at *Hansard*, page 658 on April 7th, I made reference to the ECIPs, the early childhood intervention program. I stated that we funded ECIPs for about \$11 million and about 10 per cent of it is funded by the federal government. In fact the correct funding, the ministry funds ECIPs for approximately \$4 million, in fact \$3.913 million. And then there is in addition to that, \$850,000 that comes from the federal government for on-reserve services. So the issue in the dialogue was correct, but the numbers were in fact wrong.

I'm joined tonight by a number of our officials: Dan Florizone, deputy minister; Greg Miller, assistant deputy minister; Donna Johnson, assistant deputy minister; Clint Repski, acting assistant deputy minister; Robert Spelliscy, executive director, corporate services; Angela Chobanik, acting executive director, education funding; Tim Caleval, executive director of student achievement and support; Gerry Craswell, executive director, information management and support; Edith Nagy, acting executive director, strategic policy; Lynn Allan, executive director, early years; Sheldon Ramstead, executive director, infrastructure; Brett Waytuck, provincial librarian, provincial library and literacy office; Doug Volk, executive director, Teachers' Superannuation Commission; and Drew Dwernychuk, chief of staff.

Mr. Chair, I had a number of opening remarks last time dealing with the sector list, the priority list. It is not my intention to repeat those, but I would acknowledge that the statements that we made in the budget items are things that the government is strongly supportive going forward. So for the record, I want just

to restate that those continue to be our priorities. So we're certainly prepared to answer questions.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much, Minister Morgan. And, Mr. Wotherspoon, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you to the minister. Thank you to all the officials that have joined us once again here this evening for what I believe will conclude our estimates process here tonight. And while I'll lead off with a host of different areas, then we'll be concluding the evening or our time with our critic for child care and early learning, who will be the member from Riversdale who will be coming in here in a little while.

Just to touch base on the ECIP clarification, so it's \$4 million annually that the province is funding and the federal portion is 850,000?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The numbers I used last time was, the total program was 11, about a million was from the feds. In fact, it's 4 and 1.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — And that's on an annual, ongoing basis?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — That's correct. And what I'd indicated earlier was the federal funding will cease. It runs out at the end of June of this year.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — And what follow-up do you intend to take with the federal government on this front?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We've written to the federal minister. I've had a meeting with Minister Valcourt. And at the present time, it's left in the hands of the officials to look at and compare what other programs are going to be there. We regard it as a very important program and want to look at every option that we can.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Sure. Thank you, just a follow-up. We spent some time chatting about province-wide testing, or standardized testing last week. A few things have happened since then. There's been the sector plan was released. Some, I guess, articles have run in some major newspapers saying that the standardized testing has been shelved by your government. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The large-scale American testing that would be every student in every class in every year is something that . . . There was speculation some time ago it was something that the province was considering doing. I don't think there was ever a formal decision made one way or the other. But in any event, that type of testing is simply not something that is under any current, active consideration. And in fact what we would prefer to do instead is have consultation within the sector, and with the sector partners in particular — STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation], teachers, and the divisions — and ask them, ask teachers what type of assessment and evaluation is appropriate and develop some better and more appropriate tools.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — I don't want to get caught up in wordplay at all about the, like the Americanized, or the every

class every grade, and what large-scale might mean to you as the minister, what it may mean to others. So I think what most people would see as a standardized test or what those that study this — and certainly parents, and educators, students — would see it as is something that's broad-based, province-wide, across the province in all divisions with a certain grouping, let's say a certain age group for example, in a certain area that's large-scale, province-wide, standardized testing. Would that sort of testing . . . Is that off the table? Is the minister now . . . Is that scrapped, that sort of consideration?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I think the answer that I gave where the large-scale American testing is there, what would be appropriate, it would be I think something that comes from the people or the professionals that are doing it.

One of the examples that came from the discussions we had last week at SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association] would be a situation for early years reading where it would be one-on-one with the teacher, where the teacher would sit with the student and listen to the child read and provide a reference whether the child was reading adequately or whether the child needed additional supports or not. And then if you decided okay, we're doing that for all grade 1 or grade 2 or whatever year it does, I, you know, I don't want to get into semantics of whether that would be regarded as large scale or not, but that might be the type of things there.

I'm not an educator and I can't speak to what's best practices, but I know that we need to develop a method of getting best practices and looking to the people that are doing the teaching and asking them and asking education professionals what we can do to make sure that we're meeting our goals and meeting our standards.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — So it's fair to say that the headline that standardized testing being shelved . . . You said you're not an educator, and fair that you'd identify that, but certainly I would suspect that you've been briefed quite heavily on what's perceived to be standardized testing. The headline then that your government had shelved standardized testing, if your government is still contemplating the potential of a province-wide testing tool that would go across, say, a grade level to all students, that would be a standardized test and one that would be mandated by the province. So having that in mind, would it then be unfair to say that your government has scrapped standardized tests, as I think some of the papers did this past weekend?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I appreciate the question you're asking. And I think one of the problems with the words standardized testing becoming toxic is nobody really knew or had an expectation of what those words meant. So I don't intend to use the words standardized testing, I think because they're so capable of being misconstrued, taken out of context, or having a different meaning put on them. I don't think it's something that I want to . . . I'm not able to discuss it in terms of what is or what is not standardized testing.

What I can say is, as we go forward, we put all kinds of testing and curriculum on pause and brought in Patricia Prowse and Russ Mirasty to work through these things with us. So they've been giving us advice on various things, and we would look to

people like that, and perhaps some of the other people that were participating in the sector plan, as to how we might develop good methods of assessment or evaluation.

I think it's fair to say that the best people to evaluate students are the teachers and the ones that are in the classroom. And we'll look to them to work out what best practices and what best methodology is. But I'm not in a position to debate what is or what isn't standardized or what is this or what is that, but that is the method that we have for going forward.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Well I guess I'll say that I'm less than satisfied with those answers and the approach of government on this front. And I know that many that have been tracking this file will be disappointed as well, but I'll leave those points here tonight. We can pursue that at another time.

What's noteworthy is that resources are needed to support learning, to support students where they count in the classrooms, and we certainly need to be supporting our teachers. And it's important to note that teachers are assessing ongoing, all the time, in a daily basis in all sorts of different capacities, and certainly it's those educators that play a key role moving forward. And you know, the minister referenced maybe the teacher administering the standardized test to the students and used that as an example of maybe how the standardized test may not be a standardized test then, or I'm not sure where you were going with that, but I think we could spend a lot of time on this tonight.

What I'm concerned though is it feels to me that your ministry under your leadership and your government is spending a lot of time in an area that isn't in the best interest of students, and that the listening that should have occurred with the sector hasn't occurred on this front. And I'm disappointed with the clarity, lack thereof, and the ongoing direction. And certainly it's clear here tonight that, you know, standardized testing is not off the table from your government. You've stated that you're going to stop using the words yourself but, you know, the teachers know what these tests look like.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I think when you talk to individual teachers, almost invariably they say they know that they want their students to perform well. They want to be able to demonstrate that the students are performing well, and that they are proud of the work that they do, as they rightly should be. And what we want to do and expect to do is work with them to develop methods that are appropriate for doing that without being intrusive, without being aggressive, or taking wrong stands. We need to be supportive of our teaching professionals. It's a process that we're working through, with having put things on pause with the sector plan and with the student-first initiative, and we're going down that road.

I mentioned last time we were here, and don't wish to politicize the evening, as to what the NDP's [New Democratic Party] record is on standardized testing. I have not heard the NDP either here or in question period respond as to why they want to distance themselves from it. Before they've left that on the record. They haven't stood up and said with any degree of clarity, we're not on this path any more. What happened prior to 2007 is something we're not there. So the record and the legacy of the NDP is clear and it's there. We're going to continue to

point that out to people unless you want to demonstrate some clarity and take that off the table. Now I read in what the record of the NDP was before, but I don't . . . You know, it's not a debate we need to have tonight. We have officials here and I certainly want to make them available to answer your questions.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Okay. Well it seems that all this . . . You know, some of the signals that you sent, maybe to the media, that standardized testing's off the table, well of course we see that's not the case. You said that you wanted to listen better to teachers who had been of course disrespected by your government. It seems now that you already have your goal in mind and it's a matter of maybe working on some nuance with teachers to arrive at some sort of repackaged, rebranded standardized testing which the evidence just doesn't support. And I see this sort of charade just as not in the best interests of students. As far as standardized assessment on a go-forward basis that's instituted and mandated province-wide, it's simply not in the best interests of our students across this province.

And for all the competing interests that exist in the system, and just so that you're clear where the New Democrats stand on this front: we don't need mandated, province-wide standardized tests to be implemented and added on top of all of the work that students are doing and all the work teachers are doing. And for you to be adding another whole layer of testing, and doing so in a province-wide standardized basis, really takes a lot of teachers away from the work they need to be doing in the classroom.

[19:15]

And so that's where the New Democrats are, and we'll continue to advocate that not only that the dollars should be diverted, that I hear there might be some hope on that front, but that you give up as a government the push towards this and sort of what seems to be almost a relentless, you know, approach. If you can't sort of have it through the front door, it seems your government's intent on working different approaches and bringing it in through the back door. And we'd rather you be direct with Saskatchewan teachers. And we'll continue to advocate that new, province-wide standardized testing just isn't in the best interests of students or teachers.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — While I appreciate your comments, I don't agree with your assessment of the position that we're taking.

We're moving forward. We're doing the consultation with teachers and we're going to continue to do that. We're going to continue to remind people of the large-scale assessment that was taking place in 2007. And I have not yet heard anyone from the NDP Party say, we were wrong at the time we were doing that, the increase from 11,000 to 70,000 students that was going up by the tens of thousands and would have continued to go up. So had there not been a change of government in 2007, we would have seen large-scale assessment all the way across the province, by the tens if not hundreds of thousands of people. So I guess what I'd like to hear the NDP say is, we reject the position that our own party took in 2007. If you want to put that position forward, I don't think you can put it forward without rejecting the position that you had as a party in 2007. And it's a contradiction that exists, and it's a contradiction that we would likely continue to point out to people. However you know it's

something we could spend the rest of the evening on. Or if you have other questions, we could certainly move on to those.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Yes, and we can maybe spend a little more time on discussions of stuff from the past. I have to say though like this is a long ways from 2007. And back at that time, I was an educator in the classroom, certainly wasn't elected to this Assembly. And where my biggest focus is right now is about the realities of today and today's classroom, and that classroom is requiring some attention and has complexity to it. It has needs. And to see the wasteful exercise of this government in pursuit of province-wide standardized testing has just been an utter disappointment.

And as far as the other piece, I'm not sure if the minister can . . . I'd certainly welcome anything that he has that would display what might be province-wide standardized testing that he wants to talk about from 2007 and before. I'd invite that to be sent across to me. It doesn't have to be here tonight but into the future. But I really think what we owe to students, to teachers is to focus on the here and now and to focus on the fact that your government seems focused to go on this province-wide standardized testing piece, something that's clearly not in their interest.

I would like to get to something that is in their interest and that's the redeployment of the dollars that were put into this budget, earmarked for standardized testing. I'm pleased to see the potential that those are going to be redeployed. This is something, as you know, we called for immediately as the budget came out. We saw this as supporting a wrong-headed priority. I understand that this is something that may in fact be the case. So I just wouldn't mind hearing a bit about the redeployment of those \$5 million thereabouts, what that process looks like and where those dollars are going to be received.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I answered questions in the media about that earlier. It's certainly our expectation that the money would be used for front-line education. There's a variety of different areas. The money is in a capital line budget, so we may have to go back to treasury board, whether it would fall into capital or supports for learning. But our expectation is it would be used where . . . and we haven't had discussions with the officials yet, and will, as to an appropriate place. But to the extent that your expectation is that it be used for front-line supports and help for students, that's certainly what our expectation is as well.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Okay. The timeline around making that decision and the process for reallocating those resources?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The budget is before the Assembly now, so we're not going to change anything that's in the budget now. We've indicated that we do not plan to spend large amounts of money on computer programs or other software. We have Russ Mirasty and Patricia Prowse doing their work now. We anticipate that we'll be winding down sometime in May or June, and we may want to ask them to do some additional work around the issue of evaluation of students, working with other experts. So we'll have that discussion as we go forward. And I don't know what the costs might be, but that would be a reasonable timeline where we would start looking at what other things might happen. And at the same time we'll have, you know, whatever other issues have arisen out of the

correspondence or communication we're having with school divisions.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — The larger amount, you said that you're not spending a large amount on technology. Can you speak to that piece?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I'd indicated when we were here last night the programs that were there, and I have no other figures that I can provide. You know, if there is . . . It's something I would look to the officials and to people like Mirasty and Prowse for direction on.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — So right now you're basing how to reallocate those resources based off the conclusion of the consultations. And then I think you'd referenced another exercise. You mentioned here about tasking them with another exercise.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We may want to ask them to participate in other things further but I haven't had that discussion with them yet.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — I think you used the word evaluation in . . .

