STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY

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[The committee met at 16:59.]

Chair Thorsteinson: — Good evening, everybody. Welcome to the Standing Committee on the Economy. I'm James Thorsteinson. I'm the Chair of the Standing Committee on the Economy. With us here tonight are Kevin Weedmark, Darlene Rowden, Hon. Terry Jenson, Kim Breckner, Tajinder Grewal, and sitting in for Sally Housser we have Bhajan Brar.

[17:00]

General Revenue Fund
Innovation Saskatchewan
Vote 84

Subvote (IS01)

Chair Thorsteinson: — Tonight we will be considering the estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 for Innovation Saskatchewan. We will now begin with consideration of vote 84, Innovation Saskatchewan, subvote (IS01).

Minister Kaeding is here with his officials from the agency. 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 yourself and your officials and make your opening remarks.

Hon. Warren Kaeding: — Good evening. Thank you, Mr. Chair, committee members. I'm pleased to be here for a consideration of the 2025-26 estimates for Innovation Saskatchewan.

Here with me today are officials from the agency. To my left is Kari Harvey, our chief executive officer. To my right is Brent Sukenik, our vice-president of corporate strategy and services; Avery Vold, our vice-president of academic research investments and life science innovation; Drew Dwernychuk, our vice-president of energy, mining, ICT [information and communications technology] and ag tech innovation; and Kelley Moore, our vice-president, research and technology park operations. I would also like to acknowledge my chief of staff, Drew Lumbard.

Mr. Chair, committee members, I hope you will bear with me as I want to spend some time describing the many, many incredible accomplishments and achievements found within our province by the tech sector and done by the folks sitting both besides and behind me today.

Saskatchewan is built on innovation and collaboration. From pioneering agricultural breakthroughs to revolutionizing cancer treatments to save millions, our supportive connections open new pathways for each other that help ensure the future health, safety, and economic security of the province.

Now we see that same spirit embraced nationwide as we come together in these unprecedented economic times. This moment has reinvigorated our communities and reawakened us to the strengths that we have right here in this province. Innovation Saskatchewan sees tremendous opportunity to elevate our global innovation leadership and position our province as a premier destination for research and technological advancement, driving economic growth and employment.

Since 2009 this agency has been responsible for advancing the Government of Saskatchewan's innovation priorities and has had a profound impact on the province's tech sector and research community. The agency launched core funding programs like the Agtech Growth Fund and Saskatchewan Advantage Innovation Fund, which are dual research and development grant programs advancing the commercialization of game-changing technologies.

As well as the made-in-Saskatchewan technology program, which connects companies with industry, public, and non-profit partners to bring new technologies to market, Innovation Saskatchewan also funds six major research institutes, some of which are national facilities with state-of-the -art equipment and expertise only found in this province.

In 2022 the Innovation Place research and technology parks moved under the authority and management of Innovation Saskatchewan, creating an agency unlike any other in the country. This unique portfolio allows Innovation Saskatchewan to provide robust support, from aggressive tax incentives for local investors, to flexible and specialized spaces for start-ups, and investments for post-secondary research.

And perhaps most importantly, the deep commitment to our government's core values allows Innovation Saskatchewan to fully maximize every dollar to ensure it provides the highest return for Saskatchewan citizens and the world.

Mr. Chair, tonight I am proud to share highlights of these immense impacts and show how Innovation Saskatchewan has continuously punched well above its weight and will do so for many, many more years.

In '25-26 the agency will continue to focus on its four strategic goals to create economic growth and diversity. Goal (1) ensure that Innovation Saskatchewan is funding research that is creating economic impact and is aligned with Saskatchewan's research and development priorities; (2) build and support a sustainable and inclusive technology sector; (3) focus resources into areas of strategic advantage and opportunity such as ag tech, health tech, and cleantech to position Saskatchewan as a world-class innovation hub; and (4) is to make Saskatchewan the premier destination for local, national, and international research and innovation.

Innovation Saskatchewan has helped create a dynamic research and tech environment in the province and is continually strengthening its support to ensure global industry and innovation leaders know that great ideas grow here.

This fiscal year the agency will receive a budget of $32.5 million, a 5 per cent increase from the '24-25 budget. This new budget includes two main commitments that will invest in revitalizing crucial infrastructure to further elevate the province's global research leadership position.

The first is a $3 million commitment to the Canadian Light Source, or CLS, to upgrade essential equipment, matching a $3 million investment from the federal government. CLS is one of four Major Science Initiatives Fund's research facilities of national importance in Canada that call Saskatchewan home. This national research facility operates Canada's only synchrotron, a powerful instrument that enables scientists to study the structural and chemical properties of materials at the molecular level, advancing discoveries and technologies that will transform our world.

Specifically the unique infrastructure allows researchers to utilize beamlines for more advanced and experimental techniques not possible at other facilities in the country and has led to breakthroughs in innovative health, agriculture, environment, and advanced materials research. Additionally CLS offers its full service to industry clients, making it one of the most accessible synchrotron facilities in the world and a crucial part of furthering and attracting global partnerships.

Since the facility began operations in 2005, almost 6,000 researchers have used CLS for incredible discoveries, from helping in the fight against COVID-19 to creating new cancer-fighting drugs, developing more nutritious and climate-resistant crops, and supporting cleantech and green mining processes.

This additional commitment by Innovation Saskatchewan will ensure reliable and sustainable operation of the CLS so that the facility can continue to serve more than 1,200 scientists annually from across Canada and around the world. This will help researchers solve the world's greatest challenges, train the next generation of scientists, and support industries to become more efficient, innovative, and sustainable in their practices. Importantly this additional funding from Innovation Saskatchewan will ensure that CLS will continue its legacy of innovation right in Saskatchewan for future generations.

Mr. Chair, the second commitment is $4.1 million for the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization, or VIDO. This builds on Innovation Saskatchewan's $15 million commitment in 2021 to expand the capabilities for the organization to become Canada's centre for pandemic research. VIDO is another of Canada's major science initiatives research facilities of national importance located in Saskatchewan. It has been a world leader in infectious disease research and vaccine development for humans and animals for nearly half a century and is now one of the largest and most advanced containment facilities in the world.

VIDO is a vertically integrated organization with extensive vaccine manufacturing infrastructure, including containment level 2 and 3 facilities. This commitment will help upgrade VIDO's infrastructure to include containment level 4 standards, the highest level possible, and large animal housing and vaccine manufacturing, making VIDO one of only a few facilities in the world with this capacity for infectious disease research and development of new medicines.

These enhancements to CLS and VIDO are essential to strengthening the province's presence in the life sciences sector to successfully embrace major opportunities emerging globally in health research and innovation. They will also strengthen Canada's pandemic preparedness and ensure Saskatchewan is helping lead the response to any future global health crises that impact our communities.

Moreover, these commitments complement additional investments that Innovation Saskatchewan has made to strengthen existing facilities that are foundational to the province's research landscape and make it easier for innovators to develop ideas in Saskatchewan. An effect of this work is the attraction and retention of top talent and the provision of critical made-in-Saskatchewan solutions worldwide.

