



STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE

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Moose Jaw North

Mr. Greg Ottenbreit
Yorkton

[The committee met at 15:35.]

The Chair: — Good afternoon. My name is Terry Dennis. I am Chair of the Committee for Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice. And with us today, we have Mr. Gary Grewal, Mr. Travis Keisig, Ms. Lisa Lambert, Mr. Tim McLeod, Mr. Greg Ottenbreit, and substituting for Erika Ritchie is Nathaniel Teed.

Today we will be considering the estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2, the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport; the estimates for Tourism Saskatchewan; and Bill No. 121.

**General Revenue Fund
Parks, Culture and Sport
Vote 27**

Subvote (PC01)

The Chair: — We will begin our consideration with vote 27, Parks, Culture and Sport. Central management and services, subvote (PC01). Minister Ross is here with her officials. As a reminder to the officials, please state your name for the record when speaking and please do not touch the microphones. A Hansard operator will take care of that.

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

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well thank you very much, Chair. Let me begin by acknowledging the land where we are gathered today is Treaty 4 territory and the home of the Métis. I'm pleased to be here today to discuss the ministry's estimates for the year. I look forward to our discussion and providing details on the work we do at Parks, Culture and Sport, how we contribute to a strong economy, and how we make life better for our people in our province.

I'm joined today by my officials, Twyla MacDougall, the deputy minister; Dan French, the ADM [assistant deputy minister] for stewardship division; Jennifer Johnson, ADM of parks division; Pam Herbert, ED [executive director], strategic and corporate services; Byron Davis, ED, parks planning and facility management; Michael Roth, ED, parks management services; Tracy Morey, ED, sport, culture and recreation; and my chief of staff, Molly Waldman.

Each year when we start our budget development process I meet with this group to look at our programs and our services, and discuss new ideas and opportunities that we can move forward. I'm grateful for the experience and the knowledge they bring to the table and the advice they provide. I also want to acknowledge the ministry staff who work so hard every day to deliver our programs and services. The work that we will talk about is more detailed here today, is a direct reflection of their commitment and dedication to our people and our province.

The estimates for Parks, Culture and Sport are part of a larger picture, a provincial budget that is focused on the growth that works for everyone. Budget 2023-24 creates a balance between spending for this year, paying down debt for longer term, and investment that positions our province well for the future. It recognizes that, like any province, we have a broad range of

needs. There is new funding to build schools and hospitals, investments in highways and government services, increase for vital services like women's shelters, and to bring it back home it has increases for key areas in the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport.

You know I wake up every day feeling so fortunate to lead this ministry. We have such a diverse portfolio, from parks and heritage to women's social economic prosperity. And we support sports, culture, arts, film, and the francophone language. We offer a grant for veteran service clubs and a program to support investment at community rinks. There are grants for organizations that support women and a tax benefit that helps make recreation activities more affordable for families.

They touch all different needs. The programs and the people they serve are quite different, yet they all have one thing in common: they contribute to the growth of our economy and our quality of life here in Saskatchewan. These two elements, economic growth and quality of life, are at the heart of our ministry. And I'm going to focus on a few of these programs and provide an overview that can serve as a foundation for our discussion here today.

Camping reservations opened on April 3rd. You'd never guess that this was spring with the snow, but . . . So I will talk about our provincial parks. And like I said, I'm sure I could spend the whole entire two hours talking about our parks. We're pretty excited and we're pleased because, you know, we have such beautiful nature here and it provides an affordable getaway for residents and for visitors.

And then there are things to do, activities that are fun, engaging, and bring so many people into our parks each year. The parks division has worked very hard over the last years to create an incredible experience for visitors that are special, events like outdoor cinemas — even though there are mosquitoes, we still love a show — and SaskExpress shows, programs like interpretive hikes, and opportunities for kids to learn about science or make crafts — and you know we all have to take those crafts home and put them up on the fridge, but it teaches them about the park and habitat — fun activities like inflatable water parks, mini golf, swimming, and trails for hiking and biking.

A few parks also offer Camp-Easy programs. You don't need a tent and you don't need a camper. There are yurts and tents equipped with queen-size beds and bunks and raised floors and convenience that make it easy to stay overnight with very little advance preparation required. Some people call it glamping. In some locations there are cabins or resorts right in the park. Great options for those who prefer an effortless getaway. There's also wilderness parks that appeal to those who want an adventure where it's just a trail or a river or lots of our beautiful nature.

Our parks are as diverse as the people who call Saskatchewan home. They're no longer just for summer. We have some year-round destinations. There are winter activities like snowshoeing, skating, tobogganing, and cross-country skiing. We don't have the fat tire bikes in here. Oh well, we do. We have fat tire bike trails. Anyways the ministry selects a few parks each winter to showcase special programs and events. This last winter there were snowshoe hikes, a snow maze, two festival of light displays, a skating trail through a campground — oh yes, and fat tire biking

— and yes, every winter camping for those very hardy souls who love the outdoors and a good challenge.

And I mention the reservation launch. This is when people have their first opportunity to book a campsite. Park visitation peaks through the pandemic. It was one of the places where people could go that was safe and accessible, and they took advantage of the space. It introduced more people to our beautiful parks, and I'm happy to share what may have started as a necessity and continues now as a choice for many.

Even when there was more options to explore other provinces last year, our visitation numbers remained high. And we're looking forward to another busy season this year, and we want to hold that interest. And over the next year we will continue to promote our parks and keep that momentum going. Now this includes continuing to improve our saskparks.com website, promoting park offerings through digital marketing and engagement, and to continue to focus on greater visitor experience.

Our government wants more people to become tourists right here at home and have more visitors discover what Saskatchewan has to offer. So over the next year the ministry will invest 14 million in capital projects and upgrades to help realize that goal.

There are a variety of projects in planning or under way that include building a group pavilion in the day-use area of Rowan's Ravine Provincial Park for large or multi-group gatherings; building a new visitor reception centre at Crooked Lake Provincial Park to provide enhanced customer service and visitor information; completing a 40-site service campground in Meadow Lake Provincial Park; and investing in infrastructure improvements, projects that keep common areas and facilities such as washrooms and showers modern, safe, and accessible — work that maintains the high standards that people have come to expect, and something park visitors repeatedly tell us that they appreciate. And we will keep investing in accessibility improvements to make sure there is room for everyone in our parks in our province.

[15:45]

The ministry also works with private businesses to bring a full range of amenity and services to our parks. Now these partnerships offer two benefits: they help us offer more services to park visitors, and they support small business developments, which contributes to our economic growth.

Earlier I noted the diverse portfolio of this ministry. It really is such an interesting ministry with a wide variety of programs and services that we offer. Our provincial parks are one way we deliver on this ministry's mandate to enhance our quality of life in Saskatchewan and continue to grow our strong, sustainable economy.

There is also the stewardship division, which will invest 43.4 million in 2023-24 in arts, culture, heritage, and sports. There are many programs within this funding that benefit so many people in Saskatchewan, and I will share these highlights. The grant program delivered through Parks, Culture and Sport remains a priority for the ministry of our government.

There is the active family benefit. Now this is a tax credit for families with an income of 60,000 or less who have children participating in sports, recreation, and cultural activities. The tax credit helps them keep these activities affordable for more Saskatchewan families. We offer the community rinks affordability grant, and it helps community curling and skating rinks with operational costs or minor capital improvements through grants of up to \$2,500. Last fiscal year 581 rinks received funding.

The ministry also has the veteran service support club program. And last year we increased individual grants from 25,000 up to 30,000. And I'm happy to report that it was fully subscribed. Last fiscal, 87 grants were distributed to service clubs throughout the province. Since the program started, the ministry has funded 235 grant applications, clubs using the funding for much needed infrastructure, upgrades, programs, operation, events, and activities, as well as to initiate projects that would otherwise be cost prohibitive. These programs are welcomed by individuals and communities. And we see a strong uptake every year.

The Community Initiatives Fund will receive a 35 per cent increase in 2023-24. This year 6.4 million in grants will be available to community-based programs that support the healthy growth and development of children, youth, individuals, community well-being, and leadership.

The ministry was also able to provide a 2.5 per cent funding lift to third-party organizations this year, money that will help offset additional costs due to inflation. The organizations that will benefit from this lift include SK Arts, Wanuskewin Heritage Park, the Science Centre, Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation, and the Western Development Museum.

For the second year in a row we have increased funding to Creative Saskatchewan film and television production grant. The grant-based program will grow to 12 million for 2023-24. That is a \$2 million lift. Only Saskatchewan labour, goods, and services are eligible for support under the grant. Now this means that every dollar invested is spent here on facilities, trade, labour, rental, digital and information technology services, and in the hospitality sector — our hotels, our restaurants, and catering services.

This fund helps the film and television industry in Saskatchewan grow. As Mike MacNaughton of SMPIA, which is Saskatchewan Media Production Industry Association, noted, the grant is one of the most competitive in the country. It helps producers secure federal funding and private investment, money that is also spent here, and that is good news for Saskatchewan.

We know the demand is high and the industry is growing. There is tremendous interest in our programs in Saskatchewan locations, both rural and urban and in the John Hopkins Sound Stage. This additional investment in budget 2023-24 and government's continued support for the industry will continue to attract television and film projects to the province, creating employment and further grow our economy. Twenty-eight productions were funded through the grant in this last fiscal year, and 22 have already begun filming in communities throughout Saskatchewan.

I want to bring two recent productions to your attention. The first

was a lovely film shot in Maple Creek, *A Cowboy Christmas*. This is Molly's favourite. It's a rom-com. The entire town put their support behind the production, decorating the town with a Christmas theme. Now many people had the opportunity to act as extras in the film.

And then we had *Guardians of the North* which was another production that wrapped up this past year. Aidan takes us into the day-to-day lives of First Nations and first responders in northern Saskatchewan, people that faced life-and-death situations like fire, extreme weather, and flooding. And they do this under unique circumstances, working in the vast northern wilderness and remote communities. There's bravery, danger, tragedy, and joy, and ultimately a group of people that support each other and their communities. It's a story about extreme jobs and dangerous situations. It's also a story about resilience and the human spirit. In short, it is Saskatchewan stories with Saskatchewan heroes, produced by Saskatchewan people.

These are two films that are in opposite ends of the entertainment spectrum. One, a romantic feel-good, and the other a documentary-style show that's filled with danger and excitement. And it gives you an idea of the variety of productions we see here in Saskatchewan and the potential for this industry that it has for our province.

Thank you, Chair, and for everyone joining us, taking time to hear our programs. I've not included the Status of Women at this point, and I will provide an overview of that office when we finish with the estimates for Parks, Culture and Sport. And with that, I welcome your questions.

The Chair: — Thank you for the exciting opening remarks, Minister. I will now open it up for questions. Mr. Teed.

Mr. Teed: — Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Minister, for that lovely introduction. It really is great to hear all the amazing things that are happening. I really do think you have the best ministry. I'm biased. I know when I came in I said I want to be the critic for Parks, Culture and Sport. I'm a bit biased because I come a bit from the culture side of things, so it's great to hear that.

And you also already answered one of my questions about which productions are happening in Saskatchewan. But I also just want to quickly say thank you to all of your officials as well who have come out today, and to all the folks that make this possible here today.

I thought that since we only have an hour today, I quickly am going to jump into a response to the budget, and it's from the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance. I think it really does give a very balanced response to the budget. And then I have some questions following that. So I'm going to just read that into the record here today, and then I have a few questions to jump into. So the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance response was:

On March 22nd, 2023 the Hon. Donna Harpauer, Minister of Finance, delivered the 2023-24 provincial budget, Growth That Works for Everyone. The '23-24 budget has a 1 billion surplus and saw modest increase in funding in the arts. The Saskatchewan Arts Alliance (SAA) wants growth that works for everyone, including our province's artists, art

administrators and patrons. We appreciate the work done by the Honourable Laura Ross and the Ministry of Parks, Culture, and Sport to increase funding to SK Arts to address inflationary pressures. This increase is a positive step in the right direction, but funding is still precarious and well below historical levels — approximately 180,000 less than a decade ago.

This year's provincial budget again brings mixed news — near status quo funding to the majority of the arts sector and a two million dollar increase for Creative Saskatchewan.

We must recognize that despite significantly increased investment in Creative Saskatchewan and a slight increase to SK Arts in this year's budget, the arts in Saskatchewan are still in a funding crisis. Simply maintaining SK Arts's granting levels is inadequate for our province's artists, arts organizations and patrons. The arts ecosystem in Saskatchewan is at risk, this was the case before COVID, and the ongoing impacts of the pandemic, massive inflation and last year's PST expansion have only exacerbated the situation.

Research shows that 85% of Saskatchewanians agree that "arts and cultural activities in a community make it a better place to live" (Hill Strategies Research, 2022). Saskatchewan people deserve to live in a province where the arts are adequately supported to grow and thrive and contribute to all citizens' wellbeing and quality of life.

In 2020, the GDP generated by arts & culture was \$895,871,000, accounting for 11,156 jobs in Saskatchewan — these are substantial figures (Statistics Canada, 2022). With PST expansion for admissions, recreation and entertainment in place, the arts and culture sector contributes more [now] than ever to the province's revenue. Despite advocating that this be met with meaningful return on investment — an increased investment in SK Arts — we are met with little movement.

Increased and ongoing investment is needed for a strong and sustainable arts sector. The SAA thanks the provincial government for the increases to Creative Saskatchewan and SK Arts. Creative Saskatchewan CEO, Erin Dean says, "a 20% increase to our feature film and television production grant is great news, and we're really thrilled with the government's decision to continue investing in the film sector." The SAA is hopeful that more increases, especially to chronically underfunded SK Arts, will be seen in coming years. Such increases are a worthy investment for the well-being and growth of the province.

The SAA was pleased to see an increase of \$165,000 to SK Arts, the first increase in nine years. Throughout the past year, the SAA has advocated for an increase in the 2023-24 budget to SK Arts that correlates with the provincial consumer price index rates since 2017, approximately \$1.3 million. SK Arts saw an increase of 2.5% in this budget, which is less than half of the provincial inflation rate of 6.6% over the past year. These are disappointing numbers for artists and arts organizations, especially considering there is a projected . . . [1.1] billion surplus.

Such a nominal increase to an essential provincial organization such as SK Arts puts significant pressure on the arts sector to meet its increasing obligations with fewer and fewer resources. Despite status quo funding, SK Arts has kept its granting levels unaffected. The SAA hopes this increase will again allow SK Arts to avoid reducing grant dollars to creators in the province in its 75th year.

SK Arts CEO, Michael Jones, responded to the increase, “We are pleased not to see another flatlined budget. That is certainly a move in the right direction. Over the next week or two, SK Arts leadership will have to consider how we can use this money to address sectoral and internal needs.” He continued, “we are proud at SK Arts that we have managed to maintain or even slightly increase total granting over many years of flatlined budgets. We understand the challenges faced by the funded organizations and artists we support.”

The fact remains, the arts have an impact on . . . [Saskatchewan] beyond its entertainment value; they improve well-being and develop a sense of inclusion in communities. Research studying the linkage between arts participation and well-being shows particularly strong results for health, mental health and satisfaction with life — all top of mind at the moment.

That ends their statement, and I just thought that it was such a well-balanced approach to the budget. And I think it does speak to just overall in this budget . . . I maybe would ask what some of your thoughts or responses to that statement are.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — And I’m going to tell you, you better get a few more questions because you have two hours.

Mr. Teed: — Two? I have two hours today?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — You have two hours.

Mr. Teed: — Oh, we have four hours altogether?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — No.

Mr. Teed: — Oh, because I thought we did an hour for Parks, Culture, and two hours for Status of Women.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — No. It’s the other way around.

Mr. Teed: — Oh.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Mm-hmm. But anyways, thank you for . . .

Mr. Teed: — Okay. Maybe I’ll . . .

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — So you may want to text . . .

The Chair: — You might want to go through your opening remarks again.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Okay. So anyways, thank you very much for that question. And you know, I just had — was it last week? — within the last two weeks I had an opportunity to sit down with the board, and we had a really good, fruitful discussion. And

we had an opportunity to talk about the upcoming 75th anniversary of SK Arts. So it was really good, very positive.

[16:00]

And I can just kind of share with you something that Cory Furman, the board Chair, said. He said, “This increase is a positive sign for the agency and our partners in the arts community, and we thank the Government and the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport for their confidence in our work . . . [It’s] a wonderful way to mark the 75th anniversary of SK Arts.”

And I know they’re planning to do some . . . I don’t know if you had a chance to talk to them about the program, what they’re planning to do to celebrate the 75th, and it’s pretty exciting stuff. So if you have a chance you may want to ask Michael about what they are going to be doing, because it’s going to be pretty exciting and it’s really going to be widespread.

So Twyla, if you would like to also maybe elaborate on the funding.

Ms. MacDougall: — Okay. Hi. Twyla MacDougall, deputy minister. Thanks for the question. And I do want to say that every year we do work with our stakeholders, and they do provide us some budget information and recommendations and we talk them through it. So every year we talk to the likes of SK Arts and, you know, this past year was no different. And I think what resulted was a nice balanced approach of over \$3 million increase in arts, culture, sport, and heritage this year. So I thought it was a balanced approach.

Maybe the other piece that is worth mentioning here is that the Government of Saskatchewan also supports arts and culture through SaskCulture with . . . approximately \$16 million was allocated in ’21-22 to various grants and programs through the culture sector. And that’s done through the Sask Lotteries Trust Fund, and SK Arts does receive some of that funding as well. So there are other areas that certainly we encourage that funding.

And then I guess finally what I would say is that we do remain responsive to the needs of our stakeholders and try a balanced approach every year as we’re going through the budget. And we’ll continue to work with those folks.

Mr. Teed: — So how is your ministry . . . or what are you hearing from those stakeholders? How are they coping with inflationary costs? Because kind of what we’d seen was a budget that had kind of been flatlined for quite a while. Very welcome investment, as noted, but you know, like over a longer period, if you don’t meet inflation you’re essentially getting cuts.

So how are the stakeholders you’re having conversations with, how are these organizations dealing with maybe inflationary pressures across the board, maybe across the ministry? And what are stakeholders saying about the cuts that they’re having to make? Or how are they getting creative with, you know, less money every year due to those inflationary pressures?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Did you want to answer that?

Mr. French: — Yeah, sure. Dan French, assistant deputy minister with the stewardship division. We have quite close

relationships with our stakeholders and we support them, you know, in-kind services, well in some cases. But what we've heard is . . . Of course, you know, there is a pressure that everybody's feeling and thankfully they have been creative.

And I think you mentioned that, Michael specifically, saying that they haven't had to touch the granting fund. And this year they reiterated now, thankfully, for the lift. I think most would agree like, you know, the lift was significant but you know, ultimately I think most would argue that it is a challenging time. But we support them. And again they have been creative and thankfully they haven't touched that granting fund. And this year we'll ensure that as well.

Mr. Teed: — What about inflationary pressures across the ministry? So arts, or SK Arts being one example. How are you seeing other aspects of the ministry coping with inflationary pressures?

Ms. MacDougall: — Sure, I can take that question. And a very good question because it does take some creative thinking and innovative ways and finding new efficiencies. And certainly within the ministry that's really what we focus on. We've got a strong strategic and corporate services area that we spend a lot of time on improvement ideas and initiatives.

And you know, you also have to make some hard choices once in a while as far as are there programs that are no longer providing that or meeting our mandate? And we're thinking through those by doing some program reviews and maybe making adjustments in them. I would say we haven't eliminated any, so that's not a question you need to ask. But certainly that's the work that we undertake within the ministry. And so far we have been able to find savings there as have our stakeholders who really work through it that way.

Mr. Teed: — Have we seen any loss in staffing? I know one of the comments here I got was just doing more with less, you know, being creative. Have we seen any staffing reduction, FTEs [full-time equivalent] across the ministry, you know, where they've had to scrimp or save?

Ms. MacDougall: — I can answer that too. I know our FTEs consistently have remained the same over the few years. And in fact this year we've been able to increase by two FTEs, given some of the recent pressures particularly in our marketing initiatives. So yeah. So no. And students, students. We hire as many students as we can get every summer. We employ a lot of students in the park system.

Mr. Teed: — Fantastic. I know we mentioned challenging times, of course. We know that this was a budget with a huge surplus. What was the conversation like with maybe the Minister of Finance at the table saying, hey you know, we've seen flatline budgets in some of our areas. Was it a difficult conversation, you know, to say, hey we've got such a large surplus sitting here. Can we see some of that in our PCS [Parks, Culture and Sport]?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Right. Well I guess I'd like to correct you in something in that we didn't have a flatline budget. We did have a lift, right? We had a lift in SK Arts; we had a lift in Creative Saskatchewan; we had increase into our park maintenance and things like that; increase in our FTEs.

I guess you know, we are so fortunate to have a Finance minister that really takes her job to heart and wants to ensure that the public purse is being well looked after and to ensure that the money, like as you said, that was there would be able to pay down the debt. And by doing that, you're able to make some long-term choices because you're not paying the same interest rate. So it's a win-win for everyone in that respect.

But like I say, when you say flatlined, we were not flatlined. We had increases to aspects throughout the ministry.

Mr. Teed: — I appreciate that. I know, and it was mentioned kind of in the response, was the 2.5 per cent increase. We notice that kind of across the board in this budget, that we know that the provincial inflation was sitting at 6.6 per cent. 2.5 per cent is, yes, an increase, but it doesn't really hit the inflation.

Again after so many years of not seeing inflationary increases, is 2.5 per cent enough to continue to see the quality services and programming that each of these, you know, the parks and the culture and our sport organizations, is it enough to see them continue to thrive? Or are they going to have to continue to be creative, even in a year where funding, we did see a little bump?

Ms. MacDougall: — I guess in response to that, is it enough, I think really what this government tried to do was provide a balanced approach right across. And we're competing with, you know, some pretty substantial and necessary services. So that has to be balanced every year. And so I believe that the 2.5 per cent was a good increase for these stakeholders.

And I guess what I would reiterate is that I also believe that because we have that good relationship with our stakeholders, and that annually we go through their budget process again and reconsider it yearly, that there's always that opportunity to look at different things.

Mr. Teed: — Perfect, okay.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — I'd like to also add too, you know, when we sit down, all of us sit down, I mean we really go through everything very carefully to say, how can we do the best job possible for this ministry but also then for the services of the people of Saskatchewan. So we really spend a lot of time just, all of us, like just working through how do we make sure that projects are being able to be funded.

You know, it's really difficult when you come in after Health or Education or Social Services, you know, because those big three, they take up a substantial amount of the provincial coffers. And so I mean they provide very important services, but we also know that we kind of put the fun into Saskatchewan. And so you know, it's really important for us to be able to do that in a balanced way but also just taking into account how best we can serve the people of this province.

Mr. Teed: — Thank you so much. I'm going to move into some questions. So very recently we've seen a shift. So we've seen liquor move and the lottery corporation become a new entity. We know that the lottery corporation is vital for the health and well-being of Parks, Culture and Sport for a lot of the stakeholders. I maybe would ask is, how much was available to the lottery corporation to distribute this year? And how much is going to

those three globals? And would you have a five-year breakdown of that?

