



# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

## **Hansard Verbatim Report**

**No. 7 — April 15, 2025**

Published under the  
authority of  
The Hon. Todd Goudy  
Speaker



**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

**Thirtieth Legislature**

*Hansard* and other documents of the  
Legislative Assembly are available  
online within hours after each sitting.  
<https://www.legassembly.sk.ca/>

## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

Michael Weger, Chair  
Weyburn-Bengough

Noor Burki, Deputy Chair  
Regina Coronation Park

Brent Blakley  
Regina Wascana Plains

April ChiefCalf  
Saskatoon Westview

Kim Gartner  
Kindersley-Biggar

Barret Kropf  
Dakota-Arm River

Hon. Colleen Young  
Lloydminster



[The committee met at 16:59.]

**Chair Weger:** — All right, welcome to the Standing Committee on Human Services. My name is Mike Weger. I'm the Chair. To my right I have MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] Brad Crassweller chitting in for Kim Gartner, MLA Barret Kropf, and MLA Kevin Kasun chitting in for Hon. Colleen Young. On my left I have Mr. Noor Burki, Mr. Nathaniel Teed chitting in for Brent Blakley, and Ms. April ChiefCalf.

[17:00]

Today the committee will be considering the estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 for the Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety.

**General Revenue Fund  
Labour Relations and Workplace Safety  
Vote 20**

**Subvote (LR01)**

**Chair Weger:** — We will now begin with our consideration with vote 20, Labour Relations and Workplace Safety, central management and services, subvote (LR01). Minister Reiter is here with officials from the ministry. I would ask that officials please state their names before speaking and please don't touch the microphones. A 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:** — Thanks, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the committee members for being here today to discuss the budget, Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety. Officials joining me at the front table today are Deputy Minister Veronica Gelowitz; Assistant Deputy Minister Elissa Aitken; and Phil Germain, the CEO [chief executive officer] of the Workers' Compensation Board. We're joined by other officials as well, and I'll ask them to introduce themselves should they be called on to speak.

The Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety's '25-26 budget of 21.7 million is a 6 per cent increase from the previous year. The change is primarily a result of collective agreement increases for in-scope salaries and similar increases for out-of-scope staff. The ministry's budget will ensure we continue to foster safe, healthy, and productive workplaces throughout Saskatchewan.

This year the ministry will continue to support Saskatchewan workplaces to further reduce time-loss injury rates. The ministry and the Workers' Compensation Board will continue to partner to implement the fatalities and serious injuries strategy. About 2,400 Saskatchewan workers are injured each year and that number needs to come down. Nothing can overstate the significance of the 27 people we lost to workplace injury in 2024. Using a targeted intervention strategy, the ministry focuses on employers with serious injury and/or high time-loss injury rates.

The second focus for the ministry is maintaining fair and balanced employment laws that support a strong economy and quality of life. This year we will focus on supporting employers

and employees to implement any changes to the employment standards provisions of *The Saskatchewan Employment Act*. Bill 5 is currently before the Legislative Assembly for consideration, and I look forward to more discussions on that bill when it comes to this committee.

In '25-26 we will begin a review of *The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2020*. These regulations are not just lengthy; they're significant. They impact almost every workplace in Saskatchewan. We look forward to hearing from employers and employees with their ideas and suggestions of how we can continue to improve health and safety in Saskatchewan workplaces while also reducing red tape.

Now, Mr. Chair, we would be happy to answer any questions from the committee.

**Chair Weger:** — Thank you, Minister. I will now open the floor for questions. Mr. Teed.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Thank you. I first want to say welcome to all your officials to the legislature. Thank you for taking time this evening to join us.

I'm going to start with some questions around the increases to the budget. You are increasing the salary budget for occupational health and safety by 8.9 per cent in this budget. My question is, how many new staff are you hiring as a result of that increase? And how much of that increase is for increases to existing work compensation?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — Officials tell me that that increase is all for increased compensation to existing FTEs [full-time equivalents]. There's no change in FTEs.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Okay, sounds good. Is there any comment on increases to existing work in the ministry, or is there any existing work compensation?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — Sorry. Just for clarity, you're asking like if the workload has increased?

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Yes. Yeah, yeah.

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — Okay.

