



# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

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## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

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Ms. Alana Ross  
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[The committee met at 17:00.]

**The Chair:** — Well good afternoon, committee members. My name is Ken Cheveldayoff. I'm the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for Saskatoon Willowgrove. I'll serve as your Chair this evening for the Standing Committee on Human Services.

Members of the committee include Ms. Meara Conway, the Deputy Chair; Mr. Muhammad Fiaz; Mr. Ryan Domotor; Mr. Derek Meyers; Mr. Hugh Nerlien; and Ms. Alana Ross. We do have one substitution tonight. Ms. Carla Beck will be substituting for Ms. Meara Conway. Welcome, Ms. Beck.

Before we get into this evening's proceedings, I'd like to table a document: HUS 7-29, Minister of Health, correction to a response given on April 15th, 2021 at a meeting that we had last week.

I'll just briefly read a statement. Because we are still implementing measures to facilitate safety in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, if the minister needs to confer privately during proceedings, he may do so in the hallway or the vestibule at the front of the Chamber.

And as a reminder, please don't touch the microphones. They are fragile and sensitive. Sounds like me, fragile and sensitive. The Hansard operator will turn your microphone on when you are speaking to the committee. Cleaning supplies are located at the tables by the side doors for members and officials to use them if they require.

**General Revenue Fund  
Education  
Vote 5**

**Subvote (ED01)**

**The Chair:** — Today we will be considering the estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 for the Ministry of Education. We will begin our consideration of vote 5, Education, central management and services, subvote (ED01). Minister Duncan is here with an official.

And just before we get into the introduction, I just want to remind committee members that we will recess at 7 p.m. for a short break to allow for a change of the Hansard operators and to take a biological break.

Minister Duncan, if you would please introduce your official and make any opening comments that you may have. Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon, colleagues. I'm pleased to be here to speak about the Ministry of Education's 2021-2022 budget. As you can see, I'm joined by the deputy minister, Donna Johnson, as well as my chief of staff, Mitch Graw. And we also have a number of ministry officials who will be able to support us via Webex.

Teachers, school staff, and parents are doing a tremendous job right across the province to keep our schools safe and to continue supporting our students' well-being and learning. I've had the

great privilege of meeting with many of our school boards and stakeholders during the last number of months, and I'm encouraged to hear what is going on in our schools around the province to support students in new and innovative ways. I'm impressed with the work our early childhood educators have done across the province in keeping our youngest citizens safe.

Child care providers have continued to provide this essential service throughout the pandemic, ensuring that our health care workers and other essential employees could continue working, knowing that their children are safe and well cared for. Despite the need to distance and provide extra cleaning in these areas, our child care providers have found creative and innovative ways to engage our children in learning while remaining safe. And for this I thank them.

Our libraries have also found innovative ways to serve citizens over the last year while complying with public health orders. Thanks to the virtual services, curbside pickups, and the safe return to in-person operations, thousands of our citizens, young and old, have continued to have access to the services our libraries offer. This promotes not only our well-being of our citizens but also a core value of the Ministry of Education — being lifelong learners. I thank the many library staff for all that they have done to serve citizens during these extraordinary times.

I know that this year has not always been easy, but it has been incredible to see the dedication of so many education workers, from Ministry of Education staff to school division administrators, board chairs, to teachers and support staff, child care providers, and public library workers. They've all provided safe and welcoming learning for everyone from our youngest citizens to our lifelong learners. I'm pleased with the work that everyone has done, working alongside our public health officials to adapt and ensure that we can continue to operate in the safest way possible.

With that said, the Ministry of Education budget for the 2021-2022 budget year is focused on protecting classrooms, building schools, and growing child care capacity and supporting libraries and literacy. With the largest ever education budget in the province's history, we're providing \$2.66 billion to support pre-kindergarten to grade 12 classrooms, early learning and child care, and libraries and literacy. This is an increase of 59.6 million or 2.3 per cent over last year.

Saskatchewan's 27 school divisions will receive \$1.96 billion for the 2021-2022 school year. This is an increase of 19.2 million over this school year and fully funds the 2 per cent increase for teachers as part of the teachers' collective bargaining agreement.

While the net increase to school divisions is 19 million, the full 23 million is being provided to fully cover the cost of the bargained increase. This is offset by a \$2.5 million adjustment, as the budget related to one former associate school has been moved from the operating grant to the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] initiatives allocation. This is to reflect the school's change from being an associate school to a qualified independent school. The remaining adjustments to the school division grant funding reflect the lower operating costs related to the opening of a new elementary school in Weyburn that is set to open this fall, which is consolidating three old buildings into one new

building.

This increase is also in addition to the more than \$150 million in the COVID-19 contingency fund for education that has been available to school divisions and independent schools over the last year to support the ongoing needs of schools during the pandemic. Included in this contingency funding is 20.7 million of approved provincial funding that is specifically earmarked to support school divisions as they prepare for the new school year this fall. This funding will help school divisions in supporting students with learning interventions, student engagement, mental health supports, and the ongoing costs for sanitation and PPE [personal protective equipment].

In addition to the \$19 million increase in funding for school divisions and the availability of the COVID contingency funding, we know that our school divisions will also benefit from additional cost decreases from SaskPower as well as the SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] rebate.

Our government remains committed to protecting our classrooms, and we're continuing to prioritize students' needs by maintaining our commitment to inclusive and supportive learning environments for all students. This budget provides 291.6 million for supports for learning, an increase of 2.5 million over the 2020-2021 school year. This funding is provided to school divisions unconditionally to address the intensive needs of students with cognitive, physical, and/or psychological challenges, as well as vulnerable students experiencing barriers to learning success due to social, economic, emotional, and behavioural issues.

There's also \$21.4 million for pre-kindergarten students, an increase of 595,000. This will continue to support the 316 pre-kindergarten programs across the province, which serve nearly 5,000 three- and four-year-olds.

In addition to our 27 provincial school divisions, our government is continuing to support our historical high schools and qualified independent schools. These schools continue to offer options to our students and families to choose the educational path that works best for them. The 2021-2022 budget provides nearly 15 million in operating grants for qualified independent schools and historical high schools. This includes an increase of 3.1 million for qualified independent schools to address increased costs, including increased enrolment.

As part of our commitment to grow child care capacity in the province, we're providing 100.8 million to support early learning and child care. This includes 75.5 million for child care, an increase of \$2 million in provincial funding. The provincial funding provides increased grant funding for new and existing licensed child care homes including an equipment grant of \$300 per year per space, up from \$150 per year per space; a nutrition grant of \$80 per month per space, up from \$60 per month per space; and a one-time start-up grant of \$3,325 for new homes, an increase of \$500.

Also included in our child care funding is an estimated 13.6 million from the Canada-Saskatchewan Early Learning and Child Care Agreement. The federal government has committed that this funding will be permanent and ongoing, and our ministry staff are currently engaged in negotiations for the next four-year

agreement.

The province is also working to grow the number of available child care spaces in the province. The 2021-2022 budget provides funding to create 176 new licensed home-based spaces and 51 new licensed centre spaces as part of the province's four-year commitment to create 750 new licensed child care spaces. I'm pleased to say that with this year's commitment, our government has allocated funding to 7,170 new centre-based child care spaces, a 77 per cent increase in space since 2007. Our government is also actively working to increase the number of available licensed home-based child care spaces around the province. These additional spaces are helping to serve not just our youngest citizens and their families but our province as a whole by allowing more parents to return to work and to be active participants in a growing economy.

Also included in our early years budget is 16.3 million for KidsFirst programs, an increase of 256,000. These additional resources will support increased operating and salary costs for both KidsFirst targeted and KidsFirst regional programming, allowing them to better serve our most vulnerable families as they work to support their children's development. Annually KidsFirst programming reaches more than 28,000 families in more than 230 Saskatchewan communities.

There is 4.5 million for early childhood intervention programs across the province, an increase of \$70,000 over last year. These additional resources will help the 14 early childhood intervention programs across the province continue to assist children in overcoming developmental delays and enhancing the abilities of children experiencing disability.

We're providing 2.6 million in continued funding for family resource centres. These include three provincially funded centres in Regina, Sandy Bay, and Yorkton. Funding provided by the Canada-Saskatchewan Early Learning and Child Care Agreement will provide for two newly announced centres in Humboldt and Estevan, as well as seven centres that are currently operating in The Battlefords, La Ronge, Meadow Lake, Moose Jaw, Nipawin, Prince Albert, and Saskatoon. Annually there are more than 54,000 visits to family resource centres. This number is expected to increase as the two new centres in Estevan and Humboldt are expected to open in the fall and the centres are able to provide additional in-person services again. Through these investments in our early years, we are providing support to families to create a better Saskatchewan for all of us.

In addition to protecting our classrooms and growing child care, our government is committed to building schools across the province to ensure that we have 21st-century learning environments in place for students across the province. To accomplish this, the budget provides 189.9 million for school capital, an increase of 22.3 million or 13.3 per cent, as part of the province's ongoing capital plan. This includes 101.9 million to support 21 ongoing capital projects to build 16 new schools and to renovate five existing schools.

This year construction is also set to begin on a new joint-use facility with two elementary schools in Regina to replace Argyle and St. Pius elementary schools, as well as the opening of the new Legacy Park Elementary School in Weyburn which is expected to take place this fall. Design is expected to be

completed on the remaining 14 new schools and five major renovations this year, with construction beginning as early as the spring of 2022.

