



STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY

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Mr. Steven Bonk
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Mr. Bill Boyd
Kindersley

Ms. Lori Carr
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Mr. Delbert Kirsch
Batoche

Ms. Laura Ross
Regina Rochdale

[The committee met at 19:00.]

The Chair: — Well good evening, ladies and gentlemen. The Economy Committee is back in room 8 here on May the 9th, 2017. We are considering estimates for the Committee of the Economy. Several substitutions tonight: Ms. Sarauer is here for Mr. Belanger. And we have three members on the government side, Mr. Olauson, Mr. Buckingham, Mr. Nerlien are here this evening along with permanent members, Mr. Kirsch and Mr. Bonk, and of course, myself.

So we have a busy, I guess, maybe even a long evening ahead of us tonight. We have estimates from 7 till 10 p.m., and after that we're considering two bills. And then at the end of that, hopefully we're voting off the estimates. So lots on the agenda tonight and we hope to get through it.

**General Revenue Fund
Economy
Vote 23**

Subvote (EC01)

The Chair: — We will consider estimates of the Ministry of the Economy, as I mentioned, and begin our consideration of vote 23, Economy, central management and services, subvote (EC01). Minister Harrison is here. His officials are here. I usually forget to mention this, but if officials could mention who they are when they first speak, if they do speak, for the folks in Hansard. So I'll turn the floor over to you, Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Sure. Well thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to members of the committee for being here this evening. I'll read out the list of officials we have here with us tonight, and if the committee would be so indulgent to have time for an opening statement, which I will keep relatively brief.

So I have with me, on my right, Alastair MacFadden, of course our assistant deputy minister for the labour market division, Ministry of the Economy; Laurie Pushor, deputy minister, Ministry of the Economy. Then behind, in no particular order because I think there's been a bit of moving around: Denise Haas, chief financial officer, revenue and corporate services; Kent Campbell, deputy minister of intergovernmental affairs; Kirk Westgard, assistant deputy minister, economic development; Darcy Smycniuk, executive director, apprenticeship and workforce skills; Jeff Ritter, CEO [chief executive officer], Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission; Chad Vickers, executive director, employer services; Ann McRorie, executive director, immigration services; Jan Kot, executive director, labour market services; and Christa Ross, executive director of labour market planning.

And, Mr. Chairman, Saskatchewan has always been and remains today a place of great potential. It's a place where people and businesses feel their futures are brightest, the place they feel is the best choice for them to build their careers and their lives. Over the past five years, private and public investment in Saskatchewan has totalled \$85 billion, a strong

vote of confidence in that potential we offer.

Tellingly, Saskatchewan's population has grown by more 163,000 people over the past decade; in fact our population is the highest it has ever been. Our population is also one of the youngest in the country. Saskatchewan has the highest proportion of young people aged 14 and below among the provinces, and we also have the second-lowest average age among the provinces. We have a vibrant, growing population, one that will continue contributing to a strong Saskatchewan.

Many of our residents are new residents. In 2016 immigration played a key role in population growth. More than 14,800 new immigrants arrived in Saskatchewan. We feel they've made the right choice by coming here. Because of this, we owe it to them and to our entire province to do our best to prove it.

Our government is therefore working hard to ensure that when businesses and investors are deciding where to invest their next dollar, they think of Saskatchewan. And many recent announcements suggest that they are. The Brandt group of companies is expanding its operations to Saskatoon; G3 announced plans for two new grain elevators in Saskatchewan; and Grain Millers is expanding its Yorkton plant. Back in November, Agropcorp announced that it's moving its Canadian head office to Moose Jaw. These projects create jobs and help move our province forward. Clear policies and a sound, inclusive rationale for decision making are critical for continued job growth and investment attraction.

One of the business incentives introduced by our ministry in the 2017-18 budget is the Saskatchewan commercial innovation incentive. This patent box incentive is the first of its kind in North America. It reduces the provincial corporate income tax for eligible corporations to 6 per cent for 10 years on taxable income earned from the commercialization of intellectual property in our province. Qualifying types of property include patents, plant breeders' rights, trade secrets, and copyright.

Even in the current economic situation we find ourselves in, Saskatchewan is well positioned to meet the needs of global markets, and especially our future development. In 2016-17 our ministry achieved approximately \$1.2 billion in investment wins and 71.1 million in red tape reductions, which puts us in good shape. Still we believe that government service must be continually re-examined and improved upon to be effective and deliver the services we need. The 2017-18 budget is integral to this approach, and our ministry is doing its part. The Ministry of the Economy is focused on two core concepts: generating steady economic growth and sustainability, and meeting the challenges that accompany this growth.

Our key tasks include encouraging continued prosperity across sectors and industries, attracting investment at every level of our communities, and helping to create and sustain the best possible environment for people to build careers, lives, and a home here in this province.

And I had additional remarks with regard to trade and some of the other elements of the ministry but I know, Ms. Sarauer, you want to focus on immigration. So I'm happy to defer further comment on those matters until we get to that part of the

evening, and I will turn it over to the committee. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — Thank you for those comments, Mr. Minister. I will now open it up to the committee for any questions they may have of the minister. I recognize, Ms. Sarauer.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you for those opening remarks, Minister Harrison. Being cognizant of the time, I'm going to just delve right in. The immigration line item saw a decrease of funding this budget year of about \$200,000. Can you provide some details to the committee as to what that decrease is?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Sure. Thanks, Mr. Chair. That's right and there was two \$100,000 items in terms of the reduction: 100,000 is a reduction to entrepreneur initiatives. That reflects a historic underutilization, and I'm going to turn it over to Alastair for more detail on that particular one. But the other was the \$100,000 reduction to portal maintenance, which was because we moved the website to Saskatchewan.ca to reduce the cost. So, Alastair, if you want to talk to the other matter.

Mr. MacFadden: — Sure. I'm Alastair MacFadden, the assistant deputy minister for labour market development. We had a \$100,000 reduction to the entrepreneur initiatives envelope, and that's a budget area that supports business establishment services and orientation for immigrant entrepreneurs who've been nominated through the SINP [Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program] entrepreneur category.

Ms. Sarauer: — These are both areas that I know were reduced last year as well. Can you explain why they're being further reduced in addition to the reduction that they saw last year? I know that when we talked about, for example, the portal maintenance last year, that transition I thought had already occurred. I wasn't realizing that there would be a further reduction after that year.

Mr. MacFadden: — Yes. In terms of the portal, because it's now part of government's broader Saskatchewan.ca website, we've maintained a base budget that allows for continuous improvement and updates. And over the last year we found that there hasn't been a need for the size of budget that had been available up until now.

We will be looking at the performance of that website in terms of its responsiveness, and so far, performance reporting and focus testing have shown that the content is used extensively by the target audience. So at this stage anyway that conversion has been successful.

When it comes to the entrepreneur initiatives, we contract with third party providers to help entrepreneurs get oriented. And so at this point we have an agreement with Economic Development Regina, and they work in partnership with SREDA [Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority] in Saskatoon. They provide orientation services for entrepreneurs as they arrive to support their business implementation plans that are part of their entrepreneur commitment as part of the nominee program.

And up until now, that contract funding has slipped and been

underutilized, so we were able to do a reduction while still keeping enough capacity for future growth that might take place.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you for that further elaboration. I understand, based on our discussion last year, that the immigration portion of the Saskatchewan website is one of the most utilized websites or pages of the entire website. So it's important that, as you've said, that that is maintained and accessible.

I do want to ask a few more questions about the entrepreneur initiatives portion. Minister Harrison, you mentioned that there are 14,800 new immigrants this year. So I'm curious to know why the entrepreneur initiatives programs are being underutilized. You said they were underutilized last year, and now they're being underutilized even further, I guess, this year. So what's happening there when we have so many new immigrants coming to Saskatchewan, yet you're saying that this program isn't being used as much as it was previously?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Right. Well it was not a requirement until now, so there's an issue with flow rate, but Alastair is going to perhaps provide some additional detail on that.

Mr. MacFadden: — Immigrant entrepreneurs had an opportunity to establish their businesses without support, and many would rely on friends and family originally. And as we did consultations on how to improve the success of those businesses, it became evident that requiring participation in business establishment services would help to secure their success and help to maintain the return on investment that we have in the entrepreneur stream.

So in addition to that though, the flow rate for people actually arriving in Saskatchewan to establish those businesses is unpredictable. Some will come quickly; some might not arrive in Saskatchewan for 18, 24 months. And so because of that flow rate, the utilization of those services is not even throughout the fiscal year.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. Thank you. What is the remaining budget for the entrepreneur initiatives?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — So right, there was, in '16-17 there was \$125,000 that was utilized in that particular program. This year we're budgeting \$176,000. We're, you know, hoping that there's going to be perhaps more uptake on that program this year.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. Thank you for that. Last year there was a slight reduction in funding for English as additional language programming. Has that budget changed at all this year, either up or down?

[19:15]

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well the short answer is that the budget is the exact same as last year. But I mean this is a, you know, an important area obviously. We know that the most significant determinant of success for newcomers — to Canada in a general context but Saskatchewan in our specific discussion that we're having right here — is language skills. And we put a significant

premium on that as far as ensuring that there is the opportunity for newcomers to access those skills, because we know that that is the number one determinant of labour market attachment, are language skills.

And you just . . . I mean, you would know why. I mean, unless you have basic language skills, just the kind of basic safety issues you would need to be aware of in working on a job site or in an office or whatever, I mean, you need to have that basic level of aptitude. So language programs we deliver through 16 different organizations across the province. These are primarily delivered by third parties who we work with to deliver the actual programming.

Ms. Sarauer: — Yes, thank you. And we've had this discussion before, that I absolutely agree with you on the importance of English as additional language training, and I know that . . . I'm happy to hear that the budget hasn't changed. It would have been better had it increased, at least back into the level that it had been cut last budget cycle. I'm cognizant of some of the challenges in other ministries right now, financially, in particular the Ministry of Education.

And when there was, for example . . . There was an auditor's report that came out late 2016 that said, for example, the Regina Catholic School Division wasn't able to fully meet its needs for English as additional language training for its students. And I'm aware that the immigration branch does not fund that program, that it's dealing more with the adult side. But nothing acts in a vacuum or is actually fully siloed when we're talking about people or families. So it is extremely important that that EAL [English as an additional language] training is accessible and open for anybody who can use it.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes, if I could actually maybe just add to that. And I appreciate the observations and I think we agree on the importance. You know, one thing I don't recall precisely if we talked about it last year or not, but we've been strongly advocating with the national government, along with other provinces and territories, for additional support particularly as it relates to the new arrivals from Syria over the course of the last 18 months.

So the federal government's committed just over \$33 million in funding in this province for settlement services. That doesn't necessarily flow through us. A lot of that is direct partnership with third party providers. But there was an increase. It was increased by just a little over 11 per cent.

You know, we would continue to make the case that we need additional supports in that our settlement organizations have done great work and they've really stepped up on this. They genuinely have, but I think they would be . . . I think even they would say that they continue to have challenges with regard to pressures on their services and capacity issues with the influx. Not necessarily kind of what we've become accustomed to, which is 5,500 nominees and the number of federal immigrants, which has been a major increase as well over the course of the last decade, but that immediate influx last year that was over, well just about 1,500 newcomers from Syria, you know, with varying degrees of challenges with respect to language and other issues.

So we would continue to make the case to the national government. And it's not just us. We've made this case as a united federation at the subnational jurisdiction level to the national government that they need to step up. I talked to Minister Hussen, I don't know, about a month and a half ago I think was probably the last time.

We do appreciate the additional resources. We do, and I publicly say this, that we do appreciate that. There continue to be challenges though and we would ask that the national government would, you know, play an even more significant role as far as providing some of the resources at least in the short term — we're not saying forever — but in the immediate term to provide these basic services for . . . and basic training, language particularly, for Syrian arrivals. Because once we have labour market attachment, that massively increases the success rate for new settlements, new arrivals.

And the longer this goes, the more challenging it becomes. And we've seen this historically. The longer the period from arrival to actually becoming engaged in the labour market, the harder it is and the less likely it is to happen. So it's really important that we do this up front, and we've made that case directly.

Ms. Sarauer: — I thank you. Thank you for that. That actually leads into a few other questions I had. So just to be clear, the \$33 million is additional federal funding and . . . because what I understood was that the federal funding for the Syrian refugees ended as of December 31st, 2016. So can you elaborate a little bit as to what's going on right now?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — I can. The federal government funds the first year they have the . . . I forget what the name of the program is. Right, the refugee assistance program. So that goes on for a year, at which point it's a complete provincial responsibility. It would be the same as any other newcomer through a provincial nominee program or any permanent resident that is in the province. So that means we're responsible for health, education, settlement assistance, all of these things, social services, all of these things we would be responsible for.

And, sorry, the 33.6 wasn't new funding. There is a base amount of 28.8, so there was just about \$5 million, just under \$5 million that was additional assistance in the calendar year. So it's not unwelcome, but we would estimate . . . it slightly depends on different factors. But the cost to the province incremental for the newly arrived Syrians is in the tens of millions of dollars. So a \$4.8 million additional allocation from the federal government is, like I said, not unwelcome, but it most definitely does not cover the entire cost that would be borne by the Saskatchewan taxpayer for supporting the new arrivals.