**Veronica Gelowitz:** — Veronica Gelowitz, deputy minister. So I wouldn't say there's an increase in workload. We use an evidence-based approach to determining our targeted efforts at workplaces. So the workload itself per se, we wouldn't see an increase in that.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Thank you so much. I'm going to move on to the salary increases for the budget of labour relations and mediation. We saw a \$50,000 increase there, or a 7.9 per cent increase in this budget. So my question is, is this an increase in hearing hours, an increase in the number of mediators, or an increase in compensation for the mediators?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — To your question, this is the same situation. The increase is for increased compensation for the current FTEs. There's been no changes in numbers of FTEs in that unit.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Thank you so much. I'm wondering if it's a similar situation in the salary budget for the injured worker appeals services, 94,000 or a 10 per cent increase in this budget. Is this increase again for hearing hours, worker hearing appeals, or increase in compensation?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — Yes, that's the same.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Okay, thank you so much. Again, the question, the salary budget for the employment standards, this time 311,000 or 10.7 per cent in this budget. Is this again FTE, hearing hours, number of employees, or compensation?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — Yeah, again, that will be the same. No changes in FTEs. It's compensation for existing FTEs.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Okay. Do you have any information about the collective agreements that you are facilitating, both for, I guess, the in-scope employees, and then how much out-of-scope employees received in a pay increase this year?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — Sorry, so the question is, what percentage increase did in-scope and out-of-scope get? Okay. First I was just going to mention, so Public Service Commission does that on behalf of all of government. So I'll give you the numbers, but they're not going to vary from what you've seen in other areas of government.

So for the in-scope, the wage increases were 3 per cent on October 9, 2022; 3 per cent on October 8, 2023; and 1.67 per cent on October 6, 2024. And then my understanding, the out-of-scope essentially follows that, like parallels that.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Perfect, thank you so much. I understand that the review of the employment standards Act and regulations was started in 2023 and completed in '25-26. Could you please detail the process used to make that review and what the next steps will be?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — So the bill that you're asking about is the one that I was referencing in my opening comments. So it's before the legislature right now and I think you had asked about the process of getting there, so I'm going to ask Elissa to kind of run through the process that the ministry followed.

**Elissa Aitken:** — Elissa Aitken, assistant deputy minister. The ministry undertook a pretty broad approach when we were looking at engaging stakeholders on that specific provisions in the employment Act. We started our stakeholder engagement on August 14th of 2023 and we concluded it October 31st, 2023.

We posted a discussion paper to the government's public engagement websites on Saskatchewan.ca and we also sent letters to 153 stakeholders. And that list included employer groups, organized labour, and just other interested parties. At the end of the engagement we got 89 different submissions, so that was the process that we took to really make sure that we were getting a broad cross-section of input into the Act.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Are you able to table the list of the 83 submissions?

[17:15]

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — We're just having a discussion here. Can I just clarify? So did you ask for like the actual submissions or for a list of who did submissions?

**Nathaniel Teed:** — I would take both if that was available. I would take a list of those submissions if that was available.

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — Okay, just give us a minute. We're just having a privacy discussion to see what we can and can't . . .

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Please. Thank you so much.

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — So I'm told there's some concerns around privacy issues. So what I would suggest is officials are willing to contact everyone who did that, and then we would require their permission to share it. So you know, I would just ask for your patience with that though, because that's going to take a fair bit of time for them to do that. And then once that work's done, I can follow that up with you with a letter then. Okay?

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Appreciate very much. I guess my next question: of the 89 submissions that you received, were any in-person meetings held in consultation for Bill 5?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — So I'm told that it was requested to be written submissions and that's what was received.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — I guess then it might answer the question. But I know that Don Morgan had like a minister's advisory council of labour partners. Would that group have been engaged with, separate from like a written submission? Or has that council met in the last little while?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — So first of all to your point on the committee, I wasn't minister at the time this had happened, so if there was some discussions I wasn't privy to it. I'm not sure. Officials don't know of any discussions in that committee, and you mentioned that.

I've had an opportunity since having this file over the last few months. I've been meeting, as much as time permits, been meeting with labour leaders on this. And several of them have brought up the value of that committee to me, so it's something that we're actively looking at right now.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Thank you so much. Appreciate that. Were there any goals as to the time frame of the review process set out when it was started? We just note that a two-year review seems like a long process, although you want to get something like this right. What is the goal around a time frame for something like this? Or is that set out at the beginning? Can we comment on just the timeline of that?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — So this section of the bill I'm told is lengthy and pretty intensive. So obviously they wanted to take some time, do a good job with that. I would say that consultation time periods for bills, at least in the time I've been around, it varies greatly depending on the type of Act, depending on how extensive it is. And this one . . .