These projects include a new elementary school to replace Princess Alexandra, King George, and Pleasant Hill elementary schools in Saskatoon; a new elementary school to replace St. Frances elementary school in Saskatoon; a new francophone elementary school in Regina; a new joint-use facility with two elementary schools in Regina's Harbour Landing neighbourhood; a joint-use facility with two elementary schools to replace St. Peter, St. Michael, Imperial, and McDermid elementary schools in Regina; a joint-use facility with two new elementary schools in Moose Jaw to consolidate four existing schools; a new elementary school to replace Ducharme Elementary School in La Loche; a new kindergarten to grade 12 school to consolidate the elementary school and high school in Carrot River; a new kindergarten to grade 12 school to replace Blaine Lake Composite School; a new kindergarten to grade 12 school to replace and consolidate the elementary school and high school in Lanigan; as well as renovations to Yorkton Regional High, and renovations and additions to John Paul II Collegiate in North Battleford, Holy Rosary High School in Lloydminster, Lloydminster Comprehensive High School, and Athol Murray College of Notre Dame.

In addition to our major capital projects, there's 8.8 million in this year's budget to complete 15 maintenance projects around the province. This is part of the government's \$25.9 million stimulus funding commitment. There's 10.33 million for relocatable classrooms in this year's budget, including 4.67 million to purchase 10 joint-use school relocatable classrooms for the 2021-2022 school year. And the remaining 5.66 million is to purchase new relocatable classrooms or to move existing relocatable classrooms for the 2022-2023 school year.

[17:15]

The budget provides 62.9 million in ongoing funding to support preventative maintenance, renewal, and emergency funding for our schools. This includes approximately \$12 million through the Climate Action Incentive Fund agreement. These investments in maintenance ensure that Saskatchewan's boards of education are able to proactively address the needs of their existing facilities, ensuring that our schools are safe and welcoming places to learn for years to come.

The 2021-2022 budget is continuing to support literacy and lifelong learning across the province with 11.3 million in ongoing supports for public libraries. This includes a total resource-sharing grant funding of \$8.5 million, of which 6.1 million is for the seven regional library systems and 1.4 million is for municipal library funding for Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert public libraries, as well as nearly \$1 million is for the northern library system.

Additional supports for libraries also includes \$2.8 million to support accessible library services and infrastructure including internet connectivity and the single integrated library system. As part of year two of the CommunityNet agreement with SaskTel, upgrades to bandwidth will continue across the province. This means that many regional libraries currently at 3 megabytes per

second of bandwidth will be increased to at least 10 megabytes per second, meaning faster internet for library patrons and staff.

The budget also allocates more than \$1 million for literacy programs which includes \$550,000 for the network of nine family literacy hubs and \$500,000 to continue to support the summer literacy programs provided by eight school divisions. The ministry is working with school divisions to offer these camps in July and August safely and in compliance with all the public health orders.

While this past year has not been like any other that we've experienced before because of the pandemic, I am pleased to say that the government has worked together with stakeholders and public health to ensure that students, staff, and families are safe and supported. The 2021-2022 Ministry of Education budget continues this work by protecting, building, and growing to meet the needs of our citizens.

This concludes my opening remarks, Mr. Chair, and I look forward to our discussion and the questions from Ms. Beck this evening. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much, Minister Duncan. Ms. Beck, the floor is yours.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thanks to everyone for joining us this evening. Thanks for those opening remarks, Minister Duncan, and thank you to your officials for being here this evening.

As you noted in the conclusion of your remarks, this has been an extraordinary year. And I think that I would be remiss if I didn't say thank you to the people in the ministry. I know that there's a lot of work without a parachute and without a manual that's happened this year. So sincerely, do know that that is greatly appreciated.

I do have a number of questions. I always find the hardest part of committee and estimates is getting started and getting into a bit of a groove here. So I will attempt to do that. I'm working with a bit smaller table this year, so if something drops just carry on as if it didn't happen.

I'm going to start looking at education operating. I'm just going to spend some time there. And I did take notes and I do have notes, but please forgive me if I ask a question about something that you have already noted.

So you mentioned, Minister Duncan, that there's a 1.96 allocation for K to 12 operating for the 27 school divisions. The increased amount for operations is 19.2 million. I note that is a 0.99 per cent increase over last year. That includes the \$23 million for the teachers' contract. I did listen that there is an adjustment based on the changed status of an associate school within Saskatoon Public. I note that there's a \$15 million increase this year for qualified independent and historical schools, which represents a 3.1 million increase, which is a 26 per cent increase over last year.

I guess the first question that I have is, the assumptions that were made in terms of enrolment for those two operating allocations.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you, Ms. Beck, for your question. And I too endeavour to get into a bit of a rhythm as I'm trying to answer your questions, knowing that I'm first time at this and so it might take a little while to get organized and find where I'm going. But to your first question, so the budget is based on enrolment of 177,350 students but the estimated enrolment that the school divisions provided to us is estimated to be 176,216. So about an 1,100 difference between what the budget is based on and what the estimated enrolment is from the school divisions.

And in terms of qualified independent schools, in terms of the jump in the budgeted grant for the qualified independent schools, it's based on an enrolment growth basically double that we've seen even over in the last year. So the enrolment at the qualified independent schools this year was just over 2,000, whereas the previous year it was less than 1,000.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, Minister. When we look at that qualified independent school growth, is that largely with online schools like Flex Ed? Or is it distributed evenly?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — So most of the qualified independent schools did see some increase but the largest was one online learning school that accounts for most of that increase.

**Ms. Beck:** — Was that Flex Ed?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Yes, it's Flex Ed. That's correct.

**Ms. Beck:** — And what was the increase to Flex Ed?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — 625.

**Ms. Beck:** — And is there an expectation that those 600-plus students will remain in online learning come the fall? I understand that that requires some guesswork, but I'm just wondering about the decrease in enrolment in the 27 divisions, if we might see some students back in the fall who weren't there in the past year.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — I'll just note first before I get to that, so the largest increase is Flex Ed but the qualified independent schools also now account for the 265 students that are students of Saskatoon Christian School that would formerly have been in the K to 12 operating that now fall under the qualified independent.

In terms of Flex Ed, I think my understanding in the last couple of weeks they've started to essentially send notices out to their families to ask for their interest in re-enrolling for the upcoming school year but we don't have any firm numbers in terms of what that might look like at this point.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. With regard to the 27 school divisions, the enrolment assumptions there, I don't have the numbers in front of me. Does the figure that you quoted, 177,350, does that represent an increase or a decrease over not last year but the year before?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — When we're basing off the 177,350 of last year, the prior year to that would have been 175,626.

**Ms. Beck:** — So we continue to see . . . I don't know whether to

count last year or not, honestly, in some of these things. But we're still continuing to see about a 2,000 increase year over year.

**Ms. Johnson:** — So if I could just add to the explanation. One of the things that I'd like to point out is that the school divisions this year told us that they are expecting enrolment of 176,215 for September of '21. And that is about 1,100; it's 1,134 FTEs [full-time equivalent] or students fewer than what was projected for September of 2020.

But this year's budget is built using that same projected enrolment level. The actual enrolment for school divisions this year was about 3,000 shy of that 177,000 figure. So from that I take it that if a number of the students return to the school divisions from the qualified independent schools, there's still room in the budget to absorb those students.

[17:30]

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. I appreciate that explanation. And of the 27 school divisions, how many are projecting enrolment increases in the following school year?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — 7.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. And so if I'm looking at the number of students that have gone to qualified independent schools, that shift, and the number of projected enrolments in schools, I have about 1,000 students that are unaccounted for. This is a concern that I've heard, the number of students that either cum files weren't requested and they didn't show up in that school division. I've heard some concerns about kindergarten students particularly that were expected to start school and haven't.

I'm just wondering if we have a sense of where that gap is in terms of the children that were expected. I guess it's two questions, because one is those children who were expected to start school and didn't. But then the number of students who are already in school and didn't attend school, do we have a sense of those numbers and where those students are?

**Ms. Johnson:** — So one observation that I'll make first is that when we look at the enrolment figures used to build last year's budget and then the figures that the school divisions are forecasting or predicting for enrolment for September '21, and then we add the qualified independent school enrolment for those two years to those school division level enrolment. The number that I get in total for school divisions and qualified independent schools for September of 2020 is 178,339. When I do the same for 2021, the number I get is 178,228. So they are, you know, they're within 110 FTEs of one another.

Having said that, when we look at our actual enrolment for September 2020 and compare it to what we were expecting, there were certainly a number of kindergarten-aged children who did not attend kindergarten. And of course as you know, kindergarten in Saskatchewan is not mandatory, so it's certainly an option for parents to choose to keep their five-year-olds at home.

**Ms. Beck:** — So there's a difference in funding between a child who would have been eligible for kindergarten last year, and I guess based on whether in the fall they'll go to kindergarten or



they'll go directly to grade 1. Is there any flexibility or allocation built in to acknowledge that? Are we expecting them to go to kindergarten or grade 1? Or do we have a handle on where they might be?

**Ms. Johnson:** — Well I would think it's fair to say we don't go down to that level when we're building the budget. We base it on the enrolment projections that the school divisions have provided us. But in this case because of the unusual time that we're in, we actually built this year's budget based on last year's enrolment, which was, you know, 1,100 FTEs higher than the projections that were provided by school divisions. So with that kind of leeway built into the system, I think that it can accommodate the kindergarteners coming back in full force and all of those five-year-olds who didn't attend kindergarten this year coming in as a full-time student for grade 1.

**Ms. Beck:** — I appreciate that. And I appreciate that forecasting what might happen in a number of months from now is difficult. My question is then given that, if we look at September 30th this fall and they're substantially different from what has been predicted in the budget, is there flexibility or is there willingness or room to adjust that to account for actual students in the classroom?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — I would just say that there is precedent in the event that the enrolment increase that we do see after the school year begins, if it's a significant increase, then there is precedent of going back to treasury board and seeking extra funds. But I think it's too early for us to be able to make that commitment. We'll see what the numbers look like.

