



# STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

## Hansard Verbatim Report

No. 16 — April 20, 2026

Published under the  
authority of  
The Hon. Todd Goudy  
Speaker



**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

**Thirtieth Legislature**

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## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

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[The committee met at 15:30.]

**Chair Keisig:** — Welcome, everyone, to the Standing Committee on Human Services. My name is Travis Keisig, the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for Last Mountain-Touchwood, and I am chairing tonight's meeting. We are joined by committee members MLA Chan, MLA Bromm, MLA Kropf, MLA ChiefCalf, and for MLA Burki we have MLA Ritchie is chitting in for.

Today we will be considering estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 for the Ministry of Social Services, with a recess from 6 until 7. Following our consideration of the Social Services estimates, we will consider resolutions for all estimates and supplementary estimates committed to this committee.

**General Revenue Fund  
Social Services  
Vote 36**

**Subvote (SS01)**

**Chair Keisig:** — Our first order of business today is the consideration of the '26-27 estimates and '25-26 supplementary estimates no. 2 for the Ministry of Social Services. We will begin with consideration of vote 36, Social Services, central management and services, subvote (SS01).

Minister Jenson is here with his officials. I would ask that officials state their names before speaking for the first time. Please don't 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 any opening remarks.

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and welcome to everybody. It's my privilege to speak to the Ministry of Social Services '26-27 budget and our priorities for the upcoming year.

Before I begin, I'd like to introduce the officials from the ministry who are joining me today. To my left I have deputy minister Richelle Bourgoin. Also to my right I have Grant Hilsenteger, the assistant deputy minister of finance and corporate services. We're also joined today by Brittany Csada, the assistant deputy minister of housing and president and CEO [chief executive officer] of the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation; assistant deputy minister, child and family programs, Tobie Eberhardt; Joel Kilbride, the assistant deputy minister of disability programs; and also Julene Restall, acting assistant deputy minister of income assistance programs.

Ministry senior officials are also here today to provide support, and they will introduce themselves if they come forward to answer a question. I also have joining me today my chief of staff, Dawn Kobayashi.

I will begin by recognizing the important work of the ministry and the positive impact employees and third-party service providers make in the lives of Saskatchewan residents each and

every day. The Ministry of Social Services delivers a wide range of critical programs and services to the most vulnerable people in our province.

The ministry provides supports for families to safely care for their children, and for children and youth in care to be successful. They are often the first point of contact for Saskatchewan citizens in need, ensuring that their basic needs are met in urgent situations. This includes connecting people to housing and housing services.

We provide financial support for clients and work with them to reach their goals. This includes support to enter and remain in the workforce through programs like the Saskatchewan employment incentive, which offers a monthly financial benefit and supplementary health benefits, access to discounted bus passes, and connections to employment supports delivered by the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training for working families with low income. And the education and training incentive, delivered through our core income assistance programs, that supports clients to complete their high school education and participate in the workforce and skills training programs.

The support provided by this ministry extends to enabling people with disabilities to access community-based services and participate in their communities. Along with the day-to-day commitment to support clients, our government has made targeted investments in 2025-26 that made a positive difference across the ministry's broad continuum of services. And I'd like to take a few moments to highlight some of the achievements over the past year before moving on to outline the 2026-27 Ministry of Social Services budget.

Begin with investments in income assistance that made life more affordable for seniors, for families, and for people with disabilities. In May 2025 we provided a 2 per cent increase to the Saskatchewan income support, or SIS, and the Saskatchewan assured income for disability, also known as SAID, programs.

For SIS clients that meant a monthly adult basic benefit and shelter benefit increased by a combined total of up to \$40 per month. For SAID clients, living income benefits increased by up to \$40 a month as well per household. SAID clients also benefited from annual earned income exemptions being increased by \$1,000. This has enabled clients to earn more from employment before their benefits are impacted.

We also increased the personal care home benefit monthly income threshold by \$1,000 to \$3,500 per month to help make the cost of living in a licensed personal care home more affordable for seniors. This was the highest increase in the program history. We recognized the importance of partnerships by providing community-based organizations with a 3 per cent increase in funding. We extended the same 3 per cent increase to over 3,000 foster care and extended family care providers to boost their base maintenance rates.

The Government of Saskatchewan is investing in affordable housing. In July we broke ground on a new low-rise apartment in Prince Albert in partnership with the YWCA. This transitional housing apartment will support women experiencing hardship to

move towards stability, well-being, and independence. Prince Albert Community Housing Society's Miakoda and Young Families' projects are providing homes and transitional and supportive living spaces for individuals that are rebuilding their lives.

Two new duplexes are providing homes for families with low income in partnership with River Bank Infill Solutions. New affordable housing is also available in Saskatoon and Regina. In January Camponi Housing Corporation and Sasknative Rentals officially opened 73 housing units in Métis Veterans Plaza, tailored specifically for Métis and First Nations peoples in Saskatoon.

A new fourplex at 501 Avenue H South is giving individuals renting through the Saskatchewan housing authority a place to call home in Saskatoon. In June we celebrated the official opening of phase 4 of the Columbian Manor expansion. This project is adding 134 units for seniors in Saskatoon including accessible and barrier-free units for low-income seniors with limited mobility.

And in Regina, expanded units at Regency Gardens are providing accessible, family-friendly units for large families in need of affordable housing.

We've worked to increase the availability of supportive housing as well. The ministry is working with Egadz to build two group homes, the Egadz retreat homes program for youth. With funding from the Ministry of Social Services and Saskatchewan Health Authority, the retreat homes will provide young people in Saskatoon who are facing mental health and/or addictions challenges with access to safe, supportive housing.

And in Swift Current four new affordable housing units operated by Prairie Pioneers Independent Housing are available for individuals with brain injuries and seniors at risk of homelessness.

Since the foundational investment in the provincial approach to homelessness or PATH in 2023, we are continuing to work together with our partners to address the complex issue of homelessness. The Government of Saskatchewan has invested more than \$98 million in homelessness services since the foundational PATH investment was announced in 2023.

Together with all levels of government and Indigenous and community partners, we have created an additional 155 supportive housing spaces across the province including 99 in Saskatoon; added 141 new enhanced emergency shelter spaces with 60 in Saskatoon; created 30 new complex needs emergency shelter spaces including 15 in Saskatoon; and outreach services in Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, and Lloydminster to connect people experiencing homelessness with the services and supports they need.

In November we announced an additional \$20 million investment over three years to expand homelessness services and enhance supports for individuals experiencing homelessness. This additional funding is focused on providing predictable, multi-year funding to municipalities to support community-led priorities and strategies, expanding emergency shelter capacity at existing shelters based on demonstrated need, and creating new

supportive housing spaces and more trusteeship spaces for individuals to build a better life and greater independence.

This winter the additional supports for community-led priorities funded drop-in services in Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, and Lloydminster, providing individuals in need with a safe, warm place during the cold winter months.

Phase 1 of renovations is under way on a Saskatchewan Housing Corporation-owned, 87-unit social housing complex in Prince Albert. This renovation includes upgrades to essential infrastructure and improvements to the functionality and safety of the building.

We are also seeing consistent progress on addressing social housing vacancies. As of December 2025, 15,000 of the 16,965 rentable social and affordable housing units are occupied, an 88.4 per cent occupancy rate. Of the remaining units, 830 across 168 communities are immediately available for eligible families, seniors, and people with disabilities; 257 units are out of inventory and undergoing major repair; and 878 are in the process of being prepared for the next tenant as part of the natural turnover of units in this portfolio.

Over the last year the ministry continued to prioritize the safety and well-being of vulnerable children and families, enhancing and expanding services. We partnered with Thomas' Circle of Care to open a new community respite program in Regina to provide short-term emergency care for children under the age of 12 and help families safely and effectively navigate through crisis.

To support young people leaving care, to build a strong foundation for independence, we partnered with YWCA Regina and the Youth Advisory Team to launch a new 12-space, semi-independent living program. Young people living in this new home have access to mentorship, guidance, and opportunities to build life skills, pursue education, and prepare for employment.

The ministry also works to empower individuals with intellectual disabilities. We celebrated several group home openings across the province including Elmwood residences in Saskatoon, Prairie Branches Enterprises in Kerrobert, and two group homes in Regina in partnership with Regina Residential Resource Centre and Creative Options Regina.

We began work on building 10 new group homes in locations across the province including Meadow Lake, Prince Albert, North Battleford, Saskatoon, Regina, Melfort, and Tisdale, to support the emerging needs of clients with intellectual disabilities. We also saw a project begin with shovels in the ground to kick off construction for a new Farm in the Dell group home and day program near Biggar.

Summer respite camps are another important ministry service that provides meaningful recreational activities for adults with intellectual disabilities while also providing respite for year-round caregivers. Our investments in the 2025-26 expanded capacity and improved infrastructure at Camp Buffalo and Camp Thunderbird.

During the wildfires in northern Saskatchewan this summer, the ministry worked with SaskAbilities to relocate Camp

Thunderbird campers to Camp Easter Seal, ensuring the first two weeks of camp continued safely and without disruption. We are so grateful for our partnership with SaskAbilities and thank them for their exceptional work right across Saskatchewan. And in recognition of their 75 years of service, the Government of Saskatchewan proclaimed December 2nd, 2025, as SaskAbilities Day.

I'd like to share the progress that's been made to improve accessibility in Saskatchewan, Mr. Chair. The Government of Saskatchewan released the province's first accessibility plan last year, and work continues to improve accessibility. On December 3rd, 2025, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, public sector bodies across Saskatchewan including school divisions, post-secondary institutions, Crown corporations, and municipalities publicly released their own accessibility plans. These plans outline how they will identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility in their programs and services.

The 2026-27 budget positions the ministry to continue to address priorities in income assistance, child and family programs, disability programs, and housing. The 2026-27 Ministry of Social Services budget is \$1.69 billion, an increase of \$71.9 million, or 4.4 per cent over last year.

This year's budget will continue to deliver critical programs and services that support and protect Saskatchewan's most vulnerable people by increasing monthly income assistance benefits and Saskatchewan housing benefit rates, increasing funding for third-party service providers and family-based care providers, increasing the availability of safe and appropriate housing, and improving supports for at-risk children and youth, people with disabilities, and people experiencing homelessness.

[15:45]

Our government is making life more affordable for seniors, individuals, people with disabilities, and families with low incomes. An investment of \$11.7 million will increase core income assistance benefits by 2 per cent, aligning with the rate of inflation, starting in May 2026. This is the fifth year in a row we are increasing monthly benefits for SIS clients, and the fourth consecutive year we've raised benefits for SAID clients.

The personal care home benefit increased last year, and an \$8 million increase this year will support over 500 more seniors who are already accessing this program. The number of seniors receiving the benefit has doubled to about 1,200, and the average benefit seniors received has almost tripled to over \$1,300 per month.

This year we will invest \$3.2 million to increase monthly Saskatchewan housing benefit rates to help eligible renters better afford their rent and utility costs and expand the program to over 300 new clients. Core monthly benefits will increase by 20 per cent. Renters who need additional support to help maintain stable housing will receive a 40 per cent increase in benefits through the supportive housing stream, and for individuals fleeing interpersonal violence, benefits will double through the seeking safety stream.

Also in this budget, SAID residential support benefits for families that care for their loved ones at home will increase by

30 per cent over the next three years, 10 per cent each year. This is a \$2 million investment in the 2026-27 budget that will increase benefits by up to \$130 per month for about 1,800 SAID clients.

The ministry works with community-based partners across our province. In 2026-27 service providers will see a \$10.8 million increase in funding to help deliver programs and services. Family-based caregivers, including foster families and extended family care providers, will receive a 2 per cent increase in basic payments.

The complex issue of homelessness continues to be a high priority for our government. In addition to continued implementation of the additional \$20 million investment over three years announced in November, we are investing new and continued funding to support and protect people experiencing homelessness or those who are at risk of homelessness. Government will provide \$5.4 million as part (a) of a multi-year capital investment to design and build enhanced emergency shelters at sites chosen by municipalities in Saskatoon and Prince Albert.

Over the next year we will continue to work alongside service providers, municipal and federal counterparts, Indigenous partners, and community organizations across the province to help people in need transition to stable housing, remain successfully housed, and achieve a better quality of life.

The Government of Saskatchewan will invest \$400,000 for a new one-time per-household utility arrears recoverable benefit in the SIS program to help prevent evictions and support at-risk clients to remain successfully housed. This new one-time \$1,000 targeted benefit will support SIS clients by assisting with past-due utility costs that can affect their housing stability.

We are continuing to invest in increasing availability of safe and appropriate housing for families and individuals. An additional \$17.6 million in new and continuing projects will support repairs in provincially owned housing units, and the rental development program will continue to support partners in the community to develop new affordable housing units.

The 2026-27 budget will continue to support people with disabilities to access safe and secure supports across the province, including residential services and day programming. An additional \$11.8 million in funding will increase services to new and existing clients with intellectual disabilities and increase the level of support for clients with changing needs.

A \$7 million increase will support the growing number of families accessing the Autism Spectrum Disorder Individualized Funding program, allowing families and clinicians to identify eligible therapeutic interventions that will most benefit their child.

\$11 million in capital investments will continue the development of 10 new group homes and a new medical group home in Saskatoon for individuals with intellectual disabilities and complex health needs.

We also continue to make targeted investments to ensure the safety and well-being of vulnerable children and youth and to

provide services and supports for at-risk families, children and youth. This year's budget provides \$19.1 million in additional funding to serve a growing number of children and youth with significant and complex needs placed in out-of-home care. This investment will strengthen placement stability and support access to safe care arrangements for children and youth who cannot safely remain at home.

\$1.8 million in increased funding will support intensive family preservation services, enhanced support for youth to help successfully transition from care to adult independence, and provide funding to support at-risk youth in the community.

This investment provides predictable, stable funding for three key programs: the intensive family preservation services for families with children who have complex needs, the semi-independent living program developed in collaboration with the Regina Youth Advisory Team to support youth to successfully transition to independence, and culturally informed drop-in services provided to youth 16 years and older in Saskatoon.

This year's budget theme is Protecting Saskatchewan. It highlights the choices this government is making in difficult economic times to protect Saskatchewan services, including social services. We will continue to deliver critical programs and services that will make a positive difference in the lives of many clients.

Together with our partners, the Ministry of Social Services protects Saskatchewan's most vulnerable people, helps build stronger and healthier families, and supports more inclusive communities. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and to members of the committee this afternoon. My officials and I will be more than happy to answer any questions you may have.

**Chair Keisig:** — Well thank you very much, Minister, for those opening comments. And I really want to applaud you, and pass this message on to your team, please do not . . . Use the use of acronyms as little as possible. It is very challenging for the committee to understand the nuances of the conversation.

I want to introduce MLA Senger is chitting in in for MLA Blakley, has joined the committee. And I also want to advise the committee that we are debating the budget here today. So we will stay on topic on that.

And I also want to advise the committee, absolutely no food is allowed in this chamber at all. So I will now open the floor for questions and I will take questions from MLA Ritchie.

**Erika Ritchie:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Pleasure to be here as always. I want to also extend a welcome and gratitude to the minister and his officials for being here today to answer our questions regarding the Social Services estimates for '26-27.

I think I'm going to start with funding for food banks. As is generally known and understood, there had been, in the past two years, emergency funding and that money has ended and not carried over into the current budget year. Minister, I'm wondering if you can tell me if you, and how you track the number of social services clients that rely on food banks for meeting their basic food needs.

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — So to answer that question, the Ministry of Social Services, the Saskatchewan food banks, you know, we don't have access to that information in terms of, you know . . . It's not something that's reported, so we don't know that. We are not involved in the operations of the food banks.

**Erika Ritchie:** — And so when that funding was provided to food banks the last two years, were there any metrics, performance-wise, any data that was requested in exchange for providing that funding? Was there any kind of expectation placed on ensuring or understanding how that money was being utilized?

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — So when that program was rolled out, that was previous to me becoming minister, but it was a two-year, \$2 million commitment. And that was to assist food banks who were experiencing pressure at the time. And it was due largely in, you know, entirely due to excessive inflation with food prices at the time. And so it was a request that was made by the food banks at the time. And so it was a two-year, \$2 million to get food banks through that time.

**Erika Ritchie:** — And so have those food pressures gone away?

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — So up to this point, we have not heard anything from the food banks in terms of any type of formal request. The previous \$2 million commitment over two years was a grant program that was put in place to respond to the request that was made two and a half years ago. Should be reminded too that this is a government that's put forward many, many affordability measures right across the province. And the affordability measures touch everybody in this province when it comes to general cost of living.

You know, I think of how the food banks and the response that they provide to the community is important. And we know that the food banks work really hard with their . . . there's different grocery stores, there's restaurants, there's lots of resources that they use and, you know, I thank the food banks for what they do. But at this point, we haven't had any formal requests.

**Erika Ritchie:** — So I understand that the Moose Jaw Food Bank reported an increase in usage of 150 per cent over the last four years. We've heard similar things from food banks in communities right across the province. Are you suggesting that the food banks and their directors have not reached out to request continued funding or express a need for funding going forward?

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — Well as I stated, we haven't received any formal request from food banks or Food Banks of Saskatchewan. Do you want to speak to this a little bit, Richelle, because you're kind of closer in that area.