The other thing I'd point out, like you mentioned rightly, that it was in two years. But the start in '23 was midway through the year, so it wasn't a full two years. I think it was closer to probably

18 months or somewhere in that range.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — No, I appreciate that. Thank you so much. Could you or your officials provide me with a sense of some of the key issues that were raised during the consultation process by employers and the unions? Would you say that all the main issues made it into the legislation, or were there things that were raised that may not have made it this round? Is there a sense of that?

[17:30]

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — So discussing with officials, and again I wasn't there at the time, but getting a better feel for how this went about. I would say, because as we mentioned earlier, the responses . . . They asked for written responses. That's what was given. They tried to sort of address as much as possible, for sure the ones that came up most frequently. Because of the way the process is, it wasn't a negotiation. So you know, it wasn't able to sort of try to achieve some kind of consensus or something. But what was important was to try to be balanced. And officials do feel, and I would concur with this, that the issues that came up the most frequently — things like leaves, the tipping thing, the doctors' notes — those were addressed.

So again I would just repeat, I think the intent here was to try to be as balanced as possible, address the things that the folks that did the submissions were most commonly concerned with. And I think they've achieved that.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Thank you so much. In your preamble you mentioned that you'll be starting a review of *The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations* in '25-26. Could you give a little explanation on the process you'll be using for that review? And when do you expect to complete it? And has a consultation paper been posted?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — So officials are in the planning phase right now with that. They're hoping to get started on it late this year. And then this section, I'm told, is even sort of more extensive than the other one, and it's very technical in nature. So the consultation is going to take longer than the last one.

As far as what's being considered right now, what sort of a consultation approach, it's not determined yet. But to give you a better idea, I'm going to ask Elissa to just kind of walk through what they're considering right now for the approach.

**Elissa Aitken:** — Thank you, Minister. Some of the things that we're thinking about — again just to make sure that we can reach a really broad group of stakeholders — we'll of course use Saskatchewan.ca again, the public engagement element of the website and be posting discussion papers on there. We would be certainly reaching out to employee-employer associations and labour organizations and safety groups to make sure that they're aware that it's happening and that they have access to those documents that are posted. We might use something like the Workers' Compensation Board inserts or mailers or, you know, any sort of technology that they have that could reach across a good cross-section.

We have a number of advisory committees in the ministries. We've already talked about the minister's advisory committee; the Occupational Health and Safety Council is another one, and

so those are groups that we would want to be seeking their input.

And then as the minister said, these regulations are very technical, and so there would be probably technical discussions with specific groups who have that technical expertise around the sections.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Are there any issues that you're foreseeing that may have been received through old proactive communications from stakeholders? Are there pressure points that are kind of, that you're seeing people reach out and say, this needs to be changed in the next legislation? Does that take into account . . . Or are there issues that you foresee as this process goes forward?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — So from time to time, to your point, people will reach out to the ministry proactively, as you called it, raise concerns, raise things that they think need to be changed. So what the officials do at that point is they essentially keep a list because they know, you know, legislation's going to be reviewed from time to time. So they have issues already that when the review starts, they know that that'll be considered, looked at. And then the consultation process will still allow other issues to be raised as well.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Thank you so much. That helps me kind of understand the process a little bit more for sure. According to the review schedule — and maybe you can confirm, or it wasn't mentioned in your preamble — but will there be a review of the minimum wage regulations in the next little while? I guess the schedule would say that it should start in '25-26, but maybe you can comment on that.

[17:45]

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — So to your question, minimum wages were part of the consultation process for the bill. But as you mentioned, they're in a regulation. So once the bill is passed, normal process would be the ministry then will do an internal review of all regulations dealing with this section of the Act.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Sounds good. Thank you so much. I'm going to move over to a question around a culture change. Now last year the minister and deputy minister talked about a cultural change in your approach to compliance with employment laws to improve outcomes. And I was just wondering, can you comment on the impact of those changes from 2024?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — So that started, as you mentioned, before my tenure. So I'm going to get Elissa to just kind of talk sort of the broad parameters of that. And then I'll ask Bryan to get into a bit more detail on that.

**Elissa Aitken:** — Thank you, Minister. In the last while, we've shifted our approach to really use three pillars as we interact with employers. We think of it as the education, intervention, and enforcement model. And so we really do start with that education piece. And so when we go out and interact with employers, it's about making sure that they understand the provisions and then understand what's required of them.