Ms. Sarauer: — All right. So that additional funding, did that also end December 31st, 2016 or is that ongoing?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — That's ongoing. Well for this year we know it's going to continue. As to whether that's a long-term commitment, that's something that I don't know the answer to. The feds would be able to speak to that, but they haven't announced a long-term commitment with regard to that.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. And I understand that that money isn't

flowing directly to the province, but I am curious to know where that money is going.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Right. I mean, that would be partnerships with the settlement organizations directly, so Regina Open Door, Saskatoon Open Door, Moose Jaw Multicultural, Prince Albert Multicultural. I mean, those are the gateways. I mean, those are the settlement cities, so I think if there is any . . . there might be some additional organizations, but those would be examples of organizations that they would partner directly with and we're not always even aware of all of the partnerships.

Ms. Sarauer: — Right. Is the ministry keeping track on how those refugees are doing in terms of integrating into the province? How many children are still in school? How many have found employment? How many are on social assistance, all of those sort of stats?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — I can . . . It's kind of challenging. Statistics Canada do the data collection and are notoriously behind as far as specifics with regard to the . . . and when we collect employment data, we don't do it by country of origins, so it's a bit of a challenge.

What I can tell you though with regard to refugee labour market attachment particularly, historically challenging. Very challenging. And there are, you know, obvious reasons for that, in that people who are arriving here generally don't have language skills. Some have like literally no language skills. Those have to be acquired. Obviously there's a very significant cultural difference that requires a period of adjustment.

And with regard to the difference between privately sponsored refugees and government-assisted refugees, labour market outcomes are much better amongst privately sponsored refugees than they are for GARs [government-assisted refugee].

And you know, out of the 1,500 Syrians that came to this province, a very high proportion of those were government-assisted. The highest percentage of any jurisdiction in Canada actually were GARs here. There were a very small number of privately sponsored refugees.

So I mean, so the Government of Canada — this is their data — their historic data, for government-assisted, 33 per cent gain employment within 12 months, 42 per cent within 24 months, and 56 per cent at year five. So those are people of employable age, so it's not all of the . . . it's not the entirety. But you can see that it's a challenge for new arrivals, government-assisted refugees particularly, to attach to the labour market.

Ms. Sarauer: — Sure. So is the government not keeping track of those numbers at all? Is that what you're telling me? You know, I would assume that this would be a part of your argument for further assistance from the federal government, is providing this information to them. I could be wrong, but that's what would make sense to me.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes. No, so in the first year that refugees are here — you know that because we discussed it and I know you know this anyway — I mean, these are federal government-assisted refugees. So the third party organizations

which they contract with for settlement services, they would be the ones that would collect the data or not collect the data, depending on the agreement that they have with the national government.

So we've actually asked the third party organizations, as recently as yesterday actually, for their most up-to-date information, and they haven't been collecting the information. And I would presume, you'd have to ask them directly, but I would presume that that's not a requirement of the agreement that they have with the national government to collect the information, so they haven't been.

So you know, we know that there have been low levels of labour market attachment. I would offer my conjecture that it would be lower than even the historical average. But we don't have that specific information because we don't collect it that way, and the national government haven't been asking the third party providers to collect it either.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. Being cognizant of the time, there are a few questions I still wanted to ask. I am a little bit disappointed that we're not able to provide that information. I understand that they come in as federal and I understand how the program works, that they are federally dealt with. But as I said, as of January 1st, essentially they become provincial — financially — the provincial government's obligation. So it is a bit disappointing that there isn't an ability to track that . . . well not that there isn't an ability to track that information, but that information hasn't been tracked. But I will move on.

[19:30]

I know our neighbours to the east in Manitoba are having some challenges right now with refugees walking across the border in a large number. What's happening in Saskatchewan on that front?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Right. Well I can say that there have been five that have come across the border. Manitoba over that period of time has had about 395, and obviously Quebec and Ontario have had the vast bulk of those who have crossed since January. And in Ontario, there's been 4,700. Quebec has had over 3,000. But yes, we've only had five.

Ms. Sarauer: — What's the status of those five? Have their refugee claims been heard yet?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — The process for that is again the responsibility of Immigration and Refugee Canada. So they don't inform us as a matter of course as to when the hearings are heard or the outcomes of the hearings, so we don't have specific information as to what the resolution of those five would be.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. Yes, I understand that this is a bit tough sometimes with the jurisdictional issues. I don't have the opportunity to ask the federal Immigration minister these questions, so that's why I ask them to you, Minister Harrison. You may have the same answer to this question as well. Do you know if any of those five are currently being detained?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — No, I'm sorry, I don't.

Ms. Sarauer: — Fair enough. You mentioned that there were 14,800 new immigrants this past year. Can you break down by type, please? Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — I can. We will find it. So sorry. I can kind of give you the data with regard . . . Are you asking about country of origin, or are you asking about which immigration stream they came in under?

Ms. Sarauer: — I'm asking for the stream.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay, sure. No, we can provide that. So of the 14,855, of course that includes the federal streams, the provincial nominee program, resettled refugees. So I'll give you the breakdown.

Of the 14,855, 10,970 were under streams that would be considered economic which is just about 74 per cent. And of those 10,970, 9,900 have been under our provincial nominee program. So a significant majority of the overall landings by permanent residents have been through the nominee program. This is 2016. So this includes the Syrian resettlement, so you have as well nearly 2,000 resettled refugees. Nearly 1,400 of those were government assisted. So that's primarily Syrians, but not exclusively Syrians, because we also take about 600 or so yearly GARs, and that would be from a variety of jurisdictions around the world. So that kind of accounts for the vast majority. There's, you know, protected persons and there's a couple other categories which have very, very small numbers.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Let's break down the SINP numbers a little bit. I think you said about 7,500. I might be wrong.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — 9,900.

Ms. Sarauer: — 9,000? Okay. That's a significant increase from last year, right?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well no, it's not. I mean we have the number of . . . The number of nominee positions was 5,500 last year, but then that's not . . . So this would be families as well that come with the nominee.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. Yes.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — So we use, it's kind of two or so, 2.1 per nominee as a kind of general guideline.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. Thank you. Can you break down which . . . and I'm trying to think of the right word, but similarly, can you break down the SINP immigrants as well?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes. So yes, we have the information for the nominations that are issued which is what we have within our control. Obviously the federal processing time and when they get on the plane and all of that, there's a bit of variable. But as for the nominations that we've issued through our program last year: international skilled worker with an employment offer, just about 1,500; international skilled worker, which is the occupations in demand component of that, just about the same amount, just about 1,500. Express entry was 816, which is a joint program between the federal government

and us, but we provide the nomination even though they do kind of the back-end processing. Then under the Saskatchewan experience category, there's a number of subcategories to Sask experience, so existing work permit, 435; health professions, 29; students, 500; hospitality, 180; and truck driver, 33; and then entrepreneur and farm, entrepreneur, 496; and farmer, 4.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you for that, Minister. And just like that my time is up. So I'm going to pass the baton on to my colleague, Ms. Sproule, here, but I'd like to take the opportunity to thank you for answering my questions this evening, and thank you for the officials in the immigration branch for answering my questions and for being here this evening.

The Chair: — Thanks, Ms. Sarauer. Obviously you mentioned Ms. Sproule has joined us. I'll just put that on the record at about 7:40 p.m. So Ms. Sproule has the floor.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Good evening, Mr. Minister, and officials. I have a few questions in regard to the Yancoal Southey project. But beyond that, I really do have a number of questions around the GTH [Global Transportation Hub] and their most recent annual report. So I don't see any GTH officials here tonight which could really impede this discussion. So I'm not sure how we want to proceed with that.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well I mean I'll answer the . . . We'll respond to the Yancoal questions first. We can talk about the other thing when you get there.

Ms. Sproule: — Okay. Okay, well let's start with Yancoal. This series of questions is coming basically from a group of people that live in the Yancoal area, in the Southey area, and they have a number of questions about the economic side of the deal. So I don't know if you have a group of officials here that can assist.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — We're working on it.

Ms. Sproule: — Fire away?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Fire away.

Ms. Sproule: — The first questions we have are in relation to a cost-benefit analysis for the Yancoal project. We know that you've spoken about the economic benefits and the public good that the province will gain from the development of the mine, but the folks that live out there are feeling that they haven't been provided information on how you've analyzed these costs. And so the information they're looking for in particular is what costs have you anticipated in relation to the increase in road infrastructure for the Yancoal Southey project?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well it's a bit of a challenging question to respond to, and I do appreciate the question, and I know that there's been discussion in the area obviously about the project. As far as kind of the Ministry of the Economy doing a cost-benefit analysis, that's not something we do. The Ministry of the Environment do, are obviously responsible for the environmental assessment components. We haven't made any commitments with regard to roads. As far as I know, there hasn't been a formal ask to Highways, although they would be

better positioned to speak to that. But as far as I know, there have been no formal requests with regard to that.

I mean I know the company continues to work with the community, and that's been the, you know, advice that has been offered to them is that they continue to work with the community and those in the area. So you know, and the other thing I would add is that as far as we know, there have been no decisions by the company as to whether the kind of final go, no-go decision has been taken or a time frame for when that decision would be taken.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you for that. I guess I just want to get a sense of what your ministry's role would be if and when then they do make a decision to proceed. And the questions that are being asked are generally, what are the costs to the economy here in Saskatchewan?

A number of things they've identified: the loss of an agriculture land and tax base because many hectares will be unusable for a hundred years; water contamination and costs associated to repair; increase to the Health budget as a result of additional exposure to potassium and sodium; layoffs that occur in other potash mines as this project proceeds to add additional product for sale; and the effect on the GDP [gross domestic product] due to temporary foreign workers and redirection of money back to China. So those types of costs, are those things that your ministry would do a cost-benefit analysis for?

[19:45]

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — What I would say is that the Ministry of the Environment take their environmental assessment process very seriously, and I know that officials at the ministry reviewing application take into account all of the environmental factors, many of which would play into or directly address some of the issues that you raised in that question.

As far as the Ministry of the Economy's role, I mean we — and this wouldn't be me as minister; this would be Minister Duncan as far as allocating the resource — he would be better positioned to speak to that as minister but, you know, I can say that this is something taken seriously. This would not be something that would be done in a cavalier fashion. Ministries take these sort of reviews and applications and working with these companies in a very serious way and, you know, we're not going to make any decisions that are going to negatively impact the economy or the health or the future of the province.

Ms. Sproule: — You kind of had a laugh when you were answering that. I'm just wondering what you were laughing about. Just a bit of laugh before you answered that last question so I'm just . . .

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Oh, I'm sorry. No, it must have been a nervous tic.

Ms. Sproule: — Okay, just thinking . . .

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — I'm very nervous.

Ms. Sproule: — I know that feeling. All right. So, for example, the effects on the GDP due to temporary foreign workers would

not be something that you would look at. No?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Look, I mean, as far as the temporary foreign worker program, that's not something we administer. That's something that the national government administers. You know, they made significant changes to how that program operates in the course of the last, you know, 24 months, maybe to 30 months. It's completely outside of the jurisdiction of the province of Saskatchewan.

You know, we work with the national government on these issues in a lot of ways. You know, Ms. Sarauer and I just went through some of the joint areas of jurisdiction around immigration, but as far as the temporary foreign worker program, that's something that the province has nothing to do with. That's purely a 100 per cent federal program.

Ms. Sproule: — I understand that. But the question that's being raised is, what is the effect on the province's GDP if a number of foreign workers come in to work on a mine like this? That's the question. So do you look at the analysis?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Under the program, I mean it's . . . You can't have a massive . . . You can't do a project and just say, we're going to bring in everybody from another country to work on it. That was actually a large part . . . That wasn't just specifically, but that was a part of the consideration I think that, you know, minister Kenney and minister Alexander at the time would have said was why they made changes to the program in the fashion that they did.

I mean, that wasn't . . . That hadn't happened in the context of how the program had been operating to that point but, you know, there were concerns raised with the national government with regard to the program perhaps being overrelied upon in certain industries and by certain companies. So they made very extensive changes that changed how the labour market impact assessment was done and how the rules operated for areas of, you know, higher unemployment, lower unemployment. If you were above 6 per cent in your economic region, you couldn't even apply to the temporary foreign worker program. So there were a number of provisions.

And I can tell you, I mean as far as the concerns that, you know, might be raised with regard to the program, you know, with anything, we continue to experience significant labour shortages in particular areas and particular sectors. If anything, I have particular . . . You know, I have companies and sector representatives, industry associations, saying that, you know, we would like to see a little more flexibility in the parameters around the temporary foreign worker program.

And what we've seen from the new national government — not so new, I guess, now nearly two years in — is a commitment to change the rules around temporary foreign workers to make it easier to access. And they've done that in particular areas of the country already. In the Atlantic provinces, they've changed some of the rules for being able to access temporary workers from outside of the country.