**Richelle Bourgoin:** — Certainly. So the ministry doesn't regulate or govern food banks. Those are done independently. The grant that was provided was provided for two years at the request of Food Banks of Saskatchewan, and so it actually went to that provincial governing body. And they made the determination with their regional partners on how it would be distributed. The 2026-27 budget does not have an allocation for the Food Banks of Saskatchewan.

**Erika Ritchie:** — So it's my understanding . . .

**Chair Keisig:** — Minister — or I apologize to the committee member — could you just ask your deputy minister to introduce herself for the *Hansard*. I apologize.

**Richelle Bourgoïn:** — So sorry. My name is Richelle Bourgoïn. I'm the deputy minister at Social Services.

**Erika Ritchie:** — Thank you, Deputy Minister. It's my understanding that there are 78,000 Saskatchewan children who live in poverty. That's 27.1 per cent and is the worst rate in Canada.

I would like to understand a little bit more regarding the amounts that you mentioned in terms of overall funding that SIS and SAID and SEI [Saskatchewan employment incentive] recipients are receiving and the extent to which those amounts are addressing food insecurity and poverty, particularly amongst those 78,000 children in Saskatchewan.

[16:00]

I recognize of course that you're only addressing sort of a subset, but in terms of how you're calculating the amount of the supplements that families are receiving, the extent to which that is addressing the need for funding, by family, to feed their families.

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — So the SIS program takes a whole-of-income approach when considering funds available to clients to pay for their basic needs. SIS provides financial benefit for shelter and basic needs, with additional benefits available for emergency health and safety needs or starting a new job.

SIS is not the only resource of income clients receive. So for example, they may have a part-time job, receive the Canada child benefit, or GST [goods and services tax] credits.

So as an example, with this year's budget SIS rate increases, a SIS household of one adult and one child in Saskatoon could receive approximately \$2,292 per month in combined federal and provincial benefits; a household with two adults with two children, approximately \$3,377; and a household with one adult with four children, approximately \$4,326.

SIS includes earned income exemptions for people who are working so that they can continue to receive full income assistance benefits while working until they reach the maximum earned income exemption, increasing the total funds available to them.

A \$6.1 million investment in this year's budget will raise the SIS benefits by 2 per cent providing households with up to an additional \$40 per month starting in May, and SIS clients will receive higher monthly benefits for the fifth year in a row. A \$400,000 investment in this year's budget will help SIS clients remain successfully housed — outlined that in my opening remarks — with a \$1,000 one-time per-household utility arrears recoverable benefit to prevent evictions.

And it should be noted since replacing the Saskatchewan assistance program, or SAP, and the transitional employment allowance, or TEA, in 2018-19, SIS monthly benefits have increased by around \$290 or approximately 32 per cent, which is

higher than the 22 per cent increase in the Saskatchewan consumer price index over the same period. According to the Maytree welfare report in Canada, in 2024 Saskatchewan's income assistance benefits remain among the strongest across provinces, with above average supports for meeting basic needs for most household types.

**Erika Ritchie:** — So how do you square the high rates of poverty amongst children in Saskatchewan with that statistic that you just mentioned? Because the two seem to be very much at odds in terms of rates of poverty versus the comparator that you just made.

**Julene Restall:** — My name is Julene Restall. I'm the acting assistant deputy minister of income assistance programs. So we do work with our families and the individuals that we support on an individual case basis to look at how we can best support them on an ongoing basis. So if we are working with individuals, for example, that have a family member or children, we'd make sure that they have the appropriate benefits set up for them for what they're eligible . . . through our programs.

In 2024 we did launch the Saskatchewan employment incentive. That is specifically to support low-income families within Saskatchewan. So within the Saskatchewan employment incentive, it's more than just a financial benefit that families are able to access here. Parents working full-time at minimum wage are eligible for the maximum benefit at a higher rate than our prior programs, so they can access up to \$600 a month through that process.

Within that program they also have the ability to actually have an easier access to the Saskatchewan housing benefit, which can also actually go on top of that program. We also offer discounted bus passes for individuals to support them for transportation or child care costs. We use the Saskatchewan employment incentive to support for child care costs as well.

Within that program individuals are also able to access supplementary health benefits through the Ministry of Health, which actually helps them ensure that they have their health coverages met through that program.

**Richelle Bourgoïn:** — And if I could just add, specifically to addressing child poverty, the opportunities we have when we're talking to clients and when we're talking to community is to think about the entire benefit approach. And so making changes like the employment incentive really does allow, in particular, single parents who are looking to re-enter the workforce an opportunity to do so without having to give up some of the safety net benefits that allow them the security to be engaged. The same could be said about the employment training incentive.

And then at the same time within our ministry, we also look at how we support children in the context of their family unit. And so we've introduced new programs in the last year, programs like Keeping Families Together, that allow us to work with the children as part of their family unit to try and mitigate some of the risks that may occur in events where those parents may not be eligible for programming through the Ministry of Social Services. They may be covered by other jurisdictional income support programs or may be transitioning from employment and coming to an end of an unemployment benefit, for example.

**Erika Ritchie:** — I guess there's a couple of things here that need to be resolved in my mind with respect to the amounts that are being provided in this budget for recipients through the various programs that you mentioned. Because you know, when we're seeing rates of food bank usage continue to increase and yet you're telling me that there's all of these various programs and benefits that are addressing it, it's not adding up.

And so how are you costing or estimating, you know, the amounts that families are going to need in order to feed their families at a time of rising inflation and food increases so that families can feed their children and meet their basic needs?

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — So with regards to food bank usage, I think it's fairly safe to say that not all income assistance recipients are using the food bank, and vice versa. There's likely clients of the food bank that are not income assistance or ministry clients.

Going back to another previous answer in terms of how we work with individual clients to ensure that they are having their needs met, again we do work with individual clients based on their family makeup to ensure that, you know, they're receiving the maximum benefit possible.

Just going back to the food bank piece as well, we do work with the food banks in terms of trying to promote within their facilities the Saskatchewan employment incentive so that families that are coming in that are low income have the ability to have that information so that they can come to the ministry to see if they qualify for that SEI benefit.

[16:15]

And I would also point to, you know, Maytree's 2024 *Welfare in Canada* report. Saskatchewan's income assistance benefits remain the strongest amongst provinces, with above average supports for meeting basic needs and most household types before consecutive 2 per cent increases to income assistance benefits in May of 2025 and again in May of this year.

We use a percentage approach for assistance SAID rate increases so clients with higher needs . . . And I'll go back to the larger families and really making sure we're trying to tailor benefits, you know, that maximize the impact for that family. Those larger families would receive a higher dollar increase opposed to a flat rate approach where maybe a single individual gets the same dollar increase as a larger family. So again in May of this year, assistance SAID benefits in this budget will increase by 2 per cent, which aligns with the inflation rate.

But do you want to speak a little bit more to how that's formulated for individual clients to make sure that we're supporting them?

**Julene Restall:** — For sure. So the way that the percentage increases work, we've decided to move towards a percentage increase amount because individuals that have larger families receive more money in those situations. So for example, we have shelter rates that are based on a composition of the family. And so the larger the family is, the higher the compensation that they do receive for those shelter rates.

So we've really worked on moving from a flat rate. In our past we've done flat-rated increases. And really to address the family, understanding that families are experiencing this, we've actually moved it to a percentage increase to help address that inflation pressure.

**Richelle Bourgoin:** — And if I could just talk specifically about when we're looking at whole of community and thinking about all of the individuals and families that have the ability to seek services from our ministry, we also are trying to work to engage individuals and families who would be eligible for the program but may not be receiving the benefit for a number of reasons.

So one of the things that we've done this year is really expand our mobile income assistance team. So our team works within the locations where service is being provided in the community — organizations, for example, like the shelter systems or the food banks or working with community clinics — so that we can meet with clients where they're at to ensure that they understand the benefits that are available to them. Because sometimes if you are in crisis, the last thing you're thinking about is the government programs that might be available to support you.

We've found success in ensuring that we're able to individually work with individuals and families to tailor the programs and services for which they're eligible to ensure that they're enrolled so that they can access the services and supports that they need.

**Erika Ritchie:** — Thank you for that information. I guess you had provided some numbers to me that were combined amounts, both provincially and federally, in terms of for family and different family makeups. So could you please item out how much of that is provincial versus federal funding?

And then the second piece of that question I wanted to ask again. Just going back in terms of how you are arriving at those amounts, what sort of estimates you're using for the cost of food that these family complements are needing.

**Julene Restall:** — So I'll go through three different categories of individuals. So this is taking into consideration the May increases that are coming in May 2026, and this is for our SIS program. So for singles, they would receive the adult basic benefit which is \$375, a shelter benefit for \$675, for a total of \$1,050. For federal resources they would also receive \$67 of federal resources on top of that, for a total whole income of \$1,117. As mentioned, they would also have the ability as an individual on the SIS program to have earned income exemptions, so they're able to work a part-time job up to a certain amount before their benefits are actually impacted too.

For couples within the SIS program, the adult basic benefit and the shelter benefit in total is \$1,615. The federal resources that they would also receive are \$130 for a total of \$1,745.

For two adults and one child within our SIS program, the adult basic benefit as well as the shelter benefit would be \$1,855, while the federal benefits that are also available for them is \$826, for a total of \$2,681.

It's really important to understand though with our percentage increases, that's where we're looking at that inflation rate when we are actually determining what our recommend approach is for

the next year's increases. So that's why we've looked at tying it quite closely to where the inflation rate is currently.

**Richelle Bourgoïn:** — And so I'll just add too that those are the monthly benefits. So they don't include additional federal benefits like the Canada groceries and essentials benefit or, for example, GST rebate that clients may be eligible for.

**Erika Ritchie:** — And so have those rates been published yet for May 1st? It's my understanding that the policy manual hasn't been updated.

**Julene Restall:** — No, it would be updated the day they go online. So May 1st they would be updated. Yeah. Because we don't want to confuse clients when we have two different rates out there.

**Erika Ritchie:** — Right. Right. And then going back to my question though regarding, you know, the determination of that amount? You know, what you're assuming and estimating food costs to be and contributing to that amount.

**Richelle Bourgoïn:** — So that would be based on a number of inputs, including consumer price index, things like the posted rate of inflation, of course looking back, based on the year in review because we can't predict the upcoming year. So the inputs that we put in are really based on the environment in the time that we're making the decision, and also understanding what other benefits are available for clients of the Saskatchewan income support program at the time that that recommendation is being made to the minister and subsequently to treasury board to inform that decision.

**Erika Ritchie:** — Okay, so let's just take the first amount you gave me for a SIS client, a single individual. You indicated that their monthly amount, combining both federal and provincial funding, would be \$1,117.

So from that they're paying for their housing and they're paying for their food. And you know, all life costs are coming out of that. And again my question is, like how much of that are you expecting to go towards food in a month?

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — So the overarching goal of the SIS program is to encourage independence and to encourage, you know, employment and independence and being part of the community. So when we set SIS rates, we are not necessarily looking at silos of expenses. We're looking at the entire package.

And so I'm going to let Julene speak to the formula and how we arrive at all that and the different programs that are stackable to be able to provide that overarching support and encouragement. So go ahead.

**Julene Restall:** — Sure. So we don't specifically set aside. Everyone has the ability to decide how they wish to spend their income assistance benefits. So there isn't a specific portion that is determined per that. They receive that whole amount of money and then are able to determine how they wish to allocate that through their budgeting processes.

We do work with clients individually on how they actually build those budgeting expertise. So every client that requires that extra

additional work, we actually have a worker that works with them independently. And on their initial planning meeting we actually go through that budget planning with them to see what they are spending, how we can support them when moving forward, and ensuring that they're meeting their basic needs.

We also will support them in meeting their basic needs through the use of trusteeship spaces if there is a person that needs that additional support to ensure that they can have their basic needs met.

As the minister mentioned, we also have additional benefits to really support individuals in their path to self-sufficiency. So for example, we have an education and training incentive, and that is an additional benefit on top of those core benefits that really supports people that can go back to school in achieving their adult basic education through a regional college or Saskatchewan Polytechnic.

We also, as I mentioned earlier, have earned income exemptions. And for a single individual those are \$375 per month in which they can earn. And within families that's \$500 a month that they can earn without having their benefits met.

**Erika Ritchie:** — Okay. So my colleagues here have been sort of sharing a little bit of information with me about, you know, the average cost of an apartment in Saskatoon for example. And you know, average costs of an apartment are in the \$1,500 range on the lower end. You know, someone might pay \$800. And so yes, obviously for those who are managing their own funds, there's flexibility, but there really isn't a lot of choice out there either. You've got limited funds and high rents. Cost of food is going up.

[16:30]

And so as I look at it, if there's \$365 for food and clothing and other needs, and when I do the calculation, you know, sort of conservatively, someone is going to have maybe \$75 to spend, at best, on food a week. And you know, the average basket of groceries on a weekly basis, it's got to be at least \$100, even for someone who's pinching their pennies and buying in a very frugal manner.

And so as I look at it, you know, it doesn't appear to me that we're really setting folks up for success. I mean, yes, there's these programs, but not everyone is going to be in a state of readiness or have the ability to access these programs, and so, you know, are falling through the cracks.

You know, you talked about working with SIS clients when they first come on and doing a program with them. How many clients are . . . Let's just sort of keep it to the SIS just for simplicity. I mean how many clients are on the caseload on average every year? And how many caseworkers are there to work with them to help them reach these programs? And then I mean, how often are they actually interacting with staff to receive the supplemental benefits that you mention?

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — All right. So kind of three questions in one, so that's why it took a little extra time going through all three.

I think it's really important when we talk about, you know, caseloads and the number of caseworkers in Saskatchewan. You know, something I always try to do is I always try to recognize our front-line workers that are out there helping individuals, helping families, to the people that are vulnerable and the people that are truly trying to make a better life. And so for all those, all of our employees that are out in the field as well as the ones that are employed by the different CBOs [community-based organization] around the province, I just want to preface it by saying thank you.

In terms of different things that we do, that the caseworkers are able to do, is be able to be in different places like the shelter locations. And we also work very closely with Immigration and Career Training, with the ministry there, because the ultimate goal is to be able to provide some independence and employment or at least career training opportunities to individuals so that they can lead a more independent life.

But I know Julene has some data, you know, in terms of the caseloads and the caseworkers and that information. And it's quite the collection of paper here, so I'll let Julene try to wade through it and give you some information.

**Julene Restall:** — Thank you, Minister. So we will start with just the caseload breakdowns for the last 12 months on our SIS caseload.

I do like to just preface this that SIS and SAID caseloads are driven by multiple factors such as population size and composition; the impact of broader economic conditions such as tariffs and related impacts on labour markets, for example; prevalence and incidence of disability; and provincial and federal programs. So for our SIS households I'm going to tell you the households as well as the beneficiaries. So it's the individual families versus how many people are on the program.

So in February 2025 we had 20,058 households, 36,324 beneficiaries. In March 2025 we had 20,735 households and 37,483 beneficiaries. For April 2025 we had 20,865 households and 37,645 beneficiaries. For May 2025 we had 20,347 households and 36,690 beneficiaries. For June 2025 we had 20,425 households and 36,866 beneficiaries. For July 2025 we had 20,434 households and 36,834 beneficiaries.

For August 2025 we had 19,166 households, 34,411 beneficiaries. For September 2025 we had 20,477 households and 36,794 beneficiaries. For October 2025 we had 20,769 households and 37,379 beneficiaries. For November 2025 we had 20,654 households and 36,946 beneficiaries. In December 2025 we had 21,334 households and 37,979 beneficiaries.

In January 2026 we had 21,048 households and 37,273 beneficiaries. And then from February 2026 we had 20,831 households and 36,861 beneficiaries in total for our SIS program.

[16:45]

For your second question about FTEs [full-time equivalent], so within income assistance service delivery we have around 400 FTEs that serve the caseloads throughout our province. The average caseload for an IA [income assistance] worker varies dependent on many different circumstances, so we don't have a

set number. Each case is unique. And depending on a client situation and the support required, and because it has a difference of level of support required, we don't have a set number.

When assessing cases to a specific worker, we consider family size, education, employment, health, housing stability, and various other factors to balance a caseload. As such, a specific number cannot be considered. We also for our SIS program have application and benefit administration provided through a generalized caseload process to ensure easier accessibility for clients on the long term. We have really worked hard on getting out to clients and supporting them. As the minister and Richelle had mentioned earlier, we do have our mobile outreach team, and they actually provide services on site at over 40 different locations within Saskatchewan within the CBOs that we support.

So in Regina we are also on site at the addictions treatment centre. We have the drug treatment court that we partner with; YWCA Joan's Place; Salvation Army Kate's Place; Milton Heights, Eden Care Communities; the friendship centre; Pasqua Hospital; Queen City pharmacy; RT/SIS [Regina Treaty/Status Indian Services Inc.] Horse Dance Lodge; RT/SIS low-barrier transitional housing, RT/SIS New Beginnings; Salvation Army Waterston House; YWCA Beehive; YWCA My Aunt's Place.

In North Battleford we go to the rapid access addictions medicine clinic or the RAAM clinic. We go to the friendship centre, as well as we support drug treatment court there. In Moose Jaw, we go to the John Howard Society, as well as drug treatment court.