And then when it's needed, we move to an intervention. And so that's using more of our enforcement tools, that might mean

notice of contravention, to make sure that they understand that they need to come into compliance.

And then when that doesn't work, of course we shift into the third model, which is enforcement, and so using more of our prosecutions models or sometimes summary offence ticketing model for people where those kind of approaches are warranted.

**Bryan Lloyd:** — Good evening. Bryan Lloyd, executive director, OHS [occupational health and safety] branch. In terms of culture in the OHS branch, we developed a professional responsibility guide which is very much like a code of conduct, but it essentially enhances field conduct by the officers, sets out the number of parameters. That was complemented with an internal training course specific to the professional responsibility guide. And that was rolled out in the last couple years.

Beginning last year in April we rolled out a survey called a PIN [post-inspection] survey, whereby when officers go out and do an inspection they collect an email from one of the health and safety committee members that may have attended them on the inspection, or the employer rep. Then a survey is sent out. And the survey asks that respondent a number of questions around the professional responsibilities guide: how was your interaction with the officer, were they professional, were they knowledgeable about the regulations, did they inform you? And we collect those survey results.

The participation rate's been quite good, you know, kind of above that 35 per cent area which we would expect. The response rate has been above 90 per cent in terms of positive responses to those questions in the survey, both by employer reps and labour reps from the occupational health and safety committee.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Wonderful. Thank you so much. I'm going to move over to — I guess, back to — occupational safety here. I'm wondering how many charges for violations of *The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations* occurred last year, and do you expect these violations to increase during '25-26?

**Veronica Gelowitz:** — Okay, so for the numbers of notices of contraventions, these numbers are as of December 31st. We haven't completed our year-end tally, so at December 31st there were 1,736 notices of contravention, and there were 195 compliance undertakings. There were 47 summary offence tickets issued. And I'll ask Elissa to speak about prosecutions a little bit.

**Elissa Aitken:** — Thanks. So again, this is the year until December 31st of 2024. During that year we sent 19 occupational health and safety files to Justice for prosecution. They initiated 10 prosecutions. We had 21 convictions, and so just keep in mind those don't necessarily line up. Prosecutions take more than a year, so that's why you'll see more convictions than prosecutions initiated. And in this year, again to December 31st, the total penalties levied was \$3.494 million. And so for us that's one of the largest numbers we've had, or the largest number on record in terms of the amount of fines levied under the occupational health and safety provisions of the Act.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Could you comment a little bit on maybe why you see an increase in those fines?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — So officials tell me that the number of convictions are approximately the same, but there was two exceptionally large fines that were levied. That is what drove the total dollar amount up.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — And maybe this is a silly question, but is that all public record?

**Elissa Aitken:** — That information is public. Of course through the court process, that would be public. But also in fall of 2020, the ministry began publishing fatality notification and investigative summary reports on the WorkSafe Saskatchewan website.

So there's two different kinds of information that we post on that website. There's a brief notification of fatal workplace incidents within seven days of their occurrence. So those show up there. And then once the guilty plea or conviction is secured, we also include a fatality investigation summary report on that website. And so those are all available on WorkSafe, the worksafesask.ca website.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Thank you so much. And how many charges for employment standards violations were issued in '24-25?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — Can I just clarify? Did you ask for interventions or for prosecutions?

**Nathaniel Teed:** — I asked for violations out of the employment standards, so I guess all of the above maybe.

[18:00]

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — So your question was on violations. It's difficult to give that because what they're tracking is the actual complaints. So what I'd like to do is give you . . . Elissa will give you the complaints and then the complaints that were resolved and walk through those numbers with you, okay?

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Okay.

**Elissa Aitken:** — The number of formal complaints filed was 1,644. And again that's our fiscal year up to December 31st, so that's three-quarters of a year. And just to give you a bit of background on the process, if somebody thinks that there's a violation of the Act they contact us and then we investigate that or look at the file. And so that would be the number of files we're looking at.

The number of formal complaints that we resolved this year, again to December 31st, would be 1,721. So again, that's a bit of a time lag in terms of more were being resolved than came in, but there's just that time lag in the numbers.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Could I ask what happens to the revenues from the fines that are issued either under OHS or employment standards?

**Elissa Aitken:** — Thank you for that. So it's a couple of different paths that the funding follows for our prosecutions and our summary offence tickets. So both when it goes to the courts for prosecutions and the summary offence tickets, it follows the same formula in terms of 60 per cent of that funding going to



General Revenue Fund, 40 per cent into the Victims' Fund, and there is that victim surcharge there.