I would also mention to you that, in providing the \$20.7 million remainder of the COVID contingency fund, the discussion with the school divisions would be that these would be funds that could be used for some of the things I think that you've identified. So are there children that, for example, the school divisions know about them and their families perhaps through being previously enrolled in pre-K, but perhaps they didn't attend kindergarten this year. So you know, what type of interventions may be needed for those students? As well as in the case where students really weren't engaged this year in the school system, those are some of the areas that we've recommended that the 20.7 million could be allocated.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. Is there a range or a definition of significant change?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — I can't give a definition of that at this point. Off the top of my head I don't know what the previous examples would have been, but I do know that there had been adjustments made based on what would have been considered a significant increase compared to the estimates when the budget was created.

**Ms. Beck:** — Would that significant change within a school division be sufficient, or would it need to be a significant change across the system?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — In the past it hasn't been necessarily driven by enrolment growth across the entire province. It has, in the past in cases, been specific to individual school divisions.

**Ms. Beck:** — You just made mention of the final phase of the COVID contingency funding, the 20.7 million. I understand that boards have that in hand at this point to be used in the fall. I also understand there's a measure of conditionality on it. Can you describe the conditions that are placed on that funding, and if those were set out by the ministry or by the federal government?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you for the question. So the allocation or the use of the 20.7 million in the COVID contingency fund really is the . . . It doesn't really have to do with any conditions either by the federal government or really by the provincial government. And I'll try to explain this the best I can.

So in the past, with the previous rounds of the COVID dollars, school divisions would apply for it. In this case, all 20.7 million has already flown to the school divisions. So there's not really that type of conditionality in terms of an application process.

The things that we would like to see the dollars be spent on though are really the things that have been identified by the school divisions themselves as we work through an interim plan for the provincial education plan, so mental health and well-being of students, interventions for any learning delays that may have arisen by students that have missed portions of the school year, early years literacy and numeracy issues that have come up for students.

And whether it be in the fall or even during the summertime, if school divisions identify that that's maybe a better way to deliver some of these interventions for students, that's really for the school division to make that determination. So in that sense it's not conditional other than in the areas that the school divisions have flagged with us as we work through an interim plan for the provincial education plan.

**Ms. Beck:** — And those funds were allocated based on enrolment?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Yes.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. With regard to the allocations to individual school boards, what's the range in variance of division funding, year by year, in terms of percentage increase or decrease? And can you identify the division with the largest decrease in funding and the division with the largest increase in funding?

[17:45]

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Just to clarify, Ms. Beck. Are you looking for absolute dollars or just percentage changes in the school divisions?

**Ms. Beck:** — Either's fine.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Okay, and I'm just looking at this year's allocation versus last year's. I don't know if you want to go back even further than that, but I can start with this and go from there if that's okay?

So I would say the largest on a percentage basis: Ile-a-la-Crosse is a 2.6 per cent increase; Horizon is a 2.5 per cent increase; Lloydminster Catholic is 2.9 per cent increase; Prairie Spirit is a 2.8 per cent increase; Sun West is a 5 per cent increase; and

Regina and Saskatoon Public are both 1.9 per cent increases. So those would be, I think, the largest ones that I'm just kind of picking out here.

In terms of reductions, I think the largest is a 2 per cent reduction in Prince Albert Catholic and 1.2 per cent reduction in Living Sky, 1.6 per cent reduction in Saskatchewan Rivers, and then various ones either plus or minus 1 per cent on either side.

**Ms. Beck:** — The average increase is 1.1 per cent. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Yes, that's correct.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. I note that last year there was only one school division that saw a funding decrease. I believe that was Light of Christ. And the overall increase at that point was 2.2. This year I think I count seven boards or 25 per cent that have received actual cuts to their operation funding year over year.

I'm just wondering why the decision was made this year to reduce the allocations and reduce the percentage allocation to operating funding.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — It is really just a function of the projections that were received. So in terms of that same chart, the increases and decreases both generally correlate with enrolment increases and decreases. And that's keeping in mind that we're still funding on 1,100 students from the base of last year that we're projecting, and we'll see what happens.

But there is that, I guess, allowance that is still there that school divisions are receiving funding at this point for students that they don't even estimate are going to be in the enrolment. But it's really just a function of the enrolment projections that we've received.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. When we subtract out the amount forwarded for the teachers' contract and we make the other adjustments, like to the change within Saskatoon Public, what is the dollar amount increase to operating funding over last year?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Okay, thank you for the question. So the 23 million is . . . So that's accounted for by the \$19 million increase, as well as just I guess the move of the 2.5 million for the qualified independents out of K to 12 into another line item. So it's still funding the students; it's just found in a different place. Plus there's about 1.4 million in savings that school divisions will recognize by school consolidation, largely in Weyburn where it's three schools that are being closed and now we're operating one school.

In addition to that though, school divisions also have access to the \$6 million that represents the 1,100 students that are not projected to be in schools, plus about \$3 million in SaskPower savings this year; as well as, at this point, an undetermined number in terms of rebates that they'll receive as a part of the SGI rebate; as well, on top of that, the remainder of the COVID contingency fund of about 20.7 million.

**Ms. Beck:** — So 23 million for the teachers' contract, but that doesn't cover all teachers. So if school divisions employ teachers outside of the funding model, their allocation, there are fixed costs there that will be an increase. So between that and the

non-teaching staff collective agreement increases — you know, fixed costs, CPI [consumer price index] — what are your assumptions about the increased costs above that teachers' contract that school boards will be facing over the next year?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — So just to be clear, the 23 million does cover all teachers, whether they are in the classroom or not.

In terms of the non-teachers and any of the increased costs that are associated with those contracts, school divisions will be able to draw on, I guess, essentially the savings that they are going to see this year through some of the initiatives that I've talked about, as well as the fact that the base of the budget does include funding for 1,100 students that they're not projecting to be enrolled this year. And so that's about a \$6 million amount as well.

But I think it's early in the school divisions' deliberations, and we'll see what they bring forward.

**Ms. Beck:** — Do you have any indication the shortfall that boards will be experiencing when they were given their allocations? Do you have any indication?

I know I've spoken with a number of boards who are telling me that they will be looking at needing to make up, in some cases, millions of dollars due to funding shortfalls. Do you have any sense of what the boards are facing with that regard?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — I think the member knows school divisions have until the end of June to submit their budgets to the ministry, and so we haven't formally seen anything. I've seen a couple of press clippings from a couple of the divisions that have started to speculate about what their financial position may be, but I couldn't give you a number today in terms of what all the school divisions would be looking at.

**Ms. Beck:** — No, I appreciate that you might not have exact numbers, and I suspect that boards don't either. I guess the concern that I'm putting on the record is that the allocations won't meet the fixed costs, let alone any increased need in the classrooms. And I'm just wondering about that decision in a year when we will see, I think it's reasonable, increased need in the classroom in the fall. I guess I'll just put that on the record.

Was there a reason for the decision not to cover inflationary costs for boards? This has been an ongoing issue. I know that boards have been asking for that predictable and sustainable funding since 2009 at least. Was there consideration for the fact that boards would be facing additional costs on top of fixed costs in the fall and increased need within the classroom?

[18:00]

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair and Ms. Beck, for your patience. I guess I would just say that in the past we looked at, as an example, I think last year there was funding for both enrolment growth and inflation. And I think last year it was about \$10 million that was provided for inflationary pressures. I guess I would say that we, while not directly in terms of saying that this amount is for inflation, but I would just look at the fact that while last year we funded enrolment growth, this year we're funding enrolment, again about 1,100 students, about \$6 million for students that are not projected to be in the schools. Add to that

SaskPower, which is \$3 million in savings for school divisions. On top of that, there will be SGI rebates. At this point we don't know how much. So I think that there are dollars, there are savings that can be and will be utilized by school divisions to address some of their challenges like inflation.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, Minister. A couple of questions. I'm wondering if you have anything to table with regard to your projections about the SaskPower rebates and how that's calculated or the SGI rebates and your CPI assumptions or the inflation assumptions that are made with . . . I suppose that's in the budget document, but I don't have that in front of me. What I understand is that while obviously there's a CPI increase assigned broadly, that the basket of goods, if you will, within education is different than just a general consumer price index percentage. If you have any of those calculations that you can table, that would be appreciated.

I guess the reason for the question, and I think it's probably self-evident, it's hard to remember back, but just prior to the onset of the pandemic, so just over really just over a year ago, we were poised in this province to have job action on part of the teachers, due to concerns held by teachers for sure, but not just by teachers about decreasing operational allocations to school boards coupled with increases to class size, but more as a little bit of the puzzle, but really more the complexity within classrooms: the increased needs within classrooms, mental health concerns. So I'm just wondering, and I mean, I appreciate constraints, but these were existing concerns prior to the pandemic. And we've all been through a year, but our kids have been through a heck of a year. So I'm just wondering about the consideration or the decision not to address those concerns in this budget.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you for the question. I think I'd just make a couple of points. First of all I would say that we certainly are committed to working with partners and stakeholders in the education sector on issues that I think you've identified around classroom size and composition. And I think there's a feeling that, generally speaking, that composition is probably, you know, one of the areas that we'll have to really focus on. And I'm not trying to minimize the class size issue, I think that there's a lot of recognition that a lot of the challenges are more on the composition versus the size. So a lot of that work had been paused during the pandemic. The committee is back meeting in kind of early stages of some of their deliberations. So we're certainly committed to moving forward with that.

