



STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE

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[The committee met at 15:36.]

Chair B. McLeod: — And welcome to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice. Many of us will be here for a very long time tonight, so we're going to be just great friends by the time the evening's over.

So my name is Blaine McLeod, and I will be the Chair tonight. And we have got some new introductions tonight here that we need to do as well. So myself as Chair, Blaine McLeod. We have MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] Brad Crassweller, MLA the Hon. Jamie Martens, and MLA Megan Patterson. And on my left we have MLA Bhajan Brar, MLA Hugh Gordon, and MLA Nicole Sarauer. Welcome everyone. And those three are substitutions for tonight as well. And welcome; I appreciate your involvement here with us on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

So consideration of Bill No. 31. We're considering two bills and then the estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 for the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General, the Firearms Secretariat, and the Ministry of Community Safety. We will take a recess — yay — between 6:30 and 7.

Bill No. 31 — *The Defamation Act*

Clause 1

Chair B. McLeod: — And we will first consider Bill No. 31, *The Defamation Act*, beginning with consideration of clause 1, short title.

Minister McLeod is here with his officials, and I would ask that officials introduce themselves before they speak for the first time. And no need to touch the microphones; a *Hansard* operator will turn them on and off for you when you speak. So let's begin. Minister, please introduce your officials and make your opening comments.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and good afternoon, everyone. Joining me for Bill 31 and Bill 32, I have to my left Darcy McGovern, K.C. [King's Counsel], legal executive director, public law division with the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General. And to my right, Maria Markatos, K.C., director of legislative services branch, Ministry of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Chair, I am pleased to offer some opening remarks concerning Bill 31, *The Defamation Act*. Bill 31 will repeal and replace the existing libel and slander Act with a new Act. The new Act will incorporate recommendations made by the Law Reform Commission of Saskatchewan to update and modernize the law of defamation in Saskatchewan.

The new Act will define defamation to include both libel and slander, reflecting the approach taken in most other Canadian jurisdictions and by the courts. Over time the distinction between libel and slander has created arbitrary differences. Combining the two will bring simplicity and uniformity to the law of defamation in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Chair, the new Act will eliminate distinctions between different kinds of publishers, making application of this Act and the defences and remedies available the same, regardless of whether the alleged defamation occurred in print or online.

Where defamation is proven, damages are available to the plaintiff in an amount determined by the court. The new Act includes take down and de-indexing remedies to reflect the harm that may be done by modern online publishing. The new Act will maintain the existing privilege exceptions and add a new defence for peer-reviewed material.

Mr. Chair, a House amendment will be presented to add a new clause 4. The new clause will codify the common law in Canada that says once defamation is proven, damages are presumed. The onus then shifts to the defendant to demonstrate a defence to the defamation or mitigation of damages. While damages are presumed, the value of such damages must still be determined by the court based on factors including the plaintiff's conduct, the plaintiff's position and standing, and the mode and extent of the publication.

Mr. Chair, with those opening remarks, I welcome any questions respecting Bill 31, *The Defamation Act*.

Chair B. McLeod: — Thank you, Minister. I will now open the floor to questions. I recognize MLA Sarauer.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you, Minister, for your opening remarks. Let's first talk about the House amendment that you are putting forward. You mentioned that this amendment will be codifying what already exists in common law. Does this codification exist anywhere else in Canada and, if so, where?

Maria Markatos: — I'm Maria Markatos, Ministry of Justice and Attorney General. There are several jurisdictions that codify this provision, including Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, all of the territories, and Newfoundland. And of course, where it's not codified the common law would apply, so BC [British Columbia], Ontario, and Nova Scotia, as well as Saskatchewan until this Act comes into force.

Nicole Sarauer: — As has been mentioned, this legislation is the result of consultation that occurred through the Law Reform Commission, and they created a report, the *Final Report on Reform of The Libel and Slander Act*. This House amendment was not included as one of the recommendations. Do you have any idea why that's the case?

Maria Markatos: — It wasn't explicitly included as one of the recommendations, but it was raised after the fact by members of the Law Reform Commission and will be included as an abundance of caution, just so there's no question whether or not that common-law provision would apply in Saskatchewan.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. Moving on the entirety of the bill, could you speak a bit more about the work that the Law Reform Commission did in creating the report?

Darcy McGovern: — Darcy McGovern. So the Law Reform Commission released a consultation report on the project in June of 2022. The consultations ran from June '22 to March 2023. There was feedback received from, you know, from a number of fronts, including the Law Society of Saskatchewan. There were specific survey responses, and a working group was held to more specifically deal with some of the defamation issues.

The written comments were also received from the Canadian Media Lawyers Association, a law prof from a different common-law province, and the office of public registry's administration. The CBA [Canadian Bar Association] didn't take a particular position on it with respect to the survey, or didn't respond, I guess, is more properly . . . So we're of the view that there was a fairly broad consultation conducted by the Law Reform Commission.

And as you know, the initiation for the project, this is a piece of legislation that's been around since 1909, *The Libel and Slander Act*. It's only been amended one or two times since then. And the reality that the Law Reform Commission, I think, initiated from was to say that when libel was articulated within this legislation, newspapers were the whole game.

And of course we live in a multimedia environment now. And there was a need to both recognize that libel and slander, that the distinctions that used to be made didn't make any sense anymore, would be better to treat it all as defamation and then to seek to accommodate the reality that a lot of this occurs online.

And so you will have noticed in the bill we've included provisions for take-down remedies so that there's something that recognizes that, in that environment, there can be quickly spread an untrue statement that has a devastating effect on a person's reputation, and that it needs to go beyond just simply saying that there's a fine.

Nicole Sarauer: — Also mentioned in the Law Reform Commission report is the existence of recommendations through the Uniform Law Conference. Can you speak to those as well?

Darcy McGovern: — The Uniform Law Conference position with respect to libel is similar with respect to libel and slander in the broad strokes, that they eliminate the difference between libel and slander, that they call for a modernization of the provisions. So we feel that this is consistent with that entirely. But of course the Law Reform Commission of Saskatchewan is more specific to Saskatchewan with respect to our existing legislation and the case law in the province.

[15:45]

Nicole Sarauer: — In drafting this legislation did the ministry conduct any additional consultations in addition to what the Law Reform Commission already did?

Darcy McGovern: — No, and as you know, having a report issued for consultation in 2022 and being here on the floor three or four years later is actually moving quite quick in that environment. And so that was one of the advantages here, was that we were able to piggyback on the consultation that was done by the Law Reform Commission.

Nicole Sarauer: — The Law Reform Commission's report contains 19 recommendations for modernizing *The Libel and Slander Act*. Were all of those recommendations followed?

Darcy McGovern: — The one that was not was with respect to SLAPP [strategic lawsuit against public participation]. And this was a decision that was made in terms of looking at it, that while it's fair for the Law Reform Commission to raise the issues in

general terms, the empirical basis for that in Saskatchewan was difficult to establish.

As the member's aware and the members will be aware, our Court of King's Bench is known for being vigilant and to making sure that there is no abuse of their process before them. For example, section 7-9 of the Rules of Court provide that an order could be made with respect to amending or striking out pleadings if it discloses no reasonable claim or defence; is scandalous, frivolous, vexatious, immaterial; prejudice or delay or otherwise abuse of the court. That's separate from the costs' provisions as well as the vexatious proceedings.

So until such time as there's an empirical basis for that, and given our confidence in the court in this regard, we didn't make a recommendation within the ministry for that change to be made as well.

Nicole Sarauer: — I did notice that that was the only recommendation that was followed. It seemed a little strange to me that it was the only one not followed out of the 19 recommendations. And as the minister's well aware, anti-SLAPP legislation already exists in Ontario, BC, and Quebec.

The Uniform Law Conference has also recommended it so that there's uniformity across jurisdictions. It's something that I have introduced as a private member's bill, I think three times now. So it's something that I have heard from stakeholders, that it's something that they would like to see enacted in Saskatchewan.

So my question is, in light of the recommendations in the Law Reform Commission and the Uniform Law Conference and of course, as you're well aware, the advocacy we have done in the opposition for this, why not use this as an opportunity to provide anti-SLAPP protection for the people of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — I would say the door isn't slammed on the conversation about anti-SLAPP legislation. However we do have, as Darcy mentioned, the utmost confidence in the court and its process to navigate and deal with frivolous and vexatious claims, which ultimately we'd be talking about the same thing.