The exception on our tickets would be tickets under 500. So if it's under \$500, then that goes entirely into the General Revenue Fund. The one other source that we do have is in employment standards, and there's a small fee when we do a wage assessment, and so those fees would come directly into the General Revenue Fund.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Thank you so much. Could you give me a little bit of explanation on the victim fund?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — So that fund is, it actually goes to the same fund that you'd be familiar with in Justice, the victims of crime, that fund. So the money is forwarded there, and Justice handles it from there.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Thank you so much. I'm going to move over to some questions on asbestos. One of the issues that bears kind of repeated scrutiny, I think, is the impact of asbestos on our workforce. There's a long period between exposure and impact, exposure on individual workers. Are you able to tell me about the numbers of reported exposures in 2024 and the number of claims that arose in 2024?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — There's a number of components to this. I'm going to get Elissa to talk first about regulatory enforcement on this. And then Phil will give the WCB [Workers' Compensation Board] perspective on that, okay?

**Elissa Aitken:** — Asbestos exposure does continue to be one of our leading causes of workplace injuries in terms of cancers and fatalities. In 2024 there were four worker fatalities in Saskatchewan due to asbestos-related exposure. In the first three-quarters of the year — so again to December 31st of '24 — occupational health and safety officers conducted 156 asbestos-related work site visits and issued 41 contraventions on asbestos-related inspections. That same time period, up to December 31st, there were 384 high-risk asbestos project notifications received. And that compares to there being 550 in that year before.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — So when someone is doing . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, sorry. Yes. Yeah.

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — Sorry. The WCB, if we could.

**Phil Germain:** — Phillip Germain, CEO with the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board. So four fatalities, four of our occupational fatalities accepted in 2024 were related to exposure from asbestos. Those claims often take a long time to develop. In 2024 we had 46 claims registered related to asbestos exposure which, it varies from year to year. 2023 was 58. 2022 was 17. 2021 was 40. And 2020 was 61. So you can see that it takes a long time for some of these to work their way through the system.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Thank you so much. But when you mention the 156 asbestos-related calls, is that folks who are doing, you know, repairs or renovations, and then they notify the ministry for that assistance in determining if it is asbestos-related? Is that kind of how that works?

**Bryan Lloyd:** — Bryan Lloyd, executive director of OHS

branch. In terms of the 156 asbestos-related inspections we did, those were all related to asbestos work activities. Primarily they come from the directed list whereby we know that those activities are being done by certain companies, certain locations that may have asbestos-containing materials in the buildings. And that's mostly targeted intervention work, doing inspections in those areas where we expect asbestos.

There would be a portion of those that are made up of complaints. Primarily those complaints would come from workers or members of the labour market. There are occasions a few times a year when we would get complaints from members of the public who are not in an employment relationship, whereby they might notify us that, hey, it looks like some asbestos-related activity is going on in this adjacent area. We would follow up and do an inspection.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Yeah. And then I'm imagining for the 384 high-risk projects, is that kind of the same situation? Known areas or places where asbestos is related, would that be similar?

[18:15]

**Bryan Lloyd:** — So we received 384 high-risk asbestos project notifications. And in those notifications, we would do follow-up inspections to a certain percentage of those. Those are typically done on a random basis. There are really a certain limited number of asbestos abatement contractors in the province.

And we would follow up to ensure that when they're doing that high-risk asbestos work, which is work whereby fibres can be in the air space, that they're following proper protocols, they have respirators, other personal protective equipment, sampling, decontamination, and those pieces.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Thank you so much. Last year there was capital funding dedicated to the replacement of the current asbestos registry. Could you provide an update to the committee on how this transition went?

**Bryan Lloyd:** — The hosting service contract for the asbestos registry for public buildings expired at the end of December '24, and a new solution was required to continue to make the registry available to citizens. And the '24-25 budget included 230 K to update that technology. It went through an RFP [request for proposal] process.

As of February 27th, '25, we have that new system in place, the new asbestos registry system. Currently within that registry we have 59 organizations with 5,268 facilities reporting over 26,000 locations of asbestos in public buildings throughout the province.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Thank you so much. I'm going to move to claims by firefighters, both for asbestos and diverse types of exposures while fighting fires. And to note, that as of spring 2024, Bill 138, the Workers' Compensation extended firefighter coverage. Could you give me any information about the number of claims made by firefighters for both asbestos and diverse types of exposures while fighting fire?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — Can I just clarify? It was the cancer claims by firefighters you were asking for, correct?