And I would just note that in terms of the enrolment decreases that we didn't recognize and are still funding, those as well as some of the other savings, and on top of that, the 20.7 million which I suspect that some of that will be going to addressing mental health supports for students as they return this fall.

Again I would just say that this is what's being provided to school divisions. We will look to see what their budgets look like in June. We'll look to see what enrolment looks like after students have returned and make any adjustments if they're needed.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, Minister. One thing that's been suggested to me and to us as opposition, and perhaps this is something that you have heard as well, is the need for obviously predictable funding. We did see the Ministry of Advanced Ed,

for example, this year enter into a situation where they would look at their funding for a couple of years, and I know that that would be something that would be appreciated.

But the other thing that's been discussed is the need for a recovery plan for the education sector to deal with the impacts of COVID. Of course this isn't going to be something that's going to take us back to even where we were a year ago, within a year. I wonder if there's been any consideration or any move towards either of those moves within the ministry?

[18:15]

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you for the question. So the first part I'll maybe try to address is on the recovery, and I think that that is really the main focus of the interim plan of the provincial education plan that the sector is working towards. So really focusing on three areas: mental health and well-being of students, interventions for any learning delays as a result of the pandemic, and a particular focus on literacy, especially at the early years. I think that everybody recognized while, yes, we do need to work towards another 10-year iteration of a plan, that let's set that aside for the time being, focus on an interim plan, see what the pandemic has left when it's over in terms of students, and essentially respond to this year, recover from this year, and then start setting our focus on the longer term. So again I think that recovery is a large part of what the interim plan is intended to do.

The second part, just in terms of predictability, I would just say that certainly we're aware of what Advanced Education is doing but I also recognize the significant differences in terms of how Advanced Education is funded compared to K to 12 education. Much greater reliance on tuition and student fees and bursaries and research grants at the university level or at the advanced education level as opposed to the provincial level. But you know, I would say that I'm certainly interested in having a discussion with the stakeholders in the education sector on ways that we might be able to provide more predictability than currently exists in the system.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. With regard to assessing the impact of the last year on students, be that student learning or mental health, is there any plan to increase that assessment time, I guess? And a related question: were the early years evaluations done this year? I don't remember hearing that. And if so, what were the results of that assessment?

**Ms. Johnson:** — With respect to the question of the early years evaluation assessments, so in the school year 2019-20, the EYE [early years evaluation] was done at entry but not at exit, because as you can appreciate schools were not in at that time.

And then in the current school year, the EYE evaluation was done at the beginning of the year, so the September-October time frame of 2020. And we do have plans to do them at exit this year.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you for that. Do we know how many high school students missed semesters over the . . . or the impact on credit attainment by high school students over the last year?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you for the question. I think, as I'm sure you know, in May, May 7th, on the advice of the chief medical health officer school divisions were . . . K to 12 in-class

learning would not resume for the rest of the year. Grade 10 to 12 students received a final mark at the time in-class learning was suspended, and a minimum final mark of 50 per cent was applied to outcomes that were evaluated as of March 13th, 2020.

I guess I would just say that in light of the way that the school ended last year, credit attainment was up, and it's too soon to say this year. And we just don't have kind of that granular level of detail in terms of credit hours that have been achieved at that level.

**Ms. Beck:** — The consideration, and I suppose it's obvious just in terms of when we're looking forward to next year, if some support might be needed there. I'm afraid I'm jumping around a little bit, but I want to ask this question and time is going surprisingly quickly. With regard to municipal levies — this is something that's been raised with us a number of times — it has come to be that certain boards have been asked or been required to pay municipal levies.

Of course, they're not funded in that case for that added expense. And they're asking for consideration at the provincial government level to make that right, I guess for lack of a better phrase. Is there anything to report with regard to changing that, or I guess at the very least, reimbursing school boards when they do experience those levies?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — We are aware of, in a couple of instances where it has been raised. It's not at this point . . . First I'll say that in the small number of cases that this has come up, we've allowed school divisions to use PMR [preventative maintenance and renewal] funding to cover the levy. If there was to be a change, it wouldn't be under our Act. It would be under Government Relations. My understanding is they reviewed it a couple of years ago and it was, I think at that time and still today, used in only a handful of instances. But we'll certainly be keeping an eye on it in the event that it does become more of an issue for more school divisions going forward.

**Ms. Beck:** — I'm sure that that would be appreciated. The reason I bring it up under operational questions is because of course, you know, boards . . . And I wasn't aware of the PMR piece, but this is something, you know, when their budgets are already so tight, this is an added expense out of operational costs that they feel that, you know, takes away from classroom learning.

Something else I wanted to raise was the . . . And I don't know if I'm saying this acronym . . . people say CAIF [Climate Action Incentive Fund], but the C-A-I-F funding. Boards, like most of us, pay carbon tax and that money is paid out of operating costs. The rebate from the federal government comes to the government and it comes back in a restricted fashion to boards. I'm just wondering about the parameters set around how that money is distributed and if there are any plans to change that criteria.

[18:30]

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — So the CAIF funding is distributed to school divisions based on enrolment, and the federal government determines the criteria by which the school divisions can spend the money. And I know there have been concerns. I know in one instance I've met with a school division that I think they would like to use it to replace windows at their school division offices

to help reduce their operating costs. And they've brought that to me. But it's deemed to be ineligible by the federal government and its federal criteria.

**Ms. Beck:** — To be clear, the boards do have to apply for their portion of the rebate. Is that correct? Or the project that they want to apply it to has to meet the criteria. That's what you're saying?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Yes.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. I guess the other point I wanted to get on the record — and I missed this point with the municipal levy — while I'm sure it was appreciated by those boards who didn't have pull out of their operating fund, those PMR allocations are dearly held by boards and they allow them to make improvements that can offset further costs. So I think it would be very much appreciated if there were further consideration given to . . . or advocacy, I suppose. I understand it's not within the Ministry of Education but advocacy to change that so that boards aren't on the hook for those local improvement costs.

I do have a question. I was looking at the annual report, the most recent annual report, and I hadn't noticed this before and I think it does fit in today. With regard to revenue — so this is on page 39 of the most recent annual report for the ministry — there's a note in the very back page, almost a 7 million or a \$6.7 million variance with regard to the Canada-Sask agreement on minority language education and second official language. It notes that the variance . . . So this \$7 million or \$6.7 million decreased revenue was due to not being eligible to recognize revenue from that program. I'm just curious the reason why and if that has been rectified.

**Ms. Johnson:** — All right. For the question about the revenues, my understanding is that the problem has been rectified and what we'll see now in the following . . . So that annual report, I believe, is the '19-20 annual report. So in the '20-21 we'll see the reverse happen, where we have revenue collected from the federal government in excess of our budget because we're essentially collecting that revenue after the year-end. But the concern was with respect to getting some reporting information in to the feds.

**Ms. Beck:** — So there is a note under that plan. Two teacher recruitment and retention projects will receive 1.3 and 1.7, the federal dollars. Where does that show up in the budget, or where is that allocated in the budget, the money for minority French language and French as a second language teacher recruitment?

The question, the larger question, is with regard to federal dollars contained within the allocations, and by program would be great. I'll stop there.

**Ms. Johnson:** — All right. So with respect to your question, for the fed-prov [federal-provincial] agreement for French minority language education and for French second language instruction, in this year's budget we have 7.3 million. And it shows up in the line that is called achievement and operational support. So that's the line in the budget just above the school operating line.

And the 7.3 million is allocated: 40 per cent of the base funding amount goes to French minority language education and 60 per cent of the base funding amount is allocated to French as a second

language initiatives. We have 2.45 million . . . Sorry, we have an additional 607, almost 608,000 allocated annually for FML [French minority language] education. So again, that's French minority language education.

So the total funding is allocated as 2.45 million to the Conseil; 3.17 million goes to various agencies and school divisions to fund both French minority language education and French as a second language; and then 1.72 million goes to post-secondary institutions.

On the second page, 786,000 goes to Collège Mathieu; 400,000 to Bac [Baccalauréat] en éducation at the university; 401,000 to La Cité universitaire francophone; and 132,500 for student bursaries. And I apologize for my horrible pronunciation. Anne-Marie would be so ashamed of me.

**Ms. Beck:** — That's fine. My children won't let me speak French. It embarrasses them. So thank you.

In terms of other federal dollars, if you could just describe a dollar amount and the program and perhaps where they're allocated in the budget. I would think specifically the mental health . . . Is there any money under the federal mental health allocation . . . [inaudible] . . . that would be the funding for the mental health first aid in schools and where that's found in the budget?

[18:45]

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the federal funding that we receive, there's thirteen and a half million as a part of the early years cost-sharing program. There's the 3.9 million and the 4.7 million. Those are both the French minority education and the French second language instruction.

In terms of any of the dollars from mental health supports, so the \$400,000 that we committed to offer mental health first aid training as an example, that came through the '20-21 innovation fund budget.

**Ms. Beck:** — So that money has already flowed to school divisions?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Yes. Yes, it has.

**Ms. Beck:** — How many people have been trained under that mental health first aid training?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — So approximately 800 individuals have mental health first aid training in school divisions. We anticipate 30 training sessions with an additional 450 school staff will be trained and we're anticipating that that will be scheduled for this fall.

**Ms. Beck:** — So the target for that is just over 1,400. Two per school, is that correct? Or one per school?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — The commitment is to have one person trained in every school in all 27 school divisions by the end of this calendar year. The 800 individuals . . . And I'm sorry I don't have a breakdown. We'll look to see if we have that; I've seen it before. It's not, in terms of individuals that currently have

training, it's not proportionally dispersed at this time. So a number of school divisions have quite a few that have training and a number of schools will have quite a few people that already have the training. So we expect though that this would provide for at least one person in every school, but there will be certainly multiple in some schools.