As examples of the agency's ongoing commitments to other research facilities, Innovation Saskatchewan announced additional investments for the Petroleum Technology Research Centre, or PTRC, and the Sylvia Fedoruk Canadian Centre for Nuclear Innovation, known as the Fedoruk Centre, in 2024. The agency helped establish PTRC's new Energy Innovation Hub at Innovation Place in Regina, with $1.5 million to help meet current and future demands for energy research and innovation.

PTRC is an industry-driven research organization and has been on the forefront of energy research for over 26 years. It is a world leader in carbon capture, utilization, and storage; enhanced oil recovery; and geothermal energy. The Energy Innovation Hub allows PTRC to advance these research strengths and expand its portfolio into emerging and high-demand priority areas, including methane reduction, clean hydrogen, and compressed air energy storage. This facility represents the future of sustainable energy. It further elevates Saskatchewan's position as a global energy research leader and is fundamental in providing opportunities to train the next generation of top energy experts in our province.

Innovation Saskatchewan also invested $400,000 in the Fedoruk Centre in 2024 to support and expand nuclear research in Saskatchewan. The Fedoruk Centre is an advanced science facility focused on nuclear research, development, and training, and is also Saskatchewan's sole producer of FDG [fludeoxyglucose], a radiopharmaceutical required for PET [positron emission tomography] and CT [computerized tomography] scans at Saskatoon's Royal University Hospital, which has increased vital health care services for more than 3,000 patients each year, services that citizens could previously only access out of province.

The Fedoruk Centre is also home to the Saskatchewan synchrotron facility, one the few synchrotrons in Canada accessible to external researchers and industry, which has been instrumental in elevating Saskatchewan's position as a global leader in nuclear research.

These commitments are in addition to core funding provided by the agency to its six research partners that are vital to the province's research community and driving economic and employment growth for our province, including $4.1 million for the CLS, 4.14 million for VIDO, 1.675 million for PTRC, 2.5 million for the Fedoruk Centre, and 256,000 for the industry-led International Minerals Innovation Institute, or IMII, to support digital mining transformation.

IMII was established in 2012 with the goal of building innovation and labour capacity in the province's mining industry and has expanded its visions to position Saskatchewan as a leading mining jurisdiction through two primary areas: research and

development projects, and education and training programs. Since 2013 IMII has managed 50 projects worth more than $20 million through these initiatives.

Finally Innovation Saskatchewan will provide $4.849 million in core funding for the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation or SHRF, which allocates funding to high-impact and peer-reviewed health research relevant to the province. Since 2003 SHRF has been responsible for managing the province's investments in improving health care through research and is actively engaged with the province's research institutions and post-secondary institutions. Over its more than 20-year history SHRF has funded a total of 1,381 projects and injected over $92 million of direct investment into the health research ecosystem in Saskatchewan, improving the lives of people in our communities.

Mr. Chair, Saskatchewan has a long history as a research pioneer and has evolved into a one-of-a-kind research powerhouse in our country that is not only impacting our global communities, but generating tangible economic benefits for our province. Cumulatively our post-secondary institutions generated more than $472 million in research revenue, according to the latest data available from the '23-24 fiscal year.

VIDO's E. coli vaccine, developed to protect livestock especially in feedlots, has saved the industry more than $300 million annually since it was commercialized in 2008. Petroleum research on enhanced oil recovery or EOR has allowed more than 700 million cumulative barrels of EOR oil to be produced in the province at a value of over $40 billion. These are just a few examples of the impact that our research community has on our provincial economy and industry, and a window into the possibilities of potential global opportunities.

Innovation Saskatchewan has already taken next steps to attract more international partnerships and collaborations for our research community. The agency signed a memorandum of understanding with the German Academic Exchange Service, or DAAD [Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst], to encourage increased research and academic collaboration between Saskatchewan and Germany. DAAD is one of the world's largest and most important funding organizations for the international exchange of researchers and students.

[17:15]

In March, Innovation Saskatchewan hosted the ISED [Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada] Horizon Europe secretariat at its Saskatoon research and technology park during the organization's cross-Canada tour. Horizon Europe is the world's largest research and innovation funding program and recently expanded programming access to Canadian researchers. This will provide Saskatchewan researchers with significant funding and partnership opportunities with European researchers in areas already aligned with our province's strengths and priorities.

These are two direct pathways that Saskatchewan can use to enhance its participation with global partners in the development of innovative solutions to address the greatest challenges facing our communities, helping protect our populations, our global economies, and our food systems.

Mr. Chair, in addition to these supports for our research community, the agency's Innovation and Science Fund, or ISF, matches federal innovation funding dollars for projects from Saskatchewan universities, colleges, and research institutes to promote research excellence and competitiveness in the province. For example, in 2024 ISF invested $200,000 in a project at the University of Regina that aims to make small modular reactors, or SMRs, safer and more efficient. With the world's renewed focus on nuclear energy, this project will provide valuable insight for Saskatchewan's government and industry as well as advanced training and employment opportunities in SMR, technology that will benefit our province.

ISF is a critical funding source for research projects in the province like this to secure and leverage federal funds and grants. Since 2018 Innovation Saskatchewan has invested over $18 million in ISF funding into innovative projects in Saskatchewan institutions. In turn they have leveraged $137 million in external investment with a 13 to 1 return on investment.

Innovation Saskatchewan will also continue funding for its other core programs. The agency is allocating $1 million each to the Saskatchewan Advantage Innovation Fund, or SAIF, and the Agtech Growth Fund. As noted, these dual research and development grant programs accelerate the commercialization of game-changing technologies focusing on agriculture, mining, energy, manufacturing, and health care. Innovation Saskatchewan's investments in these programs have generated exponential returns for the province's economy as companies choose to stay, grow, develop their technologies, and collaborate with industry.

Combined since 2019, SAIF and AGF [Agtech Growth Fund] have committed more than $20 million to 85 projects resulting in more than $147 million in post-project investment and a 343 per cent return on investment on average. Innovation Saskatchewan is allocating $100,000 between the made-in-Saskatchewan technology program, or MIST program, and the Innovation Challenge, which are two programs aiming to address public sector challenges with local innovative solutions.

Rising Saskatchewan success stories like Luxsonic Technologies and Rivercity Innovations used these programs early in their journeys to test and refine their technologies. Now these companies have expanded well beyond our provincial borders, sharing their solutions — like immersive technology to improve access to health care and automated temperature monitoring to reduce carbon footprints and food waste — while keeping their companies firmly rooted in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Chair, alongside its core funding programs, the agency will also continue to support the innovation ecosystem through additional commitments. Innovation Saskatchewan will provide $375,000 to Co.Labs, Saskatchewan's first technology incubator and a critical pillar in the tech community. Co.Labs' start-ups set a new record for growth, generating a total revenue of $81 million since inception in 2017. This rise follows a 48 per cent increase in revenue generated from '22 to '23, marking significant and sustainable growth and underscoring the viability of Saskatchewan's tech start-ups. Since its launch in 2017, Co.Labs has incubated 214 start-ups which have created over 903 jobs and raised $50.6 million in private investment.