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Yes. Yes, both for I guess asbestos and diverse types of exposures.

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — I'll get Phil to run through those with you.

**Phil Germain:** — So when we're talking about cancer injuries reported to firefighters, in 2024 there were 13 cancers reported specifically for firefighters, 16 in 2023, 11 in 2022, and we can go back. And then obviously a portion of those would be exposures to asbestos. We had reported, for example, 18 exposures to asbestos for firefighters in 2023. And there's no new updated numbers for 2024 yet.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Thank you so much. And now I know we had the passage of Bill 138, which extended coverage. We have legislation on the floor of the House to extend to wildland firefighters. The question we had is, are volunteer firefighters also covered under that WCB coverage?

**Phil Germain:** — Yeah, so for volunteer firefighters who are registered under a local municipality emergency services or provincial emergency services, they'll be covered. Wildland firefighters will be covered. And then obviously the new legislation expands the coverage in terms of presumptive coverage for wildland firefighters.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Perfect, thank you so much. I'm wondering if you can advise me a bit on the impact that you've seen on firefighters as far as Bill 138 last year, which extended that coverage. Have you heard any concerns, issues? Are there other cancers that firefighters and their organizations are advocating for coverage on?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — Officials tell me that the firefighters, the types of cancers they have been advocating for, they've all been covered now and that the response, to date anyway, has been very, very positive.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Wonderful. Thank you so much. I'm going to jump to some questions around some Workers' Compensation Board claims. In the annual report for the Workers' Compensation Board, the claims for 2024 increased significantly from 2023, and we've seen it back more in line with our 2022 levels. Can you explain why you think this has happened and what you expect in terms of claims for 2025?

**Phil Germain:** — So as it relates to the total number of injuries, the main reason for that is the number of full-time equivalent workers grows from 409,158 in 2023 to 443,344 in '24. So even though the rate of injury dropped from 3.75 down to 3.71, there was still a result because there was just significantly more workers. It resulted in more injuries being reported, claims being reported.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Thank you so much. I guess I'll ask a similar question to the problems we're seeing around mental health. Mental health claims have been climbing for the past four years and peaked at 283 claims in 2024. What types of programming have you been implementing to try to deal with these escalating claim numbers?

**Phil Germain:** — So as it relates to the prevention of psychological injuries, WorkSafe, WCB, and LRWS [Labour Relations and Workplace Safety] through WorkSafe Saskatchewan . . . If you go onto the WorkSafe Saskatchewan website, you're going to see quite a number of resources that have been made available to workers, employers, employer associations, unions.

There's promotional material. There's videos. There's written resources. There's a number of online courses that we've partnered with through the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. There's some courses, programming that's targeted at employers, supervisors, workers through the University of New Brunswick that have all been Saskatchewanized, so to speak, for WorkSafe and all of that.

And then we've got some group work, some committee-type of work where we'll pull together like-minded employers and try and assist them in implementing programs that help address mental health or psychological safety in the workplace. So there's a number of things that we have in play. All of those resources are available through the WorkSafe website.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Thank you so much. How does WCB or WorkSafe determine workplace injury is psychological or PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] or something like that? I know that during my time as the critic for SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance], one of the challenges was folks to access coverage based on PTSD. You're in a bad accident, and it's hard to get behind the wheel again to go back to work.

Do you find that folks . . . Is it a difficult area to determine when a claim comes forward that is psychological in nature, mental health in nature? Do you see those? Are there lots of claims coming in? Are a few being actioned, I guess would be my question.

**Phil Germain:** — So as it relates to . . . I'll start off with all injuries. What we look for, is it arising out of and in the course of employment? So we have a process to always look at (a) is there an injury, and then (b) is it work related. So that's always in the process.

When it comes to psychological injuries, we rely heavily on psychiatrists, psychologists, maybe even some social workers who have a special designation, an APE [Authorized Practice Endorsement] designation from the College of Psychologists, and that determines whether or not those individuals have the ability to diagnose an injury versus treat an injury.

And so we rely heavily on mental health; we don't really make the diagnosis. That'll help us determine if the injury is a mental health injury. And then we try and figure out, is there a connection? And often that comes through the reporting by the psychologist or the psychiatrist if there's a connection to the work event or events that may have happened. It could be a chronic type of exposure situation.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Do folks have access to those psychologists here in Saskatchewan, or are they virtual? Is it out of province? Is it here in Saskatchewan that folks have access to those APE-designated psychiatrists, psychologists? Does Workers' Compensation set those people up with those psychologists? Is

that kind of how the process works?