So you know, the representations that we've heard were that the changes made by the Tory government were too restrictive, and the Liberal government has responded by lessening some of

those or perhaps changing some of the rules around accessing temporary foreign workers. But they are still, even with the changes made or being contemplated, as far as I know, would still be more challenging to access that program than they had been three or four years ago.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you. The next question is regarding the fact that China is a major customer for us for potash, and now under this project they would be granted rights to actually mine the product, so we may lose a major customer. It could have a significant economic effect on the potash industry here, particularly when potash prices are depressed.

So the question is what economic analysis has the government completed that supports approval of a project of this scope? Has there been an economic analysis, and if so are there . . . What are the predicted effects on labour, viability of other potash mines, infrastructure, tax base, and so on?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Great, thank you. Thanks, Mr. Chair. You know, I think I know what you're getting at with the question. I mean we could . . . We have the authority to deem a royalty if necessary if we think the internal transfer prices is not appropriate. But what I would say is this is a global market as far as the potash industry is concerned. We supply right now about, you know, 15 to 20 per cent of the Chinese market with respect to potash. And it's a very competitive market. I mean Canpotex work really hard as the marketing arm of three of the potash companies that exist, well two, in this province.

But I mean this is very competitive with potash producers in Belorussia. You know, potash is produced in other parts of the world including China who have a potash mine also. So this is, you know, very much a supply-and-demand-driven market. We're, you know, relatively optimistic with regard to the short-term fundamentals around supply and demand, and I think the companies have said that publicly, as far as their outlooks are concerned.

But you know, as far as, you know, the decisions around individual companies and how they choose to sell or market or deal with, you know, companies or agencies of government, that's obviously within their purview. But I would just reiterate that this is something that is very much a global market with a supply and demand dynamic that is very much influenced by factors far beyond the control of individual companies or by governments.

Ms. Sproule: — I can see that with individual companies that are privately held, but this is, I think, the first example of a state-held company that's coming into our potash mining industry in Saskatchewan. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Again, you know, as far as the particular company in question, I'm informed that, you know, they're going to have a public share offering within the next six months. You know, and I think there's a distinction to be drawn as well between state-owned enterprises that are acting in a commercial fashion, acting for market reasons, versus state-owned enterprises that are acting on behalf of foreign governments for strategic reasons that are different than or separate from market-based decision making.

So you know, I think the fact that we're looking at . . . Like I just said, my understanding is that this company is going to a public share offering, meaning there's certain requirements that go along with that that make, you know, operations pretty transparent as far as if you're going to be listed on a stock exchange, you have a number of requirements that you're subject to versus a pure SOE [state-owned enterprise].

So I think that that would give some degree of comfort as far as the operations of a particular company but, you know, like I said, we haven't . . . We don't know, kind of, the go, no-go decision. There are a number of regulatory processes that have to occur, so a lot of this is as of yet pretty speculative.

Ms. Sproule: — Okay, the final question on this is the . . . It's been noted that Premier Wall actually flew to China, and I believe he met with Yancoal officials but has declined a request to meet with the local community of Havelock who's most affected by the mine. And this community has many, many questions about the provincial and personal economic benefit of this project.

So I guess this is the last question they wanted to raise: what is the real reason we're going into business with China on a potash mine with a company that has no first-hand experience?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well I would just say again, there's been no go or no-go decision. There are very well-established processes for companies wishing to operate any sort of natural resource extraction operation, whatever sector that might be in. So you know, again there would be a great deal of speculation involved in making any sort of firm statements with regard to the particular company and the particular project.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you for that, Mr. Minister. We'll certainly follow up as the project proceeds or if it proceeds, and we'll follow up once the project proceeds then and have more . . .

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well, if it does.

Ms. Sproule: — If it does, exactly. So if I could turn to some GTH questions right now, have you arranged for officials to come, Mr. Pushor, or is . . .

Mr. Pushor: —The minister would have a copy of the annual report.

Ms. Sproule: — Oh okay. I think . . .

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — What I would like to say with regard to this and I . . . You know, the estimates we're dealing with are the Ministry of the Economy. And I understand why there might be confusion with respect to the GTH and that I'm Minister Responsible for the GTH. The Ministry of the Economy is not responsible for the GTH. There's a shared minister. It could just as easily be any other minister in the government.

[20:00]

So you know, I'm willing to respond to some questions the member may have as best as I can respond to them, but

technically . . . Not just technically, I mean, this is to deal with the estimates of the ministry and the subvotes that we have in the ministry, which does not include the GTH. So I'm willing to respond but, you know, I would hope that we're not going to spend the next two and a half hours going over the territory when there's a lot of really kind of important stuff to do with the ministry itself.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I appreciate that. I do understand that because this is a treasury board Crown, we don't get an opportunity to ask questions on the annual report at any other time than now. So . . .

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — You can do this in Public Accounts.

Ms. Sproule: — Annual reports are dealt with in Public Accounts? Usually it's the auditor's reports. At any rate I'm not sure . . .

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Like I said, I'm willing to indulge some questions on it, but this is very much not kind of within the realm of the Ministry of the Economy, but please do ask.

Ms. Sproule: — Yes, it certainly has been in other years' estimates, so I know in the past Mr. Decker's been here to answer questions. So just, we understood all your officials would be here tonight.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Not for me. Nobody asked me or House business if there would be GTH officials. I can assure you of that.

Ms. Sproule: — We were assured all your officials would be here tonight. We assumed that that would include Mr. Richards.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — You assumed. You didn't ask. Nobody asked me. Nobody asked my office. Nobody asked House business whether we were going to have officials here from GTH. That request was not made. So you might've assumed that, but you never asked that.

Ms. Sproule: — Yes, you are very clear on that, Mr. Minister, so just calm down a little bit. We'll ask what we can. If you can't answer, that's totally fair, and I appreciate that you were not part of the discussion that we had when we were told Economy officials would be . . . I can tell you what we were told anyways.

Also, is GTH not indebted to the Government of Saskatchewan for certain loans? Like isn't that part of the budget?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — No, the Ministry of the Economy has no financial arrangement.

Ms. Sproule: — All right. Yes, basically . . . I'm trying to find what the comment was, but I can't find it instantly here. Oh yes. Officials would be there is what we were told but I guess . . .

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — From whom?

Ms. Sproule: — I don't know. My staff is indicating that we were told officials would be here. That's all I know, Mr. Minister, so if there's a miscommunication, there's a

miscommunication. It's not a big deal.

So first off, let's see how far we can get. A lot of these questions are very specific to the footprint that currently exists, so I'm not sure you could answer any of those. Maybe we could start with Brightenvue then. I know recently you had a sod-turning ceremony there recently. In terms of the global trade exposition centre — I forget the exact name of the new development out there — I'm just wondering in terms of the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program, what sort of changes may be required for the entrepreneurship category in order for Brightenvue to move forward its scheme.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — There are going to be no changes to the program.

Ms. Sproule: — So currently under the SINP entrepreneurial program, if I understand it correctly, that the individuals who are eligible to come to Canada would have to have significant business experience and a demonstrated ability to conduct business here in Canada. Is that something that will be applied to any individuals who come to the Brightenvue project?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — All of the rules that are in place for SINP will be followed by anybody from any particular project or any individual application. The rules are the same for everybody.

Ms. Sproule: — I understand that Citizenship and Immigration Canada are concerned about some representations that have been coming from Executive Council regarding a desire to have some of those categories changed. Is that anything that you've heard about?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Nope.

Ms. Sproule: — We'll have to follow up with Executive Council on that. Do you know anything about Emterra's new business venture on the GTH footprint?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well I would say that of the officials that are here, and me, I'm not aware of the project or where that project is at, so I can't comment to that.

Ms. Sproule: — I'm wondering, Mr. Chair . . .

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — You know what? One thing I would like to say . . . And I do appreciate them, and I will answer as best I can your questions with regard to this. But you know one of the first decisions I made when I became Minister Responsible for the GTH was that I would be stepping away from the board, and I think I announced that very shortly after I became minister.

And one of the first things I did very shortly after that was, I asked Doug Moen — who I think we all know is a former deputy minister to the Premier, long-time professional public servant here in this province, having served, you know, administrations of different varieties over the course of a 30-plus-year career — to be the Chair of the GTH. And I very much appreciated, and I think the public in general should be appreciative of Doug's willingness to take on that role as chairperson of the GTH, which he's going to do with, and has

been doing with a great degree of skill.

And one of the things that I had said at the front end of that, you know . . . Doug, I had absolute, full confidence in his judgment, and I would be ensuring that, as far as ministerial involvement, if there was a desire for ministerial involvement or direction, at Doug's request, I would be happy to provide or engage. An example would be going to the announcement that we did, you know, just a few short days ago with regard to the Brightview project.

But as far as day-to-day operational decisions, those are in the hands of the board, which is a very distinguished group. We added, obviously after Doug, a number of new board members up to the board and to the management. And there would be involvement from the minister when requested.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm just wondering, Mr. Chair and Mr. Minister, would there be an opportunity to pose questions to the officials at GTH around the operations there at any point in the future then? Or are you saying that this is not available anymore?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well I mean, you know what . . . No, what I would say is, I mean, there are opportunities with respect to Public Accounts, and I know that you've availed yourself of that opportunity at Public Accounts.

You know, with respect to . . . I think the Executive Council estimates, I think that there would be opportunity to ask there. But as it relates to the Ministry of the Economy estimates, this is . . . It's not a subvote.

Like I said, I'm going to answer your inquiries as best as I can, but I would really again say that I would hope that we would, you know, spend the next two and a half hours, or two hours and 15 minutes, whatever we're at, on the estimates of the ministry that we are here to review.

Ms. Sproule: — So just to be clear, PAC [Public Accounts Committee] is normally for auditor reports, and as you know, we've had opportunity in PAC to review the auditor's reports in relation to the GTH. But as far as any other opportunity to pose questions to the GTH in terms of their operations and their annual report, I believe there is no other opportunity to do so, and that this has happened with Crop Insurance Corporation and other ministries, or sorry, corporations or authorities. So I just want to understand at what point will we be able to pose questions to the GTH regarding their annual report?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Right. Well I mean we're still, we're working through that. I kind of at first glance . . . And I know as a former House Leader, and you have your current House Leader sitting beside you, both of whom are conversant with how the rules of the Assembly work, I think the Economy Committee would probably be the appropriate venue. And I realize we're sitting in that committee, but we're doing this for estimates purposes right now.

So I think if there were to be a review, it would be best done through Economy through the appropriate process of having an agenda item to review the annual report.

Ms. Sproule: — Is that something you would be willing to do before the end of this session?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well, I mean we are right at the end of session. I'm not averse to having that discussion done in a reasonable fashion, but I think in the next probably six days is a little challenging to schedule that in. So I would say that yes, we would be . . . I as minister would be open to that.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. As you know, I do have some very genuine questions, and I think you can appreciate that.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes.

Ms. Sproule: — And I don't think it has to happen before the end of session, but in the near future if we can arrange it. I mean I think that would be something that we have some very general interest questions about what's going on at the GTH. There's a lot going on there, a lot of economic activity, and certainly as minister responsible, you know it would be appreciated if you could arrange to make that happen.

So as a former House Leader yourself, I think you know how these things can be arranged, and would ask you to undertake to do so.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Right.

Ms. Sproule: — Sorry, Mr. Chair, I just want to discuss this sudden change of plans with my colleague here, so just give us a minute.

All right then. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and, Mr. Minister, for that. And we'll look forward to the opportunity to have a genuine discussion about what's happening at the GTH. Lots going on there, so would appreciate that. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Sure.

The Chair: — Mr. McCall has joined us. We have a substitution form all signed up for him, so he's a voting member of the committee, and I just wanted to note for the record about 8:15 p.m. he has joined us, and I assume he has some questions for the minister. You have the floor, sir.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, sir. Mr. Minister, officials, welcome and certainly this is always an interesting exchange and look forward to it. And just so we're clear on the program, I'm the labour market guy and I'm the trade guy.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes.

Mr. McCall: — We'll try to give those fair treatment in the questions being asked, but just so . . . I don't know if you want to move around some officials. We could start with the labour market first and then proceed to trade, or if you want to trade around as the case may be.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Right. Well one thing it might be worthwhile doing. Ms. Sarauer was in earlier and so I'd given some brief opening remarks, but some of the stuff I did want to talk about was with regard to trade as a part of an opening

presentation. So I guess I would ask your indulgence if you're okay with . . .

Mr. McCall: — Sure.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — . . . perhaps completing some of those opening remarks on the trade file particularly, and then I think I made some with respect to the labour market component during those remarks, and you can fire away at that point however you see fit.

But, you know, obviously there has been a lot of very interesting activity on the trade front in the last year since we had the last chance to chat. With regard to this, there has been significant change within the United States in the administration which obviously has impacts for the largest trading relationship between Canada and any other country by a very large margin and with respect to our largest trading partners, the province of Saskatchewan.

So you know, we've been very engaged on that front, the national government as well. And I think you well know, Mr. McCall, I'm not the first person lining up to give kudos to the national government, but I do wish to say that the level of engagement from the Government of Canada has been coordinated. It's been thoughtful. It has brought into the fold all of our stakeholders and interest.

[20:15]

You know, there's — in my view, anyway — there's two issues in the country that really transcend partisanship, and those are national unity and our relationship with the United States. And . . .