The agency also supports Cultivator's Agtech Accelerator, which connects companies developing cutting-edge agriculture technology with industry and investors. To date the accelerator has supported 47 companies from three cohorts, with cohort four recently started. Together they have raised $119.2 million in private capital, 72.1 million in revenue, and created 193 new jobs.

Aligned with this, Innovation Saskatchewan also continued investing in Canada's largest agtech venture capital fund, Emmertech. This is part of the $15 million commitment announced in 2020 to invest $3 million per year over five years to ensure ag tech start-ups in Saskatchewan continue scaling and growing.

Emmertech has already supported five scaling Saskatchewan companies, including Rayhawk and Lucent Biosciences, which are having a significant impact in our province and are on the cusp of global expansion. For example, through support from Emmertech, Lucent Biosciences established the first industrial-scale fertilizer production facility in Rosetown, which enabled the company to transform from a research entity into a commercial entity, moving all manufacturing from BC [British Columbia] to Saskatchewan and create 15 jobs with more than half of the company's employees based in our province.

In 2025 Emmertech led a $3 million financing round for Rayhawk to further develop its autonomous rail car loading solution after an initial $450,000 SAIF funding round in 2022. Rayhawk's technology is already used by global enterprises in the mining industry, and this funding will help the company expand into the agriculture industry with a focus on grain-handling and food processing plants.

These types of investments are critical for our province and national growth. It is predicted that by accelerating investments in technology, agriculture has the potential to add $11 billion to Canada's gross domestic product by 2030. Additionally, investing in high-growth start-ups with high market potential like Rayhawk and Lucent Biosciences shows how Saskatchewan's innovation ecosystem effectively works together to provide funding support for start-ups at all stages and drive economic growth.

Innovation Saskatchewan has also committed $400,000 to the technology ecosystem program which supports stakeholder programs and initiatives that advance tech sector growth. For example, through this program, Innovation Saskatchewan supports Opus which is a new start-up incubator and pre-accelerator program for the USask [University of Saskatchewan] community headquartered in Collider at Innovation Place in Saskatoon.

Opus fills a gap in our innovation ecosystem by focusing on commercializing deep tech innovations that are research based, equipping founders with the necessary skills for start-up development with the end goal of facilitating their progression to other accelerators and incubators like Co.Labs and Cultivator.

Opus is already seeing success in its missions through PathoScan which is a revolutionary crop disease diagnostic tool that enables farmers to perform real-time crop pathogen testing anywhere without it requiring any technical background. PathoScan is another made-in-Saskatchewan company that has benefited from the unwavering support in our province's tech ecosystem, fuelled by strategic investments from Innovation Saskatchewan.

Since winning Co.Hack at Co.Labs, PathoScan was accepted into Cultivator's Agtech Accelerator program, receiving $75,000 in the Agtech Growth Fund, won Startup TNTs 2024 investment summit, and was then accepted into Opus. Through this journey, PathoScan has had the opportunity to refine its product for market and is ready to share it with global industries.

Access to these unique supports is removing barriers for Saskatchewan innovators, attracting and retaining top talent, and driving economic and employment growth. In fact since 2019 Saskatchewan's tech sector has experienced a remarkable 100.86 per cent increase in employment growth rate. That's 715 new jobs per year on average, a pace that will exceed our 2030 growth plan target. It's also the highest employment growth rate out of any of the Prairie provinces, surpassing both Alberta and Manitoba.

Hundreds of tech companies in diverse fields, like precision ag tech and immersive health tech, are choosing to stay, to build and grow here because of the vibrant ecosystem. The new Saskatchewan Polytechnic, Joseph A. Remai Saskatoon campus at Innovation Place in Saskatoon officially broke ground on the site of the first building, the new skilled trades and technology building. This will add a new dimension to the first-of-its-kind innovation corridor in Saskatoon and open more opportunities for everyone, from students learning new skills to start-ups looking for untapped talent and to established companies and researchers building partnerships.

Innovation Saskatchewan also sees a huge opportunity to revitalize its park infrastructure in Saskatoon as well as address an opportunity to further support these growing companies. The agency will continue its planning to transform the Galleria west wing into a multi-tenant space for scaling companies in key sector industries like ag tech with integrated laboratories, pilot plant space, and other specialized infrastructure.

Many of these companies have longer development timelines and require specialized infrastructure, unlike typical software start-ups. This project addresses these needs and adds capacity for scaling companies that have outgrown incubator or co-working space but have not yet reached the manufacturing phase.

From tech pioneers like Luxsonic Technologies and PathoScan at Innovation Place Saskatoon, to industry-focused sustainable energy experts like PTRC at Innovation Place Regina, to major national research institutes like VIDO and CLS on the U of Sask [University of Saskatchewan] campus, Saskatchewan, it's well positioned to elevate its global innovation leadership. This dynamic environment connecting academia, industry, and government, providing comprehensive supports and driving research and technology advancement, is exactly what Saskatchewan imagined for its innovation ecosystem and why Innovation Saskatchewan was created. Put simply, proximity leads to collaboration leads to innovation. That is at the heart of everything that the agency does.

The agency's unparalleled support for our tech sector and research community has helped Saskatchewan leverage its

unique advantages and have an outsize impact in the world. Our province is unmatched in its access to world-class research infrastructure, abundant natural resources, and government-supported programs and tax incentives, and is backed by a collaborative environment between industry, academia, and government. These advantages, combined with the top talent in our province, have already made us leaders in key economic sectors like agriculture and energy.

In 2024, Saskatchewan exported more than $18.5 billion in agriculture products, accounting for 41 per cent of total provincial exports. Much of that success is due to so many years of crop science work by Saskatchewan's researchers and innovative agtech solutions that revolutionize how we farm, what we grow, and how we export. Saskatchewan has become synonymous with energy, and as a world-leading research in sustainable areas like carbon capture and sequestration that allows us to produce 457,000 barrels of oil daily with a smaller environmental footprint than our global competitors.

This pioneering research in subsurface energy has laid the groundwork to transition to renewable areas like geothermal and compressed air energy storage while continuing to ensure a diverse energy mix to safeguard Canada's energy security. The province is also primed to grasp opportunities in emerging global sectors like life sciences in mining and critical minerals, where new technologies and solutions are in high demand.

Our life science sector is built on our strong foundation in agriculture and key research infrastructure like CLS, Fedoruk Centre, and VIDO, critical to advancing research in critical areas like nuclear medicine and vaccine production. Saskatchewan also has deep roots in the fast-accelerating mineral sector, alongside the first rare earth elements commercial facility in North America, that will allow us a chance to lead in what could be a $770 billion market by 2040.

