



STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY

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[The committee met at 17:00.]

Chair Thorsteinson: — Good evening. Welcome to the Standing Committee on the Economy. I'm James Thorsteinson; I'm the Chair of the committee. With us this evening we have Darlene Rowden, Kevin Weedmark, Tajinder Grewal. Sitting in for Minister Terry Jenson we have Meg Patterson, and sitting in for Kim Breckner we have Hugh Gordon.

Today the committee will be considering the estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 for the Ministry of Highways and the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training. We will take a half-hour recess at 7 p.m.

**General Revenue Fund
Highways
Vote 16**

Subvote (HI01)

Chair Thorsteinson: — We will first consider the estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 for the Ministry of Highways. We'll begin with consideration of vote 16, Highways. Central management and services, subvote (HI01). Minister Marit is here with his officials from the ministry. I would ask that officials please state their names 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. David Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is my honour to speak to you about the '25-26 provincial budget for the Ministry of Highways. And I'll start by introducing my officials. With me here today is obviously Kyle Toffan, my deputy minister. Behind me is Bill Pacholka, the assistant deputy minister for operation and maintenance division. Wayne Gienow is there, the assistant deputy minister for design and construction division. Tom Lees is also behind me, assistant deputy minister for policy, planning and corporate services division. David Munro, director, strategic planning and budgeting. And my chief of staff, James Cherewyk, is here as well.

While every other province has a huge deficit, our government's provincial budget is balanced and delivers for Saskatchewan people by providing investments — investments that enhance affordability, improve access to health care, provide support to our classrooms, and ensure safe communities. We will deliver on these priorities while providing strong financial management and a balanced budget.

While other provinces are cancelling their affordability promises, our government has kept every commitment we made to lower taxes and make life more affordable. Our economy remains strong because we have the food, fuel, and the fertilizer that the world needs. That economic strength allows the Government of Saskatchewan to provide programs and services that benefit all of the people of this province and improve our high quality of life.

A robust transportation network is essential to ensure the strength of the provincial economy. We need it to conduct our lives as well. It's how we obviously get to work, to school, go to the medical appointments, visit friends and family, and go to our children's hockey practice and make it to a Roughrider game. Our industry partners rely on transportation to ensure our goods can get to the more than 160 markets around the world safely and efficiently.

As an exporting province, a strong transportation system is not just something that's nice to have; it's absolutely essential for our economy. Saskatchewan is proving to be an island of sustainability in a sea of economic turmoil. We have a plan for responding to tariffs, we have a plan to keep life affordable for Saskatchewan people, and we have a plan to grow our economy and create jobs.

And it's working. We are seeking to expand exports outside of North America, which is one of the ways we're responding to the tariffs from south of the border. Investments in transportation create options for exporters. When we make strategic transportation investments, we always keep certain goals in mind. We invest in projects that enhance safety, enable our citizens to live their lives, and supporting the growth of our export-based economy. And I'll take you through some of the details.

The Ministry of Highways 2025-2026 budget for 777 million is a road map to enhance safety and invest in strategic infrastructure, supporting Saskatchewan's export-based economy. We've increased investments by \$36 million, which is roughly 5 per cent more than last year. Our investments sustain our quality of life and deliver for Saskatchewan people. The budget includes an investment of \$421 million in capital projects. That's an increase of \$17 million, or about 4 per cent compared to last year's budget.

Since 2008 the Government of Saskatchewan has invested more than \$13.8 billion in transportation, improving more than 21 800 kilometres of highways. We continue to work toward our targets set under the Saskatchewan Growth Plan. We will improve more than 1000 kilometres of highway this year. Our 10-year target is to build and upgrade 10 000 kilometres. With this year's budget, we have delivered more than 7000 kilometres over the first six years. The ministry is making excellent progress on improving our network, in line with our growth plan goals.

As an exporting province, major transportation projects are essential. To remain competitive, shippers need timely and predictable access to markets all over the globe. It is a key priority to ensure our transportation network is safe, reliable, and resilient. This is why we continue to improve strategic transportation corridors across Saskatchewan.

This year, we are investing \$43.8 million in multi-year projects that increase safety and improve traffic flow. These projects include passing lanes on Highway 10 between Fort Qu'Appelle and Melville, and Highway 17 north of Lloydminster; Highway 39 twinning at Weyburn; and ongoing corridor improvements on Highway 5 east of Saskatoon, towards Humboldt.

A key part of enhancing safety and maintaining efficiency is our

ongoing passing lane strategy. We've built 60 sets of passing lanes in just over a decade. I mentioned the Highway 10 and Highway 17 projects. We will continue to plan for passing lanes on other high-priority corridors. This supports our exporters as they share Saskatchewan's food, fuel, and fertilizer and other goods with the world, and it underlines our ongoing commitment to highway safety for the people of Saskatchewan.

We recently completed a five-year, \$100 million safety improvement program investment, and our commitment to safety is unwavering in this budget. We will invest 25.4 million through our safety improvement program for improvements to intersections, guardrails, lighting, and other assets.

Other investments in road safety include pavement marking to provide visible lines for the safe flow of traffic, our sign stewardship program to keep 124,000 highway signs in good condition, and mowing approximately 44 500 hectares along highway right-of-ways to ensure clear sightlines for drivers. These investments are an important part of our strategy to protect Saskatchewan people and communities. It's one more way of delivering for our province.

We will invest in road improvements all over the province. To maintain our high standard of living we must constantly rebuild and preserve our 26 000-kilometre network. This year we will improve more than 1000 kilometres of highways, including more than 200 kilometres of repaving on portions of Highways 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 16, 18, 26, 33, and 55; 245 kilometres of medium treatments like micro surfacing; 480 kilometres of pavement sealing; 95 kilometres of thin membrane surface and rural highway upgrades; and 30 kilometres of gravel rehabilitation. These investments support growth and help keep people safe.

Our culverts and bridge projects will also rise to meet the needs of our highway network. We will invest \$81.6 million to repair and rebuild 18 bridges and more than 100 culverts across the province. This includes replacing the bridge on Highway 2 over Montreal Lake near La Ronge and beginning construction of twin overpasses on Highway 2 over Highway 1 at Moose Jaw.

The Moose Jaw project is our biggest bridge work this year. These Moose Jaw bridges are a key part of the Trans-Canada Highway corridor. A key part of this project is raising the height of the overpasses, which will benefit farmers and shippers in the efficient movement of their products. We're aware that the Moose Jaw overpasses have been struck many times — over-height loads. We are hopeful the new higher structure will eliminate all these incidents.

As we've done since 2008, our government continues to make significant investments in the transportation network that supports northern Saskatchewan. Transportation infrastructure connects northern communities, businesses, and industries such as mining to the rest of Saskatchewan. Our road network provides access to jobs, health care, education, and other services. This year's budget will see more than \$122 million to build, operate, and maintain our northern infrastructure. This encompasses operating and maintaining our northern airports.

And it also includes rehabilitation design work for our airports at Cumberland House and Ile-a-la-Crosse, ice roads in the winter, funding for the Wollaston Lake barge in the summer, and

upgrading Highway 102 from La Ronge airport north access to Sucker River, and other work to maintain thousands of kilometres of northern roads and related infrastructure such as improvements to highways 106, 135, 155, 915, and 924.

Rural Saskatchewan and its resources make a strong contribution to our economy. Our municipal programs help ensure rural Saskatchewan will continue to contribute to the success and growth of this province. We are investing 31 million in strategic transportation that supports our municipal and industry partners. This includes a provincial contribution of 18.4 million to improve and maintain rural roads and bridges, which is an additional 1 million over last year's budget. The urban highway connector program will receive 8.6 million to improve and maintain roads that connect our highway network. There is also 2.2 million for truck route agreement and other municipal partnerships.

Community airports will continue to receive funds to make necessary improvements that support this vital sector. Aviation delivers workers and equipment to northern mines, brings tourists who hunt and fish, and supports farmers in managing their crops. It also supports quality of life by bringing doctors to the North and taking patients to larger centres for treatment. It brings police and judges to northern towns and villages, enhancing community safety. The community airport partnership program will again receive \$850,000 for airport improvements. When combined with matching community funds, that is a total investment of \$1.7 million to priority local airports.

Obviously rail service is critical for getting Saskatchewan's products — food, fuel, and fertilizer, and forestry products — to market. The ministry continuously monitors rail performance provided by Canadian National railways, CN; and Canadian Pacific Kansas City, CPKC. We meet regularly with CN and CPKC to discuss rail performance, disruptions in rail service, and general challenges in the supply chain. Given the ongoing challenges in railcar supply and service, the Government of Saskatchewan will continue to advocate for the federal government to use their authority to compel the railways to improve service, address rail service disruptions, and implement improvements to legislation and shipper remedies.

The ministry also has a long-standing relationship with shortline railways in the province, including providing annual funding to offset operational costs. Our budget includes an increase of 88 per cent in funding for shortline railways. The shortline rail improvement program will receive an extra \$470,000 to raise the total investment to \$1 million. The funds are invested in safety improvements and maintenance. Saskatchewan has 2100 kilometres of shortline rails run by 13 operators. They help farmers get their products to market and reduce heavy loads on our highway system. Every shortline will receive a proportionate share of the funding based on the size of their track network.

In conclusion, Saskatchewan's new provincial budget delivers priority investments toward affordability, health, education, and community safety. Transportation plays a key role in delivering on these priorities.

[17:15]

The Ministry of Highways delivers a reliable network that

supports our export-based economy. It provides access to health care and delivers a safe route to work or school. It delivers police and justice services so you can feel safe in your community. It delivers you and your friends to a beautiful stadium where you can have fun watching the best football team in all of Canada. It delivers food, fuel, and fertilizer to markets around the globe, keeping Saskatchewan strong and sustaining our affordable quality of life.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I look forward to the questions tonight.

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

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you for that, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank the minister for his time tonight, obviously. And for his team from the ministry, there's no doubt that the work that you are doing for the people of the province is crucial. It's vital. You're not only linking the people of the province together, community to community, but you're also, like the minister said, providing a vital source of infrastructure that we need for our economy to provide opportunities for growth. So I know that the people of the province are counting on your success.

I'll just start off with a question touching on last year. If the minister could inform the committee how many kilometres of roadwork were completed this last year by category and, if possible, the price per kilometre.

Hon. David Marit: — I'll try, Mr. Chair. If not, I might have to turn it to the experts behind me, but we'll try and give it a go. If I understand the question, you want to know exactly what we did, how many kilometres we did, and cost per kilometre kind of on that side. Okay.

So what we call our light engineer-graded aggregate seals and light racked-in chip seals, we did 452 kilometres of that, and it ranged in price anywhere from 65,000 to 90,000 per kilometre.

On the medium micro surfacing and the medium thin overlay, we did a total of 331 kilometres, and that price ranged anywhere from 90 to 300,000 because the medium micro surfacing is obviously less than the medium thin overlay, right. I'm combining them because the kilometres are combined; that's all.

Hugh Gordon: — Fair enough.

Hon. David Marit: — Okay. Repaving and mill and overlay and repaving reconstruction, we did 206 kilometres, and that varied in price from 425,000 a kilometre to 1.2 million per kilometre. Gravel rehabilitation, we did 35 kilometres with an average price between 400 and 600,000 per kilometre.

Repaving TMS [thin membrane surface] rehab and TMS strengthening secondary road upgrades, we did 93 kilometres with the average price of 100,000 up to 750,000, which would be the TMS strengthening secondary road upgrades.

And then twinning. We did 15 kilometres of twinning, which comes at a pretty hefty price of between 4 million to 6 million per kilometre, which would probably obviously include land

acquisitions and utility moves.

Hugh Gordon: — Fair enough. Thank you for that, Minister. I also want to reflect on last year's work that was done. And my question is with respect to the percentage of total dollar amounts from last year's budget for contract work in '24-25 that went to Saskatchewan contractors. I was hoping you could provide the committee with some information about what percentage of the total dollar amounts from the budget went to Saskatchewan contractors last year.

Kyle Toffan: — Kyle Toffan. Thanks for that question, Mr. Chair, and we have a good success story here. Percentage of total dollar value for contract work that went to Saskatchewan contractors up until the fall of last year — and we update these numbers twice per year so that's the most current ones that we have — the percentage was 96.3 per cent. We always round, you know, 96 per cent we call it, so that's the amount to Saskatchewan contractors.

Hugh Gordon: — And the remainder, if you can enlighten us where those contractors came from?

Hon. David Marit: — Yeah, that's pretty easy. Alberta and Manitoba.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you for that. My next question is with respect to the amount allocated for infrastructure and equipment capital under highways. I note a reduction of some fourteen and a half million dollars for highways on that line item, paving restoration.

We know that a good chunk of work that our Saskatchewan contractors depend on comes from paving mainly. I'm just wondering if the minister could explain why he's budgeting to spend less in that category considering, you know, the ever-increasing need to invest more in our highways and infrastructure in the province.

Hon. David Marit: — What budget line item are you on there? Which one are you referring to?

Hugh Gordon: — Sorry, I'm just referring to . . . It would be page 73 in the Estimates under infrastructure and equipment capital, (HI08), I believe. We have highways expenditures, estimated 190.322 million; last year estimated 204.940 million.

Hon. David Marit: — Gotcha. Yeah, I think if you look at the total budget, you can see that the '24-25 estimate was 404 million, say roughly, 403.946 the total. This year it's 421.396. What you're seeing is when you pick the infrastructure highways, the estimated in '24-25, estimated at 204, and this year 190, it depends on the contract, the tendering, the work that goes out. Because then you just look down farther and look at infrastructure enhancements is up over \$25 million. So it was 161.124 last year. This year it's 186.439. So it's just the movement of the money on what projects because of the tender process and how we put that out.

Hugh Gordon: — Which could lead me to my next question about those infrastructure enhancements increasing by 25 million. Are you able to provide me with a list of all the projects — let's say costing more than 5 million — that are

budgeted for in that allocation and, if possible, a description of the project and its location?

[17:30]

Hon. David Marit: — Okay. I'll start, Mr. Chair. I'm going to turn it over to Wayne Gienow, our ADM [assistant deputy minister], just because there's so many. And I know you said over 5 million, but we'll stay that . . . Obviously there's some confidentiality here. We're obviously not going to name anything other than projects over 5 million. Okay?

