



# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY**

## **Hansard Verbatim Report**

**No. 2 — March 31, 2025**

Published under the  
authority of  
The Hon. Todd Goudy  
Speaker



**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

**Thirtieth Legislature**

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## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY**

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Saskatoon Riversdale

Sally Housser  
Regina University

Hon. Terry Jenson  
Warman

Darlene Rowden  
Batoche

Kevin Weedmark  
Moosomin-Montmartre



[The committee met at 17:00.]

**Chair Thorsteinson:** — Good evening, everybody. Welcome to the Standing Committee on the Economy. I am James Thorsteinson; I'll be the Chair. We are joined this evening by the Hon. Terry Jenson; Darlene Rowden; Kevin Weedmark; Sally Housser; substituting for Tajinder Grewal, Noor Burki; and substituting for Kim Breckner, Jared Clarke.

Pursuant to rule 148(1), the following estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 were committed to the Standing Committee on the Economy on March 27th, 2025 and March 19th, 2025, respectively. '25-26 estimates: vote 1, Agriculture; vote 23, Energy and Resources; vote 26, Environment; vote 16, Highways; vote 89, Immigration and Career Training; vote 84, Innovation Saskatchewan; vote 35, Saskatchewan Research Council; vote 90, Trade and Export Development; vote 87, Water Security Agency.

And the '24-25 supplementary estimates no. 2: vote 1, Agriculture; vote 23, Energy and Resources; vote 16, Highways; vote 89, Immigration and Career Training; vote 84, Innovation Saskatchewan; vote 35, Saskatchewan Research Council.

Before we begin our business today, I would like to table the lists of regulations and bylaws filed with the Legislative Assembly between January 1st, 2024 and December 31st, 2024, which have been committed to the committee for review pursuant to rule 147(1). These documents are ECO 2-30, Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: 2024 regulations filed; and ECO 3-30, Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: 2024 bylaws filed.

The Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel will assist the committee in its review by submitting a subsequent report at a later date identifying any regulations that are not in order with the provisions of rule 147(2). However the committee may also decide to review any of these regulations or bylaws for policy implications.

Today the committee will be considering estimates for the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Energy and Resources. We will take a half-hour recess at 7 p.m.

**General Revenue Fund  
Environment  
Vote 26**

**Subvote (EN01)**

**Chair Thorsteinson:** — We will first consider the estimates for the Ministry of Environment. We'll begin with consideration of vote 26, Environment, central management and services, subvote (EN01).

Minister Keisig is here with officials from the ministry. I would ask that officials please state their name before speaking at the microphone. As a reminder, please do not touch the microphones. The Hansard operator will turn your microphone on when you are speaking to the committee. Minister, please introduce your officials and make your opening remarks.

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — Well thank you, Mr. Chair, and good

evening to each and every one of the committee members here tonight. My name is Travis Keisig. I'm the Minister of the Environment, and here with me this evening are Kevin France, deputy minister of the Environment; Kevin Murphy, assistant deputy minister of the Environment; Wes Kotyk, assistant deputy minister of environmental protection division; Rebecca Gibbons, the assistant deputy minister of the corporate services and policy division. Aaron Wirth is also joining us, executive director of the climate resilience branch, and Nick Gan, the director of the budget and reporting branch, and of course, Kenneth Cotterill, the chief of staff in my office.

I am very pleased to be here today to present to you the 2025-26 Ministry of Environment estimates and to highlight some of the initiatives this budget will support.

The ministry's budget aligns with the Government of Saskatchewan's vision of making our province the best place to live, work, and raise a family. Our goals focus on ensuring safe communities, sustainable landscapes, resilient wildlife populations, and a healthy environment. Through innovative strategies, we aim to responsibly manage Saskatchewan's environment, drive innovation, and bolster economic growth.

The Ministry of Environment's 2025-26 budget submission is an overall increase of about \$38 million, from 235.825 million in '24-25 to 273.757 in '25-26. This year's budget supports key initiatives for my ministry in the areas of environmental protection, resource management, and climate resilience. In environmental protection, I want to talk about some initiatives that fall under this first.

Impacted sites. A key piece of work in our environmental protection division is around impacted sites. These sites, typically abandoned, are often turned over to municipalities through tax arrears. To turn these sites back into usable property, they must be assessed and remediated, a process that can be costly for municipalities. To help ease that burden, the ministry manages the Impacted Sites Fund. This fund is financed by fines collected through enforcement of *The Environmental Management and Protection Act, 2010*. It provides financial support to municipalities to assess and remediate abandoned environmentally impacted areas.

The fund can be used for environmental site assessments to determine contamination levels. Some funding is also available for corrective actions based on risk factors such as land use, sensitivity, and chemical toxicity. This helps municipalities recover lost tax revenue and enables safe redevelopment, helping them to strengthen their economic future.

Earlier this month the city of Moose Jaw was the most recent successful applicant to the fund. They were approved for \$25,875 to complete an assessment work associated with abandoned tanks at a former auto wrecker's site. What a win for municipalities and the environment.

Derelict buildings. The Impacted Sites Fund is not the only way that my ministry is supporting municipalities. Another significant challenge that municipalities are facing is around derelict buildings. Earlier this month I had the opportunity to announce a new pilot program that my ministry will be

spearheading in the upcoming fiscal year.

Working with several other ministries and agencies, we will develop and launch a pilot program where municipalities will work with volunteer fire departments to use these buildings as firefighting training scenarios. My ministry is hard at work on the details, and the pilot is scheduled to launch later in the fall.

Solid waste management strategy. As we work to grow our economy, we also need to take strides to ensure we're managing our waste effectively. Five years ago the Saskatchewan solid waste management strategy was released. That strategy lays the foundation for how we will address solid waste management challenges.

My ministry has been making great progress delivering on commitments under the solid waste management strategy. We have significantly expanded the list of materials that can be recycled through provincial recycling programs. In the upcoming fiscal year, my ministry will be working to expand the list of designated products in *The Electronic Equipment Stewardship Regulations* and reviewing the household hazardous waste products stewardship program regulations and associated programs to ensure they are all up to date.

Saskatchewan offers one of the most robust suites of recycling programs anywhere in Canada. Our extended producer responsibility model has shown to be incredibly effective at diverting waste from landfills. The positive impact that has on our environment cannot be overstated. I am very proud of that excellent work.

Our flagship recycling program though is our beverage container program, which is managed through Sarcen. Sarcen is a true leader in environmental protection, job creation, and economic growth through its province-wide recycling network. To help Sarcen continue their good work, the 2025-26 budget includes an increase of nearly 600,000 in grant payments to Sarcen through the beverage container collection and recycling program. We are very proud to support Sarcen and look forward to continuing our positive relationship well into the future.

The solid waste management strategy isn't just about reducing the items that go to the landfill. It also aims to establish modern, efficient, and effective regulatory systems for waste disposal and management.

For years, municipalities and other stakeholders have advocated for Saskatchewan-specific landfill regulations. In '25-26 the ministry will be replacing *The Municipal Refuse Management Regulations*, which will include updating the regulations to provide clear, consistent, transparent, and outcome-focused requirements for all stakeholders.

In addition, my ministry's hard at work on modernizing regulations for the construction, operation, and closure of waste management facilities. This will enhance environmental safety and efficiency and provide clarity for municipalities. The strategy commitment to implement a Saskatchewan-specific landfill operator certification program will also be part of this work. Stakeholder engagement will begin in 2025 with regulation finalization targeted for March 2026.

Next I'll delve into resource management initiatives, which provide stewardship for the province's fisheries, wildlife, Crown lands, and forest. Saskatchewan is a true critical mineral powerhouse. Our province is home to 27 of the 34 critical minerals on Canada's critical mineral list, and the world's largest deposits of potash and high-grade uranium.

The Ministry of Environment plays a key role in supporting the development of the critical minerals industry. By providing a strong regulatory environment that has clear policies and procedures, we can protect habitat and foster economic growth.

I also want to touch on the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund, which was created to manage, preserve, and enhance fish and wildlife habitat in Saskatchewan. The fund has three management goals: to maintain and grow sustainable fish populations and fish habitat, to maintain natural habitat through conservation, and to maintain game populations and ensure accessible hunting.

Over the years, the fund has supported some truly amazing initiatives such as the Saskatchewan Fish Hatchery, which stocked 8.7 million fish into 145 waterbodies in 2024; protecting habitat through purchase and conservation easements; and maintaining the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund lands, which are lands that everyone can use for hunting, trapping, hiking, and outdoor enjoyment.

This fiscal year, the fund's budget is 5.2 million, which will be used to provide grants that support protection of vulnerable fish and wildlife habitat. It will also promote resource education and endangered species programming.

On the topic of habitats, I'd like to talk about our habitat management plan. The habitat management plan is part of my ministry's support of the growth plan. It sets out the framework to maintain resilient, biologically diverse Saskatchewan landscapes and ensure a balance between development and habitat in this province. The ministry began work on the plan in 2019, and this year the budget allocation for this work increased by \$933,000. These additional dollars will be used to complete the final stages of engagement, finalize the plan, and begin implementation.

In addition to the habitat management plan, my ministry has budgeted one and a half million dollars for woodland caribou habitat restoration. Woodland caribou are integral to the northern boreal forest in Saskatchewan, and they also hold cultural significance for Indigenous people. In 2013 the Government of Saskatchewan developed the conservation strategy for boreal woodland caribou in Saskatchewan. These range plans are a made-in-Saskatchewan solution for caribou habitat management and woodland caribou population sustainability.

This year my ministry will begin restoring habitat, focusing on linear features like old seismic lines and unused roads and trails. This work will provide economic benefits to northern Saskatchewan by creating jobs and business opportunities in project planning, site preparation, and restoration work.

[17:15]

Restoration and maintenance of a healthy boreal forest landscape

is key for our resource industries and supports the growth plan goal of doubling the growth of the forest sector by 2030.

I'd also like to provide an update on the Government of Saskatchewan's commitment under the protected and conserved areas network; it's also called PCAN. Protected and conserved areas play a crucial role in safeguarding ecosystems and wildlife habitat. These areas contribute significantly to the well-being of Saskatchewan residents, and they support reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. In both the growth plan and Prairie Resilience, my ministry committed to protecting 12 per cent of Saskatchewan's land and water by the end of 2025.

Currently 9.8 per cent, or 15.8 million acres, of Saskatchewan's natural lands and waters are protected and conserved, and we are working diligently toward closing that gap. We are very confident we will reach our goal this year.

I mentioned Prairie Resilience in relation to PCANs. However this strategy is an all-encompassing framework for enhancing resilience to the effects of a changing climate. This strategy employs natural systems and technological innovation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while protecting our competitiveness, prioritizing affordability, and enhancing sustainable growth and development.

Prairie Resilience also has an integral role in Saskatchewan's Growth Plan by encouraging actions that enhance sustainable growth. We already see progress regarding our provincial emissions. The most recent numbers show Saskatchewan's total greenhouse gas emissions were approximately 75.9 million tonnes in 2022 compared to 76.8 million tonnes in 2021.

GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions are a strong indicator of our success, but I'd like to talk about the initiatives driving this success forward. The Saskatchewan Technology Fund reinvests industry compliance payments in projects that mitigate, sequester, or capture greenhouse gas emissions at regulated facilities. The technology fund projects enhance the sustainability of Saskatchewan industries while driving innovation and economic growth.

The selected projects are funded by payments collected from regulated emitters under the province's output-based performance standards program. This program is designed to reduce emissions while strengthening Saskatchewan's economic competitiveness and protecting jobs, families, and businesses.

Regulated emitters can access funds to support a range of market-ready technologies, innovations, and improvement projects that reduce GHG emissions at regulated facilities in Saskatchewan. In September 2024, 25 million was awarded to 13 industry projects as part of the fund's first-ever intake.

Earlier this year my ministry launched a second intake of the tech fund, doubling the funding available to 50 million and expanding project eligibility. Expressions of interest for the second intake have been received, and funding decisions are expected later this fall.

Tomorrow though is a new day in Saskatchewan, as we will become the first carbon tax-free province in Canada. This decision will help our industries be competitive on the world

stage, protecting the jobs, and most importantly, protecting the people they employ today and setting the stage for them to grow in the future.