We already grow food to feed millions globally. We produce and export some of the most sustainable energy products in the world and develop vaccines and therapeutics that save millions of human and animal lives. We know Saskatchewan can be a key that helps unlock the next life-saving vaccine, the next clean-energy solution, or the next climate-resistant crop to transform the world for the better and help protect our populations, the global economies, and the food systems.

Innovation Saskatchewan is ready to help usher in this new era of global innovation and take the next steps towards our province's bright future.

In closing, in '25-26 the agency will expand on its strong foundations to extend support for Saskatchewan's innovation ecosystem and continue to champion the Saskatchewan advantage as the province strives to be the best place to develop a technology company and undertake advanced research to solve global challenges. The government is proud to have Innovation Saskatchewan leading this mission, strengthening our province's core sectors while boldly advancing innovation to support the goals of our growth plan.

Mr. Chair, as you've been maybe able to tell, I am very excited about the opportunities that we have here. This concludes my remarks, and I welcome any questions that the committee may have on these estimates.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Thank you, Minister. I will now open the floor for questions. MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] Brar.

[17:30]

Bhajan Brar: — Yeah, thank you, Minister, and your staff for giving your valuable time. I want to welcome your officials to the legislature and look forward to our discussion this afternoon. My first question is does Innovation Saskatchewan have a 2025-26 strategic plan similar to the other government agencies and ministries? And if you do, can you please provide me a copy?

Hon. Warren Kaeding: — So we produce an annual report. The 2024 annual report was tabled last July, and you would expect the 2025 annual report to be tabled approximately the same time this year. And in that you'll find it responds to our strategic objectives and goals for Innovation Saskatchewan.

Bhajan Brar: — And my second question is, the budget for Innovation Saskatchewan has increased by over 13 per cent this year, one of the largest percentage increases in the government budget. Can you please explain what this increase is for, by project or activity?

Hon. Warren Kaeding: — Mr. Chair, we're going to need I guess clarification on the question. If you could just repeat the question for us?

Bhajan Brar: — Yeah. The budget for Innovation Saskatchewan increased by over 13 per cent this year, one of the largest percentage increases in the government budget. Can you please explain what this increase is for, by project or activity as compared to the last year?

Hon. Warren Kaeding: — So I'll get Brent to go through kind of how we got to that expense increase.

Bhajan Brar: — Okay, thank you.

Brent Sukenik: — Brent Sukenik, vice-president, corporate strategy and services. So the 13 per cent increase that you're talking about is just on the expense appropriation. In it there's three key areas that account for that increase. One is for salary adjustments that were processed this year. There's a $300,000 increase for FTE [full-time equivalent] increase, and that's for two new positions to support the research strategy. And the remaining of the increase is to support the ISF program.

Bhajan Brar: — So for the salary adjustments, how much is the amount of the increase? Salary adjustments?

Brent Sukenik: — Yeah, the first increase was the salary adjustments.

Bhajan Brar: — Okay. Okay. And my third question is can you please outline the projected budget for the respective research parks in Regina and Saskatchewan, including the breakdown of revenue and expenses for each of the three divisions overseen by vice-president, and then the budget for central services overseen by your fourth vice-president? I would appreciate just the high-

level revenue and expenses . . . [inaudible].

Brent Sukenik: — Thank you for the question. We don't have the detail to break down by vice-president organization. We have two parts of the agency, and this goes back to when the two organizations were merged. So the research park operations are self-funded so we don't get an appropriation to support the research parks. The appropriation that we do get really supports a portion of our organization. There's $3.9 million that supports the administration side of the business, and then the remaining amount supports specific program funding.

Bhajan Brar: — The fourth question is how much money does Innovation Saskatchewan plan to spend on renovation or improvements to the research parks respectively in 2025-26, and comparatively how much did you spend in '24-25?

Brent Sukenik: — All of our capital relates to the operation of the research parks. We are budgeting $12.8 million of capital expenditures for this coming fiscal year which includes the $4 million contribution towards advancing the west Galleria project. So that $12.8 million consists of some IT [information technology] capital. We have base maintenance capital, some infrastructure, and tenanted landlord improvements. The budget for this year was $11.8 million, so it's about a million dollars higher year over year.

Bhajan Brar: — Is there any money in the budget for improvements to the space provided by Innovation Saskatchewan in '25-26? And how much was spent on space improvement for Innovation Saskatchewan in 2024-25?

Brent Sukenik: — The $12.8 million for this year's coming budget, that is all related to the park investment. We don't have any budget in there for our own administrative offices, and that holds true for the '24-25 budget. All of our capital expenditures were either in infrastructure or the base maintenance capital for the parks.

Bhajan Brar: — Now the sixth question: how many square feet of space are sitting vacant at each of the two respective research parks as of April 1st, 2025?

Kari Harvey: — Hi. Kari Harvey, CEO [chief executive officer] of Innovation Saskatchewan. Thank you very much for the question. So in terms of our vacancy rate, the current vacancy rate of our combined park infrastructure is 19.49 per cent. So that's our combined rate. I guess to put that into context, so as you know, we have two research parks, one in Regina and one in Saskatoon, and there are a total of 26 buildings across both the parks. Just under about 2 million square feet of facility that we operate, and about 25 per cent of that would be considered specialized space like greenhouses and that sort of thing. And so in terms of that vacancy rate, we are looking at strategies to try to reduce those vacancy rates as we can.

We also know, as the minister was talking about in the opening comments about the Sask Poly campus, that project in and of itself is going to have a significant impact on our total overall vacancy rate as we go forward, particularly up in the Saskatoon campus.

Bhajan Brar: — Is there any square feet area vacant, do you know? What is the figure for that? What is the figure for the square feet vacant, unoccupied?

Kari Harvey: — The number that I have here is actually as of February 28th of 2025, there were 324,400 square feet of vacant space at the two parks. So there was 220,700 in Saskatoon and 103,700 in Regina.

Bhajan Brar: — In Regina, how much?

[17:45]

Kari Harvey: — 103,700 square feet in Regina.

Bhajan Brar: — Can you list for me how much funding is being provided by Innovation Saskatchewan to each of the following organizations for the commercialization of innovation, research, and technology? Number one, Canadian Light Source. Number two, Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization. Number three, Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation. Number four, International Minerals Innovation Institute. Number five, Petroleum Technology Research Centre. Number six, the Sylvia Fedoruk Canadian Centre for Nuclear Innovation.

Kari Harvey: — Okay. I'll start with the Canadian Light Source. So the amount of funding that we're providing to the Canadian Light Source is $4.1 million. That's the amount of operating funding that we're providing to the facility. As the minister mentioned in his remarks as well, we are making a commitment to the Canadian Light Source of an additional $3 million. That $3 million will not all be spent in this year. We will be working with them on how the cash flow for that funding will flow over the next few years.

But just to explain kind of what that funding is being used for, so as you're likely aware, the Canadian Light Source has been in operation for about 20 years. And while, you know, equipment and replacements have been ongoing, they're really at the point where they need to make some significant infrastructure investments in order to ensure reliability into the future. And so it's part of their facility strategy to focus on reliability.