Mr. McCall: — Now you're quoting Bob Rae.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Oh no. That was inadvertent.

Mr. McCall: — You're on a roll.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — But I think it to be true, and if Bob Rae indicated that then I wholeheartedly agree with Mr. Rae on that file.

So there really has been a thoughtful and coordinated approach from the national government engaging subnationals in this country. You know, Premier Wall was in Iowa, as you know, at the request of the Prime Minister. There have been other premiers that have directly engaged with counterparts at the subnational level in the United States, also at the national level, in Washington with members of Congress and members of the administration. And you know, I think that the approach has paid dividends. And I do give the Prime Minister significant credit as well for, you know, for taking a disciplined and thoughtful approach also with regard to what is the most significant and important relationship we have in the world.

So you know, we continue to have challenges. The softwood lumber file is one I wanted to speak on briefly. I'm sure you have questions on that as well. You know, we obviously profoundly disagree with the preliminary countervail determination made by the Department of Commerce in the

United States. We've been through this. We've seen this movie before. This is softwood lumber five. We've been through four of these challenges before, and we've won every one of them. And I think there's a high degree of confidence we're on the side of good this time as well.

So it is challenging and we had, you know, been hopeful at different junctures that there was going to be a negotiated solution reached prior to the countervail determination. We have the anti-dump determination coming as well in June. At that point there's a standstill period, and then we're going to get the final determination on countervail and anti-dump.

So you know, our industry . . . This isn't a shock to industry. I mean this was something that we, that industry, you know, had accounted for as far as I think a lot . . . They would be the ones to say it. I shouldn't speak for them, but I would say that I think there was a significant degree of understanding that this was a very high degree of possibility and they planned accordingly.

So you know, we're going to continue to make the case. Other subnational jurisdictions are going to continue to make the case. I know the Prime Minister has raised this directly with the president every single time he has spoken with him. So we will, you know, hopefully . . . I'm hopeful that there is a possibility of a negotiated solution between the national government and the Government of the United States, but if not, we're going to fight the fight like we did in previous incarnations of softwood lumber disputes.

The other issue I wanted to speak to briefly was the Canada free trade agreement which we had a chance to talk about last year and that was still at a point where the agreement was being negotiated. You know, the most intense round of FPT [federal-provincial-territorial] negotiations I've had the privilege of being a part of — there were 21 rounds of negotiation on this — ministers were very directly engaged in the negotiation of what were some very, very detailed policy areas.

So it was a very productive process. I think that there were some commentators that would have liked to have seen a more ambitious outcome, you know, largely from the right side of the spectrum, but I'm proud of where we ended up. I think we have an agreement that is equitable, that reduces trade barriers internally, and that I think, as importantly as anything, there's a process for reconciling regulations across jurisdictions which are really the cost items as far as interprovincial trade barriers. It's regulatory barriers for the most part. So we have that process in place.

You know, to be honest, a lot of this was based on what we had negotiated in the New West Partnership, so you know, which has expanded as well. We now have four provinces as a part of the New West Partnership. So I think that this is a . . . It built on AIT, which was the Agreement on Internal Trade, which was the basis of the Canada free trade agreement. I think we are at minimum CETA [Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement]-equal, so we aren't going to have situations where European companies are going to have more access to procurement opportunity in other provinces than their neighbour would have, which was a possibility if we had continued along with the Agreement on Internal Trade as it was.

So I think we made significant progress and I mean there's always areas where we could have done better. And I spoke to some of those publicly, but you know, I think that we made significant progress. Nothing's ever going to be perfect, but we'll continue to work on making the agreement better and advancing the reconciliation of regulations. Not harmonization, but reconciliation of regs so that they can work together, at minimum, between jurisdictions.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that, Mr. Minister. In terms of . . . And maybe it's just my sort of plodding mind, but — not plotting; plodding — in terms of working our way through this, which is, you know, obviously a fairly complex set of issues starting with the big one first in terms of NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] and the coordinations that are going on federally and provincially, and then how that works into the federal process. What is Saskatchewan's engagement with that process? And what's the minister's understanding of the timelines involved?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Right. Now a very good question and very pertinent, very important. You know, we're still not entirely sure, and I know the member knows why. Because these things seem to be a moving target in Washington.

Mr. McCall: — Ask James Comey.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well and that, you know, there is that as well. So I mean there was a . . . I think there was a story today that, you know, the president had essentially changed his mind on invoking the 90-day renegotiation period unilaterally on the basis of communication from Prime Minister Trudeau and President Pena Nieto from Mexico, which is a positive thing.

That being said, we still don't have a USTR [United States Trade Representative] confirmed, a US [United States] trade representative, which is the equivalent, for folks listening, essentially is the trade minister of the United States. So the American trade minister, they don't have one in place, which has been a bit of a challenge actually as far as negotiating on softwood lumber for the national government as well. But there is not a US trade representative head in place. So you know, the administration have been pretty clear that they're going to . . . and their intention is to renegotiate NAFTA. Whether that's through the 90-day process after giving notice to Congress or whether that's going to be through a multilateral renegotiation is not entirely clear.

You know one thing . . . I did a luncheon speech today and I said that it's not necessarily something to be feared — a renegotiation. It had essentially been done by the previous administration in the United States, and it was done though through the aegis of the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations. So NAFTA's, you know, a 20-plus-year-old agreement. It does need to be updated in a number of areas. So the previous administration had embarked on some of the renegotiation of NAFTA through the aegis of TPP [Trans-Pacific Partnership]. So when the new administration had made clear they're not going to be signing on to TPP, which we think is unfortunate but that being said, a renegotiation of NAFTA and an updating of NAFTA isn't necessarily undesirable. But I think we need to do that in a considered way, considering just how integrated the

economies of the two countries are.

You know, it's not as simple as just saying that there's things that are manufactured in one country and shipped across the border to the other. I mean the reality is that a lot of these products will cross the border seven or eight times prior to being a finished product. So it's not as easy as just saying, well you know, it's manufactured here, exported there. That's not how it works considering just how integrated supply chains are between the two jurisdictions.

So you know, what I would say is that the Government of Canada have been very good about including provinces in the trade negotiations that have happened internationally. And I would say that under both the previous government, national government, and the current one have kept provinces engaged, apprised, and have been open to input on provisions of agreement so, you know, I'm hopeful that's going to continue. The national government had just recently appointed a negotiator, a trade negotiator for NAFTA who is the lead negotiator on the CETA agreement as well, who we very much appreciated working with. So I thought that was a positive development.

So you know, we'll be definitely in the loop. I would expect that once there's a formal process in place or time frame for renegotiation, that the Government of Canada will open consultations with provinces and stakeholder groups and civil society groups, as far as what changes could be made. So I guess I would encourage people to be engaged in that process when and if it starts.

Mr. McCall: — Anything structured at the present though, in terms of the regular check-in point between the province of Saskatchewan and foreign affairs or international trade federally?

Mr. Campbell: — Kent Campbell, deputy minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. So there is regular contact between officials at Global Affairs Canada and our trade folks on a variety of issues, NAFTA being one of them. But I know that our chief trade representative was chatting with Canada's negotiator on NAFTA over the last couple of weeks.

Mr. McCall: — Is there any thought in terms of retaining a special envoy as per I think Alberta has just announced the retention of Ambassador Doer, former ambassador Doer's services? Is there any thought in those regards, or is the province waiting for the US trade representative to be appointed? And I'll have a follow-up to that.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Right. Good question. I did see that. I think it was yesterday when the Government of Alberta announced they were retaining Ambassador Doer for the purpose . . . I think it was specifically of the softwood lumber agreement though. It wasn't kind of in a broader context for NAFTA or anything like that. It was just softwood lumber, and I think the contract was 120,000 per year.

You know, as far as our representation in the United States, we're very comfortable with Ambassador Wilkins being our representative in the United States, not just on softwood lumber. And we also have counsel on softwood lumber that we've

retained in the US for very specific legal issues.

But as far as, you know, our representation, we've been very, very well served by Ambassador Wilkins, who has done a very, very good job, who has great connections with respect to, you know, Congress and into the administration. And it's been very valuable as far as intelligence about what's going on, what direction things are going on for us, but also in terms of advocating for the province.

Mr. McCall: — And again Ambassador Wilkins is retained through the retainer agreement with Nelson Mullins that's many years standing now.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes.

Mr. McCall: — Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — That's right. Yes.

Mr. McCall: — All right. In terms of the US trade representative, what's the minister's understanding of the appointment of that position, and is there any chance that someone from Saskatchewan might be considered for that job? I understand the member from Moosomin speaks a number of languages and has fluency on these issues. Anyone on the short list out of Saskatchewan, or what's the minister's understanding of that process?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Right. Well this is a tough but fair question. You know, as far as the kind of specific one on the USTR process, you know, Robert Lighthizer is the administration nominee, and he had a . . . he was before the Senate finance committee on . . . It would've been about seven weeks ago. It wasn't put to a vote. And I mean, there's a number of competing priorities within the United States Senate I think for, you know, what we would call House time, but also I think there's some politics behind the reason the nominee hasn't been put to a vote. But there would be others who can speak to, probably in more detail than I, as to the mysteries of the United States Senate.

[20:30]

You know, we're hopeful that there is going to be a vote over the next couple of weeks, but until then it has been a challenge. I will say this. You know, I've spoken to Minister Freeland on a number of occasions, and it's a challenge when you don't really have somebody to negotiate with or a point of contact to deal with directly. So I mean the US trade representative's office continues to function but without a permanent, we would call a permanent head. So it really does make it challenging to engage in a meaningful fashion, particularly to get decisions, when you don't have a permanent head in place but one who has been designated but not confirmed.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. Well thank you for that, Mr. Minister. And I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that the Chair of the committee has mentioned that he also speaks American fluently. Just to get that on the table.

In terms of outstanding issues, switching gears back to the Canada free trade agreement and the AIT foundation and the

intersection of those issues around the New West Partnership Agreement, does the minister have any observations in terms of conflicts between those two agreements and how they are resolved?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Between Canada free trade and AIT or . . . and any US trade agreement?

Mr. McCall: — No, pardon me, the New West Partnership Agreement.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Oh. You know, good question. The New West Partnership, it's more ambitious in some ways. There's slightly different thresholds. So there aren't really any areas where NWP [New West Partnership] is minus of the CFTA [Canadian Free Trade Agreement], and they're not in conflict in any particular way.

Like I said in my comments, in a lot of ways CFTA had, as a basis, the same principles that underlie the New West Partnership Agreement. So those were the negative list. So there was transparency in terms of what exemptions were being taken by provinces — which was a major change from the Agreement on Internal Trade where everything was deemed to be exempted unless specifically included — which is why we ended up with an agreement that was about that thick, and the reason being that you had to have anything listed in the agreement, otherwise it was exempted. So we've taken the other approach with the Canada free trade agreement, which is actually shorter in terms of the number of pages, but includes, you know, far more because of that negative list approach.

There's a person-to-government dispute resolution process included in the Canada free trade agreement, as with the New West Partnership Trade Agreement. Very similar in that regard, so I wouldn't see there being a conflict as it relates to that. The one difference I guess between NWP and CFTA is the regulatory reconciliation process, which we don't have in the New West Partnership Agreement, although informally we've been able to move on trucking regulations and those sorts of — first-aid kits, another example — on those sort of issues. But you know, I wouldn't see a situation where we would have overt conflict, I guess. Kent, maybe I could turn it over to you if you have further thoughts on that.

Mr. Campbell: — Sure. Thank you, Minister. Just one point to add. The general principle would be that whichever has the lower threshold or is the most liberal, that would be the agreement that takes precedence, yes.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of outstanding business flowing from the AIT, and again, you know, all power to the many rounds of negotiation and congratulations to . . . I know you've got folks, you know, put a lot of their lives into this, so kudos to that. In terms of outstanding business and resolution to come, I believe this may tip my hand in terms of certain of my, you know, hobbies, but alcohol certainly is one of the outstanding matters. Does the minister have any observations on that, or officials?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — I do. And again, you know, I appreciate the question and I appreciate the kudos for officials. They did a great job. Kent is leader of IGA [Intergovernmental Affairs]. I want to specifically mention Bob Donald and Arla

Taylor. Bob was our lead negotiator on CFTA, and Arla, you know, literally has the entire agreement memorized. So they put an incredible amount of work on this.

And I would say, at the officials level . . . I mean, Bob was really one of the leaders as far as, you know, moving this forward and putting this agreement together through two and a half years of very intense, substantial, and very detailed works . . . Sorry, Arla Cameron. I misspoke. The folks are, you know, very deserving of significant praise for the work that they've done on this.

With regard to the specific, we set up outside of the regulatory reconciliation part of CFTA a separate table for working through alcohol regulations. And this is a . . . it's a really frustrating one and I think, you know, a lot of members of the public say, well why can't you just buy wine from, you know, BC [British Columbia] or California or whatever? And I share the frustration.

You know, also being SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority] minister though, you realize that the entire system we have built up, it's contrived and it's built on compromise, built on historical reason. But people have made very real investments on the basis of these rules as they are. And you know, so our challenge has been to, internally to move on, you know, getting rid of some of the, you know, kind of historical reasons that are . . . kind of wonder why they exist, but still people have made investments on that basis. It's not that they think that they're good rules either, but that's what they were.