And so leaving that in the hands of the court for the judiciary to decide, given the Rules of Court that Darcy cited, we think that sufficiently covers it.

Nicole Sarauer: — Because it's something that we feel is important and it was included in the Law Reform Commission, just for the committee's ease, I'm going to read that section of the report into the record. Then we can move on to the next stages of the committee.

So this is section M, Anti-SLAPP Legislation, and this is from the final report on reform of *The Libel and Slander Act* that was created by the Law Reform Commission. And again this is the only recommendation that wasn't included in this legislation that's in front of us this afternoon.

And they said:

Ontario, British Columbia, and Quebec have each enacted anti-SLAPP, which is strategic lawsuits against public participation, legislative provisions. The Supreme Court of

Canada has described SLAPPs as follows:

Strategic lawsuits against public participation are a phenomenon used to describe exactly what the acronym refers to: lawsuits initiated against individuals or organizations that speak out or take a position on an issue of public interest. SLAPPs are generally initiated by plaintiffs who engage the court process and use litigation not as a direct tool to vindicate a bona fide claim, but as an indirect tool to limit the expression of others. In a SLAPP the claim is merely a facade for the plaintiff, who is in fact manipulating the judicial system in order to limit the effectiveness of the opposing party's speech and deter that party or other potential interested parties from participating in public affairs.

It is worth noting that SLAPP suits are not limited to defamation suits; however defamation is commonly relied on in these types of claims.

In essence, these types of provisions allow a defendant to a defamation claim to seek dismissal of the claim in a preliminary proceeding on the basis that the defendant's expression is on a matter of public interest. If the defendant meets this burden, the plaintiff then must establish that the claim has substantial merit and that the defendant has no valid defence. The plaintiff also must establish that the harm likely to be suffered from the defendant's expression is "sufficiently serious" and outweighs the public interest in defending the defendant's freedom of expression.

The Uniform Law Conference of Canada has adopted a *Uniform Protection of Public Participation Act (2017)* and recommended its implementation to all jurisdictions in Canada. Saskatchewan has not yet enacted anti-SLAPP legislation based on the Uniform Act.

In the Consultation Report, the Commission asked whether perceived — or actual — abuse of defamation claims with respect to matters of public interest are a concern in Saskatchewan, and if so, how should this concern be addressed.

Consultees were largely of the view that Saskatchewan should enact anti-SLAPP legislation similar to the legislation in place in Ontario and BC. The Commission is also of the view that anti-SLAPP legislation is the preferred method of addressing concerns surrounding frivolous and trivial defamation claims.

The Commission recommends Saskatchewan consider enacting anti-SLAPP legislation.

This was quoted from pages 62 and 63 of the report.

So, Minister, I hear what you're saying. I understand and also respect of course the work of the courts of Saskatchewan in the consultation that the Law Reform Commission did. The respondents, according to the report, said that they were largely of the view that Saskatchewan should, in spite of this, still enact anti-SLAPP legislation similar to what's already in place, and that it is the preferred method of addressing concerns surrounding frivolous and trivial defamation claims.

When I first heard about this as an issue and as a gap in legislation in Saskatchewan, it was several years ago. But it was in light of some individuals who had raised concerns about sexual harassment in a public sphere and had been met with defamation suits in response to that and had effectively been silenced by those defamation suits.

They came to me in a gender-based violence context to talk about the need for anti-SLAPP legislation. Of course there's a lot of other ways that anti-SLAPP legislation could be used, arguably beneficially for the people of the province. And again it was a part of the recommendations.

So I hear what you're saying. I just wanted to put the concerns on the record. I don't know if you have anything else you want to add.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thank you. No, and I think the point is well made. And as I said, the conversation isn't closed.

These types of allegations are very serious allegations and where there's an ulterior motive for a lawsuit. Again I'll reiterate that we have the utmost respect for the court's independence, and we have confidence in the King's Bench's own processes to address frivolous and vexatious claims.

Scandalous claims are specifically addressed in the Rules of Court. Where there is an ulterior motive it's, I believe, appropriate for the judges to exercise their judicial independence and their discretion to identify those ulterior motives and address them accordingly.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. No further questions.

Chair B. McLeod: — Seeing no more questions, we will proceed to vote on the clauses. And I must say that I know each ministry and department has their own acronyms that they throw around, and thank you for actually saying the names of some of them as well. So we got an education here tonight as well, so we appreciate that. Anyway we'll proceed.

Clause 1, short title, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair B. McLeod: — Carried.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 21 inclusive agreed to.]

Chair B. McLeod: — MLA Martens.

Clause 4

Hon. Jamie Martens: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to move a new clause.

Chair B. McLeod: — MLA Martens has moved new clause 4. Would any members like to speak to the new clause? Oh, I'm sorry. You haven't given me the motion.

Hon. Jamie Martens: — No worries. Thank you.

New Clause 4 of the printed Bill

Add the following Clause after Clause 3 of the printed Bill:

“Presumption of damage

4 An action lies for defamation and in a defamation action, if defamation is proved, damage shall be presumed”.

Chair B. McLeod: — Do committee members agree with the amendment as read?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair B. McLeod: — Carried. Now is new clause 4 agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair B. McLeod: — Carried.

[Clause 4 agreed to.]

Chair B. McLeod: — His Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: *The Defamation Act*.

I would ask a member to move that we report Bill No. 31, *The Defamation Act* with amendment. MLA Martens moves. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair B. McLeod: — Carried. Any closing comments by the minister? Please.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — I’ll reserve my closing comments for the conclusion after we deal with the next bill.

Chair B. McLeod: — Any closing comments from other members? Same. Thank you very much. So are we needing a recess to check out or change, switch out officials?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — We have one other bill, Mr. Chair.

[16:00]

Chair B. McLeod: — We have one other bill, but just, you need any other officials?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — No, same officials.

Chair B. McLeod: — Fair enough.

Bill No. 32 — *The Defamation Consequential Amendments Act, 2025/Loi de 2025 corrélative de la loi intitulée The Defamation Act*

Clause 1

Chair B. McLeod: — And then we will next consider Bill No. 32, *The Defamation Consequential Amendments Act, 2025*, which is a bilingual bill, beginning with consideration of clause 1, short title.

So, Minister McLeod, please make your opening comments.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. My comments will be brief. Staying with me at the table are Mr. McGovern, K.C. and Ms. Markatos, K.C.

Simply regarding Bill 32, *The Defamation Consequential Amendments Act, 2025*, this Act amends three bilingual Acts that reference libel and slander. In each case the Acts will be amended to refer to defamation instead of libel and slander, as *The Libel and Slander Act* is being repealed and replaced with the new defamation Act.

There is no change in substance to any of the Acts amended by this bill. The new defamation Act will define “defamation” to include both libel and slander, reflecting the approach taken in most other Canadian jurisdictions as I mentioned earlier.

Mr. Chair, with those remarks, I welcome any questions respecting Bill 32, *The Defamation Consequential Amendments Act, 2025*.

Chair B. McLeod: — Thank you, Minister. I will now open the floor to questions. MLA Sarauer.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The bill before us is administrative. I put my questions on the record in relation to the substantive bill, so I have no further questions.

Chair B. McLeod: — Seeing no more questions, we will proceed to vote on the clauses. Clause 1, short title, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair B. McLeod: — Carried.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 5 inclusive agreed to.]

Chair B. McLeod: — His Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: *The Defamation Consequential Amendments Act, 2025*, a bilingual bill.

I would ask a member to move that we report Bill No. 32, *The Defamation Consequential Amendments Act, 2025*, a bilingual bill, without amendment. MLA Crassweller moves. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair B. McLeod: — Carried. Any closing comments by the minister?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Just briefly, Mr. Chair, I’ll thank yourself and the committee, thank Ms. Sarauer for her questions, and of course my wonderful team that surrounds me each and every day.

Mr. McGovern, K.C. and Ms. Markatos, K.C., who I think will not be straying far, as all of us I think are pitted in here for the next couple of hours. And looking forward to that, Mr. Chair. So thank you to everyone.

Chair B. McLeod: — Any closing comments from members?

Nicole Sarauer: — I'd like to join with the minister in thanking yourself, Mr. Chair, and the committee, as well as the committee staff. And then thank you, Minister, for answering my questions and of course to your officials for their work every day. Your chief of staff as well; I would be remiss if I didn't include him. *Hansard* and broadcast services as well, just thank you.