Mr. French: — I don't have the five-year breakdown handy. Perhaps Tracy behind me may. But so this year it was approximately about \$65 million that was available for sports, culture, and recreation . . .

A Member: — Your name. You have to say your name.

Mr. French: — Oh, sorry. Dan French, assistant deputy minister. Sorry, sorry. And then the breakdown for the globals for last year was, the sport was roughly around 27 million and culture was around 19 million and recreation was roughly around 8 million.

Mr. Teed: — Perfect. Could you provide details on the dollar allocations to the various components of Creative Saskatchewan?

Mr. French: — Yeah, we don't have the exact figures of that, but we know Creative Saskatchewan is a beneficiary of that fund.

Mr. Teed: — Is it something that we could receive the five-year, like a breakdown for this year, and then a five-year breakdown after estimates? Or is that something that could be tabled?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — I'm going to ask for a clarification. Are you talking for the last five years of Lotteries or are you asking for what went into Creative?

Mr. Teed: — Kind of maybe both. Like was there funding from Lotteries that goes into Creative Saskatchewan? And if not then what was the ministry's send to Creative Saskatchewan for this year, and then what was the five-year rate on that?

Mr. French: — If I understand the question correctly, so this is an arm's-length organization. So I'm not sure if you're familiar with how the globals work through the Sask Lotteries and through Sask Sport. So SaskCulture works quite closely with organizations including SK Arts, and in this case perhaps Creative Sask. So their annual reports are available online, such as SPRA as well, Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association, and it's close to Sask Sport as well. So through their website you can see, and I believe it does go back a number of years through the annual reports, on what they should fund.

Mr. Teed: — Thank you so much.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — And I'm going to add because of the way we funded through Sask Lotteries, it's arm's-length from government. So no one can accuse us of picking winners and losers in that we don't have, as the ministry, we do not have a say who gets what, right, with that.

[16:15]

And you know what's interesting is when I sat at the tables with the provinces, territories, and the federal ministers — sport ministers, cultural ministers — they are all very jealous of this kind of funding because a lot of them, the lottery money goes right into the GRF [General Revenue Fund] and then somebody's doling it out, whereas this way it is arm's-length. We don't make . . . We are not picking winners and losers. In fact everyone has the opportunity, every organization has the opportunity to make

application and then their funding is assessed on what they have provided for information.

And like I said, across the country this style of funding is looked at with, I mean, jealousy to be honest, because it is substantial funding that . . . We wouldn't be able to do it within the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport.

Mr. Teed: — There is no thought to changing this model with the shifting . . .

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — No, and in fact I have been assured that this may have moved into a new Crown. However we have been assured very strongly that this funding will not be altered, that this is secured. And I've made it clear to them that it is not to be touched, and they've assured us that this funding, this model will stay the same.

Mr. Teed: — Perfect. Thank you so much. I'm going to jump back to Creative Saskatchewan. And you had mentioned in your preamble about some of the projects. I have noted that we have 23 productions funded last year. Is there any numbers that you can give me about the cost to fund these productions, expected revenue, number of local jobs generated from those productions?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — I think Dan's got the spreadsheet here. It's pretty impressive.

Mr. French: — Yeah, so we can't really comment on the specific productions because some are still quite confidential from the producers, but we can certainly expand on some of the numbers. Can you please repeat the specific questions?

Mr. Teed: — Oh maybe like I guess, cost to fund some of these. Or maybe we can move to like what is the revenue. Do we have a revenue number tied to funding of these 23 productions? I know with the grant, it was intended that those dollars stay in the province. So is there a figure that you have said, okay this is the figure that we're going to make from this money that we're putting forward? And do you have any jobs numbers?

Mr. French: — Yeah, we have all that. And in fact Creative Sask has done quite the spreadsheet for us. So for the grant money specifically that's going to be allocated this year, the total economic output, so 17 million, total economic output is around 84 million approximately. The Saskatchewan spend is projected to be about 45 million, and the number of jobs is expected to be around 380 jobs, and again on Saskatchewan's spend. So it's roughly almost approximately \$5 for every dollar spent, dollar invested.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — But I'm going to . . . I misspoke. We were just informed, in fact, you only have an hour on the other, so you're good to go. Sorry about that. I just wanted to see you sweat a little, and it worked.

Mr. Teed: — I know. My first budget estimates and I'm wiping the sweat off my brow here.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — What have you done to me?

Mr. Teed: — Yeah.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — No, sorry I caused that major panic, but you're doing good. Okay.

Mr. Teed: — It's all good.

Within Creative Saskatchewan, how are those productions chosen? What is the criteria there?

Mr. French: — So they have a very in-depth criteria and policy and programs in place. So its like, you know, again this is their business of course. And it's not necessarily first-come, first-served, but they do have some criteria around where they . . . You know, it's very difficult to wait and foresee if a bigger production might come.

So again they focus on Saskatchewan labour, goods, and services. And John Hopkins Sound Stage has actually been the busiest it's ever been this last fiscal, and we're forecasting it to be even busier this year.

Mr. Teed: — Was there ever any study — I know we ask this probably every year — was there ever any study done of the efficacy of that tax credit versus the grant? We probably do continue to ask, and maybe hopefully we'll one day we'll see that. I think there . . .

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — I guess what I will say is that — and you weren't around during that whole time — this is a totally different kind of program. The previous tax credit did not assure that Saskatchewan taxpayers' money would stay in the province.

The way we've set this program up today, the money has to be spent in the province of Saskatchewan. So it's very responsible to the taxpayers. Because we heard loud and clear they weren't quite sure, or comfortable, with having hard-earned taxpayers' money leaving the province. Whereas when we set this up this way, it's to ensure that the money that is being allocated for this is money that is being spent right here in the province, and creating jobs right here in the province.

So that's the difference. It's night and day and our industry is really pleased. As I think in my opening statements, I stated that, in fact, I think this is one of the most aggressive because it speaks to creating and building the industry here as opposed to hiring out and having the money . . . And the money was leaving.

And the thing is, we have to be so proud of our CEO [chief executive officer] over there, Erin Dean. She's top-notch. She really knows her job and she has put together a really crack team of individuals who . . . They go through and assess everything very carefully to ensure that, like I say, that the money that is being allocated for these projects is staying here in the province. So it's very responsible in that respect.

What's also really exciting, and I think it was in the preamble, it's across the whole province too. And that's what I think is probably one of the real benefits is that . . . Like you know, Maple Creek. Maple Creek was hopping. And the whole community, they just, they bought into it because they were included. You know, it wasn't Christmas, and yet what did they do because it was Christmas scenes? They redecorated that whole town. They really . . . everyone got excited, you know, so they could see something different in their community. But it was money being

spent right here, right in Saskatchewan, right in those communities. So it's benefiting. And that's what we mean when we say growth that works for everyone.

Mr. Teed: — I don't have a lot of time left so I'm going to jump into my last question. And we know that last budget we saw a big increase on the PST [provincial sales tax] on arts, culture, entertainment. Were there conversations with stakeholders in this last round of stakeholders asking, is that PST repealable? And if not, were there conversations about having money that was earned from that sector returned to the sector?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — That would be a question that would be put to the Finance minister.

Mr. Teed: — I appreciate that. I know the one thought was, is that in my conversations with stakeholders, you know, we were able to see about . . . we estimated \$22 million was earned off of the PST applied to tickets, memberships. You know, this was a PST that was applied and it was kind of . . . I feel that the stakeholders weren't very impressed. They're dealing with it, but you know, they're saying, why didn't we see a \$22 million investment back? If we're seeing granting dollars earning so much, why haven't we seen any of that money come back? And if not, where was that money spent?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well that money would have been spent in hospitals. That money would have been spent in schools. That money would have been spent say, to up the finances for seniors. So I mean that . . . And I think the Finance minister answered that question quite well today in the House during question period when she said, how do we pay for some of these programs? It's taxation that pays for some of these programs. So it's not something that's done without serious thought.

Mr. Teed: — Any future opportunities to see some of those revenue dollars come back into the culture, or PCS? Is that a conversation?

Ms. MacDougall: — I can answer that, and it's similar probably to a question that I answered earlier, is that every year we do extensive work re-examining the budgets and then presenting something to the Minister of Finance. And so we'll continue to do that and go from there.

Mr. Teed: — I'm going to last jump over just to parks in my last five minutes here I think, or I've got a little bit of time here. So the budget allocation has investments for projects in parks, notably Rowan's Ravine. We've been hearing a lot from our municipal partners though and stakeholders around the province about their dissatisfaction with the PST on construction and limiting that. Is the PST on construction being paid throughout these new developments baked into the investments that we're seeing in our parks? Is that accounted for?

Ms. Johnson: — Hi. I'm Jennifer Johnson. I'm the ADM responsible for the parks division with the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport. And so yes, we account for the PST for capital projects. It's been accounted for and incorporated but separate from our capital budget.

Mr. Teed: — Good. And you know, with that increase are you seeing that it's more difficult to activate projects in the ministry?

Ms. Johnson: — No, I wouldn't say so. We've had lots of success actually, activating projects. We have a five-year capital plan, so we're planning well in advance and adjusting our budgets annually accordingly. So as we see all sorts of inflationary pressures happen, we adjust accordingly and then do as many projects as we can. And we've been successful in building lots of really great things in our parks in the last few years.

Mr. Teed: — Fantastic. I know I've had some feedback around third-party production of camping sites and going into . . . You know, I've heard some frustration from folks who are seeing these new developments, camping sites being up, but they're going out to, you know, private development. What has kind of spurred that? Has it always been private developers coming into parks and creating these spaces, or is this a new development?

Ms. Johnson: — So I think you're probably referring to long-term seasonal campgrounds, and we've been doing long-term seasonal campgrounds in our parks for at least a decade. What those are . . . The long-term seasonal campgrounds are different than our seasonal sites. So long-term seasonal, they can leave their camper there year after year. They can usually build a small deck, shed, something like that. So it's much different than sort of our core camping program, and it targets different markets. It's very much like a cottage subdivision as opposed to nightly camping or just seasonal camping.

And so yes, it's been delivered by the private sector for a number of years. We partner with the private sector on a lot of things — golf courses, restaurants, gas stations, etc. — and that's just so that we can offer more to our visitors. The private businesses . . . It stimulates local economies. It helps support their small businesses. It also takes away some of the capital investment and pressures and risk from government. So it's a really good hybrid and has been quite successful.

Mr. Teed: — Fantastic. I think I have a bit of time left. As far as the processes for determining those private . . . What processes are you using to determine . . . You know, I'm sure that there's policies in place. I just say that, you know, sometimes you hear from folks that have experienced frustration, the choices of those private corporations, you know, dissatisfaction with maybe how they're going about. What's the process of choosing who you partner with?

Ms. Johnson: — We have sort of some guiding principles. We call it our business development framework. And so it outlines our principles in terms of what we'd like to see in our parks and what our visitors have told us they'd like to see in our parks. So you know, recreation opportunities that are appropriate for a park setting, still protect the landscape, and yet give visitors a reason to visit the park and a way to recreate in the park. We do have a dual mandate in parks to both protect and provide recreational opportunities. So we try to achieve that balance even with our businesses.

[16:30]

Now in terms of actually soliciting and awarding to private businesses, that's always through an RFP [request for proposal] process. So open, transparent, gives everyone in the public the opportunity to review the qualifications and then bid on it. And

then we have a number of criteria that we evaluate through the RFP process and then award to the successful proponent.

Mr. Teed: — Perfect. And I am imagining it's a very small process to the announced apparel company that was chosen. Is it a similar . . . Yeah there was a fairly transparent process.

Ms. Johnson: — Yes, we did a public RFP process. It was open for quite a long amount of time, and then we evaluated the proposals and awarded accordingly. And so Saskamper Apparel was the successful proponent and you will be able to see SaskParks merchandise in Sask parks this summer. And we're quite excited about that.

Mr. Teed: — It is exciting. Thank you so much. I think that has hit my hour window. It goes by fast. I very much appreciate all of your time, Minister, and your officials for answering my questions, and thank you so much. And I will pass my baton onto my colleague who will continue with the Status of Women.

The Chair: — I'd like to thank Mr. Teed for his questions. And now I'll have Ms. Bowes substituting for Ms. Ritchie.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Can we just ask for a moment? Because we have to change out officials.

The Chair: — Yeah, we'll take a . . .

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Just a short break, just so we can change everyone out that's coming in.

The Chair: — Okay. Sure. Sure. We'll take a couple minute break and then we'll . . .

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Yeah, and I do want to thank the officials that came to answer questions in regards to this aspect of the ministry. Also to the member opposite for a really good discussion and good questions, even though we scared you with two hours. That'll be next year. But anyways, thank you so much. You'll have to tell us about your trip to India another time.

Mr. Teed: — Absolutely.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — See if you would have had two hours, you could have used that for . . .

The Chair: — I think Ms. Bowes would've been happy.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

The Chair: — I'd like to welcome everybody back as we resume consideration with vote 27, Parks, Culture and Sport, central management and services, subvote (PC01). I will ask the minister to give some opening remarks on the Status of Women.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Thank you very much, Chair. So for the rest of our time here today, we will be discussing the Status of Women. And this is the branch in the ministry and for the Government of Saskatchewan that has a specific focus on women and girls in our province. And I am joined by my officials, Twyla MacDougall, the deputy minister of Parks, Culture and Sport; Bernadet Hamill, the executive director of the Status of Women. And we also have my chief of staff, Molly, here.

I spoke earlier today on how our parks and stewardship division contributes to the betterment and well-being of Saskatchewan people and our economy. And I highlighted the financial investment made through the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport, investments that benefit individuals, communities, and our economic sectors.

And now we're going to shift a little because some investments can't be measured in dollars alone. The Status of Women office is that kind of an investment. While they don't deliver programs, they lead and coordinate the development of initiatives across government. In doing so, they make sure our programs, services, and policies align with the government's priorities, and support the needs of women and girls in our province. And while they don't provide direct services, their work serves more than half of our population and impacts the entire province.

For the next I guess it's two hours, we're going to talk about how the Status of Women office helps shape the life for all of us, because when we improve the life for women and girls, we improve the life for everyone. The Status of Women's strategic direction and everyday work is centred around women's social and economic priorities. More specifically, they focus on the safety, health, and economic prosperity of Saskatchewan women and girls.

The office engages with all levels of government and with community partners to achieve this goal, and they do this in a few ways. First, through various tables where they are a leader, an advisor, a facilitator, connector, and a champion, they help embed the evidence-based best practices in cross-ministry and federal and provincial initiatives.

And that is a big part of their work, and I can give you some examples of what it looks like. They provide the leadership to establish a provincial-territorial table of senior officials responsible for the Status of Women. This result is stronger relationships with our provincial and territorial partners and enhances effectiveness of the work across Canada. The office also has been front and centre in the discussion with the federal government since the province has signed on to the national action plan last year. Saskatchewan's voice is not alone in conversation that impacts our citizens with our federal counterparts.

Here's another example. When we think about the economy, it tends to be in general terms as though the economy is the same thing for everyone, and we know it isn't. For an entrepreneur to be successful, they need to access capital. Yet women have traditionally had more difficulty accessing the funds they need to scale their business and expand their market base. It's a broad issue that doesn't just rest with government, yet it's one of the ways we can help move forward.

The Status of Women office works closely with the ministry that focuses on our government's economy, to make sure women are represented and that women have more opportunities to contribute to Saskatchewan's economic growth. The office brings that gender lens to the work done across government so that we know women's voices and women's needs are being considered and included in both our current work and in our future plans.

The Status of Women office has co-led government's work on gender-based violence over the last few years in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice. They co-chair the Government of Saskatchewan inter-ministerial committee on interpersonal violence and abuse. They also provide leadership on best practices and how we approach the provision and delivery of the programs, services, and public policy that targets interpersonal violence and abuse, particularly gender-based violence which disproportionately victimizes women and children.

The office has been a strong partner in bringing federal agreements to Saskatchewan including the 1 million in federal funding we recently announced to expand the crisis line. Their work also focuses on developing Face the Issue, a campaign to raise awareness about gender-based violence, a campaign that is helping to change attitudes so that we can change the dial. Ending gender-based violence is the goal, and to do so we must first be able to talk about it.

I had the distinct privilege to present Face the Issue at the United Nations this year during the UN [United Nations] Commission on the Status of Women conference. Now this was a wonderful opportunity to showcase the work done in Saskatchewan to increase awareness and help end gender-based violence.

Through Face the Issue campaign, we are using digital technology to increase public awareness about gender-based violence and change attitudes and beliefs that have for far too long normalized abuse and violence against women and girls.

The videos are streamed across multiple social media channels in French, English, and two Indigenous languages, Dene and Cree. They are linked to the provincial online crisis web page that has additional information and resources in both Canadian official languages. And to enhance safety for vulnerable women and girls, they are first directed to a pop-up that explains how to exit that site quickly and clear their browser history. We are seeing great results based on the number of views and the feedback through social media channels.

This year we will release the third phase of Face the Issue campaign, and the focus will be on younger women, ages 18 to 24. The goal is to help them realize the early signs of abuse. It's far too easy for people to rationalize their concerns and their doubts, their instincts, even when they know deep there's a problem with a behaviour they are experiencing in a relationship. Now this next phase will help raise awareness with this younger demographic and again start this very important discussion.

Talking about things openly is the first step. It brings people together, exposes a problem, and it leads to action, and that is when change happens. Gender-based violence demonstrates the link between each priority of the Status of Women office. It highlights how safety, health, economic prosperity is all so closely connected. In a relationship where there is interpersonal violence or abuse, women without economic independence are far more likely to stay in that relationship simply because they lack the options. Now let's reverse that. When women have economic security, they have more choices. They have more power and more agency over their own lives.

I mentioned a few minutes ago that Saskatchewan signed on to

the national action plan to end gender-based violence. And this is a four-year strategy between the federal government and all provinces, a reminder that gender-based violence affects people in every province, every territory, every part of the world.

The Status of Women office is leading the negotiations with the federal government on the terms of that agreement. While gender-based violence is not just a Saskatchewan problem, our office is making sure that the strategy reflects Saskatchewan's unique needs. And I look forward to sharing more about the plan, that agreement, when we finalize our discussions with the federal government.

Now before I wrap up, there are two recent events I want to highlight where the Status of Women office provided both leadership and sponsorship. In February the office partnered with the Science Centre to hold a Girls in STEAM Conference. STEAM is short for science, technology, engineering, arts, and math. Used to be called STEM [science, technology, engineering, and math], but now we call it STEAM. While it was on February 9th, it was held to mark the International Day of Women and Girls in Science which is recognized on February the 11th.

[16:45]

More than 2,000 girls in grades 6 to 9 attended. That's across our whole province. They met women working in STEAM careers, participated in hands-on learning, and discovered how interesting and engaging this work is.

It's so important that we encourage young women and girls to explore these careers, yes, because these sectors are growing. This is where more and more higher wage jobs are being created. Also because we need women to help shape technology that will drive our future for all of us.

Again it's that unique lens where we make the difference because women use technology just like everyone else, yet it's vital they aren't just consumers. We want women to be creators, founders, and leaders in STEAM. By creating these safe spaces for girls to explore these career options, we can help them see these possibilities and how much fun they can have.

Now the second event I mentioned was being held in March, and this was the first Women Breaking Barriers conference. And I say the first because it was such a great success that we plan to hold it again next year. Hundreds of people from across the province participated in the event, which was held in Regina and simulcast to eight other locations in our province.

We had a group of panellists, successful women who shared their own stories, their own experiences how they navigated the path from where they started and where they are today. And they talked about the pivotal moments, the ones that aren't planned for, aren't expected, the moments that changed the trajectory of their life.

They also spoke about people who helped them along the way: men and women who shared their time, their knowledge, words of wisdom; people that helped them open doors. Now none of us do this alone. We have families, we have friends, we have partners, we have teams, we have teachers, and we have mentors.

And while there was hundreds of points throughout the day that made me stop and reflect — what we said and how we could create real positive change — one that struck me deeply was this idea of sponsors. A mentor will listen and provide advice. They'll share their own experiences and help you talk through things. A sponsor will push you, promote you to others, and help clear the path for you to move forward in your life and in your career.

The conference was a great success and, as I said, one that we will continue to hold each year, and it's an opportunity to bring like-minded people together and keep the conversation going.

I had the opportunity to speak with other provincial ministers responsible for the status of women about the event and how we kept the cost to participate low so more women could attend. And you know, my counterpart asked us to share what we did so they too can provide the same kind of opportunities to women in their own provinces because bringing women together to connect, to share, to learn from each other, to support each other in growing their financial independence and our economy.

Now the Status of Women will continue to provide leadership within Saskatchewan and nationally. We will continue to feature federal-provincial research, coordinate the development of recommendations and solutions to meet women where they are at and help them to get to where they want to be.

And now, Chair, I will take questions. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister, for those opening comments. I'll now open it up for questions. Ms. Bowes.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Welcome to the minister and to her officials. Ms. Hamill, I believe this is the first time that we are meeting here today. It's a pleasure to meet you and welcome, since you assumed your new role. I hope you've been enjoying it. I'm sure it's very rewarding and challenging work. So I'm prepared to get right down to business and start my questioning, Mr. Chair.

So to start off, looking at the estimates. The estimates show that total funding for the Status of Women office in this year's budget has increased from last year's budget of 375,000 to 485,000. We are happy to see an increase here of course, as the Status of Women office is, in our view, chronically underfunded. I would like to know does any of this year's funding originate from the federal government and, if so, how much?

Ms. MacDougall: — I can answer the budget questions, as always. So to answer that question, it is too early to tell if any federal funding will be allocated towards this increase. We're still in negotiations, and either way we're committed to this additional increase that we hope really will bring the national action plan along greatly.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you very much. I did see in the ministry's '23-24 business plan, it's highlighted that the \$110,000 increase in this year's budget for the Status of Women office is to facilitate Saskatchewan participation in the national action plan to address gender-based violence. And so what I'd like to know is what specifically will these new additional funds be used for?

Ms. Hamill: — Hi as well. Nice to meet you as well. I'm just going to let you know that I'm deaf. I'm hard of hearing, so if you don't mind speaking a little closer to your mike when you're talking, I can hear you better. But I did hear your question. And so, just . . . Bernadet Hamill, executive director, Status of Women. Sorry about that.

So to answer your question . . . Actually, do you mind repeating it? Just I want to make sure that I caught it correctly.

Ms. Bowes: — Yes, I can repeat the question. With the increased funding to the Status of Women office budget of \$110,000, we'd like to know what specifically these funds will be used for.

Ms. Hamill: — So the funds will be used, as the deputy minister alluded to, to helping support bring that national action plan into implementation for Saskatchewan that requires a . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, sorry. Did you hear it? Okay . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yeah.