In Saskatoon we go to CUMFI [Central Urban Métis Federation Inc.]; Crocus Co-op; Elizabeth Fry Society transitional housing; Emergency Wellness Centre with the Saskatoon Tribal Council; Sawëyihotân, the Saskatoon Tribal Council supportive housing; Mustard Seed; Salvation Army; Sanctum and Sanctum 1.5; the friendship centre; and The Carter House. We also go to Station 20 West and the YWCA.

In Prince Albert we support the Ministry of Corrections İkwëskīcīk iskwëwak program. We also go to the friendship centre; the P.A. [Prince Albert] and district community services centre; Relatives' Lodge, Prince Albert Grand Council services; as well as the YWCA Homeward Bound.

In Melfort we go to the Marguerite Riel Centre. And in Yorkton we go to Bruno's Place and the Society for the Involvement of Good Neighbours, so SIGN. So that's really to show that we really try to expand our scope and reach within the communities to ensure people are accessing our benefits and we're meeting them where they are.

One thing that we . . . As I was talking about the household, the numbers of households on our caseload, one of the statistics that we use is looking at the dependency rate within Saskatchewan for income assistance. And that is actually something that has been very static, around 5 to 6 per cent over the last, I think it's about five years.

Prior to that we've seen a pretty big decrease in the dependency rate in Saskatchewan. In the 1990s, it was about 9 per cent. And that dependency rate is people that are able to be working under the age of 65. So that's something that we do standardly look at to ensure that we are not seeing a growth on our caseload. And

we've seen consistency of that caseload over time.

**Erika Ritchie:** — Okay. So you've provided me with the number of households and beneficiaries over the past year and then the number of full-time equivalents which you said was, roughly in the neighbourhood of 20,000 households and 400 FTEs.

**Julene Restall:** — For income assistance service delivery, yes.

**Erika Ritchie:** — For income assistance, okay. And so, I guess, and then I also asked you just the number of touchpoints. Because anecdotally, you know, through the casework that I receive in my office, what I often hear is that it's difficult for people to access services and programming. It's difficult to talk to somebody. You know, they'll call; they'll leave a message; they won't hear back.

And so, you know, there's two aspects to that. It's like what are your service rates, you know, in terms of . . . I would like to know those kind of performance targets you have in terms of when recipients reach out, you know, what is that return time in terms of receiving it.

But then also when you're mentioning that, you know, there's all these different programs and supplements and benefits and things that people can access, like, are those being fully utilized? Are you monitoring and measuring, and are they being adequately accessed? And how do you know that?

Because you know, I get to hear about the cases where people are having difficulty accessing those programs. And so it does come down to a bit of a performance question here in terms of, are service recipients receiving the full benefits that they're entitled to? Are they experiencing lag times? What are those lag times? And how are we ensuring that people, that the basic needs are being met through that range of services that you've discussed here today?

**Julene Restall:** — So ministry staff work really hard to obviously provide clients the benefits that they're eligible in a timely manner. The application process for income assistance is actually the best it's ever been.

We actually take applications for income assistance in four different ways. They can either apply online, and that's available 24-7. They can call the call centre. Individuals can come down to our regional offices, and we have 20 different regional offices within our province. So there's an office in Buffalo Narrows, Creighton, Estevan, Fort Qu'Appelle, Kindersley, La Loche, La Ronge, Lloydminster, Meadow Lake, Melfort, Moose Jaw, Nipawin, North Battleford, Prince Albert, obviously Regina and Saskatoon, Rosetown, Swift Current, Weyburn, and Yorkton.

And at those offices we can help them apply for those programs as well as provide any type of emergency requirements that an individual might be requiring. We also are able to actually take applications face to face at those mobile outreach places that I spoke about earlier. So that's over 40 different locations within the province.

To ensure that clients receive timely service, the ministry has set service standards, including reviewing income assistance applications within five business days. We actually hit . . . For the year of 2025, that was at 100 per cent. We reviewed every

application within five business days. We respond to client emails within two business days. We also process documentation within five business days. And as I mentioned, over the last year we actually continuously hit those standards and those requirements.

The income assistance call centre receives approximately 13,200 calls per month, with the average response call time about . . . Average response time for SAID clients is two minutes. And within the SIS line, that is 18 to 20 minutes dependent on the time of day and the time of the month.

Several actions have been taken to implement and improve responsiveness to clients, including an online application option that enhances accessibility. Within that online portal you're actually able to upload any documentation. You're also able to complete your required mandatory questionnaire, which reduces the pressure on our call wait times because people can access those services online now.

We've also implemented a callback option for clients so that staff members can actually call them back instead of them waiting on those phone lines. A voice message option has actually been implemented within our application line to ensure that everyone that calls our application line can leave a message and get a response from the ministry within one business day.

We've also set expectations with our regional staff members to ensure that we're responding to individual worker calls within one business day or ensuring that they have their out-of-offices in play. Clients do have the ability to press zero when they do actually get to that call message line to actually speak to somebody right away as well if it's urgent.

We provide urgent and in-person support, as I mentioned, at the 20 income assistance service centres throughout the province and over 40 CBOs at the mobile outreach locations. The busiest time of the month for the ministry is the five days at the end of the month and at the beginning of the month. And some of the pressure is driven by clients not receiving those benefits.

The ministry places cases on hold to ensure that clients are receiving the benefits that they are eligible for. If the ministry requires information from a client to ensure eligibility, clients are notified preferably in two different methods. We try verbally to contact them, but we do always put it in writing about what is required from that client to issue those benefits. And typically we provide clients 30 days to actually provide that information before those benefits are held. This time frame provides clients with the time to complete what they've been asked to complete for.

If the client tells us they're having a hard time getting that documentation or completing that need, we have the ability to extend that time frame to ensure that they have that time to get the documentation requirements met. It's really, we work in the best interests of our clients while ensuring appropriate controls are in place to protect program integrity.

[17:00]

Recently we have set certain standards within . . . as well for our regional staff members. We have set a standard of the initial

planning meetings with an income assistance worker as being done within their first 30 days on our caseload. That's to help with that budgeting conversation that I spoke about a little bit earlier. Staff are also required to interact with clients who have barriers to implement at least once every three months to ensure that we actually see and talk to individuals about their goals and what they're looking to achieve.

We also have set referral standards. So for example we have referral standards in which people might need support with their housing and finding stable housing within the communities. And what we've said is if there is a housing or an employment goal that is set, they have a 30-day turnaround time. So we will follow up with that client within 30 days.

And right now we've hit both of those measures at over 85 per cent of the time. So we want to ensure that we're continuously supporting clients in the most impactful way, and we've set up regional reporting as well as statistical reporting to ensure that nobody is missed and that we have active engagement with all of the clients that we serve.

**Richelle Bourgoïn:** — And I would just add specifically to the ability to ensure that those clients are receiving all of the benefits to which they are entitled, so the ministry also works internally to coordinate case management for clients — whether that's clients that are also seeking service through the disability program or through the Saskatchewan housing benefit supported housing stream, or for individuals who are fleeing interpersonal violence for example. So there's a number of different areas of the ministry that can participate in making that assessment.

And then I would just provide the additional context to Julene's comment around the 90 days in which clients have the opportunity to seek support from a career development perspective is the time where we're working with colleagues outside of the ministry, so Immigration and Career Training primarily to ensure that we're referring clients to them.

They're very closely located in all of our offices to ensure that then we can take the individuals who are receiving the Saskatchewan income support program benefit and take them to Immigration and Career Training to look at what opportunities through the regional career services model can be made available to them. Including very specific designated services like Regina and Saskatoon's skills and trades where opportunities are made available specifically to clients of the Ministry of Social Services.

**Erika Ritchie:** — Thank you for that. So you mentioned 400 FTEs . . . And I do want to also echo and recognize my appreciation for the hard work that these front-line workers do providing these services, you know, working towards the standard service rates and achieving that level of responsiveness. You know, the work that they're doing is vitally important in meeting the needs of our community.

And I guess what I would just like to understand more about is, so a little bit more information around those 400 FTEs. Like are those directly employed by the Ministry of Social Services? And are they fully . . . are all those positions filled? You know, what kind of retention rates are you seeing in those positions?

**Julene Restall:** — Okay, so your question about retention rates,

our turnover rate within income assistance. So in '24-25 it was about 10 per cent of a turnover rate. This year we are trending to be about a 6.1 per cent. So we've seen a positive reduction in our turnover rates within income assistance. We have taken very good steps within the Ministry of Social Services to fill vacancies as soon as we can. We always in IA try to spend exactly how many FTEs we get, so we're always very close to our goals at 400 FTEs on an ongoing basis.

Within the Ministry of Social Services we do have a recruitment committee in which we look at how can we ensure we get actually staff into the door as quick as possible. So we actually did look at our hiring processes over the last year, and we implemented a simplified process that has actually reduced our turnaround time to fill those vacant positions. And we've had a lot of success getting people into those roles.

Another thing that we've actually done within income assistance is we really looked at career laddering. It's a really important thing to ensure that people can see their future careers in our division. So we actually implemented a couple years ago client service rep positions, which are entry-level positions that individuals can start by doing things like applications. They can also look at doing our supplement programs. From there they can actually move and ladder into higher level positions, either in IA work or at the call centre or an IA worker in the regions, and then see their career progress. And I think that's been very effective in retaining our staff members within income assistance and really reducing that turnover rate within our team.

**Richelle Bourgoïn:** — And just to the first part of your question, of the approximately 400 FTEs that are budgeted for income assistance, there are no chronic vacancies. They are all full-time employees of the Ministry of Social Services.

So that would not count our community-based partners, who are also providing support for things like trustee and money management services. Those are employees of the community-based organizations, in addition to the 400 FTEs that are part of the Ministry of Social Services.

**Erika Ritchie:** — And you mentioned the career laddering. And so what is the minimum educational requirement or certification for an individual at an entry-level position?

**Julene Restall:** — So for income assistance workers, it's not a regulated profession. So there isn't a required need, for example, for a social worker degree such as there may be for child and family programs. With our competitive application process and our recruitment process, we consider people's education and experience when coming into our roles. So for example, a person may have less experience but have a university degree — we see a lot of human justice type of backgrounds or psychology backgrounds — while others might have 10 years working at a community-based organization.

So we really take it on a case-by-case basis on what that person brings for actually ensuring that they can complete the services we need to actually make sure our clients have the best outcomes possible. So there is no defined minimum. There is a real large contribution between education and experience within our division.

**Erika Ritchie:** — Yes, so thank you very much. I want to go back to the 2 per cent increase that's included in this year's budget and if you could provide some more detail specifically on the elements of the income assistance programs that that is pertaining to.

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — So the breakdown of the 2 per cent lift within Saskatchewan income support: so the adult basic benefit is going to increase by \$10 per adult per month, and shelter rates are going to increase by an additional 15 to \$22 per month, depending on family size and location.

The adult basic benefit increase will increase from 365 to \$375 per month per client living outside of the northern administration district, and from 435 to \$445 per month for clients in the northern administration district.

Shelter benefits are provided to SIS clients that pay for shelter costs, about 82 per cent of all households that are on SIS. And the increased shelter rates per month will be as follows: for singles in Regina or Saskatoon, \$675; the remainder of the province, 615. Couples without children in Regina or Saskatoon, 865; the remaining part of the province, 750. Families with one to two children will be 1,105; the remainder of the province, 860. And for families with three children or more, 1,287 for Regina and Saskatoon; and for the remainder of the province, that number is 965.

**Erika Ritchie:** — Okay. I appreciate that clarification. There's been one point I've been a little bit confused by in terms of the housing benefit. Do those on SIS or SAID qualify for the housing benefit?

[17:15]

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — So SIS clients, when it comes to the Saskatchewan housing benefit, the two streams that they would qualify for for support again in are the supportive housing stream and the seeking safety stream. I outlined that in my remarks. It's an increase this year in the supportive housing stream of 40 per cent. And then we're doubling the benefit in the seeking safety stream.

So as an example, in the supportive housing stream, a one-bedroom would be \$315 per month. A two-bedroom would be \$385 per month. And the three-bedroom benefit would be \$455 per month. In the seeking safety stream that amount will be, for a one-bedroom, \$450 a month. Two-bedroom is \$550 a month. And for three bedrooms, \$650 per month.

**Erika Ritchie:** — So rent of a one-bedroom apartment in Saskatchewan has risen 26 per cent over the last three years. Would you say that these increases are adequate to address those increases?

**Richelle Bourgois:** — When we're looking at the shelter benefit for the Saskatchewan income support program what we're really trying to do is look at what opportunities exist, both in the basic shelter benefit within the program, but then to use all of the resources that are available. And so where we see clients who are living outside of Saskatoon, as an example, there is more flexibility for those individuals through the social housing portfolio, using programs like the Saskatchewan housing benefit

that are benefits that stack on top of the Saskatchewan income support shelter benefit. But at the same time we also understand that the Saskatchewan income support program is a safety net program that's truly designed to have individuals transition in and through the program to independence and employment.

And so what we see with our clients who are in the Saskatchewan income support benefit is oftentimes where clients are seeking opportunities for roommates, living with extended family, living in supportive housing environments that have been made available through the Ministry of Health or through the Ministry of Social Services. And so application into the Saskatchewan income support program doesn't necessarily equate with the ability to live independently in Saskatoon, but rather to be able to look at what opportunities align with that individual program case plan that has been developed in partnership with the ministry to understand what those independence goals look like.

So what we really try and do is pathfind using all of the resources that are available, both within this ministry and our partner ministries and agencies, to try and arrive at the outcome that the individual has determined to be that goal.

**Erika Ritchie:** — So I guess I wonder then on what sort of average a recipient would be on a SIS or SAID program? Sorry let me say that again. What is the average length of time that a recipient will be on the program? And what is the mean? You know, little bit of a breakdown on the highs and the low rates as well.

Because as I understand it, you know, I think that there are those who can kind of flow in, flow out and be on their way. But you know, there's that portion that needs intensive supports to see that kind of a transition occur. And I'd like to understand what proportion that would be.

**Julene Restall:** — Okay, so within the Saskatchewan income support program, as I mentioned earlier, we have a service level screening tool which we actually make any client or any new applicant that's coming onto our program complete to really align the services we offer with that individual, to the level of service they're requiring.

So we have our SLS [service level screening] 1s. Those are really expected to be short-term individuals that are going to be on our caseload for a really short period of time. For example, they just have lost their job and they're going to be able to be very highly employable in the near future.

We also have our SLS 2s. So our SLS 2s are individuals that we actually directly refer to Immigration and Career Training and Career Services. So we've worked really closely with ICT [Immigration and Career Training] to ensure that those individuals get that job placement support because they have very few barriers to employment and we want to make sure that they get tied to a career counsellor as soon as possible.

We actually have worked on that referral process over the last year to ensure that clients are aware of the requirement to actually engage with career services as part of their SIS individualized plan. And we've seen almost double our clientele automatically transferring over into the ICT stream to support individuals in finding that employment.

Our SLS 3s are people that have individual barriers, such as maybe child care or transportation or things like lack of ID [identification] or have past justice involvement. And those individuals are specifically put in contact with our planning and support specialists, so our regional workers, to have individualized conversations with them. And then our SLS 4s are really the individuals that are experiencing unfortunately chronic homelessness and those types . . . and maybe experiencing things like addictions.

So we have looked at our categories in which we support to ensure that we're providing the level of support and service to those individuals appropriately. The ministry has been looking at performance measures within our SIS program and one of them . . . In 2024 we started reporting on two additional SIS performance measures that were actually recommended by the Provincial Auditor. We looked at client recidivism and client tenure, so how long they were actually on our programs.

Based on the most recent analysis, SIS client recidivism, approximately 73 per cent of clients who left SIS between July and September 2025, they did not return to the program within 12 months. So that means that they've left the program and didn't reapply for that program over the one year. So that is 73 per cent over that time frame. That would mean that there's only about 27 per cent of our clients in that time frame that actually came back onto our SIS program.

For the second measure, approximately only 36 per cent of SIS's most employable clients and 38 per cent of the employment capacity — so those are the SLS 1s that are 36 per cent; the SLS 2s, that 39 per cent — who started on SIS between July and September 2025 remained on the program after one year.

So we are seeing people leave our program and actually stay in the labour market or not access our programs long term, which is really the purpose of the SIS program, which is to help people become self-sufficient to the best of their abilities and maintain alignment to the labour force and work because it is better off for the individuals in those situations.

**Erika Ritchie:** — Okay. Thank you very much for that response. I guess related to that I would like to transition to some other questions here. Do you have a way of tracking the most common causes of homelessness in Saskatchewan?

[17:30]

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — Well thank you for the question. So in terms of questioning individuals who are maybe coming to a shelter or coming to a warming centre, in terms of asking questions, you know, why are you, unsheltered or why are you on the streets, the definition of homelessness is extremely broad. And it varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, it varies from provider to provider. You know, you think of homelessness, it means somebody is sleeping on the street. For most people, that's what homelessness is. So there's some that consider homelessness to be somebody that's couch surfing or staying with a relative, or there's so many different variations of it.

So defining the cause, you know, defining what the trends are, the causes — very, very difficult. But what I will say is on a case-by-case basis that we have, you know, mobile outreach working

in shelters. We have, you know, lots of supports available in those shelters.