Saskatchewan's natural resource industry is among the most sustainable on the planet, providing the food, fuel, and fertilizer the world needs, taking the decisive step to pause the industrial carbon tax and remove the carbon tax rate rider from SaskPower bills. It will save Saskatchewan families hundreds of dollars per year and will protect industry from economic uncertainty.

Now just before I close I want to talk about a couple of new revenue opportunities in the ministry's budget for the '25-26 fiscal year. First we are proposing a new revenue source through construction permit fees. These permits are issued to various facilities and are related to hazardous substances, waste dangerous goods, industrial operations, and mining activities. These fees will recover expenses associated with reviewing permit applications and monitoring compliance. They will also allow the ministry to provide better services to all of our stakeholders. This opportunity is expected to generate 1.9 million annually.

The ministry is also proposing a new resource allocation licence for game bird outfitters. This new licence will provide a mechanism to track licence allocations to game bird outfitters and ensure accurate client reporting.

The work we have presented today is only the beginning. We believe these measures will help us achieve our goals and create a better future for all citizens of Saskatchewan. I'd like to thank the committee on the economy for your attention and your support, and I look forward to answering any questions from members present here today. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**Chair Thorsteinson:** — Well thank you, Minister. I'll now open the floor for questions. MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] Clarke.

**Jared Clarke:** — Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister, for your opening remarks. I also want to thank the civil servants in the room today for the time that they have taken out of their day to prepare for tonight, but also for being here to answer our questions.

I'll get right into it. Minister, you talked at the end of your opening remarks about the OBPS [output-based performance standards] program and then how the government announced last Thursday that you're cutting that program, or sorry, pausing that program. What is the plan then at this stage for reducing emissions if OBPS is not part of that plan?

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — Well thank you very much for the question. We are pausing the program, and we are consulting with industry on what the future of the program looks like moving forward. That is an absolutely critical aspect of it. But I'm going to ask Aaron Wirth from our climate branch to say a few words on moving forward.

**Aaron Wirth:** — Aaron Wirth, the climate resilience branch, Ministry of Environment. In our experience, industry is really the ones that are driving emissions reductions in Saskatchewan, and a lot of those emissions reductions predate the OBPS program.

And so we're very eager to get in front of industry and consult with them on the future of the program and emissions reduction policies writ large and hear what they have to say and some of the ideas they have about how to continue to grow sustainably in the province.

It's been our experience that industry is very good at reducing emissions and making their facilities more efficient, and that also happens to reduce their emissions intensity of those facilities. So we do believe that it is driven by industry, and they'll continue to reduce and continue to improve the cost-effectiveness of their facilities in the production. And again looking forward to hearing more of their good ideas and how we can potentially look at future changes to the program and industrial policies more generally.

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — I just want to add, Mr. Chair, Saskatchewan has a long history of reducing emissions without government intervention. All you have to do is look at our world-class agricultural production and the implementation of zero-till and soil conservation strategies that over 95 per cent of farmers are applying that technique to their agricultural business.

And that was employed strictly by industry. This was not government policy or mandates or taxes or anything else that brought this forward. This was industry looking to do things that are better for the environment and better for their bottom line. So it's very important to note that every industry in Saskatchewan really has that can-do attitude, and this government is there to support them.

**Jared Clarke:** — Thank you. Minister, is it true that Saskatchewan has the highest or second-highest greenhouse gas emissions per capita in Canada?

**Aaron Wirth:** — It is true that Saskatchewan is the largest per capita emitter. Saskatchewan is also the largest per capita exporter in Canada. And so one of the things we've been looking at here in Saskatchewan for some time now is what's called a consumption-based carbon accounting framework. It's becoming increasingly used by many countries around the world, including the UK [United Kingdom] and New Zealand and many others.

And what it does, it actually takes a look at both the emissions from production — so emissions coming from a smokestack or a tailpipe — and then those emissions that are embedded in your exports, and comparing those against the emissions that you actually consume in terms of the products you buy and use.

And so when we actually run the numbers using what's called a Sankey diagram, it actually shows that Saskatchewan is right in the middle of the pack in Canada in terms of our consumption of emissions. And that's really where per capita comes from. It was created as a way to talk about what we as individuals consume in terms of our population size.

And the reality is that in Saskatchewan the vast majority of our goods that we produce are exported to other countries. So what the consumption-based carbon accounting framework, that's being increasingly used all over the world, does is it starts to look at what actually drives emissions reductions. And that's the average emissions intensity of the commodities that we produce.

And of course another analysis that we've done is showing that our potash is cleaner than competitors, our uranium is cleaner, and in many cases oil and gas is as well. And so we're producing products and exporting those products at a much lower average emissions intensity than our competitors who happen to be in countries like Russia and China and Kazakhstan and elsewhere. And so one of the things, a federal report that just came out says, and it's their *Canadian Environmental Sustainability Indicators* report, and I quote:

The location where greenhouse gas emissions originate has little or no impact on the resulting influence on climate change. For example, reducing production in a country and purchasing more products abroad may reduce emissions domestically, but the effect on worldwide emissions depends on whether the production taking place in other countries is more or less carbon-intensive than the domestic production.

So this is a federal report that is admitting and acknowledging that the location where the emissions are coming from has little or no impact. It's really, when you're trading in commodities, is your commodity, where there's so much demand for that commodity, is it at a lower or higher emissions intensity than your competitors? And we know that Saskatchewan is much lower in terms of average emissions intensity across those products.

So that's something that we've been doing here in the Ministry of Environment, looking at this new modelling approach for inventory and accounting for emissions and comparing production versus the consumption of goods, and emissions tied to those goods. But we've also been taking some time to actually look at the way the federal government reports on emissions through their *National Inventory Report*. And that's the data that you were referencing.

And with increasing frequency we're finding that many provinces across Canada right now are criticizing the federal *National Inventory Report*. It uses outdated assumptions. It has a two-year lag. It lacks transparency. It relies on surveys and estimates, where provinces and territories have actual data from industry and emissions sources.

[17:30]

And so something else that we're looking at in the ministry, and working with other ministries and agencies, is a made-in-Saskatchewan greenhouse gas emissions inventory that will replace the federal inventory in Saskatchewan, using more timely, more reliable, and verified emissions data. And we've been also looking at different methodologies that are recognized by the UN [United Nations] convention on climate change and are of a higher tier than even what the federal government is using.

And when we apply that methodology to our emissions profile in Saskatchewan we're starting to see some pretty significant differences in terms of the types of volumes we're seeing. In many cases the federal inventory is overestimating emissions in Saskatchewan in some of our sectors by two times. And so we want to rectify that and potentially work with the federal government on improving their inventory. But we certainly want



to take a look at what we can do here in Saskatchewan.

And in the conversations with some of our other provincial and territorial colleagues many of them are doing the same thing and following our lead. And Alberta is looking at something similar, and so is New Brunswick and, I believe, one of the territories. And so we're looking forward to trying to get a better sense and better to be able to suss out some of the emissions happening in Saskatchewan.

And that includes also not just the sources of emissions but the sinks. This has been a long-standing concern for Saskatchewan, and the minister alluded to it. Our farmers are in any given year reducing emissions through their agricultural soils using things like zero-till and 4R [right source at right rate, right time, right place] Nutrient Stewardship, reducing emissions significantly.

It's to the point that, of all of Canada's sequestration happening and carbon being stored, of all of it in Canada in any given year, 50 per cent to 85 per cent is coming from Saskatchewan farmers. And it's been as high as 85 per cent. And that is something that farmers and agricultural producers in Saskatchewan aren't getting credit for, but the federal government is using that when they submit emissions numbers under the Paris Agreement. But they don't disaggregate it and credit it back to Saskatchewan.

And so these are some of the things we want to be able to do and to share. And we'll be doing it with our emissions engineers and modellers, who have a lot of credibility and experience in this space.

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — And it's also important to note, Mr. Chair, I had the privilege of meeting with the ambassador from Switzerland today. And we are truly blessed in this province to enjoy food security, but there's a lot of nations of the world that are not.

And over 50 per cent of the food imported into Switzerland, it's imported in. They can only grow half of the food that they need as a nation. So when countries are making decisions on greenhouse gas emissions . . . I really drove the point home to the ambassador about lentils are very popular in Switzerland, and Saskatchewan produces lentils with 130 per cent lower carbon footprint than our closest competitor. And durum, pasta's very popular in Switzerland and we are producing that with 82 per cent lower carbon footprint.

It's important for consumers and producers to be aware of their greenhouse gas footprint.

**Jared Clarke:** — Thank you, Minister. Again with the OBPS being paused, what does this mean for the grant from the government, the \$174.5 million that's in (EN19)? What does that mean from government to SaskPower? Will that money still flow this year?

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — I want to thank the member opposite for the question. And so we've announced a pause. And we are consulting with industry, and we will have more to announce in the upcoming future.

**Jared Clarke:** — So at this point there's no announcement as to whether or not that money will flow to SaskPower?

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — Consultation with industry is absolutely critical as we move forward. So we're going to consult with them, take their input, and work together to see what the future holds.

**Jared Clarke:** — Thank you, Minister. I mean, SaskPower is a Crown corporation, but I guess we will wait and see. If it's a pause, is OBPS or industry not going to be . . . or is government not collecting money in the interim while it's paused?

**Aaron Wirth:** — Thank you for the questions. So all compliance payments are either being deferred or paused. So in the case of our industrial regulated emitters that are not from the electricity sector — so industry — any payments are being deferred to a later date yet to be determined. And then for SaskPower compliance payments for 2025, those payments are being paused. And again this is subject to consultations that we want to do with industry, as the minister had mentioned.

**Jared Clarke:** — In vote (EN06), climate resilience, there's \$5.5 million. What impact will pausing the OBPS program have on this department?

**Aaron Wirth:** — Thanks for the question. So we are planning to consult with industry and looking very much forward to hearing their views on the future of whether it's industrial carbon pricing or industrial emissions policy more generally. So in terms of impacts, we're not clear on that. That's why we want to consult and be able to kind of hear from the industry and get their input on any potential future emission reduction policies in Saskatchewan.

However I would say that although the OBPS is a large part of the work that in particular the climate resilience branch does in the Ministry of Environment, it's certainly not the only work. The ministry's climate resilience branch is responsible for coordinating Prairie Resilience, Saskatchewan's Prairie Resilience strategy, which is a subset of the growth plan and includes a number of measures, including on climate change adaptation and a number of measures that improve the sustainability of Saskatchewan and our production and make us more resilient to climate change. In fact it's something that we coordinate across several other ministries and agencies as well. So there are about 12 different ministries and agencies that are responsible for different aspects of our Prairie Resilience strategy, and we help coordinate that.

So notwithstanding the OBPS program, there are a number of other initiatives happening in Saskatchewan. And the Ministry of Energy and Resources, they have their methane action plan, which has been very, very successful in reducing vent and flare methane emissions in the oil and gas sector.

SaskPower has been making lots of inroads with many of their demand-side management programs and some of the renewables they've brought on board. And virtually every ministry and agency has a piece of that. So that's something that we continue to coordinate on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan.

But the branch does a number of other work that isn't related to carbon pricing in particular, everything from emissions reductions to climate resilience to adaptation. In fact this year Saskatchewan is the chair of ClimateWest, which is an adaptation

hub across the prairie provinces. So we're leading it in collaboration with Alberta and Manitoba. And we're going to be hosting a conference this year. And actually Saskatchewan is also the chair of the climate change committee for the ministers of Environment, the federal-provincial-territorial forum, the ministers of Environment.

So there's a number of other things we're doing. As I had mentioned, we're developing a made-in-Saskatchewan greenhouse gas emissions inventory, and so reporting on emissions will continue to be important and collecting that data will continue to be important to help us better understand Saskatchewan's emissions profile and better tell our sustainability story.

As I mentioned, we're developing a consumption-based carbon accounting framework, which will be the first of its kind in Canada. But it's been a best practice around the world for several years now. We are looking at providing other services to other ministries and agencies as well.

For example when it comes to irrigation we've done modelling that suggests that expanding irrigation in Saskatchewan is going to significantly reduce the emissions intensity of irrigated crops, which is really exciting work that we've been able to do. We're advising the Ministry of Highways on things like the size of culverts they need to build to withstand certain rainfall. We are identifying new opportunities for emissions modelling.

We are continuing on with our climate resilience framework, which is actually one of the commitments under Prairie Resilience. We continue to track over 20 measures that help Saskatchewan become more resilient to the effects of climate change. We know that we are experiencing those effects, and it's important for us to take action to make sure we continue to be resilient and can withstand the effects of a changing climate.