Hugh Gordon: — Fair enough.

Wayne Gienow: — So thank you. Wayne Gienow, ADM of design and construction. So I'll go through each of the projects that's over 5 million in both the infrastructure enhancement and the rehab categories, because like the minister said earlier, the categories are . . . It depends on the project mix, right. If you're doing straight repaving it's usually under rehab, but if you're doing a passing lane or something it goes under enhancements. So each year the projects change a little bit. And we'll talk about just the projects where we have more than 5 million spent this fiscal year, budget allocated, even though some of the projects are multi-year of course.

So one of the big ones we have is Highway 5 just outside of Saskatoon, corridor improvements. Really it's looking at passing lanes and widening, and it's over 5 million. And then we're looking to tender another project on Highway 5, the twinning just outside of Saskatoon. That one's over 5 million.

And then we have the Highway 39 twinning and roundabout, so the roundabout right in Weyburn. That part will be over \$5 million expected this year.

When we go into some of our other projects, the TMS upgrade on Highway 51 from Biggar to Handel will be over 5 million. We have Highway 102 near La Ronge. We're doing upgrades there — that was mentioned earlier — up to Sucker River. That one's over 5 million. Highway 106 south of Highway 120 is over 5 million, another big project there. We have Highway 102 segment improvements really along the Highway 102 corridor, is over 5 million. We have a section of Highway 135 south of Pelican Narrows, which is our third section there. We're doing about a 15-kilometre section over 5 million.

We have repaving on Highway 8 near Moosomin, just to the north there. That one will be over 5 million. Highway 16, Langenburg east near the border there is over 5 million. Highway 16, Lanigan west will be over 5 million. Highway 26 by Meota, just south of Meota there, will be over 5 million. Highway 33, Fillmore to Francis, will be over 5 million. And those ones are all repaving projects.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you.

Wayne Gienow: — And then we have a few bridges. We've got Highway 55, bridge replacement west of Green Lake over the Green River there, will be over 5 million. And then we've got quite a few culverts on our culvert program that will add up to about 25 million for some of those, 25 to 30 million.

Hugh Gordon: — Sorry. The first one about the bridges. What was that again?

Wayne Gienow: — The first bridge one is west of Green Lake over Green River on Highway 55.

Hugh Gordon: — And I guess to tie into my previous question about last year, what percentage then of the total highways budget are going to be going to Saskatchewan contractors this year?

Kyle Toffan: — Thank you for that question. We haven't tendered the projects yet for the upcoming construction season, and so we don't have a precise number for you to share. But what I can tell you is that over the last five years or so the average amount, as a percentage of the total value, is over 90 per cent. And so I gave the number earlier about 96 per cent that we were trending for last year. Historically it's hovering over 90 per cent.

Hugh Gordon: — And maybe just a last question on that note. Does the ministry foresee tendering any contracts or awarding any contracts to American firms for this year for any of the work it would like to do?

Kyle Toffan: — Yeah, so to answer your question, we do go through a pretty rigorous process, a procurement process that we work with SaskBuilds and Procurement on every single RFP [request for proposal] that we put out, or tender that we put out. And so it's hard for us to foresee what will happen. But what I can say is that over the past numerous years we haven't had any US [United States] companies do construction work for the ministry. It's been Saskatchewan companies for the lion's share, over 90 per cent, followed by Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, and a couple New Brunswick. But really Canadian companies do our work here in this province for construction.

Hugh Gordon: — I appreciate the response. Thank you so much for that. I think that's assuring to the people of the province, no doubt, that the government has an eye on not just the work that you do in your ministry but also an eye on ensuring that the benefits of that work, you know, are essentially given to the people of the province, that that's an investment in them and their businesses and in their workers as well.

I'll move on to a question I guess related to inflation and tariffs. And I'll start with maybe a more broader question and just ask if the ministry has accounted in this year's budget for any cost increases you may experience due to inflation or the impact of tariffs on your budget and the work you hope to accomplish this year.

[17:45]

Kyle Toffan: — Thank you for that question again. So in regards to inflation and tariffs, it's something that we do monitor quite closely in the ministry, being that we have a very significant budget. The three-year total for inflation prior to last year was a 20 per cent impact, so quite significant over a period time. Although in '24-25 the latest numbers that we have suggest that it was only a 1 per cent increase to inflation.

So that shows that we're likely levelling off from the inflationary impacts as a follow-up to COVID and some of the impacts of

that. We of course, as I mentioned, do have most of our supply coming from Saskatchewan suppliers. That's all of our aggregate materials, our asphalt, those types of things. But that doesn't mean that there won't be an impact from tariffs. It just means that it's likely to be a lot less on road construction and maybe some other sectors. We'll continue to monitor, as always, any impacts on inflation and tariffs and make sure we're mitigating as many risks as we possibly can, working closely with our industry partners.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you for that response. I guess associated to that as well, you know, it's not just the ministry that gets impacted by rising costs, whether it be inflation or tariffs or uncertainty around tariffs. You know, I understand from stakeholders in the province like the Saskatchewan Heavy Construction Association, they're seeing increased costs pretty much across the board, whether it's material costs, fuel and energy prices, equipment costs, maintenance, regulatory compliance costs, insurance bonding costs, etc., etc.

I'm just curious to know if the minister could provide some information here with respect to how this year's budget will be able to assist, work with, consult with, I guess, our contractors who have already been . . . for contracts that have already been tendered, already been awarded.

I'm just wondering to what degree this budget will allot those contractors for a sudden increase in their costs that they weren't anticipating, whether it was due to inflation, whether it was due to tariffs this year. Because not every project begins and ends in a budget year. Sometimes it carries on into future years, but yet the bid has been tendered and awarded at a particular price point. Correct? So I was wondering if there's any information you could provide us about how the ministry intends to work with those contractors to help mitigate those costs for them as well.

Hon. David Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And obviously you did talk about the Saskatchewan Heavy Construction Association and some discussion. And if I could, Mr. Chair, I do want to read into the record a quote from Shantel Lipp, the Saskatchewan Heavy Construction CEO [chief executive officer]:

"The Saskatchewan Heavy Construction Association thanks Highways Minister Marit for his commitment to ensuring that infrastructure needs for the province were addressed in this year's budget," said Shantel Lipp, SHCA president. "As we know the Saskatchewan economy is reliant on exporting our goods outside of our provincial borders and the current challenges that the province faces means that we have to prepare to expand our reach beyond traditional trading partners. And to reach that goal we have to have reliable and safe infrastructure. Today's budget helps . . . [us] reach that goal."

So I wanted that read into the record, Mr. Chair. And I think it's kind of meaningful of kind of where the answer to this goes. And I appreciate the question, because when you talk about, you know, inflationary pressures and tariffs and whatnot, I think probably the first thing that I do want to comment on, obviously we're going to see a big fuel cost reduction with removal of the carbon tax. That is going to obviously help a lot of the tenders going forward, and there is, when you talk about what has the ministry done to help alleviate the pressure for our contractors

when they're bidding jobs because fuel . . . we know what fuel does. It does this.

So there is a proponent in the tenders, and it's a 7 per cent variance. So if it goes up 7 per cent, anything over the 7 per cent, the ministry adjusts that to the contractor. But also if it goes down by 7 per cent, it's an equal trade that way too. Then they have to offset that. Anything lower than the 7 per cent, right. So if it went down 10 per cent, the contractor would have to resubmit 3 per cent just like we'd have to pay 3 per cent on the over.

So that's probably one thing that we really try and do. And I think when you ask about the inflationary pressures, you know, I was privileged to serve as Highways minister in 2016 as well for a couple years and got to know a lot of the contractors. They're a year or two ahead when they're doing the bidding and their equipment purchase, and they've done all that, right. So they're building that into their bid process and saying, okay we need this to cover capital costs and equipment, salaries, wages. And they've got it fine-tuned pretty good, and to some degree so do our ministry officials. When we're putting tenders out, we have kind of a variance scope of range of where those tenders are going to come.

So I think we've done a fantastic job in working with SHCA [Saskatchewan Heavy Construction Association] and a good relationship there to address the concerns they've had around some of the costs and the variance, especially when we saw some high spikes in fuel. And it was just kind of going all over the place that we had to have some discussion with them and said, okay, here's what we can do to help offset that. Because nobody can control that. So it works both ways. But probably the big thing that's going to help them this year is reduction of the carbon tax, especially with the amount of fuel these folks go through.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you for that, Minister. Yeah, because obviously the concern is, you know, with ever-increasing costs for our contractors and so many other variables that they have to deal with, right, it's also their supply chains and where they get their supplies from, where they get their equipment from, the costs of those things obviously with tariffs looming. I also understand that there's some challenges perhaps with respect to the rental rate guide has had to go up significantly the last few years, my understanding. So you know, the worry is, of course, is some of our contractors may not be in position to fulfill those contracts, so having some assistance from the ministry and having assistance from the government so that they can stay on board and keep those projects on track is very important.

You touched on a two-year window of planning that the construction association does. And I just was wondering if I could ask you some questions about the ministry's plan and what process the ministry uses to select priority paving, new build projects?

For example, does the ministry have a five-year plan on priority projects in the next five years? And if so, why or why wouldn't that plan, those projects, be shared with the industry so that they too can plan accordingly, whether it's procurement, whether it's equipment, whether it's just hiring enough people to get those jobs done? I'm just curious what the process is that the ministry relies on for making its priorities over the next several years.

Hon. David Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll start, and then I know Kyle's got some more detailed stuff to add to it. And thanks for the question because I think it fits in well with what Highways's strategy has been over the last few decades when you look at it, and it all ties quite frankly into our growth plan.

When we hit our target in 2020 with the amount of kilometres we wanted to do from 2010 to 2020, we hit that target, so we set another target from 2020 to 2030. And as I said in my opening comments, we're at 7000 kilometres — we will be this year — of our 10 years to 2030.

[18:00]

So that's a good indicator for the industry. I kind of know that, you know, they're saying, okay, they're hitting 7000. They've got roughly 3000 to hit their target. Are they going to go over and above that?

And I think historically you look at the highways budget, if you went back probably right till 2008-2009 — but I can only speak from 2016 when I got appointed to this ministry — that you've seen a steady increase in budgets, especially on the capital side. I think you can see historically that that is there.

And when you talk about the priorities, I think obviously a couple of things that do come into play on it is the budget cycle when you have to, you know, when you look at your planning side. The other thing you look at is industry growth and the opportunities around that.

And I'll give you a very good example. I just did a tour this weekend up into the northeast part of the province, and I was up at Nipawin and then Norquay as well. And I'd met with a lot of municipalities and the mayor and some stakeholders there as well to talk about a certain highway, Highway 49.

And when I drove down it, I couldn't believe the impact it's having with commercial development along that highway. It's phenomenal what is growing there and the impact that obviously the industry is having on that highway, not only on the traffic side but you look at the safety side, where turning lanes and all that other thing has to come into play as well.

So you know, there's a lot of factors that I think that make the industry comfortable with the way that the Ministry of Highways is rolling things out, because these projects obviously have to have a design. So the design could take, you know, three years prior to. It could even be three to five years, is what we're, you know, probably obviously trying to get to. So the industry kind of knows where we're doing with that and where that is.

The multi-year projects . . . And I mean it's significant, the number of multi-year projects. I was Minister of Highways when we decided to put the passing lanes in virtually from Regina to Estevan, which was a massive project that didn't take . . . Obviously it wasn't done in one year and it wasn't done in two years; it was done in three years. But it was one project.

And you're seeing that on Highway 5 east of Saskatoon. That's been a six-, seven-year project just because of the difficulty in the terrain and everything else that's going along with that. One that's really close here now is the overpass in Moose Jaw. That's

another good example. That is a two-year project. So there is those types of projects that we do as well, so we're starting to see that.

But you know, historically, as I said, the budgets have gone up and we're seeing that capital side as well, and we're adjusting the pressures that the industry has. But obviously a plan can change as a result of a massive impact, and we've seen it where you may have a highway bridge wash out and things like that, so all of a sudden you have to move funds to there. So you have to look at that side of it.

I'll turn it to Kyle, and if you want to add anything else, Kyle.

Kyle Toffan: — Yeah. As you can imagine, our process is pretty in depth when we're dealing with 26 500 kilometres of road network all over the province. We do have to do our very best with internal resources to prioritize where that limited funding does go. It really does start by reviewing overall investment strategy to align funded priorities with those government priorities the minister talked about. The growth plan, that's really our north star on where we're going to be putting our attention and our strategy.

So road-specific items, of course, capacity enhancements which we've already talked about, give you a flavour of what types of projects we'd be doing there. Safety projects, thin membrane surface, low-volume roads, gravel, and the list kind of continues. We also have things like bridge rehabs and enhancements; significant amount of culverts, thousands of culverts really across the province; northern airports which we've talked about a little bit. We have ferries, you know, another minor capital as well as accommodations.

I want to give you a little bit of a sense of the top things that we look at in our prioritization tool. So we look at current and future traffic volumes, for instance, especially truck traffic which is very important obviously to drive our economic development. Asset conditions, that's basically the quality of the current asset. How old is it? How is it performing? You know, what's the crack sealing like? That kind of thing.

Level of safety and safety concerns. And sometimes we get those from our operational crews that are on the roads day in and day out, so our boots on the ground. But sometimes it comes from municipalities, sometimes area transportation planning committees, sometimes just the general public. We have a customer service centre that gets information in from the general public.

Highway classification is another thing that we look at, and also return on investment. So we do look at trying to find a way to rank these projects based on that criteria and ultimately come up with a list of priorities going forward in a five-year cycle.

We don't share that plan, as you very well mentioned, because things do change so significantly. And what we don't want to see is one or two of our companies really looking as this is the gospel almost — we're going to be doing this — because things do change from time to time.

What we do is we work with them, as the minister pointed out, on trying to understand what's coming maybe a year in advance

so that they can plan their pipeline approaches coming in. And then really the detailed version of that is we share our fall tender schedule, our winter tender schedule, and our spring tender schedule that's out right now. And that gives them about a three-month snapshot to refine any planning that they have been doing for the past year that we've been sharing with them and gets them ready to be bidding those projects when they hit the market for public tender or RFP.

So that's kind of . . . I just wanted to go through a little bit of that to answer your question. And I hope that does answer it.