I'll just give you an example. It was less than two weeks ago. I was in Saskatoon at a shelter, and it was a Wednesday afternoon. The worker at the front counter was pretty ecstatic. She was pretty happy. I said, "So what's going on? You seem pretty happy." She says, "Well I just found another client a place to live." I said, "Really? That's great news." She says, "Yes, that's number five this week." And it was only Wednesday.

So we know that it's not so much, why are you homeless, or how did you end up here? The question is, how can we help you? So that's the short answer to maybe a longer question.

**Erika Ritchie:** — Are you able to draw any linkages between those who are unhoused and their ability to find affordable accommodation within the budget that's provided by Social Services?

**Richelle Bourgois:** — So if I can talk a little bit about what we hear from our clients who are seeking services either in shelters or in some of the drop-in services that are offered in some of our major centres. And what we know is the reasons those clients will seek services in a shelter are really varied.

And so it could be, for example, an individual who has entered Canada on a temporary resident permit and has subsequently claimed asylum — which doesn't necessarily equate to housing availability — and a delay in an issuing of a work permit while the asylum claim is being determined, to somebody who is fleeing interpersonal violence, to individuals who have lost employment, to somebody who is relying on a friend or family member to provide shelter no longer doing so. And then we see over-representation of individuals who are in active addiction who are also in our shelter system.

But specifically we have some statistics around the connection to homelessness correlated to clients who are served by the income assistance programs at the ministry. And we can go back to our former programs as well. And so Julene's going to talk a little bit about our housing stability metrics.

**Julene Restall:** — So one of the performance measures that we have recently introduced was actually looking at housing stability with benefits provided by the Saskatchewan income support, or the SIS program, compared to the Saskatchewan assistance program, or SAP program, which was our prior program.

On average, 12 per cent of SAP clients moved two or more times a year between 2015 and 2018. Since SAP closed in 2021, we've only seen actually 6 per cent of SIS clients move more than two times a year. So that's actually shown that we've actually had more housing stability on our SIS program than we did actually experience under our SAP program.

**Erika Ritchie:** — Would you be able to share those statistics with us and table them for the committee? Okay. That would be great. I'd like to ask about the support that the ministry is providing to those clients that had been formally served by programming at Prairie Harm Reduction. If you could tell us please what programs those are, and how many people, where

they're being redirected, and any other details on that, please.

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — Thanks for the question. So the Ministry of Social Service, we've provided services within the child and family programs area. It's important to note this is a government that believes in the recovery-oriented system of care. And within the ministry and helping young people, as well as families, through different crises, this is something that we take extremely seriously.

And so when this happened, we were able to move very quickly in this space to ensure that the clients that Prairie Harm had been supporting, we were able to transition really quickly. And the person I'm going to turn this over to is my assistant deputy minister of child and family programs because it was through her division they did some incredible work.

So I'll just turn it over to Tobie.

**Tobie Eberhardt:** — Tobie Eberhardt, assistant deputy minister for child and family programs.

So we had seven youth that were residing in the two semi-independent resources that Prairie Harm Reduction was operating. And we worked with those seven youth to find other spaces that we contract other CBOs to provide. So we worked with those youth to try to find what best fit with their case plan. So they're all in other resources that we fund.

And then we also funded Prairie Harm Reduction to provide a family support program, and they were working with a number of families through that. And those families have been referred to other family support programs that are operated in Saskatoon. We fund a number of organizations to deliver that type of a service.

**Erika Ritchie:** — I don't think I quite understand. Maybe you could provide a little more detail on what you mean by family support programs and what services they're receiving, through what organizations.

**Tobie Eberhardt:** — So we fund a number of community-based organizations across the province to deliver what we call family support programs. So when a family has been found to have protection concerns, our primary focus is always to try and mitigate the risk in the home, put in supports so the children can safely remain with their parents. And those programs could be anywhere from someone's going into the home on a regular basis; it could be that they're working with the family around what the protection concerns are. So they would have employees of those CBOs that work directly with the families around what the case plan might be.

And so Prairie Harm was delivering that type of a program. We also find it in Saskatoon. STC [Saskatoon Tribal Council] delivers a program like that. Haven delivers a program like that. CUMFI delivers a program like that. So that's where they work with the families, based on what the case plan is that's developed by the caseworker. And they're in the home, based on the frequency of the case plan and the risk that might be there for the children.

**Erika Ritchie:** — And so how are the costs for those services

being met for those individuals?

**Tobie Eberhardt:** — So for Prairie Harm Reduction, we had provided them full funding for the month of April. And they provided us notice on April 7th that they were going to be ending that service, which was ended on April 9th.

So we've entered into contracts on a fee-for-service basis with other providers to deliver that service, what the contract amount was we were providing Prairie Harm.

**Erika Ritchie:** — Okay. Are any of those families staying in hotels?

**Tobie Eberhardt:** — No, not to my knowledge.

**Erika Ritchie:** — Okay. All right.

**Richelle Bourgoin:** — I'll just say, Prairie Harm Reduction, those families that were being served were not being served in the Prairie Harm housing program. That was the intensive in-home support program. And so while Prairie Harm did work with housing providers across the province, the dissolution of their organization doesn't impact the housing stability of clients that were being served.

**Erika Ritchie:** — Okay. Well I do want to ask also about sort of the wider implications of the shutting down of PHR [Prairie Harm Reduction]. There's, you know, been increases in number of individuals presenting at St. Paul's Hospital. We've had increased incidences of, you know, first responders from the city of Saskatoon, fire protective services, etc.

I would like to understand the role that your ministry is taking in addressing those acute needs and increased needs by those who previously were being supported by PHR in the various ways. And any kind of collaborations that you're also undertaking with the city of Saskatoon.

[17:45]

**Richelle Bourgoin:** — The Ministry of Social Services provided funding for three programs with Prairie Harm, and those were all related to the mandate of child and family services within the ministry. Specific to fire protective services, mental health, and addictions, those are services that would be funded through the Ministry of Health budget.

**Erika Ritchie:** — Okay. I guess I was just trying to see perhaps . . . I mean I imagine that a number of the clientele would also be SIS and SAID recipients, perhaps needing housing, and if you were making any additional efforts to address the needs of those individuals.

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — So to get to the answer on that, I think it's important to realize that when we're talking about individuals who are maybe in the throes of addiction or having some mental health challenges, it's really important that we have individuals on the street, you know, through outreach services and things like that to meet those individuals where they are.

And that's something that this ministry does through our provincial approach to homelessness. We have agreements with

Saskatoon Tribal Council using, you know, the outreach teams with sawêiyhtotân. They're out. They know where these individuals are. They're able to provide some supports where those individuals are and able to help navigate them to, you know, maybe it's the Ministry of Social Services for income support. It might be for housing. If it's an individual that's in the throes of addiction, then it will be a different type of service that sawêiyhtotân would be able to do that outreach on.

But I'm going to defer this one over to Richelle because I think she's got some very good information when it comes to how this ministry interacts with other ministries, as well as our municipal partners in this space.

**Richelle Bourgoïn:** — Thank you. So, specifically in the last number of weeks, we have increased the mobile outreach presence with the Saskatoon Tribal Council in the 20th Street corridor to be able to most effectively serve individuals in need, particularly as we transition seasonally between our overnight services and our day services and our programs that will be coming online early in May.

We have also started to work directly with service providers in the 20th Street corridor to identify specifically the needs of the clients who may have the ability to be supported by Social Services. And so we have increased the number of locations where we're providing mobile income assistance services. The ministry has also added housing navigator positions to be able to connect individuals who are seeking service, and I'll use the example of the Saskatoon Community Clinic.

For example, as recently as Thursday, they really talked about how the Ministry of Social Services can play an important role in supporting clients who may not be in active addiction but may just need a little bit of help or assistance in seeking independent housing or supportive housing in any number of our programs, whether that's supported independent living in the disability programs or working with partners like the Saskatoon Tribal Council in the Kotawān housing project, or one of the CUMFI, the Central Urban Métis Federation's housing programs that are supported.

And so really trying to ensure that, to the extent that they're capable, that our partners in the 20th Street corridor have access points into the ministry to be able to mitigate some of the administrative pressure that they're feeling, in addition to the front-line service they're providing.

And then we work with the city of Saskatoon virtually on a daily basis to understand what their vision and what their plan is for the city more broadly, but specifically in acute situations where we know in the summer that we see an increase in overdoses and how the Ministry of Social Services can support the programs around that.

Obviously, that's specific to the mandate of mental health and addictions, but there are intersections and interventions that the ministry can bring to the table.

**Erika Ritchie:** — Yeah, absolutely. A lot of intersections there between the two. And I would like to know how you're tracking or monitoring success in terms of the number of clients that you're reaching out to through some of those navigators that you

mentioned, and other outreach workers, just to get a sense of sort of the scale and the scope of what you're dealing with there.

**Richelle Bourgoïn:** — So specifically the navigation and mobile teams are a new approach for the ministry and so we're establishing baseline data. And we would expect to be able to report back on metrics more effectively a year from now. So these are services that we're just introducing into the community.

But anecdotally we're hearing very positive response and we base that on, you know — as recently as our meetings in Saskatoon Thursday, Friday — a real desire from community partners to have that level of engagement because they've experienced success in mitigating some of the risks to clients where we are currently providing service.

And I think, you know, speaking about the individual success that can be realized when we case plan in a really meaningful way with our community partners and within our ministry, I'll use the example of the gentleman who we'll call Dave, who came in to one of our programs, a community-led program on a cold day in the fall. And Dave was experiencing homelessness. He was being served by St. Mary's, so overnight drop-in centre in Saskatoon.

His barriers to housing were minimal. But he was quickly assessed on a Thursday, supported by the Saskatoon Tribal Council throughout the weekend, and on Monday was able to move in to housing supported by disability programs through the Supported Independent Living Program; and at last check-in I think was receiving five hours of service a week.

And so what that tells us is that when we can bring our community partners together with the clients that they know best, they can identify the supports and interventions that the Ministry of Social Services can bring to the table to ensure that we have a very tailored and specific approach for those clients.

And I think based on the feedback that we're hearing from our community partners, the real advantage in having our teams integrated on the front line with community service teams is being able to be so specific because we endeavour — particularly in our services where we are serving clients directly — to provide assessment classifications that will help us pathfind.

But what we know with homelessness is that it may not be linear. And so we have to have that flexibility within our services. And working with our community-based partners to do that in tandem with our client, understanding their goals and objectives, has been very favourable in the last number of months.

**Erika Ritchie:** — I'm pleased to hear that you've been interacting and working with partners across the spectrum on addressing that acute situation that we're experiencing right now in Saskatoon. You know, I do travel through that part of Saskatoon. It's quite concerning and alarming to see the increased number of individuals that are, you know, visible on the street in a very desperate situation. You know, we hear reports of them presenting, like I said, at the hospital. Just a lot of chaos and concern for the individuals who are in such a vulnerable situation.

A while back, Mr. Minister, you had committed to visiting Frances Morrison Library. And I've been able to sort of

experience first-hand the challenges that they face there. Can you tell me, have you been able to visit Frances Morrison, and if not, what your plans are for that.

**Chair Keisig:** — Would the member of the committee please advise the committee on how that question ties into the budget deliberations that we are actively pursuing this evening?

**Erika Ritchie:** — I think it ties directly to the funding that the Ministry of Social Services provides to various programs including those that are offered at Frances Morrison.

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — Sure, I'll be more than happy. Yes, I have been to Frances Morrison Library actually and able to meet with the executive director, the board Chair, as well as another couple of senior leadership team from Frances Morrison. Also was able to have the Minister of Community Safety join us virtually. And we also had Tribal Chief Mark Arcand with us from Saskatoon Tribal Council.

We were able to discuss the whole approach to what the community safety looks like inside and outside the library. We were able to . . . You know, Minister Weger and I were able to give the library leadership a view of where things are with the province externally to the libraries. And keep in mind there's two — Frances Morrison as well as the one in Riversdale, Freda Ahenakew Library.

And then the library were able to share with us an action plan that they had actually put in place about a year ago to address the safety and security concerns, for not only the workers inside the library but also the patrons and visitors. And I believe it was . . . To my recollection and to my knowledge, they haven't had a single incident in that year.

So they were actually quite wondering why we were even having the meeting, why I was even being asked to do this. But we thought it was a good thing to do, and it was actually very good because I know Tribal Chief Arcand and the library leadership were able to have a very good discussion about peacekeepers and the role that peacekeepers, that Saskatoon Tribal Council are able to train and be able to offer those services to community facilities such as libraries.

The peacekeepers are not your traditional security guard. They're not uniformed. But they are there to . . . You know, they're Indigenous. They're able to instantly connect with some of maybe the individuals that shouldn't be in a library for whatever reason.

So it was a very good discussion that we had at Frances Morrison Library. And the leadership of the library were very happy to have not only myself but Minister Weger as well.

**Erika Ritchie:** — If we've still got a little bit more time to go I'll maybe just add some follow-up questions on that. I know that, you know, the library itself has reconfigured. They have fewer stacks, a lot more open spaces, a lot more security personnel at the entrance. And it is, you know, an absolutely different feel walking into that library from, you know, what I recall bringing my own kids there for Pooh Corner when they were small.

Did they mention anything to you about, you know, how their

patron visitation rates have changed over the last 5 to 10 years?

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — Nothing in terms of patron rates. But they did outline a lot of the improvements they've made in terms of having better sight lines around the library. Improvements to the washrooms, so you know, the individuals that are needing to use the washroom, they're monitored from the time they go in to the time they come out.

In terms of the security at the front door, you know, I was at the library probably four years ago to speak at a citizenship ceremony and there was a security guard at the door at that time. So I don't think the addition of security at the front door is necessarily a new thing, but it's the improvements that they've made.

And they spoke to their staff. They spoke to their patrons. And when they came out with their plan on improving the safety in the library, it's paying dividends now is what we were told.

**Chair Keisig:** — Well, being 6 o'clock, we will stand adjourned till . . . We will stand recessed. I apologize. We are not adjourning. We are recessing till 7 p.m. I will see everyone back here at 7 p.m. Thank you, everyone.

[The committee recessed from 17:59 until 19:00.]

**Chair Keisig:** — Welcome back, committee members. We will now resume considerations of the '26-27 estimates and '25-26 supplementary estimates no.2 for the Ministry of Social Services. I recognize MLA ChiefCalf.

**April ChiefCalf:** — Thank you. Okay, well welcome back, everyone, and again just want to thank you for being here this evening. I know it's a long stretch, five hours for estimates in one evening.

And I just want to acknowledge too that I worked in a women's shelter for just shy of two years as a casual and a part-time, and it was the hardest job I've ever had, partly because of the issues that I was faced with in that job but also because in the downtime I had to figure out how to fix toilets and do things that I wasn't mechanically inclined to do as well. So it was challenging on a lot of different levels, but it made me really grateful for the work that people do in our province to help the most vulnerable people amongst us. So again thank you for being here.

I'm going to ask a couple of questions that I did ask last year. I never got responses to them. Some of them were very detailed, and people weren't able to answer them on the spot last year, so I'm hoping that maybe if I ask them again I'll get some answers to them. And my questions are pretty much related to housing. I've organized everything into themes. So we're going to start with Saskatchewan Housing Corporation.

So my first question is — and this is one that I didn't get a response to last year — was how many government-owned housing units did we have in 2020? And then I would like to know how many government-owned housing units we have as of today. And I noted in *Hansard* from last year the total was 17,428. So how many do we have today versus how many did we have in 2020?

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — So the answer to that question is in 2020, 17,696. And 2026, the number is 17,196.

**April ChiefCalf:** — So it's gone down since last year.

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — Over the past six years, yes.

**April ChiefCalf:** — Okay. And then I'm trying very hard to do this without putting my glasses on, so bear with me. In last year's estimates, you noted that the number of vacant units was trending downwards from 20 per cent in 2021 to 12.7 per cent in 2025. How many units in the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation stock are currently vacant? And how many of those units are vacant because they need repair?

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — Okay, so as of December 2025, we have 830 units that require no repairs and are available right now for new tenants to move into. And we have 878 units around the province that require typical minimal repairs, and these units are in the process of being repaired and are expected to become available for tenants within the next 30 days. That would be, after somebody moves out, cleaning, carpets shampooed, that kind of thing. And then we have 257 units that are in need of extensive repairs that are expected to take longer than 30 days.

**April ChiefCalf:** — Perfect, thank you so much. My husband used to be the guy that cleaned up places when people moved out. So he had the whole checklist. He knew exactly what was required, and yeah, sometimes you run into surprises, don't you.

Okay, and then through a freedom of information request last year, one of our staff members got a really lovely detailed list of the housing stock in Saskatchewan, vacancy rates, etc. And it was broken down by client group, location, and social versus affordable, and family versus senior. And I'm just wondering if we could get another one, because that was from December of 2024, if we could get another one that's more current as well.

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — Yeah, we don't have that information available right now, but we will endeavour to get you those stats as quickly as possible.