We're doing a number of different analyses. We're calling them deferred emissions analysis. We're looking at the oil and gas sector and different federal policies and trying to better understand how reducing production — again, in Saskatchewan, whether it's the oil and gas cap or any other policy — actually will result in either no emission reductions globally, or in some cases actually cause emissions to go up. And so this is all analysis that we believe is defensible and what we're working on with some of the folks in our branch. And so, there's that.

We're also doing some macroeconomic modelling. We have actually a contract and a relationship with Navis out of Vancouver. We're building an emissions model to again better give advice and analysis to provincial decision makers when it comes to things like emission reduction policies and other climate policies. We've actually even developed our own model in Saskatchewan, which I think is the first. I don't believe any other jurisdiction has a model like it. But it's a macroeconomic model that was built in collaboration with the University of Regina.

And then we're also looking at leading some work, again with other jurisdictions, on what we're calling carbon management and sharing some of our leadership experience with carbon capture, storage, and utilization, of which we have over 25 years of experience. We have provinces like Ontario reaching out to us

and wanting to meet with us and our colleagues in the Ministry of Energy and Resources to just better understand how we do CCUS [carbon capture, utilization, and storage] and how that's been such a successful carbon management approach in Saskatchewan.

And also we're going to have to continue to work with the federal government on the National Inventory Report and any of the greenhouse gas emissions forecasts coming out of that government. We continue to have serious and significant concerns with federal emissions reporting not just in Saskatchewan but across the board. We have meetings with British Columbia, Alberta, New Brunswick and others, and we're all expressing some of the same frustration and concerns.

[17:45]

And so we want to do a better job of being able to influence some of the inputs and assumptions that are going into some of those emissions forecasts. But also something we want to do ourselves, and potentially work with Alberta and others, to think about how we can better assess emissions in different areas where we have similar geography and that sort of thing.

So those are just some of the things that the branch is doing. OBPS again is a big part of what we do, but it's not the only part. There's many other things happening. And we also look forward to doing a lot of work to engage industry going forward to see again what good ideas they have for the future of industrial policy in Saskatchewan.

**Jared Clarke:** — Thank you. I guess my confusion, Minister, comes from, you know, the Premier saying we're the first fully carbon-free province in Canada. It doesn't talk about being a pause, but you're saying here it's a pause. In the Chamber today the Minister for CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] spoke about how everyone in industry wants to see the OBPS gone. You're saying you need to consult with industry more to understand where it should go. It sounds from what we've heard in the Chamber that the government understands that OBPS is not wanted in the province, so why is this just a pause? And is it a pause, I guess?

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — Thank you for the question. Absolutely there's a lot of industry that are very excited and very supportive of the pause that is currently ongoing — April 1st — of the industrial carbon tax. But as the Minister of the Environment, I have to do my due diligence and consult fully with every area of every industry all across this province. So we are going to undertake that procedure, and we will have more to report in the future.

**Jared Clarke:** — Thank you. I'm surprised a bit by that answer. The Sask Party's been in power for 17, 18 years now. OBPS has been in place for two and a half. You'd think that consultation with industry would be ongoing and happening, especially prior to a change in the policy. But I'll move on.

It's been mentioned, Prairie Resilience today. The province's goal is to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent GHG emissions from the electricity sector by 50 per cent from 2005 levels, which would be 7.1 megatonnes by 2030. I guess the question is, is the province on track to meet that goal, given provincial emissions

are still at 13.6 megatonnes according to the 2024 Prairie Resilience report? We are five years away from the 2030 deadline. Is the province on track to cut emissions basically by 50 per cent still in the electricity sector?

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I mean we have made many, many public statements that we are focused on reliability and affordability for our electrical generation. And we do have a long-term vision of reducing our emissions in that path going forward. It was tentatively nuclear. No decisions have been made yet.

The reality of the situation, if you truly want to reduce your carbon output in electrical generation, nuclear is the only baseline option that's truly available to each and every person across the country. So it's top of mind for this government, but decisions are still being made behind the scenes.

I'm going to ask Aaron to say a few words about our emissions.

**Aaron Wirth:** — So just building on what the minister said, SaskPower is a regulated emitter in our OBPS program, and I do have some numbers that speak to some of the emissions reductions they've been able to achieve since being covered in our program and continue to make. There's been a 16 per cent decrease since they've joined our program in emissions overall and they continue to reduce their emissions each year. And so we think that's been pretty positive in our program.

But just in terms of the electricity sector in general, it is largely SaskPower as the vertically integrated company that manages distribution of power in Saskatchewan. But there are a number of other emissions reductions that are happening at regulated facilities. A lot of it has to do with either an electricity project behind the fence, so at that facility, or improving the efficiency of those facilities and reducing the demand on power. It's not just about trying to build clean power, but make sure that we have enough power to satisfy the needs.

And so the tech fund has been also really successful in funding projects which include electricity. Electricity is an eligible project in the program. We've seen just in the last intake the expected elimination of more than 4.5 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, and the attraction of more than 277 million in additional private sector investment in Saskatchewan, and energy savings of around 5 million gigajoules.

And so that's also part of the approach, and we're finding facilities are doing a very good job of year over year improving the efficiency of their facilities. We're in some cases seeing 1 to 3 per cent energy efficiencies in those facilities, which is helping in terms of the overall draw on power and demand for power. And so there's a number of different ways we're able to sort of reduce emissions, and SaskPower has been successful, at least in terms of being in our program and reducing its emissions. And I'm sure we'll continue to do so.

**Jared Clarke:** — Thank you, Minister, but I didn't hear an answer from you. To the minister: is the province on track to meet the goal given in Prairie Resilience of reducing the electricity sector by 50 per cent by 2030?

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — So I'm going to defer that question to

SaskPower, and when their estimates come up you can pose those questions to them.

But, Mr. Chair, I just really want to just reiterate to the committee on how important consultation is with industry. As we move forward with our output-based performance standards review, as we implement our pause and we defer the payments tentatively, as we work forward with industry, that consultation is absolutely critical.

This industrial carbon tax was imposed on us by the federal government. We made the output-based performance system in collaboration with industry, and we need industry's collaboration as we move forward on what the future holds in this program. So you cannot understate the importance of collaboration and consultation that we will take very seriously with industry as we move forward.

**Jared Clarke:** — So I am disappointed to hear that. I think consultation with industry and with stakeholders across the province incredibly important, and commend the ministry for doing that work. Absolutely, 100 per cent. *Prairie Resilience* is your ministry's responsibility and your document. And so to ask whether you think the province is on track for that measure in your document is well within your purview as a minister.

I will move on. How does continuing to use coal power generation beyond 2030 impact the goal of reducing our emissions by 50 per cent by 2030?

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — I want to thank the member opposite for the question. One of the very kitchen-table topics that each and every person across this province is talking about at this time of day right now at suppertime is affordability issues. And we are going to do our due diligence and provide every Saskatchewan person, every Saskatchewan industry with a reliable and the most affordable electrical network that we can moving forward. That is our number one consideration, is affordability and reliability. And I'm going to ask Aaron to say a few words on climate resilience.

**Aaron Wirth:** — Yeah, just to build on what the minister said, Prairie Resilience again is a subset of the growth plan, and it really is the responsibility of all of the ministries and agencies and really is a delegated responsibility. So while there is a coordinating role for the Ministry of Environment, it's important that our internal stakeholders, the SaskPowers and SaskEnergys and ministries of agriculture of the world are also able to sort of provide an informed response when it comes to our strategy, our Prairie Resilience strategy.

But I would also just point out that, again, the purpose of the strategy and the core principle behind Prairie Resilience is really the resilience to . . . Resilience is the ability to cope with, adapt to, and recover from stress and change. And actually one of the things that we consider in Prairie Resilience is just the affordability and reliability of electricity. So having an affordable and reliable electricity system actually makes us more resilient to climate change and the impacts of climate change. The opposite is true as well. Not having an affordable, reliable electricity system actually makes us more vulnerable to climate change.

[18:00]

And so *Prairie Resilience* is actually a concept that has been around since the strategy was developed in 2017-2018. It actually was acknowledged by a number of other provinces and territories and the federal government as being ahead of its time in 2017 and actually something we're seeing more and more adopted by the federal government and other governments in terms of some of their own strategies. And so it was the first and most comprehensive strategy of its kind when it was released and continues to be the standard-bearer for emission and resilience frameworks across Canada.

**Jared Clarke:** — Thank you. Ministers, absolutely affordability is the number one issue. I heard that in my constituency. I know members across the province would have heard that. A reliable grid, affordable grid, affordable electricity is 100 per cent important.

What doesn't seem to be part of the solution or this conversation though, is the impacts of climate change on the province. If you look at, you know, what are Saskatchewan's impacts going to be, where are they going to be most heavily felt, it's going to be drought. It's going to be forest fires. It's going to be extreme weather events, flooding events.

If we look at where the province has actually blown the budget over the last two decades, it is always related to extreme weather events — major payout in crop insurance because of a six-year drought just a year or two ago; major forest fires and the response needed to attack that; 2015, major flooding event in the southeast corner of Saskatchewan costing, you know, millions of dollars to repair and fix the infrastructure across that part of the province.

This is a big issue facing Saskatchewan, and the status quo of how we exist and how we live in this province is not going to be . . . the status quo will not continue. We will continue to see increasing droughts. We will continue to see extreme forest fires. We will continue to see extreme weather events, extreme flooding in this province. And as Saskatchewan people we are expected to do our part in reducing emissions.

And I really, after our discussions today, am disappointed with us not hitting these goals that your government has set out in terms of reducing emissions around our resilience to face the impacts of climate change. Would you say, Minister — and just to you, Minister — that it's fair that the province has abandoned its 2050 goal of being net zero?

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — Well I want to thank the member opposite for the question. There's a couple of things I want to talk about in the premise of your question. It's very important when we talk about some of the issues that we've faced currently, is some of the historical relevance about that. I mean we've seen excessive flooding in my grandfather's lifetime. I mean it's a common occurrence across the Saskatchewan landscape. The '50s were incredibly wet and caused a tremendous amount of damage. And 2010 to 2018 were incredibly wet in the area of east central Saskatchewan where I have the privilege of living, working, and raising my family.

And it's also important to note that in these climactic challenges that we're facing, as people . . . I mean in the '50s around Katepwa Lake — and I mean you would be very knowledgeable about that — there was no cabins built around Echo Lake. And

then in the wet years of the two thousand and . . . I think it was '11, '12, that ice dam and the severe flooding in the Qu'Appelle Valley. And I mean there was half-a-million-dollar to a-million-dollar cabins that have been put up, that changes the whole dynamics of the economic challenges that are faced due to flooding.

So I mean these floods have happened before. They're going to happen again in the future. It's part of nature and we have to adapt and manage as best we can, which is absolutely critical.

When talking about emissions and different challenges, I really want to talk about — I mean Minister Harrison talked about it today in the Chamber — the importance of Evraz and you know, that the electric-arc furnace and the carbon-zero steel that they're producing there is a tremendous advantage to the province and industry as a whole.

Aaron, did you want to comment on Mr. Clarke's question?

**Jared Clarke:** — That's okay, Minister. I just was looking for your answer.

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — Oh, absolutely.

**Jared Clarke:** — That's all you wanted to say?

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — Yeah, I'm fine.

**Jared Clarke:** — Okay, thank you. Absolutely, I mean, Saskatchewan has one of the most variable climates in the world. Only us and the Mongolian region in Asia sees temperature fluctuations from minus 40 to plus 40. Nowhere else in Canada do you see the extreme temperature fluctuations that we see here, absolutely. And absolutely we have had flooding in the past and absolutely we have droughts in the past. There is no question about that. We are seeing continual changes that are very rapid and are showing increasing intensity around flooding, around droughts, around forest fires.

And one of those things that is changing is blacklegged ticks, which is mentioned in *Prairie Resilience*. And the reason it's a concern is because it's being driven by climate change. And blacklegged ticks are something that never have existed as a population in Saskatchewan or in Manitoba or in Canada prior to the '70s but because of climate warming are now overwintering and populations are stable in parts of the country.