So I think we've moved a long way as far as liberalization internally on alcohol regulations. Not all provinces are as far down that road. I would say we're probably some of the leaders with regard to that in the country. So there's other provinces that are behind that even. And ultimately, I mean for every jurisdiction it's about protecting the treasury as well. So I mean, if you were to just open it up and say, well anybody can sell anything from anywhere, that would have a significant negative impact on the treasury and the finances of any jurisdiction that were to go down that road.

So the challenge is going to be maintaining our fiscal frameworks collectively as provinces, but also I think we can do this. I think we can open up borders and allow for more exchange in alcohol products. And I think ultimately we do it right. What consumers are going to see is lower price, better selection, better service, all those things, and governments are going to be kept whole. So you know, that's what our objective is and that's what the mandate of the table is to address the issue of alcohol.

But we're going to be working through the details, how that's going to work in the next . . . I mean the agreement becomes, takes force on July 1. And we've been working through already what that process is going to look like as far as the table looking at alcohol regulation.

Mr. McCall: — Okay, well thank you for that. And I guess pursuant to that, and again this is not to reflect too broadly on what may or may not be my pastimes, but as the whole question of marijuana legalization comes forward . . . and we'd missed a

chance to talk about this under Innovation Saskatchewan, but certainly I think of the . . . I don't know if Milligan Bio-Tech is into it yet, but certainly there's a development in Yorkton that I'm sure certain members opposite are following with great interest, let alone what's happening in Whitewood or, you know, on down the line.

But in terms of how that question is handled under trade regulation as it stands and then in terms of what's to come, can the minister provide — or officials — some indication where all this is headed and how it impacts Saskatchewan and if there is any sort of reckoning with the opportunities that are presented?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Right. Well again, a good question, and there was some contemplation of cannabis regulation in the Canada free trade agreement. And you know, what Minister Bains said . . . He was asked this question when we did the official signing, and his response was that, I mean, as a national government they were hopeful that, you know, the challenges we have in the regulation and interprovincial trade with alcohol won't be necessarily existent after the legalization of cannabis.

So you know, there's going to be . . . There was a very brief discussion around that with respect to the CFTA. I think individual jurisdictions are just at this point, you know, examining the federal approach and are going to be looking at regulation within their jurisdictions. I think the Justice ministers have had discussions around this for some period of time and that's been the lead ministry as far as regulatory environment. You know, we'll be increasingly involved, I suspect, through SLGA, but as of right now it's still at that stage where Justice are looking at regulatory environments.

And you know, one thing I would say, there still continues to be concern around the element of roadside testing. That's one of the real challenges. And the national government are very aware of this also, in that we don't have a reliable roadside ability to test for drivers and impairment in driving. And that's one of the biggest concerns.

You know, the Government of Canada would say this is about public safety and it's about making sure that, you know, the profits and proceeds are taken out of the hands of organized crime and those who are profiting from the trade right now. And I didn't disagree with that. I think that that's an appropriate objective. But we need to make sure that we get it right. I think there'll have to be some degree of coordination around taxation as well. You know, I think you well know, Mr. McCall, I mean the kind of premium right now if somebody were to, whoever it may be, if somebody were to go, you know, and obtain marijuana . . . I mean, there's a risk premium built into there which, if it were to be legalized, obviously that wouldn't still be there, but that's your room; that's the black-market room. So if you are to compete in the above-board market, your taxation room's going to be limited for a period of time anyway until the majority of the industry move into the light.

So there's going to have to . . . And that was the case when prohibition ended, and you know, there was a transfer from the black market to the open market. So there's lessons around that and I think that that's something probably Finance ministers are going to have to work through. I think, you know, Minister Morneau has spoken about that, and you know, in some high

level anyway at this point. But there's going to have to be, you know, a significant amount of work done over the course of the next year. I think the federal government said July 1, 2018 is their target. So there's going to have to be significant work done, and I think it would be, I think Canada would be well advised that we do this in as coordinated a fashion as we can nationally.

Mr. McCall: — Yes that's, certainly, that's why I asked the question. What the minister refers to with the situation around alcohol, and again, like I get the sort of interesting patchwork of measures that accrue over the years. In some ways this is a, you know, I use the word kind of a greenfield endeavour, and there is a chance you can get it right on the trade and regulatory side. And certainly, you know, I agree with the perspective that there is a public safety aspect to this that makes an awful lot of sense and needs to be gotten right. And you know, you rightly mentioned the Justice ministers as leads on it, and that's all as it should be.

But in terms of the economic development opportunity for Saskatchewan where we've got some tremendously productive and innovative producers generally and in terms of the way that the market will open up, I'm just looking for indication of forethought on where the trade and regulatory side is at.

[20:45]

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Right. Well again, we're in early days, right, and there have been companies that have, you know, shown a significant interest in developing the industry. We've, I think, received a number of inquiries at the Ministry of the Economy about getting into the industry. But, you know, I think the answer is that in the short term we're still going to have to work through some of those regulatory issues.

I agree with you though, that there is real and significant opportunity in the field for businesses and entrepreneurs to move forward on the matter and, you know, we're going to continue to work through the prerequisite sort of issues around regulation, around public safety, around all of those things. And like I said, I think there's a desire that we do this with, you know, an approach that's not a complete patchwork quilt across the country, that we try as best we can.

And there are going to be local differences. That's the way the federation works. And, you know, jurisdictions might choose to take slightly different paths. But you know, I think I would say that as far as what we have in alcohol, I don't think we want to replicate that with regard to this particular product.

So you know, we're going to have to work through some of those issues yet and as far as kind of specific answers around what the regulatory regime and policy direction that we're going to have, you know, we're not quite there yet as far as being able to speak to details.

Mr. McCall: — I appreciate this is more of a federal question as well, but, you know, as we're into questions like NAFTA more fully, there are — speaking of patchworks — there's quite a variety of approaches on the whole question of cannabis in the United States of America. And any sense of what sort of challenges that poses for relations between Canada and the

United States?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Right. Good question. I think the answer to that would be less problematic that it would have been 10 or 20 years ago. You know, how many jurisdictions do we have in the United States now with legalized cannabis? It would be . . . It's a number, anyway.

You know, 15 years ago the challenge had been . . . If Canada had moved in this direction, I think the United States government would have had — whether Democrat or Republican — would have had a significant, a significant problem with that, and that would have led to a thickening of the border. I think the chance of that particular response from the United States is less now than it had been, you know, during the 10, 15, 20 years ago.

So there are going to be issues associated with it, without question. You know, Homeland Security are going to have their policies in place and, I mean, that could vary depending on the state that you're bordering on. But you know, again those are questions the Government of Canada are going to have to work through with their counterparts south of the border also.

Mr. McCall: — Just one last question on the trade front and then if the minister's got anything to add, but certainly the question of steel, Saskatchewan-produced steel. We're very glad to see the announcement around Keystone and the guarantee for the work that in most cases had already been done. And again I appreciate this is like, you know, what's your crystal ball say about what Donald Trump's going to think tomorrow about, you know, pick your subject.

So anyway in terms of specific measures around steel and pipeline that's produced here in Evraz and the impact that has, the huge impact that has in terms of employment and economy here in the city of Regina and southern Saskatchewan, any thoughts on where that's going to wind up with the States?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well you know, I would say that we have been very directly engaged with both the United States and with Global Affairs, who have been . . . I've spoke to Minister Freeland about this on a number of occasions. Minister Goodale has been very engaged in this as well. And again as somebody who's not leading the parade to heap praise on the national government, I have to say that they have been very, very engaged.

I would guess that, you know, Secretary Ross is probably wondering how this steel mill in Saskatchewan is kind of the biggest issue he's dealing with on the international stage as far as the relationship with Canada. But it's really been raised to that level.

So you know, they're very aware of the challenge. We were, you know, grateful that Keystone XL was exempted in the executive order with regard to steel procurement. There's still more work to be done though. You know, we're not spiking the ball on that because, I mean, a great deal . . . Again this goes back into kind of the integration of the supply chains. I mean, Evraz is headquartered, their North American operations, headquartered in Chicago. They have a potential new facility in Colorado along with the facility here in Regina. So it's again

not so simple as to just say, well it's not American steel. Well that's not really the case, you know; there's a lot of integration across the national boundary on this stuff.

So part of this is educating, you know, a new administration and I think that there is a significant degree of awareness of these issues within Congress, particularly border state members of the House and Senate for that matter who . . . from both parties. This is not just a partisan issue across the United States. So, you know, part of it's education; it's outreach; it's working with folks we've had the opportunity to meet and get to know over the course of years, whether that be at the subnational or national level.

So, you know, as a country, we're doing all we can to make sure that that is well known. But I appreciate the question with regard to the specifics of Evraz and can say that we are fully engaged in that the Government of Canada have done good work on this.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. Thank you for that. I guess, you know, that being one last question on NAFTA or trade with the United States. In terms of investment attraction between jurisdictions, particularly those covered by the New West Partnership agreement, what's the state of the head office attraction program on the part of the provincial government, or what's your involvement in that as a minister or officials? Are there dollars allocated in the budget that we have before us? How does that work?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — No, I mean there aren't specifically. What I would say though is, you know, almost every conversation I have with companies, whether they be in Alberta or whether they be elsewhere, is that they consider moving jobs, moving resources, moving operations to Saskatchewan. And it really is a part of every conversation. And I know the Premier as well, you know, raises the possibility of that and we have general sort of provisions that would, we hope, make that . . . incentivize that companies would do more business here in the province.

But, you know, and that's the case with . . . I think that's the case probably with every Economy minister that you would find in any jurisdiction in Canada. We talk about these things at FPT meetings and I think we all see that as part of our job, to do what we can to attract investment within the parameters of, you know, well-understood roles. So we do that.

You know, the Premier tells a story of Peter Lougheed who, you know . . . Always he talked about how when building Alberta, his time as Premier of Alberta, you know, the reason he got so many head offices in Calgary is because he asked them to come to Calgary. And so we aren't shy about asking. Not necessarily . . . I mean, there are occasions where head offices would make sense, we think, for relocation. But often it's, you know, consider putting more of your investment dollars, your capital dollars, your resources into the province because we think we have a pretty attractive business climate here.

Mr. McCall: — No, and I certainly concur with the notion that one of the jobs is, get out there and attract investment and to make that case for Saskatchewan. I have no dispute with that.

What I do want to have a better picture of though, is what sort of specific dollars are attached to these kind of efforts? What kind of resources are attached to it? Because certainly one of the letters that was making the rounds in, you know, not too recently, referenced a government office building possibly being marshalled as some kind of an inducement. And certainly when we had occasion to talk about this with the Minister for Central Services, she had some pretty interesting things to say about that in committee.

So I guess as the Minister of the Economy, what's your understanding of the program? What is there in terms of specific tax inducements? What are the resources that are allocated to these efforts beyond what is just the normal course of representing Saskatchewan to the most effective . . . ?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well as far as, you know, we are always . . . stand ready to work with companies who would inquire as to possibilities of business, whether it be relocation or business opportunity here in the province. A lot of what we would do in these cases would be pathfinding, sort of, you know, here's what some options are. Here would be something we think might make sense for your company. You know, those are the sort of things that we engage in from Econ's point of view.

And, you know, as far as outreach, we do it frequently, like we had talked about earlier. But I had sent about 6 or 800 letters, I think to companies in Alberta that do business here. And I think we sent letters to other parts of the country as well, just particularly companies that have some footprint in the province already and, you know, invite them to — depending what industry they're in — either to invest more on the capital side or consider moving jobs to the province.

But we do that in the context of, you know, just offering to work with them. And it has resulted in positives. So and again I would say that this isn't unusual, that this is something that other provinces engage in as well. You know we do it as a matter of course and have done it as a matter of course for many years. And I, you know, to be fair I think your government did the same thing as far as working to attract investment in businesses into the province. That's what we do.

Mr. McCall: — I thought you were going to credit Tommy Douglas or something for a moment, but anyway . . .

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Justin Trudeau, Tommy Douglas . . .

Mr. McCall: — Anyway I guess if we could shift gears, Mr. Minister, to the question of, just I guess moving through some of the subvotes that are related to my topics that I've been tasked with coming to get some questions in on tonight. But I guess (EC12), in terms of what's happening under the economic development file, and again to those officials that are moving on down the road, thanks very much again. Missed you talking about lean today in Public Service Commission, Kent, but you know, perhaps another time.

[21:00]

Anyway economic development, (EC12), could the minister or officials describe the, sort of, marquee initiatives going on

there?

Mr. Pushor: — Thanks very much. It's Laurie Pushor, the deputy minister of the Ministry of the Economy. With the support of Kirk Westgard, the assistant deputy minister in the economic development division, there's been a great deal of effort under way to really bring a lot of discipline and rigour to our activities in the division. So we've worked very hard to research companies that might have interest in the province, begin to develop relationships with them in terms of early stage conversations to present the opportunities in the province, and then of course to continue to work alongside them and support them as they go through their decision-making processes around potential investments. If you want to think of it like a funnel, we want to see lots of volume at the top and a good flow of projects coming out of the successful end of the work.