Chair B. McLeod: — Thank you very much, appreciate that. We're going to move directly into the next section where we'll consider the 2026 estimates. Any recess or change of officials required just real quickly?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Very briefly, thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chair B. McLeod: — Okay, thank you then. We'll just recess for a few moments to get the officials changed up.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

Chair B. McLeod: — We will now move to consideration of estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 for Justice and Attorney General and the Firearms Secretariat.

**General Revenue Fund
Justice and Attorney General
Vote 3**

Subvote (JU01)

Chair B. McLeod: — We will begin with vote 3, Justice and Attorney General, central management and services, subvote (JU01). Now Minister McLeod is here with his officials. There are new officials, so I'll ask again not to touch the mikes and to identify yourselves the first time you speak. And you can go ahead please, Minister. Make your opening comments and recognize those sitting with you, please.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to provide the highlights of the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General's 2026-27 budget and financial plan and to answer any questions of the committee.

The Ministry of Justice and Attorney General's budget exemplifies our commitment to a fair and accessible justice system that protects the rights of all individuals, strengthens public safety, holds offenders accountable, and supports the well-being of families and communities right across our province.

The courts and the provincial justice system are fundamental pillars of our province, and ministry staff work every day to ensure these systems serve the best interests of Saskatchewan people. Through the '26-27 budget we are protecting and strengthening these foundations, making sure Saskatchewan's justice system is equipped to serve a growing province.

This work directly supports the Saskatchewan growth plan. While growth brings new opportunities, we are also seeing rising caseloads, more complex family matters, and increased demands upon our justice system. Our budget addresses this through strategic investments to strengthen capacity in the justice system by adding new judges and hiring additional prosecutors to prosecute complex provincial immigration and taxation offences.

The Ministry of Justice and Attorney General provides critical services to protect the vulnerable within our society, including victims and survivors of interpersonal violence and abuse; families that need support as a result of separation, divorce, or other difficulties; and those who cannot independently manage their own financial affairs. We also provide citizens with services they can use to settle disputes, such as those offered by the Office of Residential Tenancies or the dispute resolution office. And we ensure citizens have representation in the justice system through agencies such as the Public Complaints Commission, the serious incident response team, and the Highway Traffic Board.

Before we get into specifics of the ministry's budget, I will introduce officials who are joining us here today. Mr. Chair, seated with me are, to my left, the deputy minister of Justice, Kimberly Kratzig; and to my right, Deputy Attorney General Max Bilson, K.C.

Also joining us in the room today . . . And I will apologize in advance if I miss anyone. We do have quite the team here today and I'm grateful for every one of them. We have assistant deputy attorney general of justice services and tribunals, Kylie Head, K.C.; assistant deputy attorney general of public prosecutions, Elizabeth Hilts, K.C.; assistant deputy minister of courts and community justice, Rory Jensen; assistant deputy minister of corporate services, Brad Gurash; Chief Coroner of Saskatchewan, Jeffrey Wagner; executive director of legal services, Darcy McGovern, K.C.; executive director of community safety and well-being, Gina Alexander; executive director of financial services, Cindy Hingley; and chief executive officer of Legal Aid Saskatchewan, Jayne Mallin.

Also joining us we have Saskatchewan's firearms commissioner, Blaine Beaven; deputy commissioner and Chief Firearms Officer, Murray Cowan; executive director, corporate services, Dan Dierker; executive advisor to the commissioner, Stephen Coote. We have chief executive officer of the Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority, Roger Sobotkiewicz. And I will ask any officials who join us at the table to introduce themselves first before they respond to any questions.

The overview of the budget, Mr. Chair, is as follows. This budget aligns with our ongoing work to protect Saskatchewan communities. In total we are investing nearly \$269 million to operate the justice system for Saskatchewan residents. This budget maintains our commitment to a fair, accessible justice system that protects Saskatchewan families, communities, and the provincial economy.

To ensure we are getting the most out of our budget this year, we made target investments in increasing capacity within the justice system, continuing our work to modernize Saskatchewan courts, enhancing the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee as well as the Highway Traffic Board, making the Saskatchewan child protective service permanent, advancing interpersonal violence programs and services, providing a financial lift to our community-based partner organizations, and increasing funding for the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. I will briefly provide more specifics on each of these categories before we move on to questions.

Starting with increasing capacity within our justice system. As our population grows, the need for justice services grows right

along with it. In recent years we have seen an increased need for the judicial positions to handle increasing caseloads in both the Provincial Court and the Court of King's Bench. To ensure that our courts continue to operate smoothly, we will be investing \$1.97 million to add capacity to our judiciary. This will include the addition of three new judges to the Provincial Court who will be appointed later this year. The addition of these judges will increase the capacity of the Provincial Court and ensure cases are resolved in a fair, just, and timely fashion.

[16:15]

Similarly we will be appointing four new associate judges to the Court of King's Bench. These positions will also be appointed later this year to take on routine procedural matters currently being handled by Court of King's Bench justices. This will balance the judicial workload, improve scheduling flexibility, and support faster resolution of cases. We will also be hiring six new justices of the peace to provide independent adjudication of major inmate discipline hearings in Saskatchewan correctional centres. This is in accordance with the recent decision by the Supreme Court of Canada.

This year's budget also includes a targeted investment of \$400,000 in our public prosecutions division to hire two Crown prosecutors, who will specialize in prosecuting complex provincial immigration and taxation offences. These positions will protect the economic integrity of our province, improve enforcement and compliance with provincial legislation, and support public safety.

Next I'll speak to the court modernization. As we increase capacity in the judiciary and prosecutions, we must also ensure that court infrastructure keeps pace with the ongoing evolution of the justice system and the modern expectations of our population. To ensure Saskatchewan's courts remain safe and accessible, we are dedicating \$3 million to fund essential repairs, safety upgrades, detention improvements, and overall courthouse functionality across Saskatchewan. This funding is essential to address rising caseloads, the growing volume of remote appearances, and the increasing strain of completing jury trials, which are becoming more complex within the timelines mandated by the Supreme Court of Canada under the Jordan decision.

Specific initiatives being pursued this year include the ongoing implementation of electronic filing and the public-facing portal through the J-STAR [judicial scheduling, tracking and amalgamated reporting] system, necessary IT [information technology] upgrades for the judiciary, and planning for a provincial court scheduling system. Additional infrastructure improvements being made this year include detention area upgrades, distress button systems, and accessibility enhancements.

Next to address the Public Guardian and Trustee and the Highway Traffic Board investments. In addition to adding core justice system personnel and improving courthouse infrastructure, we are also making investments in critical services provided through those two agencies. The Highway Traffic Board, which is responsible for hearing appeals to SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] and regulating transportation safety on Saskatchewan roads, will receive

approximately \$1.315 million in new capital funding to build a new IT portal to replace manual processes and provide citizens with secure user-friendly online access. This new system will be implemented over a period of two years, with the cost being split between the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General and SGI.

The Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee will also see its funding increase this year by \$326,000, which will be used to add four new positions. Once in place, these staff will be responsible for protecting the financial resources of vulnerable children and adults as well as the estates of deceased persons. The work of the Public Guardian and Trustee is essential for individuals who are unable to manage their own financial affairs and do not have a trusted family member or guardian to otherwise act on their behalf.

Turning now to the child support calculation service. Since it was established in 2018, the child support calculation service has provided parents with an effective, more user-friendly alternative than going to court to get clarity around child support payments. In 2023 this program was expanded to allow parents to calculate initial child support payments without having to go to court at all. In addition to providing a more efficient and cost-effective option for parents, the child support calculation service also lowers conflict levels and provides families with critical support and resources during what can often be a very challenging time.

While this program started as a pilot project in partnership with the federal government, this year we will be transitioning the service to a fully provincially funded model through an investment of \$170,000. While most provinces and territories have a recalculation service, Saskatchewan is only the third province to develop the additional calculation service. We are proud to be able to transition this important program to a fully provincially funded model, ensuring that it will be available to Saskatchewan parents and children on a permanent, ongoing basis.

Next to speak to interpersonal violence programs, supports, and tools, Mr. Chair. Our government has a strong track record of providing support for individuals who are affected by interpersonal violence. Issues such as domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking are an ongoing concern across Canada, and certainly Saskatchewan is no exception.