I see in *Prairie Resilience* in 2003 we had three blacklegged ticks that were detected during active surveys. eTick had 27 positive submissions of blacklegged ticks. Were there any blacklegged ticks detected during active surveys in 2024?

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — I'm going to ask my ADM [assistant deputy minister] to say a few words on that, but thank you, Mr. Clarke, for the question.

**Kevin Murphy:** — Assistant Deputy Minister Kevin Murphy, resource management division of Environment. With regards to blacklegged ticks, I'm not aware of new reports from our system. It's not been brought to my attention for the last year that we've had any new sightings or reports from that . . . Sorry, I'm just getting a text message which may be from staff. And she's

indicating that we need to check with health records if there's any discrepancy between our wildlife reporting, but we're not aware of any. So no new ones have been reported from the last year.

**Jared Clarke:** — So thank you, Mr. Murphy. I know we've talked about this last year around One Health and the work that they do in monitoring like blacklegged ticks. Is it the Ministry of Environment who is conducting these annual surveys? I believe there were 40 sites monitored with 46 surveys conducted in 2023. Is this the ministry who's conducting those surveys?

**Kevin Murphy:** — So with regard to our tick monitoring program in the province, you correctly identified the One Health construct. The actual survey work that you're referring to, it's my understanding that that's conducted by Ministry of Health with a number of academic institutions and others that are helping feed into that. Ministry of Environment and across government feeds into that where we have our wildlife biologists conducting surveys, reports from hunters or other outdoorspeople as they're making reports.

And the conservation officer service, which is part of CPPS [Corrections, Policing and Public Safety], if they come across roadkill animals like that that have tick infestations, either directly through their reporting or the submission of that to Prairie Diagnostics for work with the Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre, will do reporting on finding blacklegged ticks.

So there's a variety of individuals that are contributing to that overall survey work. But the coordination of it is with our Health colleagues because of the implications with Lyme disease.

**Jared Clarke:** — Thank you, Mr. Murphy. Again, just for the minister, you know, this is an example of an impact of climate change that is going to have very serious implications for Saskatchewan people. Blacklegged ticks are, of course, bringing in with them Lyme disease, which is a disease that we have not experienced or had to deal with in this province. If blacklegged ticks, which are killed by normally our cold winter, become established in the province, Saskatchewan people will have to deal with this disease on a regular basis. And so another supporting piece to ... Climate change is real, and it is happening. And we need to be reducing our emissions to be protecting Saskatchewan people on many fronts, including this health front.

I'm going to switch gears a little bit, staying on climate resilience a little bit still. The Saskatchewan government released its agricultural water stewardship policy earlier this year. I'm wondering if you can briefly ... Because I'm looking at the clock. I see I only have 45 minutes and I have a lot of questions to ask, so I'm hoping the responses can be brief.

But can you describe exactly what the role of the Ministry of Environment plays in managing wetlands with Water Security Agency? In the ag stewardship policy document that was published in January, it does say that Ministry of Environment plays a role in managing those wetlands, so I'd like a description of exactly how ministry's involvement is in that policy.

[18:15]

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — I want to thank you for the question. I'm going to ask Mr. Murphy to say a few words, but there's a few things I'd like to talk about. And something that's very relevant to my home area — and I mean, you would be very aware of this, Mr. Clarke — the importance of the Saskatchewan geological formation, the kettle system that much of Saskatchewan finds itself in. And it's very important to note that a myriad of drainage work that's going on in the parkland region of Saskatchewan is very small water reservoirs that typically dry up at June, July, and provide a lot of challenges for our agricultural producers and provide no habitat for wildlife.

And what many agricultural producers are doing, particularly in the kettle region, would be pooling many of these products, these small sloughs, and draining them into one larger slough, and it does hold more water, creating a better habitat. And a lot of this drainage that is being done by our world-class agricultural producers is actually a net benefit to many species of wildlife and many species of waterfowl, native birds, and everything else.

So it's important when you properly use a lot of the resources that our agricultural producers have, can be a real net benefit to the overall environmental picture. But I'll ask Mr. Murphy to say a few words.

**Kevin Murphy:** — As you correctly identified, the Water Security Agency is the lead on this program. They consult with the Ministry of Environment on overall targets for location of retention, and in terms of importance of set, sort of, nodes or pathways in the watersheds. There's a concept within their policy called the floor, which speaks to a base retention on the landscape. They have engaged with us on determining what that floor looks like, and it's actually ... Their management is above the floor, if you will, so there is going to be a baseline of retention of wetlands throughout the system that they have engaged with agencies like Environment on determining.

**Jared Clarke:** — Okay, thank you for that. I am curious to know how this drainage policy ... The drainage policy, in my opinion ... And we've canvassed this last year in terms of the policy suggests that 86 per cent of wetlands remain in Saskatchewan. As a biologist and as someone who has travelled around the province, I find that number hard to believe, especially when you look even just south of Regina on the Regina Plains where, in even just the last 10 years, wetlands have been drained and diked and drainage ditches have been created to the point where there are no existing wetlands on the landscape in that area.

I guess the question that I have is like, we know — and even in Water Security Agency's document — that a reduction in wetlands is going to see a decrease in wildlife populations. They've admitted that in their own consultation stakeholder meetings, there's concern around the functionality of wetlands in terms of the filtration system services that they provide, the flood mitigation that they provide.

How does this drainage policy that will allow up to 100 per cent of wetlands to be drained in specific areas ... I know the regions have a 60 per cent retention rate or 40 per cent rate, depending on where you are, but draining that much wetland habitat off the landscape will negatively impact water quality. It will negatively impact wildlife populations. It will negatively impact flooding capacity of wetlands on the landscape, water holding during

flooding events.

So how does this drainage policy support the ministry's game management strategy when we're talking waterfowl hunting, its fisheries management strategy when we're talking water quality? How does it support Prairie Resilience? We know, and we've talked about this last year, that wetlands are huge carbon sinks and hold that carbon in and take it out of the atmosphere. If wetlands are removed, that carbon is released into the atmosphere, and also the species-at-risk management, which is again under the Ministry of Environment, things like, you know, leopard frogs and tiger salamanders that are on the species-at-risk list federally.

So how does that drainage policy support the ministry's game management strategy, fisheries management strategy, Prairie Resilience, and species-at-risk management? They seem at odds.

**Kevin France:** — Yeah, thanks for the question. Kevin France, deputy minister. I appreciate the question, and again as you noted earlier, WSA, or Water Security Agency, is the lead on the policy development. But as you pointed out, they've collaborated with the Ministry of Environment, and we have a long-standing relationship with WSA. And I would say the policy, the high level strikes that right balance between agricultural needs as well as economic development and the environmental needs as well.

And to your point about whether it's species at risk, fisheries, habitat management plan, and so on, you know, I think . . . and Kevin can get more detail about it. But to me it's really about striking that right balance, and it's the regional scale and ensuring that we both have water in the landscape as well as tools available to producers to manage that water in the landscape. So, Kevin, I'll turn to you.

**Kevin Murphy:** — Certainly. So Water Security Agency has a responsibility in terms of meeting water quality expectations to support the fishery. As one example, we have an expectation that although there may be local impacts to local populations of wildlife, it's not having a net detrimental impact on the overall populations from a sustainability perspective and from our objectives within the game management plan.

And most certainly when I spoke about those thresholds on the floor and the work that we're doing with water security, they emphatically take into account things like critical habitat as it's been assigned for various endangered species, and ensuring that we're not abrogating the *Species at Risk Act*, or even our own wildlife regulations where those apply.

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — And I just really want to add again to the record, Mr. Chair, like the pothole country of Saskatchewan, that kettle region, with proper applied drainage and proper use of collaboration with landowners and neighbours and everything else, you're going to see an actual increase in wildlife acres in many, many instances all across Saskatchewan. So it's very important that the record shows that too, Mr. Chair.

**Jared Clarke:** — Can you just clarify what you mean by increase to wildlife acres?

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — Yeah, sure, absolutely. So I was talking before about . . . I mean geologists call it the kettle region;

agricultural producers call it pothole country — whatever term you want to describe it as. If you have a myriad of water zones that hold water tentatively for May, sometimes into June, virtually all dried up in July . . . So they cannot be seeded. They produce no grass. They produce no nothing. They are just an empty void in the middle of the agricultural field, typically.

And what a lot of agricultural producers do, will take those small zones and pool that water into a central slough in the pothole zone of Saskatchewan. And a lot of times, those potholes would dry up by August, September. But by adding more water to them, they are providing habitat for many nesting water birds and other native species across there. So a lot of times, drainage can be a real boon to wildlife and to natural habitat in many instances in certain geological zones all across Saskatchewan.

**Jared Clarke:** — Thank you, Minister. So I would push back on that a little bit from a biology perspective. Those ephemeral wetlands do certainly have value regardless of whether they evaporate by midsummer or not. You think about migrating shorebirds that stop in Saskatchewan in May, like sanderlings or red knots. Shorebirds as a group are some of the fastest declining birds in the world. Those birds rely on shallow, little wetlands. They're not able to use a large wetland like a Wascana Marsh or one of the bigger consolidated wetlands.

So I would caution the minister from thinking that those wetlands don't have value, because I certainly do think that, especially when you're talking about insects. And there is species, many species on the prairies that utilize those water sources when they are available at that time of year.

I'm going to change gears a little bit, again recognizing that we are running out of time. I just was wondering if there's an update on this one I asked about last year, the protection of ecosystems across the province.

The minister referenced today in his opening remarks that the goal is 12 per cent of each of the ecotypes by 2025. Last year when I asked this question, we were at about 9.9. The minister referenced we are still sitting at 9.9. The goal is 12.

Last year the province described its plan to use OEMs [other effective area-based conservation measures] as the way to reach this goal. It sounds like we've stagnated in terms of protecting an additional 2 per cent of land. So what is the plan to get to 12 per cent in the next eight months, by the end of this year?

**Kevin France:** — Yeah, thanks for the question. Again to your point, the 12 per cent commitment, we're still very committed to hitting that this year, and we're expecting to hit that 12 per cent this year. And that's really through some of the work that we're doing — and I think you can appreciate the time that's required too — is working with some of our Indigenous communities and ensuring we identify lands in collaboration with them. Ya' thi Néné is a great example. They've identified some lands. We're working with them to ensure we are understanding of what that land base is and some potential areas for protection.

We work with other ministries and agencies as well, especially around the OEM. And again, that commitment to 12 per cent is there, and I think the relationships and the discussions we're having to date will allow us to get there this year. But I'll turn it

to Kevin, maybe a little bit more specifics on some of that work.

**Kevin Murphy:** — Thanks. So the core aspects of the program that we outlined last year where we're looking at an opportunity to bring in more grazing lands with our partners in agriculture, potential for some forested lands, and potentially waterbodies are still the core of our plan to reach our target.

[18:30]

As the deputy minister mentioned, part of the work that's been done over the last year is in working with the stewards of that land basin. In many circumstances, they are people working with industry, whether that be ranching, forestry, you know, some form of utilization, or indeed Indigenous peoples and their expectations for how they continue to be able to work in their traditional lands and be able to utilize them.

And we have been working on those relationships to ensure that we are not displacing people as we contemplate some form of recognition or indeed designation and ensuring that there's going to be a level of compatibility for the stewards on those landscapes, making sure those relationships are solid before we move to that recognition, before we move to potential designations on areas.

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — I just want to add, Mr. Chair, to the committee. Consultation with all of our relevant stakeholders on this is absolutely critical, but we are committed to achieving those goals.

**Jared Clarke:** — Just a follow-up on what the deputy minister said in terms of working with Indigenous people. So does this mean that the province is looking at Indigenous protected areas as a model to increase the amount of protected land?

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — Thank you for the question. No, we are not going to be moving into the Indigenous protected and conserved areas network. But we do have our PCAN, protected and conserved area network, which we are very passionate about, and we are going to work together towards that. And I'm going to ask Mr. Murphy to say a few words.

**Jared Clarke:** — I think that's sufficient for me. I do want to follow up with another question on that, though, as to why you are not interested in the Indigenous protected areas program.

**Kevin Murphy:** — With regards to the Indigenous protected and conserved area concept, which is one from the IUCN [International Union for Conservation of Nature] networks, from an international sort of a lens, the federal government adopted that . . . not definition but title for a program, funding of looking at including Indigenous peoples in establishing conservation areas across the country.