We've seen a great deal of work as well around opportunity identification as we come to understand some of the new commodities that are being grown in our agricultural sector. We're seeing significant activity around new strategies and new approaches to enhanced oil recovery, and we've worked diligently with the manufacturing space. You're seeing a bit of a resurgence in manufacturing shipments recently, and there's some development around evaluation for increased investment in that space.

So we've really wanted to bring that kind of discipline and rigour to our activities to really manage those relationships in a long-term way, both for existing companies as they contemplate growing and expanding their businesses, and also to attract new companies to the province.

We've, you know, as I said, we've seen opportunities in many areas. Another area where we collaborate extensively with our colleagues in innovation is around some of the emerging tech companies in the province. And there's some very interesting and exciting developments in that space as well.

Mr. McCall: — So what kind of volumes and what kind of, you know, scale of enterprises that the deputy minister is talking about here? Could the deputy minister flesh that out a bit in terms of what's involved?

Mr. Pushor: — Well across all of our activities, we've set a goal that we would like to play a role at some level in at least 100 successful projects every year. That's a significant move from historically what a lot of governments aspire to. We think with modern tools and techniques to manage those relationships, we can do that effectively. We've got some pretty dynamic young people in the division that are doing really interesting work.

If we take enhanced oil recovery out of the conversation, we had about 35 wins this last year that we can say we played a role in, and they span the breadth of activities across a number of sectors.

Mr. McCall: — Okay, so the 35 wins, what sort of capitalization are you talking? What sort of employee complement? What's the profile?

Mr. Pushor: — I need to correct what I just said. We track

about \$600 million worth of wins, was the value of those projects that we counted in the last year. We don't always have the opportunity to attract employment. Some companies haven't shared that initially when they're making their investment decisions, and we continue to work alongside them. But it's fair to say when you look at things like Grain Millers expansion out in Yorkton, I think that brings with it another 40 or 50 jobs not counting the construction phase. So very solid and strong activities in many places across the province.

Mr. McCall: — In the case of Grain Millers, what was the involvement of the Ministry of the Economy in that particular endeavour?

Mr. Pushor: — So I'm not going to be able to go into a great deal of detail around what we did on a day-to-day basis, but we have been in a relationship with Grain Millers for many years. They are a well-known company. We were checking in on a routine basis with them over the last number of years to ensure that they knew our interest and knew that we were there to support them. I believe in that instance, because it was an expansion, that their assistance sought from us was fairly limited. But we were there to help pathfind in a couple of instances, and certainly we'll be there as well along the way as they develop and advance the construction of that expansion.

Mr. McCall: — Dollar value for support, any grants or — and I realize this may get into other of the topics for discussion down the line — but any sort of dollar figure that you can put on the work done by the ministry in this particular instance?

Mr. Pushor: — Dollar figure for the work we did? It would have been staff time at this point. There may be other things down the road as their project is advanced through construction, but at this time there was no specific financial commitments made to the project at this time.

Mr. McCall: — So you'd referenced 35, excluding EOR [enhanced oil recovery], 35 companies that you're putting in the win column. Tell me a bit more about those companies. Is there one . . . Does ag value-added predominate? Or is it IT [information technology]? Or is it manufacture? Or what's the breakdown in that grouping?

Mr. Pushor: — It's quite broad based. You'll see a number of different investments. I'm just flipping through. Dumur Industries did an expansion in order to bring on some new product lines out there. It was a \$1.5 million project. We could talk about things like Ceres Ag Global, and while they had a number of activities well developed and well advanced around their rail loop down at the border, they did add a fertilizer handling facility down there recently, and we've continued to walk alongside them as they do their work.

We've had a long-term relationship with CLAAS, and they announced a third Canadian West Harvest Centre location in Swift Current. Federated Co-operatives put a \$40 million facility into . . . or announced a \$40 million facility into Hanley and have advanced the development of that project. We've had some involvement with them on that one.

There's a variety of projects like that. Some of it extends into some interesting projects. Steel Reef, we had some work with

them. They built a 10 million cubic-foot gas plant at Alameda. That's about a \$30 million investment. And in terms of some other unique projects, we've supported a company called RII. You might have heard some announcements about them as they developed a pilot project around new downhole steam creation strategy in the oil field, which could be a significant technological advancement. So we've worked with companies like that as well.

I would just close by saying we've seen a remarkable build-out in grain handling facilities across the province, and there's a number of those that, while we sometimes have very limited engagement with those companies, sometimes it's quite engaged in collaboration with our partners in agriculture.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of again in the description in the subvote and certainly you can get into it in the plan or the reports, but the involvement of the economic development aspect of the Ministry of the Economy with First Nations, Métis, and northern economic development activity, can the minister or officials describe that for the committee?

Mr. Westgard: — Thank you, Chair. It's Kirk Westgard, assistant deputy minister for Economic Development. The work we're doing at the North lines up with a lot of the other work we're doing around Saskatchewan, is where we're focusing on investment into communities, advancing opportunities throughout Saskatchewan.

One thing, you know, a couple of the projects we're currently working on is advancing a fish plant in the North, working with the fishers to organize and get a better price for their current fish and processing within Saskatchewan, as well as on some of the work we have teamed up with SaskPower to help realize the supply chain opportunities with some of their projects and their hydro projects they're looking on in the North, getting the communities and people ready for those opportunities.

As well as one of our premier events is the Aboriginal Business Match program that has been in Saskatchewan the last couple of years, which brings Métis and First Nation communities together with business who are doing work to expand the opportunities across Saskatchewan, not only in the North, but also in every First Nation and Métis community in the South.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — If I could just add to that as well. Thanks, Kirk, that's very pertinent. You know, some of our largest industries, right . . . I mean forestry is over 30 per cent Aboriginal employment, and you know, I know this first-hand from my hometown of Meadow Lake. MLTC [Meadow Lake Tribal Council] and NorSask, which is an MLTCII [Meadow Lake Tribal Council Industrial Investments] company, incredibly important employer. You know, there was a very challenging situation with regard to a fire that had happened at the mill earlier, and we're in the process of refurbishing and restarting, also the additional challenge with the softwood lumber issue that we're dealing with. But I'll tell you, very well-managed company, and you know, there had been a preparation for going into this period of time. We have a high degree of confidence that the company's going to continue to operate through this challenging period. They did through the last challenging period as well, very well managed and some, you know, very dedicated employees.

Been working with MLTC as well in a partnership on a potential power generation project in the Meadow Lake area, which would be a very important thing for the forestry sector and maintaining . . .

Mr. McCall: — Biomass or waste wood or . . .

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes, that's right. Yes, biomass. Yes. So we've been continuing to work really closely with MLTC on that project.

You know, as far as uranium mine clean-up, I think there might have been . . . Minister Duncan had mentioned there had been a bit of discussion around that yesterday evening at Energy and Resources estimates, but we talked about it in SRC [Saskatchewan Research Council] and Innovation.

You know, we're funding a large portion of that from Ministry of the Economy. It's a \$24 million investment this year — substantial increase over even last year — so \$24 million into, that's Gunnar clean-up in the North, very largely . . . And we made a real point of ensuring that local folks are the ones that are going to be doing the vast majority, the significant majority of the work, locally sourced as much as we can, equipment, those sorts of initiatives.

So you know, when we have opportunities like that, you know, we're going to make sure that we work closely with First Nations and Aboriginal groups to make these projects work. Even, you know, I can even speak to Flying Dust First Nation specifically, part of MLTC, but specifically part of First Nations Power Authority. They've been pursuing power generation projects. Again a very sophisticated First Nation who have, you know, significant business interests, and you know, we're going to continue to work closely. And in, you know, those cases I personally am working with them, both as the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly], but also as Minister of the Economy in advancing some of these projects.

Mr. McCall: — And I'd certainly concur with that. So what the minister's describing with MLTC and Flying Dust, is that being played out with Kitsaki? Is that being played out with the Athabasca Basin? Is that an accurate assessment?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes, and it would be. And that's, you know, in kind of my experience, that really is, you know, this . . . It's First Nation-led economic development, but it's being done in a very sophisticated way. So it's, you know, it could be companies like Cameco who are working directly with, you know, LLRIB [Lac La Ronge Indian Band] or other First Nations directly in a mutually beneficial business arrangement. So we, you know, we are happy to play a role and facilitate that, you know, especially where there's an intersection with government policy.

[21:15]

We're happy to do what we can to advance projects and even open doors, support companies that are looking to, you know, have business ideas but need to meet the right person or, you know . . . There's cases of that too, where we're happy to play a positive role, a force for good in that.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of the fish plant, what's the status of the fish plant?

Mr. Westgard: — It's currently ongoing negotiations. I know they're looking at a property right now, so we hope to see an announcement on that shortly.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that. In terms of SaskPower and the involvement on the part of the ministry with the supply chain, certainly the announcement that's recently been made by SaskPower and what is likely not going to be happening with Elizabeth Falls, so how does . . . what other files is the ministry working with northern First Nations on with SaskPower?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Right. So a bit of a challenging question to answer in that I think that the specific one power would be . . . I honestly just can't speak to the details of a power . . . would be better positioned, but what I can say in kind of a broader context as far as, you know, supply chain development and these sorts of things where we have a direct impact . . . Even today I referenced earlier having spoken at a conference. We did a presentation, Ministry of the Economy did a presentation at the Expo held today at Queensbury, you know, providing education insights as to how to become integrated into that supply chain in a broader context.

We engage in training so that northerners can, you know, participate in some of those job opportunities. But those contracts as well . . . And I can speak first-hand, I mean, to Canoe Lake First Nation for instance, having kind of a line-clearing sort of arrangement with SaskPower to make sure that transmission lines are kept clear and are not going to be obstructed by trees growing up and foliage and all the rest of it. So you know, there are efforts taken. So I would say that in kind of the broad context, you know, as far as our engagement as the Economy ministry.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. And my apologies, Mr. Minister. I missed the luncheon speech. I would have loved to have been there.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — You caught some of it because it was on trade so we actually had a . . . We've covered some of the ground here.

Mr. McCall: — I'll take it as read then.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — As read. Agreed

Mr. McCall: — But in terms of supply chain questions generally as regards opportunities for First Nations and Métis people in the province of Saskatchewan, what's the . . . and again I appreciate that there have been different things done different places, Crown sector, executive government sector. But is there a specific goal in terms of increasing that supply chain involvement with First Nations and Métis people, north or throughout the province as a means to, well, increase the socio-economic status, employment, engagement, economic opportunity, all these things which lead to a better life for so many people? And that's something I know that the minister knows well.

And I was following the announcements around K+S with great

interest. And I certainly know that's one of the great things about that project, has been the work done around engaging First Nations and Métis folks, both in the labour force and in the supply chain. And I read with great interest the story that was done in the Saskatchewan Mining Association mag on Terry Bird. Has been with K+S for the past five years and before that was with SaskTel, and did great work there but . . . And I certainly credit the work he's doing with K+S, but an example of really good engagement and really seeking to maximize those opportunities.

So what's the minister's understanding of where the landscape is currently, and are there goals to improve the situation around supply chain, around labour force engagement, around economic development?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Right. Well a good question, good observations. You know, I can say that we really encourage directly companies that we're working with — K+S is a good example — very responsible companies as well. I mean it's not that it's because we're, you know, telling them they have to do this and have . . . It's because they're good companies and they want to engage First Nations and Métis people in their supply chains, and directly. I mean, they see it as an advantage as well, right? I mean, this is a win-win. It's not that they're just doing it because they're being told to. So you know, K+S, I think you canvassed that as a very good example of First Nation-Métis engagement, both as kind of direct employment through the supply chain and a company that takes it seriously.

Cameco, a company that you know, we both well know who take it very, very seriously in developing their labour force to, you know, work at their operations. You know, a challenging time right now in the uranium industry as well, but still a company that continues to make this a priority. Areva as well continues to make this a priority — engaging, retaining, training, upgrading the skills of their employees of Aboriginal ancestry.

Something we engage in and, you know, participate in as well as far as our labour market programming, whether that be at the kind of the front end through our adult basic programming to Canada Job Grant which, you know, some of these companies have been . . . major uptake from some of these companies as far as upskilling their existing employees. So you know, we also see this as being a win all the way around. It's a win for the employee, a win for the company, and a win for the province in a general sense in that we have people who are making a good wage, you know, building a life, raising their families. These are all very, very positive things.

So you know, we see it as being an investment on the labour market training front, and we're going to continue to make those investments and work directly with our companies. But also, you know, as far as the front-end investments throughout all basic education, which are primarily in a lot of regional colleges especially — I can speak to mine — primarily Aboriginal people who are going through those programs. So we're going to continue to make those investments too.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. And again, it may be more of a Priority Saskatchewan or Central Services kind of question, but in terms of the leadership on the part of the Ministry of the Economy,

are there targets, are there goals around involvements with supply chain and improving that overall engagement?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Again, a good question. As far as kind of specific targets, there aren't necessarily specific targets with regard to supply chain involvement and that sort of thing, but I mean, it's definitely a top-of-mind component in the work we do with companies. You know, we encourage . . . It's not necessarily that we need to. I mean, a lot of these companies are very, very responsible, progressive, and see it for what it is, which is a win for them and a win for communities and their employees.