A number of projects have been identified. The first one began in May of 2024, which is focusing on a total replacement of the linear accelerator which had components that were end of life. The second part to this replacement involves the installation of a new storage ring solid state amplifier, and this will replace obsolete technology, again to provide some long-term improvements and stability. So again, that's where our $3 million for investment will be directed to.

The solid state amplifier project will involve replacing amplifier tubes, which is a 1940s technology that's being phased out of synchrotrons around the world and has a greater point of single-point failure, and in addition replacement parts are no longer available. This new technology is going to involve the implementation of modular transistors to generate the power needed for the particle accelerators, and these are made up of modules that can be replaced while keeping the facility operational, and this will reduce downtime. So that's not currently possible in the current system. This is going to add critical reliability and redundancy within the facility.

Once this piece is completed, once those two projects are completed, that will set the stage for additional improvement with the installation of a second radio frequency cavity which again will provide some redundancy in the facility. So that's what that investment will be targeted towards.

As I mentioned, the 4.1 is the contribution that we provide to the Canadian Light Source as part of the provincial commitment to this national facility. The federal government also provides funding through the Canadian Foundation for Innovation through their MSI [major science initiatives] program, and they will be providing in the neighbourhood of $20.5 million this year for that facility.

Bhajan Brar: — You are talking about only Canadian Light Source. I am asking the other five also.

Kari Harvey: — So the next one I'll talk about is VIDO. So funding for this year remains at 4.14 million. And again that is operational funding that we provide. And similar to the response I provided with CLS, that's the provincial contribution to this facility that's funded through the Canadian Foundation for Innovation.

We will be also investing an additional $4.1 million, or we made a commitment to an additional 4.1, and this is really to help set up the pandemic centre of research excellence as well. That, again, similarly to the 3 million that we will be providing for CLS, that will be provided over a number of years as we discuss with VIDO sort of what those milestones are at. That additional 4 million though that has been committed basically provides the full funding required for that pandemic centre to be fully constructed. And this is in addition to the 15 million that was committed to previously for that project. So to date about 11.5 million has been provided. We have three and a half million from the original 15 million and then this additional 4 million that we'll be discussing with VIDO sort of how that, again, what the funding needs are and the milestones that they're going to meet to receive that funding.

So the next one I'll talk about is the Fedoruk Centre. So the Fedoruk Centre, again we're maintaining funding from last year's level which is at $2.5 million. And essentially the funding that comes from Innovation Saskatchewan is essentially the majority of the funding that they receive for operations. They do generate a bit of funding and revenue in terms of their radioisotope production, but the majority of the funding for operating the facility comes through Innovation Saskatchewan, and that's for both the centre itself and also for operation of the Saskatchewan cyclotron facility as well. In 2024 we also provided the Fedoruk Centre with an additional $400,000 to provide an opportunity to do a request for proposals for research projects.

So essentially — and this kind of goes across the board for all of the facilities and all the research institutes that we fund — we do work with them. If there is additional initiatives that are targeted, we will work with them to look at if there's opportunities for us to help support those initiatives as well.

The International Minerals Innovation Institute — and as you know, the goal of that organization is to ensure that we have a lead in mining jurisdiction through research and development in this province — we are providing this year 256,000. So this is an industry-member-oriented organization and industry driven. So the industry members on the board also contribute membership fees. So they receive an additional about 600,000 from industry for membership fees and also some additional contribution to some projects that they might be funding.

The Petroleum Technology Research Centre we provide 1.67 million, and that again is consistent with what we provided them last year. The PTRC is a not-for-profit organization that supports sustainable oil production through innovation and increasing the production of other subsurface energy sources in the province. They manage the Heavy Oil Research Network, which funds industry-driven projects to develop new and sustainable EOR technologies. And they also manage the Aquistore project on behalf of SaskPower, which takes carbon dioxide from the Boundary dam capture facility and sequesters it permanently.

The PTRC has expanded its mandate recently, in recent years, to lead research in developing emerging subsurface energy opportunities and resources in Saskatchewan. So they're working with the mining industry to determine geological feasibility of carbon capture, utilization, and sequestration hubs in the province. They're providing support to municipalities in looking at potential applications of geothermal heat and also exporting Saskatchewan expertise in CCUS [carbon capture, utilization, and storage] and measuring monitoring verification.

So in addition we last year also provided the PTRC with an additional bump of 1.5 million. That will not be provided in this year, but that 1.5 million was specifically to help establish the Energy Innovation Hub. And the Energy Innovation Hub consolidates critical energy research equipment infrastructure into a single integrated lab under PTRC management, and it's located at Innovation Place.

So they basically took on or absorbed the equipment that SRC [Saskatchewan Research Council] and the lab that SRC was operating in Regina as part of their operations now. And the hub was officially announced, and that was opened in September of this year. And in addition, PrairiesCan [Prairies Economic Development Canada], the federal government, also provided an additional 1 million to the project as well.

Okay, and I think the last one that you requested was the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation. And again this is a provincial agency that funds and supports high-impact, peer-reviewed health research in the province. And so the province is the sole funder again through Innovation Saskatchewan for this organization. And we will be providing 4.849 million, which again is consistent with what we provided them last year.

And just a bit of how they utilize those funds. Over the past four years SHRF's solution program has invested 2.6 million through their program to fund 29 innovative projects, like involving virtual care and other high priority health issues in Saskatchewan. They are also looking at this year to pilot a process or project to increase the mobilization and implementation of health research through new commercialization programs. So this will be a pilot this year that they're going to operate and evaluate I guess what the success is of that.

Bhajan Brar: — The Canadian Light Source is presently operating on a part-time basis. Is Innovation Saskatchewan going to continue and fund the operation of the Canadian Light Source over the next 5 to 10 years?

[18:00]

Kari Harvey: — So the Canadian Light Source, as we mentioned earlier, is one of the four major research facilities that are here in Saskatchewan funded by the Canada Foundation for Innovation. And so again just want to give you a little bit of perspective.

The Canada Foundation for Innovation has identified 19 research facilities across Canada that are supported through this program, and four of those are located here in Saskatchewan. So essentially Saskatchewan receives about a quarter of the total funding from the Canada Foundation for Innovation for these facilities in the province.

So that includes Canadian Light Source, VIDO, SuperDARN, which is the Super Dual Auroral Radar Network, which is a global network of scientific radars monitoring conditions in the near-earth space environments and that is headquartered at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan], essentially monitoring space weather. Data is collected worldwide and that analysis helps to contribute to the understanding of how space weather impacts things like radio satellite communications, pipelines, and power grids.

And then the fourth one is the Global Water Futures Observatories, which is also led by the University of Saskatchewan. And that is a network of scientific freshwater observation stations, which includes 64 instrumented river basins, lakes, streams, and wetlands, and five deployable measurement systems. And this project informs the development and testing of water prediction models, monitors changes in water sources, and underpins diagnosis of risk to water security. And so I guess just wanted to give the context that these are, you know, major commitments that have been made by the federal government.