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — If we're having discussion on assessment or evaluation, those would be people we would want to engage.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Okay. So evaluation, so is this kind of where you're punting the discussions around standardized testing right now? Is that how you see that?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I don't see punting anything. I see having some discussions about developing a plan that's meaningful in going forward. And it will not be the ministry's plan. It will be the plan of the sector developed in conjunction with the school divisions, STF, and the teachers and parents in our province.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — You talked about diverting those dollars or deploying them to more useful places in the life of a student. Could you characterize how you would rank right now the most pressing areas of need?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — You know, I could spend a long time dealing with things that we need, and I would look to the people that are in the ministry to do it. I know that we had people . . . Some of the ministries or some of the divisions wanted to bump things up on their capital priority list. Those might be some things. And I can't, I wouldn't speculate any further than to say, you know, some of the ministries have raised capital issues.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Has the minister heard concerns . . . So the capital pieces are certainly real. We've spoken about those. We've raised them with yourself as well. What about basically within classrooms and in some of the supports or some of the challenges that students are facing within classrooms?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — There may be some opportunities in that area as well. As I indicated, we would look to the officials within the ministry and look to have some discussion with the

sector partners.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Why do you want to wait until after . . . There's the consultation that ends at the end of May, I believe, and then you've talked about retasking that group to go out and look at standardized testing and evaluation. Why are you waiting for that to deploy these resources?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We've developed a budget. We've advised the various divisions what's in the budget. They're developing their plans according to that. It would be premature to try and say okay, now before the money has even been distributed or where we're at, that we're making changes on that. We'll work through the early part of the year and make plans as we go along.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Okay. But you're making changes right now to the budget, just in the decisions that you're identifying right now. We've called for the redeployment of those dollars, but I don't get why you would wait until you've introduced a new concept, which would be retasking those individuals that have gone out to do the consultations and creating a new exercise to go out on standardized testing and evaluation. Why would you wait for the conclusion of that to deploy the resources to where they're needed?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We have a budget process that we completed. We went through a formal budget exercise. We consulted with all of the school divisions. We made plans. We worked with them as they developed their capital plans. We have still ongoing discussions with school divisions because some of the funding formulas, as you are aware, have changed. We're working through that part of it. It would be premature to try and allocate sort of on top of that. We will wait till we have a good assessment or a good understanding of how things have played out, where resources are or are not needed, so that we get the most benefit from those dollars.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Okay. But what you've said was that you were going to look to . . . There was a consultation in place and then you were looking at creating another exercise as it related to standardized testing and evaluation. Why would you wait to deploy those dollars until after that process?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — It would be premature to make any kind of a formal decision. We've indicated that two of the hoshins would be reading and First Nations, and those are the type of things that the money may be committed for. But it's something that we want to work through, through the processes and do due diligence on it.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Okay. But your story keeps changing. You said that you were going to wait, that you were going to maybe, after the ends of these consultations, that you were going to get another exercise going on standardized testing.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — There's nothing changed. You asked what type of things we might do. I said we were waiting until the end of the period with Mirasty and Prowse. We intend to do that. We intend to have further discussions with them. And at that point, we may have . . . You indicated what type of things we would, and I said reading and First Nations. So there's nothing changed.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — But you said you were going to task them.

[19:30]

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We will ask them to give us some assistance with assessment evaluation. We expect to do that. They've given us good advice on a lot of things. There may be some costs that they incur. I don't know. We don't intend to allocate money until we've got a plan and a timeline.

We're pleased with where we landed in the issues with the sector plan. It took a long time to work through the process on that because it was largely driven by the divisions. We heard Mr. Forbes virtually every day in the House presenting petitions, that he was calling for there to be a strategic plan and a plan in place. So you know, it took a number of months, and I had sympathy for him presenting the petitions because I knew full well that that work was being undertaken by the divisions.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Well I think that there's a lot of delays to getting those dollars to where they make a difference for school boards.

And we got something from the divisions that I think is truly remarkable. It's something that we have the support of all of the divisions. Janet Foord said:

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — You may have that opinion.

For the first time in my 26 years of governance, it's a positive relationship where we can pick up the phone and have the conversation . . . [where it needs to be].

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Yes. You know, of course it was . . . You know, it was strange that these dollars were included in the budget where they were in the first place if it wasn't the minister's intent to utilize them in this testing area. And I think that just anyone observing this whole discussion, and the confusion from this minister and ministers previous and the government on this issue, will have them questioning just really what your intentions are. And again here tonight, just no clarity at all around a process for deploying dollars when they're needed for students is disappointing.

A year ago, we asked for change in this province. And in a year, we've come a long way. We've got a sector plan that has identified two priorities, but yet we've been able to maintain our local priorities.

You did talk about boards. And certainly I've spoken with boards as well and hearing about the pressures and challenges that they're facing in the current budget year as a result of this budget. What's your assessment, what's your period of time to assess where school boards are at and to reconcile and resolve some of those challenges?

So my intention would be to ask the officials to work with the divisions, identify some key priorities, and spend the money where it will do the most good. And I don't think that you and I are likely in a great deal of disagreement as to what some of those things might be. But as a matter of process, I intend to let the officials do their work.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I wouldn't put a timeline on it. There's discussions that are ongoing. There's probably discussions that I don't know about and I suspect that when . . . I remember when I was on the school board, there was always ongoing discussions between the board and the ministry on this issue or that issue or changing numbers on where enrolments were or were not. So that's a never-ending process.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Okay. Where we seem to have a point of difference, though, is the minister said, there is no bad place to be spending money in education. I think standardized testing is not the place these dollars should be spent. And certainly I'm disappointed here tonight to hear again the lack of clarity, to hear that consideration for standardized testing is still on the table in that the conversation for that whole piece is being kicked down the road a bit.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — It seems to me that this should be a priority if you have school boards that are feeling that there's impacts from the current budget and you have dollars that could be redeployed to make a difference. It seems to me that it's wasteful to wait for the end of one consultation, to then kick forward your standardized testing review that you've referenced here, all while leaving those dollars not utilized in a way that can make a difference for boards and students.

Could you just describe though when you're canvassing and dealing directly with the school divisions of course, is the conversations that you would have directly with them the same kind that I would have? Is there a formal process with formal information or questions that you're going to be requesting some sort of submission from school boards? If so, what sort of timeline and what sort of questions will you be asking?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Our intention is to do due diligence. It takes a while to put together a budget as we go through things in the fall. And you've identified some of the things that you think are appropriate for the money to be spent, and I don't disagree with those items. There are no bad ideas where money should be spent in education.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The school divisions have got a direct line or a direct email where they can submit questions regarding funding formulas or funding issues. And I haven't been privy to a lot of the things that have come in on the email. I know a lot of them are, how is this calculated; how is that calculated? Can we use this money for this, use that money for that? So a lot of the divisions are working through that.

There's competing priorities, and it's a matter of saying, how do you treat . . . Do you give money to one school division over another? How do you change your formula to do something else? Where do you do things? So it's something that takes some time to work through. I have confidence in the officials to work through those type of things, and I intend to let them do it.

You'll be aware from the media that there was specific issues in Saskatoon that . . . And the formula is complex, but it's a sliding scale. The more students you have, the less money you receive because you're expected to have more economies of scale. The largest school division in the province is of course Saskatoon Public, and what they're saying is that, well the formula doesn't work well for us. It's because you run out of

efficiencies. So we've asked the officials to have a look at it.

So that's the nature of the discussion that's taking place. I haven't participated in those discussions, but I know the officials have met with Saskatoon Public and are continuing those kinds of discussions, saying, well what about this; what about that? So those things are on an ongoing basis.

I have confidence in the officials to work with and identify the problems with it. And I'm not afraid to pick up the phone and phone Saskatoon Public directly and say, is this being resolved; is that being resolved? And so we're working our way through those things.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Okay. Will you be initiating though something that each school division can interface with and let you know their priorities, let them know that you know where the budget is a challenge for them or where the budget has failed them or where the pressures are?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We have the direct email address. That's where things are being funnelled through right now. I met with the SSBA last week, with their executive. They identified a variety of other questions that they had, and we'll continue to work both through the SSBA and with the individual school divisions.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — You're hearing concerns about the efficiency piece, where your ministry has effectively asked school boards to go in and find reductions. Many divisions are just telling me, they just don't know where they're going to cut that's not going to impact a program in a significant way. So are you hearing those concerns?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — As a province, we've implemented reductions through ministries and Crown corporations, and I think the number of government employees is down by something in excess of 2,000 in the last seven years. And it was done through meeting various efficiency targets, and it was done without layoffs or without significant, you know, problems.

And it's the same kind of exercise that we're saying to school boards. Government has done belt tightening. We expect you to be efficient. We expect you to allocate resources to the front line. We expect you to maintain resources in the classroom. If you've got problems, we'll work with you. And I think most of the school divisions have over the last number of years adopted various efficiency targets, and we're continuing to do that as well.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Okay. So you referenced where you've cut public servants in different areas.

And I look at what's going on in education right now, where we have a growth in the population which is a wonderful thing, growth and complexity in the classroom, and then if you look at the bulk of the budget, it's front-line staff. It's teachers, support workers of various capacities, various roles. Does the minister feel that there's a place for cuts within those areas? From my perspective, it's ludicrous. The system is under-resourced the way it is in those places.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I would take some issue that there's been cuts. In fact, you know, every year we've had a large increase in operating funding. You know, there's always things where you would like to, you'd look at this and say, is this a priority or is that a priority? It's a matter of careful allocation.

I can tell you that since 2007, the pupil/teacher ratio has gotten better, not worse. There are more supports in the classroom than there have ever been. The amount of supports have gone up faster than the enrolment. So we're continuing to provide supports, and it's a matter of working with the divisions. But I'm going to let the deputy minister provide some information.

**Mr. Florizone:** — Great. Thank you for the question. In terms of the efficiencies that we're examining, we had an undertaking in 2012, April of 2012, which was an efficiency review within the sector. Deloitte was selected as the firm to undertake that efficiency review. And while there are still opportunities beyond the Deloitte review, it was interesting, some of the areas and directions that were recommended under the Deloitte review. One of the key areas was collaborative purchasing, and this goes beyond just simply pencils, looking at the vast array of supplies that are purchased. And again as you've indicated, the 20 per cent of the budget which is non-salary still has a fairly significant area for efficiencies. In fact it could be as high as 17.7 million, according to Deloitte.

Now the way to achieve this is not by cutting but by grouping together, having the divisions work, think, and act as one in their purchasing. We had some experimentation early on with portables. The SSBA has done some work with legal. They've also done work with insurance. So centralized purchasing or looking here on these decentralized activities could be a huge opportunity for us. They also increased the use of electronic funds transfers; use of PCards or purchase cards, something that the government is extending to the divisions; analyzing the use of transportation; and consistency of policies in transportation, including route optimization.

One of the examples of where we have moved on this front is the area of common school design. So Deloitte recommended it, and we've worked with the divisions to come up with ideas around a common design to be able to achieve the economies of scale and scope by acting together on that design. There are other examples that I could go through, but I think it'd be fair to say there's untapped potential.

And we've met just last week with directors of education and chief financial officers. The SSBA in turn had a presentation on shared services opportunities to act collectively. And I think the art of the possible is there are very real savings that don't result in negative consequences to students, in fact positive consequences in terms of realigning, standardizing, and approaching the services in a way that maintains quality and safety at the forefront.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Certainly some of the pieces that were identified, you know, are sort of common sense pieces that certainly could be of consideration.

But I know the efficiencies, the dollars that have been, I guess the reductions — I don't know how to characterize what the ministries have been given this year; I guess an efficiency target



or a reduction in their budget — it seems to me that they're going to be problematic for many, many boards. There's a few pieces that were identified by officials there just on the piece of the portables. And I look back to the minister. This was nothing short of a real debacle. It was disappointing.

I know a lot of school divisions really spoke out about this one where they felt that they hadn't received value through that process, but where then they also didn't receive the product that they needed. And it wasn't on time; it was late. I know in my riding, one was hung up in a tree on McCarthy Boulevard. I won't blame that part entirely on the process, but it wasn't a straightforward process. So I don't know that I would hold that debacle up as an example of success with the education sector on this front.

There was a mention of purchasing services. I don't know if that was just a slip of the tongue, or was there consideration of purchasing services and, if so, what services are being considered?

**Mr. Florizone:** — I can tell you that this is not, in terms of fearmongering, what kind of services. Legal services were one of the examples of where we've actively done it with the SSBA.

So just back to the portables and then I can go through, in a more fulsome way, the list. Of the portables, the savings were estimated at 1.6 million. So not a small amount and in fact led to a fairly significant savings for the province. Were there bumps in the road? Absolutely. This was the first round of collectively doing something. Should the ministry be in the business of providing these group services, these shared services? I would say absolutely not.

There are groups and ways of organizing our work where we can have a very strong organization and governance to be able to move that forward. I say this because we could be the best portable purchasing group that ever was in Saskatchewan. I'd rather find out who that is and make them the best than have the ministry maintain that as their core competency. Our competency is policy, direction, providing support to our minister.

On the areas, just to go into a little more detail, we look at facilities — electricity, power, utilities, natural gas — group purchasing in these areas. Transportation I mentioned. There are board-operated vehicles. And the vehicles that we operate, that we purchase, not only the quality but being able to influence the supplier in terms of what we need for the gravel roads that we're running thousands and thousands of kilometres down. Fuel for those vehicles, the ability to group purchase and group price around fuel and maintenance of those vehicles. IT [information technology] hardware, IT in terms of phones, fax, portable communication, Internet, instruction resources, textbooks.

We have the ability to group together and take a look at professional development and how we deliver it. All too often the 28 divisions are seeking the same speakers of the same topics. How could they work and think and act as one and pool that resource? How about materials and supplies? The types of supplies and facility supports that are necessary for ongoing maintenance and work — instructional resources, materials,

printing, IT in general, instruction resources — and that just gives you a sense of some of the categories that are included.

So I think there's great potential. I think the portables, what it taught us is, number one, as a ministry, we don't want to be in that business in the future. But number two, we ought not to leave that alone. Group purchasing of portables had significant impact province-wide.