**Ms. Beck:** — I think we can all agree that, you know, increased support is needed and important. I'm just wondering about the scope of the mental health concerns that we're seeing in schools, certainly reported before COVID, but all accounts that that's been exacerbated since last March.

The other concern that I would have put on to that . . . I'm just looking at the ed sector staffing profile, looking from 2016 to 2021 with regard to the number of psychologists in schools, for example, which has actually decreased as well as . . . Well the number of social workers is almost flat. I'm just wondering about being able to address all of those needs in schools with all of the issues that are there without additional resources and with declining staff.

One thing that's been mentioned to me, and I've had a lot of conversations . . . Actually it comes up in every conversation that I have with school boards, the concern about mental health needs in schools.

Perhaps you've heard this analogy, but I think it's worth repeating. You know, our educators and school-based staff are well trained and they care about their jobs. They care about the kids. And you know, if someone comes to them with a reading problem, they know how to fix that.

But the analogy is this: that when it, you know, if a child comes on the playground and breaks their arm, they know what to do. Take them to the hospital and they've got someone there that can help them out.

But if a child comes to them and tells them they have got a significant mental health concern — and we know the majority of people who experience mental health concerns in their lifetime, that will manifest in about age 14 — teachers and school staff are feeling like they don't have what they need to be able to deal with that. So I recognize with all of the needs here in education, you know, this has been an increased area of need. But also we've seen those supports in the broader community also not keep up.

All that to say, is there consideration for a youth mental health strategy in this province or cross-ministerial co-operation to address something that really has become a problem that is concerning and growing?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you for the question, Ms. Beck. And I think it certainly is one that is top of mind certainly for myself and for I think all the discussions that I've had in the early couple of months that I've had the pleasure of being the minister. I would, I think, offer a couple of comments.

I think that we have made strides to provide additional supports over the last number of years that I think the mental health first aid program will build upon. So we've had very good response when it comes to the mental health capacity-building program

that's operating in five different schools in the province. There's a number of other initiatives on top of that that we do fund.

I would just say the psychologists number, in terms of the workforce statistics that I think you are familiar with are . . . While they may be down, when you look at psychologists that also hold a teacher's certificate, it's relatively flat. When you add in the psychologists that are employed by school divisions that don't hold a teacher's certificate, there is a little bit of balance there in terms of that number.

In terms of inter-ministerial work, and I will . . . I should just say as well that they're not in our budget, but in the Ministry of Health budget there is a youth-focused initiative that did receive funding this year, that obviously students will be able to take advantage of as far as that support and service is available.

Inter-ministerial work is very much a part of the interim plan, the interim education plan that's being developed. Mental health is one of the three real focuses of that plan. And while it's early days, I know that there's been a great deal of discussion about how all the different partners, inter-ministerial partners, can work together to see success in that part of the interim plan going forward.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, Minister. You mentioned the mental health capacity building. Now that's a pilot program. Can you speak to how that program, how the pilot's being assessed, and what the plans are, you know, if the outcomes have been good, to scale that program to other areas of the province?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — So the mental health capacity building, as you I think know, it's funded by the Ministry of Health. And so the Ministry of Health will, I think, will do a more formal assessment of the program that they've been funding. But I'll talk a little bit about some of the outcomes that we're seeing that have been identified through the five schools that it's been operating. And I'll just for the record say it's at Dr. Martin LeBoldus, John Paul II, North Battleford Comprehensive, Greenall High School, and Hector Thiboutot School.

And so just as an example of some of the outcomes, in terms of program delivery the average number of programs that help to enhance mental health and well-being run per month have increased 45 per cent, from 22 to 32 per month. Outgoing referrals increased from two per month to eight; incoming referrals increased from three per month to 73; and obviously there will be variations that exist between the five different schools that the pilot is currently running in.

In terms of school staff engagement, 74 per cent of school staff attended a mental health capacity-building event or activity. This represented a 35 per cent increase in school staff attendance at a mental health capacity-building activity. It's a doubling of the proportion of school staff accessing mental health capacity-building direct programming, and nearly doubling in school staff making referrals to mental health capacity-building staff. Forty-five per cent of school staff felt more confident interacting with students about their mental health, and 69 per cent were satisfied with the mental health capacity-building initiative in 2020 compared to 50 per cent in 2019. So I'll just leave it at that.

[19:00]

**Ms. Beck:** — I'm just going to go back, and I do note your correction with regard to the psychologists. So we have the psychologists who also hold a teaching degree, that number is down from 2016 by seven. And those psychologists without a teacher's certificate is up by just about four. So I mean it's still a bit down but I think this is the issue with the bigger context is, you know, if we just would add about 2,000 students a year, that's an additional 10,000 students over that time.

And we've sort of canvassed that the mental health needs are increasing over that time. So I think that's part of the context here. You know, if we add a little bit more each year, but it doesn't keep up with the need or fixed costs, this is the situation that I think I would be remiss if I didn't highlight here tonight. The needs grow, the costs grow, and the support that's provided hasn't been keeping up. And so I think that's really important to me, I think incumbent upon me in fact to point out. And this all existed prior to the pandemic as I've repeated but I think it bears repeating. And you know, there was some want, need, you know, to see that reflected in the budget allocation. And that need will be only increased in the fall. So I wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't point that out.

You know, boards have been asked to . . . You know, there's been cuts and cuts, if not in overall dollars, in terms of where boards need to find savings. And so they've cut administrative costs, they've cut transportation costs, plant operations even, with efficiency measures. But those instructional costs keep growing as the numbers of students grow, but also the needs grow. So if there is, you know, a concern out there that needs to be said here, I just, I can't highlight that enough, that you know, the years leading up to this year have been challenging. This has been an incredibly challenging year for everyone. I understand that, the ministry included. But it's not going to be better next year, and those needs are going to be increased, so I just want to highlight that and maybe that's a good spot to stop.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much, Ms. Beck. Committee members we'll now take an approximately five-minute break.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

**The Chair:** — Well welcome back, committee members. We will now resume consideration of estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 for the Ministry of Education. Ms. Beck.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. One thing. I was just thinking about my previous comments. Well we were talking about mental health supports and certainly that's a concern. It sort of extends to the gamut of supports and needs in the classroom. There are reductions here as well with regard to speech and language pathologists for example, in the classroom, teacher-librarians, ESL [English as a second language] teachers, counselling staff. So just to not focus too specifically on mental health concerns, although they are significant.

One thing that I wanted to ask about, Minister, another issue that's been brought to my attention and has been reported on, are concerns about bullying and also around racism. There've been calls for black-history and anti-racism education and a request for that to be put into the curriculum.

I note a comment from June of 2020 from the former minister stating that we'll continue to work with Justice Arnot — and sorry, I'm just looking for the quote here — "... to ensure we increase our curriculum development around this very important matter." This following a petition of over 70,000 signatures at last report. I'm just wondering if there's anything to report with regard to those developments?

[19:15]

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you for the question. So the ministry is working with a number of different organizations, including the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan, and Black in Sask. I've met with Black in Sask twice since I've been appointed minister. I've also met with Judge Arnot from the Human Rights Commission.

And we are working with those organizations. In fact Black in Sask has been invited to take part in a feedback session as it relates to curriculum. So certainly we are engaging with a variety of groups on this front.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, Minister. Is there a timeline for the completion or realization of curriculum around racism and black history?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — So our focus right now is on the secondary social sciences that we've begun the work on curriculum renewal or curricula renewal — never sure which one to use. But certainly that's our focus right now and that is, I would say, a multi-year process as we focus on secondary social studies.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. I understand there was also a request from the Human Rights Commission around citizenship training. I'm wondering if there is allocation for that in this budget?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — So a great deal of work has gone into developing resources as a part of the relationship with Judge Arnot and the work that he does around citizenship. And those resources are available to teachers and to school divisions. As I indicated, I've had an opportunity to meet with Judge Arnot, so I would say the material is in place already to be used. Actually I've met with him a couple of times since I've been appointed. And so I would just say that the material is available for teachers to use as it relates to citizenship in the classroom.

**Ms. Beck:** — Is there any funding available to facilitate that training?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — There's funding by way of what's already available through professional development if school divisions choose to access the material as a part of their teachers' professional development. So that's what's in place at this point.

**Ms. Beck:** — What is the amount allocated in this budget to PD [professional development] for teachers and non-teaching staff? Is there an allocation?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — So we'll endeavour to provide a number for what it will be this year. It's generally speaking one and a half to two per cent of the teacher's remuneration. But there are different factors, the locally determined agreements that may

affect what that number is. But the deputy minister is going to look for a number.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. With regard to funding to facilitate implementation of TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] recommendations or teachings about TRC findings or for treaty education, is there anything in the budget allocated for those initiatives?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — In response to the joint task force final report, there is \$5.1 million provided in the budget. 2.4 million is to continue the invitational shared services initiative partnership between First Nations and provincial school divisions; 2.1 million to further the development of the Following Their Voices — that's the First Nations and Métis student achievement initiative; \$300,000 for Help Me Tell My Story, Help Me Talk About Math; \$200,000 to support Leading to Learn, which is a provincial learning opportunity for provincial and First Nations school principals to make a positive impact; and \$100,000 to extend a licensing agreement for on-reserve schools to be able to access Microsoft software.