Hon. David Marit: — Yeah, if I could just add to that. Another good example of the multi-year program was the 100 million we announced on the intersection improvement program. That just finished up this year. It was the last year of the five years of that. And we saw a very good uptake from the construction industry on that as well.

Hugh Gordon: — Thanks for your answers to that. Obviously the concern is that, you know, working collaboratively with our industry partners is really important in order to get these projects done in a cost-effective but also efficient way. I'm just curious if the ministry has given any thought to completing a study similar to those conducted in other jurisdictions to better understand industry capacity, identify optimal timelines for design and tendering.

I think the industry believes that, you know, in planning these phases in collaboration to deliver the work, the ministry could achieve more efficient project execution, improved outcomes, better overall value in the infrastructure budget. Is there any plans in the ministry budget this year or even five years out to conduct such a study?

Hon. David Marit: — I'll start, Mr. Chair, and then I'll turn it over to my deputy minister. Again, you know, when you ask about a study on . . . I feel this way about it. No, we probably won't do a study for the simple reason we work very closely with the Saskatchewan Heavy Construction Association on a lot of different things. And I say that with the greatest respect, because they've even come to us with saying, why don't you try this, and why don't you try that? And we're actually doing it.

And a few things that they came years ago was, we need a bigger fall tender window. And we've done that. We're now doing the fall tenders as . . . Well if we can get them in August, we'll get them out in August and September, you know. And then what that allows the contractors to do is, obviously when they're going to go do the crush on a project, that would be done the following year. So we'll put a fall tender out in '24 for work that'll be done in '25. And we'll do the same thing this fall. We'll put a fall tender out in '25, and the work'll be done in '26.

And the reason we do that is, obviously a lot of these paving jobs take a lot of aggregate. So they want to obviously maximize the capacity weight of hauling aggregate to wherever they have. And we've had some contractors, believe it or not, that have had to haul over 100 kilometres to a job site to get aggregate to it just because there's no aggregate around. And a good example of that is around Regina. Very difficult to find aggregate around Regina and south towards Weyburn just because of the soil and everything else.

So you know, we've listened to the industry that way. We're doing some pilot projects this year because the industry has said, why don't you try this and do this? And so we're going to do that. And you start to see that. And a good example was a few years ago when we put a few hundred million out in what we called the stimulus package, because we had that opportunity to do that. The industry had the capacity to grab that and they did. And I think our numbers are reflective of that. I really believe they are.

I can't speak more highly of the Heavy Construction Association in this province. I'm probably their strongest advocate for a number of reasons. And if I could, Mr. Chair, I do want to indulge just a little bit. And the reason being this: I don't know of an industry that has captured the road-building industry like our industry has in this province. I would venture to say there is not another jurisdiction in North America that can say that over 90 per cent of the work is done at the provincial or state level. I would swear to it, Mr. Chair. I think it is that powerful.

The other thing that I think is important to recognize the industry for that a lot of people don't really grasp or whatever, but these companies are very dedicated to their local communities. I have had the pleasure of going to the heavy construction AGM [annual general meeting] since I got elected. Even before when I was on the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] board I was going to them. When you see the fundraising that they do at these events, it's incredible.

And that's not even what they do when they go to local communities. When they have a job these contractors will go to wherever the job is they get, and the first people they go to is the tire shop and the fuel dealer because they're going to buy it local. And they stay local. They bring their trailers and fill the parks up. And these are hard-working people that are working 16 hours a day, and yeah, when they're done they probably like to have a beer and a steak.

So as I said I can't say enough. And you look at the construction association and the leaders that are in there, they are some of the most dedicated people to this province as far as . . . I will even say to some degree philanthropy. And I have the greatest respect for them.

And I have all the time in the world to listen to them on things that we could do better. And trust me there's always things we can do better, and I think we're achieving that to a big degree. And that's a result of, I can honestly say, the people at the Ministry of Highways, because I haven't been there for six years, that have continued that relationship and building on it. And I think you're seeing it reflective in the amount of work that is done locally and that gives them the opportunity to build that capacity up as well. Anything you want to add, Kyle?

[18:15]

Kyle Toffan: — Only thing I would say is that we're always open to new ideas from them on how they could build capacity locally, and how they, you know, how things are going in the industry frankly. And you know, we get that information through phone calls. We get it through biweekly meetings. We have it coming in to us through conventions that they put on and other things as well.

And one example that I'll just give you that we hope to be working with industry on in the next short while here is for our culverts program. We have about over 60,000 culverts in this province, and I don't know that we have one large supplier of boring culverts underneath highways. And we'd like to have a couple local companies.

I mentioned earlier that Alberta does do some of our work. A large majority of that work is culverts. And so we do want to work with industry on those types of things. That's just one example. But we want to build capacity, not just generally speaking but a capacity in Saskatchewan so that our number as a percentage of work going to Saskatchewan companies stays above 90 per cent and keeps growing around that level.

Hon. David Marit: — I'll just add one last note to that, Mr. Chairman. And forgive me for the follow-up but it's kind of a passion of mine anyways, highways is. I'm also very proud of the relationship we have with our northern communities and the contractors up there that are able to do a lot of the work. I've had the pleasure, when I was Highways minister, to be up there and talk to these folks. And their local knowledge is phenomenal on the structure and where the bad spots are — and they know them all — and things like that. But those relationships are strong and I can see them getting even stronger in the future.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you for that, Mr. Minister. Let's move on to allocation in this year's budget with respect to the urban connector program. If I'm not mistaken, the amount that's been allocated for this year appears to remain flat over last year. And I know in speaking with mayors from cities like Lloydminster, North Battleford, Saskatoon, and elsewhere, in particular the case in Lloydminster where they had to make significant improvements on Highway 17 at their own expense . . . I'm just wondering why that amount has remained unchanged from last year to this year, given also I guess the increasing impacts of inflation and tariffs and other, let's say, unforeseen circumstances that the cities are dealing with.

Hon. David Marit: — Okay, there's two parts to this. You asked . . . Obviously the first one was why it wasn't increased this year, the funding. Because '24-25 they got a \$2 million lift, so they got a 30 per cent increase in '24-25. So we kept them the same, flat this year at the 8.6. '24-25 it went up from 6.6 to 8.6, so it was a 30 per cent increase. And then this year we just kept it flat. So that was a significant jump last year.

And I think Kyle has the list of . . . Obviously it's a program that gets oversubscribed, right. So you have to allocate the dollars as they see, and we have the list of who's getting the urban connector program this year.

Kyle Toffan: — Yeah, thanks for the question. And as the minister mentioned, it has been consistently oversubscribed, not just for this year but it's pretty consistent. And we do have to prioritize where we put the funding.

The urban highway connector program is for urban roads that connect to provincial highways. The UHCP [urban highway connector program] is a provincially funded initiative that helps municipalities maintain and improve these urban highway connectors. And the UHCP grants are provided in addition to revenue sharing that comes from the Ministry of Government

Relations, so it's not connected to that. It's really above and beyond.

And it really is for two program components. One is for rehabilitation, capital, safety upgrades, and transportation planning studies that may be done by the municipality. And then we have an operations and maintenance grant portion funded through the operation and maintenance part of the budget.

I just want to give you a sense about the projects that have been approved for the current year. So for '25-26, we have Meadow Lake. This is going to do a regional transportation study. Moose Jaw, geotechnical rehab of Highway 363; Moose Jaw as well for resurfacing of that same highway. We have Prince Albert, Highway 302 rehab; Swift Current, North Service Road and South Service Road; and then Weyburn, emergency culvert work, Highway 39.

So it just gives a flavour of the types of things that we do. We have a budget of 5 million for capital projects and then the remainder, 3-point-some million, for operations and maintenance.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you for that. I'll move on to another question about this year's estimates or budget. I want to know how much is allocated in this year's budget for construction or upgrading of highways north of the north Saskatchewan administrative district line, or north of Prince Albert.

I'm wondering how much is allocated in this current budget for that, in particular what, if any, plans the ministry has to pave or improve Highway 123 to Cumberland House. This is a highway that was deemed impassable in 2024, needs to be rebuilt — my understanding is that the base is not sufficient — so that this community is not cut off from supplies and services every year.

Hon. David Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have a list of all the projects for north of the administrative district, but you also asked about 123. And Kyle will get into some of the other, and I think it was in my opening comment about the 122 million for northern Saskatchewan, which is a significant increase, but you asked about 123.

Just over the past 10 years, we've invested just under \$15 million on Highway 123 for capital improvements. And over and above that, we've another 9 million for maintenance. So we have invested just under \$24 million on Highway 123 in the past 10 years. So it's been significant.

I've travelled it as well. I've been there. So you know, obviously it's a challenge. We know that. And usually in the springtime when the frost comes out, it obviously causes some problems. I know the year I was up there, they were having trouble with the water getting away because berms had been built back in the forestry side. And I can say thankfully that there were some local people in the meeting that said, well we know where they are. So I said to them, I said, well can you take them out to let the water get back to the river? Quite frankly that's what . . . And you know, that's what we're left with.

Our highways folks in the North . . . And if I can say something about our highways folks in the North — I've met quite a few of them — a very dedicated team to ensuring obviously highway

safety. 123, especially when spring comes, it does cause problems because there's trucks and everything else. And when the frost comes out it obviously causes some severe problems, and we've all seen it.

But it's really working with the local community and those folks up there on the guiding of the maintenance side of it. But when you look at our record for the northern district, our investment, like I said, over a billion dollars we've spent in northern Saskatchewan. So it's a big number. Kyle, do you want to add something to it as far as other projects?

Kyle Toffan: — Yeah, so just on 123 quickly, if I could. I was up there last year, last spring or early summer, and did meet with the council up there and had a really good conversation about the impact that 123 has on the community. So the point that you had is well taken.

[18:30]

And you know, as the minister pointed out, we did increase the amount of capital spend that we had there and increased amount in operations last year as well to make sure that we answered the call of the community. And we do monitor that regularly and spend approximately a million dollars on maintenance on that stretch every year.

So just a little bit on northern spending, because I know that you had that question raised as well. So we do plan in '25-26 budget to provide \$122.5 million to build, operate, and maintain the transportation system all over northern Saskatchewan. And this includes \$86 million in capital improvements to roads and airports and 36.5 million in operations and maintenance above and beyond that. Minister talked about some of the highlights in his opening remarks, but I'll read them again. It's highways 2, 102, 106, 135, 155, and 915 as well.

The 122.5 million is quite significant for this year. And just to compare, '24-25 budgeted amount was 73.5, so 73.5 million compared to 122.5. So quite a significant increase to the northern administrative district, or NAD. As the minister pointed out, since 2007-08 we have made a record investment in the North. It's over a billion dollars.

I want to give you a sense as well as to what types of activities we're going to be doing on these corridors, as I talked about. So Highway 2 is resurfacing near Weyakwin. Highway 102 is surfacing north of La Ronge. We're doing spot improvements as well on 102 north of Lac La Ronge.

Highway 106 is a TMS upgrade south of the junction at 120; Highway 106, micro surfacing west of Highway 165 junction; Highway 106, we do have a grade raise and some other northern spot improvements; Highway 135, plate capping and base of the area kind of south of Pelican Narrows; Highway 155 we have an engineered seal west of Beauval; Highway 915, gravel resurfacing west of Stanley Mission.

We're doing some work to prepare for Cumberland House runway resurfacing, so there's some design work that's going on, and that's part of this as well. So we're really getting ahead of that and trying to upgrade that runway. And that's to improve services for air ambulance and other economic reasons, tourism

and those types of things as well. Ile-a-la-Crosse Airport as well, pavement rehab and design work.

Several culvert and bridge replacements as well. Of course we talked about the bridge that's just south of La Ronge, very significant project that's happening and starting this year. And several preservation treatments on pavements, micro surfacing and other things, along that northern corridor as well.

We do often talk to mining companies as well, ones like, you know, Cameco, Orano, their trucking company, NRT [Northern Resource Trucking], that provides a lot of services for them. And we hear very regularly about the impact on their trucks and their operations, and are working quite closely to up our game on dealing with those corridors such as Highway 914, Highway 102, 165, and others.

And there's a lot of new investment coming as well in the North. You know, there's been conversations about . . . NexGen has been in the news, so we're working with them as well, Foran Mining, and others. So it's really not just about these projects that I was talking about already and giving a list on. It's much broader than that, and focusing on the future of our economy and what that's going to look like.

Hugh Gordon: — Great. Thank you for that. I appreciate that response. Obviously you know developing the North is very important for the northern communities. The folks in Cumberland House, albeit maybe no industry there perhaps of great significance that relies on that road, but certainly the people in that community do, and I think what they would like to see for sure is improvement on that road.

And I hope . . . We'll keep an eye on the ministry and its plans for the future, certainly hold them to account for continuing to make those improvements to Highway 123 and elsewhere in the North as a lot of our industries, like you mentioned, mining and other industries, are so reliant on those roadways. And I don't believe we're going to be able to adequately develop the North without them. I think we would all agree with that.

My next question was with respect to pullouts. I was going through the budget and looking at the estimates and the words from the ministry and the minister about that, and I can't say that I came across any particular amounts allotted for pullouts or the development of rest stops. My understanding is that there were supposed to be at least three pullouts built in Saskatchewan in the last year or so. It did not happen. I stand to be corrected, of course.

I understand there was a committee circa 2018 identified a number of areas to develop these and all but one, I believe in Moosomin, was done. There was some talk of creating truck space at scales throughout the province. I know this is a serious issue for folks in our agricultural and farming communities. It's a safety issue. I know a number of delegates from SARM and SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] have mentioned it. We also know that a lot of our towns aren't equipped with the infrastructure to deal with trucks, a lot of it being also private property.

I just want to reflect a little bit on former minister Carr's statements that she gave during last year's estimates mentioning

that the ministry would be looking to repurpose locations throughout the province for that purpose . . . to repurpose locations for that purpose, as well as hiring a consultant to complete a functional design for pilot rest stop projects on priority corridors, looking at options for partnerships between the province, municipalities, and NGOs [non-governmental organization] and commercial enterprises to develop and advertise truck stops in Saskatchewan.

And I think she also mentioned that the ministry had begun work on a truck pullout functional study to determine placements for pullouts on Highway 1 near Moosomin, Whitewood, and along Highway 7 near Kindersley.