So you know, one thing I would offer though. You know, when we went through the CFTA negotiation, as an example, we had a provision in the New West Partnership Agreement that would allow for there to be preference for local companies specifically related to Aboriginal and Aboriginal companies. And that was something that had been included in the New West Partnership Agreement and something that we wanted to have included in the Canada free trade agreement, which has been included in the Canada free trade agreement, and the reason being that we do want to be able to leverage government procurement to advantage local Aboriginal owned companies.

And that's very much . . . you know, on a proportional basis, that's more important to us than any other province in the country simply because of the demographic makeup of the province. So that was something we felt important. That was something that we advanced as one of the exemptions within the agreement.

So you know, kind of getting back to one of the earlier answers when I expressed a bit of frustration with some of the criticism of the CFTA for, you know, the exemptions and all these things, well this is, yes, this is an exemption in the Canada free trade agreement, but I think as a policy objective this is something that, you know, most fair-minded people would think is a pretty good thing. So yes, it's an exemption but in a positive way for a very legitimate public policy objective.

Mr. McCall: — Do you have any metrics by which you assess the dollar figure of economic activity attached to those exemptions? Is there any means of keeping track?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well it would be a bit challenging. I guess we could probably ask, you know, the Crowns who do the majority of the government procurement. You know, they would probably be able to speak to that in more detail. Power particularly would, I'm sure, have some detailed numbers as far as their business relationships with Aboriginal companies. But you know, as far as what we had authority over, I would just kind of reiterate that it's an important thing for us.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. And I guess if we could move into . . . Thank you for that discussion. And if we could move into (EC13), labour market development.

[21:30]

And I guess, continuing on in the theme, certainly we just had jobs Friday — and I'm sure the minister celebrates it like I do, with a good cup of coffee and a hot laptop. In terms of one of

the things that I think Canadians generally are served poorly by is that, the fact that there's no sort of evaluation of what's happening on-reserve in terms of First Nations employment. And you know, I come here as someone who's once had the privilege of serving in government and I'm certain that that's how Statistics Canada made their assessments at that time as well.

So I guess I offer this up in the hope that, you know, you might not just observe mistakes that I was party to, but to learn from them and to improve the situation in the province as a whole. Because in terms of what goes on for on-reserve unemployment . . . And again, there's a lot of diversity out there in terms of, you know, we certainly know some First Nations are doing better than others, but the situation as a whole is unacceptable.

And I like to think that if more people in Saskatchewan had a better picture of what was happening, they'd ask for better from all of us in terms of what there is to be done. So again, information is king; information is power. And that the monthly labour force survey has such a glaring hole in it, for our purposes here in Saskatchewan, is there anything that can be done to remedy that, working with Statistics Canada and the federal government?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — And a very, you know, astute observation. I think we're on the same page on this one, Mr. McCall. And you know, it's something that has been important to me as well. And I've had the great privilege of being the Minister Responsible for Labour Market Development for a number of years now, and we've gone through the process at the forum of labour market ministers, which is what we refer to basically as labour market ministers, the federal-provincial table on this.

And you know, I think labour market ministers and their critics in every jurisdiction have the same Friday once-a-month experience of the hot laptop and a coffee and, you know, kind of wondering sometimes at the accuracy of the information and data that we're getting.

And you know, we can all kind of, we could get into, I could get into great detail — I know you probably could too — about the way the survey works and the information that's collected and reported out. And you know, there's some real challenges on that. And that was something we recognized, and I think it's been recognized for many years that there are significant gaps in how the survey is done.

So we were Co-Chair of the labour market information working group within the Forum of Labour Market Ministers, and we held that role for . . . a couple of years, Alastair? Five years we've been co-chairing that group with the Government of Canada. And we're at the point now where we're going to have a new Labour Market Information Council nationally which is going to be responsible for the collection and dissemination of labour market information which is going to allow, hopefully — and I think it will — but the objective is to allow decision makers to make better decisions going forward by having more accurate labour market information. Because you know, the survey that we get that Friday every month isn't the be-all and end-all and, you know, there's a lot of gaps and challenges.

So we're working with ESDC [Economic and Social Development Canada] right now. We're the only province working with ESDC on a pilot to gather labour market information on-reserve, and we're working directly with them. And this has been a priority for me. And I know we've talked about this before, so I appreciate the input on that, and it's something that . . . I think we are going to get better labour market information. A project team was actually just struck on this in the last month or so, month and a half, on the on-reserve pilots. So you know, hopefully I'll have more to report on that in the near future.

Mr. McCall: — Well I'd just like to go on record saying thank you very much. I think, you know, as per what I've said, and I need not belabour it, but certainly yourself, Mr. Minister, officials, it's a very important piece of work.

If people know what the situation is, you can't, you know, you can't unknow it. And again I think Saskatchewan people are fair minded enough that if they get this picture clearly in mind, they're going to demand better of all of us. And that's, I think, as it should be. And anyway we have talked about this in past conversations, so thank you very much.

Further to that, moving through the subvote (EC13), in terms of work readiness, youth and adult skills training . . . and I guess I also say this against a backdrop of ever-dwindling time and realizing we've got the votes to get through as well, otherwise the Chair might start speaking in American at me.

But anyway, in terms of working through the subvote, work readiness, youth and adult skills training, could the minister or officials describe what's happened there and any federal dollars that are incorporated into that amount, as per other conversations we've had about the labour market development agreements and on? Anyway, if the minister could start us off there with work readiness, youth and adult skills training.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Right, and we'll get into the details on that particular item. One thing — and again I don't want to take up all the time because I know we're running short — this is one of the areas of significant policy interest I know for you, Mr. McCall, and for me as well. So just for folks who are tuning in and watching at 9:30 on the night of the BC election, not that we would want to be watching that if we weren't sitting here, but probably cheering for different sides as well, but that being said . . .

Mr. McCall: — I understand the Liberals are tied with the Greens. I've got it on good authority from Kelvington-Wadena that the Liberals are tied with the Greens, but that could be wrong. I don't know.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — The last update I have is Libs 12, NDP [New Democratic Party] 9, and Norm Letnick in Kelowna was just re-elected, so we've got that but . . .

Mr. McCall: — You're telling me Kelvington-Wadena had it wrong?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — He may have had. I wouldn't say he had it wrong. His information may have been dated. So I'm sure it was accurate at the time that he reported it though. So with

that update, which is very important to us all, we'll talk about the labour market transfer agreement.

So this year, actually we took the Chair this year of the labour market ministers' table. So one of the, like I said, one of the great privileges I've had is to be the labour market minister for a number of years now, and had the chance to become quite familiar with the labour market transfer agreements.

As the member knows, there's four labour market transfer agreements. The job fund agreement, which previously had been the labour market agreement but now job fund, it's about \$15.8 million, I think. This year the Labour Market Development Agreement, which is the largest agreement — and these are largely federal; these are federal funds — the targeted initiative for older workers, which is a small agreement, and the Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities. So we have all four of these agreements.

One of the objectives I have working with my Co-Chair, who is the national minister responsible, is . . . you know, I'm under no illusion that we're going to be able to have one labour market transfer agreement in one year. But I think if this is a priority for other jurisdictions, and I know it is for other provincial jurisdictions, as much as we can, that we would, you know, bring these labour market transfers into a single umbrella. Because there are administrative challenges that go along with four separate agreements with different parameters, different rules. Some of these are not illegitimate; I mean they're for different reasons. But that being said, the end goal, which is to put people into the labour market, is the same for all of these agreements.

So I think that we have an opportunity to try and, you know, reconcile some of the parameters in these programs, which will allow for more resources to be put into the front end of training. So we are going to be going through that process, and I hope to advance that cause to some degree as the Co-Chair of FLMM [Forum of Labour Market Ministers] this year.

With regard to the work readiness and employment development subvote, there were changes. You know, we're going to . . . There was a reduction in the Sask student works program, which is going to continue to run for this year, but which the Canada summer jobs program was significantly enhanced, which does the same, has the same mandate as our summer works program. So we're going to be and have been directing potential clients and those that we would work with, or third parties who would utilize the program, the summer jobs program, and we're going to be pulling back some of our funding from Saskatchewan student works. So that'll be one change.

One of the other changes we made in this vote was transferring the northern firefighting funding to the Ministry of Environment. And there were some reasons why it had ended up in the Ministry of the Economy, but my view was that it was much better positioned in Environment, and that was agreed to by Minister Moe as well. So that was transferred to Environment, which shows a reduction obviously in the budget for this, but it was a . . . it transferred. There was a bit of a reduction overall, but that had to do with program administration and some other things, is my understanding.

The other thing we did was increase the budget for the Canada Job Grant, which is a program that I am very supportive of. And it was a program that, you know, Minister Kenney and I had signed the job fund agreement, which was the overarching agreement under which we fund Job Grant. So that was an increase, and in, you know, a challenging budget year, as you well know, there weren't a whole lot of programs that saw increases.

So we put a million-dollar increase in the Job Grant, which has shown . . . There's been a remarkable interest and uptake on this program because it works. Employers really like it. It means that, you know, there's . . . upskilling is a part of it, but it also means the people who are re-entering the workforce are going to have a guaranteed job at the end of it.

And you know, we've talked about some of the delivery agencies that you well know, and I know they're in your riding, where this sort of approach of having, you know, real skin in the game on the part of the potential employee, the employer, and the government — this is how you get results in labour market training. And that's not always going to be possible in every instance, but in the instances where this is a possibility, it really works.

So I'm a fan of Job Grant, and we have some other programs that are similar to that in concept that really have shown significant results.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that. I guess adult basic education . . . Certainly there's a goal oft stated around the elimination of wait-lists for adult basic education. Again in terms of critical investments on the part of government, this is about as smart an investment as you can make. What's the status of . . . Is there a wait-list at present around adult basic education, and anything else the minister would like to add?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Right, yes. No, there's not a wait-list. And no, I know your commitment to this, and mine as well. We've significantly increased funding into adult basic, nearly 70 per cent over the course of the last 10 years or so.

One change we did make though, and I'll maybe focus on one particular change. You know, we had different delivery bodies and partners that had adult basic programming ranging from 130 days to 200 days, and it was really inconsistent. So you could have, you know, the same program, depending where you were, could take 70 days difference to complete it. And what we actually noticed were that the programs where there was, you know, a larger, a longer period of time had lower completion rates. So the ones that were shorter actually engaged students, and they finished them at a higher rate.

[21:45]

So what we did was we standardized the adult basic education which we thought was ideal. It's 170 days which, you know, we standardized across the province with our third party partners in delivering the program. So you know, we're hopeful that we're going to see, like we saw in the last number of years, higher completion rates for shorter programs. We're hopeful we're going to see even higher completion rates overall. So you know, around two-thirds is what we've seen historically for the

programs that were under 170 days, and those that were over 170 days, you know, we were seeing completion rates in the high 50s. So it's not a, it's not kind of a statistical blip; it's a real thing.

Mr. McCall: — Good. Glad to hear it. In terms of, again moving through the list, employment development, if the minister could describe what goes on under employment development. And certainly looking through Public Accounts, there are a wide array of third parties engaged in the delivery of this kind of work. Anyway if the minister could describe what's happening there and any changes for the year to come.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes, no, I think I'd, sorry, addressed this in one of your earlier questions. But specifically with regard to the student summer works program, with regard to the Canada summer jobs program, and the realignment on the fire suppression training to the Ministry of Environment, so we moved that over in addition in this vote. And sorry, this was my mistake, not because you had asked a different question.

Mr. McCall: — So just to be clear, the work readiness, employment development, that was largely the home of the student works and firefighters and on.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes.

Mr. McCall: — There are also though certainly looking at Public Accounts 2015-16, there are a great number of third parties involved. And again these are the folks that the minister's talking about when the referral is over to new and increased federal sources of funding. Am I understanding that correctly?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes, I mean we must have over 150 different suppliers under this particular subvote, and you know we appreciate the relationships we have. I mean these are the folks that are actually delivering the programming with respect to literacy and initial work experience, social barriers, addictions. So these are some of the kind of most challenging sort of areas.

You know one of the . . . And I remember we did talk about it at different points in the past, I think both online and offline, as far as, you know, federal contribution to some of the programming. You know, we have advocated strongly for increases to the Labour Market Development Agreement particularly, and we did see a commitment in the last budget year that increased LMDA [Labour Market Development Agreement] programming. We advocated for that to stay in place, and we've advocated as well for basically a rebalancing as to how LMDA funding is divvied out across the country.

That's going to continue to be one of my goals as Chair of FLMM, and I think we have some significant allies in that. But there was an increase overall to LMDA funding, and I think we saw that sustained in this budget. They did; the national government announced an additional 2.7 billion to LMTAs [labour market transfer agreement], which includes the LMDA and job fund agreement as well over the next six years.

But within that funding envelope, I think we have an opportunity to make sure nobody's worse off but those that are

being, you know, underfunded based on population and employment and a number of other factors, you could bring those jurisdictions up — which includes us, which includes Ontario, which includes Alberta as well — that you could bring these jurisdictions up to a level of funding equal with other parts of the country without disadvantaging those other jurisdictions.