**Phil Germain:** — In Saskatchewan as it relates to the assessment of a mental health injury, the mental health assessments, we have contracts with 21 doctor-level psychologists to provide mental health assessments to help us or help the customers. In some cases the clients have already sought out a mental health specialist. Sometimes those are 1 of the 21 that we have contracts with. Sometimes it's not, and we'll look at each situation and determine whether or not we need to provide them. So if necessary, we will set up an appointment with 1 of the 21 mental health specialists and get the assessment done. Typically it's taking us right now about 23 days to get them into one of those assessments.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Thank you so much. I'm going to jump over to a couple . . . I think we have about 20 minutes left, so I have a couple maybe slightly more random questions that I'm going to move through here as we end our time. But I really appreciate the conversation about Workers' Compensation Board and the work that you're doing.

My first question on this list is, which CBOs [community-based organization] received funding through Labour Relations and Workplace Safety in the '25-26 budget?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — Officials tell me no CBOs are funded through this ministry.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Oh, okay. No, appreciate it. I was asked to ask that question by our shadow minister of CBOs. There's nothing like WorkSafe or anything like that, or the construction associations?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — So I just want to make sure for clarity that everybody's on the same page. So for example, safety associations aren't considered CBOs. And in the ministry I was referring to . . . but WCB does fund some non-profits. So I'm just going to get Phil to elaborate on that.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Thank you so much.

**Phil Germain:** — Yes. So we provide funding to various levels. The safety associations would be by far the most funding that we provide to a non-profit. We provide funding to about 50 different non-profits. Whether or not any of those are CBOs I don't know off the top of my head, but certainly we could provide that information if necessary.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Yeah, do you happen to have a list of the safety associations that WCB would fund? And I guess the same would go if there is an available list that could be provided for the 50 non-profits, that would be very helpful.

I guess the next question I might have is also, did any of those associations or non-profits see a funding increase in this budget?

**Phil Germain:** — So as a matter of clarity, our fiscal year is December 31st, so it doesn't line up completely with the government's budget cycle. But I can tell you that the safety associations all received . . . I think, when I look at from 2023 to 2024 it was flat, and then 2024 to 2025 there was an increase.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — What was that increase?

**Phil Germain:** — From 2024 to 2025, all of that is reported in our . . . Like when we posted our annual report, we've got our compendium. So all of those numbers are in there as a supplier, so to speak. The increase was roughly, I think 1.3 million in totality.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Thank you so much. And as far as the 50 non-profits, is there any criteria that they have to meet to receive funding?

**Phil Germain:** — So as it relates to our process of engaging with non-profits — whether it's us to them sometimes, or them to us — we always sit down and try and figure out how we can understand where they're at and where they're going, and where we're at and where we're going, and then how do we make it a win-win. How do they help us, you know, with our strategies, our initiatives, our objectives, and then how do we help them?

We always find a kind of a win-win formula and then just try and determine the value of that. A good example of that is STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Service], for example. We have a partnership with STARS, and we always sit down and just figure out where is it that we can help them and where is it that they can help us.

[18:45]

**Nathaniel Teed:** — No, I really appreciate that, and as we talk about STARS I think it's important to just thank those folks who do that work. I know, very anecdotally, my uncle was just airlifted from Kindersley. And it's always just such important work, and yeah, really appreciate those folks. So I appreciate just understanding a bit more about how the funding comes from WCB and goes into those non-profits.

I'm going to move on to the next question around . . . Last year there was some conversation about the foreign worker recruitment and protection unit that was transferred to Immigration. I'm wondering if we can speak a little bit on how that transition has gone. And my next question would be like are there any checks and balances in place for foreign workers as it's moved into career and immigration training? Does labour and workplace safety do any checks or balances on the welfare of folks who would be declared foreign workers?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — So you're going to have to ask that question of the Immigration minister.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Okay.

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — I'm just kidding. That's me.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — That's you.

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — So foreign workers have the same protections as any workers. They can file either formal or anonymous complaints just like every other worker.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — So largely it was just kind of an internal situation, but still mainly the similar oversight is what you're saying?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — I'm sorry, I missed what you said.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Yeah, so it's just an internal transition and there's similar oversight.