I'm wondering if you could provide an update on any of those endeavours that former minister Carr had alluded to being under way while she was the minister.

Hon. David Marit: — Forgive me, Mr. Chair. I'm going to have to read from the work that has been done and the next steps, and so it's about four paragraphs. I'll try and get through it here if I can.

So the initial planning work was guided by a committee that included representatives from the Saskatchewan Government Insurance and the Saskatchewan Trucking Association and several trucking industry stakeholders. The review committee identified several priority areas for further review: Battlefords area, Highway 1 East between Whitewood and the Manitoba border, Highway 7 between Kindersley and the Alberta border, and Highway 1 West between Gull Lake and the Alberta border.

So in the Battlefords area the ministry has repurposed an old tourist turnoff on Highway 16, west of the town of Battleford, into a rest stop at minimal initial costs, obviously. The site maintenance is being funded through the ministry's maintenance budget, and the ministry staff and the town of Battleford have worked together to provide site services which include obviously grass cutting and garbage collection.

For Highway 1 East between Whitewood and the Manitoba border priority corridor, the ministry developed conceptual designs for three potential pilot rest stop projects. The expansion of the existing weigh scale site on Highway 1 east of Moosomin has been selected as the most suitable option, with completion planned for 2025. The other alternative options were a new rest stop on Highway 1 east of Whitewood and repurposing a former tourist information site on Highway 1 at the Manitoba border. So the one they've gone with is at Moosomin.

Regarding Highway 7 west between Kindersley and the Alberta border priority corridor, the ministry completed a conceptual design to expand an existing weigh scale site on Highway 7 west of Kindersley; however the timeline for completing the expansion has not yet been determined. So that's where we're at.

And then the section of Highway 1 West between Gull Lake and the Alberta border corridor was initially excluded from the ministry's pilot project review because a private developer was looking at options for a commercial truck stop in this area. Obviously we've added it back into the priority. I do know that one of the big trucking companies does use an area just at the turnoff at Maple Creek for where they do a lot of switching, so

that is probably one area where a lot of the truckers do pull into. So that's where it's at. And obviously the Moosomin one will be done this year.

Hugh Gordon: — Okay. If I could perhaps ask for a little bit more detail about the ministry's plans for building pullouts. My understanding, talking with folks from the SHCA, is a pullout could cost somewhere between 300 to \$500,000. And the best time to do that would of course be when the ministry is planning to repave a stretch of road or do some twinning or passing lanes, obviously, to try and incorporate that into their plan.

So I just was wondering then, how many pullouts then total have been budgeted to be built this year?

Hon. David Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. If I can, you know, when you talk about 3 to 500,000, I'd give you an example. The Moosomin one is not anywhere near that. It's millions. Just because of everything else you got to put in, the accelerator lanes, decelerating lanes, and the challenges around that.

The other challenge we have is: how long is the pullout? You know, do you make it a quarter-mile long or do you make it a kilometre long or 2 kilometres long? But then it's almost a passing lane when you do that. And so it's challenging but it doesn't mean we're not looking at it in future projects where we are.

I think the one thing I do want to talk about, especially when we talk about the corridors you're talking, we deem that our national highway system. We do. Like No. 1, No. 16, No. 11, No. 39 are virtually deemed our national highway system and recognized by our federal government as well.

One thing we've been advocating since I've been in this chair in 2016 — still every year we go to the FPT [federal-provincial-territorial] meetings — is the federal government has a responsibility for the national highway system. They have some responsibility for that. You look at the interstate system in the United States and the federal government is working with the states on that side of it too.

I fully believe that the federal government has a role to play in the ongoing maintenance of a national highway system in this country. And there's an easy formula to do it. Take your kilometres of your national highway system that is deemed by the federal government today and your traffic counts. So the 401 in Ontario obviously is going to get more money than No. 1 in Saskatchewan — rightfully so. And I think that's a respect that I truly believe that the provinces deserve from a federal government, that there should be a national highway maintenance program.

[18:45]

We're probably one of the only jurisdictions — well there's probably a few — where No. 1 is divided from border to border.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, for that response. Obviously it's a safety issue. Yes, obviously there needs to be a partnership with the federal government and they need to be engaged. No doubt about it. I'll just make a note for the record in committee.

You know, there's a national safety code with respect for motor carriers, and section 3 sub (2) and sub (3) in particular, a pretty clear indication to our truckers in the province and what their requirements are with respect to regularly reinspecting your vehicle. And the long and the short of it, without really getting into great length is, you know, these loads need to be checked essentially every couple of hours.

And so understanding that this is also a safety issue that impacts people beyond just our trucking community, you know, we will look forward to how the ministry makes progress on this file and making those improvements for those folks as well as the people in the communities that are impacted by that activity.

I'll move on to a portion in the budget estimates with respect to shortline railway improvement program. I'm just wondering . . . I know that the minister had mentioned an increase year over year of some \$470 million if I'm not mistaken, now topping \$1 million. I'm just wondering if the minister can tell us what projects that money is going towards and which rail line operators, short rail line operators will be benefiting from that.

Hon. David Marit: — Well I don't think I need much help on this one, being a shortline operator myself for years and working with the association over the time.

I'm very proud of the shortline association in this province and what they have done from a local community perspective. I think that's got to be the key message here, because virtually every shortline in this province for the most part is owned by community or shareholders, and the importance around that and why we felt it was important as well.

Obviously this sector is doing everything they can to keep the traffic off our highway system. Now if you look at the geographical location of our shortline system, you'll see that they're predominantly where we have TMS highways and secondary weights. As a result of the industry doing what it did, it was a role that we took . . . I hate to date myself, Mr. Chair, but 25 years ago was the first negotiation I sat at with CP [Canadian Pacific Railway] to negotiate a railway. And I've had the privilege to sit at two of them.

So I think it's important to recognize the work that they do and how this program works, and it's been established for quite a few years under this government. And to see an increase in the funding . . . And how it works is it's application-based. Every shortline railway is eligible for a per-kilometre-of-maintenance dollar amount. So it's proportionally sent out that way. It's cost shared and they can use it to buy railway ties, railway itself — the steel — templates, whatever they need. That's what it's used to do is for their ongoing maintenance of their system.

So I know in talking to Andrew — who I know quite well, who is obviously managing probably the longest shortline railway in Saskatchewan what happens to run through my constituency — that they were very, very appreciative of the increase in the dollar amount on the maintenance side. And that's how the formula works. So they're paid out for the miles they have, and cost-share it that way. So they were all happy to see obviously a significant increase of 470,000 up to \$1 million.

And I do want to recognize the association for the work they do

and also take this opportunity to go on record to thank the shortline association for the comments they made about our addition to the budget.

Hugh Gordon: — Sorry, to ask for some more details on that, the amount of money allocated is for maintenance costs? And is that an amount distributed evenly amongst all 13 operators or is it, like you say, application-based, only those that have applied?

Hon. David Marit: — No, they all have to apply for it, but they all get it per mile. So to give you an example, Red Coat rail probably has in the neighbourhood of 400 miles of track. Red Coat rail has about 60 miles of track. So they'd get a per-mile allocation, and obviously Red Coat would get a bigger allocation because they have more miles.

Hugh Gordon: — Fair enough. Obviously I think we all recognize the need to improve that kind of infrastructure in our province. I think Saskatchewan is uniquely positioned in that regard compared to our neighbour in Alberta, where we have more shortline rail than they do. I think the impact of our rail system is also important when we're looking at expanding, I guess, our trade markets and moving our products from east to west as that type of infrastructure is actually oriented in that direction more than perhaps our highways are.

And so on that, you know, the amount of money that is provided . . . And I understand your comments that these shortline rail lines are community-based operations. Obviously their dollars are limited. I'm just wondering if there was any thought in this budget to expanding our short rail line capacity, adding more money for infrastructure with that and facilities on our short rail line system in this budget or planning in the future.

Hon. David Marit: — You know, I guess I look at it and discussions I've had with Andrew about this. And if I could, Mr. Chairman, I also want to read Andrew's quote into *Hansard* as well. And this is Andrew's quote:

I would just like to thank the Ministry of Highways and Minister Marit for the great support that was shown today and what we received in the budget today. You know, looking back over the years, the province has been a good support for the shortline rails going back many, many years.

So that's a quote from Andrew Glastetter, president of the Western Canadian Short Line Railway Association. Because I believe there's even members from Alberta and Manitoba on that too.

But you talk about, you know, our investment. I look at what we did do. I mean it was an 88 per cent lift in their budget this year from where it was to a million dollars. And in discussions I've had with shortline operators and discussion around that, is there opportunity?

And I mean obviously there has to be a business case and a business model. A lot of them are generating a lot of revenue right now by storing rail cars. And you'll see a lot of the lines do that. It's an opportunity . . . I mean not only they're doing business, but they have an opportunity to store as well.

And then we have some on the west side of the province that are

moving a phenomenal number of cars under gas. And it's amazing what they're doing, and it really is. And so you're seeing that being mobilized and used in that way.

If the business model works, in some cases — and I'll give you a good example — we've had some discussion with some of the shortlines about gravel moving. So obviously we'll have that discussion with them and with our highway contractors, just because gravel is becoming such a scarce commodity. Is there opportunity around moving gravel by rail to the site? And obviously it comes down to, what does that cost?

Some of the challenge we have, quite frankly, with it is we have to at some point cross the class 1s, which is CN and CP. And that is a very, very difficult situation to do. You can put freight onto their line and then let them do their thing with it, but to . . . and then obviously it comes with a cost, right? I mean the shortlines are moving a big-number amount of grain. I look at, you know, the line from Regina up to Davidson. It moves an awful lot of grain up there. AGT [Alliance Grain Terminal Ltd] which . . . he has a working relationship with CN so that he can go through the yard in CN and go out west to the lines that he has out that way as well too.

So they build those relationships with the class 1s. And I can say Great Western Rail has that same relationship with CP in the yard in Assiniboia. In fact there's a lot of times they'll even stage for them as well. Any opportunity for future expansion in the shortline rail, I would hope that could be, but that would really become dependant on CN and CP saying they don't want the line anymore. That's first and foremost.

Probably why you see what you have seen when I talked earlier about community ownership, because the community has the last right. So any rail line that goes for sale — obviously the rail line can put it for sale — they go through the stages, but the last right has to be the municipality to say if they want it or not before it goes for discontinuance. And how that works then is the class 1s that they discontinue, they pay the municipality so much a kilometre over three years for the discontinuance of that rail line.

But the business case has to be there for us to continue, and I'm confident that a significant number of them have that.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I think it's also really important to highlight the role the province has also in developing this infrastructure and being leaders and working with industry, working with those community-based organizations to improve on the infrastructure. And it's not just actual rail. Some of it is obviously maintenance, but it's also building extra capacity and facilities along those lines as well.

Just a quick note. I would hope also that the ministry is also working with our federal partners — I think with the CTA [Canadian Transportation Agency] — to get the CN line used to Tisdale linked. There is a tremendous opportunity I think for producers and our economy in this province to take advantage of a line that will certainly be more efficient if we can get it up to the port of Churchill, take advantage of that kind of infrastructure.

My last question is just with respect to the ports. And I'm just wondering if the ministry can provide us some information about

what actions have been taken to address the issue of demurrage with the federal government to provide some cost relief to our producers. That is certainly a significant cost to our producers that I think is unnecessarily charged to them, and I would argue almost unfairly so. And I want to know what efforts the ministry is making to advocate on their behalf to mitigate those costs.

Hon. David Marit: — Mr. Chairman, I think I'm going to go overtime, and I hope the member opposite is okay with that one, just because . . .

Hugh Gordon: — If you had two more hours, I'd be okay with that.

Hon. David Marit: — Yeah, you know what? I would gladly take that if we want to talk about rail transportation and the port and everything else. I've had the pleasure of being at the port a few times, I have, and toured it. And obviously when you talk about demurrage, you're hitting me right in my pocketbook, being a farmer all my life. Obviously every farmer in this province has paid demurrage over time.

It is challenging, and it's challenging in a number of ways. And we can blame the railways and we can blame the port and we can blame everybody, and it's a combination of both. The one thing that this government has made a strong case for, and I really, truly believe it and I don't know how we do it, but the railways have to be classed an essential service. And even to some degree the port has to be deemed an essential service.

[19:00]

My understanding is there's like 80 different contracts at the port, so we're always dealing with interruptions, and rightfully so. That part is what it is. But the challenge we have with it is it puts a negative impact on us as a trading partner globally.

And I'll give you a couple examples. In talking to the owner of a grain company in Mexico . . . That is the largest grain miller in Mexico, where 20 per cent of his wheat comes from Western Canada, most of it from Saskatchewan. And he buys no. 2, 14.5 protein wheat because it is the best wheat in the world to grind to make flour. This guy is the largest bread maker in the world, supplies Bimbo and that. So the challenge he has . . . And he said that. He said, so I've got a ship destined for Vancouver and it gets there, and for some reason the grain isn't at port because there's been a disruption; there's been something else.

I've talked to the railways for the last 25 years about the challenge we have as a farmer moving product. A farmer has five months to move his grain from after harvest until March, because then the road bans come on and the logistics are challenged that way.

The railways have the same issue. Soon as it hits minus 40 they don't move. Then we have challenges with avalanches in the mountains and all that side of it. And then we get the train into interior BC [British Columbia] and they have to split the train. And then we're challenged by 9 or 11 different municipalities that don't want trains going through them because it disrupts traffic flow.

When I was Highways minister in 2016 and 2017, I asked the

federal government to give the Port of Vancouver 400-and-some million dollars instead of giving it to the provinces. I said if you want to improve the flow of freight on the Vancouver port, you have to put jet engines in the tunnel for the North Shore.

I've seen that operation work and now trains are going, instead of every half hour to 45 minutes, they're down to every 15 minutes. So it's increased the capacity that way. Is there still challenges at the port? You bet there is, and the challenges aren't so much with the port authority in working with them. The challenge is obviously from the municipal side to some degree, and understandably so. We're now up to two-mile trains going across this province.