This year we will be investing approximately \$33.5 million through the justice system to maintain interpersonal violence programs, services, and tools in Saskatchewan and to explore innovative ways to further address this complex issue. This amount includes funding provided through the ministries of Justice and Attorney General and Community Safety as well as approximately \$5.7 million from the federal national action plan to end gender-based violence.

A significant amount of this money is provided to community agencies to provide targeted services to reduce the impact of victimization, the likelihood of re-victimization, and the number of interpersonal violence and abuse incidents overall.

The agencies we partner with provide a wide spectrum of programming for survivors of abuse, including transition houses, second-stage housing, sexual violence services, and transportation.

This funding also includes investments to programs and tools designed to address interpersonal violence before it starts, such as family violence intervention programming, family intervention rapid support teams, and education and awareness programs and campaigns.

Turning now to the CBO [community-based organization] lift, to help our community-based partners continue to provide these vital programs and services, the ministry's '26-27 budget includes an increase of \$440,000 or 2 per cent for community-based organizations that are funded by the ministry.

The majority of this funding, 412,000 to be exact, will be dedicated to organizations that work to address the impact of interpersonal violence and abuse. The remaining \$28,000 is shared by community partners who support the delivery of the Aboriginal court worker program and the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations special investigations unit.

We value the work of all of our community-based organizations and stakeholders, and we look forward to continuing our important work with them in the year ahead.

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. Saskatchewan has a strong record of protecting and supporting human rights through our ongoing commitment to human rights legislation and our continued support of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. The commission protects and promotes human rights and advances equality for all Saskatchewan people, and provides a free complaint process for everyone to access to bring forward their concerns about discrimination or human rights offences.

As Saskatchewan's population grows and becomes more diverse, the demand for human rights education, outreach, and complaint resolution will continue to increase along with it. To prepare for this and ensure the commission can continue its ongoing mission to protect the rights of Saskatchewan people, we will be providing \$500,000 in new operating funding.

Additionally this year's budget includes \$1.5 million in one-time capital funding to relocate the commission's office to a new building, which will address space issues and allow them to better serve the needs of the public.

In closing, the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General is well positioned to meet its goals and mandate in 2026-27. We look forward to continuing our work with the courts, our community partners, other ministries, and to protect the public access to the justice services, promoting accountability and increasing public safety across our province.

The funding for the 2026-27 fiscal year will ensure that Saskatchewan continues to have a fair, accessible, and equitable justice system. I would now be pleased to answer any questions about the budget and the business plan for the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chair B. McLeod: — Thank you, Minister. I will now open the floor to questions. And I recognize MLA Sarauer.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Minister, for your opening comments. I just want to start —

before I go into questions about the various announcements that you have made in your discussions and your opening remarks — with an overall question regarding the budget of Justice and Attorney General. You've mentioned some new programs and some new investments that are happening; however the estimated budget is a reduction from '25-26. So can you please explain what has either been cut or reduced in terms of funding from your ministry this budget year?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thank you for the question, and I'm going to speak to kind of a high-level answer to the question, and then I'll let Deputy Minister Kimberly Kratzig get into a little more detail.

But to address the concern, there haven't been services cut from the budget. What actually happened was \$6.6 million of our previous budget was transferred for enterprise IT costs to the Ministry of SaskBuilds and Procurement. A budget item was moved to a different ministry, which shows a corresponding reduction in the overall budget, but it wasn't a cut of services. It was simply a transfer of those IT services being moved to the Ministry of SaskBuilds and Procurement. And that was the primary reduction.

There was also a \$1.4 million decrease in non-statutory salaries as part of the workforce realignment, but no job losses. No individuals lost their job as a result of that. But I'll let Deputy Minister Kratzig get into more detail about that.

Kimberly Kratzig: — Thank you. I think that, you know, the minister really did summarize. In addition to all of the investments that the minister spoke about in his opening remarks, those were the two primary reductions that we talked about. There's a few other sort of what I would call ins and outs of monies that we could walk through for you if you're interested in knowing exactly what came in and out of the budget.

Would you like that level of detail? They're lower amounts, and again they don't . . . There's no service reductions or anything associated with them. But I could do that if you're interested or you have some questions about these larger ones.

Nicole Sarauer: — Do any of them involve staff reductions?

Kimberly Kratzig: — No. There's no staff reductions. We did have three FTEs [full-time equivalent] that did move to the Ministry of Community Safety, and that was just more of the rebasing of the work that sort of happened around some changes that were made a couple of years ago. So that was done.

And as the minister said, the workforce realignment that we've discussed, that is being done without any impacts on individuals. That is being done through attrition as we look at efficiencies. As people are leaving the ministry, we'll be reviewing each position to meet that target.

Nicole Sarauer: — Tell me a little bit more about the workforce realignment, where you're hoping to find those efficiencies.

Kimberly Kratzig: — Thank you. So in terms of where we're hoping to find the efficiencies, I think that we're looking really throughout the entire ministry. We know that the province has instructed that there will not be an impact on front-line services,

so that's certainly a lens as we're making decisions around the positions that we will be reducing.

We'll be looking for efficiencies throughout all areas of the ministry though. And all positions that are being staffed will be sort of coming through our senior team, and we'll be looking at them and having discussions with our various levels of the organization to determine, you know, what the impact is. Can we do things differently? So we're very confident we will be able to meet the reduction target without any impact on front-line services.

Nicole Sarauer: — Do you have an estimate of how many FTEs \$1.4 million in reductions will mean?

[16:30]

Kimberly Kratzig: — For our ministry, our reduction target is 44.5 FTEs over two years. So we have about 1,145 positions, so we feel that we'll be able to again really do that in a responsible way that will not impact front-line services as individuals are leaving our workforce, whether it be moving to other places, retiring, whatever that might be. We'll be assessing which of those positions could form this target over two years.

Nicole Sarauer: — Can you explain this \$6.6 million that was transferred to SaskBuilds and Procurement?

Kimberly Kratzig: — Sure. So the \$6.6 million reduction that's being transferred to SaskBuilds and Procurement is an across-government change to the funding model for IT. There's no change to the services that are being provided. But SaskBuilds and Procurement provides a range of services to all ministries, so they've changed the funding model. So instead of billing us for those services, we've given back the money — in our case, \$6.6 million. Examples of that might be things like IT security charges or service desk, that type of thing that's done across all ministries.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. Now, Minister, you've discussed that there will be the appointing of four new associate judges, three new Provincial Court judges, and six new justices of the peace. Which line item of the budget would their expenses be coming out of, just so that I can see it in the Estimates?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Looking at page 88 of the Estimates under courts and civil justice, (JU03), the allocations are all broken down there: salaries for Provincial Court judges; salaries for King's Bench associate judges; salaries for justices of the peace; as well as family justice services; dispute resolution; and court facility land, buildings, and improvements.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. You have \$390,000 allocated for the new associate judge positions. Could you explain to the committee how much each associate judge is going to be paid?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — So the initial compensation will be aligned with the compensation framework for justices of the peace, reflecting a similar supportive judicial function performed by associate judges. Their work to a King's Bench justice will be comparable to what a Justice of the Peace work for a Provincial Court judge will be.

In terms of their specific compensation, their duties as assigned, we're still in conversation with the Chief Justice of the Court of King's Bench to align the appropriate work for these positions. And that in turn will ultimately impact the compensation. But generally speaking the compensation will align with the same framework that we use for justices of the peace at the Provincial Court level.

Nicole Sarauer: — So when you say it'll be the same framework, will they be paid the same as a Justice of the Peace? Or has that not been ironed out yet because the scope of the duties hasn't been ironed out quite yet?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — I guess what I can say is that the \$390,000 that's listed in the estimates is built around a mid-year start and based upon a Justice of the Peace salary. The specifics of the pay structure and the details around these positions will of course appear in the legislation that hasn't yet been tabled but will be tabled shortly.

Nicole Sarauer: — Are you able to provide the committee any information as to how these associate judges will be appointed? What will the process be?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — I would say, similarly, the appointment process will be better articulated in the legislation, and I'm keen to avoid speaking too detailed about legislation that isn't yet on the table. However we can say that they would be appointed through a similar process using an order in council and again in close consultation with the Chief Justice of the court.