**Ms. Beck:** — Are those found under K to 12 initiatives, or where are they found in the budget?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Achievement and operational support.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. I have a number of questions around enrolment outside of the ... not exclusively outside of the 27 school boards. But I'll maybe just list them and if you could endeavour to table them. I believe we're in committee again tomorrow. Around the number of students in home-based learning; number of students in online registered with the division; number of students in online learning with a qualified independent; and the number of students registered in registered independent schools, alternative independent schools, associate schools, historical high schools, and fully qualified independent schools not online. Thank you.

I have a few questions around sort of COVID-specific questions, the allocations. So the 20.7 is the last piece of the safe schools plan funding, 134 of that coming from the safe support in classroom. Is that correct? That's already been allocated. Of the 155 million rather, 134 is the safe support in classroom. The 20.7 is the last allocation of that. Okay.

With regard to rapid tests, I believe you mentioned, Minister, in question period that I believe 50 tests had been administered. Is there any update to that and any details about where those were deployed?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — So about 150 now have been administered. The first 50 were in Wilcox at Athol Murray and the others have been in Saskatoon, both public and Catholic, as well as Warman.

**Ms. Beck:** — Who administered those tests?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — We'll have to get back to you with an answer on Saskatoon. We're not sure who administered those ones. But the ones in Wilcox were administered by a nurse that's on staff.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you. To date, Minister, how many cases of COVID have been found in schools? And how many cases of transmission have been found in schools?

[19:30]

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Okay, thank you for the question. According to the Saskatchewan Health Authority . . . And I'm just reading off of a document; this is March 12th, 2021. It is using the number at that time of 1,661 cases that were identified in somebody that would have been school associated. And the most likely source for those 1,661, most likely source being an educational institution, the school, was 273.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you. So March 12th, that puts us right before we started to see the concerns of the variant spread. Do you have a measure of the number of . . . I don't know how you'd measure this exactly, but the number of classroom days lost to either schools moving online or classrooms being closed due to contact tracing?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — No, we wouldn't have that information.

**Ms. Beck:** — Do you know if that's being tracked at the division level?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — We will inquire with the divisions.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay, thank you. One of the questions . . . I know, Minister, we've had opportunity to canvass this in question period, but sometimes this is a better place to canvass these things. In terms of vaccination of school staff, there's a number that you've been citing with regard to the number of teachers who are eligible and might be eligible in coming weeks. Can I ask where you have that data from?

**Ms. Johnson:** — Thank you for the question. So that information is information that the ministry collects. And I'm probably going to forget what the acronym stands for, but the acronym is NIPA [non-instructional personnel and administration], N-I-P-A. It's part of the whole educator profile information. You were referring to our educator profile information a little while ago. But when we collect that data, each of the positions that land on that education sector profile summary that you saw are provided to us by the educators themselves. They sign that off once a year and send it in to us.

So we collect it in a database. And the information that is collected does also include some information about the educator's age. So I have a spreadsheet here in front of me that by school division identifies how many educators we have in the five-year age cohorts from 20 to 24 through to 55 to 59 and then 60 and over. So for each five-year cohort, I have a number of the summary of what you see in the educator profile document.

**Ms. Beck:** — And does that include substitute teachers as well?

**Ms. Johnson:** — That's a good question. I'm not sure, but I'm sure someone on the ministry team who is listening to us will be able to answer that question here shortly.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you. Yes, if you could let me know. That's probably significant if it includes substitutes or not.

**Ms. Johnson:** — And NIPA, by the way, stands for non-instructional personnel and administration. But the spreadsheet, despite the way I've described it, does include educators, educational assistants, and other school-based staff.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Minister, would it be wrong to characterize that talks are ongoing with regard to priority vaccination, or is that a matter that's settled at this point?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — No, I think it's fair to characterize that discussions are ongoing.

**Ms. Beck:** — There has been some concern noted with regard to the numbers as presented on the government's website with regard to cases of COVID in schools and the reporting of individual divisions themselves. Is there anything that you could tell me about that difference in reporting?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thanks for the question. I'm not sure I can really provide an answer. We get the information from Health as they do the contact tracing rollout and then make that public. There may be lags in terms of when all of that work is done that may have a little bit of variation with the numbers that we would have and that we would report. But I think that's probably best for Health to try to answer.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. You mentioned contact tracing. I wonder if you could describe the role that school-based staff or division staff are playing in contact tracing.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — It does vary by division and by time, so there have been times late last year where a couple of school divisions were asked by the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] to assist with contact tracing. I'm not sure now what that level of assistance would be, but it for the most part is done by the SHA. But they have at times asked for the school divisions to help.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. I'm just going to flip back to the rapid tests for one second. I believe that you mentioned in question period that the training video that had been promised, that is up. Is there a clear set of instructions to those administering the test, or to divisions, about when they're indicated and how to use the results?

**Ms. Johnson:** — So with respect to your question, yes. The training video is available to those who want to enter into an agreement with the SHA to administer the tests, and the training video is about an hour and a half long. Once you take the training, it issues a certificate indicating that you have been appropriately trained.

And then if you are going to perform the tests in any organization, I believe the next step is you get in touch with the SHA and turn to a memorandum of understanding. And it's through that process that the SHA informs the administrator, if you will, what they need to do when the tests are completed and how they need to report those results. They are expected to report all of the results of all the tests used back to the SHA.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay thank you. When the announcement was made, Minister, there was a promise made that divisions wouldn't have to utilize their own resources to administer the



test. Does that still hold?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you for the question. Yes, that commitment still remains. Some school divisions may have capacity though. But certainly the intention is not for school teachers or, you know, others that are obviously . . . already have a lot on their plate. But in the event that a school division has capacity that makes sense and they have the resources to do this, then they're free to.

There are five vendors that are currently in different parts of the process of getting approval from the SHA or to be contracted to administer the tests. But that's certainly . . . The commitment does remain that we will provide that capacity as a government.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. With regard to the different risk posed by the variants of concern, is there a threshold at which there would be advice to school divisions to discontinue in-person learning if the variant threshold were to get to a certain point? For example, the decision that has been made with the two Regina boards and Prairie Valley. Is that is something you're in discussion about?

[19:45]

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — There's not a threshold that we would be involved with in discussing with school divisions. They're making those decisions on the advice of their local public health officers, and so the public health officers may have different thresholds. I'm not aware of what those may be, but we're not involved in those discussions in terms of when they should make that decision based on a threshold that we have. That's really the local health officers that are making that determination.

**Ms. Beck:** — So when they're making these decisions, it's based on the advice of their SHA officials?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Yes, their local health officers.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay, thank you. I have some questions about curriculum development, the stages of curriculum development generally, and then some specific questions about different aspects of that. With regard to the work of the curriculum advisory committee and curriculum development, can you provide updates as to where we're at with that?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you for the question. So there are three reference committees that are currently active. They are secondary arts education, secondary social sciences, and secondary practical and applied arts. Last year there were 59 curricula that were either being developed or renewed for French immersion, Fransaskois, and English programming. And I could provide that list if you're interested in that. And we've also approved a locally developed Nakota class, 10, 20, 30 — I believe it's 10, 20, 30, all three — that has been approved to move from a locally developed course as a part of the provincial curriculum.

**Ms. Beck:** — Did you mention social studies in that group?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Yes.

**Ms. Beck:** — You did. Okay.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Yes. Yes, secondary social sciences is one of the three reference committees that are active.

**Ms. Beck:** — And at what stage of development, or what's the expected time for those curriculum to be ready to start rolling out?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — So we're aiming for 2023. It's typically about a two-year process for new curricula to roll out.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. Is there a list of the groups, or those who have been consulted, with regard to that curriculum development?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Ms. Beck, just to clarify, are you asking about the three reference committees that are active on those specific three areas, or just kind of in general, the process?

**Ms. Beck:** — The reference committees, I think, but if there was broader consultation with regard to that. And if you wanted to table that I think that would be fine, when you have that.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Sure.

**Ms. Beck:** — I have specific questions around American Sign Language curriculum and if you have any updates there in terms of the stage of development and who's been consulted with regard to that curriculum.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — American Sign Language are locally developed courses that are available in Saskatchewan schools. We are in the process of finalizing the development of provincial secondary ASL [American Sign Language] curricula. I don't have a list of . . . I think your question was about consultations. I don't have a list here, but we'll endeavour to provide the committee with further information on that.

**Ms. Beck:** — So just so I'm clear that there's locally developed courses at the elementary level and work under way for the . . . did you say secondary level for provincial curriculum?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — No, no, there is currently locally developed courses for the secondary level. And there's a process that we go through that we can make it as a part of the province-wide curricula.

It usually doesn't take a lot of modifications to turn it from locally developed to provincial curricula, and it's a shorter time period than, I think, the one that I talked about with the three that have a current reference committee. But that's just at the secondary level. I'm only speaking about that, not at the earlier years.

**Ms. Beck:** — So I'm sorry, so there are plans under way to develop this provincially?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Sorry. Yes, that's correct. We're finalizing a process to turn it into provincially, a provincial curriculum.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Can you describe the involvement of the Deaf community in the development of that curriculum?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — The ministry has been working with a committee of stakeholders since November of 2016 that has been led by the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. It was formed with membership from the Deaf, Deaf and hard-of-hearing community, a number of relevant community-based organizations, and other ministries. The ministry continues to be an active member of that advisory group.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Minister, there are a number of questions that have been raised with me as concerns. I'm not sure if they've been raised with you as well. I don't know if I expect you to have the answers to all of these right now, but I would like to put the questions on the record and hope that that makes its way into the development of the curriculum: concerns around standard practice for deaf and hard-of-hearing programming within school divisions; a concern that those who are teaching the curriculum is fluent in ASL and knowledgeable about Deaf culture; that there is an accreditation process and a set of agreed-upon skills; that there is some instructor evaluation; and, I think, just involvement from the Deaf community, specifically those who are fluent and use ASL. I think that's the main concern that I've heard. Is there funding, specific funding in this budget to support this initiative, or does this fall into other allocated funding around curriculum development?