And I spoke to "not a definition" because they gave no clear definition of specifically what type of area and what kind of inclusion it would hold. We, the bureaucracy of the Ministry of Environment, consulted with cabinet on a variety of mechanisms and discovered that our protected and conserved areas network already had significantly established mechanisms of working with a variety of Indigenous peoples.

We'd had some areas that were under agreement for special management in the North that actually comprise a lot of the core of some areas that our colleagues in Ya' thi Néné are looking at right now, and felt that continuing with the protected and conserved areas network and establishing either the OECMs through recognition or the designated Ecological Reserves would suffice and has the flexibility to allow us to work with individual Indigenous peoples, recognizing that they don't want a single definition of IPCA [Indigenous protected and conserved area] to be applied. So that's why we're continuing to do the work that we had under the PCAN and won't be adopting the federal strategy or definition of IPCA that they provided.

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — I'd just like to add to that too. I mean, the PCAN network that we're working on very diligently is a made-in-Saskatchewan solution, and it's important that we all work together, listen to our stakeholders and all relevant contributors as we move forward in this area.

**Jared Clarke:** — Thank you. I do know that there are Indigenous people who are interested in the Indigenous protected areas in Saskatchewan, and I understand from stakeholder conversations that I have had that there are millions of dollars of funding that is not able to be accessed in Saskatchewan because the government is not willing to have these kind of conversations. So it is hurting organizations who are trying to bring in other funding dollars from outside of the province to do this important conservation work.

I'm going to switch gears, though. Last year I asked about how much native prairie remains in Saskatchewan by percentage and by total area in acres. The modelling was being done. This is something the ministry is working on. I'm just wondering if you can give me an update as to where that work is at and when we can expect to see that number of exactly how much native prairie remains in the province.

**Kevin Murphy:** — With regards to the Prairie Landscape Inventory work, that was finalized and was actually published on our government GIS [geographic information system] site in February time frame. So it is available to download for academics and researchers and others as an ArcGIS tool now. That work . . . and you know, you asked for some brief answers; I'll try and be as brief as possible. But comparing the current work and what has been done there with the old southern digital landcover is not immediately a 1 to 1.

So the current work for . . . This is the entire aspen parkland, moist mixed grassland, mixed grassland, and Cypress upland, which is effectively what was also covered by the southern digital landcover. Right now native grassland is at 16 per cent of that in total. But the old southern digital landcover also included the shrubs, trees, and woody plants. So if we look at the current PLI [Prairie Landscape Inventory], it's at 26 per cent native cover versus around 21 to 22 per cent for the old southern digital landcover.

I think probably more important to be able to look at the modern one and use that as a baseline going forward, simply because it's a far more accurate tool. It's at much better resolution than the old 30-metre pixels of the southern digital landcover, which often didn't capture things as well as the new one does. But that data is available. It is published on the GIS hub for Saskatchewan. It's

split out into the products by those different grasslands and then could be combined.

**Jared Clarke:** — I just need you to repeat that number of the up-to-date value of total native prairie that you said.

**Kevin Murphy:** — Sure. So what I would consider to be total native prairie that's comparable to the old southern digital landcover is the native grassland, woody plants, treed, and shrubs. So native grassland, 16 per cent; woody plants are 2 per cent; treed is 4 per cent; and shrubs are at 2 per cent. And if you take the water out of the new one, which was not included in the southern digital landcover, the total percentage is 26 per cent native versus 21 per cent for the old southern digital land cover. Water is 7 per cent of the new land cover.

That is an amalgamated percentage by all of the areas that were combined for the PLI.

**Jared Clarke:** — And then would you have the number for just the mixed grassland, not including aspen parkland?

**Kevin Murphy:** — So specific to the mixed grassland, this is done as of 2019 for the mixed grassland. They identified 34 per cent native grassland in the mixed grassland area.

**Jared Clarke:** — As intact?

**Kevin Murphy:** — That's correct. That's for the mixed grassland.

**Jared Clarke:** — Okay. Thank you. Minister, jumping a little bit over to the derelict building policy, I'm wondering, would hazardous materials be required to be removed from the building prior to burning?

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — I want to thank the member for asking this question. The derelict buildings is a pilot program that I had the privilege of spearheading moving forward. It's absolutely critical that the big-picture goal of this is to provide municipalities that have a fire service agreement with a volunteer fire department to provide a realistic fire training scenario for those volunteer firefighters. That is the goal of this pilot program.

The municipalities will have to be on board. The volunteer fire department and the chief will have to be on board, but the importance of this policy and this pilot is to leave the buildings intact to provide a truly accurate training scenario for each and every volunteer fire department across Saskatchewan and provide them with that . . . well it could be tentatively life-saving scenario to implement these training scenarios. So I'm going to ask my assistant deputy minister to say a few words.

**Wes Kotyk:** — Wes Kotyk, assistant deputy minister, environmental protection division. As the minister indicated, the details of the pilot are to be worked out in the coming months.

So things like safety are important. Municipalities with their volunteer fire departments will have to ensure that it's being managed in a safe way, so things like they would need to ensure they have the appropriate protective equipment when this is occurring. You know, certain things like ensuring that there are no other receptors or people in the vicinity. So it would be, you

know, maybe more appropriate for the very remote locations where there aren't populations. Those are things that would need to be considered.

We'd also have to look at, you know, how would the materials be managed once the exercise is complete? So we would look at, what would the rules be around that? How would they manage that? But those details are yet to be worked out.

**Jared Clarke:** — Thank you. From the minister's comments, I read between the lines and say, no, hazardous materials would not have to be removed from the building. As my other shadow minister role on our team is municipal affairs, I certainly understand the need for rural municipalities and villages to be able to remove derelict buildings, and that is a concern that we definitely heard at SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] so I appreciate the concerns around that.

I do question like which fire department is going to want to send their team into a derelict building? I mean if a derelict building is going up in flames, I don't think they're running in to rescue anything out of it. And I would be worried about the safety of firefighters entering that building in general.

[18:45]

I think there's also serious hazardous material concerns. We just, in the House today, were discussing a bill that brings wildfire firefighters on board with presumptive WCB [Workers' Compensation Board] claims and cancer cases. And so like as a firefighter we already know that they are at higher risk of getting cancer because of the work that they do, and I don't understand why we would want to put them in situations where we know there could be batteries in a building. There could be asbestos. There could be lead paint. There could be asphalt shingles. This seems reckless just as a way to remove derelict buildings off the landscape.

So I would hope that the minister does, you know, really have the best interests at heart of the firefighters when we're designing how this pilot project is going to be rolled out.

I'm also worried about . . . In your opening remarks you opened by talking about the remediation fund. If a building is burned and toxic and hazardous materials are in it, the land that that house just burned on is now contaminated. And would they be, you know, eligible for funding to remediate the ground now because it's just contaminated?

And I would be concerned in a small town, if there's a derelict building beside me on an adjacent lot and that is burned, is, you know, my backyard now contaminated? Is the garden that I grow my vegetables in contaminated because hazardous materials weren't removed from it? So I do think there are serious liability issues.

And I'm wondering under the pilot project, who would be liable for, say, the contamination risks? Would it be a municipality? Would it be the former building owner? Would it be the province? Who's responsible for that contamination risk?

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — Thank you for the question. It's important to note that both SARM and SUMA [Saskatchewan



Urban Municipalities Association] have been very supportive of this pilot program. The volunteer fire department association has been supportive of this pilot program.

And there's a reason why governments use the term "pilot program." It gives you an opportunity to test things out, to try things out, to see if it's something that's good for each and every stakeholder involved, and we are going to do our due diligence in doing outreach over the summer before we finalize all the nuances of the pilot program going forward. But I'll ask . . .

**Jared Clarke:** — I think that's sufficient for me, just with looking at the clock. Thank you for that, Minister. I still have concerns on that. And I think, you know, these regulations around environmental contamination are important. I don't think that we want to be going back to a place where, you know, rivers are on fire and burning up like they were in the '30s and '40s because rivers were so polluted, right. Like there's a reason why we know we should be dealing with these hazardous materials in an appropriate way.

I have a question about elk and the extended elk hunt. I'm not actually going to come at you about it because as a biologist I do believe that you've made the right choice in terms of the mandatory testing piece. And I do acknowledge that the risk for bovine tuberculosis is real and needs to be managed. So I'm wondering if, one, the results of the mandatory testing are going to be made public, and is there a plan in place if elk test positive for bovine tuberculosis.

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — I want to thank the member for the question, and I'm going to ask Mr. Murphy to say a few words on it. But I just want you to know that this decision was not taken lightly. We analyzed a lot of data with the hunter harvest survey, with aerial surveys, crop insurance claims, and numerous data points that we collected.

And the impact of bovine tuberculosis cannot be overstated on the challenge that would pose to our world-class livestock producers. So I mean data is absolutely critical that we collect it, and that was definitely one of the deciding factors that we made together to move forward on the big game management extended hunt. But I'll ask Mr. Murphy to say a few words.

**Kevin Murphy:** — Thank you. Extension of that One Health concept: we're working with our colleagues in Agriculture and of course the Canadian Food Inspection Agency on tuberculosis. Bovine tuberculosis is a reportable disease and one of significant concern because there is potential for it to cross over into human beings as well, depending on which strain is involved.

So we're working very closely with CFIA [Canadian Food Inspection Agency]. We have an expectation that our results will be publicly reported when it's finalized. We'll probably do that in conjunction with CFIA if there is a positive report found, and then very much working with CFIA in terms of the results of finding a positive.

They have indicated to us that there are certain thresholds for determining strain and abundance from the sampling protocol to determine what they expect to be done in terms of a response, which can range from ongoing monitoring right through to an expectation of local eradication of herds.

I don't know what they would say about wildlife. We'll have to work with them on that response. The province's response to that follows our invasive species framework, which typically looks at containment first if possible, where you have something that's invasive and then moving up from there in terms of our response protocols.

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — Okay. If I could, Mr. Clarke, I just want to really quickly add to the record. Our provincial veterinarian tells us that there is no TB [tuberculosis] coming from elk into the livestock industry. Our biologists at the Ministry of Environment tell us that there is no TB in the elk herd crossing into cattle, but we need to collect some data to verify those. So I just really want to clarify that to all the people watching tonight.

**Jared Clarke:** — Absolutely. So it would be the responsibility of the ministry, though, to have a response to manage the elk herd if TB is found there.

I also — not so much of a question, and I'm really watching the time in my last few minutes here — would like to see the province, through the Ministry of Environment but also through SCIC [Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation], take more of an active role in prevention around interactions between elk and cattle.

I think you can easily pull data from CSIC in terms of elk damage over the last number of years. And you can very easily pinpoint which farms in the area where TB has been found, where elk and cattle are interacting on an annual basis, and so pulling the list of say the top 50 farms and talking to them about funding, about barrier fences or livestock guardian dogs or all sorts of different tools that can be found.

I would hope the province will be more proactive in establishing those incentive programs to work with producers to actually prevent elk from interacting with feed on a farm. And I understand there's different management styles, and if bale grazing and swath grazing don't necessarily . . . aren't as easy to deal with, but they can still have tools to be dealt.

I'm going to move on because I think I've got like one or two more questions here. I was having a conversation with a rural municipality just last week, and talking about hydrovacating. And it's my understanding that there's no regulation for hydrovac companies dumping their slurry on sites. Can you speak to that? And quickly so I can have one more question, please.

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — Thank you for that question. I'm going to ask Mr. Kotyk to say a few words on that, but there's a couple things that I just want to talk about, Mr. Chair. It's important when we have challenges with wildlife interactions with our agricultural producers that we do work very closely with crop insurance and the Ministry of Ag and everything else. There is a myriad of opportunities and funding streams and options for our agricultural producers to purchase fencing or put up fencing or portable panels or, you know, a myriad of things that we work together collaboratively, together with our agricultural producers. And it's important that the record shows that too, Mr. Chair.

And, Mr. Kotyk, could you talk about vac trucks?

**Wes Kotyk:** — Right, yeah. Although there may not be any specific regulations dedicated to hydrovac operations, *The Environmental Management and Protection Act* does have provisions that you cannot discharge causing an adverse effect. Any industry that is generating materials, that a hydrovac truck may empty and then dispose elsewhere, there's rules around where the industries and how they have to manage their waste.