Nicole Sarauer: — Do you know yet where these associate judges will be located in the province?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — The location of the specific positions is ultimately a determination made by the Chief Justice. However I can anticipate that, given that the nature of these positions is to support some of our busiest court points. Saskatoon and Regina tend to be the heaviest load for family services and the civil matters that are likely to be addressed most directly by these new positions.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. Will there be any other additional supports provided to the courts for these associate judges? I'm thinking clerks, office space, that sort of thing. And if so, how much has been budgeted for that?

Rory Jensen: — Rory Jensen, assistant deputy minister, courts and community justice. Thank you for the question.

In this budget we did not include additional amounts as we believe that the infrastructure and support staff can be absorbed in the existing complement. We believe that we have office space for the additional associate judges and existing staff in the courthouses that we can provide the support.

Nicole Sarauer: — One of the challenges I hear with respect to pressure is related to court time, access to court facilities. Do you feel like this will help address those concerns? And how?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — The creation of these positions is largely to alleviate some of the pressure that we're seeing on our King's Bench judges, taking away some of the routine matters, some of

the Chamber's matters off of their plate to allow them to focus their attention on the more complex matters, giving them more time to write their decisions on those complex matters, which of course more and more detail is being included in those decisions.

The access-to-court time, we are largely hearing, is more of an issue at the Provincial Court level which is why we've established the bylaw and traffic courts in Rosthern and Fort Qu'Appelle. Again pulling some of the matters out of the busier court points like Saskatoon and Regina, allowing those municipalities for their bylaw matters and their traffic matters to be heard in a different court point; pulling those out of the busier courtrooms, again creating the space and availability of the courtrooms in the Provincial Court.

These associate judge positions are really about alleviating more of the work off of the workload of the King's Bench justices.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. On the Provincial Court you had mentioned that there will be an appointment of three new Provincial Court judges. Can you indicate where they will be located?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Similarly, ultimately the location of those appointments will be at the discretion of the Chief Judge of the Provincial Court. However we would anticipate again that they will be targeted to alleviate the pressures in the busier court points.

Nicole Sarauer: — Similarly will there be the addition of the hiring of any clerks? Is there any firm or office space? Any of that additional expense, has that been contemplated this budget cycle? And if so, how much?

[16:45]

Rory Jensen: — So similar to associate judges, we do believe that within the existing budget allotment we do have, we can absorb any additional infrastructure or staff needs to support the appointment of the new judges for Provincial Court. In the existing budget appropriation we have just over \$1.2 million for capital work within courthouses across the province.

So when we're evaluating how that money will be distributed, we meet with all three levels of court to determine their prioritization of their needs and what they would like to see addressed. So this is a really collaborative conversation between the ministry and the levels of court.

In conversations that we've had recently with Chief Judge Metivier since the budget, she has indicated that she would like to earmark some of that money to ensure that we can develop any judicial officers in courthouses to make sure that we have appropriate officers for new appointments as well as meet the needs of the judiciary going forward as we implement and make new appointments.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. As has been mentioned, there is a significant challenge in terms of pressures of the court at the provincial level. Obviously the appointment of these three new judges is reflective of that. Similar to what I asked at the King's Bench level, there is no increase in court facility space, but can you explain whether or not this will help deal with the pressures

around court facility access right now that is being felt in the justice system?

Rory Jensen: — Thank you for the question. The three additional judges will help increase access for communities to courts. One of the benefits of having these new judicial appointments: the court will become less reliant on relief judges who, as you may be aware, are retired judges that really will determine when they would like to work. By having full-time appointments, they will be better able for scheduling to ensure resources are available for less cancellations of court.

Other things that we're also working on: as the minister mentioned, the bylaw hubs that are being implemented will be overheard by a senior Justice of the Peace. These will expand the availability of communities to access the court system instead of having their bylaw matters grouped in with a general docket. They will have dedicated time. By separating these out, we also free up judicial resources for judges to focus on the more complex cases and allow senior justices of the peace to do their work and oversee bylaw matters.

We're also continuing to focus and invest in video appearances in court. So right now approximately 30 per cent of all appearances in court are heard by video or virtual matters. We're also working closely with Provincial Court and Court of King's Bench on making sure that virtual appearance has gone streamlined and efficiently, so when the judiciary and court is expecting a person to appear, that they will appear and also that those options are available to citizens to have their matters heard through virtual options.

By doing this, we're really going to be serving citizens to meet them where their needs are. We're also going to be . . . One of the benefits of this is also really creating more, increasing community safety. Because as we can have increased virtual appearances, we're less reliant on prisoner transport to bring in-person matters. So there's more policing, and RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] are able to focus on front-line policing work instead of supporting bringing prisoners to court.

And also by adding additional judicial resources, similar to the associate judges for King's Bench, it will allow . . . By having additional judicial resources, there will be more time for the judges to write decisions, while we still maintain making sure that courtrooms . . . we're maximizing and using space efficiently to make sure that matters continue to be heard and their decisions are completed in a very timely manner.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. Now you've mentioned that there will be the hiring of two new Crown prosecutors to focus on immigration and taxation matters. Can you explain to the committee why this was seen as a targeted need?

Max Bilson: — Thank you. Max Bilson, deputy attorney general. At a very broad, high level and broad strokes, the positions are necessary to assist with the enforcement of laws in Saskatchewan to ensure the integrity of our immigration system in the province and in the country. And also on the taxation side to ensure the integrity of the tax system and the collection of tax and the fairness of tax for people of the province.

And I think my colleague Elizabeth Hilts can speak to the details

of the actual prosecution.

Elizabeth Hilts: — Sure, thank you. Elizabeth Hilts, assistant deputy attorney general, public prosecutions. So we made the request for these two prosecutors just because of the very specialized nature of the work. The provincial legislation as it relates to immigration and as it relates to provincial taxes is not something that we would deal with on a regular, day-to-day basis. And tax law can have a lot of ins and outs. And so we think it's important for proper prosecutions that we have people in place who can become specialists in that particular area of tax work. And the same is really the case for the immigration work.

The integrity of that legislation obviously depends on people having confidence on where there are people who are not following it, that they will be held accountable, and for us to have prosecutors that are able to take the cases to court to ensure that people are held properly accountable.

Nicole Sarauer: — Now please correct me if I'm wrong, but when I look at the line item for public prosecutions in the Estimates document, it's actually a slight decrease from last year. So can you explain how you're hiring two new prosecutors, yet the budget appears to be decreasing?

Kimberly Kratzig: — I can explain that, sure. So we are hiring two new prosecutors. It is a \$400,000 investment. We also do have a decrease in the budget line. What we did when we received the workforce alignment target that we talked about earlier — the \$1.4 million — we allocated it across all votes in the Ministry of Justice. They will not turn out that way, and if you actually look you'll see some very small reductions across different areas of the Ministry of Justice.

We don't know where people will be leaving from. We don't know if those are positions that will be replaced or not. So we had to allocate the money in a fair way, so that's what you'll see across the entire budget.

[17:00]

And as the year goes on, we of course have the ability to move the money back and forth. So the percentage of workforce reduction target in prosecutions, that's the decrease that you're seeing.

Nicole Sarauer: — So I hear what you're saying is that there hasn't been a decrease in the level of prosecutors at this time, but there is the possibility that there will be a reduction in prosecutors in the next two years.

Kimberly Kratzig: — I think how I would answer that is similar to how I answered it earlier. We will be looking at every position. We will be doing everything we can to not impact front-line services and services that are in high demand and high need. And as you see, we've made the investment of two new FTEs; government has decided this is a priority. So when you see the reduction in the budget in prosecutions, I would call that a placeholder, and you'll see that throughout our budget. Those are just where the reductions were applied on very much a pro-rated basis based on the budget of each area. So that was a decision that was made internally.

We had to park, if you will, the 1.4 million, and that's how we did it. But there has been no reduction in the number of prosecutors; in fact we are increasing the number of prosecutors.

Nicole Sarauer: — You've indicated that there will be continued investment of the J-STAR program as well as some courthouse improvements. Can you provide some details as to what those courthouse improvements look like and where we're at with the J-STAR program?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — So I'll start, and then I'll pass things over to Rory Jensen.

Essentially the budget is providing a little over \$1.2 million in ongoing court-maintenance-based capital to support essential repairs, safety upgrades, detention improvements, and courthouse functionality. The budget also includes just shy of \$1.8 million for court modernization initiatives such as courtroom technology, the J-STAR electronic filing implementation that you were asking about, judicial IT upgrades, and planning for a provincial court scheduling system and further eCourt development. This investment supports the safety, security, and technology performance in our courthouses that operate at a very high capacity and have ever-increasing caseload pressures.