So we're in negotiations with that, and so part of the work is to continue to foster those negotiations so that we end up with a plan that's reflective of Saskatchewan's unique needs and considers our voice within that. As you can appreciate, those negotiations are confidential until we get to the point where we are able to sign an agreement with the federal government. Those are their terms, not our terms, but we have to follow them. So more information will come, hopefully not too distant. We're making good progress there.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — I'd like to add to this also. As I said, we have signed on to endorse the national action plan to end gender-based violence. And like I say, we're currently working with the federal government to ensure it meets the needs of the province.

We did have a bit of, you know, some issues that we had to make sure we ironed out because we did not want the federal government to be prescriptive on what kind of programs that they wanted for Saskatchewan. And one of the things when we brought this to the FPT [federal-provincial-territorial] table, other provinces and territories realized that they hadn't maybe fully realized that the federal government was trying to be very prescriptive.

And you could imagine, when you look at a country and the kind of population across this whole country, the territories' needs are completely different than, say, Ontario's needs. And yes, gender-based violence is on top of all of our minds. But the kind of programming, it needs to be specifically tailored to meet the needs of every province and every territory, and not have what the federal government at first, I think, envisioned, like a cookie cutter. And so Bernadet has been just working just hand in hand with the officials to ensure that Saskatchewan needs are going to be met because otherwise it's not going to be utilized to the fullest extent that we know it's needed.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you for that. I appreciate that. And I wonder, you know, ongoing negotiations notwithstanding, if you're able to comment on some of the unique needs that have been identified for a plan specific to Saskatchewan?

Ms. Hamill: — It's hard to talk about it while we're developing Saskatchewan's implementation plan, which is part of the

agreement that goes into pieces that are being negotiated with the agreement.

You know, we can talk about the priorities Saskatchewan has, which we've had the inter-ministerial committee on interpersonal violence and abuse for a number of years. So Saskatchewan's had some really quality actions and plans in place for quite a substantial amount of time.

I think sometimes people don't realize just how much work is going on in Saskatchewan as we work across the partners, across all of the Government of Saskatchewan, all the ministries, all the agencies to ensure that they each have an opportunity to identify what areas that they are working in, what programs and services that they have, what policies they have that could be enhanced or expanded upon, if you will.

This is, you know, four years of short-term funding, and so we're working with them to help them develop the quality plans that meet the pillars of the Saskatchewan interpersonal violence and abuse which are prevention, intervention, accountability, as well as must meet the pillars and priorities that the federal government has set forth within the national action plan to end gender-based violence that they're holding all provinces and territories to.

So it's a lot of work. Some of it is obviously still very confidential that we can't discuss publicly as of yet.

Ms. Bowes: — Yes, I understand. Thank you for that. Minister, last month our Justice critic and I wrote to you and the Minister of Justice inquiring about the status of Saskatchewan signing on to the national action plan. According to the response you provided March 20th, the province had at that time still not signed on to the national action plan despite endorsing the plan last November.

And so I guess my question is, understanding that there are negotiations that need to happen and that you said you hoped it will be signed on to soon, we do have questions about that we're wondering if you're able to answer. Are you aware of how much of that total 539.3 million in federal dollars that has been committed will be made available to Saskatchewan and on what conditions?

Ms. Hamill: — So part of the terms and confidentiality around the negotiations prohibits us from sharing any information around the actual dollar figure. That is to be completed within the negotiations so we'll be able to speak to that once the agreement is signed and approved by Canada . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, certainly, as soon as we can. You bet. We'll be glad to share it.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, well thank you. I'll stay tuned. I'll be excited to hear more about those details. I'd like to know, moving on, what is the breakdown in spending for this year's total Status of Women office budget of \$485,000?

Ms. MacDougall: — Sure, I can provide you some details on that. So yes, you're correct, it's \$485,000 this year. Of that, 361,000 is for salaries. And 24,000 approximately is for operational expenses, you know, such as travel, office supplies, contract services, learning and development. And then we have 100,000 that we set aside for transfers to third-party sponsorships

in regards to Status of Women office priorities.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. So I think it looks like from last year a pretty substantial increase from salaries. I think last year you had mentioned it was 260,000. And can you let me know what that accounts for, that increase in salaries?

Ms. MacDougall: — Sure, most definitely. The major change is that we do plan to staff a term full-time equivalent position, and it would be over the four-year term of the national action plan is our initial intent. And we're in the process of working through that posting right now.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. And have you identified the salary for that position?

Ms. MacDougall: — That's all still going through Public Service Commission.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. My other question around salaries is, I believe last year you had said that there were two permanent full-time and one summer student. And has that changed since last year?

[17:00]

Ms. Hamill: — So last year for '22-23, and that is the equivalent, there's two permanent full-time staff assigned to the Status of Women's office. Also we pay for salaries of summer students; there was a summer student last year as well as paid student executive internships with Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. Thank you. Then I was just going to come back to, Deputy Minister, some of your answers there. You have mentioned 100,000 to transfers to third parties, and can you give some more specifics around those transfers?

Ms. Hamill: — Certainly, I'd be happy to speak to that. So the Status of Women's office priorities are set around supporting women in the economy, helping to secure financial independence, as well as supporting education and community outreach initiatives that reduce . . . We want to end gender-based violence, but we want to target interpersonal violence and abuse as part of the Saskatchewan priorities.

So this past year in '22-23, we had quite a number . . . We don't have a large bucket of money — \$100,000 is a lot — but what we do with it is we try to ensure that it's being shared in different pockets around the province. And so this past year, you know, I'm happy to share where those funds have gone to. Would you like a listing of that?

Ms. Bowes: — Okay.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Yeah, we'll read that off for you because I think that's really important.

Ms. Bowes: — Yes, just briefly that would be great.

Ms. Hamill: — Sure. So again, as I mentioned, expanding community outreach program to prevent gender-based violence was provided to the Moose Jaw Transition House, which enabled

them to extend their work that they do in the rural area around Moose Jaw. So not just the city centre.

Family Service Regina was provided some funds to expand the community education and violence prevention programming here in Regina and the area as well that they serve around the city.

The Piwapan Women's Centre was provided with funding in La Ronge to support a three-day, Indigenous-led approach to safety and well-being. This included information sessions on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. And that was a really interesting conference that they provided because they, you know, looked at traditional use of the lands and the environment to incorporate very different elements for the women that attended the conference. And they also focus on men and boys, too. The work that that centre does is just quite outstanding.

We provided funds to Hope Restored in Saskatoon to support community outreach education to prevent human trafficking. They not only have their safe house but they do a lot of community engagement initiatives. We provided funds to the coalition of the Saskatchewan sexual assault centres to improve prevention programming to reduce sexual violence. And again that is across the province, so the coalition represents sexual assault centres in Regina, North Battleford, as well as other areas of the province. I don't have the full listing in front of me.

We provided funds to sponsor the Women Breaking Barriers and Girls in STEAM conferences to support women and girls in their economic and academic pursuits to enter into higher levels of not only participating in the economy, but leading the economy and providing leadership and, as the minister mentioned, sponsorship to each other.

We provided funds to Dress for Success Regina, as well as Dress for Success Saskatoon, to support women entering or re-entering into the workforce. As well, there's a lot of wraparound work and education and supports that those women receive. Many of them are coming out of abusive relationships as they're seeking to enter . . . to find work. And then we also provided funds to RaiseHer, to the International Women's Day fundraiser that they put on to support . . . which the funds all went, I'm happy to say, to the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] here in Regina.

So those are just some of the priorities that we've had and sponsored investments in the communities to the grassroots organizations across our province that are, you know, doing that boots-on-the-ground work to ensure that education and support is out there for women and girls, but also for men and boys in violence prevention.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you. That's very good to have that list of investments. And I'd like to know, how is it that your office determines who will get funding and in what amount? It must be hard to pick.

Ms. Hamill: — Well we have processes and protocols in place, which includes organizations or individuals representing the organizations complete an application process. So you know, we want to know what the . . . We want to understand about their organization. We want to know what their goals are. We want to

understand about the specific initiative that they're seeking funding for, what are the outcomes, what are the performance measures that they have.

When it comes to evaluating who gets what, it is based on scrutinizing from the eyes of the priorities of the office, as I mentioned, the priorities being a focus on education in the areas of prevention of gender-based violence as well as supporting women's financial independence, safety, and security. So through those lenses is how determinations are made.

Ms. Bowes: — Great, yeah. Thanks. And then I guess just stemming from that, is there a process through your office to make different organizations aware of the application process, or does your office directly approach these organizations?

Ms. Hamill: — So I would say, like we do get inquiries that come. We have a Status of Women office email address, so we will receive inquiries there, requests through that process. I would say a number of them come through that way. We also do a lot of stakeholder engagement across the province in conversations with the different leaders of the organizations that are doing this work. So they're aware that we have a small envelope, you know, to put it out there at . . .

You know, some people do call for proposals, right, but the envelope of money is small. So you know, it's been the history of the office to really work on that personal engagement, right, to understand not only what people are looking for for support, but that also gives us an opportunity to really learn about their organizations.

Like each and every one of these folks that applied for funding this year, we made sure that we made time to meet with them, to engage with them not just around what they're asking for for funding support, but to really learn about the good work that they're doing so we can support it through a voice, not just the dollars that we have. Because you know, it's a small envelope but we have a mighty voice, and so often we're also advocating and talking to others about them as well.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you. Minister, just moving on a bit. Last year we discussed how Saskatchewan women earn on average \$5 less per hour than men. Can you tell me if that number has changed over the past year?

Ms. Hamill: — Hi. Thanks for bearing with us while we were trying to get our notes together. We have the information. So employment indicators for women in Saskatchewan are positive and continue to be an upward trend. According to Statistics Canada, as of December 22nd the employment rate for women over 15 years of age was 60.5 per cent, the second-highest in Canada. And women ages 24 to 54 was at 81.6 per cent, also the second-highest in Canada. The average weekly wage for women is sitting at just over \$1,000 — \$1,031.92 to be exact — an increase of \$146 from the average in 2019. So we're seeing that continued steady upward trajectory for women's wages in Saskatchewan.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay.

Ms. Hamill: — From January 2022 to January 2023, women saw an increase in employment of 4.9 per cent or, in real jobs, 12,900.

This is the highest gain on record since 1976, and mostly full-time jobs.

In 2022, the province recorded all-time highs for women's employment, from full-time employment and in the labour force. So when comparing this to pre-pandemic levels, there are fewer women that are holding multiple jobs. And in February 2023 of this year, we saw that women with multiple jobs fell even further, by nearly 12 per cent since February 2020. So gains are really out there for women.

Ms. Bowes: — Yeah, thank you for that.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Can I just . . . I guess that's one of, you know, the real reasons why we did the conference for Girls in STEAM, because we know that the jobs in STEAM are higher paying. So we want our girls to start and young women to start considering those kind of careers.

It was also one of the bases of why we had the Women Breaking Barriers. And the individuals who attended were all age groups and at all different points in their careers. And especially the panel talked about the importance of why you have mentors, but why you have sponsors. Because it's those sort of sponsors that really help them elevate to that C-suite, to that next position.

And it was so remarkable how, when people left that conference, the conversations they had. This was so informative but they also had a really good opportunity to network and connect. And you know, we all know that it's through, a lot of times, word of mouth we hear about a better job, a new opportunity, things like that. And those kind of connections were being made all day long, and the value from that was just so incredible. And like I said, it's through those sort of things that really will make a difference in career choices, but also in their trajectory within their careers.

Ms. Bowes: — All right. Thank you for that. I really appreciate that information. I'm not sure that it answered the question. So the question was if the number has changed over the year for the gender wage gap in Saskatchewan. But if that answer's not available, I will move on. I would like to know as well, is it the case that Saskatchewan's gender pay gap is still one of the highest in the country and that it remains higher than the national average?

Ms. Hamill: — I'm sorry. Can you repeat that you just said?

Ms. Bowes: — Yes. I said, is it the case that Saskatchewan's gender pay gap is one of the highest in the country still and that it remains higher than the national average?

[17:15]

Ms. Hamill: — So thank you for the question. I think one of the things that we try to do here is work with our ministries to get the most accurate information about our province as possible. And so when we gathered information from the Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety, LRWS, we asked for some of these breakdowns and they were just not quite ready yet. I believe that a lot of this data is forthcoming. It just wasn't available at the time that we were looking for it.

But in talking about women's wages, we are seeing that women's

average hourly earnings of being \$28.39 is up from \$27.58 in 2021, and so the average wage for women . . . If there is a huge wage gap, I think we need to understand and ask where those gaps are really occurring. And I think that's information that we will continue to try to derive to get those questions answered.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Stats Canada might . . . [inaudible].

Ms. Hamill: — Yeah.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. Thank you for that. And so you know, it may be the case if you're still waiting on information from Labour Relations and Workplace Safety that . . .

Ms. Hamill: — Or Stats Canada too. Some of it isn't out yet.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — That's where the information comes from, Stats Canada. And there is a significant lag in obtaining the information from them.

Ms. Bowes: — Yes. Yes, absolutely. So are you telling me . . . Is it the case then that the reliance is solely on Stats Canada? Or does the Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety do, you know, their own number crunching?

Ms. Hamill: — Well they do some of their own, right, but I guess I would just have to speak to it in this way: the problem is is that data is hard to come by, and the data to answer some of the critical questions is even harder to get because it's sitting in so many different pockets.

So one of the things that we try to do ourselves — I wouldn't put it on the shoulders of any particular ministry — is that we're trying to work with all of our ministry partners in Saskatchewan, as well with our federal counterparts, to try to access improved data so that we can answer different questions, particularly if there is wage gaps. Where are they? Where do they continue to sit? Where are the gains being made? I think there's a lot of information out there that we're just not having at our fingertips as best that we can.

So some of the work that we're doing is continuing to drive that work, particularly at the national level to say, you know, where do we come together, get out of the silos, if you will, so that we can understand and find those pieces of information that tell more holistic stories, so we can understand where the gaps are and then work towards solutions to help improve them.

Ms. Bowes: — Yeah, I think that makes great sense.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — I'd like to also add to that because, at the minister's table with the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for the status of women, a lot of the discussion was on the national action plan to end gender-based violence, and the women in the economy did not get the fulsome discussion that needed to be had.

And so we are ensuring that this summer, that becomes front and centre also on the table because, as I stated in my opening comments, is that women who have economic security also have a better chance of walking away from abusive relationships because they have that opportunity. Otherwise a lot of women choose to stay because they maybe feel that they don't have any

option and no place to go, whereas we know that if you feel economically strong, you're going to make decisions for yourself and for your family.

So we are ensuring that the women in the economy is going to have a fulsome discussion at the federal, provincial, and territorial table for the status of women.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. I'd like to just, you know, a bit further . . . I did have some further questions but it would seem that that information is not available. But I guess I would like to point out that, you know, in the business plan for '23-24, the number one goal listed for the Status of Women's office is increasing women's capacity to grow Saskatchewan's economy. And certainly in order to be able to assess that properly and to work towards it, you know, those numbers are very much needed.

So there is data that would be very important around, you know, how much lost economic output the current gender pay gap costs Saskatchewan's economy each year, which I imagine is quite substantial, and also how much the provincial GDP [gross domestic product] would be boosted if we closed that pay gap here in Saskatchewan. So hopefully, you know, you'll be receiving that information soon from the ministry.

And I guess, moving on from there but very much related, I would like to say and ask, Minister, for over two years now the opposition has been calling for and tabling petitions with hundreds of signatures from residents across Saskatchewan here in this legislature calling for pay equity legislation to be implemented by the provincial government. Saskatchewan unfortunately does remain one of only four provinces that has still not implemented pay equity legislation.

And so I know that from two years ago now, in estimates committee, you and I had talked about this very thing. At that time you had committed to conducting a jurisdictional scan around pay equity legislation, and then unfortunately you had subsequently declined to share the results of that scan with me as the critic for the Status of Women, even after the opposition was forced to file a freedom of information request.

And so I guess I find this difficult to reconcile seeing as, again, the number one goal identified in the '23-24 business plan for the Status of Women office is to "increase women's capacity to grow Saskatchewan's economy." So you know, to me it seems quite clear that pay equity legislation should be a fundamental component of this.

And I would like to know. The question here is, is it part of the Status of Women office's business plan for '23-24 to conduct any further research around pay equity legislation and to in turn advocate within your government for the implementation of pay equity legislation?

Ms. Hamill: — So thanks for the question. And yes, you're correct. In our business plan, it is to look at improving or providing opportunities for women to increase their capacity to grow Saskatchewan's economy. That's, you know, if you think about it for a holistic perspective, that is, you know, ensuring that women have opportunities to have seats at various tables when we talk about women in STEAM, we talk about women in industry and business, we talk about women in various pockets

in the private sector.

As far as pay equity goes, pay equity in the public sector is addressed through equal pay for equal work of equal value and pay equity policy framework. We do have Saskatchewan's legislation that . . . inclusive, to ensure pay discrimination is prohibited in section 2-21 of *The Saskatchewan Employment Act*, which states that an employer cannot pay a female a different rate of pay than a male for similar work performed under similar working conditions in the same workplace that requires similar skills, effort, and responsibility.

This section also covers pay discrimination based on any of the prohibited grounds found in *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* of 2018, in addition to section 16 of the human rights code, 2018, which states that an employer is not permitted to discriminate against a person or class of persons with respect to employment or a term of condition of employment based on any of the prohibited grounds.

So Saskatchewan has in place this legislation that protects women and, I would say, protects all people from any forms of discrimination based on pay to ensure that pay is given appropriately and equally, based on skills and abilities.

Ms. Bowes: — Yes, thank you for that. You know, I think to your comments about ensuring women have opportunity, you know, seats at tables — for example, through STEAM — I think that's terribly important. We've discussed this the last few years, Minister Ross, and there's no argument against that. However there are of course other more traditional sectors that are very negatively impacted and, I would suggest, where this pay gap is very much concentrated.

And so you had mentioned that pay equity in the public sector does exist. Yes. Yes, it does. So here we're talking about legislation that would ensure the private sector is also covered, which doesn't exist in Saskatchewan. You mentioned that the employment Act does legislate around this. And the problem I think as identified by the Human Rights Commission, you know, now over 25 years ago, is that this is a reactionary process. And if there were a proactive process, like would be the case with pay equity legislation, then it will actually result in equitable pay much more readily than with this sort of reactive, complaints-based program that we have here in Saskatchewan.

So I will move on at this point. So I guess I will take that answer to say that your office will not be advocating for the implementation of pay equity legislation. Is that correct?

Ms. Hamill: — We take direction also from the government. So if the Government of Saskatchewan asks us to look at anything like that, we certainly would include it within our work plan. As far as, you know, commentary around jurisdictional scanning, all kinds of pieces of research are done all the time. And when looking at some of the other provinces that have implemented pay equity legislation, it's kind of a tiered approach, you know, from the look at it. Private sector employers can publicize wages within any of the job ads, and some of them do.

Ms. Bowes: — Yeah, I mean thank you for that. And I guess to your answer that, you know, your office takes direction from government, I guess when I read the mandate of the Status of

Women office, it clearly says that the Status of Women office acts as a catalyst within government to raise awareness of issues affecting women to ensure gender considerations are integrated into government policy making, legislation, and program development.

So you know, to me it would appear that the mandate is really the opposite of that. So I think I will move on. I'll take that, you know, as a no.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — No, I think you want to maybe talk about the work we do across different government ministries.

Ms. Hamill: — Exactly. So yes, our mandate is to work across various sectors and government ministries and organizations to advance the status of women — particularly when we're looking at program design, policy design — that we provide that subject-matter lens into, you know, the development of business cases that are factoring in considerations that will impact women positively or could impact them negatively. And we're called upon all over the government to do that. So that's within the mandate of our work. It's broad. It's a very broad mandate.

We have legislation. We're one of the only provinces in Canada that has a women's affairs Act like we do that gives us that, you know, that authority to work across those lines in that manner. We co-chair and lead the ICIVA [inter-ministerial committee on interpersonal violence and abuse] table that I had mentioned to you earlier which . . . You know, when we're looking at factors around gender-based violence, that includes a variety of different root causes and initiatives that various ministries are doing through the scope of their lens.

We don't operate programs and services, but we certainly provide strategic advice in the development of initiatives. We are embedded in a lot of different ongoing initiatives even right now that I can't publicly commit to or talk about while they're, you know, in the developmental stages that have to go through ministerial and cabinet approval and whatnot. But you know, there is a big mandate with us and we are doing a lot of work across many spectrums.

Ms. Bowes: — Absolutely. And I do know, as you said, that you have a very small envelope of money. And I respect the work that's being done, certainly. And I know you do have to pick and choose which areas that you will focus on. But I again would, you know, implore your office, the minister, to take a look at this as one of those initiatives that you conduct further research around and that you lobby the government around.

Moving on, I would like to know, Minister, how many women are currently employed full-time in Saskatchewan versus part-time? I know that Ms. Hamill had spoken to the increases and I'm wondering if you have those numbers handy.

Ms. Hamill: — I can speak to raw numbers. So out of Saskatchewan's, as of March 2023, Saskatchewan's labour force was over 610,000. And of that, 286,000 of that were women employed in the workforce. And of that, the percentage of that was over 200,000 that were full-time employed, comparable to males that made up for 324,000, just over 324,000.

[17:30]

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. And sorry, that 200,000 were women that were full-time employed?

Ms. Hamill: — I'm sorry. Say again?

Ms. Bowes: — The 200,000, that's women who were full-time employed in Saskatchewan?

Ms. Hamill: — That's correct. Just over 200,000.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. And you'd also spoken, Ms. Hamill, about the reduction in women who are working more than one job. Can you tell me, if you have those numbers, how many Saskatchewan women are working more than full-time due to having multiple jobs?

Ms. Hamill: — I'm sorry but the rates weren't broken down that way.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay.

Ms. Hamill: — It just listed full-time or part-time employment.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — We do have . . . Compared to pre-pandemic, there are fewer women holding multiple jobs. In February 2023, women with multiple jobs fell by nearly 12 per cent since February 2020. Okay?

We should probably also point out too, this government recognizes that in order to support women of the province, we must lead the way and champion women in the workplace. So as of December 31st, 2022, 49.7 per cent of senior management with the Government of Saskatchewan are women, and 56.4 per cent of middle management are women. And in 2019 women entrepreneurs contributed 23.1 billion to the Saskatchewan economy, as we said, creating over 191,000 jobs.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you. And can you answer this as well? I'd like to know how many Saskatchewan women are working for minimum wage.

Ms. Hamill: — I'm thinking the Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety may have that information.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — We don't.

Ms. Hamill: — Or perhaps even the Ministry of Trade and Export Development may have that information, but we don't have that.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. So this next question perhaps as well you may not have, but just in case you may. Minister, last year you may have seen the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives calculated a living wage for Regina as 16.23 per hour, and for Saskatoon as 16.89 per hour. I'm sure, you know, these numbers will likely have changed since then, due to inflation specifically.

But leaving that aside, are you aware how many women in Saskatchewan are earning less than what's been calculated as a living wage for Regina and Saskatoon?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — No, we don't have that information. That probably, again, would be either in Minister Harrison's ministry or Minister Morgan's ministry. But we do have women's average hourly wage. We're at \$28.39. So that's up from 27.58. So that is, you know, as you said, your living wage was what, 16? So it's over and above that.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. Yes, we can check in with the Minister of Labour Relations on that.