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — Oh, I'm sorry . . . [inaudible] . . . the transition, I believe so. My understanding from officials is that went smoothly, I think.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Oh, okay. Thank you so much. I'm going to ask next about group termination notices. I know it's something that's coming up in Bill 5, a change. I was wondering, can you provide me with how many notices of termination the ministry received in the '24-25 budget year, or I guess the previous budget year?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — So these are the group termination notices by year. And just to give some context, I'll just go back just a few years. In 2019 there was 50. In 2020 there was 44. In 2021 there was 22. In 2022 there was 15. In 2023 there was 27. And in 2024 there was 33. So you can see, it varies.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — It varies. Absolutely. Thank you so much. I guess, is that information public record as to companies that would be making those notices to the ministry?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — Officials are telling me that it's not provided publicly, and there would be individual names in there, so there would be privacy issues around it.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Sounds good. Thank you so much. I guess this could be probably a question for when we discuss Bill 5, but I guess the logic behind increasing to 25 . . . At the moment, is an employer allowed to let go 10 people one day, and then let 10 people go the next day and have to do those same . . . Or would they lay off nine people and then they wouldn't have to notify, and then lay off nine people the next day? Is there any regulations around that process?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — So section 2-62 of *The Saskatchewan Employment Act* governs in that case. And to your point about sort of nine one day, nine the next, they wouldn't be able to do that because it's 10 or more employees within a four-week period.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — That's very helpful for my understanding. I'm going to move over to some of the work of the employment standards. I know that I've had a stakeholder engage with me about the work of employment standards staff being more visible to the public, and I'm wondering . . . So the request has been, you know, is there any plans that the ministry has to start releasing work of employment standards staff to the public in an annual or biannual report that would identify the nature of the cases being dealt with — resolution, names of businesses, etc. — in an interest of compelling a change of behaviour, that something would be public record in that sense?

I know that there have been . . . You know, this information is FOIP-able [freedom of information and protection of privacy], but I'm wondering if the ministry has any plans to make that information more public.

**Elissa Aitken:** — When we look at what goes out publicly, I

guess the first thing that we think about is just sometimes when people make claims, it's an honest misunderstanding between an employee and employer. And so again, starting with education, we work through that process. And you know, it can be an honest mistake on either part.

When we do wage assessments and they're appealed, those decisions go to the Labour Relations Board and an adjudicator hears them. Those results are public and so you can find those on the Labour Relations Board website. And then if there is a prosecution, those pieces are public and are listed on Saskatchewan.ca. Those can be found there.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Okay, thank you so much. I hope that helps with that question. I think I will ask one more question here. During estimates last year, my colleague, the member from Regina Douglas Park, raised the issue of the young man, 14 years old at the time, who was poisoned by carbon monoxide in Canora. At the time the conventions were issued to the employer.

I'm wondering if since that incident, if there have been any changes that the ministry has brought forward, considered in legislation, to ensure that something like this doesn't happen again, but also that we might see some administrative monetary penalties potentially be issued in cases where young people are injured in the workplace.

[19:00]

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — So you know you mentioned earlier about how the ministry approaches when they're going to be reviewing a section of the Act. I think this is a perfect example. This was a terrible situation. It shouldn't happen. And so this will be one of the examples where the ministry, whether a submission raises it or not, they will have it on the agenda. So when they do that review we were discussing earlier, they'll be reviewing the Act and then the regs as well. So this will be part of that review.

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Thank you so much. And I think that's all my time here today, Mr. Chair.

**Chair Weger:** — Having reached our agreed-upon time for consideration of these estimates, we will now adjourn consideration of the estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 for the Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety. Minister, do you have any closing comments?

**Hon. Jim Reiter:** — Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to thank you. I would like to thank the committee members. I'd also like to thank Mr. Teed and his colleagues for the great discussion and the respectful questions. Thank you for that. And lastly but foremost, I would also like to thank our ministry officials for their time tonight and their good work. Thank you.

**Chair Weger:** — Mr. Teed, any closing comments?

**Nathaniel Teed:** — Thank you so much. I'll reiterate. Thanks to the Chair and the folks who make this evening possible here as well. To committee members and to the minister and the ministry officials, thank you so much for taking my questions this evening, and thank you so much for all the work that you do in our Labour Relations and Workplace Safety ministry.

**Chair Weger:** — Okay, and I would just echo those same comments. And that concludes our business for today. I would ask a member to move a motion for adjournment. MLA Crassweller has moved. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Weger:** — Carried. This committee stands adjourned until Wednesday, April 16th, 2025 at 5:15 p.m.

[The committee adjourned at 19:02.]