So the challenge is, rightfully so, on the transportation side. But until we prove that, we are going to be challenged globally with the movement not only of grain, potash, oil. Everything else is going to be . . . Our reputation is going to be challenged. The challenge that this gentleman's had in Mexico, he says, well I have this ship destined for me. And he says, I need these 50 or 60 000 tonnes dated April 1. I don't get it till May 30th, he said, I'm not in business so, he says, I have to source it from somewhere else.

The challenge you have with it is once you lose that customer, it's very hard to get him back. So if we could do something for the whole food chain system, it was deem it as an essential service because it is delivering food, and I think it's important that way. So I'll end with that, but thanks for the question.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Thank you, Minister. Having reached our agreed-upon time for consideration of these estimates, we will now adjourn considerations of the estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 for the Ministry of Highways.

Minister, do you have any closing comments?

Hon. David Marit: — I think I've probably talked too much. I'm sure they've had enough of me. But no, Mr. Chair, obviously I want to thank the committee and Hugh for his questions and line of questioning. And it was very good. It was very good. Thank you.

But I want to thank the team behind me. And I call it a team because we really are, and the advice and expertise they bring to me is critical. But I think the one thing in my absence, for the last six years that I've been gone from the ministry, is the relationships we have with industry stakeholders is still very, very strong. And that says a lot to the officials behind me. And I hate to say behind me because I feel they're right beside me, and they are.

So, Mr. Chair, I'll end with that. And thank you very much. It was very, very respectful. Thank you.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Thank you, Minister. MLA Gordon, any closing comments?

Hugh Gordon: — Just thank the minister once again for his time and his team having been prepared tonight. It's duly noted. Nice to see you guys are on top of the file and appreciate your fairly timely responses. So thank you again.

You're doing important work . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yeah, you too. You too. And you're doing important work for the province. I think that can't be stressed enough, and we're all affected by it. So thank you once again.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Thank you, Minister and all the officials, for being here with us tonight. This committee will now recess until 7:30 p.m.

[The committee recessed from 19:05 until 19:30.]

General Revenue Fund Immigration and Career Training Vote 89

Subvote (IC01)

Chair Thorsteinson: — Welcome back, committee members, for the second session here this evening. We have Minister Jenson returning, and we have Noor Burki sitting in for Kim Breckner and Nathaniel Teed sitting in for Sally Housser.

Welcome back, committee members. We will now consider the estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 for the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training. We will begin with vote 89, Immigration and Career Training, central management and services, subvote (IC01).

Minister Reiter is here with his officials from the ministry. I would ask all officials, please state your names 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. Jim Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to thank you and the committee members for this opportunity to discuss the budget for the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training.

Officials with me at the front table are Deputy Minister Drew Wilby and Assistant Deputy Minister Christa Ross. Also with us are Assistant Deputy Minister Darcy Smycniuk, and my chief of staff, Brady Peter. There's other officials with us as well and I would ask them, as you mentioned, if they speak tonight to introduce themselves.

Saskatchewan's labour market continues to lead the nation. In March Saskatchewan's unemployment rate was 4.9 per cent, the lowest unemployment rate of all the provinces. Saskatchewan's job growth rate also leads every other province at 3.4 per cent with 19,800 new jobs created year over year. Guided by the Saskatchewan labour market strategy, the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training is focused on delivering the workforce the province needs to support our growing economy.

We are investing over \$117 million in labour market programs, and that includes 24.1 million for adult essential-skills training; 17.8 million for pre-employment programs and services; 10.4 million to support employment for persons with disabilities to make and prepare transitions into the workforce; 12.8 million for newcomer and settlement services; 22.6 million for skills

training programs delivered through post-secondary institutions, which is an increase of 716,000 compared to '24-25 fiscal year, and included in that amount is an increase of 320,000 for northern skills training and 3.7 million to support our government's health human resources action plan.

We are also increasing our investment in the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission by 2.7 million to add 150 new apprentice training seats. This brings the total investment in apprenticeship training to 25.6 million and increases the total number of training seats to 5,000.

Tomorrow marks the one-year anniversary of the Government of Canada's decision to cut 625 million in labour market transfer agreement funding to the provinces and territories. Saskatchewan's share of that cut, 17.6 million, was bridged by the province for the last fiscal year to ensure that critical labour market programs continued while provinces continued to advocate for that federal funding to be restored. As that funding has not been restored by the Government of Canada, the ministry has had to adjust the programs and services we offer to Saskatchewan people, and our budget has been reduced accordingly.

The Canada-Saskatchewan Job Grant has been eliminated and funding for workforce development programs has been reduced by 5.2 million. In total, funding for labour market programs has been reduced by 9.9 million. In January of this year, the Government of Canada cut provincial nominee allocations of all provinces by 50 per cent and reduced flexibility for provinces in how they administer their own programs.

As a result, last month we announced changes to the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program in response to the federal government's reduction to the program. The changes will ensure that the reduced number of nominations are used effectively in a manner that prioritizes building our economy.

With that, Mr. Chair, I'd be happy to take any questions.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Thank you, Minister. I will now open the floor to questions. Mr. Burki.

Noor Burki: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Legislative Assembly Clerk, Hansard, for your time, and thanks to all my colleagues across the board. And thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know how hard-working you're doing, so it's our second time that we're doing a night sitting for two hours. Thank you for all your hard work and all the people that are from the ministry — deputy minister, assistant deputy minister, and all the officials from Immigration. Thank you very much for all your hard work, and we'll move on from there.

Minister, the central management and services subvote increased by almost 1 million or 4.9 per cent in 2025-2026. It's not executive management cost and/or accommodation cost. According to the estimate material, can you please explain what else is your overhead and administration cost has increased so much?

Drew Wilby: — Hi. Drew Wilby, deputy minister of Immigration and Career Training. Thank you for the question. So in terms of the central management and services subvote and a

few of the different changes there, if it's okay with you, Member, I'll walk through the different pieces that are there and how that plays out to give you a bit of a better understanding.

I think by now most are familiar with the collective bargaining agreement changes that have happened across the Government of Saskatchewan and that are, you know, subject to each ministry. Of course Immigration and Career Training is no different. So throughout the estimates you'll see that layered in, just those changes year over year, according to the CBA [collective bargaining agreement] being ratified there last year.

So there's a \$44,000 increase this year for those salary adjustments. And so the way that works is with the collective bargaining agreement, obviously the in-scope staff receive those allocations accordingly because it's a bit backdated. They showed up in a chunk, a lump sum this year. And as well then the out-of-scope follow that as well. And so that's where that change comes from.

In terms of our central services component of that piece, those are tenant improvements. And so we received about a million dollars this year. We have quite a few regional offices out there across the province. It's part of the footprint of the ministry to try to service rural communities, more remote northern communities. And we know that some of those offices are in need of those tenant improvements. And so we were quite fortunate to receive a million dollars — it's \$1.008 million to be exact — to support a bit of the modernization as well as the accessibility and safety.

You know, we're seeing obviously, just with the date of those buildings and the age of those buildings, there's some improvements that need to be made on both of those fronts. Of course the government has the accessibility strategy as well, and so we want to make sure we're in alignment with the accessibility strategy that falls under the Ministry of Social Services.

And then there's an \$82,000 reduction on our accommodation services. And that's just internal government transfers. That's with SaskBuilds, just a recovery adjustment on our IT [information technology] side of the equation as well as our accommodation. So nothing too significant there, just an adjustment accordingly. So in total for that subvote, it's about a \$970,000 increase that's accounted for in those changes.

Noor Burki: — Thank you, Deputy Minister. I'll move with it. Thank you very much for your answer. Did the new GEM [government enterprise management] system that the government installed have anything to do with the cost increase? If it did, can you please advise exactly how much of the increase was due to this new GEM system?

Drew Wilby: — So in terms of the GEM system and it coming online and the reallocation, our share of that would be approximately \$152,000 and half an FTE [full-time equivalent]. I always get a bit of a chuckle at the half an FTE, because we can't move half a person, but it's just the financial accounting for that. What's important to note with that money and that movement is that that's just movement from us to the centralized sort of GEM function. So it's not a reduction overall to government, just the movement from the ministry because those services will now be provided centrally for the Government of

Saskatchewan as opposed to within the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training.

Noor Burki: — Okay. The GEM system, all the component of the software is being developed here in-house, or if there's any outsourced component of the software to any other companies?

[19:45]

Hon. Jim Reiter: — So because this is just one ministry that'll be using that, and this is across government . . . There'll be many ministries using it, so the procurement is actually being handled in SaskBuilds, not in the individual ministries.

Noor Burki: — Okay. Thank you very much, Minister. Okay. The budget for the workforce development program has fallen by over 5 million, or 22.7 per cent. Can you please explain why you have reduced the program funding? Which external organization will be most affected by the decrease of this funding? And how many fewer clients will be served by the program?

Hon. Jim Reiter: — So during my opening comments I had mentioned about the federal government's decision on cutting \$17.6 million. So because of that, the provinces had to adjust programs and prioritize funding to adjust to that. So I had also mentioned, I believe, that last year we had temporarily bridged it. Advocacy was done to the federal government, hoping that they would reinstate that. Other provinces were doing the same thing. We weren't successful with that.

So to get more into the crux of your question, I'm going to ask Drew to go into those adjustments in a little more detail.

Drew Wilby: — So as the minister indicated, I mean this was strictly due to the \$17.6 million funding reduction from the federal government, and obviously we had to make some difficult decisions. But these programs were funded through that pool of money, so that \$5.24 million.

And so in terms of where that funding went, we had three programs for 2.783 million that was a targeted initiative for older workers program. So that was six contracts totalling \$750,000. We had a self-employment program, which is five contracts for \$943,000, and a training voucher program, which was 10 contracts for \$1.09 million. You know, and then on the targeted contract reductions as well, we had 18 contracts for 2.458 million, and then further just a slight reduction, six, seven because we're winding some of those up.

What I would say with these is that a lot of these, you know, they don't have a direct impact on individuals. It's not funding programs that's going towards individuals. It's more so as a flow through to different organizations around the province. So we tried to limit the impact that these cuts would have on those that are going through a lot of those, you know, important training programs that the minister has highlighted.

And you know, in terms of that second batch that I talked to in the 2.458 million, you know, we had some one-time initiatives in there that were just individual contracts that had expired anyway, and that was \$1.264 million worth of those. So those were not going to continue on into '25-6; we were able to let those contracts go. And then some non-renewals at 523,000, some

others that we were able to wrap up at 328,000, and then just some adjustments for 342 to right-size some contracts. So again, you know, some real methodical work that went through to make sure that the impact would be as limited as possible on those individuals.

Noor Burki: — Well my one worry was that on one side, we are reducing the amount of workforce development. On the other side, the federal government would have 50 per cent cuts on our limitation. So how we can produce a workforce, labour market to make sure, and if we are going for 50 per cent cut from federally? So I think we have to be investing in our own people to make sure we can produce our own labour market people. That was the only worry, and that was the question about that. Thank you.

The budget for the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission has increased by approximately 2.7 million, or 11.8 per cent. Can you please list which trade categories will be the focus?

Hon. Jim Reiter: — So I would preface this by saying, before you asked just this last question, you shared some of the concerns you had, why you're asking the questions. We share those very concerns. We've got many capital projects happening around the province that we need to make sure we have skilled trades for, and so we need to be investing appropriately to do that. So what I'm going to do, I'm going to ask Drew to kind of walk through the details of where we're targeting, which areas, and why.

Drew Wilby: — Yeah, so as the minister highlighted, with those capital investments that are happening and, you know, where we know that we need to invest, our primary focus is the labour market strategy. And it has three pillars. The first pillar is to train Saskatchewan people for Saskatchewan jobs. The second pillar is the credential recognition to make sure that those that have credentials and that may be underemployed or even unemployed in the province are able to get into those jobs that they're trained for. And thirdly of course is international recruitment where we need it.

In terms of that first pillar, this speaks to that, you know, with that investment in the Saskatchewan apprenticeship and trade commission, looking at what the needs are going forward, what we know is going to be needed out there in terms of those capital projects.

And so the investment this year gets us to 5,000 seats. It will be up to the commission to determine exactly how they want to allocate those seats and what that looks like across the year with their partners of course, you know, that do the training, whether it be Sask Poly, some of the regional colleges, or some of the other training institutions as well that are involved and training partners.

But most of those seats will be focused in on the skilled trades, whether it be construction, electricians, carpenters, plumbers, welders, some of the other construction trades. And then there will be, you know, obviously the carry-over on the non-construction trades as well, because we are seeing the demand increase across the board with the new apprenticeship system.

Noor Burki: — Well thank you, Minister. Thank you, Deputy Minister. Well we can see that construction is one of the biggest

demands, so the more we invest in that one inside the province I think that will be the best optimum investment. Thank you.

The most surprising budget cuts or budget changes in your ministry is the cuts to the newcomer settlement program. You're reducing funding by 1.5 million, or 10.4 per cent. When you have some of the lowest levels of newcomer retention in the country, why the ministry is cutting this budget?

Hon. Jim Reiter: — There's still 12.8 million in the budget for that, so I'm just going to kind of walk you through what happened there. So the 1.5 million reduction, about a million of that came from the newcomer and settlement credential recognition grant, and what that was was part of the health human resources initiative which was the nurses from the Philippines. And so what's happened in that case is all the nurses from that international recruitment mission have completed their training as of last fall, so that ended the need for that funding.

And then there was \$500,000 reduced because that was to the Ukrainian Canadian Congress because as the number of displaced Ukrainians arriving to Saskatchewan, that's been declining, so much of that funding was no longer needed. There is still 200,000 in place for that because some are still arriving.

[20:00]

So I would say this: as the federal government cut our numbers in half, our nominees in half, there's still 12.8 million in there. So when you look at it in that perspective there's less nominees but still significant funding. So sort of funding available per nominee would actually be substantially up.

Noor Burki: — Well thank you, Minister, for that. My worry was that when we are talking about retention, something that we have to have the same amount of money to make sure that those people, they're living in the province, that they are not leaving the province. But if you are reducing already we are losing our people from our province.

So that was a little bit kind of surprising for me, but if you said that it was strategic for Ukrainians and they settled down, so if we cut it down that way, our Philippines . . . We got some nurses from Philippines. If this is the case that's okay.

So I'll move on to the next question. The province's five-year immigration retention rate has fallen by 16 per cent according to the latest Statistics Canada data and now stands at only 50 per cent. Half of immigration, comes to Saskatchewan, leave within five years, and you have the fourth-lowest retention rate in Canada. What the ministry is doing to change this situation?