I would say that one of the things that we have been in discussions with the Canadian foundation and that the Canada Foundation for Innovation has committed to and the federal government has committed to is looking at how these facilities are funded in the long term. So they're looking at doing more life cycle funding. Right now all of these projects are funded on a six-year agreement basis, but there is a recognition that, given the permanency of these facilities in the places where they are located, that there needs to be, you know, a rethink around how these are funded into the future.

And so there has been no commitments made yet on what that will look like but essentially, just again for some context here, the way that the agreements work right now is that for these six-year funding agreements, 60 per cent is funded by the Canada Foundation for Innovation, 40 per cent those institutes or those organizations must find matching funding. So that can be a contribution from the provincial government. It can be other federal agencies, or it could be industry dollars that would be used to leverage that 60 per cent.

As I mentioned, they are looking at this longer term life cycle planning, and they're doing . . . So what they've identified is a program called a major research framework program that they are currently exploring. And they've identified Canadian Light Source and VIDO as two of the facilities that they are going to be piloting or working through to set out what the parameters of this new program will look like. So this will ensure a longer term view to supporting capital, operational maintenance, and funding. And in addition they are going to be looking at funding ratios as well.

So there has been, you know, some discussion around whether 40 per cent of matching is an appropriate amount. We again have not heard any confirmation of what those ratios will look like, but we've heard that could be in the neighbourhood of 80/20. So these kinds of decisions may impact, you know, the funding that would be required from the province going into the future, but we don't know what those exactly look like yet.

So the CFI [Canada Foundation for Innovation] is suggesting that all of these facilities will transition over into this new major research framework program in 2027, is the time frame that they're looking at.

So right now CLS and VIDO are preparing budget scenarios for this new framework to determine what those future funding amounts would look like, and those need to be completed in the fall. And again we will continue to work with our federal counterparts to understand, as this program gets developed, what those impacts could be on the province.

Bhajan Brar: — Given that the provincial industrial carbon tax corridor OBPS [output-based pricing system] is being shut down, I assume that there will be no regional funding for the technology fund that Innovation Saskatchewan will see. Is that correct?

Kari Harvey: — So just for clarification, the Saskatchewan Technology Fund is under the responsibility, so the policy, the governance . . . Responsibility of that fund is with the Ministry of Environment. We have a partnership with them to essentially deliver the back office or the administrative supports to that program. And we were selected or asked to provide that role because of some of the other projects that we've had, or the other programs that we have experience in in managing these kind of like grant-related programs.

So in terms of the future of the fund, what we do know is that the second intake is under way right now. There's a decision that we will be continuing with that second intake. Any future intake will be paused while the Ministry of Environment and others are consulting with industry about what the future of the fund might look like. And then from there we would have to assess again what that impact is on, you know, our organization if we continue to . . . I mean obviously if the fund is no longer in existence, we would no longer be, you know, providing the support for that fund.

Bhajan Brar: — I would appreciate if you could just list me for all the approved technology fund projects that are not yet completed but are still under way in '25-26, the total funding for each project, and the expected project completion date.

Kari Harvey: — So in terms of the projects, so there were 13

projects in total that have been funded. The fund's commitment to date is just around 25 million, 24, just under 25 million. What has been deployed to date in terms of total funding is 1.574 million. And so what's outstanding is 23.4 million and change.

Bhajan Brar: — How much money remains in the technology fund as of April 1, 2025? And will that money be awarded to new projects in '25-26?

Kari Harvey: — So as of March 27th the amount held in the fund is 73.8 million. So there's an additional 50 million in the fund in addition to that 25 million that I spoke about earlier.

Bhajan Brar: — As of 1st of April, 2025?

Kari Harvey: — March 27th, 2025.

[18:15]

Bhajan Brar: — Okay. How many unfunded projects submitted to the technology fund are sitting at Innovation Place? And what is the total amount of the requested funding for those projects?

Kari Harvey: — Okay, so just in terms of the fund's second intake which began expressions of interest on January 14th of this year, so as I mentioned, $50 million is available. The second intake statistics include . . . Thirty-one expressions of interest were received and reviewed. All have been deemed to be eligible for the fund and have been invited to submit a full proposal.

So in terms of the total amount that's requested, we're looking at 145 million in total for all of those projects. And also in addition to that, this would result in about 600 million in private investments. So again, you know, the amount requested and what's available certainly far exceeds what will be able to be funded. But it's yet to be determined which projects will be funded.

Bhajan Brar: — What is the breakdown of staff members between the number of managers and number of staff at the start of 2025-26?

Brent Sukenik: — For '24-25, we had approved 108 FTEs. For the '25-26 budget we have 112 FTEs. So the additional four are broken up: two for the tech fund and then an additional two to support the research strategy.

Bhajan Brar: — My question is number of managers and number of staff. Can you differentiate that?

Brent Sukenik: — In total, we don't have the breakdown specific at the manager levels. I just want to make the point that all of our employees are out-of-scope employees. But to look at the senior leadership team, so between the senior leadership team and our executive team we have about 20 members, and the remainder would be below that.

Bhajan Brar: — You can supply later on if you want. If you want to get that breakdown for the managers, you can give it later on if you don't have now.

Brent Sukenik: — Okay, we will get that breakdown for you.

Bhajan Brar: — Okay. Can you please provide me there the salary ranges for the CEO and each of the vice-presidents in 2025-26?

Brent Sukenik: — Effective April 1st, 2025, the salary range for the vice-president level, the minimum is 151,958 and it goes to a maximum of 197,560. And our CEO position, which follows the DM3 in the executive pay band, goes from 202,270 to 262,931.

Bhajan Brar: — Okay. Can you please provide me with the list of non-monetary benefits provided to members of the senior executive team in 2025-26?

Brent Sukenik: — We don't have any non-monetary benefits provided.

Bhajan Brar: — Does any member of your senior executive team receive a bonus? And if so, what were the amounts of each bonus provided last year? And are similar bonuses provided for in the '25-26 budget?

Kari Harvey: — So there is no bonus system in our agency, yeah. We essentially follow a very similar process to the public service in terms of the merit-based program and providing, you know, adjustments — incremental or economic adjustments — as deemed approved, but also incremental adjustments based on performance as well.

Bhajan Brar: — Okay. Does Innovation Saskatchewan have any specific contractor that handles your communication work? And if you do, who is the contractor?

Brent Sukenik: — We have two contracts for communication services. One was through a company called Bravo Tango, and they're doing brand development and video, and that contract goes back about a year. And the other contract is with a company called Exemplifi. It is a Canadian subsidiary of a US [United States] company. And that contract is for website redesign services. That contract was tendered, or that project was tendered last August through a competitive bid process.

Bhajan Brar: — Does Innovation Saskatchewan provide any free space in the research parks either to other agencies of government, non-profit, or private companies?