Moving on to another topic, today in the legislature we had the pleasure of hosting a group of Saskatchewan medical students from the U of S [University of Saskatchewan], as well as doctors, who joined the opposition's call for universal no-cost coverage for prescription contraceptives.

We heard from these medical students and doctors about the importance of this coverage in terms of ensuring women have barrier-free control over their reproductive choices. So we know that socially unplanned pregnancy leads to lesser educational attainment, reduced labour force participation, poorer career outcomes, and lower socioeconomic status, including an increased dependency on social assistance systems for women.

We also heard from doctors today about the importance of this coverage in terms of the cost savings it would lead to for the government. And there's actually really an outstanding return on investment for implementing universal birth control coverage with a cost analysis out of the states indicating that for every dollar spent on family planning, the system saved over \$7.

So my question is this, given the clear impacts that this coverage would have on women's social and economic prosperity — which, Minister, in your opening remarks, you spoke to the importance of — will you then take the lead in your role as minister over this coming year and commit to pushing the government through the Status of Women office to make this policy solution a reality for Saskatchewan women?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well thank you very much for that question. And as it was posed in the House today in question period, and the Minister of Health has the lead on that. And so those questions were directed to the Minister of Health that would, that's within his purview. So we are always advocating on behalf of women, but the Minister of Health is the one that is directly responsible for that question that was coming into the House.

And, Bernadet, do we have any further information that you'd like to share?

Ms. Hamill: — Yeah, I can, you know, as the minister alluded to, the Ministry of Health is, you know, who answers questions to any of their programs and services, but they did provide me with some information that I can share today.

The Saskatchewan formulary lists a variety of contraception options including oral contraceptives, hormone injections, and medicated in-uterine devices. The Ministry of Health is responsible for the provincial prescription drug benefits program and they've advised the following: that the drug plan's programs support those with low incomes and high drug costs to ensure that cost is not a barrier to treatment; that residents who are

nominated through the Ministry of Social Services for income assistance are eligible to receive listed contraceptives at no charge as those who are under 18 years of age who are eligible for coverage under the family health benefits program; other residents who require assistance with the cost of their medications may apply for special support program. This program assists those with high drug costs in relation to their income based on total family income and drug costs, a deductible, and co-payments that are established.

Ms. Bowes: — Yeah, thank you. I appreciate that information. Nonetheless I think we all are aware and can agree that there are many women, especially across Saskatchewan, who do not have any form of coverage for contraception. So while, you know, there's a rather piecemeal solution, I guess, or coverage that may exist through the Sask formulary lists and other programs, what we're looking for and what we're calling for is universal coverage for prescription birth control.

And so I understand that yes, the Minister of Health would have the lead on this file. But again, through your office and through your office advocating for the needs specific to women in Saskatchewan, the question was, will you be pushing this initiative through the Status of Women office to any ministries that may have, I guess, jurisdiction here that . . .

Ms. Hamill: — Just going back to, you know, this falls under the scope of the Ministry of Health's mandate where it covers programs and services related to prescription drug benefits. Should the Ministry of Health reach out to the Status of Women's office to invite us to a conversation, we absolutely would be more than happy to support them in anything that they're working on, as we have on other initiatives.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you for that. And so I guess, you know, a clarification I'm seeking here is just based on the answers to a few of my questions. Am I understanding correctly that the Status of Women office will, you know, pursue initiatives or research that other ministries bring forward to them? Or is it the case ever that your office is proactively going to these ministries and suggesting policy and legislative solutions to issues that women face?

Ms. Hamill: — Well we partner with government ministries and organizations on a variety of different initiatives. You know, we look at where we should be. Where we are the lead in any kind of group work, if you will, it just really depends on the direction and mandate of the ministries. So some take the lead, where others are supportive roles that we would provide.

But because we don't offer health care programs or services, it is not in our mandate to develop those initiatives on our own. We would be, you know, again if the Ministry of Health or any other ministry . . . And other ministries do reach out to us and ask us, you know, for support in development on a lot of different initiatives across the province.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. I'm going to move on a bit from there. Coming back to violence against women in Saskatchewan, I did have a few questions about your government's Face the Issue campaign. And I would like to know, since you have launched that campaign, have you seen any tangible or measurable impact on the rates of violence against Saskatchewan women, again

since this campaign's launch?

Ms. Hamill: — Is your question since the beginning of the campaign or this past year?

Ms. Bowes: — I mean if you have a breakdown of since the start and over the past year individually, that would be great.

Ms. Hamill: — So the purpose of the campaign is to stimulate conversation and to start raising awareness so that people have a better understanding what abuse, what violence may look like, the signs or the symptoms, if you will. And so the campaign . . . You know, we had over double the population this past year and 2.5 million views of the campaign itself, which is telling us that people are stopping and spending time. They're listening; they're absorbing the information.

You know, gender-based violence is, you know, a systemic problem that's been around for, I would say, probably a couple of hundred years, and you know, we're just moving — as the minister alludes to — moving the dial is changing the conversation to help people start really having the conversations around this.

You know, the work I did in domestic violence going back 20 years ago, people didn't even report it, you know, so now we have people that are reporting it. And when they're seeing public awareness campaigns like this, it helps them to understand what the signs might look like so that if they're, you know, seeing it with peers, in other relationships, if they're, you know, people, women particularly, disproportionately — not to say that men can't experience gender-based violence because they certainly can — but women experiencing it have an opportunity to see . . . connect with that information so it resonates with them.

It also provides avenues to find resources with a connection to the Sask 211 which includes a pop-up website that stops people . . . you know, to safe exit out if they're in dangerous situations, so that they can have safety in looking for resources.

Ms. Bowes: — Great.

The Chair: — Just before we go on, I would like to announce that Jim Lemaigre will be subbing in for Gary Grewal. Continue on. Thank you.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you for the answer, the response, Ms. Hamill. And fully appreciating the importance of raising awareness and shifting attitudes, I very much do. Not at all meant to be a criticism in that way. But also very important to be able to measure results of any initiative that government undertakes. Do you have a sense of, you know, at what point do you expect that the impact of this campaign might be noticeable or measurable?

Ms. Hamill: — Well I think the impacts of the campaign can't always be measured either in, you know, numbers. And so when we're looking at qualitative results over time, that takes time, you know, to see how young people are starting to see, you know, the focus to young people so that they see this is what abuse looks like, this is what abuse is, why we don't want that in our lives, starts to shift the beliefs and attitudes of people. And that takes a long time. I'll be very honest. It takes a long time to measure.

And I think, you know, we may see, reap the benefits of that probably within years down the road. I don't think it's something that we can snapshot in a year.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — And I guess I'd like to add in, because we realize that universities and technical schools, you know, that's a very vulnerable age for a lot of especially young women.

[17:45]

And I think we've all probably watched the documentary *The Hunting Ground* which just absolutely makes your heart stop. So this is where our third phase is going to be focused on.

And I had an opportunity to talk to some young university women the other day, hockey players. And you know, you think that these are pretty . . . these young women have a pretty high self-esteem and kind of know who they are. So I talked to them about the expanding Face the Issue public awareness on recognizing what abuse is, what interpersonal violence is. And they said it is so needed on our campus here in Regina, but it's also needed at our technical schools too.

So this is where we're going to be focusing in this fall, this coming fall when the students all come back — oops, I touched the mike, sorry — when they come back so that they have an opportunity to really start to see and understand exactly what abuse is and what is acceptable behaviour. And then we will be also directing them to all of the sites where they can get help, because I think that . . . And like I said, it all comes down to education too because man, if we don't change the dial here, we're kind of going backwards. And that's why it's so important.

This Face the Issue campaign is pivotal for us to be able to educate people, what is abuse. Because sometimes people don't even realize it, especially when we talk to new Canadians. A lot of those women don't understand that what's acceptable behaviour maybe in the country they came from is not acceptable here.

And so that's why it's really important that we do the education and that we do provide the kind of information on the website, like when Bernadet talked about the quick exit. So if they're on a computer and they're looking up sources of help and somebody walks into the room, the person who's maybe the abuser, they have the opportunity to exit. There's a quick exit button, and that absolutely erases the history of where they've been.

Because an abuser is going to go and check and see where they've been, what they've looked at, what they've done. And this is a really good opportunity for them to then, you know, continue the abuse. So I think this quick exit button may seem like it's not a big deal. It's a big deal for a lot of women and girls.

Ms. Hamill: — And if I could just add, I mean raising awareness through the Face the Issue campaign, public awareness is one piece of a wraparound of programs and services and initiatives that are being undertaken and have been undertaken for years to try to support prevention, intervention, and accountability around interpersonal violence and abuse and particularly gender-based violence.

So the public awareness campaign is an opportunity to take it a

little bit further into the public, so that mainstream citizens are seeing it. They're talking about it. Young women are having conversations with each other about what's not appropriate, that that's just not okay, you know, which a lot of it has been swept under because people have been afraid to talk about it.

So the goal of this campaign is to get people talking so that they share information. That they're not afraid to come forward and say, that's not okay, and to talk about it. As well as for individuals who, you know, may be teetering on perpetrating it and not realizing what they are doing is abusive behaviour and is inappropriate behaviour.

So you know, there's many initiatives going on. We have Clare's Law here in Saskatchewan, which is an amazing tool. I had the distinct privilege when I was with the Ministry of Justice to help work on developing that model, and to see it come into implementation is outstanding for the women of this province as protection to find out, you know, if an individual that they are entering a relationship with has a past history of abuse and violence. And you know, we've been leaders in this.

When we talk about the work we're doing on the national level — and I'm even going to say even international level at that point — when we've had members even from United Kingdom where Clare's Law originated, the idea stemmed from, who just had policy in place, who approached us, crossed the floor at the United Nations and said to us, we want to talk to you about what you've done, because the model that you created in Saskatchewan is best practice.

We've had many great conversations with other provinces and territories that continually reach out to us to ask us, you know, can we come and meet with you? Can we learn about your model? And having, you know, been a part of the developmental stages of that where we worked with Saskatchewan stakeholder groups like PATHS [Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan], you know, the women of the transition houses, to support the development not only of the legislation but the framework to implement it so that it is an inclusive process. It is sensitive, and it provides people with the information that they need.

Ms. Bowes: — Yeah, thank you for that. I mean, no dispute here. I mean that's very important legislation and I thank you for your work around that legislation. It's crucial.

Just coming back to a few comments around the importance of education specifically, Minister, which you'd referred to — very much agree. I did want to follow up. Last year we had talked, and the year before a bit, about the importance of mandatory consent curriculum in our province for school-aged children. And I know as follow-up last year when I had asked about it, your office had indicated that those conversations had been undertaken with the Ministry of Education, which I was very encouraged to hear about. And I'm just wondering at this point if you have any updates at this point on any outcomes from those conversations which I hope have been ongoing.

Ms. Hamill: — Well that would fall to the Ministry of Education as far as programs that are delivered through the school system and, you know, that falls under school divisions. But you know, I am aware that the Ministry of Education does . . . there is some

programming that is ongoing through there. Forgive my ignorance. You know I came to the office just this past year so, you know, I'm not privy to that question that you asked or conversation. But you know, we certainly will follow up on it.

Ms. Bowes: — Yeah. I appreciate that. And you're correct. I mean that was your predecessor at the time and so fully understand you may need to look into that a bit further. But I really . . . I would appreciate an update at whatever point you're available to provide that. Would be great to get that in writing, a bit of an update on that.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well I think it would be a really good opportunity for you to also ask the Minister of Education too on that specific . . .

Ms. Bowes: — Yeah, and certainly we can do that. But the reason I bring it up is that this is an ongoing discussion item that we've had here at this table over the past, you know, now it's the third year. And last year there was an indication from the executive director at the time that your office had undertaken conversations with the Ministry of Education. So I mean, I think that work has somewhat . . . There's been some overlap there, and so I think it's . . . [inaudible] . . . appropriate.

Ms. Hamill: — I can't speak to it. I would defer to the Ministry of Education, because if they are delivering that specific program and service they would have to be the one to answer that question.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. Coming back to the campaign, the Face the Issue campaign, I had a few other questions. And certainly understanding when you've talked about public awareness, raising public awareness and how it's not always easy to measure and it's often qualitative. Fully understand.

I know just reviewing some of the information you've got around that campaign, I'm aware of sort of the number of views that have been tabulated and, you know, the social media impressions that your office has found from that campaign. And I just am curious to know: are there any other indicators of success that you're looking at with this campaign, anything else that's measurable? Like beyond views or social media impressions.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well we have this, you know, when we talk about Face the Issue, because it was on social media and we did billboards. I think you probably saw some of the billboards. We also did mainstream media, right. Television. And the ads were viewed by 88 per cent of adults over 18 who watch television, so we felt that we had an opportunity to reach a fairly significant portion of the population.

Now we know that less and less people are watching mainstream media to get their information, which is why we took to the social media platforms. And so we used platforms like Facebook and Instagram because we know especially younger people and . . . well not just younger people, lots of people. Older people use Facebook also. So it was a good opportunity to again make sure that we had the opportunity to reach out and let as many people know about the . . .

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. Another question about the campaign. Was the campaign created in-house or did you hire a

firm to create it?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — That went out to an RFP, and it was successfully bid upon by a local firm.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, can you let us know what firm that was?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Phoenix Advertising, whose president and CEO happens to be a woman, so it kind of worked out kind of nicely.

Ms. Bowes: — Nice. Another question about the campaign. In the development of this campaign, who was consulted through your office around that development?

Ms. Hamill: — I'm sorry, can you ask the question again?

Ms. Bowes: — Yes, with this campaign and the development of this campaign, who was consulted in the community in terms of stakeholders or, you know, people with a little community-based expertise around the development of the campaign?

Ms. Hamill: — So we partnered with the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General on the first couple of phases of the campaign. And the one that we're developing right now we're also included . . . another partner is the Ministry of Advanced Education.

And so the development of the campaign goes back several years where it was idealized, if you will, and during that development it was based on, you know, a lot of stakeholder work that the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General . . . And when I talked about the ICIVA group, the inter-ministerial committee on interpersonal violence and abuse, which includes members across the human service ministries including the Ministry of Social Services, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety now, the Ministry of Justice and the Attorney General, as I mentioned, where stakeholders also come to the table and they provide input and information based on the work that they do.

So I would say it's the compilation of all of the interactions and work that's been done in the past that factored into creating a public awareness campaign, understanding that there is a need to get information out there into the public hands. As I said, as the campaign has grown and evolved, it now includes the Ministry of Advanced Education — which, you know, includes ensuring that we have the people who are going to be impacted by it to understand that.

The group, the agency that is contracted to do and develop the work for us that goes into these public awareness campaigns, does an incredible amount of market research and analysis to bring specific factors into the campaign so that the markers are being hit correctly. So it's a wraparound effect.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. Thank you. Can you tell us how much has been spent on creating the campaign to date by the government?

Ms. MacDougall: — So I have a dollar amount for this year as far as the campaign, and it's . . . Oh, just a minute. No, I don't have that.

Ms. Hamill: — Yeah. So the funding this year . . . Yeah, the

funding is allocated through the Ministry of Justice, so they would be best to answer that question.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. So there's no funding that comes directly from the Status of Women office?

Ms. Hamill: — There was in the first year of the campaign. The Status of Women office I believe provided \$50,000 towards the development of it. After that, through treasury board funding process the Ministry of Justice owns the budget, so they would be best to speak to that question.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thanks. So I was going to ask about how much money has been spent on disseminating the campaign, but I assume that's also a Justice question?

A Member: — Yes.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. I would also like to know — and now this is moving on again, bouncing around a bit — has the Status of Women office engaged in any discussions with the Ministry of Health regarding improvements to abortion access across Saskatchewan?

[18:00]

Ms. Hamill: — So the Ministry of Health is responsible for medical treatments, and so I would defer to the Ministry of Health for any questions around abortion.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. So I guess the answer is no, that the Status of Women office has not engaged in those discussions.

Ms. Hamill: — We've not been asked to meet with the Ministry of Health to review their programs or services or how those are rolled out with their ministry. That is under their mandate.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. I'm going to skip through some questions here that were related that will not be applicable if those conversations haven't happened.

Has your office conducted any research or does your office have any plans to do so around the economic effects of increased abortion access, such as increased workforce participation or poverty reduction?

Ms. Hamill: — I'm sorry. I'm going to have to ask you to repeat the question.

Ms. Bowes: — Has your office conducted any research or does your office have plans to do so around the economic effects of increased abortion access, such as increased workforce participation or poverty reduction?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well as you know, an abortion is considered a medical procedure, and that's covered under the Canadian health Act. And so I think that it probably was something that was probably done a little wiser than in the States because it's referred to as a medical procedure, and so it cannot be denied in that respect here in Saskatchewan. And abortions are available both in Saskatoon and in Regina.

Ms. Bowes: — Yes, thank you. And certainly yes, it's legal, but

that does not equate to being accessible. And it doesn't mean, as I believe you've suggested in the past, that there are no barriers that exist to women who are looking to seek abortion in our province.

And so certainly it does have economic impacts — access to reproductive rights, a variety of different kinds including abortion access and including, as we discussed earlier, access to things like universal birth control. And so you know, if the answer is that that's not been research that's been undertaken by your office that's . . .

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Mifegymiso is available to individuals and so we've made sure that that's available. It's provided under the drug formulary. So I mean, it is there. And when you say access, you know, you're talking probably about transportation. And as you know, I've had this conversation with the Minister of Health who provided me with the information that they do not provide transportation for any medical procedure.

Ms. Bowes: — Yes, thank you for that. And I mean I guess on that point, I can relay to you — and perhaps, I believe I have in previous years — that, you know, the demise of the Sask Transportation Company was very much something that has impacted women's access to exercising their reproductive rights in our province including accessing an abortion.

And I think part of, you know, the barriers that exist too, Minister, are, you know, there's differing standards for surgical abortions between Regina and Saskatoon. And certainly we've been calling, as the opposition, for increased access to surgical abortions in other areas of the province, for example Prince Albert, which would expand access to people in the North of our province more readily. And it's something that's been identified to us by stakeholders, especially abortion providers, doctors across the province as really integral to improving that access.

So yes, we do . . . I believe Saskatchewan was perhaps the last province to fully fund Mife and I'm glad that, you know, that is coverage that's available now. But we have really, really many barriers that still exist. Those are just a few that I've mentioned. And I do hope and encourage the Status of Women office to consider some of those issues and to proactively advise, especially the Ministry of Health but any relevant ministries within the government, on those issues of access.

Moving on, another topic I'd like to ask about. What funding has been allocated by the Status of Women office towards supporting missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people?

Ms. Hamill: — Well thank you for that question. So as part of our federal-provincial-territorial work, we sit as one of the partner members. The Ministry of Justice and Attorney General leads the FPT work for Saskatchewan, but the Status of Women office, along with Government Relations, participate in that. The Status of Women office . . . Government Relations has provided 400,000 in funding for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls initiatives through their fund.

And through the work I mentioned with the Piwapan wellness centre, we provided funding for that conference which focused on, you know, safety and wellness for Indigenous women and

girls to help them, which included — which was really interesting — roadside safety, which helps women, you know, dealing with potential high-risk situations if their vehicle stops, you know, if they're needing help.

So we do participate in a lot of ongoing conversations. Part of our federal work, as minister mentioned, with the ministers and senior officials across Canada responsible for the status of women, includes working with . . . in our forum to work with Indigenous leader representatives of women. These are federal partners, but they are from across Canada. And so we are chronically engaged in conversations around different initiatives. And as mentioned, we work with stakeholder partners to provide support in our small envelope of funding so we can get some dollars to the grassroots where we can. And we expect that that will continue to go forward in this coming year as part of our work plan.

As mentioned in our business plan, we lead the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls work within our Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you. And sorry, that \$400,000 in funding, what was all represented by that? That was from the Status of Women office, the 400 . . .

Ms. Hamill: — That was through the Ministry of Government Relations, is that fund.

Ms. Bowes: — I see. Okay, yeah. Yeah, thank you. And I guess, you know, in follow-up, does your office work with the ministries in this government, in your government, to promote the Calls to Action that have been identified in the final report for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls?

Ms. Hamill: — Yeah, so the Government of Saskatchewan across all the ministries and organizations are all leading various actions that support the Calls for Justice for the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls action plan, and two-spirit people. As I mentioned, the Ministry of Justice leads that work, and we are a supportive partner with that, with the Ministry of Government Relations.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you very much. And understanding that the Ministry of Justice leads that work, is there oversight by the Status of Women office to, you know, assess how far along the government has come as a whole and across ministries towards implementing those Calls to Action?

Ms. Hamill: — So we participate in it as well, you know, providing the work that we are doing, as well as support the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport in the work that they are doing. And we support the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General in their leadership role.

A Member: — It's Government Relations who would have the details.

Ms. Hamill: — Yeah, yeah, we would have to defer to Justice and the Attorney General, who is the . . . and Government Relations as well for . . .

A Member: — They would have more detail.

Ms. Hamill: — Yeah, to answer some of those questions.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. And through the Status of Women office, have there been any initiatives other than the conference that you mentioned that you had provided funding for? Any initiatives aimed specifically at reducing violence against Indigenous women in Saskatchewan? And you know, I do understand that the Face the Issue campaign was translated into Cree and Dene. But aside from that, have there been any initiatives undertaken by your office?

Ms. Hamill: — So again, you know, kind of going back to the inter-ministerial committee on interpersonal violence and abuse, so the Status of Women's office Co-Chairs that committee and we work with all ministries and organizations, human service ministries, as well as across government.

We're leading the development of the national . . . Saskatchewan's implementation of the national action plan to end gender-based violence, which the national action plan includes pillar 4, which specifically speaks to Indigenous women and girls and has linkages to the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls national action plan and pathway forward. So through the culmination of all of this work, we have a strong voice. We provide guidance and advice and leadership.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. On another topic but also related to violence against women, I'd like to know how much consultation your office had with the Ministry of Justice around the new operational funding that's been announced in this budget for second-stage shelters.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well thank you very much for that question. As you know, the Ministry of Justice led that. And it was through discussions that, like I said, recently we committed the three-year funding. The Government of Saskatchewan has committed three-year funding to second-stage shelters across the province. So it's not just in one specific urban area, but in fact we have reached across the province to ensure that there was more additional funding. And like I said, it's a three-year commitment by the government.

Ms. Bowes: — Thanks. I'd like to know too, did your office have the ability to offer any input or feedback regarding the dollar amount of the funding that was announced for second-stage shelters?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well the dollar amount came from the Ministry of Justice, and so that would be a question that would be better directed to them. But we do have conversations with them all the time in regards to interpersonal violence and abuse, and what is needed, and how we can move some of these programs forward.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. Now I'd asked earlier about sort of how your office . . . what data is used and whether you collect your own data. So I guess perhaps the answer is the same. But wondering specifically around data regarding gendered violence statistics, do you rely solely on Statistics Canada for that data?