Some of the larger school divisions may not have seen as great a benefit, but when we think and act as one, as a whole province-wide, everyone benefits. In this case 1.6 million.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — So moving forward, just keeping this area, I mean there's some practical pieces that are discussed there for consideration where are value to consider, but caution as well in areas around professional development. I mean caution on these fronts to standardize and centralize that sort of process. There's still something important of ensuring that local needs can be met and, you know, I hope, and I don't think I have to tell anyone in this room, but there's a big difference between what a teacher in La Ronge might need as opposed to southeast Regina as opposed to north central Regina, and use all the different examples across the province.

[19:45]

**Mr. Florizone:** — It's an excellent point that you raise around context matters. We need to make sure that we're very responsive, as we have been with our sector planning, in terms of addressing the priorities of the local divisions and local schools, community matters.

But the other piece of this is, as we do things collectively, we don't need to standardize everything. We standardize that which is best standardized. We could work very closely for instance with the STF in organizing and coordinating certain areas of professional development, making sure that it's teacher led and teacher informed. At the same time, we can allow for local context so that when we're organizing events that are PD [professional development] related — and again as a non-teacher, I wouldn't pretend to know the detail — but I think this would be an excellent opportunity to be able to think differently, rather than fly in certain speakers from destinations multiple times, to coordinate those trips so that there would be efficiency with respect to whoever and however we plan to approach this.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — So important points about making sure local autonomy is in place for our boards and for professional autonomy for our teachers, and be careful moving forward. I hope there's not a professional development day for the minister to tell us all why standardized testing is good for us, but I say that in jest, Mr. Minister.

When I look at some of the other pieces, there's the formula's being phased in and there's impacts on some divisions over a number of years. What concerns is the minister hearing about . . . I guess we're maybe, I think we're two years left of that phasing-in process.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The question you're asking in regards to a transition funding on the formula, the officials tell me that

they expect that the transition process to take two to four years. This is year 3. So in some areas they're finding it's taking longer, some areas it's taking less, but they indicate they're working their way through it.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Just hearing some different concerns and different potential impacts through that process as we move forward. So please make sure that that's part of the consideration when you're dealing with boards and making sure the consequences of funding changes are understood.

The sector plan, we've spoken a little bit about it. I've raised concern as it relates to sort of the locking in or automating of the funding with a sort of an automated formula that funding increases won't exceed, I believe, inflation and wages. Could the minister speak to who added this to the sector plan, which partner?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I wouldn't know. I commend them for wanting to be fiscally careful and I think the parties that put it together, the division folks, looked at it and felt that it should be a deployment of resources rather than something that was layered off on top. So I think that's where that came from.

And of course we're always glad to see people that are wanting to be fiscally prudent. Having said that, in each and every year we've raised the budget by significantly more than by what the cost of living, or by what the increases would be that are specified in the plan. And if as we went forward it was appropriate, we would certainly budget in the same manner that we had. And the sector plan may well not recognize a lot of the other costs that are here now. I think I'll let Dan answer that and see.

**Mr. Florizone:** — I happen to be a strong advocate for this particular component of the sector plan. A plan without some form of budget consideration is simply a wish list. And what has been in terms of the exact wording, and so I'll go through it because it's clearly been developed in concert with divisions with full knowledge that it isn't just about inflation and wages. In fact what it says is:

By 2017, the increase in operational education spending will not exceed the general wage increases and inflationary costs within the sector while being responsive to the challenges of student need, population growth, and demographic changes.

So the attempt to modify this beyond a standard inflationary cap is to be able to state quite clearly, student need is changing. It's emerging. Population growth, of course we're blessed with growth and in particular we're feeling that pressure in certain areas. And the demographic changes, the landscape and the mosaic of our students is changing. So the complexity around that obviously is something that we need to pay attention to.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Okay. So let's just be clear on what this means, and I appreciate your comments to it. The statement is that they will not "exceed the general wage increases and inflationary costs within the sector." Then it doesn't talk about any additional resources. It just talks about what the system will then do, or divisions will do, or the ministry will do, which is . . . It talks about a focus on being responsive to these other

needs.

So the general wage increases and inflationary costs as it seems to be described here seems to be the bulk of the dollars that would be provided. Are you saying that there's then additional dollars on top of general wage increases and inflationary costs that would be provided on top of that to address things like student need, population growth, demographic changes, all the pieces that might be required to be responsive?

**Mr. Florizone:** — I'm saying exactly that, that this is not an either-or. It's both. And what we're saying is it "will not exceed general wage increases and inflationary costs within the sector," and at the same time the funding will be sufficient to be "responsive to the challenges of student need, population growth, and demographic changes." That is not to say that there won't be efficiency challenges within a budget. This is not to exceed.

The reason why we ask, first and foremost, that divisions look inwards to themselves to be able to fund change is that's what they always did as boards. As boards, before they ever suggested or intimated that they would increase the mill rate, they challenged their administration to look inward into their organizations and self-fund wherever possible. And only when that possibility was ruled out would they consider a tax increase. What the administration said to me unequivocally is that that is exactly what their boards had always required of them. So simply what we're doing now, as being the full funder of education, is expecting the same of our administrations.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I can add one thing. This is not a commitment that's there forever. We go through a budget process every year, so we look and assess the needs each and every year as we go forward.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Okay. Well it just seems strange that this would be built out as . . . There's not a whole lot to the sector plan, of course. Right? It's kind of stripped down. And I get maybe the reason behind wanting to focus energies. But this is included here, so you know, and you're saying that well maybe when . . . Next year, maybe this will change. I mean it's a strong statement.

And I believe, just to follow up I mean, it's worded very clearly here. And I just want to make sure. ". . . will not exceed general wage increases and inflationary costs." Then it talks about some responsibility for the other pieces that are there. That doesn't say that there is consideration of additional resources for those pieces. What I'm hearing tonight is that there will be a focus to make sure that there's a reallocation, which in the end can be an awfully difficult processes for boards that are, in many ways, stretched as we speak.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The boards developed the program. We commend them for the efficiencies that they look for. And the board and the sector plan is not treasury board. Treasury board looks and makes an analysis and a review each and every year.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Okay. Well you know, I think this just speaks again to the challenges in the current culture and approach of this government is that you're engaging in bringing partners together, which is the way it should be and I think it's

good, in fact, to be building out aspects in a sector plan. I think that's more than reasonable. But then it seems to be sort of an automation of the funding system for something so human as education, something so dynamic as our children, something with such flexibility as the needs of communities across the province. And I think that this is too rigid, too automated, too constraining to really in good faith engage partners into the kind of discussion we should be having about, you know, are we delivering education in the way that we need to? Are there other ways of going at this? Are there investments that could be made now and to certain approaches that would pay dividends economically, socially into the future? I find this a very constraining piece to be included in the sector plan.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I think the answer that I gave before is where we're at on it. We commend our sector partners for looking carefully at how money is spent and money is allocated. We respect and value that, as all of us should. The budget is, as I'd indicated, prepared by the ministry, taken to treasury board, and should be cognizant of the facts that you've mentioned about changes in demographics, changes in a variety of other things that are difficult to quantify in each and every year.

And that's why we have an annual budget process. The ministry is the one and the minister is the one that's responsible for what they take forward. And as much as I appreciate their efforts and continue to encourage them to work hard for the efficiencies — and you heard the deputy minister outline the different things that are there — we intend to look at and analyze the needs on a year-to-year basis as we have for the last seven.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — I guess we'll just track this moving forward. But certainly I am concerned by opening up a process that should be fluid and should be one of listening, working together, and should be able to question approaches and then constrain it with that piece right there. I'm hearing from the minister that maybe there'll be considerations moving forward to be more flexible than that. I would say, you know, that I hope so.

I would be interested in hearing a bit about the school capital process. I know that there's been a lot of critique. I've heard from across the province, from communities and board members as it relates to the new process and the simple . . . the top 10 that's been established. And I think there's some changes that the minister's identified on this front as well, so maybe I'll just turn it over to the minister.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We have some ongoing discussions. The ministry had relied on projections and utilization rates as to what they felt it would be a year or two out. The school divisions were looking at things on a more immediate approach. We were trying to project forward. We know that using the examples we had of Montgomery School, there's two or three empty classrooms. The officials' projection is that that will be an area that will have some significant growth. The Saskatoon School Division does not think that it will. So we've asked the officials to have a look at their methodology versus ours. I know the media reported that we had bungled it. I'm not sure that I'd say anybody bungled it, but there's a difference in approach. The officials that worked their way through the numbers, they may use a different formula. And I'm not saying that we're always right, but that's certainly an area that's under

discussion now.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Okay. So there's some flexibility to what's been laid out. Now you talked about Montgomery and working with Saskatoon, and some potential reconsiderations on that front. Are there other schools and school divisions that you're actively reconsidering what was announced in the top 10?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Not in the top 10. The other one that we used as an example, and this is a difficult area, is Pleasant Hill School. Pleasant Hill School is in Saskatoon and Saskatoon Public would indicate that it would be at or near the top of their list because it's a castle school — I think probably not yet 100 years old but approaching 100 years old — and needs electrical, needs roof repair. So the school division there could, if they chose to, use funds from their prevention and maintenance budget.

But the difficult problem that we have with those type of schools, its utilization right now is under 60 per cent. So the difficult decision for a school division is, what's the long-term plans for that area? Do you see a revitalization? Is this a school that should have other community purposes as well? From a ministry perspective, they have to look at it and say, okay, you've got a school that's 60 per cent used. What are you going to do with it? And it's there and it's, I appreciate, a historic building. I used to live across the back alley from it so I'm sympathetic for what they do. And I think, you know, the school division is looking at it. But that's another example.

[20:00]

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Are there other divisions that you're working with for active reconsideration of what was announced?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Those were the two that I know of. I don't know whether . . . Those are the only ones.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — There's nothing else posted for all the other priorities that school boards will share, that I'm aware of. Is the minister hearing what I'm hearing from many school boards and from many communities, that they'd appreciate an understanding of where their project is at? Even though I know it may be some ways down the list, it provides a sense of transparency and leaves one with a sense of fairness to know where that project is at and communicating that to the public.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The decision was made to avoid frustration. It's a very long list and goes on . . . And if you had somebody that was on the list, let's say no. 79, the next year it was done they would reallocate, and then all of a sudden it'd slip from 79 to 101, then that school division would say, well why did we slip back? Well it doesn't matter because that's not happening in the foreseeable future. So the rationale in putting only 10 on the list was those were ones that are likely going to be done in the next two to four years. Those are the ones that people should be focusing their planning on. And it really doesn't matter whether you're no. 80 or no. 70. It's not going to bump things up.

The sad part about this is there was . . . You know, we have

schools that are typically 50 to 100 years old. Schools were built at two great times in the province, when the province came in, and after the Second World War. In both cases those schools are either 100 years old or if they were newer schools, well at the end of what you would regard as their useful life. So the difficult decisions are what are you going to do with some of those schools. If you try to do everything on the list, it would be well in excess of \$1 billion.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — I would urge the minister to make the list public. I think it's paternalistic . . .

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — If a division wants to know where they're at, they can certainly call the officials and the division. I think some of them have and we certainly tell them where they're at. There just isn't a lot of point in putting out something that isn't going to happen in the foreseeable future. What we want to do is have a list that we know is a workable list that we can work with the divisions on and try and get those projects teed up, ready to go, so that whatever they need to do by way of land, resources, planning for a move with students, and everything else, this is the portion of the capital budget that people should work with.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Well just to express that I think this is the wrong approach. I think that it's helpful, and I can understand why it's helpful to have some prioritized. But it has many questioning the fairness and transparency of the process. It has many communities wondering where their school's at. And despite the complexity to the list, I think it's important to be shared. And I mean it's a bit paternal not to be providing that information, certainly to school boards and to the public in a public manner. And when we're talking about people that are looking for a school to be rebuilt or to be addressed or to be built, I mean these aren't kids that all want candy at once and you give them guarded answers as to when they're going to receive it or how many hours down the road to the next pit stop. This is something that taxpayers deserve, that communities deserve, and I'd urge transparency in the process.

I would like to hear from the minister just where Scott Collegiate is at or the North Central Shared Facility. This is one that was announced. Of course I think we'd have to go back now six years.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The other aspect of this is school divisions' priorities change as well. The indication we get in the school divisions, if you want to know further or have a specific project explained, we'll either explain the project or where it would be on the list.

Scott Collegiate, I understand there was some internal issues and the money had been set aside by the ministry, and I am told that that project will be going to tender summer of 2014. Now whatever the issues were at the school, they weren't within the ministry; they were within the division and I can't speak to what they were. But in any event, they've resolved them now, and it will go to tender later this year.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — We'll follow up. Of course it's a project that was announced some years ago, as I say, and certainly it's important to see it become a reality, and I think it's going on six, seven years of tracking it from our end as an opposition.

Thank you for the statement and we'll be tracking it through to its completion.

Just a note about school divisions' priorities change. That's understandable. These are . . . And there's no reason that a list can't be comprehensive, transparent, and updated and revised in conjunction with ed partners, so I'd urge that approach moving forward.

I just would appreciate getting a sense from the Education minister what, if any, changes he's planning as it relates to the teacher regulation system.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Yes. It's one of managing expectations. If people want to know about it, we have it now; the information is there. If somebody wants to know, ask. If it's published, people draw an inference that a project has been approved. But approved for what or for when? So it's the decision the ministry made, and I didn't participate in the decision, was yes, we should look at the ones that are actively being done and then, you know, as things come off that list, then we move other things on it and have discussions with boards.