Kari Harvey: — So we do not provide free space for any other government agencies. What we do on occasion is, as part of our commitment to ecosystem initiatives or, you know, events and those sorts of things, from time to time we will provide like a conference room space for an event as part of our contribution, our in-kind contribution, to that particular event. But we do not provide like leases, free space, to government agencies or organizations.

[18:30]

Bhajan Brar: — One of your budgetary goals is, at Innovation Saskatchewan, you triple the size of the technology industry in Saskatchewan by 2030, right? Can you please confirm for me what the size of our technology sector was when the Saskatchewan government growth plan was released, what the size of the technology sector was in the most recent year available, and what you are projecting the size of the

Saskatchewan technology sector will be at the end of 2025 given your available budget.

Kari Harvey: — So in September of last year, we commissioned, or released a report on the progress of meeting the growth plan goal of tripling the technology sector by 2030. And so some of the findings that we saw, in looking at employment numbers we've seen, since 2019 there's been 109 per cent increased employment growth, which has outpaced the growth of the technology sector in all Prairie provinces and in addition, the other provincial sectors, economic sectors.

Since 2016 we've seen an average of just over about 700 jobs added each year which is on pace to meet or exceed the 10-year target of 7,900 jobs. And what we found is that the technology sector accounts for about 10 per cent of all jobs that were created in the province between 2016 and 2023.

Just, I guess, another statistic that I can add is that in 2019 there were 347 technology companies in Saskatchewan. And what we've seen since then is that there's an increase of 14 companies that have been established, with five of those over 100 employees. And then just in terms of employment numbers, in 2016 there were 2,098 employees in the technology sector and in 2023, 5,489 jobs.

Bhajan Brar: — During the 2024-25 estimates introduction by the former minister responsible for Innovation Saskatchewan, he talked at length about two initiatives that will expand support for key innovation industries. The first was the redevelopment of the flagship building at the research and technology park in Saskatoon, and the second was the expansion of the Saskatchewan technology start-up tax incentive overseen by Innovation Saskatchewan.

What is the status of the building redevelopment project in Saskatoon? Has it been completed? Is this space in use? And if it is in use, which companies are occupying the space and what are they being charged per square feet of space?

Kari Harvey: — So in terms of how many tenants currently occupy space in the research park, so there are basically 160 tenants that we have between the two research parks and just under 4,000 employees that are located there. In terms of the sectors that are represented, we have ag tech, health, life sciences, industry services and support, information and communication technologies, and natural resources. And then as I mentioned, about 25 per cent of our space is specialty space, so greenhouses, growth chambers, pilot plant, and laboratories.

In terms of the Galleria building and the work that's being done there, so we are in the process of a redevelopment project of part of the Galleria building, the west wing, which we refer to as the west Galleria. And this is space that was previously occupied by the Saskatchewan Research Council, so it's been sitting vacant for a while because it requires some significant improvements in order to become leasable.

And so the project will entail about a $35 million investment overall to develop some specialized space that will support our scaling ag tech companies. So we expect that the project will include five to eight separate suites that will support these companies and will include a combination of office, lab space, high bay, and pilot plant space.

So this is a facility that's currently not available anywhere in the province, so this is not up and running yet, as per your question. We're in the design phase right now. So last year, as I think Brent may have mentioned earlier, we had $2.4 million that we put towards the design of that space.

Going into this year we will continue design, but we'll also be investing about $4 million into the first phase of our base building improvements. So that's what we expect. So that would include things like our HVAC [heating, ventilating, and air conditioning], you know, upgrading those sorts of mechanical systems. And then the following year we would move into phase 2 base building upgrades. As well, we would start the specialization of suites as we have tenants that are interested in moving into that space.

So to answer your question, there's no companies in that space yet because we're just in the process of redeveloping that.

Bhajan Brar: — Now what are they being charged per square foot of space?

Kari Harvey: — So the business model that we have as an organization is, of course, we exist to really help early-stage companies to grow, and we want to have flexible space and lease arrangements to really allow that to happen. So we don't have a standard per se kind of lease rate that we would lease any given space out. We really work with each of the individual tenants to understand where they are in their growth to really determine, you know, what we can offer in terms of that space.

Again depending on the type of space as well, we have a whole variety as I mentioned. The specialty space like our greenhouses would be probably considered some of our most expensive space, but you know, as I mentioned we really have a range anywhere from, you know, market rates to, you know, very extremely low, you know, low lease rates to some of those really early-stage start-up companies, because we want them to have their . . . we want to make sure that they are putting their funding into research and developing their product and really getting their business off the ground.

Bhajan Brar: — My question is, is there any limitation that up to such-and-such area there will be this rate, and up to such-and-such area there will be this rate? How do you fix that?

Kari Harvey: — So yes, you are correct. Like in that, like we don't have again per se, you know, set lease ranges, but as a company grows we work with them to understand where they're at from a financial perspective. And we would absolutely expect that a company's lease rate will go up, you know, as they're growing and they are generating revenues. And in addition we will work with them all the way to the point where if they get too big that they would move out of the park.

So a really good example of that is really on the manufacturing side, because we do not allow manufacturing to happen within the park, large-scale manufacturing. Pilot-scale, you know, we certainly would support. But once they get to a certain point and they're scaling up to the point where they're much larger, we would expect and work with them to look at moving outside of

the park.

I would also just mention, I guess, that we do have as part of our decision-making process, we have what's called the management advisory committee. And we have one of those in Regina and one of those in Saskatoon that's made up of various stakeholders: the city, the university, other industry or ecosystem partners that would basically approve any leases that we bring forward to be considered. So it's part of our head lease agreement that we have with both the universities.

I mean it's expected that we are bringing in the technology-related companies. And this is part of that process, is that we would take these leases, and you know, to get approval for these tenants to be approved to be considered as part of the park. But as I mentioned, as they grow, we work very closely with them to understand, you know, at what point do their lease rates need to be increased and/or at what point do they need to look at moving outside of the park.

[18:45]

Bhajan Brar: — For the start-up tax incentive, please advise how many companies you expect to apply for the tax incentive this year. What would be the expected tax savings for the companies? And finally, in 2024-25, how many companies applied for the incentive and received it?

Kari Harvey: — So in terms of the way that this program works, start-up companies do apply to become an eligible company underneath the Saskatchewan technology start-up incentive program. And essentially we work with IRAP [industrial research assistance program] as well to understand, to do that evaluation on the company to determine the novelty of their product and the commercial viability as well. So they go through that process to be considered an eligible company.

Once a company is considered eligible, it doesn't mean necessarily that they're going to, you know, be a part of the program, because the program works in a way that they are deemed to be eligible but they have to get an investor to come and invest in their company. So we also approve investors under the program, but we don't do the matching. It's up to the company to get the investor and to get that investment from the company.