But I should also note that — and I believe it started today — so for the first time in Saskatchewan Housing Corporation's existence . . . So social housing is available in communities right across the province, offering safe and affordable places to live for low-income families, seniors, and persons with disabilities; Saskatchewan Housing Corporation now on the website is able to report these numbers. So occupancy and vacancy rates are changing as tenants move out and new tenants move in. Work is under way to increase the availability of that housing across the province.

So on the website that is live right now, you'll be able to find social housing occupancy and vacancy rates for Saskatchewan as well as the four major cities — Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, and Moose Jaw — as of December 25th, 2025. And these numbers are going to be updated twice yearly.

**April ChiefCalf:** — That's good to hear. Thank you so much. So in the next budget year, or in 2026, how many social and affordable housing units directly owned by SHC [Saskatchewan Housing Corporation] do you expect to sell, transfer, or

demolish?

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — So the ministry, we don't budget or forecast or plan divestitures or demolitions or anything like that. Everything is done on an as-needs basis. It's related to a better-use policy that the ministry has.

So if we have, in town A, a unit that hasn't been needed by the community, the community — well the municipal council — has the first right to buy that and then use it for their own purposes. And if they defer to that, then we will sell it on the market and then take the proceeds, put those proceeds back into housing where the housing is actually needed. And so it helps pay for things like that.

In the better-use policy that we have, we're continually evaluating our portfolio to ensure the rental units are meeting the changing needs of people with low to moderate incomes. The demographics and housing needs of Saskatchewan people have changed since the 1970s and '80s, when a lot of these social housing units were built. And so by selling the units that aren't serving the needs of Saskatchewan communities any longer, the housing corporation can then reduce its ongoing operating costs and increase the funds that are available to maintain the units that are in demand or construct new ones.

**April ChiefCalf:** — Thank you. Yeah, I definitely noticed when I saw that very detailed list that there's senior housing units that are vacant in really, really small towns. And I can see why those maybe aren't going to be used and there could be alternative purposes for it. Yeah.

Okay, now I know that in your introduction you did outline some of this next question, but I couldn't write fast enough to get all the details down. So let's see if you think you might want to add something to that or if you want me just to go back to *Hansard*. But I'm wondering, how many new Saskatchewan Housing Corporation units were constructed last year? And where they are located?

[19:15]

**Kim Hornung:** — Good evening. I'm Kim Hornung. I'm the executive director of homelessness services with Sask Housing in the housing division. So through the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, since 2022 we've constructed a total of 36 units. Of those, four are currently under construction. We're also working with disability programs to construct group homes across the province. Right now we're working on 10 different projects for a total of 47 units.

**April ChiefCalf:** — Are you able to say which communities the houses are located in?

**Kim Hornung:** — Specifically the SHC social housing units? Yeah, for sure. So there are four units constructed in Saskatoon in 2025, six units in Regina, four units in Air Ronge, two units in Creighton, two units in Martensville, 12 units in Prince Albert. And under construction, there's two units in Ile-a-la-Crosse and two units in Denare.

**April ChiefCalf:** — Thank you so much.

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — So that's on the SHC side. On the rental development program, which is another piece to the social and supportive housing areas . . . I'm just trying to read a chart here real quick. So I might have to get . . . Do you know how to read this chart?

**Kim Hornung:** — Yes.

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — Okay. I'm trying to make sense of it, but I'll let Kim go through it because she's got the technical know-how on this.

**Kim Hornung:** — All right. So the rental development program is the program that funds third-party housing construction. So since 2007, 85 units have been or are currently under construction, and . . . Sorry, I read that wrong. There's 3,518 units complete, there's 85 units currently under construction, and we're working in the planning phase with 96 units for a total of 3,699 units.

**April ChiefCalf:** — You just anticipated my next question. It's just a little ways down here. I had, what was the 5 million in the rental development program used for last year and was it all spent? So the 99 that you just mentioned, is that in Saskatoon? Or the one that you just mentioned is the most recent?

**Kim Hornung:** — It is the most recent that includes projects across the province and it could be from the last commitment of 5 million. Some of those projects might be under construction and some of them might be under planning.

**April ChiefCalf:** — Okay, thanks. I'm going to ask some questions about seniors and housing. Okay, so we are still hearing from seniors in Saskatchewan Housing Corporation-owned senior buildings that they feel unsafe. And I want to be careful how I frame this because I've met with some seniors and spoken with them about why they feel unsafe and I do understand their concerns. I also don't want to be disparaging anybody that might be living in or accessing the building that's making them feel unsafe. Everybody has their own circumstances and why they're in those situations.

One senior, their concern is that the designated smoking area outside the building was moved and they're basically smoking in a back alley now — downtown Regina — and that they don't feel safe. Now I haven't driven by that complex to see it for myself, but that was just one of the concerns that was brought to me. And you know, we hear other things about maybe doors not being secure. So just wondering what measures the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation is taking to ensure the security of seniors in these facilities.

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — So this is something that I as a minister take extremely seriously. I've got parents that are seniors, and I would want nothing but the best and the most secure place for them to live as well if they were in one of our seniors' units or seniors' complexes.

To that, I did spend some time at King Edward in Saskatoon and I also spent some time at Scott/Forget Towers as well, because both of those had been identified as having some safety concerns. So I took it upon myself to take some ministry staff with me and visited both of those complexes to see for myself what, you

know, what the concerns were.

And I also happened to have Roger Parenteau with me, who's seated beside me. And what I'm going to do is I'm just going to let Roger walk through the processes that we have when we have residents that maybe feel that there needs to be some improvements in terms of safety, and go through some of our policy with regards to that.

**Roger Parenteau:** — Thank you, Minister. Good evening. Roger Parenteau, executive director of housing operations with the housing corporation. Yes, concerns by seniors has been raised a number of times to our housing authorities, and we have certainly taken a lot of different measures to try to address their safety concerns.

Security cameras has been one of the measures that we've been taking, and there's been a lot of security cameras that have been installed in our exterior accesses to entrances to all of our buildings in Saskatoon and in Regina. I can say that all 14 buildings in Regina and I think the 12 senior buildings in Saskatoon all have security cameras at the exterior entrances, so a measure that we have taken for that.

Another measure we have taken is locking the doors at a certain time at night so that individuals can't get access to the suites. So when they're getting buzzed in . . . So they can't get a blind buzz-in. And individuals coming into the buildings that are not either company or residents of the building.

Other measurements that I would have taken are fobbing our elevators. The tenants have key fobs, elevator fobs so that they're the only ones that can access the elevators into the floor that they need to get up to.

And the other thing that we were really having a lot of conversations with the tenants is some tenant education about exactly the information about, you know, watch out for each other. Don't let individuals that are not part of the building — not a tenant or coming to visit — into the building.

So those are the kind of measurements that we've been taking to try to address safety concerns for our seniors.

**April ChiefCalf:** — Thank you. Okay, and as you know, we had a couple of seniors come to the legislature last week telling their stories about they're being asked to relocate. So why are individuals 55 and over who are living in Saskatchewan Housing Corporation units being told that they have to move to senior-only buildings?

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — So thanks for the question. So Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, we're always evaluating our inventory and evaluating our social housing program as a whole. As time goes on, things evolve across the province. And trying to get the right number and the right mix of housing for families, seniors, non-senior singles within affordable housing is a challenge. And there's unique needs and demands from each community. And we understand the day-to-day work to adjust that portfolio to meet the local demand by the housing authorities is work that, you know, we thank them for, and it's important work.

I was able to meet with the two tenants last week. We had some very good discussions about what is happening. And so I've directed the ministry to take a look at our portfolio management processes. You know, the work is happening, and while this is happening, we're saying we're not going to require any seniors to relocate to equivalent units while this work is being undertaken.

At the same time, if there is a senior that wishes to relocate into a seniors-designated complex, because there are some benefits to being in one of those complexes in one of those units, they're more than welcome to. And we'll support them with that transition. But for the time being, while we're reviewing this policy and trying to determine best next steps for everybody involved — not just the housing corporation or the housing authority but also the tenants — they're going to be able to stay where they are.

So we're going to continue to work with the housing authorities across the province and looking at ways of maximizing the utilization of the portfolio, recognizing that there are non-senior singles that require housing, specifically in Regina, where we have excess senior inventory, recognizing that we have that challenge that the Regina Housing Authority has been working very hard to address those needs. But that's conversations that we're going to keep having in terms of what the next steps will be.

**April ChiefCalf:** — Thank you. So there's an increase in the budget this year from last year. Can you explain how the increased funding will be allocated?

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — Are you talking just the housing line in general?

**April ChiefCalf:** — Yes.

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — Okay.

**Brittany Csada:** — Good evening. My name is Brittany Csada, and I'm the assistant deputy minister of housing and the president and CEO of Sask Housing Corporation.

So in '26-27, SHC will receive a provincial budget contribution of 83.275 million, and this is an increase of 9.5 million from the previous year. This increase is primarily due to new funding announcements for the Saskatchewan housing benefit as well as increases to the investments around homelessness services.

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — So the housing benefit increase for the base benefit will be 20 per cent. On the supportive stream — and I outlined these in my opening remarks — 40 per cent. And then a 100 per cent increase for the seeking safety stream for women and children that are fleeing domestic violence.

**April ChiefCalf:** — In the 2024-25 annual report, it's noted that 100 new supportive housing spaces were created in Saskatoon and Regina. And then I think tonight you noted that there are now 155. What kind of services are provided in these supportive housing units?

[19:30]

**Brittany Csada:** — So supportive housing covers a range of services, and it really depends on the clients' level of acuity in terms of what services they receive. But these could be things like life skills, budgeting, or money management skills. It could be support for health outcomes of individuals. It could be around managing addictions if that's something that individuals need, and all the way up to supporting recovery. So it really just depends on the unique needs of those in the supportive housing.

**April ChiefCalf:** — Thank you very much. Housing capital in 2025-2026, so it was budgeted that there would be 14.2 million spent. But as of the third quarter, only five point million was spent.

So I'm wondering if this is related to those renovations for the complexes in Westview Place, I think it's Prairie Place, and Bryant Place. So I heard in the media presentation the one day that there was a delay on Prairie Place, but I'm just wondering if those two aren't connected. And if you can just update on the renovations in those three complexes and on the money that was budgeted in '25-26. Has it all been spent or . . .

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — So the 14.2 million that you're referring to, you're right, these are what we affectionately know as the place projects. There's Westview Place, Prairie Place, and Bryant Place. So in the last year's budget, these would have been multi-year capital projects. So in terms of the dollars being allocated that there'd be, it'd be staged as the projects move. So you know, whatever the expenditure was in '25-26, the dollars are still there to keep those projects moving through '26-27 as well, in addition to whatever other new projects we have for renovations and repairs.

You know, I should note, in '26-27 budget, two and a half million dollars to continue the multi-year repair projects in Saskatoon and P.A. Westview Place will get \$2 million to continue the major repairs and renovations, and there's 44 units in that complex for large families. Bryant Place in Prince Albert will receive \$540,000 to replace and repair the major building components, and there's 87 family units in that complex.

And initial work started earlier this year to prepare Prairie Place in Regina for that renovation work that's there. As the contractors began that work, there was some unexpected deficiencies that were discovered. So as a result, right now the construction activities have been temporarily paused to allow a more fulsome and thorough review of an assessment of what's happening within the walls of that building. As you know, you open up something and you start finding things. And that's where we're at with Prairie Place, unfortunately. But we are committed to getting that work done as soon as we can possibly get it done.

**April ChiefCalf:** — Thank you. I'm going to move on to my second theme which is to talk about homelessness, or preferably houselessness. I've been doing a lot of visits in different communities with different stakeholders, and one of the things that I found really striking that I never thought about before was when I visited Square One in Moose Jaw. And they don't receive any provincial funding.

And I know there is a shelter space that's funded in Moose Jaw provincially, but Square One does some pretty amazing work there as well. And they said, you know, that it's really hard to get

funding for houselessness in rural areas. And he considered Moose Jaw rural. I consider it a city. It's my birthplace actually. But it made me think about that, about expanding the PATH program to other communities.

I was pleased to hear at SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] last week your team talking about they're going to speak with folks from La Ronge. I don't know if you were able to have that meeting, but again, La Ronge is . . . I lived there for 20 years and I know what a struggle it is in La Ronge to provide services to vulnerable people.

So you know, what are the options of expanding that PATH program to provide more funding to accommodate rural communities, northern communities, to provide shelters and supports for unhoused people in those communities?

**Richelle Bourgoin:** — The provincial approach to homelessness does give opportunity for communities outside of Saskatoon, Regina, and Prince Albert to also make submissions and participate in the funding of services for individuals experiencing homelessness for things like supportive housing.

And recently we've been working very closely with our federal colleagues to try and streamline the funding opportunities — because it can be difficult for partners to navigate — so that there's a single point of entry into the system, so that community-based partners who are delivering these services have a more clear line of sight into how they can receive funding, preferably with some predictability.

And so what we know about some of the federal funding envelopes is they're limited — one year in duration — and that's difficult for our partners to plan. So we've been working on how we can really help pathfind through the funding envelopes that are available, at the same time thinking about how we support the client. So traditionally we would be funding an organization to deliver service. Now we're looking at how can we support that client through their transition through the housing continuum.

And so the minister has spoken about the supportive housing stream of the Saskatchewan housing benefit. It's an excellent example. So we can use the increase that the individual receives for the shelter benefit to ensure that organizations are supported to deliver those services.

**April ChiefCalf:** — Thank you. Okay, so I don't want to be taken as belligerent in this next question, but we've had debate in question period in the legislature, and one of the points of debate has been over the cause of houselessness. So I'm going to make some reference to some reports here.

So the 2024 point-in-time count report that came out, you know, they collected the data in October, and then they released some numbers in December. And then they released some numbers again, I think, in February or March. They didn't actually release the full report until the end of May. And so when they were releasing these numbers bit by bit by bit, there was one number that they released that . . . I believe it said 82 per cent of people identified having a substance use disorder that are unhoused.

And it's really important to be careful about confusing cause and effect and correlation. So absolutely there's a correlation

between substance use and houselessness. Having met and talked to some individuals, I would argue that sometimes what we think comes first is actually what comes second. And I know people who end up unhoused and they start using as a way of coping with that, so the addiction comes after the houselessness.

And so with the PIT report, that point-in-time report that came out from Saskatoon — and I do need my glasses here — so under health challenges, there were people that listed a substance use disorder, but they also listed mental health, chronic illness, cognitive limitations, acquired brain injury, and hearing and visual issues, as well as physical limitations, as health challenges.

And then another section of that report lists the cause of housing lost as reported eviction, and the second cause was insufficient income. So I think you know where I'm going with this. Only 19.6 per cent of people interviewed in that point-in-time count said that they were actually evicted because of their substance use.

And similarly the PIT report from Regina found that 50 per cent of people identified the cost of rent as the problem for getting housing and maintaining housing. And 55 per cent said it was the income being too low that was the cause of homelessness. So I think that there's numerous reasons why people may find themselves unhoused. But what is the government doing to address factors outside of addictions or mental health that are causing people to become unhoused and to keep them housed?

[19:45]

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — So I think one of the big things when it comes to homelessness is on the prevention side and especially working with young people who, if we don't pay attention to that, they're the next ones that will be going through that experience. And that's something that we're working very hard to keep that from happening.

To that end, we have youth advisory teams in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert. Once a year they meet and several ministers meet with them and we get to hear their ideas. We get to interact with them. And they're a wonderful group of young people who are able to provide that lived experience to us and along with suggestions.

And one of those suggestions that came from the Regina Youth Advisory Team that was absolutely amazing was their idea for a transition home for youth coming out of care, turning of age, needing that intermediate place to be before they're truly out on their own.

So we opened a new 10-unit transitional home for young people coming out of care here in Regina. We opened that up . . . it would have been, I guess, last fall. We've been opening a lot of things lately. But this one in Regina provides these youth that are coming out of care with life skills.

And you know, they may not have had the ability to learn, you know, the simplest things that you and I might take for granted — doing laundry, how to pay bills, how to even interact socially with roommates or others living under the same roof. So this was a project that turned out really well. And the YWCA is the organization that's running this transitional home.

And I think that's one key piece when we talk about homelessness in this province, is ensuring we're doing everything we can to prevent young people from becoming the next statistic in it and preventing them from appearing in PIT counts.

So that's one area of focus for me as the minister. But I know we do a lot of other things, whether it's in the supportive housing area or in trusteeship and money management and all those. And I'm going to turn this one back to Richelle because she works in these every day and is interacting with a lot of our partner organizations in this area.

**Richelle Bourgoin:** — Thank you, Minister. So in addition to the work that the ministry is doing to prevent the risk of homelessness for clients in service of the ministry, we also are looking for every opportunity through the provincial approach to homelessness to expand opportunities to connect clients throughout the housing continuum.

And so we have our emergency response system, which would be our emergency shelters, both basic and enhanced. We work with municipalities to deliver emergency services like overnight drop-in services, for example in inclement weather.

But we also have established systems in place to support clients individually, and so things like trustee and money management services that really allow clients to work with community-based organizations to help them build and manage their budget to avoid things like arrears in utility payments as an example.

We have our supportive housing programs that meet people where they're at. And so Brittany was speaking about it earlier, but we have really low-intervention supportive housing where individuals are building life skills — they're learning how to cook, for example, if that's not a skill that they have — to higher acuity where there's more medical intervention necessary, which is done in partnership with our colleagues at the Ministry of Health.