So that's the process that they felt was best for the ministry officials and working with the divisions. And the information is certainly there. It's not being hidden or everything else. It's just a matter of saying, if you post a list and somebody is no. 75 on the list, it's an exercise in frustration. If it moves up or down, then the division decides they don't want to do it or all of a sudden it becomes emergent as we saw with Sacred Heart in Regina. I don't know where it would've been on somebody's list before. But a gym collapses, well and then all of a sudden it bumps way ahead of everything else on the list, as it should. So I think it's when you want to have that kind of flexibility. So I think it's a straight matter of how the officials choose to, want to manage public expectations so that they aren't unrealistic. Because we know that we're looking out, a two- to four-year window on most of the projects that are taking place. So that's why this particular list is prepared.

And I appreciate the point you're making because that's the way it used to be when I was on the school board. And I know the frustration that I certainly had seeing a project that I valued and wanted was way down on the government's list. The minister at the time was Clay Serby, and they would not even want to take your calls regarding where you were on the list and why it was there. So it's a problem that's not political. It's straight due to the age of the buildings in our province.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — I would urge . . . And the minister said he wasn't involved in this piece. I think maybe it's a place for the minister to consider being involved because certainly I think it's a matter of fairness and trust with educational partners. And they can handle it. They might be frustrated to see where the ranking is. They might have a certain, they might want to provide a justification or a different consideration, but I think it's fair. And you talk about being frustrated to know you might be project 35 or 42, and knowing the capital dollars that are required to get to you, but I still think that's a better spot than having no idea where you're ranked.

What I would ask the minister though, is for him, to the

minister, if you could provide that list, the current ranking, the comprehensive ranking that the minister's referencing that he said he would provide to school boards. I would appreciate if you could supply that to myself as the critic. Can the minister commit to that?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Yes. Your question was whether we'd be prepared to provide you with a copy of the list. We will.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — And do with it as you will. This was a decision that was made by the ministry officials. I supported the decision and still do, just for exactly the reason you mentioned, whether somebody was 35 or 42 on it. So we'll certainly do it. There's nothing hidden on it. It's a matter of having a short list of the things that are currently at work or being worked on. So if somebody else wants it, they're welcome to it. And I'm sorry. You had another question?

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Yes. What changes you're either considering or making as it relates to the teacher regulation system.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — You're aware that Dennis Kendel had done a report earlier in the year or late last year, and the report recommended that there should be a stand-alone or a separate entity that would regulate the licensing and discipline of teachers. We support that but I am going to let Mr. Repski give some particulars.

**Mr. Repski:** — Thank you. Thank you for that. Based on the recommendations of Dr. Kendel, the Ministry of Education has engaged with its stakeholders and determined that there is support for a new transition to the new regulatory model across the province.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — In reference to the Kendel report, and I've certainly taken a look at it and I've heard from some educators on this front. I understand that physicians, that their model has sort of been looked at in some ways. And I understand it is an independent process or body that's not funded by physicians but funded by the province in, I guess, as it relates to considerations and what you're looking at for a potential body for teachers, if that's where you're going. How much will that body cost? And I would anticipate that you would be looking to fund that directly yourself as a province as well and not having teachers fund that.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I can advise the member that doctors' and lawyers' plans self-fund. They're not funded publicly. We would look at putting some transitional or some funding, some long-term funding, into the start-up costs. Right now under the current model, it's funded by the STF. So it's in effect self-funded.

The recommendation was that it should be a separate or a free-standing body from the STF, that the roles that they had were not consistent. We agree with that, but how it should be structured or the framework of that, we want to engage with STF to have some discussions as to how it would appear. We have had some ongoing, you know, some discussions about, is the doctors' one appropriate? Is the lawyers' one a better

model? And the goal is, or our expectation is it must be a free-standing entity. It must be separate from STF. And it must be open, transparent, and have some laypersons that are on the panels that would sit . . . And then how other functions would be divided are something that we would have ongoing discussion. I don't know, Clint, if you want to add.

**Mr. Repski:** — No. I think that's well said in terms of the ongoing support of this body whether it be provincially funded, similar to other models, or member funded. That's the work of the transitional committee on a go-forward basis, to make sure it's the right solution.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — We talked about the committee there and that maybe speaks to process. So could you define the process, any committees, and what you are planning on this front to arrive at some recommendations for this body?

**Mr. Repski:** — In terms of the transitional committee on a go-forward basis, we spent some time in consultation over the last little while for all of our stakeholders including SSBA leads, the typical sector partners. And the goal on that is to get representation from those stakeholder groups to form this transitional committee on a go-forward basis.

So what the work of that committee is going to be doing is to work within a framework to establish this body, to establish things like self-certification where the certificate is issued within that body. Currently that work is being done in the ministry.

[20:15]

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — I just note from Kendel's report that he seems to touch on how crucial it is to have the STF sort of engaged actively with this process if it's going to be successful. And the whole goal, I would suspect, is if you are making a change and you have an objective in mind that you want to be as successful as you can be, and you don't want, you know, unintended consequences with it. Where are you at in engaging the STF on this front? Where are they at with concerns or support as it relates to the considerations around this regulatory body?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The involvement of STF, it's exactly the same process as if the bar association was expected to set up a law society or if the Saskatchewan Medical Association was expected to set up the College of Physicians and Surgeons. As you draw that out, that is your main body base. That's who you look to for the consultation in that.

I can tell . . . Mr. Repski has just indicated that the consultations are in the earlier stage. But it would be our expectation, and I think yours as well, that the STF would be fully engaged in this process. And I wouldn't want it any other way.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Just looking at, you mentioned lawyers and their body; you mentioned physicians. Those will have been reviewed by yourself. What from those, from your perspective, fits for education? What from those doesn't fit?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We know that we don't want it being driven by government or by the ministry. That's been tried in

other provinces unsuccessfully.

So Mr. Repski indicates to me that he's expecting it to be a made-in-Saskatchewan model. The type of thing that you would look for in this type of thing is that the entities that would be on, you would have a mixture of those from within the profession, and then you would have some that would be lay people or would be external. Not wanting to talk about a particular profession, but you usually want somebody that's got a legal background that would sit in. That's I think usually when the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the other self-regulating entities, that's the . . . So yes, in any event usually you try and look for people that would represent the public interest.

And the things that you would also expect would be that you would have an open and transparent methodology, using it. The expectation in the end is that you value teachers, teachers value themselves, and that the process that's there has to preserve the integrity of the profession — and not just by way of process, but justice. I think of the old saying, justice must not only be done but must be seen to be done. So the process, the methodology has to be the ultimate in openness and transparency. And I think when you talk to individual teachers, that's where they are as well.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Unfortunately I'm out of the time that I have for asking questions here to the ministry. Certainly I thank the officials for all their work. I thank the minister for his time. Our critic for child care, the member from Riversdale, will follow up on child care, which of course is a very important part of the ministry.

But you know, just as a bit of a recap, I've expressed profound frustration with where this standardized testing is at and the lack of just recognizing a bad idea for a bad idea, and shelving it and moving forward with an openness with the sector. And I'm also concerned with the lack of deploying those resources that were earmarked for standardized testing in this budget, as we talked about here tonight, to where they can make a difference on the front lines.

And we spoke about other areas I'm concerned about — entering into a sector partnership but constraining that partnership with an automated funding model on the front end instead of, to use the words of the deputy minister, to enter into the art of the possible. And to do so, I think that funding models need not be constrained and shackled at this point in time.

I mean there's other issues that we've addressed here tonight and that I appreciate the minister's attention to. I think there's no reason that there can't be more transparency for all school divisions, all communities as it relates to the school capital projects — the repairs, renovations, and builds that are important to them. I think that should be publicly posted.

I appreciate receiving the information as the minister's endeavoured to provide, and certainly I urge full engagement with the teachers of this province and the sector as a whole in analyzing next steps with the regulatory body. That engagement will be crucial.

Thanks for the time, to the minister, and thank you to the

officials for all the work you do on an ongoing basis.

**The Chair:** — Ms. Chartier has the floor.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you. Do you need to change officials here to talk about child care? You're all good?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — They're self-changing and . . . [inaudible].

**Ms. Chartier:** — I'd like to start . . . Well first of all, thank you for everybody being here tonight. It's always good to have this kind of conversation, dig a little deeper into questions.

In terms of numbers of spaces that were operational at the end of this last fiscal year, so the end of '13-14, how many child care, licensed child care spaces were operational in Saskatchewan?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We are joined by Lynn Allan who will provide the information. She will be somewhat constrained because she's more comfortable using a slide deck, but today she is going to be using a graph on . . .

**Mr. Miller:** — Greg Miller, assistant deputy minister. So the number of spaces at the end of fiscal '13-14 was 13,314.

**Ms. Chartier:** — 13,314. So at the end of . . . So all of the spaces that were allotted in the last fiscal year, was it 500 total? Or I know the previous year it had been 530, so I'm just wondering the full . . . What happened with the 500 spaces?

**Mr. Miller:** — The spaces last year were 537.

**Ms. Chartier:** — And are all of the ones that were allotted in '13-14, are they all operational?

**Ms. Allan:** — Lynn Allan. I'm the executive director of the early years branch. So this year there were 542 net new spaces, and 116 of those are centre spaces. That's of the 537 that we allocated, 116 became operational; 336 spaces were centre spaces as well and those are previous years' spaces. I think as we've mentioned previously, they don't all open up in the year that we allocate them because of delays in construction, etc. So 336 were from previous years and expansion, and 90 were child care homes.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay.

**Ms. Allan:** — So we had net new 542.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay. And as you said, some were from previous years' commitments.

**Ms. Allan:** — Previous years.

**Ms. Chartier:** — So are there any of last year's commitments . . . So when applications come in, are we anticipating some of those from last year opening this year? Do we have those numbers?

**Ms. Allan:** — So right now we have 711 from previous years that are in development.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Do you have a timeline on those? And so how . . . Those 711 that are outstanding, how far back is that going?

**Ms. Allan:** — There's one space from 2010-11, 145 from '11-12, 101 from '12-13, and 464 from '13-14.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay. Thank you. I'm just thinking with having read this story on March 18th, 2014, around the U of S [University of Saskatchewan], their 90 spaces that they had been allocated and they've put on hold. What happens in a case like that?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — They don't lose that allocation. That allocation stays there and that funding stays there until whatever other problems they have. But it's a good project and we want to continue to support it.

**Ms. Chartier:** — So the money, even if it's five years down the road and they can't develop, does that money stay locked in for them or how does that work?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We work with the organization to try and do it. I know Mr. Wotherspoon would have us spend the money on something else instantly, but we may reallocate temporarily and say, do this. But we remain committed to the project. And if it takes that agency a period of time to get ready, we'll give them whatever supports we can. And if it takes some time, we're there.

**Mr. Miller:** — In terms of the overall process, over the last three years we've deployed around 500 spaces a year. So there's a constant working with the sector to work with those that are ready to deploy the spaces that have been allocated and to work in a thoughtful way to redeploy as they become available, keeping track along the way of the allocations that have been made so as the sector is able to come online, that those are deployed as they were intended.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Is the 90 from the U of S included in the 711 from previous years that are still in development?

**Ms. Allan:** — Yes.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Yes, okay. Of those — so we're going back — you said 145 in the '11-12 year that were allocated. Did I write that down correctly?

**Mr. Miller:** — So from . . .

**Ms. Chartier:** — From a couple of years ago.

**Mr. Miller:** — So from 2011-12, there was 145. The U of S spaces in particular will be a part, will be . . . 90 of those will be, yes.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay, that's when they . . .

**Mr. Miller:** — Yes.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay, thank you. In terms of numbers . . . And we've had this discussion here at the previous couple years and I know the minister last year, your predecessor, Mr.

Minister, I had asked specifically about developing the infrastructure to be able to quantify the demand. So you say you're going to develop 500 spaces a year, but you have no sense of what the real demand is. And the minister had said last year, "At the present time, we don't have a way of doing that exactly. And so that's part of the plan going forward."

I know in terms of some data around children under the age of five, there's more than 73,000 children under the age of five right now, according to Doug Elliott, and that we've got almost 70 per cent of women with children under the age of five who are in paid employment. So I'm wondering since estimates last year where the minister said that's part of the plan going forward, have you done any work on quantifying the demand for licensed child care in Saskatchewan?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I think the minister had indicated last year that there was difficulty in trying to quantify it because you don't know what other arrangements people have made, what the real demands are.

We think it's fair to say that the number of parents wanting daycare significantly exceeds the number that are available. The challenge that we have is in sector readiness, places that are willing to open or facilities that come on stream. To try and address that, what we're trying to do is work with entities that would set up a daycare centre. It's difficult when you're adding three, four, and five at a time. It's better if you can add 12, 15, 20, 90 at a time. So we certainly want to do more of that.

We have announced the joint-use schools that we anticipate will open in fall of 2017. Our expectation will be that each one of those will have a daycare in them. We think that the ones that are done in conjunction with schools we find work best at staffing and willingness on the part of the community to participate in, but the challenge that the officials have is in locating places and groups that are willing to operate them. We're open to suggestions.

[20:30]

**Ms. Chartier:** — I was going to ask how . . . You'd mentioned that the schools opening up in 2017, but many of the kids who currently don't have child care now will not need it because they'll be in school by that point. But you'd mentioned working on sector readiness, so what are some of the things that you're doing to work on sector readiness?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Well as I'd indicated, you know, one of them is having the schools provide them. You know, a lot of these are provided by service clubs or small groups in smaller centres and they just . . . Those people don't exist. But I'll certainly let the officials provide . . .