I think what I'll do is I'll turn it over to Rory Jensen to maybe get into more specifics about each of those categories.

Rory Jensen: — Thank you, Minister. So for the J-STAR project, we're right now in the development phase, so we're working with the vendor on what would be determined as sprints and testing. So we've done a number of sprints to get certain pieces of the functionality ready, and we've done testing on those. We are on progress and making . . . right now on the development schedule for implementation later this year.

So that'll be a really big milestone for the Court of King's Bench as the public-facing portal will really modernize how the court interacts, how their case management system works, and how they interact with the public and accept electronic filing, which will be a big step forward for the court.

In terms of investments in the court, we're making some targeted investments in La Ronge and Saskatoon as well as working with the judiciary, as I mentioned earlier, to really target those investments throughout the year. We're talking with all courthouses and resident judges to determine what the security needs of each courthouse is to make sure that, as we use this funding, that it's really addressing the highest priority and the highest needs where it's going to benefit the province and the court system the most.

Nicole Sarauer: — Just to clarify, you're saying that there is in the works an electronic filing system for King's Bench that will be public facing and will be launching?

Rory Jensen: — Yes. So a number of years ago the Court of King's Bench implemented what is called the J-STAR system. So that's their case management system. Right now we are in phase 2 of that. And the big push on phase 2 is really a public-facing portal that will allow for electronic filing of documents as well as just complete case management for the judiciary to see

all matters that have been filed within a case in a nice electronic system. As well as creating efficiency for when a case needs to move from one court location to another, that that file can go with it electronically instead of packing up paper files and driving them to the next community where that court matter is going to be heard.

Nicole Sarauer: — Any idea when the public-facing side of that will be available?

Rory Jensen: — For the project, we are scheduled to implement that later this fiscal year.

Nicole Sarauer: — Now I heard you say eCourt development. That brings me to my evergreen question about the e-justice project and its continual pause. Could you provide any information as to what the status of that project is?

Rory Jensen: — Thank you for the question. The provincial budget, the budget includes a focus on court modernization. So there is a lot of investments being made into IT systems throughout all levels of court. As you mentioned the eCourt system, the Court of Appeal has been using the eCourt system since 2012. We continue to invest to help them enhance and modernize their system to ensure that they are still on the leading edge of court technology in the country.

We're making similar investments with J-STAR to bring Court of King's Bench in Saskatchewan up to a similar level of the Court of Appeal. So J-STAR is going to be, as we mentioned, have a public-facing portal, which will be very similar to eCourt, who also accepts online filing and electronic filing. So bringing Court of King's Bench up to speed on that as well as allowing the systems to communicate. So as files flow through between the levels of court, the citizens going through the systems have more of a seamless transition. So that's a really positive investment.

The other investment in this budget is for Provincial Court as we look at exploring a case management system and a modern case management system for that level of court to really transform the technology used at all three levels of court.

[17:15]

We also continue to invest across all levels of court, as I mentioned earlier, in virtual court, expanding the use of video court technology to have courts run more efficiently, improve community safety.

We're really making a lot of investments across the various courts in conjunction with all levels of courts. So we meet quarterly to determine what the courts' priorities are and help them understand their needs in the IT sector to make sure that we're keeping them up to speed with where changes in technology are going, where they would like to move their courts, and how they can use their courts and get the most efficient use out of technology in each level of court.

Specific for the e-justice program, the e-justice program project was made up of two different parts. There was one part related to the Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority that was implemented and is up and running. The other phase was the

provincial offence phase. That project is paused, but we still maintain all of the background support, so if we do want to pick that up and implement that, we still maintain all of that infrastructure with that project.

Nicole Sarauer: — Any plan this fiscal in unpausing that project?

Rory Jensen: — We are working with all levels of courts to prioritize their needs for the use of technology.

Nicole Sarauer: — How much is budgeted on maintaining that project in this fiscal?

Rory Jensen: — The amount to maintain that system is \$10,000.

Nicole Sarauer: — Last year I asked for the total to-date cost at that time of the e-justice project. I requested it. I had not received it. Does the ministry have that number today, but updated to this date? And if so, could you please provide it?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thanks for the question. We've actually had that question before. As you noted, in fact, it was one of your written questions in the fall. Question 61 was answered and tabled on November the 6th, 2025 where you asked that question. The tabled answer was that the e-justice project to date at that point was a little over \$6.6 million. Of course that was as of about October of 2025, so it could be updated to current date by adding about \$10,000.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. It helps me to find it for next year if it's in this *Hansard*. Appreciate it.

Mr. Jensen, you had mentioned a few times the bylaw and traffic safety court hub announcements that were made last year. Could you provide an update on the status of those two court hubs?

Rory Jensen: — Thank you for the question. The municipal bylaw hubs in Rosthern and Fort Qu'Appelle are up and running. We've been working closely with the Chief Judge, and we anticipate that in the coming months, traffic safety court will also be expanded to Rosthern and Fort Qu'Appelle.

As I mentioned, working with the Chief Judge and communities to ensure their awareness is out there, to take advantage of these additional court opportunities for communities, we do anticipate that the uptake in the utilization of these courts will increase as awareness continues to build with communities.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thanks. What does it look like for those courts in those locations operationally?

Rory Jensen: — So these bylaw courts really operate similar to any other docket. The docket is focused on bylaw matters for communities. The province is providing the Justice of the Peace that overhears that and the administrative staff for communities to ensure that the court runs efficiently.

Nicole Sarauer: — What is the current status of the Indigenous court project that will be based out of Saskatoon?

Rory Jensen: — The Provincial Court is really leading an investigation into and development of an Indigenous court pilot

in Saskatoon. The initiative is designed to operate similar to existing therapeutic courts with a focus on healing-centred sentencing, Elder guidance, and really community-based supports. The work has begun. There has been consultation with communities, Elder engagement, development of some initial framework. The province is working very closely with the court to establish what that framework and how the operations of the court will look when it is ready to begin sitting.

[17:30]

Nicole Sarauer: — Is there a timeline for when it is projected it will begin sitting?

Rory Jensen: — We do not have a specific timeline right now.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. Is there any budget this year for the Economic Impact Assessment Tribunal?

Kylie Head: — Thank you for the question. Oh, my name is Kylie Head, and I am assistant deputy attorney general with the Ministry of Justice, specifically responsible for justice services and tribunal division.

In the current fiscal year, the cost of operating the Economic Impact Assessment Tribunal is \$44,000, which is the cost of paying the retainers for the five tribunal members who were appointed to a three-year term. The funds for that are in the justice services and tribunal division line, which is on page 89 of the Estimates book.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. Is there any work planned for the tribunal this fiscal so far?

Kylie Head: — No.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. It wouldn't be Justice estimates if I didn't ask my other evergreen question, which is the total cost to date for the ongoing litigation between UR Pride and the Government of Saskatchewan. If you could just provide that for the committee please.

Max Bilson: — Thank you. Max Bilson, deputy attorney general again. As we've said in previous years, it's not our policy to waive the privilege over the amounts paid in individual ongoing litigation files. Though obviously those amounts are aggregated and in future will appear in public accounts as an aggregated amount with the amounts that are spent on civil litigation in the province and are public. But we do assert privilege over the specific amounts paid on ongoing litigation files.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. And just as a reminder — I know we've discussed this before, but to the committee — it is a privilege that could be waived by the government. They are choosing not to waive it. Is that correct?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — It's a matter of protecting the interests of the people of Saskatchewan in terms of the litigation itself. Disclosing the specific amounts for any individual file does potentially compromise the strength of one's case. We're not prepared to do that.

Nicole Sarauer: — Now as you well know, Minister, the

notwithstanding clause that's subject to litigation will sunset in 2028, at which point the government will need to make a decision whether or not they will essentially renew the clause or discontinue, which would end the litigation of course. Do you not feel that the public has a right to know how much this litigation has cost it when making the analysis as to whether or not the notwithstanding clause should be renewed?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — I would say that that question could be answered when the litigation is concluded. But on an active litigation matter, disclosing the solicitor-client fees are a matter of privilege for good reason.