[20:00]

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — It would be a part of the base of the SAS [student achievement and supports] branch.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. So just to clarify, currently there is no standard of practice across the province for the services that are provided to deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Sorry, Ms. Beck. Could you repeat the question?

**Ms. Beck:** — The question was around whether or not there was a standard of practice or a level of accreditation similar to those teachers who teach special education or, for example, is there a standard of accreditation or qualification across the province?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — We're just checking in with some folks at the ministry. So if we don't have it this evening, we'll endeavour to provide you an answer tomorrow.

**Ms. Beck:** — And of course, as you've mentioned, Minister, you've been in contact with Justice Arnot. And these concerns, the long-standing, sort of came to a head of a report from the Human Rights Commissioner. There was some actions that were recommended there around equity in the education system in order to achieve equivalent and comparable service for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, support for parents of those students, and then recognizing American Sign Language as a heritage language. And the provincial advisory committee of course came out of those recommendations as well.

And I believe I heard this in your responses, Minister, but that body is still meeting and you are actively meeting with them. Is that correct?

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

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay, thank you. I do have one question that I didn't ask under operations and under the budget questions.

Do you have a number or a percentage with regard to the percentage of Education funding provided out of . . . I suppose it's all provided out of the GRF [General Revenue Fund] at this point, but provincial funds versus education property tax?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you for the question. So in the 2021-2022 year, it's expected to be approximately a 60/40 split — 60.2 per cent from the GRF and 39.8 through property tax.

**Ms. Beck:** — Is that target still 60/40?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Yes.

**Ms. Beck:** — Right. With regard to the ESSP [education sector strategic plan], can you provide an update where we're at with regard to the development of the next educational sector plan?

**Ms. Johnson:** — Thank you for the question. So yes, the education sector plan, as you know, the original plan was set for the period ending 2020. And beginning in 2018 we began the planning for its successor, its replacement. And that new plan will take us to 2030. The framework for the plan of course was developed in, I think, about 2019 and there would've been an update provided to this committee in June of last year.

Since then, of course, we've been dealing with the response to COVID so the long-term planning for the new 10-year plan has essentially been deferred. What we've opted to do for the current fiscal year is to craft an interim plan. So we're referring to the new provincial education plan in two parts essentially, the first part being the interim plan which will take us through the upcoming school year. And then this fall, this summer or fall, we will be working on the long-term plan which will take us for the remaining nine years to the year 2030.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay, thank you. In that framework document there were noted to be four priorities: inclusive, safe, and welcoming learning environments; ensuring students have the skills and knowledge for their future; forming connections and relationships; and supporting mental health and well-being. Do these priorities stand or have there been any changes to those priorities?

**Ms. Johnson:** — No, they continue.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay, thank you. I'm just going to go through the education council as I had it at last in terms of those who are at the table. I've got the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations; Gabriel Dumont; the LEADS [League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents]; Métis Nation of Saskatchewan; the Ministry of Education; the Office of the Treaty Commissioner; the Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials, SASBO; the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association]; the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation]. Is that the complete list?

**Ms. Johnson:** — No.

**Ms. Beck:** — No.

**Ms. Johnson:** — So just so that I ensure that I don't miss anyone out, I'm going to just go from top to bottom in my page.

**Ms. Beck:** — Sure.

**Ms. Johnson:** — I'll be repeating some of the names you've already provided. So from the pre-K to 12 education side we have representatives from the Saskatchewan School Boards Association; the League of Educational Administrators, Directors, and Superintendents of Saskatchewan; the Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials; the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation; the operational structure for the provincial education plan, which we now refer to as the provincial education plan implementation team. And then also the Ministry of Education is represented.

Then we also have representatives from the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations; from Métis Nation-Saskatchewan; the Office of the Treaty Commissioner; as well as from the First Nations University of Canada; Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies; the Gabriel Dumont Institute; the University of Saskatchewan; the University of Regina; Saskatchewan Polytechnic, one from each of those.

And then from the business and employer and industry representative side, we have representatives from the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce and from the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Commission; the Regina District Industry Education Council; Saskatoon Industry Education Council; and Regina Trades and Skills Centre. And we are working on identifying parent representatives right now.

Oh, I'm corrected. Apparently we do not yet have a member from Gabriel Dumont Institute, so I'll correct my earlier mention of GDI [Gabriel Dumont Institute].

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay, thank you. Thank you for that list. There's no representation from non-teaching staff in schools. Is there any consideration for representation from those non-teaching staff? For example, CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees] has 7,000 members in schools who are not teaching staff. There are other groups represented as well.

**Ms. Johnson:** — I guess I would offer that Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials may be in some way able to represent the non-teaching members in the education sector.

**Ms. Beck:** — To the minister: would he submit the work that the CFOs [chief financial officer] and those that are educational assistants, for example, or bus drivers might be differently represented? But I will leave it at that.

With regard to other initiatives, I know that . . . And I'm going to forget the name of the initiatives, but the member for Canora-Pelly spent some time in the province consulting around parent engagement. And I'm wondering if there's anything to report or any significant initiatives that stem from those consultations.

[20:15]

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you for the question. Mr. Dennis met with approximately 360 people representing 185 schools. The meetings were held in 15 different locations, but it represented schools in all 27 school divisions. It's unfortunate he's not here to be able to provide you some of his insight. I did meet with him quite early when I was appointed minister, and I know he spent a considerable amount of time meeting with school community council members from all across the province.

Since that time, the ministry's working with the SSBA to do things like update the school community council handbook. And I've had discussions with Mr. Dennis on possibly doing some follow-up meetings with the SCC [school community council] although he . . . You know, it certainly would be if he would like to do it. But I think this might be a pretty good opportunity as we come, once COVID ends, to maybe circle back with parents to kind of get a bit of an update on how they felt the school year went during COVID. But again, he hasn't committed to doing that yet. Maybe putting this on the record will pressure him a little bit to say yes to me, but I know he's got some other areas that he's certainly interested in working in as well.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, Minister. So there's some changes to the SCC handbook. Any changes that might be described as substantive or structural that might stem from these conversations? Will that be the level of the changes?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — We'll endeavour to provide to the committee what the changes to the SCC handbooks would be. Again, that's being done in conjunction with the SSBA, but we'll provide that information.

**Ms. Beck:** — There were a couple of questions while you were out that I realized I neglected. I was trying to go somewhat systematically through my questions here. One was — and this could be tabled as well — the number of the students requiring EAL [English as an additional language] supports in schools, and the other was with regard to curriculum. There had been some calls to include teaching around consent in the health curriculum. Is there any plan for that, or any updates to report there?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — The number of students . . . You're asking for the number of students that require EAL supports?

**Ms. Beck:** — Yes.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Yes. It's roughly just, approximately 17,000.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. Do you have a list of the number of students requiring various levels of support as would be outlined in the supports for learning? Do you have numbers for those students in the province? And if you have further numbers around how they're distributed by school division, that would be helpful.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — So this past year, just under 9,400 students required intensive supports.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Do you have that by school division? Would that be something you could table?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Yes, we can table that with the committee.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. Are there any planned changes to the funding model specifically around supports for learning? I know that's something that I continue to hear concerns about, how that's allocated, particularly from boards that might have higher intensity or higher concentration of students with those additional needs. I just wonder if there are any plans with regard to that portion of the funding formula?

**Ms. Johnson:** — So with respect to the funding formula for supports for learning, it is I think important to note that that was the formula that, along with other aspects of the funding model, received a good deal of scrutiny over the last three or four years. And so I think it was in 2017 where we finished a very in-depth review of the formula and took that work through the entire group of the school divisions. And at that point, they agreed that the formula itself was as good as it can be.

I think it's also important to note that when we are working with that formula, we feel it's quite important to have the formula based on data that can be verified. So we do pull in data sets from a number of different areas. And we will always consider additional data sets if people bring them forward and suggest that, you know, if they were to find that we are missing something entirely and that we should consider this data set, we would absolutely be open to making those considerations.

In fact we have an operational grant advisory committee that has representatives from our usual stakeholders — STF, SSBA, SASBO, and so on. And you know, we use that as a regular sounding board for making any improvements to the funding distribution model. So we certainly are open to always getting whatever input folks might have, but we will put it through a level of due diligence to make sure that whatever new data set we include in the model, that we understand how it would impact the funding allocation across all divisions.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. Another question that I should have asked when we were talking about mental health supports . . . And I honestly cannot remember if this was last year or two years ago so bear with me, but there was an allocation of about a quarter million dollars that was to have gone to WE Charity that then was suspended. I'm just wondering, I think it was last year but was that . . . It was meant for mental health in schools. Where did that go? Was it reallocated somewhere else?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — The deputy and I aren't familiar with that but we will get an answer for you.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. All right. I'm going to spend some time on capital dollars. First question I had: the last time that it was reported, there was 1.3 billion in deferred maintenance in schools. Do you have an amount updated for today? And if you don't have it, by end of committee is fine.

[20:30]

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thanks for the question. All that wait to say, I don't have an answer for you.

**Ms. Johnson:** — So what I can tell you with respect to your question is that we don't have a revised dollar figure for that. We have been working with SaskBuilds and Procurement on new assessments of our facilities across school divisions and we are

currently working with SaskBuilds and Procurement on facility condition audits. Right now we're entering year two of a five-year plan to assess the schools.