**Mr. Miller:** — So in terms of working with the community, the branch works with organizations to look at the availability of child care, zero to nine years of age, in the communities. We're also looking at and establishing the overall total community population and population trend growth, the proportion of the population at child-bearing age, the employment rate, as well as teen birth rate in the community, and certainly looking at the distribution of single- and lone-parent families as an indicator of needs of child care.

In terms of readiness, the incorporation status of entities that are willing to take on the child care provision and certainly looking at community engagement and partnership building to establish a broader area of service provision in communities and the availability of physical space and looking in terms of schools. Of course letters of support and so on to indicate that they're ready to take on the provision of care.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you for that. I think one of the things that I've, in discussions with some child care centres . . . So you've asked for any advice or thoughts. And I know in my discussions with child care centres and some of the more well known or the ones . . . There's some very sought after child care centres in Saskatoon who've I spoken to who've said they could easily add more spaces and would like to, but they can't staff them. Like staffing is a huge issue, finding the right complement of staff. And I know that there's been some more work done with advanced education, but that continues I think to be a real problem. And so I'm wondering what kind of work has been done in the last year to address some of the staffing challenges that our child care centres have.

**Mr. Miller:** — Certainly the ministry has been working with the sector in terms of the investment of over \$7 million since 2007 to improve wages and benefits to aid in that area. As we recognize it in a strong economy, there is pressure to fill positions in many sectors. Given the importance of early years and quality child care opportunities, the field of early childhood development is one of considerable impact and significant. Well-trained and well-educated caregivers are important and are certainly a major factor in determining the overall quality of the care provided.

In terms of direct support to the centres, the early years branch is aware of this need and works with the sector to provide support, recently working on a resource document to help centres to meet the needs of children.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you for that. I think though that doesn't address . . . So \$7 million since 2007, that's seven years on . . . 7 million since 2007 in terms of wages and benefits. And I've talked to child care centres and directors who have said increases sometimes only translate into 10 cents an hour when the rubber really hits the road. And what I hear from centre directors is the lack of ability to do professional development, being stretched way too thin. It's more financially beneficial to work at Walmart or McDonald's rather than be a child care worker when your wages are 11 or \$12 an hour. So I still think wages and benefits are a huge part of the challenge for sure.

**Mr. Miller:** — So certainly in terms of the ongoing work with centres, ministry staff works to provide and support a number of professional development opportunities for staff including the provision of stipends for training and certainly working with centres now to explore the number of options that are available for child care providers including the possible expansion to online training to broaden the scope of training that's available.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The member raises an interesting point. We have a labour shortage all the way across the province, so we have a shortage in skilled trades, unskilled trades. It wasn't long ago I went to an Arby's because I'm thrifty, and Arby's was only doing a drive-through because they didn't have staff

for the service counter inside. So the difficulty in recruitment is all the way across the whole employment sector.

So I think to your point, the things that we've done to try and increase some professional development and increases, we certainly are trying to do what we can, but it's not simply a matter of saying we'll provide more money because we've provided increases. It's just a general labour shortage that we continue to work through. I don't know if you want to add.

**Ms. Chartier:** — I think around professional development, one of the challenges is you can offer those days, but if you are so understaffed that your staff can't take the professional development day that they're given in a year, it's hugely problematic. And that's exactly what people are telling me.

And I recognize that there are labour challenges across all sectors, but child care really is an economic development strategy. It's about early learning and care, but it's also about ensuring that those labour force shortages everywhere else are being supported because parents can go to work, and you can't work if you don't have child care.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I agree with you completely on a need for and a priority for child care. We want families to succeed in our province, and one of the best ways we can have people succeed is by having quality daycare.

We've increased the number of daycare spaces since we formed government by 500, and that's about 500 per year, so it's about a 50 per cent increase since we formed government. And we'll continue to look for opportunities to increase wherever we can and look at appropriate staffing formulas.

**Ms. Chartier:** — I think, going back to some of my earlier question around . . . well when the minister, when we talked last year about quantifying the demand. I'll raise this again. There are other jurisdictions that quantify the demand for licensed child care. They've got an online child care registry in Manitoba, which serves two purposes. It helps families not have their names on 23 different child care lists, which I remember a CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] story just a month or so ago where there was a family in Regina who had to put their name on 23 different child care lists. And so you've got the piece where you enable the one stop, like you put your name on a list, and you're waiting for the child care that you've selected. And the other piece is that Manitoba with this child care registry uses that to help quantify demand. So you can't really meet demand if you can't measure it.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I think that you've identified exactly where the problem is. If a family puts their name on a dozen or 20 or more or I think you said 43 — I'm speaking . . . [inaudible] . . . I'm sure — lists, then you don't know whether . . . When you're looking at all the different lists, you say, how many do you have? How many do you have? Well you don't know that it's the same family on a whole bunch of places.

I don't think we would want to do a central registry. We want people to be able to select where they go to. So they put their names on lists and maybe are on several lists and then get on whenever it comes to the top. But I don't think we would want to take over administering the list of where people could go to. I



don't think that's the role of government.

You know, parents have to make their choices of where they want their child to go to. If your child . . . You know, if you came to the top of the list and it was a daycare that you didn't wish to go to, it was in an inconvenient location or whatever, it's not something that the government should be in. But I appreciate the point that it's difficult to assess, and we're addressing it as we can by having increased it by 50 per cent. And I'm certainly the first one to admit there's more work to do in the area.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Just to clarify. Just because . . . That's not exactly how the Manitoba registry works. You don't just get the first available space. It's different than how our long-term care system works. So it doesn't work quite like that.

But I would just ask the minister, so we have 73,000 children under the age of five and approximately 13,000 spaces, so there's a 60,000 space gap. We've got mothers with children under five; about 70 per cent of them are in the workforce. I, with all due respect, would like to ask the minister his suggestion for all these families who are really struggling to find child care.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We will continue to increase it as rapidly as we can. We want to ensure that the spaces that we develop as we plan to in the schools . . . We've indicated that school-based ones are among the best options that we have, and we'll continue to do that kind of approach. And we certainly want to do more as we go forward. You had mentioned the Manitoba model, and I will let Mr. Miller I think has a comment on that.

**Mr. Miller:** — Certainly. So the ministry has worked to have discussions with other jurisdictions that are using online registries, both in terms of what are the advantages and some of the challenge. We've just described the challenge of being registered in multiple places and how that affects the overall accuracy of the registration and ultimately working towards the . . . smoothing out the transition as people look for care. So certainly we worked on that and need to consider it within the complete context of the work that we do within the ministry.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Have you learned from your discussion with other jurisdictions? I've mentioned Manitoba, but I think the Ottawa capital region also has an online child care registry. So I'm curious what you've learned from those discussions.

**Ms. Allan:** — We've talked to both Manitoba and Prince Edward Island about it, and I think there's a couple of things that we've learned in terms of some of the challenges. One is the increased parent expectations, that once people put their name on the list, they expect that they're going to get a spot very quickly. So there's been some increased . . .

There's also been concerns about people's literacy and ability to work on the system to be able to get the information correctly on it, as well as keeping the systems up to date because people do put their names on several lists. And then when they do get a spot, it's important that the whole system is kept up to date so that someone else's name comes up. So we have been following up with those in terms of how that is working, and we'll

continue to look at that.

**Ms. Chartier:** — And do Manitoba and Prince Edward Island feel like it's a successful or a useful venture? Obviously there's challenges with every system, but what kinds of things have they reported back to you in terms of . . . You've reported some of the challenges, but overall how are they feeling about those systems? How are families feeling? How is the government feeling in general?

**Ms. Allan:** — They're just early in their development. I think in Manitoba it's only been a couple of years.

**Ms. Chartier:** — So is that something that . . . You said you're following it. Where do you go from here?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The indication is that, you know, we know there is a significant shortage in our province. We continue to increase as fast as there is capacity in the system to try and build or develop new spaces. We know that we want to do even more and increase them at a faster rate. And some of the things that we would do going forward would be the initiative to do it in the schools, so by adding a daycare in each of 18 new schools. So maybe one'll be a shared, but at least nine new schools, and then having discussions with school divisions as to whether there's other locations.

The school-based model seems to be one of the most effective and one of the most efficient. It's also convenient for parents that've got school-aged children as well as ones that need daycare. We know that it's an area that we want to continue to do more work in and will continue. The point you make about it being a priority for families, I absolutely agree with you.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Just moving on from specifically child care spaces to talk a little bit about child care consultants. And I know we've talked about this before. I'm wondering if you're still at 22 child care consultants.

**Mr. Miller:** — Yes.

[20:45]

**Ms. Chartier:** — And you've had no . . . Have you had any feedback this past year about a lack of ability to utilize the child care consultants when needed? I know last year I think one problem was flagged with just a job-share, but I'm wondering if you've had any feedback this last year whether or not 22 child care consultants have the time to do their work.

**Mr. Miller:** — So of the 22 consultants, the caseload per consultant ranges 26 to 27 for each of our consultants.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Have you had any concerns flagged from centres or homes about their inability to hear from a consultant when need be?

**Mr. Miller:** — So the ministry continues to work with the sector to identify service delivery, to maximize the resources in terms of the consultant availability. So we worked over the last year to streamline our processes, to make the initial family child care home licensing and annual licence review more efficient for both the applicants and provider and for the ministry staff,

to be as efficient as possible with that resource.

We're implementing as well a new grant payment system this fiscal year which will reduce the amount of duplication in the data entry required for the exchange of data associated with funding, and working on policy changes to make our work with centre boards as efficient and effective as possible.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Have you had feedback though from child cares that the 22 consultants, their caseload is too much?

**Mr. Miller:** — No.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay. I'm wondering if consultants, do you measure . . . I know that there's a minimum of standards in terms of visits that they need to do. So if I'm correct, for homes it's two unscheduled visits per year and an annual review at each home. For centres it's two unscheduled visits per year and an annual review at each facility and a minimum of two board meetings or parent advisory meetings and the annual meeting. Do you measure or ensure that your consultants are . . . every year every facility gets that, at least that, from the consultant?

**Ms. Allan:** — We have a case management system where the consultants enter, after they've been out to a centre or a home for any of their visits, and they all report through to a manager who does a regular case review with all of them. And all of the annual licences then come up and are also signed off by the director.

**Ms. Chartier:** — So just to answer that question then, in fact consultants are getting out to every home and child care centre, meeting those minimum standards.

**Ms. Allan:** — That's the expectation of all the workers, yes.

**Ms. Chartier:** — That is the expectation, but do we know if it's the reality?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We can advise that that's the expectation. The workers are deployed, but there hasn't been an independent verification to determine whether that was fully met or not. But it was certainly the direction that was given. The workers went out to do it. And whether each and every worker did each and every call they were expected, we don't have a follow-up method to determine that. But we would anticipate that virtually all or most of them would have been made because we have no reason to think that they were not.

**Ms. Chartier:** — I'm wondering around child care complaints, not specific to consultants here, but in terms of complaints or concerns that either families or individuals lodge about child care, whether it's a centre or a home, how many of these have we had in this last fiscal year?

**Mr. Miller:** — Certainly the ministry is the point of contact for parents or care providers for concerns regarding the provision of services. We have a draft policy and tools to help guide the assessment of complaints and the determination of the level of investigation warranted. The ministry to date has established a toll-free number for reporting complaints and a mechanism to track those complaints.

The investigation is proceeded with according to the information received. And in terms of complaints this year, we've had 22 complaints reported to the ministry, 10 of which were related to the over-enrolment. And then there was 12 other complaints which I'll itemize here. In terms of . . . We had one complaint around the social environment, two complaints with respect to supervision, one complaint about programming, three complaints with respect to health and safety, two complaints with respect to administration, and three complaints with respect to child management. So as I said earlier, there was 10 about enrolment, and I just characterized the other complaints.

For those other 12 complaints, seven on-site investigations were conducted for quality of care issues. Information resources were provided. And in four other circumstances, there was another agency contacted in terms of an investigation.

**Ms. Chartier:** — And what was the outcome of those on-site visits and the investigation?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We can provide you with some follow-up information. We don't have the information here. I think the expectation was that the problems would have been regarded as resolved, but there's a possibility there was other things that were there. So it's appropriate that we give you a listing of the background.

**Ms. Chartier:** — With respect to the total of 22 complaints that were reported, are those both in licensed and unlicensed facilities then, or what's the breakdown?

**Mr. Miller:** — So those numbers that we just went through, in terms of 22 complaints, were with respect to unlicensed care.

**Ms. Chartier:** — So there were no complaints in 2013-14 around licensed child care facilities?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We don't have a breakdown on the numbers we gave you as how many of those were licensed or unlicensed, but we'll provide that to you as well.

**Ms. Chartier:** — So it was likely a mix.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Up to 22, there would be a mix, some of each. So we can certainly — it's not that many to track down the individual files — so we'll certainly be able to tell you. I think, for privacy of the children, we would probably not be able to identify but we can certainly tell you whether it was licensed or unlicensed and we could tell you the resolution of the complaint.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Okay, thank you. With respect to the 10 related to over-enrolment, can you tell me a little bit about that? Are we talking one or two children over-enrolled, or are we talking 10 beyond capacity? I'd like some details around the over-enrolment.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Well we'll provide you that as well.

**Ms. Chartier:** — When would that come to me?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The officials indicate they can have it to you within a week. We're not sitting next week, so probably by

the time we come back from Easter break, they would've had time to go through the files and provide the information.