So I mean, as you can imagine this is going to be not a unanimous position within the country. There's going to be jurisdictions who don't think this is such a great idea. But it is something we're going to advance, and it's a case we have been making over a number of years. And it's not just us, you know, we have . . . This is a position shared by Alberta, by Ontario, so you have a multi-partisan consensus on changing the funding on LMDA specifically.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that, Mr. Minister. The apprenticeship and trade certification, if a minister or officials could talk about what's happening there. I just want to assure the minister, I'm not asking this so that the Chair doesn't feel left . . . or the CEO doesn't feel left out; he feels involved. It's not just sentimental, but certainly there's a minor reduction — well about \$1.1 million on a \$23 million budget. That's not insignificant, and certainly it also ties into utilization.

And the kind of credentialing that goes on with the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification board is such a critical aspect of labour force development, so we always, you know, using the royal official opposition, we look on any decrease in that number with some concern. So can the minister tell us what's happening there.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — I can. No, and I appreciate the question. And you know, I just want to say first, I want to thank Jeff for the work that he does as the CEO of SATCC, Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, and his team who do a great job. This is some of the most cost-effective training that, as a government, we can possibly invest in, and the return on that investment is very substantial.

So you know, we really endeavour to match demand to funding. And you know, we very much want it to be the case that those who would seek to enrol in any of these courses are able to do so. And I may ask Jeff to come up and speak to this, but I think that that's precisely where we're at and that's why the reduction is tied to a decrease in demand. And that's not necessarily good news, but it's kind of where we're at right now.

You know, we've also been working diligently. Jeff had chaired the national association of directors of apprenticeship commissions and, you know, has done great work as far as working to reconcile training programs across the country such that, for apprentices particularly, so there's mobility, apprenticeship mobility across Canada. And we've made significant progress on that. But Jeff, I'll turn it over to you.

Mr. Ritter: — Thanks, Mr. Minister, and thanks for the question. As members will know, the apprenticeship system trains people for jobs that they're in, not for jobs that might exist, and as such it would . . . It's very much pro-cyclical in terms of the economy. When the economy is expanding and growing and things are booming, employers are looking for us

to help meet their labour-market demands through skilled tradespeople. And during periods of, you know, decline in the economy, the opposite happens. So we have seen sort of a modest reduction in demand for apprenticeship training right now, and the funding really corresponds with that demand.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that certainly. And again like, I second everything that you've said in terms of the way that the commission interacts with the economy. But I cast my gaze down to the next item in the subvote to the provincial training allowance. And certainly again it's not to knock the provincial training allowance but the kind of credentialing that goes on with the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, it's . . . Once you get your journey papers, you know, pick your trade, it makes a big difference in your standard of living, what kind of wage you can attract, and certainly that's something I speak of from the experience in the McCall family. So in terms of trying to, as much as is possible, gear folks from things like the PTA [provincial training allowance] into a credentialing track, what thoughts do you have on that, Mr. Ritter, or Minister, or officials?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes, I'll maybe take that one, Mr. McCall. I mean, when apprentices are enrolled . . . I mean, we have the apprenticeship training allowance which is kind of directly associated with the apprenticeship training process. As far as the provincial training allowance, that would be more associated with the adult basic education part of the equation so, you know, we've been able to . . . With the standardization of the length of adult basic programming to 170 days, there's going to be less requirement for the outlay on PTA because that was the program that folks would be on if they were in an ABE [adult basic education] course. So you know, rather than being for 200 days in the ABE course, with kind of less optimal outcomes, it'd be a 170 days, and that would be reflected in the PTA layout. So you see a reduction in PTA from last year. That's a large part and portion of it.

Mr. McCall: — I guess the question . . . And you know, I know that these things are anticipated, so maybe I'm just asking to have it confirmed or clarified in front of the committee. But in terms of that link from once you get your ABE, that upscaling that keeps adding value to an individual's resumé and to our economy, how does . . . Maybe to ask it a different way, what are the on-ramps for folks coming out of ABE into the realm of something like the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission?

Mr. Ritter: — Sure, thank you very much for that question. I guess the one . . . We have some academic prerequisites that are required for admittance to the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission. They vary a little bit from trade to trade but, you know, typically are grade 10 or 11 maths or sciences.

The one prerequisite we can't get around ever is that in order to be an apprentice, you have to have an employer that's willing to commit to a primarily work-based education system. So anything that happens to increase the employability of people to give them, you know, an opportunity to get into the skilled trades through employment, and then we'll help them through with training and certification through to the end, is beneficial.

Mr. McCall: — I guess not to, you know, impinge on our undertakings as the official opposition, we've reached the hour of conclusion. And you know, I'm sure the minister would attest to this: I could talk about this stuff all day. And I'm sure the minister could too.

And anyway I just want to . . . We'll be looking for the pilot on the labour market information on-reserve to bear fruit, and we wish you every success in making that part of the landscape. But just in general, on behalf of the opposition, Minister, officials, thank you very much for all the work that you do on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. And with that, Mr. Chair, I turn it over to you.

[22:00]

The Chair: — I appreciate that, Mr. McCall. Thank you for your questions. I'll echo that on behalf of the committee. Thank you, Mr. Minister, and all your officials. If you have just a few seconds, if you would like to wrap things up, Mr. Minister, I'll give you the floor.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — I'll be very, very brief. I want to thank officials for being here, for your professionalism, for your hard work. It's genuinely appreciated, working on behalf of the people of this province. We appreciate it. Thank members of the committee. Mr. McCall, thank you. I know you have a deep interest in these matters, and I appreciate having the chance to chat with you about it, and I mean even offline which we regularly do also. And I appreciate your input and thoughts, so thank you for that. And with that, I will turn it back to you, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you for that. We've reached the agreed time of considering the estimates and we will proceed to vote off the estimates. I will certainly leave it up to the officials if they'd like to stick around. It might not be as exciting an endeavour as they've gone on the last three hours. I guess they can move along, assuming there would be no supplementary questions for the officials as we go through the estimates. So if we can have an agreement upon that, we can move on to voting on the estimates.

And we will start here on vote 23, the Economy. And starting with central management and services, (EC01), in the amount of 33,079,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Minerals, lands and resource policy, (EC06), in the amount of 36,489,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Next is petroleum and natural gas, subvote (EC05), in the amount of 12,988,000. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Revenue and corporate services, (EC04), in the amount of 3,852,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Economic development, (EC12), in the amount of 10,844,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. We have next labour market development, subvote (EC13), in the amount of 157,364,000. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Performance and strategic initiatives, subvote (EC20), in the amount of 1,947,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of 3,251,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purposes only. No amount is to be voted.

I'll ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2018, the following sums for Economy in the amount of 256,563,000.

Thank you. Mr. Bonk has moved that. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That's carried. Committee members, there was a little . . . Between the committees branch and House services, there was some miscommunication, I believe. And I think we have agreement from both House leaders that we will move the consideration of bills 61 and 62 for another point. Economy, the next time we meet, we'll examine those bills.

Do I have agreement from the committee to do that?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That has been agreed. Thank you very much for that. That's carried. We will continue on with the estimates.

General Revenue Fund Agriculture Vote 1

The Chair: — Next is vote 1, Agriculture. The first subvote there is central management and services, subvote (AG01), in the amount of 11,207,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Policy, trade and value-added, subvote (AG05), in the amount of 5,221,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Research and technology, subvote (AG06), in the amount of 26,806,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Regional services, subvote (AG07), in the amount of 38,250,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Land management, subvote (AG04), in the amount of 10,935,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Industry assistance, subvote (AG03), in the amount of 7,376,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Program design and delivery, subvote (AG09), in the amount of 23,035,000, are we agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Business risk management, subvote (AG10), in the amount of 264,103,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of 1,621,000. These adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purpose. No vote is required.

And again, I'll ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2018, the following sums for Agriculture in the amount of 386,933,000.

Mr. Bonk: — I so move.

The Chair: — Mr. Bonk again has moved. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Environment
Vote 26**

The Chair: — Next on the list, we have here vote 26, the Environment. The first subvote here this evening is central management services, subvote (EN01), in the amount of 18,334,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Climate change and adaptation, subvote (EN06), in the amount of 3,971,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Fish, wildlife and lands, subvote

(EN07), in the amount of 13,433,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — I'm sorry, \$13,443,000. And that's agreed. Carried. Compliance and field services, subvote (EN08), in the amount of 17,332,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Environmental protection, subvote (EN11), in the amount of 40,555,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Forest services, subvote (EN09), in the amount of 8,347,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Wildfire management, subvote (EN10), in the amount of 67,534,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. And again, the non-appropriated expense adjustments in the amount of 12,822,000. These are non-cash adjustments presented for information purposes. There's no vote on that.

And once again, a member would please vote, excuse me, move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2018, the following sums for Environment in the amount of 169,516,000.

Mr. Nerlien: — So moved.

The Chair: — Mr. Nerlien, thank you very much. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. There is I believe one more ministry . . . a couple more, a couple of smaller ones.

**General Revenue Fund
Highways and Infrastructure
Vote 16**

The Chair: — We're moving on to vote 16, Highways and Infrastructure. Committee members, we are trying to get through this as quickly as possible.

The first one is central management and services, subvote (HI01) in the amount of 18,237,000. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Strategic municipal infrastructure, subvote (HI15) in the amount of 22,745,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Operation of transportation system, subvote (HI10) in the amount of 90,028,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Preservation of transportation system, subvote (HI04) in the amount of 122,228,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Transportation planning and policy, subvote (HI06) in the amount of 4,136,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Custom work activity, subvote (HI09) in the amount of zero dollars. This is for information purposes only, no vote needed.

Infrastructure and equipment capital, subvote (HI08) in the amount of 842,882,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. And again, the non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of 173,263,000, that is for information purposes only. Non-cash adjustments and no vote needed.

And again, in terms of vote 16 I'll now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2018, the following sums for Highways and Infrastructure in the amount of 1,100,256,000.

Mr. Buckingham: — I so move.

The Chair: — Mr. Buckingham has moved. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Innovation Saskatchewan
Vote 84**

The Chair: — Next we are moving on to vote 84, Innovation Saskatchewan. Innovation Saskatchewan, subvote (IS01) in the amount of 27,709,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. There's only one subvote there. So again, Innovation Saskatchewan, vote 84, I'll now ask a member to move the following resolution once again:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2018, the following sums for

Innovation Saskatchewan in the amount of 27,709,000.

Mr. Olauson: — I so move.

The Chair: — Mr. Olauson, thank you. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Saskatchewan Research Council
Vote 35**

The Chair: — We're moving on here. Vote 35, Saskatchewan Research Council, the SRC, subvote (SR01) in the amount of 21,118,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Again this is vote 35. I'll ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2018, the following sums for Saskatchewan Research Council in the amount of 21,118,000.

Mr. Kirsch, thank you. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
SaskBuilds Corporation
Vote 86**

The Chair: — Next in the estimates we have vote 86, SaskBuilds Corporation. SaskBuilds Corporation, subvote (SB01) in the amount of 5,073,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. And again on vote 86, I'll ask a member to move the following motion:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2018, the following sums for SaskBuilds Corporation in the amount of 5,073,000.

Mr. Bonk, thank you. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Water Security Agency
Vote 87**

The Chair: — And we're moving on to the Water Security Agency, vote 87, the subvote (WS01) in the amount of 17

million 666 . . . 660,000 . . . Excuse me. I'll say that again — 17,660,000. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. And I'll now ask a member to move the following resolution once again:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2018, the following sums for Water Security Agency in the amount of 17,660,000.

Mr. Nerlien has moved. Thank you. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — March
Agriculture
Vote 1**

The Chair: — Now we are on to the supplementary estimates, March 2016-17 and vote 1, Agriculture, business risk management, subvote (AG10) in the amount of 35,141,000. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. And again Agriculture vote 1 in that amount I just mentioned, I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2017, the following sums for Agriculture in the amount of 35,141,000.

Mr. Buckingham has moved. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[22:15]

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — March
Highways and Infrastructure
Vote 16**

The Chair: — And continuing with the supplementary estimates. Vote 16, Highways and Infrastructure. Infrastructure and equipment capital, subvote (HI08), in the amount of 70 million, a round number, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Again vote 16. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2017, the following sums for Highways and Infrastructure in the amount of 70,000,000.

Mr. Olauson, thank you. Carried. I think we are nearing the end.

So, committee members, you have before you a draft of the third report of the Standing Committee on the Economy. We require a member to move the following motion:

That the third report of the Standing Committee on the Economy be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

Mr. Kirsch: — I so move.

The Chair: — Mr. Kirsch, thank you. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Well I thank you very much for your attention as we went through all those votes, committee members. It is now 10:17, just for the record. I wanted to mention that. I ask a member to move a motion of adjournment. We've reached our time. Mr. Kirsch once again has moved that. Are we all agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That's good. Carried. This committee stands adjourned until Monday, May 15th and we're scheduled to meet again at 3 p.m. Thank you all for your time this evening.

[The committee adjourned at 22:17.]