So if it is a hydrovac that is just strictly soil and water and there are no contaminants, then it is a suitable activity if it's being applied to land if there are no contaminants. But we do have the legislation rules that you can't generally in any situation discharge contaminants that are causing an adverse effect.

**Jared Clarke:** — Who would be responsible for monitoring that and ensuring like testing to see if it is contaminated?

**Wes Kotyk:** — All right. If the ministry received a complaint and that there was a need or suspicion that that was occurring, then we would investigate and do some sampling and follow up in accordance with our compliance framework.

**Jared Clarke:** — Okay, thank you.

**Chair Thorsteinson:** — Having reached our agreed-upon time for consideration of these estimates, we will now adjourn consideration of the estimates for the Ministry of Environment. Minister, do you have any closing comments?

**Hon. Travis Keisig:** — Absolutely. I want to thank the committee, I want to thank Hansard, and I truly want to thank the team from Ministry of the Environment. And I want to thank the members opposite for the very respectful questions, very interesting.

And I also, Mr. Chair, want to thank Rebecca Gibbons for all of her hard work. Today is literally her last day at the Ministry of Environment. She is moving on to a different position. So talk about winning the lottery — get the ability to go to estimates and then start a new job. Anyway I want the record to show it and thank Rebecca for all of her hard work and thank all of the ministry officials for their due diligence.

**Chair Thorsteinson:** — Thank you, Minister. Mr. Clarke, any final comments?

**Jared Clarke:** — Sure. I'd like to echo the minister's statement and thank Hansard and the folks at the table here and also the Ministry of Environment folks for being here tonight. I appreciate the conversation and the good work you do for Saskatchewan people, so thank you for putting up with me for the last two hours.

**Chair Thorsteinson:** — Thank you very much, Minister, and thank you to all of your officials for being here with us this evening. This committee now stands in recess until 7:30 p.m.

[The committee recessed from 19:00 until 19:30.]

**General Revenue Fund  
Energy and Resources  
Vote 23**

**Subvote (ER01)**

**Chair Thorsteinson:** — Welcome back, committee members. We'll now consider the estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 for the Ministry of Energy and Resources. We will begin with vote 23, Energy and Resources, central management and services subvote (ER01).

Minister Young is here with her officials from the ministry. I would ask that officials please state their names before speaking into the microphone. As a reminder, please do not touch the microphones. The Hansard operator will turn your microphone on when you are speaking to the committee.

Minister, please introduce your officials and make your opening remarks.

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to be here to discuss the Ministry of Energy and Resources 2025-26 budget.

Before I begin my opening remarks, allow me to introduce the Ministry of Energy and Resources officials who are here with me this evening. We have on my left here my deputy minister, Blair Wagar; my chief of staff, Caelan McIntyre, sitting behind me; Assistant Deputy Minister Cory Hughes; Assistant Deputy Minister Scott Giroux behind me; Debby Westerman, acting assistant deputy minister; and there are a number of other officials who will introduce themselves if need be when they address the committee.

The Ministry of Energy and Resources 2025 budget ensures our world-class resource sectors will continue to deliver for Saskatchewan people. Our budget, at 56.5 million — an increase of 5.1 per cent from last year — invests significantly and strategically in oil and gas, geoscience, and critical minerals. These investments will support industry, increase production capacity, and grow the provincial economy.

Diversification will continue to be a focus for our ministry this year. We've long been world leaders in potash and uranium, and now we are an emerging producer of helium, lithium, copper, and zinc. Including the six I just mentioned, our province has 27 of the 34 minerals listed on the federal government's critical mineral list. As Canada's leader in critical mineral production and potential, we are uniquely positioned to meet the world's growing demand for these important resources.

In 2023 we launched *Securing the Future: Saskatchewan's Critical Minerals Strategy*, to help guide the expansion of the province's critical minerals sector and support the Government of Saskatchewan's 2030 growth plan goals. One of the key initiatives in the strategy is the 10-year, \$10 million public geoscience initiative. This year's budget includes a \$350,000 investment in the second year of this initiative. This funding will support the generation and publication of technical data used by industry to make important decisions about resource projects. The availability of this high-quality information will help attract private sector investment in exploration and development, leading to new critical mineral discoveries.

Building on our stable and competitive business environment is another way we are driving investment and encouraging

diversification. Last year, we launched two new programs to support the critical minerals strategy: the critical minerals processing investment incentive and the Saskatchewan critical minerals innovation incentive. The year prior, we also increased the Saskatchewan mineral exploration tax credit from 10 to 30 per cent and expanded the targeted mineral exploration incentive to include drilling for all hardrock minerals.

Creating the right conditions for mining companies to invest and develop projects in Saskatchewan will continue to be a priority for our ministry. In 2025 our province is expected to continue to lead Canada in total mining investment, with industry spending in the year projected to exceed \$7 billion.

Our 2025-26 budget also has a new program to strengthen another critical economic driver for our province, the oil and gas industry. We are delivering a new incentive to support the growth plan goal of increasing oil production to 600,000 barrels per day by 2030. The low productivity and reactivation oil well program is designed to encourage industry to make new capital investments in low-producing and inactive horizontal oil wells. This will provide significant opportunity for our province's oil-producing regions.

Saskatchewan has close to 25,000 low productivity and inactive wells, all of which could qualify for this program. This new incentive would make it economical for small, medium, and large producers to invest in increasing production at these sites. The low productivity and reactivation oil well program includes a \$1 million investment in one-time capital funding to update and enhance the integrated resource information system, or IRIS as it's known, to ensure the program is fully supported.

In addition to this new incentive, we are also extending the oil investment infrastructure program for four years to expand market access for Saskatchewan oil and to support carbon dioxide pipeline infrastructure. Following an internal review, it was determined the oil investment infrastructure program remains essential to Saskatchewan's goal of building more oil and CO<sub>2</sub> pipeline infrastructure. This program, launched in 2020, offers tax credits for qualified projects at a rate of 20 per cent of eligible program costs.

Over the past four years, it has seen success in leveraging oil pipeline investment in our province, with 74,000 barrels per day of new oil pipeline capacity supported through the program. To date, \$110 million in capital investments has been secured through the oil investment infrastructure program, with a further \$380 million in capital investment conditionally approved.

I'd like to touch on one more new item from this year's budget, and it relates to our ministry's focus on regulatory excellence. We take our role as the primary regulator very seriously and believe in transparency, clarity, and consistency. This year we are moving forward with the \$1.6 million investment in enhancements to the information technology systems. This will improve oil and gas industry's ability to report to the ministry in support of risk mitigation and safety efforts. This investment includes the incident reporting enhancement project, and the pipeline licence multi-substance project. These projects will contribute to the delivery of Saskatchewan's Growth Plan commitments and position the province as a leader in sustainable resource development.

Saskatchewan is one of the most sustainable energy producers in the world. According to *The Oil and Gas Emissions Management Regulations* 2023 annual report, greenhouse gas emissions were down 67 per cent in 2023 compared to 2015 at upstream oil and gas facilities. Methane emissions were down 75 per cent during the same time period. This is a great example of how our ministry's regulatory work is having a positive impact. We remain focused on working with industry to drive innovation and investment in sustainable resource development.

Although we are in a period of uncertainty with our largest trading partner to the south, I am certain of this: Saskatchewan has a great story to tell. As a world leader in the sustainable production of food, fuel, fertilizer, and critical minerals, Saskatchewan is crucial to global and North American food and energy security.

We are the world's largest and most reliable producer of potash, supplying a third of global production in most years. 2024 was another record year for potash sales volume in Saskatchewan. Over the last few years, the world has taken notice of our ability to be a stable supplier of a resource that is crucial to agricultural production.

We are the world's second-largest uranium producer, and northern Saskatchewan is home to some of the largest high-grade reserves in the world. As the world seeks ways to generate low-emissions power, demand for uranium is rising, and Saskatchewan is in an excellent position to meet that challenge. Uranium production in Saskatchewan in 2024 far exceeded 2023, setting a new production record over the previous highs from 2016.

Our mining sector is a major contributor to our provincial economy, directly and indirectly employing over 30,000 people throughout the province, generating billions in private investment, and helping to pay for the programs and services the people of Saskatchewan count on.

In critical minerals other than potash and uranium, we are seeing advancements in helium and lithium. Arizona Lithium's Prairie Lithium project is getting ready for production later this year, while North American Helium recently brought online its ninth — ninth — helium purification facility in the province. Foran Mining's McIlvenna Bay copper and zinc project is under construction while the Saskatchewan Research Council's rare earth processing facility has begun producing metals at a commercial scale.

I've touched on oil and gas already, but as the second-largest oil producer in Canada we have a significant role in ensuring energy security and affordability in North America. Last year oil and gas accounted for approximately 26,000 jobs in our province and generated an estimated 4 billion in new exploration and development investment. Our oil and gas industry deploys some of the most advanced carbon capture and enhanced oil recovery technology in the world. We will continue to support expansion and innovation in this industry so we can get to 600,000 barrels per day by 2030.

Finally, our forestry industry is a significant driver of economic activity in the North and a major employer of Indigenous workers, who comprise 27 per cent of the forestry workforce.

Saskatchewan's forestry industry is expected to invest nearly \$900 million in new projects between 2021 and 2027.

I'll conclude my remarks by saying this budget and our priorities for this year will strengthen our already thriving resource sectors which contribute to food and energy security around the world and drive economic growth here at home. This will ensure our province remains in a strong financial position to deliver on the priorities of Saskatchewan people. Thank you, and I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.

**Chair Thorsteinson:** — Thank you, Minister. I'll now open the floor to questions.

**Sally Houser:** — Great. Thank you so much, Minister, for being here and to all of your officials, public servants. I know the amount of work that goes into the estimates, so very much appreciate your work and making the time here this evening.

How many staff or full-time employees are included in the budget for the ministry right now?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — So currently working in Energy and Resources, we have 312 FTEs [full-time equivalent]. Three hundred of those are actual people, and then we have some open positions at this point in time.

**Sally Houser:** — Great, thanks. And is that an increase or a decrease from the '24-25 budget?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — For the 312 FTEs there's no change, but you know, there is a slight change in the amount of positions that are, as I said, that are open.

**Sally Houser:** — Great, thanks so much. So we referenced the Sask government's ambitious goal of 600,000 barrels of oil per day by 2030. I believe the target for the coming fiscal year is 460,000. And just to confirm that that number was reached before the tariff announcement?

[19:45]

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — So yes, we had the target of 600,000. And the numbers that you gave, the 459,000 or 460, is before.

**Sally Houser:** — Great, thanks. Can you comment on how, now with the impact of US [United States] tariffs, how you anticipate that affecting the target of 460,000?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — So first thing, don't want to speculate because there are no tariffs in place at this point in time. So I'd be only speculating, correct? And as you know, we have been working hard meeting with influencers in the United States and those who we believe that can help to navigate us through this tariff situation with the US administration. But at this point in time, our target of 600,000 has not changed, and neither has our annual target of 460,000.

**Sally Houser:** — Okay, thank you very much, Minister. Is there any oil from Saskatchewan going west to BC [British Columbia] through the Trans Mountain pipeline at the moment?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — The answer is no at this point in time.

Seventy per cent of our exported oil goes to the United States, our largest trading partner of course. And domestically, the other 30 per cent stays here to support our industries and our facilities in this province. I'm going to defer to one of my officials here, if you want, to give you a few more details on it.

**Sally Houser:** — I think that's fine for the moment. I appreciate it.

Thank you, Minister. How many new oil wells were drilled in Saskatchewan in 2024, and how many are forecasted to be drilled in 2025?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — So in 2024, 1,277 wells were drilled. And for 2025 we estimate that to be about 1,600.

**Sally Houser:** — Great, thank you. With regards to incentives to the oil and gas sector, with the Saskatchewan petroleum innovation incentive, SPII, and oil and gas processing investment incentive, the OGPII, how many of the companies participating in the multilateral well program are American owned?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — Just to be clear, you were just asking about the multilateral well program? Because you did start out by mentioning all the other incentive programs, but I think your question was straight to the multilaterals.

**Sally Houser:** — Yeah, what I'd like to know overall is, of kind of American-owned companies, how much has been claimed under the OGPII and SPII versus Canadian-owned companies?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — Okay. So that's different than what you asked at the end of yours because we have no American companies in the multilateral program, okay.

**Sally Houser:** — My apologies.

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — That's okay. So you led, but your question . . . So we were a little confused.