Ms. Hamill: — So I know the federal government utilizes Statistics Canada for that data, and some of the data information that we use as well comes from Statistics Canada. It's, you know,

important to understand that the data sometimes is far behind. Often the data unfortunately relies on crime stats, which doesn't necessarily tell us the fulsome picture.

So we're working with our national partners. You know, one of the opportunities we have being a leader with the provincial-territorial table that we established was to really look at performance metrics so that, you know, when we're working across Canada, we're doing a better job of not just gathering data for the sake of collecting numbers, but for the sake of understanding what the real story is out there, helping us to form better questions so that we understand what's going on across Canada better.

So we've even had a . . . led the development of a working group that took on some of this work to work with the federal government and their chief evaluators to provide a collective voice from across all the provinces and territories to inform the creation of better performance measures. And so data comes from a lot of different areas.

[18:15]

As I mentioned earlier, it's one thing that we find that is a constant continuous improvement effort, I would say in all ministries and areas, not just in the work that the Status of Women office does.

And part of that is to, you know, start reaching out better through our partnerships, through different pockets of people who are collecting information, supporting our stakeholders to start collecting information, which is something new for a lot of them. They're very wrapped in the services that they provide but understanding that when we get better information, then we can support better strategies and develop better actions and initiatives.

Ms. Bowes: — That leads right into, my next question is, does your office use those statistics, whether through, you know, StatsCan predominantly or otherwise, as a gauge of how effective anti-violence initiatives by your government are?

Ms. Hamill: — I would say that we gather data to look at a variety of initiatives right to measure the effectiveness. You know, through courses of program evaluation and program review, those type of tools to look at different initiatives — whether it be a simple project or a major program that's been undergone and been implemented over the course of many years — to determine, you know, what's the utility of the program. Is it meeting where it needs to go? Is there opportunities for continuous improvement? Is there opportunities for initiatives?

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. And you know, I guess stemming from that would be, how often, you know, at least through your office, would you gauge that sort of thing of how effective the initiatives that are being promoted through your office are around anti-violence?

Ms. Hamill: — So I would have to . . . You know, I think it's kind of a two-prong answer. I'd say historically, and we are not alone in this, that many provinces and territories have relied on the information through Statistics Canada and other university bodies that gather data to provide through research. You know,

we do a lot of contracting for gathering research.

But I would say that we're really helping to promote moving past that into, you know, really working with a variety of different sectors to ask them what data they have because they may have data that they don't even know.

Like sometimes people know things they don't even know, and so part of the work that we do is to help develop really good quality questions, right. And through that process we move through into developing business case-type work, right, where we look at what is the research, what is the data telling us, you know, and to really define and hone what a problem is to create quality problem statements and then to continue on through that process by conducting cost-benefit analysis, risk management analysis so that we are taking data and information that's out there to be developing evidence-based solutions, best practice solutions in the work that we go forward. So I'd say it's an evolving situation that we're continually striving to improve.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. Thank you for that.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — I guess we could also, you know, talk about some of the data collection. And that was some of our conversations we had when we met at the ministers' table in Nova Scotia, was the importance of good information because, as we know with anything, garbage in, garbage out.

So it's so important to have real information, information that is usable, and not just collecting data for the sake of collecting data because, as we know, most of the organizations that we work with do not have an excess amount of people sitting around twiddling their thumbs doing nothing but maybe wanting to do stats. So then a lot of them have other things to do. So it was really important that we have that discussion, that the information that is gathered has then the ability to have some real, direct impact on the programs that could be delivered.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you. So through your office, what metrics do you use to evaluate the efficacy of government initiatives or your own initiatives through the Status of Women office?

Ms. Hamill: — Well each ministry and agency undergoes its own strategic planning and evaluation metrics for their own strategic and business plans. So we have our performance measures indicated in our business plan, so those are the metrics that we use. I can go through them if you like.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you. Sure.

Ms. Hamill: — Yeah, I can. I don't mind. So under our goal for increasing women's capacity to grow Saskatchewan's economy, our strategy is, the approach we will take to achieve our goal is to increase the capacity for women to work in non-traditional sectors and industries.

So our key actions are:

to establish a provincial working group to identify and leverage opportunities to increase women's participation in science, technology, engineering . . . [I see "arts." There's a typo in our business plan, it should be "architecture."] and mathematics and non-traditional sectors; lead and

coordinate new opportunities with our strategic partners to enhance existing programs and services that enables greater participation in the economy; lead and coordinate provincial initiatives that support women to break barriers in leadership roles.

So what success looks like to us? So when we look at seats in non-traditional apprenticeship and trade programs, you know, our target is to really increase the number of seats that are available to women in these non-traditional apprenticeship and trade skill programs in Saskatchewan by 20 per cent by 2025. And I mean that's a goal, right? It's always good to have a good goal set.

And for women in the STEAM sectors, our target is to increase the rate of women entering science, technology, engineering, architecture, and mathematics sectors in Saskatchewan by 20 per cent by the end of March of 2025. And then for women in leadership roles in non-traditional sectors, our target is to increase the number of women in leadership roles in non-traditional sectors in Saskatchewan by 70 per cent by 2027. And I know that's really ambitious, but I think it's doable.

And our second goal is leading and coordinating with Saskatchewan stakeholders to end interpersonal violence and abuse in Saskatchewan. So you know, the approach that we're taking with our strategy is to lead and coordinate stakeholder engagement across government and communities to identify strategies and initiatives that increase women's safety, security, and well-being.

So the key actions we're looking to support this strategy and achieving our goal is developing Saskatchewan's implementation plan to support the national action plan to end gender-based violence, lead our ministry actions to support the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, 2SLGBTQIA+ [two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual plus] peoples national action plan and pathway forward, and implementing phase 3 of Face the Issue public awareness campaign.

So what success looks like for us this year to achieve those goals would be Saskatchewan's implementation of the national action plan to end interpersonal violence and abuse — that is the national action plan to end gender-based violence — so developing the implementation plan by the end of March 2024. So you know, those negotiations and planning and commitments are well under way. And as well with our public awareness campaign is to implement the phase 3 of the campaign and to start working on phase 4 of the campaign by March of 2025.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you very much. Wondering if you can tell me, based on that, what are the current numbers for women in leadership roles within these non-traditional sectors in Saskatchewan?

Ms. Hamill: — I'm sorry, can you repeat the question. I'm so sorry.

Ms. Bowes: — Yes. Apologies. What are the current numbers for women in leadership roles within these non-traditional sectors in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well thank you very much for that question. I do apologize, but we don't have those stats with us. But we do have them, and we'd be more than happy to provide those to you.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you very much.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Okay, because we did have them. In fact we had them when we had the discussion which we were leading in Nova Scotia. So that's in another binder. Sorry about that. But it's good information and we are more than happy to provide that to you because it does indicate exactly the changes that has taken place.

And you know, it's interesting when we were just talking about the stats, I had an opportunity to talk to women engineers and their association. They have set the goal of 30 by '30. So they want to see 30 per cent of engineers being female by the year 2030. So it's nice to see when organizations take it upon themselves to move the needle forward so that it's not just pushing from the outside but in fact it's encouraging from the inside.

And we know, and I guess that's where we really had the opportunity when we did the conference with Breaking Barriers. We had women sitting at that table, were in non-traditional roles, and so it was good to see and how they got there and why they got there. And they were more than prepared to share their story and their successes. And so like I said, we really do focus in on how do we ensure that we change the dial on who is obtaining jobs in non-traditional.

And that's why our program at the Science Centre is so important with girls who code. I don't know if you've ever had a chance to attend any of those sessions, but oh my gosh, those little girls are smart. And they're teaching them coding. And you kind of come out of there and kind of go, well I feel really dumb, and man, are they smart. But you know, they just think this is normal.

So that whole thing of, that's a guy's job — no. No, absolutely, these young girls are not . . . And that's why our program where we had the opportunity to touch 2,000 young girls across this province, where they got to see and hear and experience non-traditional roles, that's where we really, I think we shine. Because we may be a small office, but I think we're pretty mighty in that we have the opportunity to really touch base with so many different organizations that Bernadet has spoken to, and then the work we're doing with outreach too.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you for that, Minister, and I do want to commend you on the work that your office has done, and that you've done as minister around promoting women in STEAM. It is important work, and thank you for that.

Just one last question, and maybe this is something you can provide too, probably with those other numbers. But I'd like to know too if you could provide at some point, with the other numbers, the numbers for women in leadership in traditional sectors in Saskatchewan. So if we could get the numbers for both, you know, women in leadership in non-traditional and traditional, that would be great.

Ms. Hamill: — So can you define what traditional means?

Ms. Bowes: — Well essentially, I guess, anything that you're not defining as non-traditional, I guess would be what's left over. I mean I suppose the definitions can vary, but yeah, I mean perhaps even outside of STEAM would be interesting to know, if you do have those numbers.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — You'd have to talk to Minister Harrison's shop about that because . . .

Ms. Bowes: — Yeah.

The Chair: — All right, we've reached our agreed-upon time for consideration of these estimates today. So we will adjourn consideration of these estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 for Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport. I recognize the minister. Do you have any closing comments?

[18:30]

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well thank you very much, Member Bowes, for your questions, a fruitful discussion. Some tough questions, some we couldn't answer because they are not within our ministry, but the information that we have promised to provide you, we will. And I encourage you to touch base with the other ministers.

And I want to thank Bernadet. She may be new, but she's not new. She's dynamite, and we're just so, we're so honoured to have her, especially when she brings to the table the work she did on Clare's Law when she was within the Ministry of Justice. She's just, she's a rock star.

She also was so instrumental in Saskatchewan being able to present at the UN. She's pretty tenacious, and it was wonderful and the support . . . It was one of those opportunities that doesn't happen very often, and we were honoured to be able to tell our story of what we are doing here and how seriously we take the issue of interpersonal violence and abuse. So I do appreciate all the work that Bernadet and her small but mighty team does.

And then also thank you so much, Twyla and the whole team at Parks, Culture and Sport. You know, every minister is going to sit here and say, I have the best ministry. But I have to tell you, I really do have the best ministry in that we have an opportunity to get together and we discuss and we really problem solve together. And that's what I really appreciate about Twyla's leadership, in that she allows her deputies, her ADMs and all the people within, to really shine. They all get to really rise to the occasion. So thank you so much for your strong leadership. Because it's through strong women like Twyla and Bernadet that absolutely make this ministry such a success.

I also want to thank these two powerful women behind me here, who again, make sure that I stay on the straight and narrow and don't fall off the path.

But you know, like I said, it's an honour and a privilege to be the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport, and the Status of Women, and the francophone affairs because, like I said, I think I have the best portfolio. I have the most fun, I think. And I just feel it's an honour to serve the people of Saskatchewan. So thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister. Ms. Bowes, do you have

any closing comments?

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that, Minister, and want to echo your thanks and your remarks about your officials. I don't know them as well as you do, but I can see, certainly for myself from our time here today and over the past couple of years, how hard these women work and how much expertise they do bring to the table and how hard they are working on behalf of Saskatchewan women through the Status of Women office. And very much respect to you all. Thank you so much for your time, and I know all the time that goes into preparing for these estimates. And thank you as always for indulging my questions and for your very informative answers. And thank you. Have a great night.

The Chair: — Thank you. I'd also like to thank the minister and her staff and the officials and the committee and Hansard too as well. We will now stand recessed until 6:45.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

[18:45]

General Revenue Fund Tourism Saskatchewan Vote 88

Subvote (TR01)

The Chair: — I'd like to welcome committee members back. We will now begin our consideration of vote 88, Tourism Saskatchewan, central management and services, subvote (TR01). Minister Harrison is here with his officials. I'd remind the officials to please state your name for the record before you speak, and do not touch the microphones, please. Minister, please introduce your officials and make your opening comments.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Sure. Well thanks very, very much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate it. And thanks to the committee members for being here this evening. On my right, our CEO at Tourism Saskatchewan, Jonathan Potts, who has been at committee, no stranger to committee through this process. Behind me, Amy McInnis, vice-president of marketing and communications; Tracy Breher, vice-president of destination and workforce development; and Rae Gallivan, chief financial officer and vice-president of corporate services.

The Chair: — Oh, thank you, Minister. Sorry. We'll now open it up for questions.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well, I have some opening comments.

The Chair: — Oh, okay. Sorry. I'm sorry. Your opening comments.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — No, thanks, Mr. Chair. I'll take the opportunity for some opening comments. Again, thanks to committee members for being here.

This really is an opportune time to talk tourism as we look forward to Saskatchewan Tourism Week, proclaimed April 24th to April 30th. The week brings attention to a sector that contributes substantially to the province's economy and is a

major employer.

Saskatchewan's tourism sector is experiencing a strong but extended recovery. There is resilience among travellers and pent-up demand for meaningful experiences. Buoyed by domestic travel demand near pre-pandemic levels, domestic travel spending is expected to recover in 2023, a full year earlier than originally forecasted. Statistics Canada figures show that visitor spending reached \$1.83 billion in the first three quarters of 2022. Based on this amount, the total for the year is estimated at \$2.2 billion, in line with spending generated in 2019.

Tourism employment is measured at its peak in August of each year, and in 2022 almost 70,000 Saskatchewan residents held full- or part-time jobs in tourism, close to the total of 2019. Hotel occupancies across the province surpassed pre-pandemic levels in May and remained elevated throughout the rest of 2022.

Saskatchewan's growth plan sets an ambitious goal of a 50 per cent increase in tourist expenditures by 2030, a jump from 2.4 billion to 3.6 billion annually. Tourism Saskatchewan will grow the tourism industry by appealing to new high-yield visitor markets, enhancing the quality of tourism experiences and services in the province, and strengthening investment in events, business travel, and markets that will yield a high return.

In addition to its work to inspire local and domestic markets to explore the province, Tourism Saskatchewan is focused on attracting lucrative new markets, higher spending niche travellers who want what our province has to offer. Tourism is a fiercely competitive industry, but Saskatchewan is well positioned to take advantage of the experiences in demand by global travellers, including opportunities to connect with nature, abundant wide open spaces, and unparalleled fishing and hunting experiences. Furthermore Saskatchewan is a safe destination, without the uncertainty and upheaval under way in other parts of the world.

Tourism Saskatchewan has refreshed the province's brand pillars and identified themed travel zones for promoting the province. This work was based on comprehensive research along with industry consultation. The new look and approach will enable Saskatchewan to stand out from the competition and help travellers understand why our province is a compelling travel choice.

Saskatchewan has world-class hunting and angling experiences in demand by high-spending US [United States] travellers. Tourism Saskatchewan is marketing outfitted angling and hunting across a number of target states where research shows we have the greatest potential to influence visitation. Advertising focuses on convincing former clientele to return and on persuading new markets to seek Saskatchewan adventures.

Tourism Saskatchewan support brought 36 outdoor media projects here last year, leveraging the influence and reach of popular outdoor influencers and media outlets, like The New Fly-Fisher or North American Whitetail, as a fundamental part of strategies to influence anglers and hunters to choose Saskatchewan for their next adventure. The return of direct air service between Saskatoon and Minneapolis is positive news for the outfitting industry. Tourism Saskatchewan is partnering with WestJet on a marketing campaign to bring awareness to the convenient new route and drive bookings from the US market.

Getting events and business travel back on track is fundamental to tourism recovery.

Tourism Saskatchewan has invested in research and consultation to create a new, effective event strategy for the province, which will be implemented in the spring of 2023. The new strategy will support the development and expansion of major events. It will include a stronger focus on attracting business events and travel that aligns with sectors of strength — agriculture, life sciences, advanced manufacturing, technology, and natural resources.

In just a few weeks, Moose Jaw will be in the spotlight when it hosts the World Para Ice Hockey championship. This is the first time that the championship will be played in Canada. Next year Regina will proudly welcome Canada's top talent in men's curling and legions of fans travelling here for the 2024 Brier. It is expected to have an economic impact between 8 and \$12 million.

Tourism Saskatchewan leads several application-based programs that enable operators to expand their product offerings, increase their market readiness, appeal to new clientele, stay open longer, and boost employment. The tourism diversification program has been in place since 2019 and has inspired big-picture thinking and innovative projects that increase Saskatchewan's experiential tourism assets.

Projects vary in size and scope. For example, funding enabled and established businesses to develop a new experience that involves retail sales and tour hosting. The tour is now generating \$5,000 per month in new revenue with 94 per cent of guests making additional retail purchases. Another example is a seasonal fishing outfitter that invested in cabin upgrades, expanding its season and offering experiences like ice fishing, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. In 2022 the business reported an additional 34,000 in revenue during the winter months.

Tourism Saskatchewan values its relationships with the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada and continues to work closely with ITAC [Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada] to implement a comprehensive Indigenous tourism strategy for the province. A new Indigenous tourism association, Indigenous Destinations Saskatchewan, was announced late last year. Tourism Saskatchewan looks forward to working with IDS [Indigenous Destinations Saskatchewan] and supporting its mandate.

Tourism Saskatchewan is currently involved in a number of projects with Indigenous partners. One example is supporting Mosquito, Grizzly Bear's Head, Lean Man First Nation to complete an experience development plan for a new interpretive centre and art gallery. This will be constructed south of Battleford on property known as The Ridge. Support has also been provided to Beardy's and Okemasis Cree Nation to advance its plans for Pêmiska Tourism and create a variety of authentic experiences that reflect local Cree stories and traditions.

A robust, skilled tourism workforce is critical to building a competitive, service-driven industry that delivers on the promises made to visitors. Tourism Saskatchewan leads programs and activities that help businesses recruit and retain staff and help employees build confidence and skills that prepare

them for meaningful careers in the industry.

A focus on youth has driven initiatives like presentations in high schools throughout the province, from urban centres to remote northern communities. Career fairs held in partnership with industry education councils, Saskatchewan Polytechnic, and participating tourism businesses have been very successful. A new website, workinsktourism.ca, links education and students to resources, activities, and information about tourism jobs, entrepreneurial opportunities, and career pathways.

Tourism Saskatchewan hosted a series of free online workshops throughout February to May that address a range of important topics, from digital marketing and managing online reputation to employee recruitment tips.

I appreciate the time that's been afforded to discussing Tourism Saskatchewan's leadership and work, and thank you for your attention.

The Chair: — Thank you for those comments, Minister. We'll now open it up for questions. Mr. Teed.

Mr. Teed: — My first question was, what were your priorities for Tourism, but I think that summed it up quite well. So I think now maybe what I'll do is I'll jump into some questions I had about the governance structure for Tourism Saskatchewan. What is the governance structure for Tourism Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Sure. Yeah, no, I appreciate the question, and the first one's a good question as well. And you know, we kind of laid out a bit of that, but we're happy to kind of get into some of those questions as well as far as priorities. I know Jonathan would be happy to speak to that.

But to the specific question around governance, you know, obviously Tourism Saskatchewan has a minister for whom I have the current pleasure of being the occupant. But you know, we have a great team, and Jonathan leads the team at Tourism Saskatchewan. I think we've got about 74 folks or thereabouts.

Mr. Potts: — Around there, yeah.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Around there? Yeah, at the end of the year, I think we'll have about 74 folks who work for Tourism Saskatchewan, do a great job. Leadership team here beside and behind me who really do all the hard work and heavy lifting. But, Jonathan, if you want to maybe speak to some of the governance part, I'd turn it to you.

Mr. Potts: — Sure. Thank you, Minister. Jonathan Potts, CEO of Tourism Saskatchewan. Thanks very much for the question. So obviously we're a treasury board Crown, which implies that we also, in addition to the minister, have a board. Our board currently consists, I believe, of eight people, great representatives from across the province, you know, business leaders, community leaders, and so forth. So they provide great governance, I have to say. We have Norm Beug as our Chair and Cory Rideout as our vice-chair, and they do an exceptional job of providing leadership to our team.

And then, as the minister said, we have three different divisions and those are represented by the three very capable people behind

me. So trying to see what order they're in there: Rae Gallivan, our CFO [chief financial officer] and VP [vice-president] of corporate services, is a very experienced government employee, spent most of her career in government and just came over to us in the fall. And then Amy McInnis is our VP of marketing and communications. She leads the largest team at Tourism Saskatchewan — which you can imagine, marketing is a key focus for us — and is in charge of all marketing activities that we lead around Saskatchewan and around the world. And then Tracy Breher is in charge of our destination and workforce development team.

So they're located in Saskatoon mostly, or primarily in Saskatoon. And that team does a number of different things. So it helps the industry with destination development and planning and all sorts of activities to help individual businesses and communities, you know, better serve travellers, in addition to providing also education and training opportunities for managers and employees throughout the tourism industry across the province.

Mr. Teed: — Wonderful. As far as the board goes, how long are the board appointments for Tourism Saskatchewan and are they renewable?

Mr. Potts: — They are renewable. They are three-year terms. I hope I get that right. I know Angela in our office will kill me if I didn't. So they are three-year terms to a maximum of three terms.

Mr. Teed: — Three terms. Perfect. Has anyone served longer on those terms?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Yeah, well maybe I'll . . . We've actually asked Norm to stay on as our board Chair for . . . I think we call it an overhold, right? But Norm's been our board Chair for a very long time.

And actually I'd be kind of remiss in my first answer in talking about management structure. I really do want to thank the board, publicly in this forum, for the work they do, and really thank Norm as well for staying on as the Chair at Tourism for, you know, a little bit past where I think at one point he expected to be staying for. So I want to acknowledge that and say thank you to those folks.

Mr. Teed: — Is there a remuneration for those board members?

Mr. Potts: — There's a small remuneration. I wouldn't be able to tell you the number today, but it's a small remuneration.

Mr. Teed: — Per diems or travel?

Mr. Potts: — Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Teed: — Have there been any recent changes to that board?

[19:00]

Mr. Potts: — Most recently, Trent Fraser was appointed to the board. That was in 2022. And that's the most recent change.

Mr. Teed: — Any governance structure changes at all that we've seen?

Mr. Potts: — No. No.

Mr. Teed: — Wonderful. What is the money transferred from the province expected to cover? And could you provide funding for the past five years?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — We may or may not have the last five years of allocations. I'm not sure. We'll take a look at that and if we don't have it, though, I'd give you an undertaking that we would table that GRF allocation.

This year we're just a little over \$20 million, I believe, is our GRF allocation. You know, obviously that covers the salaries and other expenses that are incurred by the agency or corporation as we operate and fulfill the mandate that we have, you know, kind of all facets, I guess, in that regard. But, Jonathan, maybe if you wish to add any additional detail, feel free.

Mr. Potts: — Sure, and thank you, Minister. So first off, yes, the budget is just over 20 million this year. That includes 550,000 that will be heading for the Brier in 2024, which we're very excited about as the minister stated.

It does cover off the three, sort of, pillars that I mentioned. So our corporate services team, which includes, you know, obviously accounting, finance, but also our e-business team, which is our digital team which is a very important piece in Tourism these days and in marketing activities and so forth. It includes our research division. It also includes our information collection division. So that's a small team that keeps in touch with industry numbers across the province. We have an industry of over 3,000 businesses, communities, and groups. So they keep in contact with each and every one of those every year. And that rounds out that area.