So the program itself, as you're likely aware, it is one of the most aggressive angel investment tax credits in Canada. An investor can earn up to 225,000 in tax credits and claim a maximum of 140,000 per year. And these tax credits can actually be claimed over a seven-year period. Start-ups can raise a maximum of 2 million under the program. And as I mentioned, this program has been in place since 2018.

In terms of the numbers of start-ups that we expect, it's difficult to say because it really depends on the company themselves. And in any given year when the program was first rolled out, we had a large number of applicants. So we had 24 start-ups that applied, or that were approved, I should say. And that ranges anywhere between, you know, seven at our low in 2023 — there was some challenges in the investment climate in that particular year — up to the 24 start-ups that were approved.

In terms of investors approved, we have again on any given year ranged from 88 at our highest to the lowest year was 41 in terms of the number of investors that were approved under the program. But just in terms of total accumulated numbers, what we've seen is 150 million of private investment has been attracted under that program, which is comprised of 41.4 million that was raised actually under the program and then 70 more million that was raised as co-investment under the program.

So 521 jobs have been created by start-ups through this program. As I mentioned, 423 investors in total have been approved, and 112 technology companies have been approved under this program.

Bhajan Brar: — My question that will not be in your books. One question. Recently in BC a locomotive engine has been elevated from coal to hydrogen to decrease the carbon dioxide. Is there any provision or thinking in the innovation department to step into the hydrogen? There are a number of terminal plants. Have you thought about that?

Kari Harvey: — I would say that that would be something that we would see being looked at through the Petroleum Technology Research Centre, and in fact I know that they are. That is one of the areas that they're currently exploring as well as part of that new Energy Innovation Hub.

Bhajan Brar: — Now my last two questions that don't allow both our sides to sleep. Tariffs. How have you accounted for tariffs?

Kari Harvey: — Okay, thank you for this question. So I'll answer this in a few different parts. So in terms of the tariff impact on our sector stakeholders, we've been looking at it, the impact on researchers, the impact on the tech sector generally, and then of course the impact on our operations as well.

Through our conversations with stakeholders in the research community, what we've discovered is that the immediate impact on research due to tariffs through, you know, the scientific policies of the US government is really expected to be moderate. What we're seeing here is that Trump, the Trump administration has been freezing funding to scientific organizations like the National Institutes of Health, which is causing the ceasing of acceptance of new grant applications and delaying decisions on how millions of dollars in research in that organization would be spent.

What we know right now is that has stalled about 16,000 grant applications that are vying for 1.5 billion in funding. And the NIH [National Institutes of Health] funds more than 300,000 researchers at more than 2,500 universities.

So Canadian researchers receive relatively small amounts of direct and indirect funding, but there is lots of cross-border collaborations that could impact research progress. The University of Saskatchewan holds about 3.2 million in NHI grants and other funding for 16 projects. And VIDO last year received an indefinite-delivery, indefinite-quantity contract for preclinical trial models for infectious disease, which was a seven-year contract with a ceiling of about 146 million.

So what we know is that it's not clear how this contract is yet

going to be impacted. Tariffs also may impact the overall costs associated with scientific equipment that's imported from the US, and so we know our agencies are looking at alternative options or sources for that equipment.

And then just another item to mention is just access to data. So there is some question about if there's a move from the US to remove access to data or stop collecting data, that that could impact things like vaccine research and other research priorities.

So this also though, however, may be a great opportunity to look at recruiting and retaining researchers as well, because we know that there are potentially researchers that are looking for other jurisdictions that might be more friendly to research support. I think you probably would have seen in *The Globe*, there was an article there about a researcher in Ottawa who was a cardiologist that was recruited to California and made the decision to not proceed because he did not want to move to the US in the current situation that they're in.

So we're in discussions. You know, we're in discussions with the research agencies and research partners to understand how these might be opportunities and also just to understand where, you know, where further impacts might happen. And then I would also say, you know, that's also the importance of expanding research opportunities with other countries like Germany in terms of the project that we have . . . the memorandum of understanding that we had signed with the German Academic Exchange. So we're trying to support in that way as well.

In terms of the impact on our technology sector, the discussion that we've had is really that there is an expectation, at least in the short term, that there will be minimal impact. And in fact there is a report that Deloitte released in the spring here which is basically suggesting that there's going to be — so this would have been after the tariffs — that there will be growth in the technology sector again this year.

Software companies aren't expected to experience immediate impacts as tariffs are focused really more on goods. However any of our technology companies that have hardware components could be impacted, you know, mainly due to supply chain disruptions, particularly if there's a reliance on the US.

The longer term macroeconomic consequences, of course, like any other sector it could have consequences if there is decreased demand for services as, you know, businesses look at ways of reducing costs and those sorts of things. And you know, we may see impacts on venture capital investments as well.

So in terms of our operations as a research park, of course we're following the direction of SaskBuilds and Procurement in an effort to reduce our reliance on US products and prioritizing Canadian suppliers through reporting and tracking, the reduction of US products and services, as well as including language and new criteria in any of our procurement documents.

So right now minimal impacts for us have been identified as most of our projects that were funded from last year are near completion, or the orders have been completed and/or goods received.

And so most of our 2025-26 projects are in early stages so we will be looking at ways to ensure that we're reducing reliance on US products and will be incorporating any other procurement policies and processes that have been directed as per government.

Bhajan Brar: — Thank you. Consider that question as the last question because already your explanation answered my second question. And now I will ask my colleague if they want to ask any questions. Okay.

Brent Sukenik: — Before we finish, I have the answer to your question that you had asked previously on the managers. Based on our current staff position, we have 16 positions at director and above; we have 36 manager and senior manager level and 53 below the manager level.

Bhajan Brar: — Thank you. At the end, I will say thanks to the officials and thanks to the minister. And still if anything left, kindly supply me a copy of that. I shall be highly appreciative of that. Any other question?

Chair Thorsteinson: — Seeing no further questions, we will now adjourn consideration of the estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 for Innovation Saskatchewan. Minister, do you have any closing comments?

Hon. Warren Kaeding: — Well as you can tell, I have a lot of experience beside me, and I certainly want to appreciate them and want everyone to know of the wealth and depth of talent that we have in Innovation Saskatchewan. So I'd say the tech sector in this province is in very good hands.

I do want to thank the committee members as well as you, Mr. Chair, and certainly the very respectful questions that we had today from our colleagues, certainly appreciate that. And I learned a lot on this sector as well, so I do appreciate your questions. And certainly thanks very much to Hansard and other officials in the building tonight.

[19:00]

Bhajan Brar: — Thanks again.

Hon. Warren Kaeding: — Thank you.

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

Bhajan Brar: — I will say thank you to all of you who gave up their valuable time. And we discussed very, very valuable items here that will be in the interest of our public.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Okay, thank you. Thank you, Minister, for being here with us this evening. Thank you to all the officials who joined us as well. This concludes our business for the day. I would ask a member to move a motion of adjournment. I recognize Terry Jenson has moved. All agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. This committee stands adjourned to the call of the Chair.

[The committee adjourned at 19:01.]