**Sally Houser:** — My apologies.

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — That's okay. That's okay.

**Sally Houser:** — My first kick at the can here.

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — The answer to that one is there are no American companies that have received credits in the OGPII or SPII programs in this province.

**Sally Houser:** — Thank you so much. Minister, could you please explain what you expect the results of the SPII, OGPII, and the multilateral well program to be in the '25-26 year, as well as the project costs of these programs before any consideration is given to the economic benefits?

[20:00]

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — So as you know, the eligibility criteria for OGPII is focused on significantly increasing oil and gas processing capacity in Saskatchewan, and OGPII has supported a number of associated gas commercialization projects which have resulted in fewer flared and vented methane emissions. And

SPII is focused on innovations that improve production and reduce environmental impacts.

We can probably give you some data, and I'll let my deputy minister here provide that to you with regards to the '23-24 program into that. But it's really difficult to predict at this point in time who will access those credits for the next year. So you probably won't see any data or results until the '26-27 program, right? So I'll turn it over to my deputy minister.

**Blair Wagar:** — Sure. Blair Wagar, deputy minister. We can give you some performance stats, I think, is what you're looking for. So in terms of OGPII, or oil and gas processing incentive program, up to this point there's about 20 projects or applications that have been received that are either approved or conditionally approved.

And so of the ones that we have, so far we've leveraged about \$375 million in project capital that's eligible. Or sorry, project capital overall; not all of that necessarily is eligible. And then that has generated . . . The associated credits associated with that is about 50 million in credits up to this point, and what we're projecting for going forward is about another 161 million in capital projects. That's the total projects, and then the associated credits with those would be about 23 million. So that's for OGPII.

For SPII we have about 14 projects that are either approved or conditionally approved. That's leveraged about \$86 million in capital that the industry has invested. Of that investment, about \$18 million have been generated in associated credits.

That's kind of what we've had so far. And then from a projection perspective, based on what we have on the radar in the hopper, 129 million in capital investment that the industry would make. And then that would generate \$18 million in credits based on the applications we have now and our understanding of what's eligible in those applications. That's kind of the numbers that we get to.

**Sally Houser:** — Okay, thank you very much. You know, enhanced oil recovery has always been a big part of the Saskatchewan oil industry. Are there any new projects on the drawing board that you see moving to implementation and production over the next three or four years?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — These chairs don't roll very well on rug. You have to kind of pull them forward. So currently Saskatchewan has 65 EOR [enhanced oil recovery] projects actively producing and 10 EOR projects pending — approved but not yet on production.

So project types include steam-assisted gravity drainage, or the SAGD, as you've heard, and other thermal steam projects; and CO<sub>2</sub> injection projects; polymer injection projects, which include alkaline-surfactant-polymer floods; and gas and solvent injection projects. So there's 65 that are actually producing currently and 10 pending.

**Sally Houser:** — Thank you very much, Minister. And what's the status of the EOR project that is using CO<sub>2</sub> from the Boundary dam power station? And how high have they been able to drive the recovery rate from that field?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — Okay, so the estimated ultimate recovery from the current SAGD projects in Saskatchewan are between 60 and 80 per cent. And the one for Weyburn CO<sub>2</sub> EOR project is greater than 55 per cent, so 55 per cent. So a conventional well, if you were looking at a conventional well, would only be about 10 to 15 per cent. So it's very significant as to what we're capturing.

**Sally Houser:** — Thank you, Minister. Can you list for me today, or perhaps table if the information's not readily available, but I'd like to have a list of each: for remediation of contaminated sites, a list of the contaminated sites that your department has booked liability for, and the amount of liability by site.

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — So we have two main ones, the Gunnar one which has 35 satellite sites, and Lorado mill site as well that we have liabilities on. And I'm going to turn it over to Cory to talk about what those liabilities are.

**Cory Hughes:** — Cory Hughes, for the record. So yeah, so the Gunnar site also has 35 associated satellite sites. The total liability for those sites was 368.5 million, and the remaining liability on Gunnar and the satellite sites is 82.9 million. There is a separate liability for the Lorado mill site. The total liability was 34.4 million and the remaining liability on that site, which is fully remediated now, is 3.7 million.

**Sally Houser:** — Okay, thank you very much. Has the liability on those sites changed in the past two years? Has there been any changes?

[20:15]

**Cory Hughes:** — Cory Hughes, for the record. So last year we did add \$90 million to the liability of Gunnar and the satellite sites. And we added \$3 million for the Lorado site. And there's no changes this year.

**Sally Houser:** — Thank you. Can you confirm how much has been spent to date on remediating the uranium sites in northern Saskatchewan and how much of that is provincial versus federal dollars?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — So just your question is in regards to Gunnar and Lorado and the satellite sites, I'm assuming, to date.

**Sally Houser:** — Yeah. Okay.

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — To date is, from the provincial end of things, it's 285.6 million that we have spent to date on remediation. And the federal government has provided 1.13 million.

**Sally Houser:** — Okay. And to that end, what's the status of the lawsuit that your ministry filed against the federal government with respect to federal cost sharing of the remediation work? It seems to have been in abeyance for the past five years. Wondering if there's any intention of pursuing it any time soon.

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — I'm going to defer this one to my deputy minister, who has had more involvement on that end of things as well.

**Blair Wagar:** — So yeah, there's certainly a long runway on the project itself and, as a result, the discussions that we've been having with the federal government.

Right now the lawsuit is still active, and legal counsel have been in discussions. Of course with the federal election called, that's going to pause. The most recent thing that we have done is we've updated and amended our statement of claim to reflect the increase in liability that was booked last year that we referenced earlier. And then everything else kind of after that, it's difficult to comment now because this issue's still before the courts.

**Sally Housser:** — Thanks very much. But it is the intention to continue pursuing this?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — Absolutely.

**Sally Housser:** — Thank you. In the 2024-25 budget, the ministry committed 10 million over the next 10 years for critical mineral exploration and production. Can you first advise what activities you undertook last year to increase the critical mineral exploration and production, and what you intend to do this year, and how much of that 10 million commitment is budgeted this year?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — So last year the field activities that were covered under the 250,000 that they received was to do work in the field to identify areas of high potential for critical minerals. And the 350,000 this year is in addition to continue with the airborne geophysical work that is being done.

**Sally Housser:** — And what is the list of minerals that'll be considered for funding from the mineral exploration program?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — So as you know, we are blessed in this province with many, many potential critical minerals that are very important to the economic development and industries of this province. And what we are targeting is the highest potential critical minerals that we do have — and there's a number of them — particularly around the rare earth part of things, as you know with the SRC [Saskatchewan Research Council] and the facility processing plant that is, you know, looking at those rare earths and the potential for them in commercial production.

So there's a large area of what we're looking at, but it is the highest potential ones that we are focused on, and Cory here is going to give you a list of a few of them that we are looking at. But as you know, we have already identified 27 of the 34 critical minerals that occur in our province, and we have the potential to identify more through these programs and provide that data to industry so that they can move forward.

**Cory Hughes:** — Yeah, Cory Hughes, for the record. Just to get into . . . As the minister said, at this point it will really depend on the results of some of the fieldwork we're doing to identify the highest potential areas. Some of the most opportune minerals for the province right now are really associated with base metals — copper, zinc, cobalt — the rare earth elements, and as well as we may use uranium. But it really depends on how much geological information we have in those areas already, and if there's a need for more of them to assist industries.

**Sally Housser:** — Okay, thank you very much. How many

companies are currently exploring in the province for rare earth minerals, and can you provide a list of the companies?

**Blair Wagar:** — So we're aware of, you know, around between three and four companies specifically that are looking for rare earth specifically, companies like Appia Rare Earths & Uranium Corp., for example. Or Searchlight Resources, REAlloys are a couple companies that we're aware of. However when you get a disposition to search in our North, those companies are not restricted to specifically like rare earth elements. They can be searching for uranium. They can be searching for other hardrock minerals that they discover. So it's kind of hard to pinpoint exactly what companies are searching for what when they get a disposition.

**Sally Housser:** — Thanks so much. I appreciate that. Barring that, could we get a list of all companies doing exploration, regardless of whether it's uranium or critical minerals? Understanding that.

[20:30]

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — So all of the disposition holders that are exploring in the province are found online on our public online site, our geological atlas. So I mean, there's a number of them there. So you could go on there and find them because that is public. It's nothing to hide.

**Sally Housser:** — Thanks very much, Minister. I appreciate that. I'll have a look. Moving to natural gas, has there been any natural gas wells drilled in the past three or four years, or do you expect any to be drilled in '25-26?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — There were no gas wells drilled in the province last year.

**Sally Housser:** — Last year? In the past three or four years?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — None, neither.

**Sally Housser:** — None at all. Do we expect to produce or how much . . . any natural gas in Saskatchewan in 2025?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — There's one potential at this point in time.

**Sally Housser:** — One potential? And just for my own edification, when was that drilled?

**Blair Wagar:** — I think we were talking about, what are we aware of planned for this coming year?

**Sally Housser:** — Yes.

**Blair Wagar:** — We're aware of one that's potentially going to be drilled in the next fiscal year. We're not sure when exactly it will be drilled or if it will be drilled. There's just one projected right now.

**Sally Housser:** — Thank you very much. Could you tell me about the rate of growth of helium-producing wells and liquefaction facilities in 2023-24?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — So just to give you a little bit of data here. In 2020 we had 352 400 cubic metres being produced in the province. And currently in 2024, it's 4 996 600. And currently we have 31 active wells and 9 purification facilities producing around 5 million cubic metres of helium per year.

**Sally Housser:** — Thank you, Minister. And I appreciate the growth from 2020 to them, but it still appears that you achieved less than half of the target for that year. Is there any explanation as to why? And if so, is there any kind of lessons learned or a report on that? And if so, could it be tabled?

**Cory Hughes:** — Yeah, for this year we did change our annual goal to a production-based goal as opposed to a well-based goal. You asked about lessons learned; that was one. But I think the most important thing to know about helium is that it is growing significantly each year. We are now producing about 3 per cent of the world's helium, and we are on track to meet the helium action plan goal of producing 10 per cent of the world's helium by 2030.

**Sally Housser:** — Okay, thanks. That was my next question, if we were on track, so I appreciate that. Can you please, Minister, outline the progress and present status of the NexGen uranium energy project since the environmental assessment approval was issued in November of 2023?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — Could you repeat the question? It was a little bit confusing.

**Sally Housser:** — Sorry. My apologies. Just outlining the progress and/or status of the NexGen uranium energy project since the environmental assessment approval was issued in 2023.

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — So as you're probably aware, NexGen has gone through and been approved through the provincial environmental impact assessment. And so they've fully met all of the approvals from the province, and they currently have received some federal hearing dates in November and January.

And just so that you're aware, I had the opportunity to meet with our federal minister of energy and resources, Minister Wilkinson, on a one-on-one and did bring this to his attention and to be clear, to say that, you know, there are priorities within the province that need to be expedited in order to get some of these projects moving.

[20:45]

And you know, even though they're in a bit of a limbo right now federally, he acknowledged that there is work that needs to be done in order to expedite, you know, large projects that are important to the province. And then following that I did send him a letter to remind him that NexGen has been waiting and that things need to move forward quicker.

**Sally Housser:** — Thanks, Minister. And if there's any greater sense of timing, timelines, or are we just kind of in the hurry-up-and-wait for those federal assessments?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — It is in the feds' hands right now and the hearing dates have been set. We have no control over those hearing dates and when they are set and when CNSC [Canadian

Nuclear Safety Commission], you know, the Canadian nuclear commission meets with them.

**Sally Housser:** — And do you have a sense of the type of mine that will be used to mine the deposit? Open pit? Underground?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — So we will let Cory give you a bit of an update on it.

**Cory Hughes:** — Cory Hughes, for the record. So they will be mining . . . It'll be an underground mine similar to some of our existing underground mines.

**Sally Housser:** — Thank you. Do you know what the size of the deposit is? Are the known reserves at a level to support a mine, or is further exploration still required in that respect?

**Cory Hughes:** — Cory Hughes, for the record. So initially when they had discovered the deposit, it is a world-class deposit. I think the timelines they initially looked at were 11 years. They've since had a very extensive exploration program in the past few years, and they've expanded that resource significantly. So they're looking at, you know, at minimum, a 15- to 20-year mine is the most recent that I've seen. And you know, they will continue to explore to expand that resource to have a longer mining life.