But within this ministry we also have our disability programs. We have the opportunity to connect clients into group homes, into group living environments, into supported independent living. We really focus on the assessment of clients and their needs and adapt the programs and services accordingly.

And so I'll talk about one client that we connected through one of the shelter systems in the province, and we'll call him Roger for the sake of the conversation. He was an older gentleman who was living independently. His wife had died. He had a low rate of literacy but had been employed most of his life, but didn't have the experience paying bills, filing income tax, some of those things that his partner had taken care of for him, and without family support, found himself in the shelter system.

So for somebody like Roger, for the assessment it's quite straightforward. And what Roger sought was an opportunity to have a community. And so in the case of Roger, our partner organization also delivers essentially a group living environment for senior older males, and really builds a strong community. And so collective group living, but independently with your own suite in a smaller, more controlled environment where there's a high degree of comfort.

And I use that example to illustrate the very specific and personal case management that's required to support people in crisis to find that stability. And it can look different for everybody.

**April ChiefCalf:** — Thank you. Okay, so just in the interest of time, I'm going to combine two questions into one. So we have heard repeatedly from front-line agencies that the transition from SAP to SIS and the termination of direct payment of rent from Social Services to landlords has had a detrimental effect on SIS clients, and has likely led to a number of people becoming unhoused.

And a May 2025 report from the Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership noted that “inadequacy of income assistance” has also led to housing insecurity and again that the termination of direct payment of rent to landlords has been tied to a growing number of evictions.

And then also in June of 2023, the Provincial Auditor recommended that the Ministry of Social Services “periodically analyze the overall causes of SIS client evictions and unpaid utilities.” So what steps has the ministry taken to act on the auditor's recommendation, and what were the findings of the analysis?

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — So direct pay of rent and utilities was not provided through the former transitional employment allowance, or the TEA program and optionally used under the Saskatchewan assistance program, SAP. The old programs of SAP and TEA weren't working. Clients and stakeholders told us they were outdated, too complex, and weren't helping clients become self-sufficient to the best of their abilities.

There's families in Saskatchewan who have been involved in income assistance for more than one generation. SIS was designed to help break that cycle in providing for basic needs while also helping individuals and families become self-sufficient to the best of their ability. We continue to work with our clients to help them move forward.

Under SAP clients never saw a utility bill. They didn't know how much utilities cost. Under SIS we want our clients, even the most vulnerable, to have ongoing conversations with a trustee or somebody from the ministry to understand their expenses and benefits so they can build the foundation for self-sufficiency in the future.

You know, to that end we have our trusteeships that are available to clients if they so wish. And you know, if the client wants that money management or that help, the ministry will be here to help them with that and we will help them get that trusteeship.

Our findings show that SIS clients today have more housing stability with benefits provided under Saskatchewan income support than the previous Saskatchewan assistance program. On average, 12 per cent of SAP clients moved two or more times per year between 2015 and 2018. Since SAP closed in 2021 only 6 per cent of SIS clients have moved two or more times per year.

The ministry has also conducted a qualitative analysis of a sample of cases where SIS clients faced eviction and found that less than 1 per cent of SIS clients — 228 in total out of 27,773 unique SIS clients from February 1st, 2022 to November 30th,

'22 — faced eviction through the Office of Residential Tenancies, or the ORT. The findings revealed that eviction pathways are complex, shaped by individual client factors.

Addiction and mental health issues among clients often lead to the behaviours that increase the risk of eviction. So I guess we're going to have to agree to disagree on this. But income is not the main driver of chronic homelessness.

Every province has its own income assistance model and none of those models has solved homelessness. The root causes of homelessness are complex and all levels of government, community leaders, and partners have a role to play in addressing it. The ministry is actively working with all levels of government, both federal as well as our municipal partners, as well as our Indigenous and community partners around the province to better support individuals who need more than a home to remain connected to housing.

**April ChiefCalf:** — Okay, I just have two more questions and then I'll hand it over to my colleague here. So with the compassionate intervention, or compassionate care Act, once that's implemented, will the Ministry of Social Services be working with Mental Health and Addictions to provide housing to people who come out of recovery? To me it doesn't make any sense to put people into recovery and then release them into the same circumstances that they were in before they, you know, went into recovery, if that circumstance is homelessness.

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — Yeah. And I would be very happy to answer that question because the answer is absolutely yes. To date, the Ministry of Social Services, along with other ministries in government — notably, Community Safety and Mental Health and Addictions — we've invested north of \$118 million so far when it comes to homelessness and mental health and addictions.

And everything is all related. So one of the things, when we talk about compassionate intervention, is we know that individuals . . . and even aside from compassionate intervention, we have individuals that are coming out of treatment, and we know the worst possible thing you can do for that individual is leave them isolated, leave them by themselves. That's when loneliness creeps in. We need to make sure that we have supports there for those individuals.

What that level of acuity looks like for each individual is going to be different. There's some that will be requiring a high degree of wraparound supports. There's going to be others that may not need near as much. But the short answer is yes, the Ministry of Social Services, along with our other partner ministries that have been working in this area very, very diligently, will continue that work.

And so when we look at the development of additional supportive housing, that's going to be the end goal, is to ensure that people coming out of recovery have a place to go where they have those wraparound supports. Absolutely, 100 per cent.

**April ChiefCalf:** — So my last question or two relates to the Saskatchewan housing benefit. So in 2023 the goal was to have 1,500 new households access the Saskatchewan housing benefit, but in actuality, there were 2,022 that accessed it. And I believe those were new households. And then in 2024 to 2025, your

target was 800 new households to access the benefit, but then actually you had 1,106.

So I'm just wondering, why do you think there were more people actually accessing the benefit than your original target?

[20:00]

**John Saltasuk:** — John Saltasuk. I'm the executive director of program and service design for the housing division. Yeah, so very happy to see the increases to the Saskatchewan housing benefit this year. And I would say, as many of my colleagues have alluded to this evening, one of the key points for us in continuing to increase that uptake is really continued efforts to connect people on the visibility of the SHB [Saskatchewan housing benefit].

So we often are relying on CBO partners to make those connections with people and make sure that they know that it's available to them, work with them in enrolling them. And as I say, we continue to see people coming on and off the program, but the uptake continues to grow, and we're quite pleased with it.

**April ChiefCalf:** — Yeah, and I know it's necessary for a lot of people to help them pay their rent. In the current plan your goal is 5,000 households. I wasn't sure if that meant a total or 5,000 new households.

**John Saltasuk:** — That would be 5,000 currently on the program.

**April ChiefCalf:** — Okay. So here's my concern: what's to stop landlords from just simply raising the rent when they know that their tenant is receiving these benefits? And I raise this point because last Friday there was an article in allSask news that Boardwalk is hiring somebody to lobby the provincial governments to raise Saskatchewan housing benefit and Alberta housing benefit. So you know, what's to stop the landlord from simply raising the rent, and then the tenant is in the same circumstances?

**John Saltasuk:** — So I would just say with regards to that, that is the market and we're not going to necessarily intervene. But at the same time this is private information. We deal with the client directly and not the landlords, so we would hope that that wouldn't be an instance of happening.

**April ChiefCalf:** — Thank you for your answers. That's all my questions for this evening, and I will hand it over to my colleague.

**Brittney Senger:** — Thank you so much. I'm going to just dive right in. Appreciate everyone being here tonight. My first handful of questions are in regards to the restructuring or changes to the Ministry of Social Services.

So as I was perusing online, I noticed that there are a number of changes that were listed just this past month. They include but are not limited to, under the income assistance delivery department there is now income assistance operational effectiveness, income assistance special projects, income assistance program design and operational policy. Under child and family programs there is program design, operational policy,

and standards; program effectiveness; quality improvement, which includes the quality assurance unit. And moving on, same is true in disability programs: program and service design, program design and operational policy, program effectiveness, and the quality assurance unit.

So my question is, what prompted the changes to the Ministry of Social Services?

**Richelle Bourgoin:** — The last substantive organizational redesign of the Ministry of Social Services was in 2009, but periodically we make changes. And those changes are driven by any number of things. So they can be, for example, the increase in the Saskatchewan housing benefit. So when that opportunity became available to us, we reorganized our team to be able to deliver that benefit in the housing division.

When we look at special projects for example, it might be as a result of, we're coming to the end of our income assistance redesign project, and how do we ensure that we're managing those changes internally by designating an emphasis on that work?

I think you talked about quality assurance. So having quality assurance in the disability programs is a recommendation of the auditor. So we really just shift focus. From time to time there will be new programs or services that are added to the Ministry of Social Services. A really specific emphasis on homelessness services would've been one of the more recent. And what we've done is re-prioritize existing work areas in the ministry to really try and meet that need.

So some things might fall off and some things might come on. And I'll use a recent example of a discussion around an unfilled FTE that had been at the ministry that was responsible for working with insurance on Saskatchewan Housing Corporation claims. That work is now being provided through the insurance provider, and so it's no longer necessary in the ministry, which allows us to repurpose the existing FTE for something that is a higher priority today.

**Brittney Senger:** — So, sorry, these changes in particular, am I hearing that this is because of the Saskatchewan housing benefit?

**Richelle Bourgoin:** — No.

**Brittney Senger:** — Predominantly? Sorry.

**Richelle Bourgoin:** — Sorry. Much of what you listed is not a change at the ministry. And so when you talk about those service areas, for example in child and family programs, those three primary what we would call branches under the division of child and family programs have not changed. But from time to time we will tweak some of the specific accountabilities and responsibilities of the employees within the ministry.

One example in the ministry of approximately 2,000 FTEs is that when the Saskatchewan housing benefit became a program that was delivered by the ministry, we reassigned FTEs to be able to deliver and administer that benefit in the housing division. But of the positions that you noted, I think that they are all existing positions and responsibilities that have been at the ministry for some time, with the potential exception of special projects. It's

been around.

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay, thank you. So just a follow-up question to that. I did notice that a number of employees listed on the Government of Saskatchewan website in these different departments or areas that I have listed are consultants. So out of curiosity, how many people are currently working for the Ministry of Social Services as consultants for any of the areas listed that I had previously outlined or in any other areas?

**Richelle Bourgoin:** — So the title is a bit of a misnomer. It is like saying "analyst." So the individuals that you will see on Saskatchewan.ca with the word "consultant" in their title, for example, portfolio management consultant, that is a public servant, a member of the Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union collective bargaining association who works in an in-scope role, providing services internally. And so while it has "consultant" in the title, it does not imply that they're an external consultant who's contracting to the ministry either in a permanent role or on a contract basis.

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay. Thank you. Why is the quality assurance unit responsible for both child and family programs and disability programs? And does this signal something to people with disabilities?

**Richelle Bourgoin:** — They're two separate operating groups. So they would have equivalent titles, but they're not the same people. So there's a quality assurance unit with a director and with policy analysts that support the work in disability programs. And then there is a separate and distinct unit, a group of additional FTEs that reports in in child and family programs, but they are not the same.

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay. Thank you. So as I was reviewing the two, I did notice that under quality assurance unit — again, now this could just be an error on the government's website — but I did notice that under child and family programming and disability programming, that the same staff were listed in the quality assurance unit. And so I was just curious as to whether or not that was a mishap on the government website or if it is an overlap in terms of roles.

**Richelle Bourgoin:** — So it is two very distinct groups of individuals who work in very different areas of the ministry. So, thank you. We will figure out what's going on with the directory.

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay. Thank you. From my understanding, the quality assurance unit for disability programming was actually launched in the 2024-2025 budget. And I believe it was actually announced in the . . . Sorry, maybe it was the 2024-2025 annual plan. Out of curiosity, why was the information only made public this month?

**Richelle Bourgoin:** — So the disability programs quality assurance unit was announced and made public as part of the budget, and it's been fully operational for more than a year.

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay, thank you. Then sorry, just again, if it's been fully operational, why was the information only published in April if it was operational?

**Richelle Bourgoin:** — So I'm not sure what you're referring to,

like where it would have been published, but it was part of our annual plan and it's certainly been part of our budget submission for more than a year.

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay. Sure, yeah, so that actually came out . . . I've got the documents in front of me. And bear with me. Maybe I will move on to my next question and can circle back to it, but it is up on the government's website, and it just came up this past month, so April 2026. I don't have the exact date because it was not published, but yes, April 2026, sorry.

How many people involved in the quality assurance unit actually experience a disability?

**Richelle Bourgoïn:** — So specifically in the disability programs, I wouldn't have that information available. Not everyone is required to self-declare at the Ministry of Social Services.

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay. What is considered a disability program?

**Joel Kilbride:** — Joel Kilbride, ADM [assistant deputy minister] of disability programs. So the programs that we offer in disability programs are primarily for adults with intellectual disabilities. That's the bulk of our caseload, but we do have broader disability programs too like benefit programs such as the autism spectrum disorder program, cognitive disability strategy, and family respite program. So those ones serve a broader disability group.

**Richelle Bourgoïn:** — And I would also just add that at our ministry, our disability programs take responsibility for advancing the work of the accessibility Act. So provincially the work . . . the accessibility office is also housed at the Ministry of Social Services and supports that work, both across government but across the province as well.

[20:15]

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay. On the note of the autism support, I'm curious as to how many people are accessing autism support and how many people are on the wait-list to access financial support.

**Joel Kilbride:** — That's a good question. There's currently 4,100 people accessing the ASD-IF [autism spectrum disorder individualized funding] program, and there's not a wait-list. We're processing applications as they come in, and they do take 30 to 60 days to process.

**Brittney Senger:** — So how will the increased funding for the autism program reduce wait times for testing children that may be autistic or . . . Yeah, how will it improve or reduce wait times for children that may be autistic?

**Jeff Redekop:** — Good evening. Jeff Redekop, executive director with disability programs service delivery. The question was, if I recall, to do with assessment and diagnosis for autism spectrum disorder. So in disability programs the assessment is not part of this ministry's work. So that would be done by practitioners in the health and psychological sector. The ASD-IF, or Autism Spectrum Disorder Individualized Funding, is a benefit program, and it requires people who apply to be assessed and diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay. So one thing that I often hear about is families who are referred by their child's school to perhaps go and get an autism diagnosis so they can access the individualized funding. One thing I hear about very often is that when they go to get a diagnosis, at say nine years old, they end up on a long wait-list to actually get that diagnosis to be able to access that individualized funding.

Is there anything being done to support families and children who are going through that process?

**Joel Kilbride:** — Yeah. Thanks for the question. That's really the responsibility of the Ministry of Health on the assessment side. We don't have budget for that or control over that.

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay. I'm jumping around a little bit here, so forgive me. I want to get through as many questions as possible with this short window of time. So I'm going to pop over and ask just a couple of short questions about the tax credits, so the disability tax credit and the caregiver tax credit. I understand that these are . . . that the federal government contributes to both of these programs. I was wondering if you could tell me, just a simple figure, how much the federal government is contributing to each program and if you could speak to what the funding agreement is.

**Richelle Bourgoïn:** — Both of those programs are administered by the Ministry of Finance in partnership with the Government of Canada. And so we're not in a position to provide any context.

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay, thank you. Okay. I want to pop back to the quality assurance unit for disability programming because this is something that is very new — at least to me — so I want to get a clear understanding. How is the quality assurance unit measuring success?

**Tobie Eberhardt:** — Hi. So I'll just talk in general about the purpose of our quality assurance units. And really they developed out of a desire for us to be able to evaluate our programs and services we're delivering — are we meeting the policy standards, the context standards? — and then also to make recommendations on how we can improve those services. So the purpose is really to assess the current practice and make recommendations on what we need to do to improve those practices.

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay, thank you. And sorry . . . Okay. The program effectiveness language to me really stands out. So I'm curious as to what metrics are being used to determine a program's effectiveness.

**Joel Kilbride:** — So program effectiveness is really just the name of a unit within the program and service design branch. And it is responsible for financial operations as well as data collection and continuous process improvement, and in our case — in disability programs — quality assurance. So it just has those four elements. But it's just simply the name of a unit.

**Brittney Senger:** — So if it's not being used to measure program effectiveness or if there are no metrics around measuring effectiveness, how did it end up with that name?

**Richelle Bourgoïn:** — So those are our de facto policy teams.

They're responsible for gathering data. They're responsible for measuring our outcomes, for evaluating our metrics, our key performance indicators. And they all tie back to reporting into our business plan.

And so in the business plan you'll see the actions, the strategies, and the targets that the Ministry of Social Services strives to obtain on an annual basis. This is the team that is really central within each of the five divisions of the Ministry of Social Services at gathering that data, using external sources, working with our federal colleagues, working with our municipal colleagues, informally engaging or formally engaging with our community-based partners.

I think of child and family programs as an example. They seek feedback from children in the care of the ministry about their needs, their experiences. The minister spoke earlier about the Youth Advisory Team. They're very active in providing input so that we can measure those successes. There are some things that are very tangible so if we've got a number target, you either hit that target or you don't. But because our primary focus at the ministry is serving the people of Saskatchewan, we also look for some of the data that is more experientially driven.

And so it would be that policy program effectiveness team that's evaluating that on a constant basis. So they're also responsible for the design of new programs to set those targets, to evaluate them, and then to report on the outcomes.