Christa Ross: — Okay, thank you for the question. So when it comes to our retention rate, the data source that we rely on is from a database called the IMDB [Longitudinal Immigration Database]. So that combines immigrant landing data with CRA [Canada Revenue Agency] tax filer data. And there is a bit of a time lag with this data source, so we do measure retention typically within a five-year window or a five-year cycle.

The most recent data we have through this database on retention is for 2022. That retention rate — so this is again how many newcomers are still filing taxes five years later in Saskatchewan

— and that retention rate as of 2022 was 62 per cent. So it is actually the first year in a few years where we've seen that number go upward, so hopefully that's the start of a continued trend.

But in terms of more generally speaking, what we're doing to improve our overall retention for newcomers, I think . . . You know, we spoke a little bit to that in the previous response in terms of that continued investment in settlement services, so the 12.8 million. And we're trying to bolster some of those services within that 12.8 million, recognizing the opportunity and the value in providing more service and supports further upstream in the immigration process.

So what we typically refer to is a pre-arrival service, so starting to do more there in that space as well as, you know, continuing to bolster what we're doing when it comes to credential recognition to make sure that individuals who are immigrating to Saskatchewan have the opportunity and the supports to fully bring their skills and experience to the labour market.

I think further to that what also supports increased retention is going to be the work we're doing on program integrity and strengthening the protections of the immigration system and the experience for newcomers, as well as some of the program changes that we have made recently we believe will help to support and increase that overall retention rate. An example of that is, you know, we can tell through this database that where we have the lowest retention rate is for provincial nominees who have come without a job offer already arranged for them.

So some of the recent changes we've made in part because of the federal reduction to the program. But also, you know, the changes are very mindful and cognizant of the priority we have around increasing retention would be putting priority on individuals who do already have employment arranged in Saskatchewan. So we believe some of the changes that we've recently made to the SINP [Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program] will also help to increase retention.

I think too if I can just share, while the retention rate, you know, we want to continue to see that improving, we do have other pretty solid data sources that point to newcomers are finding success and settling well. One I would share with you is just around the employment rate. We know the employment rate in Saskatchewan is 81 per cent. You compare that nationally for recent immigrants, so that's individuals who have been here for five years or less, that employment rate is 77 per cent nationally. So we do have a better employment outcome for recent immigrants in Saskatchewan compared to the rest of the country.

And I would just also maybe share a few other observations in terms of retention and what's contributing to some of the trends we see. And while we can certainly, you know, try to respond with additional measures to the program and services and supports, we do a fairly robust evaluation of the SINP every five years, and it's an opportunity to survey many people who came through the program and get their feedback.

And in terms of what we hear through that survey and that source around why people are leaving the province, some of it is factors that are just simply out of our control like the weather, people wanting to go to larger centres where there's a bit more of a

nightlife for instance. So some of the factors we can't control. But we're certainly, you know, we want to see that retention rate continuing to improve. And any changes we make to program, services, the SINP itself, it always has that goal in mind.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Thank you. Just before we continue, just for the clarity of the *Hansard* record, could I just get you to state your name?

Christa Ross: — Christa Ross, assistant deputy minister. My apologies for not doing that at the beginning.

Noor Burki: — Thank you, Deputy Minister. So it's sometimes like we get really worried about that when people coming to the province — we sponsor, we invest money on them, we bring it over here — and then they leave our province. It seems like effort for us, tragic to come and go, we should not be having. As you mentioned, that you have PIU [Program Integrity Unit] and those kind of integrated programs to make sure we can take legitimate people that will stay, verify those things, that's really encouraging.

Would you mind if I can get the data from last five years about IMDB, the one you mentioned, for five years?

Christa Ross: — Okay. Thank you for the question. So for the most recent data release — so this is from the IMDB again, the database I mentioned in my previous response — the time period we have that's the most recent release is for 2018 to 2022, and that's the retention rate. For that period, that's the retention rate of 62 per cent that I mentioned.

I can provide a bit of a further breakdown of those numbers if it's of interest. So the 62 per cent is retention for all immigrants who landed in Saskatchewan during that period. If we look at just those who came through the federal family sponsorship stream, the retention rate, the five-year retention rate for that group was 76 per cent. If we look at federal skilled worker and federal skilled trades, the retention rate, the five-year retention rate for that group is 32 per cent.

The retention rate for Canadian experience class . . . So that's another federal economic immigration stream, and it's primarily for individuals who are already in Canada on some type of temporary resident visa and who are working in the country already. The five-year retention rate for them was 58 per cent.

And then we have the retention rate for SINP nominees and their accompanying family members. That is 60 per cent. And then we have a retention rate for refugees. So again these are federal humanitarian streams. The five-year retention rate for that group is, or was, 59 per cent.

Noor Burki: — Thank you, Deputy Minister. It's a very hard subject to retain people. We can't force them, but we have tried our best to make sure we can take benefit from the people that we're investing. So it's very hard. So I'll move on from that.

What is the most surprising is that according to the latest statistic data, Canada data, Regina and Saskatoon have the lowest five-year immigrant retention rate among major cities in Canada — only 39.2 per cent and 43.3 per cent of immigrants to Regina and Saskatoon respectively stay for five years. Does this not show

that our ministry are not doing enough to try to aid immigrants in settling these cities?

[20:15]

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Obviously retention is a focus for us. Certainly we agree with that. And as Christa mentioned, some of the things are sort of beyond our control. For example, when our folks talk to people that have decided to leave, weather is frequently mentioned and also the size of the cities.

So with the numbers being reduced by the federal government I think, you know, if we can take advantage — sort of make something good out of something bad — we can sort of refocus our efforts on that, on retention. And we've got some thoughts around that, things that we think will increase retention. I'm going to get Drew to elaborate on that.

Drew Wilby: — Thank you, Minister. Yeah, with the reduction in numbers, obviously it will be difficult in terms of filling that 125,000 jobs that we do know are coming. But we believe that we will be able to attach individuals to local communities. We should hopefully be able to attach them to the job market and hopefully encourage them to stay here.

You know, Christa's highlighted these settlement services and supports that we do have. Obviously we're relying on the federal government for some of those too. They've reduced, and so we'll continue to advocate with them that they should continue their investment to make sure that those settlement supports and services are in place.

But you know, we've got record unemployment right now. We know that we have record economic development. We have record population growth within the province. And so there is a lot of opportunity to capitalize on and to, you know, market Saskatchewan to those individuals that we can hopefully bring here in those areas that we've aligned with: health care, agriculture, and of course the skilled trades as well.

But then also part of that reduction that the federal government gave us was not only by 50 per cent to 3,625, as well as 75 per cent of those have to be temporary residents converted to permanent residents. And so the team is really looking creatively through the credential recognition services branch at, you know, pools of individuals around the country.

And I hate to talk about groups of people as pools so, you know, I don't mean that in any sort of a negative sense. It's just looking at, you know, who is in-country? Who do we have coming through our post-secondary institutions? What are some of those skills? And how can we help people bridge potentially to becoming fully employed in those areas that they're looking at?

And so, you know, a lot of that background work is going on, figuring out what that looks like. And again, you know, although significant reductions here and some significant challenges, we do think that we have an opportunity to really turn that if we can.

Noor Burki: — Thank you. Mr. Deputy Minister. Thank you very much for the answer to that question.

One thing I can say that if we compare our two cities, major

cities, with Toronto, with BC or Quebec, the rental costs over there are really high and buying a house is very hard for people to buy it. If a person sells a house in those three cities, they can buy two houses here in Saskatoon or Regina. So comparatively to that, it should be really attracting people rather than people draining out from there. So this is one of the questions — 39 per cent, 43 per cent was really worrying me. We have to return where we are such a good slope that we can attract people. I think we should have to be retaining more people in our cities.

So I'll move on to the next question. Your ministry is responsible for labour market planning. Can you please provide me with a brief summary of current labour market needs and projections for the next five years?

Hon. Jim Reiter: — So in a minute I'm going to get Christa to sort of elaborate on the question you did and the areas that we need to target and we're going to target.

I would just say this to kind of preface it though. You saw what we did. I won't repeat the whole issue with the federal government cutting the number of nominees we have. But when we did the pause out of necessity there, when we sort of came back from it with targeted areas . . . For example, the areas that we specifically targeted were health care, agriculture, and skilled trades. And I think that speaks to sort of the need in the labour market province-wide.

So Christa's just going to give you a bit more detail on that.

Christa Ross: — Okay. Thanks, Minister, and thanks for the question. So what I'm going to walk through here is actually some resources that we do publish publicly, so it's on our website.

We have a very talented labour market intelligence team who produces a number of publications looking at what labour market demand is going to look like over the next four years. We produce reports that look at that from a sector level and then more detailed reports that get into down to individual occupational demand.

So over the period of 2024 to 2028, we are forecasting just under 120,000 job openings. So the exact number would be 119,070 job openings. Thirty-six per cent of those jobs are due to anticipated economic growth, so what we refer to as expansion demand, and 64 per cent of those job openings are anticipated to be due to retirement and workforce replacement.

So I'll get a bit into what that looks like at a sector level. Like I said, this can get quite detailed, so I won't kind of go through the full list I have in front of me. But I'll maybe just offer sort of the top five where we're forecasting the most demand. And if you'd like more detail, then we can certainly get into that.

So if we look at the forecasted demand — again this is over 2024 to 2028 — at a sector level, highest number of openings is anticipated to be in health care and social assistance. So over that same time period, we're forecasting just over 17,000 job openings. Just over 10,000 of those will be due to replacement, so retirements. Next largest number will be in retail trade. So over that again four-year period, forecasting 11,670 job openings; 8,100 of those are anticipated to be due to retirements

or replacement demand.

Next is educational services. So forecasting 10,450 job openings for that sector; 6,750 of those will be due to replacement demand. Next we have construction. So total forecasted openings for that sector are 9,700; 5,420 of those are anticipated due to retirements. And then we have wholesale trade next with 8,410 job openings; 4,630 of those are attributed to expansion demand. So those are the top five.

Like I said, we have a number of publications, and some of them get into a much deeper level of detail. But I'll offer that as a response now, and certainly we can get into more detail if you would like.

Noor Burki: — Thank you, Minister. And thank you, Deputy Minister. The question that I ask we all know about, that the federal cuts on our immigration is really impacting all of us in the entire province. And the minister said as well in the media that when we are going for next year's planning, we will be having the same implications. We'll have to reduce the nominations, so 3,000-something that people will be bringing in to next year, but 75 per cent of those people are already on board here. And the only leftover will be 600, somewhere like 700 people that we'll need. And priority, Minister, as we know, that health care needs a lot of our resources. And the minister said we will be giving priority to the health care.

My question with the labour market is that we have a lot of people, a lot of students that they graduate with medicine from abroad, and they come here. They've been born and raised here. Is there any way that we can have some kind of training for them so they can join our health care system as a professional?

[20:30]

Drew Wilby: — So appreciate that question. And I think, you know, that's a little bit of the goal that everyone really around the world right now is looking for but in particular across Canada and Saskatchewan, is where are those individuals that maybe were born and raised here, have gone abroad somewhere else to train to obviously get their schooling. And then, you know, figure out how do they bridge back if that's where they want to go.

We've had some good recent discussions around that with a lot of our partners. We do know, you know, that there are schools. As an example, there's a college in Bahrain that's tied to the Royal College out of Ireland, and there are a fair amount of Canadian kids that are there. As well down into Australia and other jurisdictions as well.

And so we're working with our partners on that to see, you know, who those individuals might be, how can we first off potentially reach them, which would be an important piece. Identify them, reach them, market Saskatchewan to them to either come home or to come to Saskatchewan if they're not from here, and then figure out what a path looks like.

You know, is it that they need to get their residency, or have they done their residency abroad? And then maybe it's an easier path to come into Saskatchewan and practise in the health care system. Or is it that they need to take some more of that either abroad or bridge it when they come back? And so again the credential

recognition group that we have in place is doing a lot of that work, both domestically but also internationally.

And you know, as we look towards any sort of future international recruitment initiatives through the ministry or in partnership with some of our other colleagues, such as Health, we will definitely, you know, consider those pieces. But it is a fairly complex system in terms of the different players that are involved, the regulatory bodies that are involved, and the other ministries and agencies involved as well. And then of course, you know, our health care sector too and looking at that piece.

But I would say, you know, we're definitely doing a deep dive into that to figure out what it looks like, to figure out where some of those groups are and how do we potentially recruit them to Saskatchewan and to, you know, want to come back and work, raise a family, and live here of course.

Christa's got a bit more detailed information on some of the initiatives we have, so I'll turn it over to her.

Christa Ross: — All right. Thanks, Drew. Thanks for the question. So you asked specifically about physicians, and so I just wanted to share some information about one initiative we have that is targeted at international medical graduates.

So it's an agreement we have with the University of Saskatchewan, and it's meant to assist international medical graduates with a couple of different . . . we refer to them as streams but different types of support. So one would be just helping them get ready in terms of study, interview, prep, and other just informational pieces to get ready for the residency matching process.

Another stream or support they might access through this U of S [University of Saskatchewan] agreement we have is to gain clinical experience opportunities, so medical residencies. And then another stream or another support we provide through this particular program is alternate career planning. So we have helped some international medical graduates bridge into alternative professions that still use their skills and qualifications. An example of that would be moving into a role of an advanced care paramedic.

Noor Burki: — Thank you, Minister, for a thoughtful answer. I really appreciate that one. I just personally share something that I have in my family. My daughter, she went for a bachelor and master's for biomedical physics to Toronto university. And we were sitting one day on the couch, me and my wife, and she call and she was telling my wife that when I complete my Ph.D. [Doctor of Philosophy] in biomedical physics I will work in Regina.

And I said, why you will work in Regina? You went to Toronto on your own choice. And she told me that, Dad, Mom makes such good food that . . . So one thing I can see that no matter what, our children, they love, they want to stay with parents. And they . . . [inaudible] . . . I been working for 15 years with young teenage people. They love their parents, their high school friends, and they want to stay in community no matter what.

I think that would be a best investment for those people that their kids go abroad, they do degree, and they come back. And we can

recognize the recognition, and you know, they can do work over here. I think that would be the organic sort of investment that we can reap. Shall I move with the next question?