**Sally Housser:** — Thank you. Do you have any information available on the number of local northern residents hired back into uranium mining? And if so, do you have a percentage of staff or people working that are Indigenous?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — You're talking — sorry — about mining specifically?

**Sally Housser:** — Yes. I would take both if you have uranium-specific, but overall would be welcome as well.

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — I have had the opportunity to meet with a number of our mining industry folks and CEOs [chief executive officer] and talk about the employment opportunities they have, as well as how many folks that they do have in the North working for them that are of Indigenous backgrounds, and the commitments they have made to working with those communities and employing as many people as they possibly are able to.

Just as far as numbers go, in 2023 the Saskatchewan uranium industry was responsible for 3,420 jobs, including direct employees and contractors. So the uranium industry is a major employer of northern and Indigenous workers with almost 50 per cent of northern workers who reside in the North.

**Sally Housser:** — Thank you, Minister. Recognizing that the clock's running down here. It's an impact of the bounty and variety of resources that we are blessed to have in this province of course. I guess getting a quick question on just how often do pipelines have to be checked for corrosion as they age? What kind of check is required of the companies? And are the results of these checks logged with the ministry?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — Okay, so just to be clear, pipelines that cross provincial boundaries are federally regulated, so the only ones that we control and have authority over monitoring and

mitigating any risk on are flowlines that are usually between facilities. And that's one of the reasons why we've made more of an investment, as you saw in the budget, into our system in order to be sure that safety is priority for those flowlines but also that, you know, we mitigate any risk that might come forward.

And so I'm going to turn over to Debby here to talk about, you know, how we monitor those and regulate them and what standards we do follow.

**Sally Houser:** — Thank you.

**Debby Westerman:** — Hi, I'm Debby Westerman. I'm the acting assistant deputy minister of the energy regulation division. We are in charge of inspections. We do risk-based inspections, so that's on wells, facilities, and pipelines. And we bill out based on risk factors and inspect the most riskiest pipelines.

We have a schedule that we follow year to year. Plus these pipelines have to adhere to CSA [Canadian Standards Association] standards, so that's including corrosion inhibition, where we make sure that they're built to a level that they should not corrode based on what product is going through them.

**Sally Houser:** — Thank you. And were there any leaks, major or minor, in 2024 within Saskatchewan's borders?

[21:00]

**Debby Westerman:** — In 2024 we had four pipeline incidents, all very minor.

**Sally Houser:** — Could you give me the areas in the province of where they occurred?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — I don't believe we have, you know, necessarily the areas on the sheet, just the numbers that we do have. And you know, even though it says four incidents, they're minor. Four incidents, it should be zero. So that's why we've invested into the budget this year to ensure that, you know, we can mitigate any risks as we move forward in this province.

**Sally Houser:** — Thank you very much. I'm sure the information exists somewhere of what parts of the province, the-minor-though-they-were incidents occurred. If you'd be able to provide that information at some point, that would be appreciated.

**Debby Westerman:** — So to answer that question, our incident information is public. It is on our website online, and it will show specifically where the incidents took place.

**Sally Houser:** — Okay, I'll google that then again. Thanks very much. Appreciated that. Moving right along to forestry, what is the current status of the P.A. [Prince Albert] pulp mill reopening? Are we still on track for 2027?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — So this was public knowledge as well. Paper Excellence, now Domtar, did announce in September of last year that they would not be reopening the P.A. pulp mill. And it was in the *paNOW*, it was in the *StarPhoenix*, I believe, and it was in a number as well.

**Sally Houser:** — And how many forest product facilities are operating in Saskatchewan, and what products do they produce?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — Right. So in Saskatchewan we have six large primary forest product facilities producing lumber, oriented strand board, OSB, and pulp. And in addition to those there are about 210 smaller businesses producing a variety of primary and secondary forest products in the province as well. So forestry is the second-largest industry in northern Saskatchewan following mining, so very important industry up there.

**Sally Houser:** — Absolutely. And with regards to the OSB, understanding that the Paper Excellence project is no longer going on, what's the status of the One Sky Forest Products OSB mill? And are they still on track to be operational in 2027?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — So the Government of Saskatchewan has allocated nearly 1.2 million cubic metres of timber to One Sky Forest Products. And the company does plan to begin construction on the 500 million plant in 2025 — this year — and to be open in 2027, creating an estimated 800 direct and indirect jobs. Indigenous forestry investments will partner with One Sky on this project.

**Sally Houser:** — Thank you, Minister. Could you describe — and if there's any data or modelling — what the effect on our forestry industry has been from the massive forest fires over the past few years? Is there any risk assessment that's been done of what the next few years looks like with the impact of climate change and the potential for forest fires going forward?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — So when it comes to the forestry industry, we allocate the resources and the facilities. And you know, when it comes to the impact of forest fires and what that might . . . [inaudible] . . . it falls under Environment. But I'm going to let Cory add a little bit more to this.

**Cory Hughes:** — Cory Hughes. So the Ministry of Environment is a ministry that approves the sustainable timber harvest levels, and that has determined the annual allowable cut. And that is reviewed every, I believe, every five years. And that looks at what impacts have taken place as far as, be it forest fires or any other factors that may limit access to the timber. So that is regularly reviewed to ensure that the annual allowable cut is at a sustainable level and can support the existing facilities, and then look for timber for new facilities if there's being some proposed.

**Sally Houser:** — Thank you. And in terms of that review, when was the last one conducted?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — I think that question would have to be deferred to Environment to give you, you know, any specifics around that. So as I said, we just allocate the resources and . . . [inaudible] . . . the facilities.

**Sally Houser:** — Makes sense. Thank you. I will confer with my colleague here to maybe see if we can find that. I appreciate that. Have there been any significant insect outbreaks that we're fighting in the northern boreal forest or any that we anticipate becoming a problem, such as pine beetle?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — That would be Environment as well. Sorry.



[21:15]

**Sally Housser:** — Okay, another collab then for your ministry. Does the ministry work with Public Safety on the fire attack strategy in the North with respect to the different economic or financial values of the different forest areas? Do you work with Public Safety on tailoring that strategy to maintain a higher-value forest over low-value forest?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — That is Environment as well, but also understanding that the Public Safety Agency is a stand-alone organization that also does the monitoring of those areas. So that would be better answered by them.

**Sally Housser:** — What's the province's current position concerning the possible opening of new coal mines in the future?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — That is not Energy and Resources as well. It falls under CIC.

**Sally Housser:** — Okay, then I guess for SaskPower, I'll defer that to my colleague Aleana Young on some of those questions as well.

**Blair Wagar:** — Maybe just before . . .

**Sally Housser:** — Yeah.

**Blair Wagar:** — That's okay. So to the minister's point, all of our coal resources in the province, we still regulate the . . . or access to the coal itself, but all of our coal, you know — I stand to be corrected by Cory or others — is all dedicated to power generation. So the minister's point, if there is any kind of aspect of looking at expanding coal, coal mining, coal production, largely that's driven by SaskPower because all of our coal is for thermal coal as opposed to coal that's made in the steel.

**Sally Housser:** — Thank you very much. With respect to that, and again acknowledging that I'm still learning here, does the ministry have any oversight or involvement in the remediation of coal mines in places such as Coronach, or is it the Ministry of Environment as well?

**Blair Wagar:** — So there's a bit of differentiation between coal mining. There's the active coal mining that's taking place that is supporting the thermal coal that's used in the power production side. And so we have no active role there at this point in time.

There are older abandoned coal mines that are there from many, many years ago. We have a role to play in those and we take a risk-based approach in terms of how we monitor those. And any time there's any issues that kind of arise, we go and deal with those in terms of making sure that they're safe and that people are aware of them.

**Sally Housser:** — Is there any liability associated with that?

**Blair Wagar:** — At this point, no, we don't have liability associated with those.

**Sally Housser:** — Thank you very much. Minister, given the much more than average or than other resources, the burden that will be placed on potash given potential tariffs as well as

normalize trade with the United States and Russia, where current target for potash '25-26 is 8.4 billion in sales, how do you expect that figure to change?

And I know in the overall budget there's the kind of the half page of what kind of an assessment of tariffs might look like. I'm wondering if there has been more potash- or energy-and-resource-specific modelling of what impacts might be and what that means for your bottom line.

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — As I did mention earlier in some of my comments to you on answering another question is, you know, I have met with a number of our potash producers in this province and, you know, asked them the questions about what impact they think that this might have. And like anything else, they . . . I can't speculate on it. There are no tariffs at this point in time. There's no impacts at this time on the industries.

And we have been supportive of working with the Finance minister on an analysis that was released in the budget's technical paper, as you're probably aware. So it's a very uncertain and dynamic situation that we're all in right now. But at this point in time, you know, to speculate as to what that impact might be would be wrong because industry is quite aware of what may or may not be. And they can't, you know, come up with a scenario as well at this point in time.

**Sally Housser:** — Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that, and I've spoken with many of the potash companies and appreciate the . . . But I just want to confirm that there has been no specific, you know, analysis modelling out of, oh, 10 per cent on potash, 15, 20, that has been done by your ministry.

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — But we have, as I said, worked with the Ministry of Finance and that's where it probably lies more so on the analysis that they're doing based on a number of, you know, assumptions that they've put in place.

**Sally Housser:** — Okay, thanks. And I think I've got one more in there, Mr. Chair. Presuming that the business plan was completed before the tariffs announcement and the normalization of relations with Russia, has there been a discussion in the ministry of providing — and I know a break with tradition, but these are extraordinary times — providing an updated version of that business plan or those accounts should the worst come to pass on liberation day there on Wednesday?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — Well as I said, I'm not going to speculate on what that might look like. The Minister of Finance has, you know, been through an analysis of what they may . . . might happen even at the 10 per cent if you're talking the potash industry. But we have no idea at this point in time what that looks like because, as you know, there are no tariffs at this point in time. So we're moving ahead with our forecasts and what we believe is important to the economic prosperity of this province and those industries that, you know, employ a lot of people and the people that work in those industries and the value that they bring to the economic prosperity of all citizens in Saskatchewan.

**Sally Housser:** — But just to confirm, I know the analysis is . . . We don't know what's happening, but what I'm asking is, when we do know what's happening, will there be updated figures?

[21:30]

[The committee adjourned at 21:33.]

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — I guess like I said, if there are impacts, I guess we'll have to wait and see what that might look like in the future. But I am not going to predict the future and I'm not going to speculate on what this might mean to industries in our province. In speaking with them, as I told you I did is, you know, they've done probably their own analysis on what it means to them and what it might look like for them. But at this point in time they'd only be making speculations as well.

**Sally Housser:** — Thank you, Minister.

**Chair Thorsteinson:** — Thank you. It being having reached our agreed-upon time for consideration of these estimates, we will now adjourn consideration of the estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 for the Ministry of Energy and Resources. Minister, do you have any closing comments?

**Hon. Colleen Young:** — Yes, I would like to begin by thanking those folks in the ministry here who, you know, in the short time I've been, have been a strong backup for me in helping me to learn this portfolio and to provide me with the information as we move along. And yes, we are in some trying times, and they have done a phenomenal job of, you know, being aware of all the things that are going on and providing me with that information.

So I appreciate all the work that they do. And you know, I see them on a regular basis, almost daily, and spend a lot of time with them, but they've been very valuable to me as well.

So thank you to the committee members for your time this evening, and thank you to Hansard for being here this evening and doing the recording.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the member opposite for her questions tonight. You know I can't . . . There's not answers that I know you were looking for sometimes, but like I said, you know, you hate to speculate and create something that shouldn't exist. But thank you.

**Chair Thorsteinson:** — Thank you, Minister. MLA Housser, do you have any closing comments?

**Sally Housser:** — I guess just thank you to the minister and to all the staff for providing what could be provided. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and to all the committee members and to Hansard, and also to the production folks as well who I know are making sure that this is getting aired to surely thousands of people following this committee at home tonight. Thank you very much for being here, folks. Appreciate it.

**Chair Thorsteinson:** — Yeah. Thank you. Thank you, Minister, and thank you to all the officials who joined us here this evening. That concludes our business for the day. I would ask a member to move a motion to adjourn. MLA Rowden has moved. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Thorsteinson:** — Carried. Committee stands adjourned until Wednesday, April 2nd at 5 p.m.