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay, thank you. So you did just mention KPI [key performance indicator] and some metrics for the programs within Social Services. Can you speak a little bit to those KPI and metrics within, particularly, the disability program department?

**Chair Keisig:** — I apologize. Could you just explain what KPI is?

**Brittney Senger:** — Key performance indicators.

**Chair Keisig:** — Thanks.

**Jeff Redekop:** — So your question was, what do we measure in disability programs? So one example of that would be the outcome-based service delivery project that we initiated a couple of years ago. And in '22-23 we launched this multi-year project to roll out outcomes-based service delivery framework and evaluate a client questionnaire tool designed to address the outcomes and evaluate service delivery for clients with intellectual disability.

[20:30]

So the tool measures quality of life, quality of services from the perspective of the individual, the person with the intellectual disability. That enables us to identify strength areas and the opportunities for improvement. That framework covers six different areas: social inclusion, emotional well-being, physical well-being, material well-being, personal development, and self-determination. So we started off by working with 61 different third-party organizations to participate in that initial project and it grew from there. Client interviews were conducted.

So again this is an example of some of the work that we're doing to address the question of what outcomes do we measure. In December of the previous year, we completed interviews with 185 different clients who had been interviewed a second time, and the purpose of this approach is to really understand, are people with intellectual disability experiencing a quality of life?

And in '25-26 — the previous year — we started working with additional service providers across our sector, collected data on that, and learned from that information that in a large scale, clients were very satisfied with services. And you know, we've got data that we can go deeper, but I think that's just really one example of one of the things that you were looking for.

**Brittney Senger:** — Sorry. Okay, thank you for that. If possible, would any of that information be tabled to the committee to review?

**Joel Kilbride:** — Yeah, the outcomes framework is something that we can provide and table.

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay, thank you. Okay. And again, apologizing in advance. I know I'm going to jump around a lot, and so again, apologizing. I want to discuss some of the changes to the SAID program, the Saskatchewan assured income for disabilities program.

According to the changes made to the SAID policy manual, as well as the order in council that was conducted, I think, on January 23rd, and then the changes obviously that came out of the policy manual released on April 1st, SAID is now a last-resort program. What is a last resort? And how is it determined if somebody is accessing it as a last resort?

**Julene Restall:** — Thank you for the question. So with our programs, so the SAID program for example, we're given legislative authority to provide SAID benefits through the Saskatchewan income assistance Act. So within the Act, it is required to be a needs-based program.

So what we did was actually update the information with the last-resort language in the regulations to ensure alignment with that Act that gives us the legal authority to actually provide SAID benefits. So that is why it was put in. It does not change the benefit administration, program administration, or the eligibility of requirements for that program. So really it is a legal requirement to have it tied to that Act. And we included that language and the regulations to ensure that alignment to provide us the legal authority to provide SAID benefits.

**Richelle Bourgoin:** — Income assistance programs, by their very virtue, are safety net programs, and so the Saskatchewan assured income for persons with disabilities program has always been a social safety net program that's income tested and continues to be. So while we — to Julene's point — updated the language, nothing has changed, including the fundamental intent of the program.

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay, thank you. Can I get a single figure of the total number of people — I don't need a month-over-month, just the total number of people — that accessed SAID in the 2024-2025 fiscal year as well as the 2025-2026 fiscal year? And if you can't provide a single figure for each fiscal year, can

you provide a number from the last available month? So if you don't have for the last fiscal year, you know, March 2026, February 2026 would suffice. Thank you.

**Julene Restall:** — So as I mentioned earlier, we do have fluctuation within our caseloads. So I will provide you February 2025 data and February 2026 data. So for SAID households in February 2025 there were 18,446 households on our SAID program. For February 2026 there was 18,197 households.

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay, thank you. How many applicants have there been to access SAID since January 2026 up until end of the last fiscal year, so March 31st?

**Julene Restall:** — Okay, I do have monthly averages for '24-25 and monthly averages for '25-26 year to date. So for the monthly average for the SAID applications in '24-25, was 381 per month. And for this fiscal year or from '25-26, it's 339 applications per month.

**Brittney Senger:** — Thank you. And what is the average per month approval?

**Julene Restall:** — Okay, thank you. So I'll go through the whole SAID application process because it's a certain step process that we have to go through. So there are three processes in which an individual needs to apply for a SAID program.

Number one, it starts off with just a basic financial application for income assistance. So with that, as I mentioned earlier, we have four different ways people can apply for our programs, which are over the phone, in person at our service centres, in person at our mobile outreach locations, as well as online 24-7.

So we have to determine that the person is financially eligible for our income assistance programs first. From there we do actually also require a medical documentation confirming that the individual has an enduring nature of disability. So that is actually done through a medical professional who provides us a document that allows us to determine that it's an enduring or ongoing nature of a disability.

The final step involves an assessment of the impact of the disability using the disability impact assessment, so that's our DIA process. Our DIA process is actually done by a third party external to the ministry to ensure that it's fair and equitably done. Our DIA process looks at 26 different elements of a person's disability to actually see what it looks like on their day-to-day practices.

So from that process, that is done through our contract with the SaskAbilities council. From there it will come back to our organization. We will determine if that impact is high enough to be actually eligible for our SAID program. From there, if they are, they would be found eligible instantaneously.

**Brittney Senger:** — Great. Thank you so much. Well since we're on SAID and SAID approval, I've got my April 1st SAID policy manual out in front of me with not even half of the notes that I have but a handful of questions.

So I will just jump right into . . . Actually before I jump into my first question, I did have a hard time tracking down a number of

historic SAID policy manuals online. Would it be possible for the past five SAID policy manuals to be tabled?

**Chair Keisig:** — Can the member just clarify on how does expired SAID manuals have to do with the '26-27 budget that we're debating this evening?

**Brittney Senger:** — Absolutely. Yes, thank you. So I have found it to actually be quite helpful to look at what historically has been covered. I know that the, I think it was, January 23rd order in council included a number of changes kind of outlined. However when I was looking through the new SAID manual, I wasn't able to actually clearly see some of the changes in terms of rates.

[20:45]

And so it would be quite helpful for me to get a clearer picture of how the changes will actually affect not just individuals who are relying on the program but just give me a clearer picture. Does that make sense?

**Richelle Bourgoin:** — We will make our best effort.

**Brittney Senger:** — I appreciate that. Thank you. Okay. So, sorry, now I'm going to jump back into the questions. That was kind of a note to self.

Okay, so on the note of accessing SAID, we were just talking about the application process, which I am familiar with; thank you for refreshing my memory.

I did want to discuss appealing benefits. So previously, there was funding available, or it was . . . In the past, SAID recipients were able to appeal if their benefits were denied or if they had to reapply. And now, based on the changes to the SAID program, that is not an option unless the individual pays out of pocket.

Perhaps I'm wrong, but from what I read, there is no benefit for appealing your benefits should they be denied. If somebody is relying on SAID funding, how are they expected to afford the cost of a lawyer — oh gosh, I can't believe I lost it in here; sorry — or have their benefits reduced for that period when they may be appealing any sort of changes or losses to benefits?

**Julene Restall:** — Thank you so much for the question. There has been no change in the ability for clients to appeal their benefit changes. We have a very strong appeal process to ensure that our clients are receiving the benefits that they're eligible for, for all of our income assistance programs.

So for example, on the SAID program, any time there's a change in benefit, there's a reduction in benefit, there's an overpayment assessed, individuals will have the ability appeal that process. In our SAID program, they have 30 days to appeal. As soon as we get or are made aware of their interest to appeal that process, the first step we do is a reconsideration at the manager level to ensure that we have appropriately interpreted our policies and our procedures. And in certain circumstances, it actually is dealt with internally before it actually goes through the more formal appeal process.

Within our appeal process then, if the client is still not satisfied with the outcome of that process, it goes to a regional appeal

committee, and there are three within Saskatchewan. And at those appeal boards, they have the ability to tell if we've been following our regulations and our policies.

From there, if a client is still not happy with the outcome of that approach, we then go to our Social Services Appeal Board. And that's a provincial body that is able to determine if we have followed our policies and regulations and the client is receiving the benefits appropriately aligned with those policies and regulations. So from there we also have the opportunity for individuals to then go to judicial review if they're not satisfied with the outcomes there.

As I mentioned, there's been no change to the ability to appeal benefits on our SAID program. There was a change, a slight change in our benefit structure for individuals to access an advocate for it. And that was a \$45 benefit, and that was only used twice . . . under 10 times, I'm going to just preface, under 10 times. It was once — by the same person, twice — in the whole year in '23-24. So when we're looking at ways of simplifying our program, it's a very underutilized benefit. So that is why we looked at something that we could easily simplify for our program.

What we have seen regularly is that our clients are accessing community resources to actually have advocates on behalf of themselves. So for example in Saskatoon, CLASSIC [Community Legal Assistance Services for Saskatoon Inner City Inc.]. They do a lot of work for our clients. As well as here in Regina, the Anti-Poverty Ministry regularly supports clients through these processes.

So it was a benefit that was underutilized, and we really wanted to ensure that our clients are still able to have those advocates. And we totally welcome them through that whole process.

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay, thank you. So appreciate you clarifying that it was used once in the '23-24 fiscal year. Can you speak to the '24-25 fiscal year as well as the '25-26 fiscal year for that specific benefit? And just to follow up on that, can you clarify how many people accessed the housing benefit, respite care, the advocate benefit, preschool benefits, and visitation benefits?

**Julene Restall:** — Thank you. So for '24-25, that was used once; '25-26 that was used twice. That was regarding the advocate fee benefit. For the other benefits that you asked for, for individuals that had a change from actual child care to adjusted flat rate for unlicensed child care, that was one client. For child access benefit, there was one individual utilizing that benefit. And for transporting dependents to school, that was seven individuals using those benefits. So as mentioned, those are all benefits that were underutilized and were used less than 10 times. And respite wasn't used at all.

**Richelle Bourgois:** — I would maybe just provide some context on respite, because it might seem puzzling. But respite care is provided in a number of other programs across the government. So the Ministry of Health has respite programming; disability has respite programming. And so it really is more effective for those clients to have a single point of entry and not having to look at stacking or how that impacts the SAID benefit overall.

So it's a good example of a change that has a net zero impact on clients but improves clarity for them when they're navigating through the system to try and reduce the number of potential benefits that may be applied. Like they're very unique sort of specific benefits, and so this really allows us to . . . We've heard loud and clear from clients that it's too complex. We want a straighter path. And so this is some incremental work that has been done to do that with very minimal impact. And the clients — the one and the one and the seven — will be grandfathered on their existing benefit.

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay, thank you. Okay, in regards to the changes to SAID and how it was simplified, can you speak to who was consulted in the changes?

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — So through my work as minister I take a lot of pride in travelling the province, and I'm quite sure you would understand that as well as many others. I've spoken to numerous, dozens and dozens of community-based organizations. And I've also talked to a number of SAID recipients around the province, whether they be in my constituency or the constituency of Swift Current. They could be in the constituency of Carrot River Valley. They could be in the constituency of The Battlefords.

What I have heard since I became minister in November of 2024 is a fairly common theme in that the SAID program prior to these last changes that took effect April 1st, the program was very complex. It was very cumbersome. It was confusing, and it resulted in clients expressing some frustration. It resulted in some CBOs expressing some frustration as well.

And so this was work that was undertaken based on that information. How can we simplify things and make things easier and more responsive, not only for the families of the client but the client themselves? So this was consultation done by myself, as minister, from talking to individuals, whether that be a CBO or whether that be an individual. Or it could also be a ministry worker, whether it's a front-line social worker or a social worker that's maybe employed by a CBO.

So these are all things that I heard as minister, and I take that responsibility extremely seriously. But I'm going to pass it over to Julene. She can explain the internal process from within the ministry of how we arrived at this.

**Julene Restall:** — So we have been reviewing, obviously, our SAID program to make these changes. And what we've seen is a lot of inconsistency, unfortunately provincially, on what we've been seeing for application of benefits. On our SAID benefit program, it is a decentralized benefit administration process. So people are able to go to their worker, get the benefit through that conversation, which leads to inconsistency especially around the complexity of this system.

[21:00]

So we really wanted to look at how could we support clients to ensure that they're getting all the benefits that they're eligible for in the most timely way without having to make them provide receipts, for example, or estimates for benefits. We want to be able to ensure that people are able to get the benefits they need and that they're eligible for in the most timely way.

So some of the work that we have done . . . Over the next month, we are actually also going out to our CBO partners to actually do presentations about these changes. We also talk to our CBO partners in the communities. As I mentioned, we're at over 40 different locations. We have mobile outreach. We also are on a lot of different community-based committees in which we've received that feedback about the complexity of our SAID system. So we'll continue to, obviously, look for opportunities to simplify our program and make it more client-friendly in any way that we can.

**Brittney Senger:** — Thank you very much. So if I'm understanding this correctly, there was no formal committee involved in creating or developing the changes to SAID. There was no way to track the percentage of people advising who had a disability, who were social workers in that regard. It was based on predominantly personal conversations.

**Richelle Bourgoin:** — So these are program policy decisions that were made by the Ministry of Social Services. We always take into account the feedback we receive from our clients, whether that's through casework, referrals that come through your office or the minister's. We also take into account all of the feedback that we receive on an ongoing basis from our community-based partners, organizations like Inclusion Saskatchewan, like SARC [Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres].

And so, thinking about the experience that we have interacting with our clients on a daily basis, we are constantly undergoing program policy decisions that fundamentally don't change the administration of the SAID program.

And so we will continue to do that. We certainly rely on feedback from the community, but when it comes to incremental changes to program policy like these, those are things that we just do on a continual basis.

**Brittney Senger:** — Thank you. And so that consultation, there's no actual record of it anywhere?

**Richelle Bourgoin:** — Yeah, this would not be the kind of thing that we would invest in large-scale public consultations for relatively incremental internal program policy changes.

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay. So I appreciate your response to that. I guess that leads me to some of the things, perhaps, that my office and I know a number of my colleagues' offices are hearing in regards to the SAID benefits. Now one of the things that I hear the most — and I hear it at least countless times over the last couple of months in particular — is around transportation benefits.

And now I know that my office received a note saying that there was no actual change. However I did notice some language around travel and travel circumstances, particularly not providing travel within a client's municipality as well as very limited opportunities for the travel benefits to be applicable.

Are you hearing much around the change around how the transportation benefit has affected people over the last couple of months since the changes to SAID were announced?

**Richelle Bourgoin:** — So MLA Senger, I think you're talking about medical travel benefits for exceptional travel needs. I should start by saying there have been no changes to the policy, but what we did come to learn — and I'm certain your office has heard about it — was that the application of that policy was incorrectly applied in a number of circumstances in Saskatoon specifically.

And so as an example, we had a client who was using taxis and using the exceptional travel benefit for taxis to work on a daily basis. That's not the intent of that policy. And so where our client has the ability to safely attend work by using public transit or alternative means, it would be our expectation that they do so.

We also ensure that, because it is an exceptional benefit, that those who need it absolutely continue to have access to it, but that may not include supplementary health services. Like if you were going for a massage or you're going for physiotherapy, and you have the ability to take alternative means of transportation rather than an Uber or a taxi, it would be our expectation that you do so. And so it was perceived certainly as a loss by individuals for whom the policy was incorrectly applied. And while that is regrettable, it's a necessary change when we're working with our teams.

So another advantage of us streamlining benefits and being abundantly clear in the application of those policies is that we're not raising expectations of clients, and we don't have clients treated differently in different regions of the province. The policy is clear and applied consistently and equitably.

So what you will likely not have seen is concerns raised with your offices about this policy anywhere outside of Saskatoon. And we have rectified that, spoken with each of the clients who have been impacted. And I would say from our experience at the ministry — I can't speak for you — we have not seen this continue to be a persistent issue.

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay, thank you. So the clients that were affected by it, what is the expectation of them if they had, as you had said, abused it?

**Richelle Bourgoin:** — I didn't say abused.

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay, sorry.

**Richelle Bourgoin:** — So the application was incorrectly . . .

**Brittney Senger:** — Incorrectly. So sorry.

**Richelle Bourgoin:** — Yes. So no clients have done anything other than make application to a program. But from time to time, when you have such a large number of clients and a large number of individuals assessing those policies, they can be incorrectly applied. And so the conversations that our team have with the individual clients are really around identifying that specific need and what opportunities are available.

And so in the case of medical transit for someone who is in the SAID program and experiencing a physical disability, they have the opportunity to take — and I apologize, I can't remember the name of the medical transit — Access transportation in Saskatoon. Now if that was not possible, you know, we have

clients who travel by ambulance strictly for the purpose of medical appointments. And so they're outside of this policy. But where the policy was incorrectly applied and there is the ability for the client for seek an alternative, we expect that they do so.

And so it's really been about looking back and working with those clients who were negatively impacted by the internal application of our policy and understanding how we can pivot with those clients.

There will be circumstances in Saskatoon where the policy was applied correctly, and that will continue. But when we're really specific around what is the exceptional circumstance and being diligent in helping the clients understand what opportunities exist to mitigate the risk to the program, ensuring they're still continuing to receive the necessary services that they receive, it's that balancing act. And I think we've come through it to be able to really understand the small number of individuals, high impact, and how do we work with them to move forward.