Can you please explain to the public, Minister, that your labour market strategy that was released in March 2024 does not in any way quantify the numbers of the people that will be needed in specific job areas in the next 5 or 10 years?

Hon. Jim Reiter: — So to your question, the labour market strategy is an overarching document, and the numbers you're looking for are actually in the labour market outlook. That's what Christa referenced a little bit ago when she gave you some of the numbers. And she mentioned we could give you more detail if you like, which is a five-year rolling document. And again that's more specific. That'll change as conditions change, but the overarching document is the labour market strategy you're talking about.

Noor Burki: — Well I was just asking about were all . . .

Hon. Jim Reiter: — So I guess if I could, the short answer to what you're asking is it's not in that strategy because it's in the other document. It's in the labour market outlook.

Noor Burki: — Okay, fair enough. Minister, we are one of the only three provinces in Canada that regularly is losing our population to other provinces. Over the past five years and the past few years on a net basis, we have lost over 50,000 people to other provinces. And over the past one year we have lost closer to 5,000 people on a net basis to other provinces. We are one of the only three provinces in Canada that lost people interprovincially.

Is this not the reason for our low unemployment rate?

Hon. Jim Reiter: — So to your question, I guess I would respectfully disagree because I think you're not looking at the full picture. You're only looking at part of the picture. You're ignoring the immigration numbers. Our population is growing. It's been growing for a number of years now.

A big part of the reason I decided to enter politics was because I grew up in west central Saskatchewan in a small town. And when I looked at all my friends around me, all of them, once they graduated high school, they all moved to Alberta because that's where the opportunities were. And then as I got older my friends' kids were all moving to Alberta because that's where the opportunities were. And I wanted to turn that around, and I feel that we've been successful in doing that.

And I think the numbers speak for themselves. If you look at the population of Saskatchewan, for most of my life it was always hanging just under a million people in population. And there was great political debate in the legislature on this amongst the opposition and the government of the day, whether that could be changed. And it has.

You know, I was given the privilege on budget day to deliver the budget in my other role as Minister of Finance. And on that day Statistics Canada announced for the first time ever we had one and a quarter million people in the province. So that creates great opportunity. So no, I would say clearly the population has been

growing.

Noor Burki: — Well thank you very much. We wish and pray that our population should grow and we should attract a lot of people, but you know, it's something that we're definitely looking for that. But if we go for like back 2007 to 2025, I think the population . . . Definitely growth is higher than compared to 2007, but we can see that it should be growing more.

And the only thing we can do is retention and keeping people more over here. And I wish those people that they were going from our province to Alberta to Manitoba, any other province, that they should have to come back to us. That would be great.

Okay, I'll move on to the next question. Thank you for your answer. The latest data from Statistics Canada on immigration programs in Canada shows that the provincial nominee program has the lowest retention rate in Canada, and the specialists specifically in Saskatchewan have the second-lowest rate in immigration retention among all provinces at 46.6 per cent.

[20:45]

Minister, how is this possible when the ministry officials are selecting the immigrants?

Hon. Jim Reiter: — So if you compare — because the province only does economic streams; the feds do economic streams, but they also do family streams as well — so if you compare our economic streams to the federal family streams, absolutely their numbers would be better because just by its very nature, if you're bringing family over, obviously they're much more inclined to stay.

But if you compare the economic numbers so it's apples to apples — our provincial economic numbers to the federal economic numbers — actually ours are better. Ours are at about 60 per cent. One of the federal streams is at 58, and the other one's at 32. So when you compare economic streams to economic streams, the provincial ones here are actually better.

Noor Burki: — Thank you, Minister, for the answer. So I will move on to the next comparison with our neighbouring provinces, Manitoba and Alberta, for their retention rate of the new immigrants. Manitoba is higher 19 per cent than us, and Alberta is 42 per cent higher than this.

Again, Minister, why is the government failing with the operation of the provincial nominee program? If you're looking to the relative conditions, like it's not that big a difference if it would be 5 per cent or 6 per cent between the provinces. But the retention rate in Manitoba and Alberta is way higher than Saskatchewan.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — So we believe that part of the reason for the success rate, the retention rate, is because temporary residents are more likely to stay. It's been shown in statistics. They're more likely to, you know, if they get permanent residency, to stay in that jurisdiction. And we have fewer per capita. We have fewer temporary residents than those other provinces, so we think that has a significant impact on it. Again, we're going to focus on retention. Very important. But we think that's a significant factor in it.

Noor Burki: — Thank you, Minister. So we'll move on to the next question. It's a little bit longer. I tried to make it into two, three questions but I couldn't make it. And this is, I think, is the target of the government as well.

The 2025-2026 business plan and the budget suggest that you want to increase the Saskatchewan labour force by growing our population to 1.5 million in 2030 through immigration, which is great. This amounts to roughly 25,000 new residents every year.

Is the ministry and the government committed to increased funding for education, health care and settlement services and new housing to ensure that those new residents and existing residents do not experience any kind of reduction in their standard of living?

Hon. Jim Reiter: — So you know, I won't repeat what I said earlier, but I talked about the fact that we're now one and a quarter million people. We're committed to continuing to grow the province, continuing to grow that population. And as far as the services provided, you know, I think our record speaks to that.

I had the opportunity, as I mentioned earlier, to deliver the budget speech this year. And when you look at sort of the priority targets — and even though I realize this is outside the realm of, you know, the specific debate today — I would point to . . . You mentioned health care, education, for example. Health care, a 6.4 per cent increase in funding. Education to sort of the front line, if you will. To the school divisions, money flowing to the school divisions, there's an 8.4 per cent increase in the budget for that.

So we've been very clear that we're going to continue to provide services. We're going to do our best, continue to improve services. And part and parcel with that is more people here means more people working, means more corporate income tax, means more personal income tax, means more PST [provincial sales tax], which you know, I share those because it's not for the sake of the revenue itself or the growth itself, it's because of what that allows the government to provide people and services.

So to your question, absolutely our priority will be continuing and improving the services to our citizens.

Noor Burki: — Okay, thank you, Minister. With an extension with this question, do you think our target, that 1.5 million in 2030, that is practically achievable?

[21:00]

Hon. Jim Reiter: — So the growth plan goal is 1.4 million. And you know, I spoke a couple times tonight already about being at one and a quarter million already, which I think is a remarkable achievement when you look back just a few years. The changes the federal government . . . Well I would say, you know, the goal being 1.4; we're already at one and a quarter. Very clearly we're on a trajectory to reach that. The changes the federal government made are going to cause some difficulties there. We're certainly concerned about that but we're still committed to that goal.

Noor Burki: — Thank you. My concern was that the recent tariffs and federal cuts and geography of our province compared to other provinces. To be very honest, when I came in 2003 as an immigrant to Canada, I just knew only one city name — Toronto.

And I didn't know that the capital city is Ottawa, not Toronto. I didn't know about that.

So those cities, the big cities, they always get immigration through federal. They are self-sufficient in that one. But our province is really very hard. So my concern is that when we have federal cuts and we have tariffs and we don't have the exposure as compared to other big cities, I was just wondering whether we'll be still able to achieve our target in 2030. It's a dream; I wish and pray that we achieve that for more people in our province that would be looking forward. So I'll move from that onward.

So the budget and the business plan stated that you will continue to innovate to improve the accessibility and awareness of credential recognition services as you mentioned for immigrants coming to Saskatchewan. Please list each of those detailed changes that you will be going to implement in 2025 and 2026 that will improve the credential recognition and shorten process turnout times.

Drew Wilby: — So our credential recognition services branch is a fairly new branch within the ministry. It's really come together and, I would say, got its legs over the last six months to a year. Last year alone, they were able to connect with 405 individuals through our navigator program. And so these are individuals that work in the branch. And their role is to connect with those both in Canada and abroad and finding that path for them to success in Saskatchewan, to having those credentials recognized and making sure that they have that gainful employment and those pieces that they, of course, are trained to do, you know, and contributing back into the local economies of course.

Building off of that, you know, we've really taken a focus at some of the regulatory agencies, and part of the team is working with those regulatory bodies. You know, we're blessed here in Saskatchewan. At the federal level there's a lot of talk about labour mobility right now and making sure that those barriers are down. Saskatchewan really leads the pack. We lead the country on labour mobility. We introduced legislation years ago that really cleared the way for that.

And so knowing, you know, that across the country we're able to recognize those credentials for folks that, of course, are Canadian trained, but extending that further to those that are internationally trained and what that looks like. And then connecting with those regulatory bodies to make sure that those hurdles and barriers aren't put in place to prevent individuals that have the proper credentials from coming into Saskatchewan and practising.

You know, it's really acute, especially in the health care sector and trying to identify those key components and key professions that we really do require in the health care sector. And of course partnering with our partners in the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] to make sure that, you know, we are going out there, we're actively looking at those skilled trades and those skilled health care workers that they require. And then looking forward too on the skilled trade side of the equation and making sure again that some of the regulatory bodies that are in place there aren't putting up those barriers.

So you know, I would suggest it's really sort of that all-encompassing piece of the navigators looking and connecting

with individuals. If we take it up to the next level, working with those regulatory bodies to make sure that again we have those clear paths and we don't have those artificial barriers, and then seeing what innovation comes.

You know, we've got a really dedicated, talented group of folks there that are treading into new territory. We do know this is an area the federal government wants to work with the provinces and territories on, so we've made some good connection. This would be at the ESDC [Employment and Social Development Canada] level, so of course coming out of the federal election, we'll see what's there and what connections we can make again.

But knowing that, you know, the discussion is there across the country right now, that we really are leaders in that and we've got a group of dedicated individuals that want to move this ahead, I think is exciting for the province and exciting for this work and especially with some of these changes that have come in. Because we need to be innovative. We need to look at some new paths and look at some new opportunities for how we drive this out.

Noor Burki: — Thank you, Deputy Minister. What is the Indigenous labour force participation rate, and what's the ministry trying to do to increase the participation rate?

Drew Wilby: — I really appreciate that question, and it really does speak to the first pillar of our labour market strategy in terms of training Saskatchewan people for Saskatchewan jobs. So in terms of the Indigenous participation rate, it's 63.6 currently. The employment rate is 56.6.

And we've had some pretty significant gains in the last while. The March numbers that were just released, we saw an increase of 5,900 for off-reserve Indigenous, which is an all-time record high for those that are employed. That's an increase of 10.2 per cent. As well the off-reserve Indigenous youth that are working is an increase of 19.8 per cent or 2,100 if we look at the whole numbers.

Our off-reserve Indigenous labour force is 70,600. The off-reserve Indigenous employment is 63,800. Off-reserve Indigenous full-time employment is 51,900. And off-reserve Indigenous youth employment is 12,700. So some good gains and some great numbers, but obviously more work to be done.

Part of the work of the ministry last year was to create an Indigenous and northern services branch. It's not often that we have executive directors in government, you know, in the North. We have one in Meadow Lake that leads that branch connected to the North, with offices in La Ronge, as well as of course Saskatoon, Regina, and others. And the look of the branch is to attach, you know, to those opportunities and to those communities and really build those relationships between a lot of that economic development that's happening in northern Saskatchewan, as well as across the province in areas of local Indigenous communities.

We know we have employers like BHP who want to have a 20 per cent Indigenous workforce. That's admirable. And part of that job is going to be ensuring that those individuals that want to be employed with employers like that are trained and have the skills needed to do that. BHP's partnered with the ministry on the

potash campus at Carlton Trail Regional College in Humboldt, which is a great example of really, you know, government working with a private sector partner and also a regional college to deliver that piece out.

We've had a recent pilot that, you know, we had a good announceable around a while ago about, we've called it the "pilot pilot" kind of for fun. But it's partnering with Rise Air in northern Saskatchewan to ensure that those individuals in the Athabasca Basin that want to stay there and want to be pilots can be trained in order to do that work. As well some great work with Cameco as well too, up in the North.

[21:15]

And so the branch is looking at those opportunities, looking at how do we better engage with our Indigenous and First Nations partners across the province? How do we engage with those communities in the North? Because an Indigenous community in the South is different than an Indigenous community in the North. And I can't sit in my, you know, eighth-floor office in downtown Regina and figure out what's going to work for Meadow Lake, what's going to work for Sandy Bay, what's going to work for Black Lake.

And so having individuals that are connected to those communities and on the ground doing that work and figuring those pieces out, we're hopeful will go a long way to addressing some of those challenges and to better engaging our Indigenous partners and our Indigenous youth into the labour force across Saskatchewan.

Noor Burki: — Thank you, Deputy Minister, for this great job that you're doing. It's amazing. Thank you.

I'll go on to the next question. Two years ago your ministry increased staffing for immigration support and fraud detection. How many cases of fraud were found in 2024-2025? How many immigrants or companies will be investigated in 2025 and 2026?

Hon. Jim Reiter: — So, interesting question. And with the Labour critic being here as well, there was a question about that earlier in Labour. And I think this gives us an opportunity to sort of address the whole piece.

So I'm going to ask Drew to talk about that, the compliance branch. And then following that, Christa will give you the numbers that you had asked for.

Drew Wilby: — It's a unique opportunity, having seen the transition of FRWISA [*The Foreign Worker Recruitment and Immigration Services Act*] into now the program compliance branch, having been in Labour Relations and Workplace Safety myself and now here. So all circles kind of come full, it seems.

You know, it's been fascinating to watch that after the creation of *The Immigration Services Act*, and especially some of the tools that are available within it to really deal with some of those challenging issues that do arise. You know, they arise everywhere, but of course in this sphere.

Our program compliance branch is nearly fully staffed now. It's headed up by a former senior RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted

Police] officer. We've been able to recruit from a lot of municipal police services across the province, but not just policing. We've been able to, you know, bring in individuals that really want to make that difference, that have immigration expertise and experience, some that have worked in this field for 30 to 35 years. And they're just excited to really be a part of what's coming about with the program compliance branch.

Any time we're dealing with those enforcement activities, you know, it really focuses first on education. And we want to educate those individuals, employers, and others that are in the province that are employing folks that have come internationally and making sure that they understand what it is that they need, that they need that certificate of registration at the front end, you know, the differences between the provincial streams and the federal streams.