Nicole Sarauer: — And also just for clarity, as has been mentioned, that the aggregated cost will be reflected in public accounts. That number is a total cost that's paid to the third-party law firm for all legal services and not just this specific litigation; is that correct?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Correct.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. Minister, I understand there's an ongoing gender-based violence engagement session happening right now. Can you explain how much is budgeted for this project? I believe KPMG has been contracted to do this work.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Just for clarity, you're talking about the development of theory of change model?

Nicole Sarauer: — I understand that there have been consultations happening throughout the province conducted by KPMG on behalf of your ministry related to gender-based violence. That's all I know. So I'm curious to know what that project is, broadly speaking, and how much is being spent on it.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thank you for the clarity. We just have multiple investments in this space, on reducing gender-based violence, so we just wanted to make sure we're talking about the same one.

Kimberly Kratzig: — Thank you for the question. I'll start with the answer and then turn it over to Gina Alexander, our executive director from community safety and well-being branch.

[17:45]

The Ministry of Justice did a call for proposals to develop a theory of change model to help inform how we approach gender-based violence. So that is what you're referring to. Now I'll talk about those two stages that are happening. One is to support the service map to develop, identify, categorize all the various services that are happening in Saskatchewan related to gender-based violence. And then there's also research that outlines the reasons behind the high rates of gender-based violence in Saskatchewan. So it's a two-stage project. They were the successful vendor. They've been awarded the contract in October; it expires later this year.

I'll turn it over to Gina to talk about why that is a priority under the national action plan, what pillar that aligns with, why we think that this was an important investment to help us really understand I think at a very basic level exactly what's happening in the gender-based violence space, and hearing from our

stakeholders to understand what they would tell us we could do to better make some progress on this very important issue.

Nicole Sarauer: — Sorry, just before Ms. Alexander speaks, can you also tell us how much the contract was for?

Kimberly Kratzig: — Yeah, it's \$258,000.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you.

Gina Alexander: — Gina Alexander, executive director of community safety and well-being, Ministry of Justice. So just to follow up on what the deputy minister has already talked about, we think this is important for us to map out where the services are that are currently located so that we can get a sense of what's happening across the province. And we can get a sense of not only where in the province these services are located, but also what other measures might be implemented at a later date once we discover where those services are.

The Ministry of Justice and some other ministries have a number of services. When we engage with stakeholders, this allows us to explore services that we may not know about that are in existence, that are operating quite well, that may not be funded by the provincial government, may be funded by municipal governments, may be funded by the federal government that we may not know about. So that's in reference to the first stage that was awarded to KPMG. So get the lay of the land. Figure out what's out there.

And then the second phase of this particular project is to, as the deputy said, research — research that outlines the reasons behind the high rates of gender-based violence in Saskatchewan. So what's happening out there? What's happening on the ground that service providers, communities, partners are noticing that we can all benefit from as we figure out what we do next in terms of good practice and evidence-based practice approaches? And it will also start to confirm where things are going well and maybe where there are some gaps and how we might work to fill those gaps. And this particular item falls within the foundation pillar of the national action plan to end gender-based violence. So that's the fit which the deputy minister referred to.

Nicole Sarauer: — Will phase 2 of this project be a report that's made public?

Gina Alexander: — So this particular work has not been designed at this point to make its way to a public report. But like all engagements that we have on a very frequent basis with stakeholders and partners that we are connected with, sometimes several times a year, the feedback from this work and also the ongoing work from the stakeholders that we work with will continue to inform our decisions as we move forward.

Nicole Sarauer: — Will the report be shared with the stakeholders who participated?

Gina Alexander: — There may be points or summaries that might be shared with the stakeholders.

Nicole Sarauer: — And how will these recommendations differ from the recommendations made in the last two domestic violence death review reports?

Gina Alexander: — So domestic violence death review reviewed files of homicide and death from 2015 to 2020, and the focus was on, of course, the serious outcomes related to that. A number of their recommendations pay attention to and inform us to look to prevention and also intervention, but the focus is on how do we stop the level of violence that results in homicides and these types of deaths.

The focus on the domestic violence death reviews included just looking at those files by three groups of folks who are experts in domestic violence across the province. And we had a group in and representing northern Saskatchewan, a group in and representing rural Saskatchewan, and then a group in and representing urban Saskatchewan, and the focus of that was about those particular files.

Different than that, on the focus of the national action plan funding and the continued work that the ministry does in terms of a number of areas of interpersonal violence and abuse, this work that we have contracted with KPMG to do will be looking much broader than at the instances of domestic violence that have resulted in death. And part of what we will be able to do is not only take the recommendations from focusing on those files in the domestic violence death review but also the work by KPMG from the federal funding that will allow us to look more broadly than just on the more serious matters that occur in our province.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. Could you speak at all to the RFP [request for proposal] process that was engaged where KPMG was awarded with this project? Are you able to provide the committee information as to how many other organizations bid on the project?

Gina Alexander: — I don't have the level of detail which you've requested on this particular request for proposals. What I can offer today is that the procurement processes that we use in the community safety and well-being branch follow closely the procurement processes that are utilized by SaskBuilds. And it's an open and transparent process. You may know this. It appears on SaskTenders so agencies and individuals can see it. They're typically open for somewhere between a month to six weeks, maybe up until two months. I don't know the exact time frame that this particular one was open for. I don't recall that at this point.

And then an assessment of the submissions is done by an evaluation team, and from there a successful proponent is chosen based on a rating system that is utilized. And the rating system involves analysis around the agency's or individual's capacity, their efforts and experience with collaboration, their experience and knowledge and skills and abilities around the particular topic, how they've demonstrated in the proposal their ability to achieve the outcomes which we always have in the request for proposals and procurement processes through our branch.

Nicole Sarauer: — I'm just being cognizant of the time. I'm going to move on and ask about the experiential learning program at the College of Law that the ministry provides \$100,000 for. Would you provide to the committee how many students accessed the program last year and where they were all placed?

[18:00]

Kylie Head: — Thank you for the question. For this past academic year, there were two students placed at Legal Aid. One was working in The Battlefords area office and the other was in the Prince Albert area office. Additionally students at Legal Aid were given the opportunity to work in the North for a few weeks and have that experience as well, so travelling up to northern area offices. We also had two students that were placed in the prosecutions offices, one in North Battleford and one in Meadow Lake.

Nicole Sarauer: — What are the plans for placements this upcoming fiscal?

Kylie Head: — I spoke with the dean at the College of Law, Martin Phillipson, and the associate dean there as well. And because the placements are based on student interest and what community they want to go to, we're not able to answer that with specificity at this time.

I know they are working on getting interest in some other communities, such as Yorkton was one of the centres they mentioned to me. But we're not able to give you a specific number until registration starts in sort of September or October.

Nicole Sarauer: — When this program was originally announced, there was a lot of conversation about . . . The minister at the time mentioned that there would be placement opportunities in the private sector as well. I'm not hearing that there were placements in the private sector last year. Can you explain what happened with those ambitions?

Kylie Head: — So our contribution towards the private sector is that we pay the main costs of administration for the overall program at the College of Law. So part of the \$100,000 covers the cost of the sessional lecturers because students are required, when they do these placements, to attend a sessional lecturer class at the college, a seminar class. And so we have one that's in the first semester and one that's in the second semester for those students.

And we're also paying sort of the central administration fees for getting the program up and running. There's some evaluation costs, those sorts of things. So the money that the government is providing is sort of the backbone for the program overall.

But when the private sector wants a student to be placed in their individual firm, they would pay the costs for that student. If there was a student to go rent accommodations, etc., and live in another community, that would be up to the host who is working with them in that particular community.

Nicole Sarauer: — To your knowledge, were there any placements other than the ones that you have mentioned within the program, and if so, where?

Kylie Head: — Yes. I'm sorry, I don't have the complete list of what happened at the College of Law, but they did talk to me about it and there were quite a number of different placements. Some of the ones that I remember were the administration office right on the campus at the College of Law. I think there was like some mining-type firms, sort of some of the . . . I can't remember for sure if it was Cameco or if it was someone else. So I don't want to misspeak, but there were other companies that did have

student placements with them.

Nicole Sarauer: — So just to clarify, there were placements that occurred outside of prosecutions and Legal Aid within this program? They just weren't funded by the ministry?

Kylie Head: — Yes. The only contribution from the ministry would be those main administrative costs at the college.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. How much money is budgeted to CLASSIC [Community Legal Assistance Services for Saskatoon Inner City Inc.] by the ministry this year?