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay, thank you. I wanted to touch on . . . I'm only looking for a number. Nothing more than just a number. And that would be how many people were accessing SAID as well as the Saskatchewan rental housing supplement at the end of the last fiscal year or whenever you have most recently?

**Richelle Bourgoin:** — Approximately 1,900.

**Brittney Senger:** — Thank you so much. Okay, I'm going to try and move on and get through the last of my SAID questions. I may have to skip over a few because I know we are running short on time. Okay, I'm only looking for examples of what would be considered a duplicate benefit or what is considered a duplicate benefit, not what is not considered a duplicate benefit. Does that make sense? I'm only looking for examples of . . .

With the SAID manual, one of the purposes of it from my understanding is that it is to eliminate duplicate benefits. I know that there are a number of items in here that are exempt from that. What I am wanting to know is what — whether it be funding through the provincial government, the federal government, or CBOs, any other areas, Crown corporations — that would not be exempt?

Sorry, I'm framing this a little bit strange. It's because I don't really want a whole list of areas that are actually exempt.

**Julene Restall:** — So when we look at our . . . As I mentioned earlier, SAID is an income-tested benefit program. So what we actually . . . We won't have a list of non-exempt income. Anything that is not explicitly exempted, either through our regulations or through a minister's order, would be not considered income. Every other payment method could be considered income, dependent on the way that an individual receives it.

**Brittney Senger:** — Thank you so much. I appreciate the clarification despite my very unclear question.

[21:15]

Okay, I'm going to jump over and quickly ask a question about CBO funding. So for clarification, the 2 per cent funding increase

to CBOs, did that go to community-based organizations that are exclusively funded through the Ministry of Social Services? Or is that across all ministries?

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — I can confirm that the Ministry of Social Services, it was 2 per cent. Okay, and the 2 per cent was applied across government for all CBOs.

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay. Thank you so much. And my follow-up question: just in the budget, I know that there is a \$10 million increase to CBO funding. Is that for all government ministries? Or is that \$10 million — sorry, I should have it directly in front of me — is that for all government ministries or is that just for the Ministry of Social Services?

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — So the short answer to that is no, that the Ministry of Social Services funds and partners with CBOs across the province to deliver a wide range of services and supports to Saskatchewan people and families.

The increase is \$10.8 million, and that goes to CBOs for, you know . . . To support people with intellectual disabilities, that'll be about 5.83 million; 3.73 million for service providers supporting at-risk children, youth, and families in their homes and communities; about 620,000 for mental health group homes and approved private service homes that care for people with intellectual disabilities; 536,000 for emergency shelters that provide temporary shelter and access to support programs and services; as well as \$58,000 for income assistance service providers.

It should also be noted that foster care and extended family care providers are also receiving this 2 per cent increase this year.

**Brittney Senger:** — Thank you. Okay, I've got to jump back a couple pages here. And now I know we are running short on time. I want to talk about some of the ministry's plans to measure success. And I'm curious about the percentage of CLSD [community living service delivery] clients that are participating in day programs.

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — So this happens to be one of my favourite areas of the ministry, is within CLSD and the group homes. And all the great work and all the, you know, the environments are just absolutely amazing. And it's through this ministry I've had the opportunity to spend a lot of time travelling around the province, whether it be visiting the Pipestone Kin-Ability Centre in Moosomin and seeing their day programs, their commercial laundry, their Sarcan facility. They operate two group homes there with six clients each, plus they do supported living through the semi-independent living program in Moosomin.

You know, I also look at places like Preeceville. I happened to visit Mackenzie Society Ventures with the MLA for Canora-Pelly. And you know, the semi-independent living program that they run there — five group homes in Preeceville, Sturgis, Canora — they cover that whole area north of Yorkton off really well. The training centre and activity centre, one thing they actually do at that facility is they produce marker flags for transport and for roadwork and construction and things like that, the little orange oversize flags that you attach onto the back of your load. You know, who would have thought in Preeceville, Saskatchewan that they're making these flags. They also operate

a thrift store.

You know, we were up in Creighton last summer, visiting a group home operated by Karis Disability Services — a brand new group home, five residents, you know, occupied last spring. It's absolutely amazing. And you know what? Every resident of that home are fans of the Flin Flon Bombers, and we know what they're doing in the SJHL [Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League] playoffs right now.

So when I visit around the province . . . And you know, those are just three communities. And in my own home constituency, I've got Sunshine Housing in Hague operating a day program. They operate a coffee shop called Daily Delights, and in the back they have a day program for residents that can't participate maybe in the kitchen or in the front end.

So you know, this is what really gets me up in the mornings is in the disability sector and the CLSD in terms of the group homes and the day programs, whether that be in Regina, Saskatoon, Humboldt. You know, we're going to be opening a brand new group home later on this week, so we're going to be having some information on that later on.

But you know, going all around the province, the difference that it's making in people's lives is absolutely . . . it's astonishing. And you know, I thank my lucky fortune for being able to do this job and being able to see what is being done around the province for those that have intellectual and physical disabilities. But to answer the actual question in terms of how many and the numbers and everything, I'm just going to let Joel speak to that.

**Joel Kilbride:** — Yeah, so it's 65 per cent are participating in community-based programming at the end of the last fiscal year. So really good progress there.

**Brittney Senger:** — Thank you so much, Joel. And Minister, I'm thrilled to hear about your enthusiasm for day programs and group homes in all of the different corners of the province that you visited to explore all of the great work that's going on. And also fabulous to hear about the group home that you mentioned is set to open this week.

And now I know that there were 10 group homes announced in this budget. So this is a multi-part question. First of all, these 10 new group homes, I'm assuming that these are the same 10 group homes that were announced in the last budget. Thank you. What is the wait-list for group homes, for people to access CLSD group homes? How many people will each group home be able to house? And yeah, okay, I'll leave it there. Did I say what is the wait-list?

**Joel Kilbride:** — Okay, I'll start with the number of spaces for Home First. So the home that we're building in Tisdale will be a four-space home. Melfort will be sort of a 10-space home, but two five-space homes sort of connected together. We'll have a five-space home in Regina, a four-space in North Battleford, another four-space in Regina, a four-space in Meadow Lake, and there's two in Saskatoon. Those will each be four-space. Prince Albert, a four-space; well there's another one in Prince Albert which is also a four-space.

**Brittney Senger:** — Thank you. And then, sorry, the follow-up

was just how long is the wait-list?

**Jeff Redekop:** — Thank you. So disability programs doesn't maintain a wait-list. Instead we use an emerging-needs process where services are prioritized based on the urgency of need, individual circumstances. That process makes sure that we continually assess and respond to evolving needs. As you heard from Joel, there's quite an expansion with those 10 homes, which will serve approximately 46 people.

We actively prioritize the needs of individuals to ensure those who are most in need of service receive it first. This is done through a combination of annual forecasting and frequent in-year adjustments as individuals' needs change. And as client needs are dynamic, the number of people who might be prioritized at one point in time may not be the same, you know, group of people as the year progresses.

The first consideration when prioritizing services is the urgency of need. But other factors include things like the availability and appropriateness of existing services; suitability with other people that might be in a home; the environmental fit, where it is in terms of, you know, closeness to family, that sort of thing if that's a factor for a person; managing the level of need of the individual, making sure that they're going to achieve valued outcomes; and of course the level of support and the capability of the sector to support that individual. So we ensure that our clients are supported.

We're going to continue to work with people and their families to develop services as they're needed in the areas of greatest priority.

**Brittney Senger:** — Thank you so much. And then I just want to maybe ask my last question, just circling back to this quality assurance unit, again just because it's new to me. So I'm wondering if you can talk a little . . . Well I've got time now. It's the end of the night. If you can speak to how CLSD . . . kind of give me a bit more detail on how the quality assurance unit is working collaboratively with CLSD and third-party service providers to enhance the quality of life of people with intellectual disabilities. And if you could please touch on how that includes monitoring quality of care within licensed homes as well as how it includes analyzing data and the trends as well as tracking and improving the tracking of incidents within homes.

**Jeff Redekop:** — Okay. To start with, the quality assurance unit is newly established, as we heard earlier in the evening. The unit is working to strengthen relationships with third parties and improve our serious incident tracking. That process occurs currently, even before the existence of the quality assurance unit. We continue to require all service providers to report serious incidents, and the quality assurance unit will help it analyze that information. It'll help monitor the quality of support at homes, connect with service providers, make sure their training needs are identified as required.

We expect this work is going to greatly improve outcomes. Again the work of this unit is very new, so they're just beginning to get out there with . . . well not just beginning, but they've been for several months working with different organizations, looking at things like our outcome-based service delivery work that I talked about earlier in the evening; risk assessment; looking at

performance management; basic standards, that type of a review we do with all CBOs; and our case management practices.

So maybe I'll stop there for now.

**Brittney Senger:** — Okay. And since there is one minute left, I just wanted to kind of circle back on the other piece to that, which was, how are you monitoring the quality of care within licensed homes? And what data are you using to identify trends and look at enhancing programs?

[21:30]

**Jeff Redekop:** — Yeah, there's an extensive list of processes that our division and our ministry does to ensure quality of support for people with intellectual disability in various programs.

Just a few examples. We have a basic standards review that's done every two years that contains a long list of requirements that organizations are required to complete. We have requirements that are part of the licensing process where annually, licensing requirements must be fulfilled under *The Residential Services Act*. And that includes quite a number of processes, from program standards reporting to fire and other different types of inspections. And I mean there's a long list, but I mean, those are pretty substantial processes.

**Chair Keisig:** — Having reached our agreed-upon time for consideration of these estimates, we will proceed to vote on the estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 for the Ministry of Social Services.

Before we begin the voting process, Minister, do you have any closing comments?

**Hon. Terry Jenson:** — Well thank you, Mr. Chair. And I do have a few comments I'd like to make. I'd like to thank yourself as well as your committee tonight for spending the time to do the good work on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan to ask the questions and get the answers and get all the data and the statistics and everything that go with it, along with the human side of why we do this work.

I'd also like to thank all my officials for joining me tonight. You know, this is just one piece of the entire machine within the ministry that makes things happen each and every day for the people of the province.

And you know, again thanks to the committee and thanks to everybody who has a touchpoint within the Ministry of Social Services, whether that be in disability services, whether that be in child and family, our front-line workers. The work that goes into everything here is much appreciated, and we can't do it without them.

So with that, appreciate the committee's time tonight.

**Chair Keisig:** — Thank you, Minister. MLA ChiefCalf, any closing comments?

**April ChiefCalf:** — Once again just want to thank everyone for taking the time to be here this evening, and hope you have a safe ride home.

**Chair Keisig:** — Well thank you for that. And I just want to join in and thank the minister and his team. And I truly want to thank each and every individual that attended committee tonight, and for their hard work and their disciplined use of trying not to use as many acronyms as possible. Saskatchewan people are truly watching this, thousands of people, so we are providing an information service to them. So thank you for all of your efforts on that.

Minister, if you and your team are welcome to leave, the committee will stay and we will vote on estimates. Thank you very much for all of your due diligence this evening. Thank you, everyone.

Voting off Social Services estimates and supplementaries. Vote 36, Social Services, page 115. Central management and services, subvote (SS01) in the amount of 50,530,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Income assistance services, subvote (SS03) in the amount of 717,625,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Child and family services, subvote (SS04) in the amount of 434,432,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Client support, subvote (SS05) in the amount of 14,800,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Housing, subvote (SS12) in the amount of 83,275,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Disability programs and services, subvote (SS14) in the amount of 390,022,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of \$5,542,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purposes only. No amount is to be voted.

Social Services, vote 36 — 1,690,684,000. 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, 2027, the following sum for Social Services: 1,690,684,000.

**Barret Kropf:** — I so move.

**Chair Keisig:** — MLA Kropf. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund  
Supplementary Estimates — No. 2  
Social Services  
Vote 36**

**Chair Keisig:** — Vote 36, Social Services, page 16 in supplementary estimates. Income assistance services, subvote (SS03) in the amount of 14,000,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Child and family services, subvote (SS04) in the amount of 48,000,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Disability programs and services, subvote (SS14) in the amount of 13,000,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried.

Social Services, vote 36 — \$75,000,000. 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, 2026, the following sum for Social Services: \$75,000,000.

MLA Bromm?

**Terri Bromm:** — I so move.

**Chair Keisig:** — Is that agreed? Carried. We will now proceed to vote on the remaining estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 committed to this committee.

**General Revenue Fund  
Advanced Education  
Vote 37**

**Chair Keisig:** — Vote 37, Advanced Education, page 25. Central management and services, subvote (AE01) in the amount of 13,776,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Post-secondary education, subvote (AE02) in the amount of 780,141,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Student supports, subvote (AE03) in the amount of 53,157,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Advanced Education, vote 37 — 847,074,000. 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, 2027, the following sum for Advanced Education: 847,074,000.

MLA Chan. Is that agreed?

**David Chan:** — I so move.

**General Revenue Fund  
Education  
Vote 5**

**Chair Keisig:** — Vote 5, Education, page 39. Central management and services, subvote (ED01) in the amount of 12,240,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. K-12 education, subvote (ED03) in the amount of 2,663,559,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Teachers' pensions and benefits, subvote (ED04) in the amount of 26,981,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Early years, subvote (ED08) in the amount of 425,521,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Provincial Library and literacy, subvote (ED15) in the amount of 16,031,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Education, vote 5 — 3,144,332,000. 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, 2027, the following sum for Education: 3,144,332,000.

MLA Kropf. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund  
Health  
Vote 32**

**Chair Keisig:** — Vote 32, Health, page 71. Central management and services, subvote (HE01) in the amount of 10,645,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Saskatchewan health services, subvote (HE03) in the amount of 6,242,375,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Provincial health services and support, subvote (HE04) in the amount of 395,187,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Medical services and medical education programs, subvote (HE06) in the amount of 1,296,176,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Drug plan and extended benefits, subvote (HE08) in the amount of 534,318,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of 1,907,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purposes only. No amount is to be voted.

Health, vote 32 — 8,478,701,000. 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, 2027, the following sum for Health: 8,478,701,000.

[21:45]

MLA Bromm. Is that agreed?

**Terri Bromm:** — I so move.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried.

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

**Chair Keisig:** — Vote 20, Labour Relations and Workplace Safety, page 91. Central management and services, subvote (LR01) in the amount of 4,621,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Occupational health and safety, subvote (LR02) in the amount of 9,762,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Employment standards, subvote (LR03) in the amount of 3,009,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Labour Relations Board, subvote (LR04) in the amount of 1,079,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Labour relations and mediation, subvote (LR05) in the amount of 730,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Injured worker appeal services, subvote (LR06) in the amount of 1,037,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of 92,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purposes only. No amount is to be voted.

Labour Relations and Workplace Safety, vote 20 — \$20,238,000. 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, 2027, the following sum for Labour Relations and Workplace Safety: 20,238,000.

MLA Chan. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**David Chan:** — I so move.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund  
Lending and Investing Activities  
Advanced Education  
Vote 169**

**Chair Keisig:** — Vote 169, Advanced Education, page 153. Loans to student aid fund, subvote (AE01) in the amount of \$80,000,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Advanced Education, vote 169 — 80,000,000. 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, 2027, the following sum for Advanced Education: 80,000,000.

**Barret Kropf:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — MLA Kropf. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund  
Supplementary Estimates — No. 2  
Advanced Education  
Vote 37**

**Chair Keisig:** — Vote 37, Advanced Education, page 11 in the Supplementary Estimates — No. 2, student support subvote (AE03) in the amount of 2,152,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Advanced Education vote 37 — 2,152,000. 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 sum for Advanced Education: 2,152,000.

MLA Bromm. Is that agreed?

**Terri Bromm:** — I so move. Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund  
Supplementary Estimates — No. 2  
Education  
Vote 5**

**Chair Keisig:** — Vote 5, Education, page 12, central management and services, subvote (ED01) in the amount of 33,500,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Teachers' pensions and benefits, subvote (ED04). This includes a statutory amount. The amount to be voted is 2,900,000. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Education, vote 5 — 36,400,000. 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 sum for Education: 36,400,000.

MLA Chan. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund  
Supplementary Estimates — No. 2  
Health  
Vote 32**

**Chair Keisig:** — Vote 32, Health, page 14. Saskatchewan's health services, subvote (HE03) in the amount of 301,800,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Provincial health services and support, subvote (HE04) in the amount of 22,200,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Medical services and medical education programs, subvote (HE06) in the amount of 14,000,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Health, vote 32 — \$338,000,000. 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, 2026, the following sum for Health: \$338,000,000.

MLA Kropf. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Committee members, you have before you a draft of the second report of the Standing Committee on Human Services for the thirtieth legislature. We require a member to move the following motion:

That the second report of the Standing Committee on Human Services for the thirtieth legislature be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

**Barret Kropf:** — I so move.

**Chair Keisig:** — MLA Kropf has moved. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — Carried. Well that concludes our business for today. I would ask a member to move a motion of adjournment.

**Terri Bromm:** — I so move.

**Chair Keisig:** — MLA Bromm has moved. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Chair Keisig:** — This committee stands adjourned to the call of the Chair.

[The committee adjourned at 21:55.]