I had some experience with this before. I had this portfolio and there was a complaint about a daycare that had two extra children in it. And it was an issue whether it was a family member's children because it belonged to a cousin or whatever. But it was a large home, and then they had an issue: well, were the fire doors sufficient? Because it was a house built into a hill that had, you know, it was not stairs going out the back but there was a large window. So the issue was, was it a compliance issue or was it that the regulations didn't apply appropriately? So I can't speak to the individual ones, but we can certainly get you that background.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you. And I'm wondering too around the over-enrolment piece, how that was resolved. We've had stories a few years ago in Saskatoon with families in family child cares where there's been over-enrolment. And again for families that desperately need care, they're not quite so concerned about necessarily the fire door or exactly how things are, but I just would like a few more details around the over-enrolment and how that was resolved.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Fair question. I think our first concern has to be the safety and security of the children in every case. And if we know of somewhere where a child is being in any way having their safety compromised, the ministry has to deal with it and deal with it, either through involving social services or another agency or dealing with it directly. So the question's fair.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Is it the child care consultants who do the investigation or who goes out and does the investigation?

**Ms. Allan:** — Yes, for the over-enrolled, it is our consultants. And also for the unlicensed, as of last August, we now respond to all complaints. We're the first point of contact for any issue or concern in a child care facility.

So for an over-enrolled, our consultants will receive a call and they will go out. And if no one is home, they will send a letter and go out again and advise the child care provider of our legislation and the fact that they have more than eight children. And we will try our best to work with the facility in terms of bringing them into compliance. So we will work with them in terms of developing a plan to reduce their numbers. They may decide to become licensed and then we would proceed to license them.

**Ms. Chartier:** — With respect to what changed last August, I know last summer there were a lot of stories around unlicensed child care. And I think you've just said that you'll now respond to all complaints whether licensed or unlicensed. What happened prior to August?

**Ms. Allan:** — Last August the minister announced that we would be the first point of contact for any complaints, and we established a toll-free number for reporting complaints. We developed a mechanism to track complaints. And as you heard, we've given you the numbers of complaints between August and March 31st. We drafted a policy and a tool guide for the assessment of complaints and determined the level of

investigation warranted. So when we go out and it's not an over-enrolled, we are the first point of contact, but there might be other ministries or other sectors that we need to involve.

We met with other agencies, including the Ministry of Health, Government Relations. We developed a checklist that our consultants used to assess, you know, potential fire or health hazards when visiting an unlicensed child care home as part of a complaint investigation. We developed information and educational materials to provide to unlicensed providers on a variety of care topics as well.

And we also got information from the Provincial Ombudsman's office regarding potential training for our staff on conducting effective investigations. So we are the first point of contact for people calling and, as we indicated, since August we've had 22 complaints.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you for that. And I'm glad to hear about the toll-free number. I know that huge concerns had come up around not licensed care necessarily, but unlicensed care.

But in terms of complaints prior to that, obviously you weren't necessarily the first point of contact. But I'd be interested in adding . . . So we had 22 complaints from August until now, but were there previous complaints from April 1st to August?

[21:00]

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We wouldn't have information as to all of the complaints because we didn't deal with everything at that point in time. But we would have to add on the complaints regarding over-enrolment. So for the preceding, the rest of that calendar year, I think we would have that information, and assuming it's there, we can provide that to you as well. So I think we're . . .

**Ms. Chartier:** — Yes, that would be great. Thank you. And I know that it's time to pass off to my colleague here from Saskatoon Centre. So thank you for your time tonight. It's always appreciated, and I look forward to some of those answers.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Do you have any closing comments?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I do. I'd like to thank the members opposite. I'd like to thank the members of the committee.

And we have a significant number of officials here, and on their behalf, I would like to express their gratitude to the Chair because tonight we have allowed them to sit in the members' desks as opposed to sitting on chairs as they did the other night. So they think that the world is getting to be a better place. So on their behalf, thank you. And I'd like to thank all of them for coming out tonight as well. Thanks.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. With that we will have a short recess, and then we will return with Labour Relations and Workplace Safety.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

**General Revenue Fund  
Labour Relations and Workplace Safety  
Vote 20**

**Subvote (LR01)**

**The Chair:** — Thank you, everyone. We've returned from a recess, and we now begin our consideration of vote no. 20, Labour Relations and Workplace Safety, subvote (LR01). Minister Morgan is here with his officials. Minister, please introduce your officials and make your opening comments.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to appear before your committee to present the 2014-2015 budget of the Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety and to answer your questions.

Supporting me are senior members from the ministry including Mike Carr, deputy minister; Louise Usick, executive director, central services; Greg Tuer, executive director, employment standards; Tareq Al-Zabet, executive director, occupational health and safety; Pat Parenteau, director of policy; Denise Klotz, director of the office of workers' advocate; Rikki Bote, executive director, communications branch; Tara Acoose, executive assistant to the deputy minister; Drew Dwernychuk, chief of staff to the minister. Also joining us is Peter Federko, chief executive officer of the Workers' Compensation Board; and Fred Bayer, board registrar with the Labour Relations Board.

The past year has been extremely busy for ministry staff as they have been working diligently on several legislative initiatives to ensure that our labour policies are up to date and to encourage healthy, safe, and fair workplaces.

This budget makes important investments in people and keeps Saskatchewan on the path of steady growth. By balancing controlled spending with no new taxes, this budget continues to sustain a strong and prosperous Saskatchewan, one that builds opportunities for our people and improves safety and the quality of life for all. We are keeping our promises and ensuring greater transparency and accountability to the people of Saskatchewan.

Today I want to speak in particular of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety and the leadership role the ministry takes in our plan for steady growth. I would like next to talk about safe and competitive workplaces. Mr. Chair, we are committed to supporting a competitive and productive employment environment by encouraging healthy, safe, and fair workplaces and ensuring that our labour policies are up to date. In the last year we worked on several legislative initiatives to better protect workers, promote growth, and increase accountability, including *The Saskatchewan Employment Act* and *The Workers' Compensation Act, 2013*.

This year's budget of the Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety further supports these activities. The 2014-15 budget is \$18.682 million, an increase of \$242,000 or 1.3 per cent from the 2013-14 budget. The budget provides 400,000 to decommission the occupational health and safety, the OH & S hygiene and radiation lab; 125,000 and two full-time equivalents to increase the number of workers' advocates in an effort to reduce wait times to under four weeks, offset in part by

a \$283,000 net reduction for information technology and operation. This budget also includes \$100,000 in government-owned capital for phase 3 of the OH & S portal project. These are important investments in the safety and well-being of our workers.

We have made progress, but the workplace injury rate in Saskatchewan is still unacceptably high. Make no mistake, this government is determined to see better results. We will be working diligently in this session of the Legislative Assembly to ensure compliance with OH & S provisions that include higher penalties and focused enforcement.

Mr. Chair, last December our government introduced amendments to *The Saskatchewan Employment Act* to include essential services. These amendments are the results of consultations that occurred in 2012 during the development of *The Saskatchewan Employment Act* and most recently the summer of 2013. Further, Mr. Chair, we continue to be committed to protecting essential public services such as highway safety and health care in the event of a labour disruption. The amendments we introduced came from working collaboratively with our stakeholders, and we believe they provide the right balance between protecting the public and ensuring that alternative methods to settle a labour dispute are available if the ability to strike is removed.

On January 1st of this year, *The Workers' Compensation Act, 2013* became law in Saskatchewan. *The Workers' Compensation Act, 2013* is a positive step forward for workers' compensation in Saskatchewan. It increases benefits in a fiscally responsible manner and modernizes the language for ease of use. The Act addresses the recommendation of the 2012 workers' compensation Act committee of review, or COR, on various recommendations that were made by the committee of review.

Mr. Chair, in February we introduced a summary offence ticketing as a new enforcement tool intended to have an impact on people who violate OHS [occupational health and safety] legislation. We believe summary offence ticketing will encourage ongoing compliance with health and safety rules and help workplace injuries. We also believe that this new tool deals with recurring and potentially dangerous contraventions that require immediate action.

Soon *The Public Health Act* amendments respecting an asbestos registry will be law. As part of this, owners of public buildings will have to post the information required in the OHS regulations regarding asbestos. We give credit for this legislation to the late Howard Willems who was a champion of this cause. The registry is the first in Canada.

Mr. Chair, soon we will proclaim *The Saskatchewan Employment Act*, which is the result of a lot of hard work and significant consultation with our stakeholders and with the people of Saskatchewan. We've restructured and reorganized the existing legislation, eliminated inconsistencies, clarified legislative applications, and modernized the legislation to more accurately reflect contemporary work environments. The result is legislation that supports the needs of stakeholders in Saskatchewan, putting the safety and interests of working people first.

We committed to indexing the minimum wage in Saskatchewan. This has already taken place, and we've announced an increase in the minimum wage to \$10.20 per hour, effective October 1st, 2014.

[21:15]

Mr. Chair, this is a budget that is responsible, strategic, and supports steady growth. This is a budget that invests in our workplaces, our youth, employers, and employees so all Saskatchewan people can come home safely each night and enjoy the benefits and opportunities of growth. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, committee members. I look forward to your questions.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Forbes, I believe you have a question. You have the floor.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much. Thank you very much. I appreciate the presentation, and they do spark a few questions, so I have a few questions for you and for the minister and the ministry.

Right off the bat though, there has been a lot of attention to lean. Any new lean projects? I know there was one we talked about a year ago in employment standards. What is the situation since the past year or going into future years with lean?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I'm just going to have Louise Usick answer.

**Ms. Usick:** — This past year, we conducted six lean events. One was the occupational health and safety, the creation of a standardized file management process. The second one was in labour standards, the streamlined processes related to the insurance of wage assessments and certificates. We held a couple of kaizen events. One was in labour standards and that identified the information to complete the wage assessment and certificate. It was also a follow-up to the value stream mapping process just mentioned. And another one in labour standards identified the competencies and the criteria necessary to delegate the wage assessment.

Fifthly, we had a business enterprise model. This was for the management of lean methodologies to identify shared competencies within the ministry. And finally we had a lean management system which was in labour standards, and this was for labour standard managers and supervisors in the compliance and investigation program. We have three lean projects planned for this coming fiscal year. We haven't identified all the details in those.

**Mr. Carr:** — I think our approach to lean has been really to look at existing processes and programs to try and make the improvements that would deliver better service to citizens. And that's an example of what we had described in the six issues that Louise has raised in her explanation.

The three additional projects that we're going to do have yet to be identified. Usually we wait until we get through the budget process and then we sit down with leaders and talk about what projects they want to take on for the current fiscal year. That work will be done this June.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well what has been the cost of the six events? And do you have a budget laid out for the three that are coming up?

**Ms. Usick:** — Our costs have been fairly low because four of the six events that we held this past year were internally facilitated. Our total costs for '13-14 was \$9,685.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So that would be the total for all six?

**Ms. Usick:** — Yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And then what are you anticipating for the three coming up?

**Ms. Usick:** — We have . . .

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Likely nil because those are internally done as well. Not saying there wouldn't be some costs but there's no money budgeted for them.

**Mr. Forbes:** — When you talk about a kaizen event, what does that mean?

**Mr. Carr:** — Kaizen is an event that looks at a short one-day event to look at a specific problem we're trying to solve. And so a kaizen . . . For example, if you do a value stream mapping event, you may in the course of that analysis of the value stream identify problem areas within the value stream, and so you'll assign people to look at that specific problem. So that specific problem, we call a kaizen. And so what we would do is then come back to that after we've completed the value stream mapping event and continue the work of the kaizen to complete that problem-solving event, and then bring that back to the group that had done the value stream mapping event as a solution to the problem that they'd identified.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Now I just heard you refer to some leaders. Now what did you mean by that?

**Mr. Carr:** — Leaders are employees of the ministry that have taken specific training with respect to lean methodologies. And so they become our experts and the people who lead us through the value stream mapping events.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So how many leaders would you have in your . . .

**Mr. Carr:** — At the present moment, we have four lean leaders inside the ministry.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Have they all been trained? How have they been trained?

**Mr. Carr:** — They've all taken the lean leader training that has been offered within executive government. And they're qualified then to take on projects. So the whole lean leader development program is that you take the training program, then you support a value stream mapping event as a participant. Then you watch that value stream mapping event being led. Then the next value stream mapping event, you participate as a co-leader, and then the third time out, you lead a full event yourself.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So have these folks taken their training all in Saskatchewan or have they been . . . When you take Executive Council, have they gone to Washington state?

**Mr. Carr:** — No. All of our lean leaders have been trained here, locally.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Which consultants have trained them or has it been completely internal?

**Mr. Carr:** — We used the consultant that executive government has engaged for that training purpose. And the training was delivered through that consultant. Then we have taken the lean leaders and they have led our process from there.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Is that John Black?

**Mr. Carr:** — No, it is not.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. Can you share the name?

**Mr. Carr:** — The consulting company that provided the services was Westmark Consulting.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. Now I don't know if this is . . . I'm curious about Workers' Comp. Are they going to be going through, or have they gone through the same process?

**Mr. Carr:** — Well Peter Federko is here and can best speak to that. But my understanding is of course that they have a different process improvement methodology that they're using. And he can speak to that, I'm sure, in the questions that you may wish to pose.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Sure. That's my question. I'd like to hear from Peter on this if I may, from Mr. Federko.

**Mr. Federko:** — So the Workers' Compensation Board has been doing process improvement since about 1996. We did not adopt the lean approach. We adopted a methodology known as Hammer which has now become FCB Partners.

We continue to work toward process improvement using that FCB methodology. And there are similarities between it and what lean does, but we have not subscribed to the lean methodology.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Have you been able to identify savings? And have you been able to catalogue that and prove the worth of the program you are on?

**Mr. Federko:** — Not specifically. The improvements that we've made over the years have not had a direct, linear relationship. So our focus has not been on reduction of costs as much as improving the value for the services provided with the resources that we have in place.