From there, you know, potentially may need some intervention. And the tools are available through *The Immigration Services Act* and regulations for that.

And then of course at the back end is the enforcement, and there is time where enforcement is required. And that Act is designed to protect people. It's designed to ensure that, you know, the people that come here understand their rights, understand what it is that they're getting themselves into in that employer relationship. And that the strength of that Act is there to protect them as well against some of those individuals that choose not to play according to the rules, of course.

So I would say they've done some great work to date. It's starting to build some momentum, which is fantastic.

And I'll turn it over to Christa to talk about some of those statistics that you're looking for.

Christa Ross: — Okay. Thanks, Drew, and thank for the question. So in terms of specific numbers and where we've concluded some investigations and had some enforcement actions taken, I can share with you that over the past year we have suspended the certificate of registration for 33 employers, and we've done the same for the licence for one immigration consultant.

Further to that, as Drew mentioned, we have a number of kind of tools and recourses that we can take. We suspended four employers from accessing the SINP, so they still hold their certificate of registration but are not eligible or not able to recruit through the SINP specifically for a period of time. We have suspended 296 applicants to the SINP, mainly for misrepresentation that they had made to the program. And then we also issued 67 warning letters to employers for a variety of reasons.

And further to Drew's point, you know, we try to come at this from the perspective of trying to bring people into compliance first, and so have issued a number of warning letters for more minor kind of infractions where we have confidence that we can bring those employers into compliance.

And if I can just share a couple more numbers, just to give you a sense of kind of how busy the team is but how much progress they've made, I was looking back at around this time last year

when we were at estimates, and the number of cases I reported then with our program compliance team was 1,124. That's now down to 661 cases, and that's even with almost 700 new referrals made in '24-25.

So you can tell there are some big numbers there, but that with the new team we've put in place, with the skills we've been able to recruit for and just the additional resources and capacity we've been able to add, that they're making really good progress.

Noor Burki: — Okay. Thank you, Deputy Minister. Thank you, Minister. So my last question is just a quick one, and if you can't provide me, you can provide me later on in writing as well. How much total revenue we collected from the penalties that we put on those people that were doing wrongdoing? And how many cases were rejected, and how many cases were being cleared from PIU in past year?

Hon. Jim Reiter: — If I could, so your question was about the monetary penalty, and then the rest of the question, can I get you . . .

Noor Burki: — The people that were put penalties, and we got some money from them, because last year they were saying that we will be . . . In the bill it says that those they find wrongdoing will have to pay penalty for that. So how much money we generated in those penalties?

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Right. But then there was a second part to your question. What was that?

Noor Burki: — The second part was that how many cases were rejected in PIU last year, and how many have been cleared?

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Okay, thank you.

Drew Wilby: — So in terms of the question about the fines and the revenue that's come in, at this point we're still working with our administrative monetary penalty system. We don't have one that's proceeded right to the end at this point. We are working through numerous at this point in time. But obviously, when those are put out there, there's a lot of due diligence that goes around at the front end, I know, as well as working through.

[21:30]

There are appeal mechanisms that are there as well where they can appeal to, they can write a submission to our executive director. And then from there, you know, if it's still being implemented or that fine is still being assessed, they can appeal that through the judicial system, through the Court of King's Bench. And so we want to make sure that all of our proper homework and our i's are dotted and t's are crossed and due diligence is done on that side.

The other component of that too would be when a file goes to prosecution. Obviously there's a significant review that prosecutions would do. And then that file, of course, would proceed to the court system with full disclosure and those different pieces as well. From a clearance piece, I'll turn that over to Christa because she's got some statistics for you there.

Christa Ross: — Okay. Thanks, Drew. And sorry, I know we're

quickly running out of time so I'll be quick. If we look at what we refer to as employer non-compliance and those cases that are referred to program compliance branch to review, they completed 220 investigations into potential employer non-compliance, and 44 per cent of those were released or cleared.

Another bucket of review activity that we refer to is application compliance reviews. So those are for individuals who have applied to the SINP, and they're referred to program compliance because we suspect potentially there's some misrepresentation on the application. The team completed 743 of those reviews, and 51 per cent of them were cleared or were able to return back to regular processing.

And then another bucket of activity we have is what we refer to as nomination reviews. So really the difference there is just at the point in which the review or the referral takes place. And it's obviously post-nomination, so after they've been nominated by the SINP. And the team completed 320 of those reviews, and 43 per cent of them were cleared. And we continue to support those nominations.

Noor Burki: — Thank you very much.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Great, thank you. Having reached our agreed-upon time for consideration of these estimates, we'll proceed to vote on the estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 for the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training. Before we begin the voting process, do you have any closing comments, Minister?

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Yes, Mr. Chair. I'd like to thank the critic and his colleagues for the respectful questions and the great discussion. I'd like to thank you, Mr. Chair, and the committee members for your time tonight, the staff as well. And I'd like to thank the ministry staff for the great work they do, not just tonight, Mr. Chair, but all year long. So thank you.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Thank you. MLA Burki, any closing comments?

Noor Burki: — Sure. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for your patience. Thank you, my colleagues, for being part with me in this discussion. And our backbone of our ministry, thank you very much for all your hard work that you've been doing. And I don't know how many time you have spent on this, preparing yourself for this meeting, but thank you from the bottom of my heart for all your hard work. And you guys are the backbone of our ministry, our province, and our country. God bless you for all that.

And with that I will say, Minister, you have a very good crew. I have never . . . concerns a lot, and if I have any question, they promptly reply me. You have been blessed by having such good people in your ministry. Thank you all.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Thank you very much. Thank you, Minister, and thank you to all the officials for being with us here tonight. And you are free to go unless you want to stick around and watch the vote.

All right. We will begin with vote 89, Immigration and Career Training, page 77 of the budget book. Central management and

services, subvote (IC01) in the amount of \$14,244,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Immigration, settlement and credential recognition, subvote (IC02) in the amount of 8,585,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Training and employment services, subvote (IC03) in the amount of 12,248,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Labour market programs, subvote (IC04) in the amount of 117,299,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of 1,622,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purposes only. No amount is to be voted . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, did I? Sorry. Apparently I said a number wrong. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of 1,662,000.

Immigration and Career Training, vote 89 — 152,376,000. I'll now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2026, the following sums for Immigration and Career Training in the amount of 152,376,000.

Darlene Rowden: — I so move.

Chair Thorsteinson: — MLA Rowden. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — No. 2
Immigration and Career Training
Vote 89**

Chair Thorsteinson: — Moving on to supplementary estimates no. 2, vote 89, Immigration and Career Training, page 17. Central management and services, subvote (IC01) in the amount of 1,300,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Immigration, employment and career development, subvote (IC02) in the amount of 1,700,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Training and employer services, subvote (IC03) in the amount of \$100,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Labour market programs, subvote (IC04) in the amount of \$500,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried.

Immigration and Career Training, vote 89 — \$3,600,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2025, the following sums for Immigration and Career Training in the amount of \$3,600,000.

MLA Weedmark. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Agriculture
Vote 1**

Chair Thorsteinson: — We will now proceed to vote on the remaining estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 committed to this committee beginning with vote 1, Agriculture, page 27. Central management and services, subvote (AG01) in the amount of 12,832,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Industry assistance, subvote (AG03) in the amount of 4,726,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Land management, subvote (AG04) in the amount of 5,990,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Policy, trade and value-added, subvote (AG05) in the amount of 6,357,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Research and technology, subvote (AG06) in the amount of 38,277,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Regional services, subvote (AG07) in the amount of 34,875,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Programs, subvote (AG09) in the amount of 36,211,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Business risk management, subvote (AG10) in the amount of 483,800,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of 2,135,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purposes only. No amount is to be voted.

Agriculture, vote 1 — \$623,068,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2026, the following sums for Agriculture in the amount of 623,068,000.

MLA Jenson. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried.

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

Chair Thorsteinson: — Vote 23, Energy and Resources, page 39. Central management and services, subvote (ER01) in the amount of 26,526,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Energy regulation, subvote (ER05) in the amount of 13,440,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Resource development, subvote (ER06) in the amount of 14,517,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of 4,620,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purposes only. No amount is to be voted.

Energy and Resources, vote 23 — 54,483,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2026, the following sums for Energy and Resources in the amount of 54,483,000.

MLA Rowden. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Environment
Vote 26**

Chair Thorsteinson: — Moving on to vote 26, Environment, page 43. Central management and services, subvote (EN01) in the amount of 15,542,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Climate resilience, subvote (EN06) in the amount of 5,511,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Fish, wildlife and lands, subvote (EN07) in the amount of 20,557,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Forest service, subvote (EN09) in the amount of 8,768,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Environmental protection, subvote (EN11) in the amount of 48,612,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Clean electricity transition, subvote (EN19) in the amount of 174,710,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of 468,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purposes only. No amount is to be voted.

Environment, vote 26 — 273,700,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2026, the following sums for Environment in the amount of 273,700,000.

Kevin Weedmark: — I so move.

Chair Thorsteinson: — MLA Weedmark. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[21:45]

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. We're getting there.

**General Revenue Fund
Highways
Vote 16**

Chair Thorsteinson: — Vote 16, Highways, page 71. Central

management and services, subvote (HI01) in the amount of 19,833,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Preservation of transportation system, subvote (HI04) in the amount of 132,285,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Transportation planning and policy, subvote (HI06) in the amount of 4,912,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Infrastructure and equipment capital, subvote (HI08) in the amount of 421,496,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Custom work activity, subvote (HI09) in the amount of zero dollars, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Operation of transportation system, subvote (HI10) in the amount of 167,974,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Strategic municipal infrastructure, subvote (HI15) in the amount of 31,017,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of 289,858,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purposes only. No amount is to be voted.

Highways, vote 16 — 777,417,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2026, the following sums for Highways in the amount of 777,417,000.

MLA Jenson. Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Innovation Saskatchewan
Vote 84**

Chair Thorsteinson: — Vote 84, Innovation Saskatchewan, page 81. Innovation Saskatchewan, subvote (IS01) in the amount of 32,537,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried.

Innovation Saskatchewan, vote 84 — \$32,537,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2026, the following sums for Innovation Saskatchewan in the amount of 32,537,000.

MLA Rowden.

Darlene Rowden: — I so move.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried.

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

Chair Thorsteinson: — Vote 35, page 99. Saskatchewan Research Council, subvote (SR01) in the amount of 19,423,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried.

Saskatchewan Research Council, vote 35 — 19,423,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2026, the following sums for Saskatchewan Research Council in the amount of 19,423,000.

MLA Weedmark. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Trade and Export Development
Vote 90**

Chair Thorsteinson: — Vote 90, Trade and Export Development, page 115. Central management and services, subvote (TE01) in the amount of 9,881,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Strategic policy and competitiveness, subvote (TE02) in the amount of 2,337,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Economic development, subvote (TE03) in the amount of 12,508,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. International engagement, subvote (TE04) in the amount of 19,542,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of 150,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purposes only. No amount is to be voted.

Trade and Export Development, vote 90 — 44,268,000. I will now ask a member to move the following motion:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2026, the following sums for Trade and Export Development in the amount of 44,268,000.

MLA Jenson. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried.

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

Chair Thorsteinson: — Vote 87, Water Security Agency, page 119. Water Security Agency, subvote (WS01) in the amount of 99,407,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried.

Water Security Agency, vote 87 — 99,407,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2026, the following sums for Water Security Agency in the amount of 99,407,000.

MLA Rowden.

Darlene Rowden: — I so move.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — No. 2
Agriculture
Vote 1**

Chair Thorsteinson: — Okay. Supplementary estimates no. 2, '24-25. Vote 1, Agriculture, page 11. Business risk management, subvote (AG10) in the amount of 93,125,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried.

Agriculture, vote 1 — 93,125,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2025, the following sums for Agriculture in the amount of 93,125,000.

Kevin Weedmark: — I so move.

Chair Thorsteinson: — MLA Weedmark. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — No. 2
Energy and Resources
Vote 23**

Chair Thorsteinson: — Vote 23, Energy and Resources, page 13. Central management and services, subvote (ER01) in the amount of 2,595,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Energy regulation, subvote (ER05) in the amount of 944,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Resource development, subvote (ER06) in the amount of 612,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried.

Energy and Resources, vote 23 — 4,151,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2025, the following sums for Energy and Resources in the amount of 4,151,000.

MLA Jenson. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — No. 2
Highways
Vote 16**

Chair Thorsteinson: — Vote 16, Highways, page 16. Preservation of transportation system, subvote (HI04) in the amount of 2,331,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Transportation planning and policy, subvote (HI06) in the amount of 300,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Infrastructure and equipment capital, subvote (HI08) in the amount of 30,000,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Operation of transportation system, subvote (HI10) in the amount of 24,900,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. Strategic municipal infrastructure, subvote (HI15) in the amount of 4,300,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried.

Highways, vote 16 — 61,831,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2025, the following sums for Highways in the amount of 61,831,000.

MLA Rowden.

Darlene Rowden: — I so move.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — No. 2
Innovation Saskatchewan
Vote 84**

Chair Thorsteinson: — Vote 84, Innovation Saskatchewan, page 17. Innovation Saskatchewan, subvote (IS01) in the amount of 790,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Innovation Saskatchewan, vote 84 — 790,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2025, the following sums for Innovation Saskatchewan in the amount of 790,000.

Kevin Weedmark: — I so move.

Chair Thorsteinson: — MLA Weedmark. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — No. 2
Saskatchewan Research Council
Vote 35**

Chair Thorsteinson: — Vote 35, Saskatchewan Research Council, page 18. Saskatchewan Research Council, subvote (SR01) in the amount of \$22,000,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried.

Saskatchewan Research Council, vote 35 — \$22,000,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2025, the following sums for Saskatchewan Research Council in the amount of 22,000,000.

MLA Jenson. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried.

Committee members, you have before you a draft of the first report of the Standing Committee on the Economy for the thirtieth legislature. We require a member to move the following motion:

That the first report of the Standing Committee on the Economy for the thirtieth legislature be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

Darlene Rowden: — I so move.

Chair Thorsteinson: — MLA Rowden. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Thorsteinson: — Carried. All right, that concludes our business this evening. I would ask a member to move a motion of adjournment.

MLA Weedmark 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 22:00.]