In marketing and communications, obviously, there's the communications piece. Marketing includes everything from the obvious advertising to things like travel media that the minister mentioned. Travel trade. So working overseas with trade representatives from around the world to help bring people to Saskatchewan. Social media and so forth.

We have our events and partnership team. And that team is responsible for supporting and helping to fund community events, but also to support major events that come to the province. And I'm going to forget something here . . .

But I'll just skip forward to Tracy's team for now. In our destination and workforce development team, there's . . . Our destination development team does industry development activities. So as mentioned, they provide funding programs and other training programs to help industry better plan and coordinate and prepare themselves for the markets of interest that they want to serve.

Our workforce development team is very busy. You know, one of the key challenges across many industries these days, but certainly in the tourism industry, is attracting and maintaining a workforce. So they're very busy at training different groups across the province, different types of individuals, training businesses like I said before, and trying to maintain a robust workforce for the industry.

Mr. Teed: — I guess as far as workforce goes, are these seasonal? Is it kind of that people come in during different times of the year and then you don't see them come back? Is that kind of the . . .

Mr. Potts: — So you know, we really strive to promote tourism as a career. Certainly there are seasonal employees and obviously they're critical to the industry in peak months like summer.

But perhaps more importantly, or just as importantly, are longer term employees and, like I say, that career development. So you know, Tracy's team has done a great job recently of going out to high schools, for example, and attracting them in, bringing in a variety of speakers.

Here in Regina we had our former Saskatchewaner, Filipe Gomez — who the kids loved — and a couple of representatives from industry here speak to probably about 80 to 100 high school students, talk to them about different career opportunities. So from the traditional to non-traditional, so things like being an influencer like Filipe has done and is doing. And that really got their attention, right, that there is an opportunity here not just to work in tourism in the summer but to gain the skills and get a career foothold, and you know, potentially build a much longer lasting career.

Mr. Teed: — Sounds like a fantastic program. I think yes, sometimes the challenge I know I found is that sometimes you don't even really know about those career opportunities. You know, as a high school kid, you didn't know that you could have a life career in tourism.

One of the pillars you mentioned was the destination. Is that work with the destination marketing organizations throughout the province?

Mr. Potts: — Yes. We do work with destination organizations across the province.

Mr. Teed: — And I know I had some questions about destination kind of later on. But maybe I'll just quickly jump. So what kind of support do you offer the destination organizations here in the province?

Mr. Potts: — Sure. Sorry, just one second.

Mr. Teed: — And is there a financial component?

Mr. Potts: — Yeah, so we do work with destination organizations across the province, right, so from large, like Tourism Regina and Discover Saskatoon, to much smaller ones in smaller communities, as small as, for example, Coronach, but more obviously places like Swift Current and Moose Jaw and so forth.

We primarily provide support to, as we call them, DMOs, our destination marketing or destination management organizations, through two programs — our marketing and events partnership program, which I'll probably just use the acronym for, which is MEPP, and our destination development funding program. So one on the marketing side, one on the development side.

In 2022-23 we provided 140,000 in support to DMOs and CMOs,

city marketing organizations, through our MEPP program, through our marketing program. We provide other supports, so for example, the town of Maple Creek being like sort of the gateway to the province on the west. There's a visitor centre that we support on the west side of the province, and they do a great job of really using that to attract people to Maple Creek and the Cypress Hills and communities in that area.

We also do a lot of work, and Amy's team does a lot of work, hosting travel writers and travel media to visit cities and write about their experiences. Not just cities. But cities; it could be outfitting experiences; it could be a ranch experience or so forth. And so that ends up in media across Canada, across North America, and around the world.

I should be clear we don't provide any direct funding for operational support. So that's something we're pretty clear on with every destination organization because that's something that was done in the past, and frankly, leads to a lot of organizations and not a lot of marketing dollars or development dollars, and isn't a particularly effective use of the dollars. And then we also obviously provide support to Regina and Saskatoon, but I'll leave that for now.

Mr. Teed: — You know, it kind of answers one question I had was, it seemed like there's quite a diverse funding model for different DMOs across the province. And has there ever been thought about unifying that across the province? Or do you find that the current model works better, as that you're seeing these organizations having to, you know, use their dollars efficiently, or you know, earn the dollars that they're making? I know some have hotel levies and some come from different . . .

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Yeah, I'll maybe kind of just by way of, make a bit of an intro, and then Jonathan can speak to it. A valid observation, absolutely. You know, really we do not get . . . You know, we're not playing a prescriptive role with DMOs about how they go about their business. I mean they're a very much independent organization.

So you know, we do provide support, as Jonathan well pointed out, for project-based or application-based supports on different things, and we're happy to be partners in a lot of those. But as for the organization of the destination marketing organizations, that really is up to that organization's board and oversight structure without us providing, you know, any prescriptive direction on it.

Mr. Potts: — Yeah, thank you, Minister. That's absolutely right. And I would just maybe add that, you know, it's certainly a discussion not just within Saskatchewan but around the country. When I meet with my counterparts around North America and around the world, you know, what's the best way to fund and support those organizations? Typically it is something done at a local level or primarily done at a local level.

Mr. Teed: — Okay. And we'll hop back to some of the questions I had about the transfers. One of the questions I had was, what are the revenue streams? So of course there's the General Revenue Fund. What are the like other grants and contributions? Sales and products, partnership revenue, where does that revenue come from? Or can you give us maybe a more . . . elaborate on those specific line items?

Mr. Potts: — Sure. Yeah, that's a great question. So we do receive some federal dollars from, for example, PrairiesCan. We've partnered with them on two or three projects in the last few years. We have a project going forward this year where we'll be putting \$850,000 towards the development of content assets for business events in Regina and Saskatoon, so really, you know, building up the content that those two cities can use to attract business events to their communities.

And then those events, you know, we look to align with Saskatchewan's key sectors of strength primarily, and you know, work with the trade offices the minister is responsible for around the world. And we'll be hiring a lead generator in Europe, in German-speaking Europe and the UK [United Kingdom], to assist Regina and Saskatoon with some of that. So I blended a little bit there, but the content assets really is part of what the funding that we receive from Prairies Canada.

We also receive funding from Destination Canada which is our federal partner. So we have a partnered program that we do with Travel Manitoba and Destination Canada. It's an angling program, and we have . . . Because Saskatchewan and Manitoba have very similar fishing product, outfitted angling product, you know, we consider each other co-opetition, if you will, that we're happy to work together to build Canada's reputation as the best freshwater fishing in North America, and then we go out and compete against each other to bring those people to — and they're Americans — to our provinces. So we receive 250,000 in support, Saskatchewan does, for that program. Works really, really well.

We also have revenue streams tied to, in Tracy's area, training programs. So while we offer some training programs for free, others we do offer for a fee and generate a small amount of revenue from them, for example.

Mr. Teed: — Fantastic. Can you provide a five-year history of expenses as laid out in your business plan?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Yeah, that might be one where we can provide an undertaking to table that. I'm not sure we have the detailed breakdown of the past five years.

Mr. Teed: — No, that's fair. Can you provide me with a little bit of information on how our transfers compare with other Western Canadian provinces? Where are we amongst, kind of . . . and you mentioned Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia. What does our, you know, investment look like comparatively to other provinces?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Yeah. Yeah, I mean I can kind of provide a bit of an overview, but the way I would kind of position the discussion on this though is that every province has it set up a bit differently. So it's hard to have an apples-to-apples comparison on this, and the reason being that functions that would be fulfilled by a tourism organization in Alberta, for example, might be filled by a line ministry here or that we might perform in tourism would be performed by a line ministry in Manitoba. And there really are variations in how that works in each of the jurisdictions.

So you know, I think kind of the short answer would be that there would probably be a higher per capita funding. And I'd leave that

to Jonathan, I guess. I'm not sure if we have all of that information with us, especially kind of based on the last budgets and everything like that. But there might be a little bit higher per capita expenditure in a couple of the other jurisdictions just on their tourism organization, but there is a difference as to the allocation of responsibilities and program responsibilities and those sort of things.

[19:15]

So it really is a challenge to kind of make an apples-to-apples comparison.

Mr. Potts: — I also was going to speak about apples. So no, I appreciate the question.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Say oranges to oranges.

Mr. Potts: — Yeah, for sure. Whatever your favourite is.

It's a fair question. To the minister's point, I think, when I talk to my counterparts from other provinces, obviously the investment in Alberta and BC [British Columbia] is higher in gross terms than in Saskatchewan. Per capita, I think, it's actually probably quite close in Alberta. I'm not sure about BC. Manitoba, I talk to my counterpart there quite often. He tells me often that they are the lowest-funded provincial marketing organization in the country.

But to the minister's point too, our mandates are all a little different. We have a broad mandate and certainly our destination workforce development team, a lot of the components of that work you would often see performed in a ministry or perhaps even elsewhere in other provinces. But we're kind of an all-in-one shop in many ways at Tourism Saskatchewan.

So you know, we're happy with the amount of funding we receive. And it allows us to pursue our mandate, I think, quite effectively.

Mr. Teed: — Thank you very much. Yeah, even as I was trying to do some research too, it seems like every budget in the West has a different way of allocating it. And yeah, I wasn't even able to, you know, line comparisons. So, very interesting.

I'm going to jump into a little bit of different questions. You know, from engaging stakeholders and such we're hearing that the tourism sector is struggling to recover from the effects of the pandemic. You know, hotels were hit across the province, destinations are struggling to recover, arts organizations, cultural organizations. And I've asked this in, you know, Parks, Culture and Sport, but was there any research done in advance of the application of the PST expansion on sporting events, concerts, museums? And how that might affect the tourism expenditures in the province?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Yeah, I mean, I'd be happy to kind of take that. I know Jonathan probably will have some to add as well.

I'll get to kind of the specific question. I think that the answer to that is that we don't really know. I mean, there's not current data on all of that. I suspect that . . . I really believe, in the long term,

you're not going to see an impact around that. But there has been an impact coming out of the pandemic, which some would probably argue, and fair enough to argue, that it was tied to the PST component. But I think, a lot more than that, there are a whole lot of pandemic-related issues.

You know, one of the things that we do genuinely have a challenge on is around the labour issue. It's a real thing and our hospitality industry are facing it every single day. I mean, I hear about it; it's the number one issue that we hear about. And I think that there's a lot of reasons why we ended up in that place which is not just confined to Saskatchewan. But I mean these are good challenges to have, in that we have kind of more jobs available than people, but it is nonetheless a significant challenge for the industry overall.

So you know, we've tried to respond to that in a host of different ways. And we've really tried to work closely with our stakeholders on this — you know, chambers of commerce and Hospitality Saskatchewan obviously as well — in designing responses that kind of take an all-of-the-above approach. So that means making sure that more of our own residents who are here in Saskatchewan are able to take advantage of opportunities that exist in the tourism sector and industry.

You know, some of that is to do with job training that has to do with things that go along as well, not just working in the industry directly, but things like infrastructure development and other elements that go along with it. So I would say that's kind of number one, is making sure more of our own folks can take advantage of the opportunities.

A big part of it as well is going to be international in-migration. And we've really worked closely in designing and we responded with what we called the hard-to-fill skills program, which was a SINP [Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program] stream that we rolled out about a year ago. Maybe a bit less than that, around a year ago now. That really was designed to accommodate and respond to the labour market shortages we were seeing, you know, in significant measure, not an entire majority measure, but in significant measure in the tourism and hospitality sector.

So you know, I think you would hear . . . I mean, if Jim Bence was here representing Hospitality Saskatchewan he would say that this has really been, you know, a game changer for them and for their members, being able to access through SINP labour streams which would have been more difficult to reach had we not reallocated resources within SINP to do this. That's going to continue to be a part of the answer as well.

You know we had advocated really quite strongly . . . And this is a little bit tangential to tourism but it's kind of not as well, in that SINP and international in-migration are really important for the industry. So we've advocated strongly and put through our Saskatchewan Immigration Accord proposal, a significant increase in the SINP allocations per year. To their credit, and I kind of am reluctant on occasion to give the federal government a lot of credit for a lot of things, but on this we have worked very collaboratively. And it's because, you know, I think we've built a pretty good coalition of provinces, alignment of interest, to increase provincial nominee program allocations. The federal government have been, you know, quite clear that they want to increase the levels, which is what they refer to as the number of

newcomers per year. So levels were increasing.

There was no guarantee though that the federal government was going to allocate increased levels to provincial nominee programs. They could have allocated those numbers to federal immigration streams, but you know, united, the provinces made a very compelling case as to why our PNPs [provincial nominee program] were better positioned to respond to labour market challenges in our own jurisdiction.

So that was ultimately an argument that was accepted by the federal government, and the result of that is our provincial nominee program, now sitting at 6,000 per year, is going to be increasing to, I guess, 7,500 this year. So a very substantial increase over the course of just this year alone, and then to 8,000 next year and to 8,500 the year after. So that will mean, in practice, nearly 20,000 newcomers per year through our provincial nominee program. So that was one component of what we had put forward in the immigration accord that, you know, really in large measure has been realized.

Other elements had to do with duplication of assessments. And we've been clear that we, you know, we really believe we could, literally tomorrow, take over the entire selection side on the economic migration streams. Not every province is in the exact same position as we are, simply because our international immigration is very, very largely composed of our PNP. So we actually could take over selection tomorrow on all of the economic migration into the province.

So what the federal government have responded with really has given us primary, it's given us sole authority over settlement outcome selection determination, which is a big, big part of what we had asked for. It's going to speed things up considerably. We do this much more efficiently than the federal government, and I think other provinces would say through their provincial nominee programs they do this much more efficiently as well than the Government of Canada.

So that is another big component of what we had asked for. I mean, the other parts of the immigration accord aren't entirely relevant to what we're talking about here so I won't get into them, but on these two elements of addressing the labour shortage, international in-migration is a significant part of it.

I think Jonathan had talked a little bit about some of the education stuff we're doing. But I will turn it over to Jonathan maybe to speak about that a little bit more. But this really is a multi-pronged approach to dealing with what is, you know, probably the biggest challenge that the industry has, which is around labour. But, Jonathan, do you want to speak to kind of the training elements of what we are doing. That would probably be relevant.

Mr. Potts: — Sure. Great, yeah, and thank you, Minister. Yeah, we're really proud of the industry training that we do. We've done it for a very long time, since Tourism Saskatchewan was incorporated, and that makes us quite unique amongst the provincial marketing organizations across the country.

So in 2022-23 we had 12,240 people across the province take part in our training programs. So that ranges from Service Best customer service training to the Serve It Right program, which is

for the responsible service of alcohol and a number of other things in between.

We have a series of webinars happening right now. And I think I touched on those or I touched on some, but I'll talk a little bit more about. We have digital marketing, online reputation management, hiring for diversity, handling difficult conversations — all sorts of programs intended to help managers and management deal with different situations that they face. Registrations for those are over 500.

This is the first time offering some of these programs, and it just blew it out of the water. There's a real demand, kind of to the minister's point. You know, what we're seeing a lot of demand for right now is upskilling, reskilling, you know, providing opportunities for people in the industry to upgrade their skills, especially for those who want to stay in the industry and have stayed in the industry. It's a great incentive if they're getting great training along the way.

As of March 31st, 2023, we have over 8,000 individuals that hold a Serve It Right certification in the province, so we're really proud of that. You know, the responsible service of alcohol obviously is in everyone's best interests, and we play a big part of that.

We also have over 1,300 individuals across the province that are currently certified in CannaSell, so that's a similar program for the responsible sale and distribution of cannabis.

The workforce development strategy that we do have is being updated in the current fiscal year, so we're excited to refresh that. And because of the obvious challenges that the industry went through during the pandemic — and you know, the minister touched on things like immigration and so forth — it's a very dynamic environment right now in attracting, retaining, training a workforce. So we felt it's time to refresh our strategy on that front.

And one program that I am particularly fond of, and I'd be remiss if I didn't just draw a little bit of attention to, is our Ready to Work program. So that's been offered, I want to say for time immemorial, Tracy, but for as long as I've been in the tourism industry here, which is over two decades.

It's a program that equips participants with skills, knowledge, attitudes, and experience required to work in long-term stable employment. So often they're people who haven't had the opportunity to work, frankly, in a stable environment for any length of time. So 80 per cent of participants identify as Indigenous. Many are in northern Saskatchewan, many are in remote communities.

It has a really strong success rate, and I believe six months after completion of the program we strive for an 80 per cent employment rate. And we hit that pretty much every year. So it really does amazing work and I would encourage anybody here, if you ever get the opportunity, to come to one of the events. We start people off really early, you know, with sort of rudimentary service skills, but by the end they're doing white linen table service, and the meals reflect that. So it's a truly incredible program.

Mr. Teed: — That sounds like a great program. Yeah, it's interesting to start thinking about like where did all the people go over the pandemic. When you start thinking about the struggles around labour, it's like, why? Yeah, I think I have a few thoughts.

It's great to hear about those educational opportunities. You know as an SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] critic, I love to hear about the Serve It Right and CannaSell and Ready to Work. So would you say that education is kind of the spearhead for this industry to recover?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Yeah, I mean I would say education is going to be a part of it. I mean, we've worked hard to, with partners, in identifying where we have opportunities to expand and attract those who might have been here before but also those who would be inclined because of the experience that we offer here to come here.

And you know, one of the areas, and there's more than just one, but I'll speak to one that I know personally pretty well, and that's around angling and hunting. You know, we have what is really the best product in the world as far as our outfitted angling and hunting opportunities. This is the best place to come in the entire world. And I don't think that's just me saying that either. It is. We have the highest quality of animals, fish, of experience that you are going to get anywhere.

[19:30]

And you know, we've worked really hard on getting that story out there. And really I think it has been a focus that we have had as an organization over the last number of years but, of course, interrupted by the pandemic to the point where a lot of our outfitters were, you know, really in very, very difficult positions. And we responded during the pandemic really quite rapidly in rolling out support programs that were very, very carefully tailored and targeted at supporting the outfitting industry, which has probably been disproportionately hit. Even in an industry that had been disproportionately hit, outfitting was even more so and continues to be. I mean the reality is that you still have vaccine requirements to go to the United States, for example. I mean that's one of them.

The kind of other elements around this were that it disrupted what had been, you know, in a lot of cases, longstanding, traditional patterns of coming to Canada for your, kind of, annual bear hunt or your annual deer hunt.

So we are really working hard on re-establishing some of those patterns that existed before. And that was a part of the consideration in working with WestJet on the direct flight to Minneapolis as well which, you know, from Saskatoon really is the gateway for your hunting and angling outfitted experiences. I think it's over 90 per cent or staged through Saskatoon.

So having a direct flight from a US hub city was really vitally important for the outfitting sector. And you know, I talked about that. We talked about that when we announced the project. You know, not universally supported by all, but that being said, we really felt it was important that, as a government, we partner with an airline to get to a US destination, a hub city destination, for a variety of reasons, outfitting being one of them.

But that is going to be very, very helpful for our outfitting industry. I think the Commission of Professional Outfitters would be the first ones to attest to that being a real difference maker for them. I mean there have been some challenges which we keep working through that are not of our making.

The firearms stuff that the Liberals are doing in Ottawa has been deeply unhelpful in a lot of these cases as well in that, you know, US hunters are bringing their firearms up from the United States, you know, who have been bringing the same firearms up for 20 years, suddenly find themselves in possession, apparently, of assault rifles. I don't know how Marco Mendicino believes they are assault rifles, which is crazy, just crazy. I won't go on kind of at length on it, but I would encourage members to review my speech in the House on this I had before Christmas. But my goodness.

This has been really very, very unhelpful as well, and you know, some of the coverage that actually the gun stuff, the insane Liberal gun laws proposals got in the United States was unhelpful as well in that a lot of the folks who are inclined to come up to Canada to hunt whitetail are less inclined when they know, you know, that they can't bring their normal hunting rifle up because it's been deemed to be something else.

So that's been a challenge. But all that being said, we continue to have a huge advantage in that we have the very best product in the entire world, and we're going to tell that story. I mean we do at Safari. We, you know, attend other venues and shows. We actually support our outfitters directly in attending those shows as well, and we're going to continue to do that because this is going to be a growth area for our tourism sector.

And the reality is when folks come up, if they're bear hunting, deer hunting, these are generally folks coming up who have some means and, you know, and are able to and probably spend, you know, money outside of just kind of that hunting experience.

So, Jonathan, if you want to . . .

Mr. Potts: — Yeah, thank you, Minister. Certainly just to pick up on the outfitting piece, absolutely right. So our highest-yielding market are US anglers and hunters. They're certainly . . . You know, we have people that do drive across the border maybe from some of the northern interior states for, you know, some nearby fishing experiences, but the people who use outfitting services are often spending 4, 6, 8, \$10,000 on that part of their trip alone.

Not to mention their flights, their stay in Saskatoon. As the minister mentioned, 92 per cent stage out of Saskatoon, so they often have a stay on at least one side of their trip and usually on both, and then you'll find them in a steakhouse drinking expensive wine, especially if they've had a good hunt or fishing experience.

But yeah, so just maybe to take that a slightly different direction too, since early 2022 we've really been focused on growth, again not just recovery but growth for the industry. And we think that's really important. We have a very entrepreneurial industry made up primarily of small businesses or small, medium-sized businesses. These are people who, you know, take great pride in the work that they do and the people they employ, and you know,

what they mean to their communities and to the province. So you know, the first opportunity they had to get busy again and make money again, you know, for the benefit of all, they were chomping at the bit, quite frankly.

So in addition to outfitting, I do want to add, I mean outfitters, absolutely we have a tremendous growth potential there, and we continue to invest. And the minister mentioned the Minneapolis flight. We're investing to support that certainly in the US and make our American clientele and potential American clientele aware of the fact that they can get here in one flight, perhaps two flights if they fly through Minneapolis from somewhere else, and go have the best fishing of their life or hunting.

Our marketing strategy really, going forward, is focused on niche markets. And I'm sure I'll get an opportunity later to speak more about that, but we want those resilient markets that come to Saskatchewan because they deeply, deeply love coming here for a particular purpose. That outfitting market is the prime example.

But we look at other niche markets like flipping maybe hunting over to bird watchers. You know, this time of year we've certainly seen a growth in that segment and are going to continue to pursue growing that segment. And things like Indigenous tourism, culinary tourism, a number of different aspects of our industry that we want to promote.

And lastly again I'd be remiss if I didn't mention events. Events are really critical to growing the industry. You know, our larger events obviously typically take place in the two major cities, but we do have events right across the province, and we've been very steadfastly supporting those and trying to help them rebound as well. Because to the minister's point, outfitting was an industry within an industry that was devastated. Events were another example of that where, you know, people were quite reluctant to gather in large crowds for the last few years.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Yes. Actually maybe I'll just build on Jonathan's as well.

Mr. Potts: — Sure.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — But very, very right as far as opportunities in niche marketing. Snowmobiling is another example of where we feel . . . And this is really predicated on research. I mean we're actually out there doing market research in different markets with different clientele about what would be attractive niche sort of opportunities for them.