And so we do track the growth in our administrative costs, not specific to any one process, but rather to the running of the entire operation. And for about the last 15 years, I guess, we have been managing our administrative costs below the inflationary growth of goods and services within the province.

Our current focus, we've renewed that focus on process improvement about two and a half years ago. We will have more specific metrics relative to specific processes that we are looking at again, and those would be available as those processes mature and we do see the results.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And the same question to you, Mr. Minister, in terms of the cost savings of these lean initiatives and what has been really the driving force behind this?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I can tell you that while you were asking Mr. Federko the question, it was anticipated by Mr. Carr who has got his answers ready.

**Mr. Carr:** — Thank you, Minister. We have looked at each of the projects that we set out as value stream mapping events. And we've identified specific improvements in process.

I shared with you last year the example of labour standards, where we've been able to reduce the number of days on average to close a file on a complaint. That continues to be something we monitor on an ongoing basis, and so I'm pleased to report that as a result of the work that that team did, we continued on average to close files in about 99 days. So that's down significantly from the 143 days we'd averaged prior to the project.

In terms of the occupational health and safety division, they did a value stream mapping event on the appeals decisions for the director, and in doing that project, they have been able to eliminate completely a backlog that had existed for a number of years on decisions. And they're now able to report very timely outcomes for people choosing to appeal decisions of the director or executive director under occupational health and safety.

In terms of the office of the workers' advocate, a value stream mapping event there has produced a very significant improvement in service levels for people pursuing claims with the workers' compensation system. In terms of the work that's been done to create a standard file management process within the office of workers' advocate, we've been successful in addressing a 32 per cent increase in the number of files opened each year. We've been able to improve the outcomes in 34 per cent, in addressing the 34 per cent increase in the number of hearings attended by staff on an annual basis. And so that's actually providing significant benefit to injured workers who are addressing disputed claims with WCB [Workers' Compensation Board].

In terms of the labour standards project that we spoke of this year, there's some continuing work, and we've seen a significant turnaround in terms of the opportunities we have to address collection and the opportunity to collect wages that have not been paid but are owing. And so as a result of the lean project there, we've been very successful in moving to a decision and getting improved collection rates in those circumstances.

If you look at the lean value stream mapping event that we did to improve invoicing and billing in the radiation safety unit of occupational health and safety, we have generated an annual savings of about \$7,800 in terms of improved billing and

recovery of the monies that are owed by people certifying radiation equipment.

In terms of the latest projects, the kaizen events that we did in employment standards last year produced a 25 per cent process improvement in the labour standards complaint investigation process. So that's just eliminating bottlenecks within the department.

In terms of the occupational health and safety, at kaizen events, we have created an opportunity where we look at the complete file management process. And that has allowed the occupational health and safety division to look at improvements in processing the files that are opened by workers or by workplaces to the tune of generating, we think, a cumulative benefit in the thousands of dollars annually.

Preliminary targets in terms of improving our handling of files has meant that we could reach decisions and enforce actions within workplaces on a much more timely basis. If we look at the work that we've done in the labour standards wage assessment and certificate processing, we've been able to make service improvements there that allow people with disputed wage claims to get to a decision much quicker, as I had mentioned earlier. But we're now able to collect the wages that are owed more effectively by having direct line of sight with the decision that's been made on the file.

In terms of the project work that we've done this past fiscal year, the project that we worked on on business enterprise modelling has allowed us to look at every aspect of the work that we do and change the decisions that we make as to whether a process is valid and important in producing the outcome we desire. So if we look at labour standards . . .

[21:30]

**Mr. Forbes:** — Excuse me, Mr. Deputy Minister. I appreciate the answers, but we have only an hour and a half, and I was thinking we might wrap up early. But if we're going to take an hour on that one question, I appreciate it but . . .

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Your point is taken. We will try and be succinct.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Yes, I don't have many questions and they're not long questions. But I appreciate the answer. So I'm getting the sense though, is that you're also doing combination of services. There's savings but there's services. That's happening too, which is a good point.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I think that's a fair comment. I think when you go through the process of trying to develop efficiencies, you can't do it at the expense of either your employees or at the expense of doing services. So certainly that's the direction we very much want to go.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much. So if we could just quickly go through the line items there to see, and I see that the two staff you're increasing there in the workers' advocate area?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — That's correct. The number of files had grown in that area. The goal is to reduce the turnaround time on

the files at the office of the workers' advocate to four weeks or less. We were not meeting that target, so we asked for and got approval for two additional employees to deal with that.

Not wanting to make any answer any longer, I was also concerned with whether there was an issue at workers' comp that was running the number of them up. And I'm told it was just, it was sort of the normal process of doing work and trying to be as efficient or as effective. But there was not a problem with workers' comp per se.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Very good. And there's been no cutbacks in other areas or the other staff components or the different . . .

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We are even everywhere.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Even everywhere. Okay. And so in central management and services on page 98, I see that Central Services is down about \$300,000. And you had talked about, I know last year we had talked about the IT project that you had in terms of occupational health and safety committees and that there was a phase 3 or another phase this time, 100,000. Is this where this is showing up, or if you could speak to that?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — [Inaudible] . . . the breakdown. We've reduced spending in IT \$158,000, and then we've reduced communication funding by \$200,000 because we've already done whatever communications was necessary with regard to the rollout of the employment Act. We'd done the consultation, everything earlier so that there was a reduction in there. And then we have also reduced . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, in central management, \$7,000 in professional development travel.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. So you've finished the rollout of Bill 85, but you've mentioned that you want to . . . it is your goal that it will be implemented this year, that it would be proclaimed and the regulations would be also proclaimed by the end of the year. And that will all be in place?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Correct. The expectation is that the regulations we're looking at, the regulations for most of the bill will be done in the next few weeks. Essential services, of course, is dependent on the nine members on that side of the House. But that will control the timing somewhat. But I'm confident that come the long weekend in May, the members on this side will control the timeline.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I think we are . . . I think it's in committee, is it not? I think it's between you and me actually.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — You're exactly right.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I don't want to implicate my fellow colleagues here, but I appreciate that. So Bill 85 or the employment Act, the regulations, are you saying that within a couple of weeks this will be all, by the end of May, more or less . . .

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Yes, there is regs for OHS that they're doing consultation on, and that will take 18 months to 2 years, but the labour standards ones will all roll out within the next few weeks.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And then these . . . Well we'll get into the essential services part, but that debate is also going on in the Supreme Court, is it not? And when does the Supreme Court hear that case?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — May 16th, so I think we're still here. The Supreme Court has only set one day aside for the hearing. I don't read anything good or bad into that by virtue of the fact, but the hearing by their measure will be completed that day, and then your guess is as good as mine how many months after that before a decision is rendered.

There are a number of similar related applications from different provinces that are, I think, scheduled for roughly the same time in the court, so I'm expecting something that will be fairly comprehensive in detail, a variety of different issues regarding collective bargaining rights.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So does that have an impact on the full rollout of . . .

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — No. The portion that's before the Supreme Court deals with the constitutional right to strike and the things that would deal with essential services. So when that decision comes down, depending on what's in the decision, it may require an amendment to the essential services piece. But we've decided not to wait. We're going to go ahead with it, amend if we have to, and we've tried to make the legislation as fair and open. We think it's the type of thing that would stand up to a new court challenge. But having said that, I can't speak for the Supreme Court.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And getting back to the budget allotment here, is the ministry planning any further communications around the employment Act coming into force and that it is actually in force? Because there has been . . . It's been a year since it's been passed. And so some people may feel, may be under the impression that it is already in, or what's actually happening here.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Yes. The rollout will be relatively minimal. There was a lot of publicity when it came out, a lot of discussion, a lot of media at the time. So the advertising of the rollout, we didn't budget any significant amount of money for it. It would largely be web-based information and some advertising that it's now in place. I think the budget amount, Louise tells me that it's 50,000.

**Mr. Forbes:** — How much?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — 50,000.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Fifty thousand, okay. Good. And then getting back to the IT project, so it's phase 3, the 100,000 that's coming into play, and it was 250,000 last year?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — This is for the OHS portal?

**Mr. Forbes:** — Right.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I'll let Louise . . .

**Ms. Usick:** — That's correct.

**Mr. Forbes:** — That's right. And is that going to be it for that project?

**Mr. Carr:** — That project will wrap up this year, and the \$100,000 that we're budgeting for this year will be the last expenditure we expect to make in terms of capital.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And is it licensed software from . . . Can you describe a little bit about it?

**Mr. Carr:** — It's the safety management information system that we've developed with a vendor. We've taken basically their product and made it more effective for Saskatchewan. And in doing that we've had to purchase the licences. But in doing it we will create an environment in which we will be able to facilitate electronic contact with every Saskatchewan workplace.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And you've been rolling it out, so you've been testing it. It seems to be working well, and it's meeting its mandate? And you're not seeing a . . .

**Mr. Carr:** — It in fact is going very well. We're quite pleased with what we're seeing.

**Mr. Forbes:** — You're getting good feedback from both employers and employees on this?

**Mr. Carr:** — Yes. Yes, we are.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Is there any public access to it at all?

**Mr. Carr:** — It's designed to be a tool that provides access to OHCs, so occupational health and safety committees. We've got in the province 6,022 of them presently. And it will also allow employers and interested workplace parties, usually members of the OHC, to make inquiries.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. I'm just curious whether I would be able to get in and see what it's all about.

**Mr. Carr:** — We'd be happy to, at some point, provide you with a demonstration.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I'm just curious. You know, we always like to see what's happening.

**Mr. Carr:** — Sure.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Yes. Okay, good.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — If you wish to go on an electronic tour, the officials will arrange one for you.

**Mr. Forbes:** — All right. Well it sounds like with 6,000 committees, it's very public. So it's not much of a secret.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The fact that's happening is it's certainly open, but I don't know how many of the 6,000 will have seen it yet.

**Mr. Carr:** — Not many, Probably about 100 will have seen it. We hope tomorrow to send out the mailings to all of the OHCs



in the province.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — You can become an early supporter.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Yes, early adapter. There you go. Okay. Occupational health and safety, if we go down to that area, and in this case we see . . . Now this is where the IT part would be coming up. This is the 200,000. But you also talked a little bit about the — I didn't quite catch — the decommissioning or something happened with the radiation. There was a project there that was . . .

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — There's a lab where they do testing of radioactive material and the lab is no longer used. And for that place to be returned so that it can be used for office or other things to remove all of the hazardous material and testing things that are in there, the cost is \$400,000. It's a one-time expense.

**Mr. Forbes:** — That's a fairly significant cost.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We could arrange a tour there. I've gone on one.

**Mr. Forbes:** — We'll talk about that. All right. But I am curious. I do have a question about Jimmy's law, and I had a written question and I don't know if I wrote it as well as I might have or should have. It seems you have been out doing some investigations or inspections of late-night retail businesses. There was 41 and they all seem to be in compliance. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — No, the compliance is not that good. It's not 100 per cent. The compliance is approximately 70 per cent.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Seventy per cent. Yes, the question wasn't very good. So can you tell me a little bit about what were some of the issues that were identified?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Twenty-three per cent were in full compliance. The highest sections where there were non-compliance were installation of signage indicating the worker's limited accessibility to cash and valuables, installation of signs, indication of the use of video cameras, and provision of a personal emergency transmitter for workers working alone between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m.

So of the audits that were done, the ones that were not in compliance, they were . . . Directives were given to bring corrective action. They will continue to conduct workplace compliance audits and go back to those. No charges have been laid yet. At this point in time the OHS workers are trying to use an education and voluntary compliance. The ones that are members of the Western Canadian convenience association or the larger chains seem to have a better level of compliance, and it's the smaller locations that will have obstructed windows or poor visibility. So it's getting those ones to get up to speed and to get an understanding.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I appreciate the inspections, because I think it's a good thing that it's known that they're being inspected. That's a good thing. And the other question I had asked, I'd asked about two instances of late night robberies and I think the phrasing of the question might have implied, was the robbery

investigated by the occupational health and safety? I didn't think it was the robbery that was being investigated but the workplace. So these two sites, one was in Hague and the other one was in Saskatoon.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — No workers injured in those incidents. They were not investigated as OHS incidents. They were ones that would have been of course, as you'd indicated, investigated by the police or the usual authorities. But insofar as safety audits, where there's been an incident, it would be one that they would be more inclined to audit in the future as they go forward.

**Mr. Forbes:** — That's the thing I was wondering about, whether they would be. Because I understand you have your list of 50 employers.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Over 60.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Over 60. This might be 62, just because it would be worth travelling back to see. And I don't know if the cause of the robbery was anything related to the workplace and whether or not the regulations were followed or not followed caused the robbery, but anyways I appreciate that. And we'll follow up and we look forward to hearing more about that.

Now you had alluded to the work around the asbestos registry and that there were . . . further work, that it would be published or . . . What are the next steps for that?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The registry is required to be posted online, and the regulations are coming into place. I'm not sure what the timeline is. I have an information sheet. The mandatory posting for public buildings through the Public Health comes into force May 7th, and I think that's correct. So that will be coming up soon.