**Ms. Beck:** — And will the findings be reported out annually on those assessment facility condition audits?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Yes. I would just say I suppose we could, but it would be partial information because it's going to be over a five-year period of time. So what we could do in terms of reporting on an annual basis wouldn't really give you, I think, the complete picture that you'd be looking for.

**Ms. Beck:** — All right. Well yes, any reporting would be appreciated, I'm sure. How many emergency maintenance funding applications were made last year? Were they granted in their entirety and how many were denied?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — 1.3 million was committed in 2020-2021. We don't have the number of applications that we received, approved, and/or denied, but it was just over 1.3 million.

**Ms. Beck:** — Is that something you could provide?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Yes I can. Fifteen were received, and three were denied of the 15.

**Ms. Beck:** — Sorry. 15 were received and . . .

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Three were denied.

**Ms. Beck:** — Denied, okay. The allocation for PMR this year is . . . I should have this in front of me. And does that represent an increase to PMR outside of the CAIF funding?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — So it's 50.4 million this year and that's consistent with the average over the last three years. It's been 50.4 million on average for the last three years.

**Ms. Beck:** — So there was a reported increase I believe in the budget documents, but that's because the CAIF funding was rolled in. Is that correct? The CAIF funding?

**Ms. Johnson:** — It looks like a \$5 million increase this year because last year, or actually the tail end of the year before that, 5 million was advanced to the school divisions. So the estimates last year were reduced by the 5 million. So that's why we say, when you take it over three years, it has essentially been 50 million each of those three years.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. At one point there was a target in terms of the investment in PMR as a proportion of capital assets. Do you still have such a target, a proportion of the deferred maintenance costs?

**Ms. Johnson:** — It looks like we are still targeting for a 1 per cent total target for PMR. So when we reach 1 per cent, we'd be looking at a total allocation of close to \$80 million.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you. With regard to portables, there was 4.67 million allocated this year. How many portables does that represent?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — It represents 10.

**Ms. Beck:** — 10. Do you know how many were requested this year?

[20:45]

**Ms. Johnson:** — So with respect to the relocatable budget for the traditional schools, we do, as I think you noted already, we have 5.66 million that will provide funding to the request for the relocatables for our traditional schools and that process will begin in the fall. So after the schools receive their information or finalize their information about the upcoming enrolment levels, they'll put in an application for relocatable schools. We typically would ask for that application in November, and then a decision will be made in December so that they're able to get their tenders out and award contracts in the spring and have the schools brought in or the classrooms brought in over the spring and summer and have them ready for fall.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. And that has been a good development. I know that's been positively reported from divisions getting those portables in a more timely fashion. With regard to the number of schools in the province that are over capacity or over 120 per cent capacity, I think, for the parameters that we were using before, do you have updated numbers for that?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — There are 76 schools that have a utilization rate exceeding 100 per cent. And I think you asked for a separate number. Over 120?

**Ms. Beck:** — I think what 120 per cent was the next, I think . . . Well I don't know if the designation, if it's well over capacity.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — There's 12.

**Ms. Beck:** — 12. Okay. Are you able to table that?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — We'll check on that, but I don't think that's a problem.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay, thank you. Just looking at the funds allocated, just to clarify — I think I'm right, but that's not always the case — there was no new capital announcements within in this budget. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Yes, that's correct.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. So the completion funds for Weyburn expected opening is this fall, is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Absolutely.

**Ms. Beck:** — I can see you smiling behind your mask there. Okay. And expected completion for St. Pius and Argyle?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — The expected completion date of Argyle and École St. Pius is fall of 2023.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. And then various design and construction projects, the school to replace a number of schools — Princess Alex, KG [King George Community School], Pleasant Hill in Saskatoon — timeline for completion on that

project?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Fall of 2024.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. Same question for St. Frances?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Sorry. It was right in front of me. Fall of 2023.

**Ms. Beck:** — A new francophone elementary school in Regina?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Fall. Fall of 2023.

**Ms. Beck:** — There was a request for a francophone school in Prince Albert. There was a decision there not to fund in this year's allocation?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — No, not in this year's allocation. There's a commitment by the middle of the decade to move forward with three — Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert — and so not Prince Albert this year.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. The school to replace St. Peter, St. Mike's, Imperial, and I believe McDermid has been added to that project.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Fall of 2025.

**Ms. Beck:** — And the joint-use school in Moose Jaw slated to be open?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Winter of 2024.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. The consolidation in Carrot River?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — That one is fall of 2023.

**Ms. Beck:** — Ducharme replacement in La Loche?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Same. Fall of 2023.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Blaine Lake? We had smiles and now clapping.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Yes, Blaine Lake, if I choose to proceed with that one. And I say that only because of the Chair of the committee. I jest — fall of 2023.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. And Lanigan?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Fall of 2023 as well.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. With regard, I see the renovation projects, and I note that Notre Dame is on the list. I don't recall a time when capital was allocated to, in this case, a historical high school but for independent schools. Is that common practice or is that something that's happened before or is this new practice?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Traditionally the ministry does fund 20 per cent of capital with respect to a historical high school. We just don't see very many of those projects, and there's only I think the four in the province. But for quite a long time, 20 per cent has been the norm.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay, thank you. I wasn't sure if that was a change or just something I hadn't seen before. Right. I did ask you about the portables. Was that reported? I had a list here of the portables. Ms. Johnson, I think that you had mentioned, though, that those determinations hadn't been made yet. There is a list here: I have Holy Mary; Wascana Plains; and St. Kateri, Martensville; and the Lindner, Kateri in Saskatoon. Are those in addition to the ones that will be allocated later on?

**Ms. Johnson:** — So that would be with respect to . . . The names you just listed are all of our joint-use schools and those are the relocatables that will be going to the joint-use schools. I mentioned previously the \$5.66 million budget amount for traditional schools. For the joint-use school relocatables, the budget amount is \$4.67 million and it is going to 10 relocatables for the joint schools that you just mentioned.

**Ms. Beck:** — And why the distinction between the two types?

**Ms. Johnson:** — Well, with our P3 [public-private partnership] contract, we have a separate section in the contract with the consortium that we entered into the agreement with. So when we're making decisions about relocatables for the joint-use schools, we do that separately from the allocation that's provided for all of the other schools in the province.

**Ms. Beck:** — And funding for those portables to the P3 schools, where is that found in the budget? Is it separated from . . .

**Ms. Johnson:** — It actually is in the . . . Let me just double-check that. It would be in the budget line that is called school capital, so in the \$189 million budget line for this year.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay, thank you. Does it cost more to put a portable on a P3 school versus a traditional build?

**Ms. Johnson:** — I will need to ask. So the answer to your question is that yes, it does cost more for a portable or a relocatable classroom on a joint-use school than it does . . . It's roughly 490,000 per unit on the joint-use schools compared to 375 for the traditional. And the reason for that difference is that in the P3 schools there's additional floor space including a breakout room as part of the design of the P3 schools. And of course the P3 contract includes maintenance over the remaining term of the contract.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you. I'm just updating my chart here, so I believe I have some of the answers that I was looking for, but in 2019-20, in the annual report it was reported 715 schools in the province. Do you have the number updated for today? And then the number of qualified independent schools as well? If you could provide both of those.

[21:00]

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — So there's 22 qualified independent schools but we expect or anticipate that a 23rd will qualify for funding. So we actually built in funding in the budget for 23. And the overall number of schools — we're working on that so we'll provide it. I'm not sure if we have the time tonight but certainly tomorrow.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay, thank you. And yes, for this year and for

next year, if you could. That would be great.

The other question that I had around portables — and I'm sorry to make you flip back and forth in your binder — I recall at different points we sourced the portables or the relocatables from different places. Is there a single source for these portables or relocatables? And where are we sourcing them from?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — So each individual school division will tender out the contract, so it's depending on where their tender's coming from.

**Ms. Beck:** — I'm just confirming there's no . . . I can't remember the year it was, but there was a time when they were sourced and the ministry was helping with that contract. Okay, thank you for clarifying.

Can you provide the number of schools currently under review in the province?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Currently, so Arborfield School is currently under review by North East School Division for potential closure in 2023. I know as well that Regina Catholic placed Holy Rosary Community School under review in October, but I believe they've decided not to move forward with closure. I might be wrong on that. I'm just going off of memory and media reports that they had decided not to, but I'll confirm that.

**Ms. Beck:** — And does the ministry plan to close Arborfield?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Well the ministry has no plans to close the school, but if the school were to close, then that would be the school division that would decide that.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay, thank you. Something that I haven't looked at for a while, but I was thinking about this when I was looking at schools under review, was the schools of opportunity and schools of necessity. Can you provide an update or a list of schools that fall under those designations?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you, Ms. Beck, for the question. I'm going to just clarify my previous one. I don't know where I thought this, but I don't believe Regina Catholic has made a decision on Holy Rosary here in Regina. For some reason I thought that I had heard that they were deciding not to do it, but I was mistaken. So I apologize for that.

And the schools of necessity, there are 57, and I'd be happy to make that list available.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you. Is school of opportunity a designation that still exists, or are there any schools designated under that statute?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — So we currently don't have any schools of opportunity.

And I'm going to, at my own peril, correct myself again. My understanding is that Regina Catholic has pushed the review on Holy Rosary back and so they will be taking registration for this fall for students.

**Ms. Beck:** — Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Colleagues, we have reached the agreed upon time of adjournment. We will now adjourn consideration of the estimates and supplementary estimates for the Ministry of Education. At this time, I'd like to thank the minister, his official, those that have been helping virtually. Well at this time I would ask that a member move a motion to adjourn the committee. Mr. Meyers? Mr. Meyers has moved. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. This committee stands adjourned until Tuesday, April 20th, 2021 at 5 p.m. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 21:11.]