And this is generally people who have very high passion about a particular thing, and where we have a competitive advantage in that area, and about how we kind of can bring those two things together. So we do, you know, work hard on that element and we think that is going to be an opportunity for growth in some of those targeted areas as well.

Oh, and on the events front. So you know, the way we have done historically event support through Tourism Saskatchewan really is kind of predicated on events that are mobile, that move from one market to another or one city to another over a period of time. We really kind of see that as being an area where we have a real advantage as well, and that really comes down to the fact that we're really quite good at doing it.

And we have a huge volunteer base which is, you know, repeatedly shown . . . factually, statistically shown. Our rates of volunteerism are higher than basically anywhere else in Canada, which is very important in kind of large-scale event hosting. So we have been very open to consideration on event supports.

The Grey Cup was, you know, an example of that this year, right. We stepped forward with support for the Roughriders in hosting that event. I think just today actually we had the, kind of, economic impact released which is very, very substantial. I mean we as Tourism Saskatchewan had put about \$3 million last year into support for the Grey Cup. Was that last year or the year . . . Yeah, last year, into Grey Cup support. And I mean the economic impact overall was 60-plus million dollars. You know, so a pretty good return on investment, right.

Next year will be the Brier which, you know, nobody hosts a Brier like Saskatchewan, and I think everybody knows that to be the case. So we've allocated \$550,000 for that event.

And there's some other discussions out there right now too, without, you know, making any announcements or prejudging any outcomes. But you know, I would say that we are very, very open as a government and as an organization to being supportive of large-scale events that we know we can do better than others can.

Mr. Teed: — Thank you, gentlemen. Lots to unpack there but I really appreciate that. I was hoping maybe I could sneak some announcements out of either of you on what kind of events. Tell me if Taylor Swift is coming, okay.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — I've certainly made announcements at estimates before.

Mr. Teed: — No, I had a meeting with the REAL [Regina Exhibition Association Ltd.] folks, and you know, just hearing about, you know, the amazing facilities that we have here in Regina, just alone. You know, I'm from Saskatoon so it was great to learn about the facilities we have and some fantastic opportunities I think.

I'm going to hop quickly back to flights, but you kind of answered it. You said 90 per cent of our angling and fishing are staged out of Saskatoon. So I have to ask because, you know, the folks will ask, are there opportunities for Regina to see direct flights to the United States? I know there's certainly an appetite there for that. And maybe I'll . . . Yeah.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Yeah, no. I appreciate the question and I've been kind of asked this by media as well. I mean it's more of a Trade and Export question. Happy to answer it though in this venue as well.

You know, the resources that we provided for the Saskatoon Airport Authority are available for the Regina Airport Authority as well. So the RAA [Regina Airport Authority] has been working very, very closely with our senior officials at Trade and Export in the same way that we did with the Saskatoon Airport Authority. And I would say the Regina and Saskatoon airport authorities work very closely together as well. But we have worked very closely with RAA.

There's slightly different dynamics on connections from Regina as opposed to Saskatoon and US hubs. I would say by way of a general observation that we would prefer having a connection from Regina to a different hub than to Minneapolis. And I think the airlines even would say that you end up with a certain cannibalization of potential clients based on having destination to the same place.

So I would just say this. Regina Airport Authority are the lead. We have made available to the RAA the same resources that we provided for the SAA [Saskatoon Airport Authority] on attracting that Minneapolis flight. And I'm very hopeful, and I think the RAA would say the same thing about some good news coming, you know, in the medium term on that front.

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — There's your announcement.

Mr. Teed: — Yeah.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — It was diplomatically . . . [inaudible].

Mr. Teed: — We'll just blurt out anything, any of these secret announcements that we make.

No, thank you for that. Both of you had kind of mentioned a bit, one of the thoughts and concerns around, you know . . . I guess I should preface this. In speaking with stakeholders in the tourism, there's a lot of support for those subsidized flights which, you know, were going to the airport authority.

One of the concerns that was brought forward is what is Tourism Saskatchewan doing to diversify that it's not just angling and hunting? Is there plans in the mix to ensure that those folks are staying extra days? Or you kind of mentioned snowmobiling and birding. Are there other areas where you're seeing budding tourism opportunities so that we can ensure that (a) we're getting butts in those seats all year round? Because I think that's the biggest concern is that we want to make sure that we're getting folks into the province not just around the angling and fishing seasons. But maybe you can share a little . . .

[19:45]

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Yeah, I'll maybe take the first crack at that and then Jonathan might maybe talk about some of the niche stuff. We've talked a little bit about it but there's probably a bit more that we could focus on there too, not just about hunting and angling by any stretch. You know, that's one area I emphasize personally because it's an area I have a high degree of interest in, some degree of knowledge, pray. I could have more. But that being said, I mean, it's not just about that.

I just want to be clear too on the . . . You know, some have characterized the minimum revenue guarantee as basically a cheque that we're writing to the airlines. That is not what it is. What it is, is providing a guaranteed minimum revenue based on, you know, what the expectation is on the flight return. So if the flight is full all year round, like, the government would be paying zero, right?

Mr. Teed: — Right, yeah.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — It's based on a minimum return on the

route, so you know, our interest as well is served by having that flight full year round. And we're actually working with WestJet on some of the marketing parts of the Minneapolis flight as well. So we are not just kind of giving a cheque to WestJet.

And I fully expect that the \$2.2 million, which is allocated under the MRG [minimum revenue guarantee], that there is going to be nowhere near that much that will be provided at the end of the day. But you know, that being said, we are prepared and have budgeted for the full 2.2 million and made a policy decision that this was something that we needed to do as a province in having direct connections to US hub cities.

And you know, I knew that was going to be controversial. I think government had our eyes wide open that there was going to be controversy from some angles on that, but you know, we really feel very strongly that this is the right approach to take. And you know, doing that for both Regina and Saskatoon was the right approach for, you know, the tourism industry, for the business sector, for individuals who are seeking to get to a destination in the United States. I mean it's a challenge. I mean folks know that. It's a challenge when you don't have direct connection through US hub cities.

So anyway, all of that to say that, you know, that's a priority for us, and we've explained, I think, why we believe that to be the appropriate policy. But you know, beyond hunting and fishing, I'll turn to Jonathan for a discussion there.

Mr. Potts: — Sure. Again thank you, Minister, and thank you again for the question. It's a good question. You know, in Saskatchewan, we're very clear-minded at Tourism Saskatchewan about who we are as a province and what we have to offer and what we do particularly well vis-à-vis other destinations and what we offer as well, and sometimes even not as well as other destinations.

So you know, I think all the way back to my university years in Saskatoon. I had a professor named Professor Bone in human geography, who talked about the law of human retail gravitation. And essentially that is, you know, if you're offering a similar experience or a similar opportunity in a city of a million people, or you're offering that experience in a city of 300,000 or 250,000, the larger centre is going to have a greater gravity, right, and draw people from further away.

So we want to be clear in Saskatchewan that we're not trying to compete on the general leisure traveller. That's why we are pursuing a niche market to get to that \$3.6 billion target that the minister identified earlier. So when we talk about niches, we're just really talking about specialized segments of like-minded people who are really passionate about the activities they're in. And that's why, you know, we love using that hunting and fishing example, because that market symbolizes that.

But we have identified through research, and I'd emphasize through research, that everything we do is really well research-driven. But we are after niche markets that, you know, they want better in-destination experiences, something they can't get somewhere else. You know, when you're talking about air access to Regina, for example, we can offer an experience here — I'll touch on some of those markets in a moment — but in astrotourism. So looking at night skies or looking at storm

chasing has become a big activity in recent years — you know, different things to do with our skies in Saskatchewan.

Those are people who will travel, and they'll travel passionately and they don't care about the barriers in their way to get here. So they will spend more money, much like those anglers and hunters do. They do reach across geographic markets, so it's not limited to looking next door in a neighbouring province or state. They may come from a long way away, and the further they travel, typically the more they spend.

They're typically educated consumers who value, in one way or another, you know, nature, culture, that kind of thing. So you're talking about extending stays. So these are people who want to get to know the destination they're visiting. They're not coming for an amusement ride. They're coming to get to know the people that they're visiting, to get to know the culture of the people that they're visiting, or to get to know the landscape or the animals that are endemic there.

And it's a great opportunity for us to disperse travel across the province. We're not overrun with tourists, and I mean that in the best possible way. We're a large province, but we do have the opportunity through a niche strategy to get people to different parts of the province.

So just to go over the list, when we're talking niche marketing strategy, what we're looking at right now, birding as I mentioned before. Minister mentioned snowmobiling. We've got a great experiential offering, for example, in east central Saskatchewan called 1000 Miles of Snow. And we're working with local communities in that area to really promote and develop their snowmobiling trails that interconnect and again are over 1,000 miles of trails, so the kind of experience that can turn into a multi-day experience and really be, for someone who is passionate about that activity, a great destination.

Nature-based wellness, we've seen a huge growth in that and I can provide lots of examples about that. Astrotourism, like I mentioned. So you know, everything . . . That again is . . . Night skies. If you've ever gone down to the east block of Grasslands National Park during, for example, the Perseid meteor shower in August, the place is full of out-of-province licence plates from Canada and the US, people with multi-thousand-dollar microscopes and computer equipment capturing the meteor show because it's one of the best places on earth, and a dark sky preserve, to see that.

In addition to that, and in addition to angling, hunting, Indigenous tourism like I mentioned — and that's a real growth opportunity for us — and the culinary and agri-tourism, which often interconnect obviously in a place like Saskatchewan.

Mr. Teed: — I was reading the points, and under point 2 it says commitments to Calls to Action 7 and 92. Alongside and maybe hopping back maybe to a bit of the angling and hunting, is there an opportunity for sustainability in those areas and an ability to continue on a reconciliation journey?

Through that, are there challenges in that area? Or are there . . . And you know, maybe another question. You know, you hear a lot about the fresh water, and maybe this actually may be diving way too much outside of the . . . So you can tell me if I'm going

way too far out. But is there an opportunity for tourism to engage a sustainability role in the province? You know, we see the advertisement of Sustainable Saskatchewan. Is there opportunities there to engage?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Yeah. You know, I think that really kind of underpins a lot of what we are doing, whether that be in the niche area, whether that be in the existing area, you know, whether that be in our Indigenous tourism strategy. I think a lot of that . . . Really kind of the condition pressed into a lot of that is the sustainability of what we do here, and the fact that it really is timeless and it is going to be timeless, a lot of what experiences people are going to be able to avail themselves of.

So you know, I think really it's a central part of who we are and what we do and, you know, whether we're advertising some of those elements in kind of the economic context. And I think members will have seen that in different airports and that sort of thing around the country. But really that's a big part of our value proposition in a tourism context as well. So you know, I think it's a very valid observation and question though. So I'm sure, Jonathan, if you want to . . .

Mr. Potts: — Sure. Yeah, and great question. All of the niche markets I identified are built around being sustainable, including hunting and angling, quite frankly. You know, our Ministry of Environment does a great job of managing the resource there. Obviously hunting is a little more consumptive than angling. You don't get to put the bird back in the air. But they know . . .

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Some of the time you just miss it though.

Mr. Potts: — I see some skinny hunters up there, yeah. No, like I say, when we look at . . . everything we do is research-based. So we work with an agency called Destination Think, primarily based out of Vancouver, but they work all around the world. Their principals are from around the world. You know, they work with major destinations in Australia. They work with Holland, Netherlands, across the US, across Canada, many destinations in Europe, and so forth, right, in New Zealand, Southeast Asia, etc.

So when we look at the global picture and what we want to target, you know, we're not bringing a myopic view to that. We're bringing a very world view to what Saskatchewan actually really does do well. That is bolstered by our research agency of record, which is Environics and Environics Analytics, which obviously most people have heard of or some familiarity with. But again they do tourism research across North America, around the world, and are able to either, you know, inform that strategy on the front end or marry that strategy on the back end to the work that we're doing.

And just to illustrate that, we're bringing principals from both agencies here next week to do some deep dives into some of these niche markets and really help us grow them going forward.

Mr. Teed: — Thank you. And I guess my next question, and kind of leading off of that, what kind of . . . I know later on in the business plan there's a bit of discussion around — I'm just going to find it here — overall Indigenous engagement. So we hear a lot about economic reconciliation. What sort of partnerships is Tourism Saskatchewan making on those fronts? You know,

we're bringing people into Saskatoon, bringing them out into the different areas of our province. Are there goals, or are there things in place that we're looking in that direction?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Maybe I'll just kind of lead off. Jonathan's done a tremendous amount of work on this, and we do and have spent a significant amount of resources in putting together, you know, really our Indigenous tourism strategy, which aims to create a sustainable Indigenous tourism industry. And there are kind of a number of elements to that and a number of partnerships that go along with that. But it really is a priority issue for us. We think that there's a tremendous economic opportunity beyond any of the other benefits that go along with it as well. But, Jonathan, I'll turn this one to you.

Mr. Potts: — Thanks, Minister, and I love this question because this is one that I have been really engaged with over the last number of years. So just to set the context, at the national level there's an organization called the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada. That is led by Keith Henry, who actually is Métis and is from the Prince Albert area and is a very, very capable leader on that front.

So starting in 2019 . . . You'll catch the unfortunate timing here right away, but starting in 2019 we developed an Indigenous tourism strategy for Saskatchewan in partnership with ITAC, the Indigenous Tourism Association. That was completed early in 2020 and then obviously had to be shelved for a little while because there was no opportunity really to act upon it.

One of the key elements of that strategy was to establish an Indigenous tourism association within the province. So I'm really proud to say that Tourism Saskatchewan has worked alongside ITAC and alongside some really, really smart minds in the Indigenous business community and community generally over the last year or so, a year and a little bit, to develop what's now called Indigenous Destinations Saskatchewan. It launched in late November 2022.

The organization is currently in the process of hiring an executive director, which I anticipate would be . . . in the next month or two there would be somebody in that position, would be my guess. And it's exciting because that strategy, we've been working on updating it. When I say we, I sit ex officio on the board. But we've been working to update that strategy and, you know, once somebody is in place, then Tourism Saskatchewan will certainly be providing, you know, a variety of supports to help operationalize that, as will ITAC, as will presumably other partners as well.

[20:00]

But that's just as it relates to ITAC and Indigenous Destinations Saskatchewan. We do a ton of work in Indigenous community, and I do just want to flesh that out a little bit. So we are very engaged. We sent four people to the International Indigenous Tourism Conference in Winnipeg just a few weeks ago. You know, we have a person that serves on the management planning committee for Wanuskewin's bid to become a UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization] World Heritage Site.

We provide support to Indigenous tourism operators this year —

I think it's two operators — to go to Rendez-Vous Canada, what we call RVC, which will be in Quebec City in May. That's the largest international travel trade show in the country by far, and so we always make sure that we have a strong Indigenous presence there. And in fact last year we sponsored the breakfast, a morning breakfast, where we got to present Saskatchewan to the world, if you will, and made . . . not made, we featured and focused on Wanuskewin. And Darlene Brander, who you know is the CEO there, did an amazing job presenting what Wanuskewin is all about.

You know, it's really critical to us that we develop Indigenous tourism. Just in terms of content development, I can give you some great examples too. So in addition to Wanuskewin we work with Beardy's and Okemasis on some work with their Pêmiska Tourism there; Back to Batoche; Cree North Adventures on Flying Dust First Nation in the Meadow Lake area; Dakota Dunes Resort, which obviously is one of the best new attractions to come on board in the province in the last number of years; the First Nations University of Canada spring powwow.

And we just put out a piece of content on that last weekend, and it went borderline viral I would say. I want to say 700,000 views, 17,000 engagement? Sorry, just fact-checking myself there, but last time I checked it was over 700,000 views, over 17,000 engagements — you know, likes, shares, comments, etc. And it really went across North America and beyond, which was fantastic.

Onion Lake powwow, if you know Patrick Mitsuing, if you've ever heard of him, he is an influencer in the Indigenous community, again from the Meadow Lake area. And Minister, I don't know if you know him personally or not. Yeah, so he runs what's called Powwow Times, which is an Indigenous tourism website and has over a million followers on . . . sorry, I should say on his Facebook page. So we work closely with him as well and he's a great guy.

kâniyâsihk Culture Camps, and I always hope I say it right for Kevin Lewis, but up near Island Lake. And I'm ashamed that I can never pronounce the First Nation quite right, so I'll just say it Island Lake.

And one I do want to highlight is Aski Holistic, so that's up in the Cumberland delta. For anybody that's ever been up there, you've probably run into a person named Carriere, or one of the Carrieres, but Michela Carriere is a young Indigenous woman — I say young; I believe she's still under 30 — really accomplished. She does provide what's known and talked about as sort of that well-being and nature niche. She provides experiences where people live off the land for a week or learn to live off the land for a week or two.

If you've ever been to the Cumberland delta, it is a mind-bending maze of ribbons of the Saskatchewan River and forests, and I would be lost in two minutes if I were turned loose there. She guides people through there and provides just exceptional experiences. She's providing birding tours now that are selling out this spring, and so on and so forth.

So just really incredible stuff happening there. We've also partnered with the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada again, and Destination Canada, on doing an Indigenous travel

familiarization tour. We partnered with Discover Saskatoon on that as well. I could go on and on, but really proud of the work we're doing there.

In terms of goals, they're embedded in that strategy. I'm not going to speak to the goals per se right now, just because we're in the process of refreshing some of those, like I say, as we get the new executive director on board. But suffice to say, there's a very robust group of people and a very robust strategy and a lot of excitement around the Indigenous tourism industry in Saskatchewan right now.

Mr. Teed: — You mentioned Wanuskewin Heritage Site. Are there any dollars designated to that UNESCO Heritage application in Tourism Saskatchewan, or does that sit anywhere else?

Mr. Potts: — No, we don't. . . Tourism Saskatchewan is not set up to provide funding for that type of application. We support them in a number of different ways, and we work with them. There are elements of that application where they need a partner like us to work with them on things like content development and marketing and so on. We fulfill those parts of that application, but we don't provide the funding, no.

Mr. Teed: — That's very good to hear. I'm going to jump back because I had made a note, and maybe jump, jump, jump back to our Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program. Are there any numbers about how many are hospitality applications?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — I don't have the SINP breakdowns here in front of me. I'm happy to kind of address that. We'll have the ICT [Immigration and Career Training] estimates in early May, so we'll be able to provide data in that regard there. But like I said, we have allocated through the hard-to-fill skills program, I think it's about 2,200 positions out of our 6,000 this year within SINP.

So it's very substantial and, you know, very much worked out in collaboration with stakeholders, industry. And you know, we try and be very nimble with our stream designs and with our allocations within streams in SINP — and again, kind of going back to, you know, what might not be directly related to all elements of the tourism file — but a real advantage we have in our PNP program compared to federal immigration streams which are very bureaucratic and very hidebound and rarely change and are deeply unresponsive with extraordinarily long processing times. And I think especially folks from newcomer communities are very aware of all of that. So you know, we just kind of feel we're much better positioned through SINP to address some of these challenges.

You know, there are federal economic streams that would be applicable for a lot of businesses in the space as well, but I think it would be fair to say that the vast majority of them prefer to use SINP because of, you know, a whole bunch of factors — customer service, turnaround times, adjudication processes, clarity of process. All of these things are just superior through our PNP than they are through a federal stream.

Mr. Teed: — Thank you so much. I had one more question around the flight announcement. It was announced, the airline sharing revenue deal, in Saskatoon on the February 22nd, but it

actually wasn't approved by cabinet until an order in council on March 29. Why was there a gap in the timeline there?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — That's a good question with a very deeply technical answer that I think probably most folks wouldn't overly be. . . Anyway it's a technical answer. We took the order in council a bit later through the process. We had cabinet approval to announce the program prior to it being announced. There then is a process for the order in council and finances to be allocated. It wasn't necessary for us to actually do the financial allocation any earlier than we did. I mean, to this point, obviously we're still not flowing any of the resources under the program. But you know, we announced that, you know, shortly after cabinet approval was granted, and we'd been working with our partners on kind of all the elements around that and the lead up to it.

Mr. Teed: — Thank you. I think in the next couple of questions I have — I think we've got maybe 40 or so minutes left — I'm going to kind of focus on the business plan, but I have just a quick question. How much support do we receive from the federal government, from like federal Tourism? So we recently had the announcement from the federal government, I know. I went to the event and I think the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport, the mayor, and Randy, the Minister of Tourism federally. How much did that federal announcement impact the business plan, before we kind of jump into the business plan?

Mr. Potts: — So just to clarify, which announcement you were at? Do you mean in Saskatoon or in Regina?

Mr. Teed: — It was in Regina at the REAL. They had the tourism branding event and they had kind of a round-table of. . .

Mr. Potts: — So to the extent that it affected our business plan, I think it enhanced our business plan. It wasn't our business plan. . . or no components of our business plan were contingent necessarily upon it, but it certainly enhanced our ability to do some of those things. And I mentioned some of the content development, for example, tied to business events for Regina and Saskatoon. That's a key example of what we're able to do to a much larger extent as a result of that funding.

So you know, we do receive federal funding through different streams. So I mentioned Destination Canada which is, you know, very akin to what we do. Our federal partner, PrairiesCan, you know, has proven to be a good partner over the last few years. And we do receive funding also for some of our training and education programs, primarily training programs out of our Saskatoon office as we work in, like I say, in different communities and try to bring people into the workforce.

Mr. Teed: — Wonderful. So I'm going to kind of jump into some questions I had about the Tourism Saskatchewan business plan. And first off I just said, like this is a great document. I know as I was reviewing through it I felt like it had. . . There must have been a lot of work gone into it because it's very fulsome, and have to thank the ministry and anyone who was involved in producing it.

As I went through some of the goals, I had some questions in regards to some of the baseline numbers. And so the first one was goal one, and the goal says that by 2030 we want to see a 50 per

cent increase. Now it looks at that through a dollar figure. And so my first question was, you see a couple baselines. Why do the baselines jump around in the goal document?

Mr. Potts: — Yeah, fair question. And first of all I just want to acknowledge what you said too. We do have some great people on our team working on this, not just the three very smart women behind me, but a lot of great people watching right now with nothing better to do on a Tuesday night.

I can tell you that the initial measurement of 2.4, if you're French they're 2.4 and 2.7 probably?

Mr. Teed: — This was in the business plan and it was baseline 2.7 billion in 2019, and then there was a target of 2.1 billion in 2023-24.

Mr. Potts: — Yeah, oh sorry. I can certainly speak to that. So yes, our 3.6 billion is based on a 2017 figure which is 2.4 billion. So that's where you see the 50 per cent increase. The 2.7 billion in 2019, we were starting to see some of the growth even prior to . . . So the data always lags, you know, when you're putting together a plan. So when the government put together its growth plan, the most recent figure was 2.4. So in 2019 we did reach 2.7. Obviously the pandemic hit. Our industry got nailed, as the minister mentioned and everyone knows. We were down in 2020, I think, to 1.3 billion and change, 1.5 or so the next year. But in 2022, I'm really happy to report that we had hit our target of 1.83 billion, I believe by the end of the third quarter.