The requirements for the details of what needs to be posted through the OH & S regulations will come into force May 20th. The next steps or the public awareness of that is the ministry will post the information on the provincial website. There will be a mailout sent out April 11th, so starting the 11th. So that's been sent already. And the occupational hygiene unit is currently contacting key stakeholders via conference calls and committees to remind other ministries and Crown corporations of the changes to posting requirements.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. So those are the regulations related to the registry, I assume?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Correct.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. And there's no other regulations that are contemplated at this time?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — It's a bit of an anomaly because the asbestos is part of the public health legislation. So we've done an amendment to the OHS so that our regulations sort of referentially incorporate or allows our workers to enforce that portion of an Act that would not ordinarily be ours otherwise.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Now someone has contacted me a bit about the Fortune Minerals situation at Langham and the asbestos. Has

that been raised with you as well?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — It has. I've had discussions with the Ministry of the Environment officials. They indicate that their understanding is that there is not any hazardous chemicals that have not been dealt with in accordance with their legislation. Because it's not a building, it is not subject to any of our legislation. The information I have is that . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes. If there are workers working there and there is asbestos or other chemicals that would be . . . then there's regulations affecting that as a workplace. But we don't have information indicating specifically that asbestos is there, the ministry officials have been told, in an environment. In any event, until Environment has sorted out what they're doing with regard to licensing, they don't have employees on site. So this ministry has not yet, not developed a plan and won't until they know what is taking place within the Environment ministry.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So the hazardous substance is actinolite, a-c-t-i-n-o-l-i-t-e?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — That's the substance that . . .

**Mr. Forbes:** — That's the one you're aware of?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I'm going to let Tareq answer the question. What I'm told is that once the workplace starts working and they identify what substances are there, then they're in a controlled workplace and then our regulatory regime for safety kicks in. But I'll let Tareq answer more.

**Mr. Al-Zabet:** — So Fortune Minerals is a project that hasn't even been built yet. It's on blueprint. It has been approved conceptually by the Ministry of Environment. All the hazardous material, if there are, really are being built through their environmental assessment process. Once the project is approved and if they have any kind of asbestos removal, asbestos moving, or . . . [inaudible] . . . they have obligation to report that to our ministry. So every employer in the province needs to report that information, and we have to be actually following up with them on how they remove things and how do they stabilize that material.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So in a sense, the Environment folks are being the proactive and you'll end up being the reactive. But hopefully, because you'll have to have a plant, I see . . .

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I think that's fair. We don't license or determine what can be . . . whether a workplace project can go ahead. We regulate it once it's there, but it's up to the Ministry of the Environment to determine whether the project can or should go ahead or under what conditions. If they decide it can go ahead, then the regime of this ministry kicks in and we would do whatever inspections, training, whatever would be appropriate.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Now moving on from that but still in occupational health and safety, the fines that were part of the Bill 23, I think there was just a couple of sections that were not proclaimed, and one was the structure of the fines. And while I do, you know, salute the ministry and Justice for its good work in bringing these infractions to court and seeing the fines, the fact is that it's under the old fine structure. So are you

contemplating that the new fine structure will be brought into force soon?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Yes, the fine structure is part of the legislation which comes into force on proclamation, which will likely be in the next . . . when the bill, when everything comes through the House. So the answer is yes. Now there will be some of the OHS things as part of the OHS regulation review that won't . . . Fines for those things won't be levied until those regulations are updated and brought through.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So when Bill 128 is proclaimed, that's what you're saying, or Bill 85?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We're expecting in April.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay, thank you. And then looking through your work plan for 2014-15, I notice that it's time again for the workers' compensation committee of review to be begun. So what is the plan for this year, or what's the timeline for that?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — It's actually mandated in the legislation. So the process will come away and it's usually fall of the year and largely done in conjunction with WCB and with the ministry. So it'll be this fall, and we'll work through the process in a fashion similar to what happened last time.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So I don't have the Act with me, so I don't have the timelines. There are several parts to it. The naming of the Chair is very significant and the naming of the committee and then the hearings. So when will the committee be named and the committee Chair? When will we see that news release come out?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The process is unchanged from . . . The legislation and regulation regarding this process for the committee of review is unchanged since the last time, so the expectation would be we would go through the process in the fall, but we have no direction at this point in time as to board members, Chairs, or . . .

**Mr. Forbes:** — What I'm hearing you say is that's when we should be expecting to see a press release or some sort of information about the committee, sometime in the fall.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The process was followed last time. It's done by order in council. They solicited input from SFL [Saskatchewan Federation of Labour] and various safety organizations, chamber of commerce, so there would be business representation. And there was a recommendation came forward regarding the appointment of the Chair. And I think the last Chair was Roslyn Kunin, a former BC [British Columbia] Chair, and that was my appointment.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So again I'm just trying to get a timeline. So that is what will happen in the fall?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Yes, and the expectation that it will follow a similar timeline to what it did last time. The officials and the WCBC [Workers' Compensation Board committee] . . . [inaudible] . . . We're looking at fall, but I wouldn't hazard a guess as to when in the fall. I'd look to them for some direction as to when they'd done it last time and . . . [inaudible] . . . But

it's not something that we have had discussion so far this year.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And I guess that's my . . . I was thinking I haven't heard much about this until I read the plan this . . .

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — It's this year's agenda, this year's project. Right now the immediate project is the finalizing the legislation, and then it'll be something that we'll follow after that.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Last year we talked about the young worker readiness certificate course and how effective it is and whether it's meeting its goals of having young workers who know their rights and that they're working in safe workplaces. Can you tell me how that is going?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Yes. We regard it as one of the really successful things that has been undertaken by the ministry, as much as it was brought in by my predecessor, and it has continued to be well received. And as you're aware, it's for allowing young workers age 14 to 15 to come to the workforce if they complete an online young worker readiness certificate course.

So as of March 31st of 2014, over 40,000 certificates of completion have been issued. By fiscal year, I'll go through them by year: '09-10, 527; '10-11, 4,069; '11-12, 5,051; identical number in '12-13; and in '13-14, 25,961. So they've been promoting it, and actually the schools have given good support to it, so we've spent time in schools.

I have a great statistic for it. In 2011, 14 per cent of the youth in the province had taken the course; 2012, 37 per cent; 2013, we now have 76 per cent of the young people have taken the course. So we regard it as incredibly successful and the young people seem to be doing well in the workplace.

[22:00]

**Mr. Forbes:** — And I think that would be the question. If they're doing well in the workplace, if they are safe, are these kids showing up with any injuries or that type of thing or are they . . . If you have any of that?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I've been told that the 70 per cent-plus number may be inaccurate because young people may have chosen to print more than one certificate. So to the extent that young people may have done that, that may be a number that may be over-optimistic. However I would like nothing better than to think that this is one worker per certificate.

What we can do is, because of the large number of young people that are working in the workforce, there is an injury rate for them, and we'll provide that for you. It's a low number. But as with any injury, one is one too many.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Absolutely. Absolutely. And I think this could be a real opportunity to do some research into young people and work in terms of even high school completion. And I think this is something that, Minister, that you serve as Education as well, I think it would be interesting to know. I would almost think that kids who get certificates often complete high school too. They tend to do both those things. Kids who don't complete

high school probably tend not to get certificates. I don't know. But it would be interesting to know because we want to keep kids . . . And I know this is a goal for the government, to have a higher completion rate. And this would be one way to do some research to find out if, you know, students are leaving or staying because of this. It would be interesting to know.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Your point being that whether this affects work, young people, whether they're more likely to stay in school because they have taken a course and are working or whether that's a distraction. I know when the program was started, the concern was whether we should put a cap on number of hours and the type of things that may lead a young person not to want to go back to school. So I think it's a good question. I don't know whether we have the ability to track or find out, but I have the same curiosity and will ask the officials.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I think it would be interesting, and if it could be helpful, that would be . . . especially I think that as we really work hard in Education to keep kids in school, and if there's ways . . . But I have a sense that kids who would take this program often would be the ones who would stay in school. But I could be wrong.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — You're a teacher. I'm not. But I'd be inclined to . . . That would be my sense as well. It may seem counterintuitive that somebody who's taken a course and is working part-time would not do as well at school. But I think the people that would show the self-resolve to go and do those sort of things may well do well on a number of things, that they do have some additional maturity. So good. Interesting question.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I'm also looking at one of your performance measures in that. And I think we alluded to this group, but you said they were a group of 50 or 60 employers. And I'm curious about those employers in terms of whether they're public, private, to the size of how many employees are we covering.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We have the information here. Tareq is just assembling it. I'm not sure if he's going to answer it or I am. The areas that we'd targeted earlier in construction and manufacturing, those industries, we've done a . . . they've done a good job of driving down the numbers. And as I say before, one injury, one accident is one too many, but the statistics have improved across the board.

The list includes some manufacturing and includes some public sector employees, municipalities, and a number of health agencies.

The health problems are usually when it's the health sector. They're not traumatic type injuries. It's lifts and strains from people either not using the lift equipment or not knowing how to use it. So we have a strategy and discussions under way between this ministry, Workers' Compensation Board, and the Ministry of Health to try and improve worker safety.

I've actually attended some of the health facilities and when you go there, the signs, the bulletins, and the equipment are there. But whether the workers are as engaged as they should in using equipment, it appears that they're not always. And the injuries — the lifts, the strains — are continuing to happen so

that's why we've continued . . . I'll give you a couple of the statistics. The health care sector is one that we've targeted this year and targeted last year. So we've had a 13.8 per cent reduction in the total injury rate in the health care sector, which is better than the Worksafe target of 11.2 per cent. So it's not as . . . It's a step in the right direction, but we know that we have work that we need to continue to do.

**Mr. Forbes:** — In terms of . . . And I know that we've been in the second last place for injury time loss. I think that's the one we're second last and we have been for several years. Have all the other provinces been going down as well? That we haven't . . .

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The good news is that all of Canada is getting better. The bad news is that we're not getting better faster than the other provinces. And in spite of that, there's a significant improvement. As I keep repeating, one is one too many.

The fatality rate has seen a marked drop. A year ago you will recall that we had 60 names for fatalities. This year it will be 35. So it's a significant drop. But if you are one of the 35, it's the most horrific thing your family can go through. The provincial time-loss injury province-wide was 2.54 per cent, which is a 9 per cent decrease from 2012. It's better than the target which was 2.60. So we made progress, but not fast enough.

**Mr. Forbes:** — In terms of the 35 — it looks like you may have the list in front of you — how many of those were related to cancers, I guess, or were other than traumatic deaths?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Of the 35, 13 were cancer related. The previous year it was 19; the year before that, 15. So it's an improvement and, as much as we'd like to take some credit for that, these are illnesses that these people have had for a long time, and we can't take credit for the reduction that's there.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much. A couple of other questions. The summary offence ticketing process, I understand . Where is that at now?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — It will come out as part of the things in plan to come out in April. And the simplest explanation is, it is the same as getting a seat belt ticket. If a police officer sees you not wearing a seat belt in the vehicle — you're not wearing some personal protective device — there is a fixed fine for it. Stops you, gives you a summary offence ticket. And if you choose to fight it, you go to court on the prescribed date. If you choose not to fight it, you make your voluntary payment, tick off the box that you're not fighting it, and send your cheque for whatever else and hopefully learn from that experience.

So what we've done here is we've identified 12 specific offences and said, these are the things that we think should be abundantly clear to people or people should have known about already. Some of them would be for workers. A few of them would be for workers; most of them would be for employers. So the ones that would affect workers are failure to use or provide personal protective equipment and failure to ensure use of fall protection.

**Mr. Forbes:** — You had taken some time to delay this implementation for further consultation and that type of thing. Has that been successful?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Yes. As a result of the further consultation, we had a number of other things that we had initially included. And some of the ones that we are not going forward with — not to say that they may not at some other time — was use of lifting equipment and that would have affected health care workers. And the analysis that we did, and having met with SEIU [Service Employees International Union] and some of the health care unions, was that it was not the right tool to use at this time. There needed to be issues with training, availability of equipment, and we thought imposing that on the worker at this time wasn't particularly productive — that we wanted to focus on availability of the equipment, training of the workers, and look for some voluntary compliance.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you. And then another question I have, and just going back to the implementation of the employment Act, one of the parts will be the role of the Labour Relations Board, that they'd take on a much bigger role. And part of the fact is that's where people will now call if they have a lot of their issues, in fact. I mean, labour . . . employment standards will be at place, but if there's any issues, it's a bigger role for Labour Relations Board. Are they ready for that, and will they be getting resources to be geared up for that?

[22:15]

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I meet periodically with the board Chair. We're respectful and very mindful of their independence. We treat them the same way we would, the same way I dealt with the chief judge when I was in the Ministry of Justice. So we don't tell them how to decide cases. We don't tell them how to allocate their resources. We respect their independence. But the questions that we pose to them is, there's some significant changes to the legislation. It imposes duties on you, and my question to Chairperson Love is, are you ready? Do you need anything from us?

He has looked at the legislation, had discussions with board members or with his staff, and the direction that we have from him now is they are coping well with the matters that are before them now. They will assess and continue to monitor as they go forward, and come back to us if they require them. And my offer to him stands, that if there are issues regarding staffing, professional development, whatever else, let us know as quickly as possible. They are doing things internally, and they indicate that they wish to continue that we will respect their independence.

**Mr. Forbes:** — All right. Then with that, Mr. Chair, I think I may be done my questions. And so I'd just like to thank the minister, his officials, for the answers. I think they were forthright and I appreciate the time with the minister. Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair, to the member opposite, to the committee members, and yourself, and the staff that are here tonight. Thanks to all of you. To the officials that I would like to say would have had a nice night out barbecuing or golfing otherwise, but the weather is such that this is a night

that I'm sure they're enjoying. So I'm glad they're here and I want to thank them for the hard work that they do, not just today but through the rest of the year as well.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much, one and all. Seeing no more questions, I would ask a member to move a motion of adjournment. Ms. Wilson has moved. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — This committee stands adjourned until April 15th at 3 p.m. Thank you one and all.

[The committee adjourned at 22:17.]