So this target that you see was actually set before we had some of that data. So our target for 2022-23 was 1.83 billion. Our target for this year when we set the target was 2.1. But our projection based on the data that we do have available to us right now is that we should hit 2.2 billion by the end of 2022. So yeah, we should hit this target quite easily this year, I would say. And obviously we're not just content to hit the targets. We want to see substantial growth, as I mentioned, year over year. So that target is, frankly, a little outdated, just based on when it was produced.

[20:15]

Mr. Teed: — Are there any jobs numbers that are tied to those goals? As far as the baseline 2.7 billion, and then with the increase, are there jobs targets at the baseline and jobs targets at the 2030 projection?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Yeah, it's a good question. You know, we have kind of our baseline employment numbers and these are always kind of a bit point-in-time numbers. And you know, Jonathan spoke to it a while earlier, owing to the seasonality of what some of the businesses are, and just kind of the nature of some of the industry. But I mean, you would find a fairly direct correlation between employment numbers and overall expenditure. It wouldn't be a perfect correlation over time, but you would find a correlation that would be statistically significant as far as the job numbers.

So I mean the objective and the reason that we had set some pretty clear goals in the growth plan, without getting into kind of all of the sausage making on the growth plan, but there were a lot of, you know, there were a lot of options about what we could include, not include about where to set targets, where to not. I

mean there were a lot of variables in a lot of these things.

And you know, I was responsible as minister for the growth plan overall. And the direction that I have consistently provided is that, let's be aggressive. I mean we want to put stretch targets in here. And if we don't hit them, we don't hit them. But let's try. Let's do our best to get there.

You know, we did the same thing with the last growth plan as well, and you know, there's some targets that we've already kind of gone far in excess of within the existing document. This is one where it's going to be more of a challenge, without question. It's going to be more of a challenge, you know, in an industry that was disproportionately hit, the industry during COVID, you know, far in excess of a lot of other elements of the economy.

So yeah, we're going to continue to work though to hit that 3.6. That continues to be the target. And we're kind of year to year. We're going to continue to have targets to get to that point. And that's really what our team works towards and kind of sets the parameters of how we're working every day.

Mr. Potts: — Yeah, and I'll just add to that because there's some good news tied to your question there. So you know, I mentioned we're really focused on growth. And our industry I think has come back as strong, or almost as strong as any province in the country out of the pandemic.

And just to provide some labour data related to that, in September and October of this past year we reached 70,000 employees in the tourism and hospitality sector again in the province, which was our pre-pandemic or very close to our pre-pandemic number. It doesn't speak completely to full-time, part-time, the nature of the work, all those types of things, right. So you know, as a benchmark though, it was one of those benchmarks we were really trying to achieve.

As we go forward obviously, and again the minister spoke to it, there might not be a direct correlation, a direct, you know, linear curve or linear growth pattern related to expenditure growth and labour growth. It really depends where that growth is, how much, you know, what kind of GDP each person in the industry generates. And you know, rightly, people just generate different value based on the type of work that they do, right. Well what we want to see is that base number grow though, because that's strongly indicative of growth in the industry.

The one other part I would add, I guess, is that you know, we don't know that the 70,000 number was optimal prior to the pandemic. You know, the labour shortage didn't just jump out of nowhere. It was something that has been coming demographically for a long time. It's been predicted in numerous industries and we're seeing in numerous industries, not just in Saskatchewan, but around the world.

And you know, as we go forward, we're going to do more research and analysis on what the right number is, if you will, right. So it's great to be back where we were, but the right number might be a little bit higher than that even to be sort of optimal for what our industry can achieve right now.

Mr. Teed: — Are there any goals around increasing from that 70,000?

Mr. Potts: — Not at the moment per se, but that's kind of to my point is that . . . and the minister's point, I think. Tied into growth will be labour growth. You know, we have a lot of programs, as I mentioned before, tied to educating and expanding the workforce, but it has just been such a volatile labour market right now that we're happy with the gains we have achieved at this point. And we'll continue . . . I mentioned we're redeveloping our workforce development strategy in this current fiscal, so we'll likely have goals coming out of that.

Mr. Teed: — And I guess one question, and maybe this is again jumping around, but what is the economic spinoff of tourism in Saskatchewan? So is there . . . Do you have a figure?

Mr. Potts: — Like when you say economic spinoff, could you just clarify that? Because the minister knows what you're saying, and I feel like I don't.

Mr. Teed: — Like what is the total number of like what GDP or . . .

Mr. Potts: — Yeah, so for all visitor expenditure, you know like I say, in 2022 we'll be about \$2.2 billion. We'll anticipate it'll be significantly higher than that in 2023. We're on a steady growth pattern. You know, we want to not just be on a steady growth pattern; we want to add some significant steps along the way, and then continue on that steady growth. So you know, visitor expenditure right now is probably the best data I can provide, and that's 2.2.

Mr. Teed: — One question I had was about the baselines. Why do the baselines jump around from 2019 to 2021-22? Is there any reason? I know even when we were reviewing through this, we were just kind of skipping around.

Mr. Potts: — It's just the year for which the most recent data is available typically. So if you look at something like number of social media followers, that's something, you know, I could tell you yesterday and then tell you today and the number would have grown, you know, by 100 people or what have you, right. So we can have very detailed numbers up to the minute for that type of thing.

Click-through rate, we talk about in terms of how we did over the course of the year because it's not a snapshot; it's more of a year analysis. But it's typically baseline when we develop the business plan. And Jeannette, I know you're watching somewhere there. When we look at the data, we have to have a baseline to work from when we set our goals going forward. And that's why, like I say, some of these become outdated, because our visitor expenditure baseline went down, and then as we went through the pandemic we've adjusted it, and you know, we broke through the barrier for this past year before we set the goal.

Mr. Teed: — Into goal number two, and this may just be new to tourism lingo, but what does the Net Promoter Score indicate?

Mr. Potts: — It's actually quite simple. We engage platforms that allow us to do social listening, so you know, cast a wide net across all social media and websites and so forth, and pick up on what people are saying about Saskatchewan, particularly travel in Saskatchewan. So you have positive comments, neutral comments, and negative comments about the province. The Net

Promoter Score literally is the net of the positive minus the negative as a percentage. So when we look at 59.2, you know, that ratio of . . . There's that much more ratio of positivity about Saskatchewan than there is negativity.

Mr. Teed: — Now I know we had kind of discussed Indigenous experiences. So the number of Indigenous experiences supported through funding programs, are those the ones that we were chatting about earlier? Or would that be . . .

Mr. Potts: — Partly, but I'll just expand on that. I'm just going to get my numbers here just to . . .

Mr. Teed: — Yeah, absolutely.

Mr. Potts: — Just coming back to that question, our tourism diversification program, for example, supports tourism businesses to expand what they offer or how they appeal to new markets. So in this past fiscal year, we had six businesses that received support of just under \$200,000 — \$195,000.

One of the really great programs our team in Saskatoon has developed is what's called Achieving Awesome program. So it provides businesses and individuals who have never offered a tourism experience before with training to develop, market, and deliver an experience. And then we have sort of gradually more higher levels of training, I guess, as they go forward. That's a great opportunity.

And frankly when we look at development opportunities, lots of times when we work in First Nation communities with First Nation would-be entrepreneurs, they're looking for that first step to help really nail down that idea, to figure who their market is, to figure out what the experience that . . . You know, they've got a lot of great ideas and knowledge and partnerships, but they don't quite know how to turn that into a tourism business because they've never been involved in tourism.

So we have a lot of those types of projects on the go. And just a few examples. We're doing that with White Bear First Nations down in the southeast; Mosquito, Grizzly Bear's Head, Lean Man First Nation, they're in The Battlefords area; and the Westside Indigenous Experiences association which is up on the west side of the North, so a lot of the Métis and Indigenous communities like Ile-a-la-Crosse and Buffalo Narrows and so forth.

Mr. Teed: — Would you say that these training opportunities or programs are addressing the Calls to Action 7 and 92? They both kind of . . . When I went into those goals it seemed like they were kind of focused around employment, but maybe you can elaborate on the use of the . . . Are those goals?

Mr. Potts: — So there's three things that I guess I would take away from those two Calls to Action. So like you say, employment, but also education and economic opportunity were kind of my personal three key take-aways.

So you know, our destination workforce development team in Saskatoon, I've mentioned a lot of the great work they've done historically and currently on the training and education side in Indigenous communities across the province. And you know, there's . . . 2022-23 we had eight programs in the Ready to Work

program that were delivered. So Waterhen, Little Pine, Regina, Prince Albert, Buffalo Narrows, Missinipe, Loon Lake, and Cowessess, those were six-week . . . six-week programs, right?

A Member: — Sixteen.

Mr. Potts: — Yeah, 16-week programs, pardon me, that we offer in those communities. So it's really intensive training. So just to give you an example on the education side.

As it relates to economic development, that's really where we've emphasized or increased our focus over the last number of years. And that's when I talk our Achieving Awesome program and so forth, there are real opportunities because we . . . I've been in this business — not at Tourism Saskatchewan but in the tourism industry in Saskatchewan — for over 25 years now, and previously worked as a private consultant. I've never seen the interest and the aptitude and possibility in Indigenous tourism that I'm seeing right now and I think as an organization we're seeing right now.

So there are great people and great opportunities springing up right across the province. And you know, we almost struggle to keep up with some of those opportunities right now, quite frankly. So you know, that's huge for us.

[20:30]

I think you know, like I say, it goes far beyond the education side. It really is about helping to create that economic opportunity, helping to create that environment of growth and the entrepreneurial spirit out there. And the ability to make things happen out there has really increased, so we're excited.

Mr. Teed: — That's great to hear. We see great numbers of people trained through those programs. How long are the other programs? So we've got the Ready to Work, and then I noticed that there was tourism . . . I'm just looking. Are they all like a 16-week type program, or there's a varying . . .

Mr. Potts: — No, they're not. And if I may, I'm going to call upon Tracy to come up and maybe speak to a little bit more detail on some of that.

Ms. Breher: — Hi, I'm Tracy Breher, the vice-president of destination and workforce development.

So we offer a really broad range, I guess, of training opportunities. And certainly the Ready to Work program is one of our sort of signature pieces. But we also offer a whole range of things. And I'm just going to pull my note up to make sure I get the right stuff. Going backwards actually.

So we offer programming that is online and we offer in-person training. So it depends on the audience and it depends on the program, I think, in terms of where the best fit is and what the best . . . kind of where we can meet needs properly. But we are the delivery partner in Saskatchewan for emergit national training. And the emergit training is the certification system throughout Canada for almost 30 tourism occupations. So we offer that.

And then we offer province-wide sort of training. It's customer service training, some professional development training. We do

the online webinars, which are more business focused. So we have a focus sort of toward businesses and then a focus towards people who are interested in working within the industry or who are working within the industry and who are interested in advancing their skills, and you know, being able to progress, learn more, do more.

Mr. Teed: — Fantastic. Thank you so much. I'm going to jump into goal number four. As far as the cybersecurity goal goes, we've got percentage of employees participating in digital skills improvement training, LastPass, and Centre for Internet Security. How do those numbers rank with other jurisdictions? Or you know, maybe I'm looking at it naively and saying, LastPass, the average security was 45 per cent, why is that maybe so low? But maybe is that really comparable to other jurisdictions?

Mr. Potts: — If I may, if I could focus on the one that comes after that just because LastPass is more related to passwords and so forth. But representing the organization as a whole, the Centre for Internet Security CSAT [controls self-assessment tool] score is a very interesting tool to evaluate how an organization is doing. It can be used to measure everything from IBM [International Business Machines] or Microsoft down to, you know, perhaps an organization the size of ours or perhaps smaller. So you know, the amount you could spend as an organization on security is proportionate basically to your size, right. So you're not expected as a smaller organization, a \$20 million organization, to have 100 per cent or even 50 per cent necessarily. But you should do well on certain factors.

I'm really pleased or was really pleased last year with the results that we saw there, because to your question about how we perform vis-à-vis organizations or government or pick whatever comparative that makes sense for Tourism Saskatchewan, we typically were ahead of the average on our security. We do have in-house what we call our e-business team or our digital team that are very focused on that issue. Certainly work with SaskBuilds on some issues as well.

So for an organization our size, to summarize I guess I would say we're doing very well on cybersecurity. Obviously it's again a very volatile risk item, right, as we all know and we see on a regular basis.

I recently had the opportunity to go through some training with Public Safety Agency. It was a great eye-opener as well and it will lead to some future work for our organization as well. You can't sit pat obviously on security issues. You have to keep trying to address new challenges. And as we go forward we have a new platform that we'll be using across our organization for all our web properties that we just licensed in the last couple of months, which heightens our security or will help to heighten our security in some areas as well.

So it's an ongoing issue that we take very seriously. And part of the reason we made this, our key reason we made this a strategic pillar is just because of the obvious importance of digital, not just for our growth but also for the security of what we do as an organization.

Mr. Teed: — Thank you so much. No, thank you to all of you. This has been very interesting and very enlightening. I want to say, excellent job to the team putting all this together and putting

together this budget process.

After going through it all I just maybe thought I would say, are there a top three things that you would hope to achieve in the next couple of years as they relate to tourism? And then I think that kind of sums up my questions I have for the evening.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Sure. Well I'll maybe make a few comments, but I'll maybe leave the kind of last response to Jonathan as well with regard to the look ahead. I'll offer a couple thoughts on that as well though.

But you know, really we continue to recover from what has been a historically challenging time for the industry in a lot of ways. And you know, the way we have been continuing to work is making sure that we're listening to stakeholders, increasing resources as well — which you've seen in this budget for Tourism Saskatchewan — making sure that investments that we are making are in key areas that are going to have a significant impact for our tourism operators and businesses, largely small- and medium-sized enterprises, and making sure that the investments we're making are in areas where we really have an opportunity to make significant progress.

So you know, I think we've had the chance to actually talk about a number of those different elements, but you know, I will leave it to Jonathan to kind of maybe flesh that out a little bit. But just kind of looking at my watch here, I maybe will make kind of my final comments before as well.

But I just want to say thank you. Very good questions from the opposition. I appreciate it. Very good discussion here tonight, I think, that really canvassed a lot of issues. Want to thank colleagues on the government side as well for their interest, and I know they are interested in this, and this is something I hear from my colleagues about all the time, and it's a hugely significant part of our economy.

And want to thank our board members at Tourism Saskatchewan for their service. And you know, really nobody is on these boards for the glory or any of those reasons. They are on and willing to serve to make a difference for their community and the province.

But I really want to thank our team here, through Jonathan and our senior management team here, for the work that really they do day in and day out in managing the organization and motivating our team. And it's a great team that are passionate about growing this industry in Saskatchewan and showcasing what we all know to be true here in Saskatchewan — those of us fortunate enough to live here — around the world in telling that story. So I just really want to say thank you to our team for that great work.

But Jonathan, I shall turn it to you though, maybe for the last words.

Mr. Potts: — Thank you, Minister. Yeah, and I would echo your words of appreciation. Thank you. You had great questions this evening and you kept me hopping through my binder, which I think is the point. But they're all good questions and they're all ones that, you know, our team was happy to prepare for.

So you know, I want to thank all of them. Like you said, we have

a fantastic board which keeps us in line and constantly challenges us to move forward as well. And thank you to all of you from the government side that were here tonight. I appreciate your attention.

Just back to your question about, you know, three or four things going forward that we will be focusing on over the next few years. Like I said, we're at a really exciting time as we look at our niche market development. We've started some work, you know, we've been involved in some of those niche markets for a while, but we've really intensified our focus on some of them. And even next week, like I said, we'll be doing a lot more work as we really launch, you know, future programs related to those. So you know, that's something to be watching for over the next few years.

On the development side, you know, we've really become more active. And with some of the recent budget increases we've had, that has allowed us to become more active on the development side. And we've seen that entrepreneurial spirit of our industry come to the fore, and just seeing all sorts of great new experiences being developed across the province, literally in every corner of the province, and by all types of operators, but people who are, you know, leaving the hard couple of years, or hard three years, we had behind us and just going forward with great gusto and excitement and vitality. So you know, we're proud to support that and work with that, and I think you'll see lots of great experiences coming on stream over the next few years that way.

You know, a big one as well that, you know, as I mentioned before, one of the hardest-hit areas of the tourism industry was the event sector. And that's everything from, you know, sports events, cultural events, business events, right? You know, we have an increased focus on that this year, and that's something that, going forward, like I said, we will be hiring right away a lead generator in Europe to try to help bring business events tied to Saskatchewan's sectors of strength. So Saskatoon might be something, you know, that ties into the synchrotron, for example, and you know, things like ag-biotech and so forth, so things that Saskatchewan does particularly well, again. So keep your eyes open for that.

And lastly, you know, you did a great job asking questions related to the labour force and Tracy and her team. We have some great new employees on that team in Saskatoon that are just doing wonderful work. You know, we've got incredible opportunity there to try to solidify the workforce.

You know, the minister and others in the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training and so forth are doing great work to not just help the tourism industry but other industries, and we look forward to, you know, bolstering the workforce. And like you said, as the industry grows, obviously the workforce needs to grow along with it, and we want to make sure we're providing the strategies, the training, the education to make that happen. So I'll leave it at that, but thank you very much.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister, your staff, Mr. Teed, for good questions, good answers. And it was interesting. Also to my colleagues too as well. Having reached the agreed-upon time for consideration of the estimates today, we will now adjourn the consideration of estimates for the Ministry of Parks, Culture and

Sport. Thank you.

I got the wrong notes. Sorry, I got the wrong note. Tourism. Sorry. We'll move on to Bill No. 121, *The Provincial Emblems and Honours Amendment Act, 2022*, clause 1, short title.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — And I think, Mr. Chair, if we could, this being an Executive Council item, we have officials from the protocol office who are going to be joining shortly.

The Chair: — Okay. We'll take a two-minute break to move people in and out. Sorry.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

[20:45]

Bill No. 121 — *The Provincial Emblems and Honours Amendment Act, 2022*

Clause 1

The Chair: — I'd like to welcome everybody back. We'll move on to Bill 121, *The Provincial Emblems and Honours Amendment Act, 2022*, clause 1, short title. Minister Harrison, you may make your opening comments and introduce your officials.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Sure. I just have very, very short opening comments. And just for the committee's information, this obviously being an Executive Council bill, but I am representing Executive Council as Government House Leader here. So you know, we're happy to take questions at the end.

But I want to thank Jason and Ashley for being here . . . Sorry, Ashley Metz, our deputy minister of Intergov, and Jason Quilliam, our chief of protocol. I think most members know that, but for those who are watching on television, whoever the dozen of those folks may be, they now know. I just want to say that, as well, basically just thanks for everybody being here tonight, though, because we scheduled this in late.

This bill seeks to add the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal to the four other provincial honours: the Saskatchewan Order of Merit, the Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal, the Saskatchewan Protective Services Medal, and the Saskatchewan Centennial Medal.

The Platinum Jubilee Medal was created to recognize Her Late Majesty's unprecedented 70 years on the throne and continued as a tribute to her, following her sad passing in September of 2022. Though the medal program itself is drawing to a close, this bill will codify the program and provide for its future administration. It also simplifies the process of creating provincial medals by allowing the Lieutenant Governor in Council to approve honours that may be considered into the future.

Most of us in this room have been a part of the medal ceremonies and seen the pride and joy of the recipients. It is the largest medal program in our province's history and will become a permanent reminder of not only Her Late Majesty's service as Queen of Canada, but also for the works, both large and small, done across the province by those who have earned the medal.

And we are prepared to take any questions. Before we do so, I do want to really thank all of our staff through Jason in protocol who have done such a great job in working with members and putting on just some very, very nice, moving ceremonies over the course of the last number of months. Happy to take questions.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister, for the introductions. I'll open it up for questions. Mr. Teed.

Mr. Teed: — Thank you. Yeah, I want to echo the sentiments of appreciation to all involved in the Queen's Jubilee Medal program. I mean, even up to today we were engaging about it. I guess I just have a few quick questions here. Can you speak to the Queen Jubilee Medal program a little tiny bit, give just a little bit of a background? And how many have we given out and how many do we have left to give?

Mr. Quilliam: — Awesome. So I mean, in the context of Canadian history, there is always a commemorative medal to recognize a royal anniversary. That's just been a thing since Queen Victoria, 1877, thereabouts. This is quite importantly the first time in Canadian history that a provincial medal has been created to recognize a royal occasion, so we're incredibly proud of that frankly.

Of the 7,000, we're sitting at just over 6,400 that have been allocated to a name, with about 6,200-plus that have actually been sent out. A fair number of those obviously have been presented, of course, as well. Waiting on names back from just under 500, so partners are getting names still in to us. And because of some underutilized partnerships, I have about 50 medals that have yet to be allocated to a partner but fully expect those to be allocated fairly shortly here.

Mr. Teed: — Fantastic. What will this Act do in relation to that program?

Mr. Quilliam: — I can take that as well if you . . . Yeah. So I mean, I'm still getting questions about the Saskatchewan Centennial Medal from 2005. So you know, I get people asking queries about it, how was it created, how was it administered. This essentially codifies the program, so it puts into place everything that we've done for the last eight or nine months but also allows us to create rules around, you know, once it's sunset we can't give out any more medals — you know, things along those lines. Just frankly the basic background administration that the protocol office does for honours and awards.

Mr. Teed: — Well does the government have any future plans for specific medal programs in the works for the future amendments? Will these amendments assist in that?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well I can probably take the policy element of the question. Jason can maybe speak to the details or some of the specifics of this program. But I mean, the short answer is, you know, I think we would probably be looking at a coronation. I'm not sure. I don't know that to be the case. I'd actually defer to you, Jason. I should have asked you this question before we sat down for this, but whether that has been a practice historically. But I would say that government has made no decisions about any further or future medals.

Mr. Quilliam: — And I can, yeah, just add onto that. Yeah, you

know, historically we would see a federal coronation medal. And frankly we're just waiting to hear from the federal government before we make any decisions, I think, or before I make any recommendations further. Yeah.

Mr. Teed: — Okay, thank you so much. That's all the questions that I have for today.

The Chair: — Thank you. Seeing no more questions, we will proceed to vote on the clauses.

Clause 1, short title, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 11 inclusive agreed to.]

The Chair: — His Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: *The Provincial Emblems and Honours Amendment Act, 2022*.

I would ask a member to move that we report Bill No. 121, *The Provincial Emblems and Honours Amendment Act, 2022* without amendment. Ms. Lambert?

Ms. Lambert: — I so move.

The Chair: — Ms. Lambert moves. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. That completes our committee business for tonight. Minister, do you have any closing comments?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — I just, I thank the officials for being here tonight and good questions.

The Chair: — Mr. Teed, do you have . . .

Mr. Teed: — I echo those sentiments of thanks.

The Chair: — Thank you. I too would like to thank the committee members and the minister and his help and also the staff too as well. I'd ask a member to move a motion of adjournment.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — I'll so move.

The Chair: — Mr. Ottenbreit has moved. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. The committee stands adjourned until Tuesday, April 25, 2023 at 3:30.

[The committee adjourned at 20:53.]