Kylie Head: — So there's no money in the budget currently targeted for CLASSIC. The transition to this newer program was done in consultation with the College of Law. There was a conversation that the ministry had funded CLASSIC for multiple decades to this point.

The dean at the college expressed some interest in having diversity in programming. There were concerns that some students didn't want to necessarily be in a poverty law clinic setting, so they would like the opportunity to do other things, have other opportunities to participate.

The other main point of discussion was that it's very difficult to attract lawyers to rural Saskatchewan. This is the same for the private sector as it is for the public sector. And if we could get students to be interested in and experience living in some of these smaller centres prior to graduation, they might be willing to stay and article there. And that's actually what we found, is that both prosecutions and Legal Aid have attracted articling students out of this investment.

Nicole Sarauer: — That part of it is great news to hear. Of course CLASSIC is an important institution within the College of Law, and having a clinical law program is incredibly important for comparison to other law schools across the country, as you all well know. Hearing what you're saying, as we know that there will be a change in leadership at the college this summer, if the new dean makes the request to the ministry to renew that funding — it was \$100,000 in the past — is that something that the ministry is open to?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thanks for the question. I would say that myself and my team have frequent conversations with the dean. As Kylie indicated, we're in frequent contact with him and the needs of the college and certainly of the students.

I want to point out that CLASSIC is providing a valuable service. That service exists and the students are still free to participate in that if they choose, if the students want to volunteer there. It being an urban program, it's there and it's available to the students who are currently attending the college in Saskatoon.

This program and the needs that Kylie has outlined, together with consultation with the dean of the college, has really addressed what was identified as a rather critical need: putting placements in more rural locations and dealing with those pressures. It's a lot easier for students to continue to participate in an urban program like CLASSIC while attending, whereas that's not an opportunity that's available to them in a rural setting while they're attending the college and attending class.

So I would say that we will certainly continue to have those conversations with the outgoing dean and with the incoming dean, but we're cognizant of making sure that we're providing the most diverse opportunities for the students to make sure that they can serve both urban and rural settings across Saskatchewan.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. Another question I've asked in the past and am going to ask again this year.

We've talked about the challenges around domestic violence in Saskatchewan and some of the work that the ministry is doing with respect to that. One thing we've requested and have not been successful in that request at this point in time, is to have the government declare intimate partner violence an epidemic in Saskatchewan. Is the ministry now prepared to do that this year?

[18:15]

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thanks for the question. I would say that what would demonstrate the significance of this very serious issue for our government is the fact that we invest over \$72 million towards interpersonal violence and domestic violence programming every year in our budget. This year in particular we've got over \$33 million just from the Ministry of Justice alone.

Gina Alexander is going to provide some of the breakdown and specifics on what those investments are really targeting, but the level of investment that we're putting towards this really is a strong indication of how seriously we take this issue. Gina.

Gina Alexander: — Thank you. Out of the 70 million, 33.5 million investment annually comes from both the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General at 31.9 million and the Ministry of Community Safety at 1.6 million. And of course part of that contribution is approximately 5.5 million of the federal funding for the national action plan for this year.

The combined provincial and federal funding allocation provides a wide variety of support programs and services for survivors of abuse, programming for those who use violence, as well as investments in programming and tools designed to address interpersonal violence before it starts. So we are focused not only on assisting people in emergency situations but also assisting people in earlier intervention and also assisting and gearing the programming to prevention as well.

Funded community-based programs include early intervention and outreach for families at risk of violence, of course emergency transition shelters, second-stage housing and transportation services across the province, sexual violence services, support for agencies that provide provincial coordination services, as well as supports for families of missing persons, and supports for children and youth who have witnessed and experienced violence, and supports for victims of crime including policed-based victim services.

So all of those services contribute to or are part of the 31.9 million that the Ministry of Justice invests in annually.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. Of the 33 million, how much of that is new provincial money this fiscal year?

Brad Gurash: — Hello. Brad Gurash, assistant deputy minister, corporate services. For the funding for new funding there comes primarily through the CBO lifts this year. The majority of the funding is base funding that we always maintain within our budget and make sure that we allocate towards these initiatives and had, given their importance.

And then as Gina mentioned, the federal funding portion — 5.5 million roughly — comes from in our budget this year from the national action plan to end gender-based violence. And there's also federal funding through the Victims' Fund, which is about 1.2 million. And our CBO lift in total for the ministry was \$440,000, of which 412,000 is directly related to these initiatives.

Nicole Sarauer: — Okay. So my initial question was, how much of the 33 million invested is new provincial dollars this year? Could you provide that number?

Brad Gurash: — And that would be the \$440,000.

Nicole Sarauer: — \$440,000.

Brad Gurash: — For the CBO lift.

Nicole Sarauer: — Increase of provincial money?

Brad Gurash: — Yes.

Nicole Sarauer: — Okay, and that's it?

Brad Gurash: — Yes.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you.

You mentioned, Minister, that there is \$500,000 being provided to the Human Rights Commission in new operating funding. Could you provide some more details as to what that is for?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — I'm cognizant of the time. Minister Schmalz is the Minister Responsible for the Human Rights Commission, but Kimberly Kratzig can start on the answer, and Minister Schmalz will take this chair to assist in any way.

Kimberly Kratzig: — Sure. The '26-27 budget provides the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission with 500,000 in new operating funding. There also is \$1.5 million in one-time capital funding to relocate to a new location to improve access to services for the public.

Nicole Sarauer: — Can you provide some detail as to what the operating funding will be for?

Kimberly Kratzig: — Sure. Thank you. Primarily the \$500,000 will just help address growing caseloads, ensuring timely resolution of issues, ensuring that they're able to meet their mandate in an effective way.

Nicole Sarauer: — Will this result in new additional FTEs?

Kimberly Kratzig: — Thank you for the question. As you know, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission is a third-party, independent operation. So I'm not really in a position to comment on their human resource hirings and what they they'll

be doing specifically in that regard.

Nicole Sarauer: — Has the ministry put any accountability frameworks into the dollars that are being provided, its significant increase in money, in terms of timelines for files or anything like that?

Hon. Eric Schmalz: — Thanks for the question. Yeah obviously, we as government, we expect that any organization that's receiving government funding would be exercising prudent fiscal management, obviously, when it comes to utilizing those dollars whether they're arm's length or not.

So for them, obviously being an arm's length organization, that is within their purview to decide timelines, to decide the day-to-day operations. We as government do not step in or interject in any way in that. What we want to do though is we can look at their annual report in which they provide those timelines. Any reporting on how their structure is operating on a day-to-day basis is done through that process.

Nicole Sarauer: — Could you speak to this \$1.5 million that's being provided for the new capital funding for their move?

[18:30]

Hon. Eric Schmalz: — Thanks for the question. Yeah, so the need was identified by the Human Rights Commission themselves. They've stated for some time that there's been some issues with their current space, their space currently for about 15 people. Their current staffing complement is over 30.

So we wanted to ensure that we were able to support them in providing a more functional space and to ensure that the confidentiality of the interview process is maintained and ensuring that those individuals who are seeking help from the Human Rights Commission, that they are able to receive that in a proper setting.

Nicole Sarauer: — Any idea yet where they're moving to?

Hon. Eric Schmalz: — An RFP has been issued, and they are currently searching for a space. That work is ongoing, and hopefully they will find that space very soon.

Nicole Sarauer: — I've just been given the hook by the Chair, so I'll pass it on to you.

Chair B. McLeod: — So having reached our agreed-upon time for consideration of these estimates, we will now adjourn consideration of the estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 for Justice and Attorney General and the Firearms Secretariat.

So thank you for two ministers for their involvement and engagement tonight, and all the officials that were here. Wonderful and very credible information that was given; we appreciate that so much.

And I'll ask the minister if he has any closing comments.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. My sincere thanks to yourself and to the committee, to Ms. Sarauer for her many thoughtful and detailed questions.

Had a team of fantastic staff here to assist me, as I do every day, and I want to thank all of them. I know many of them didn't have an opportunity to come to the table, but the people of Saskatchewan are so incredibly well served by the team in the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General. And I want to thank each and every one of them for what they do each and every day, even if they didn't manage to make their way to the table here this evening. But thanks to the committee and to yourself, Mr. Chair, to the staff and to *Hansard*. I appreciated the opportunity.

Chair B. McLeod: — Any closing comments from committee members then as well, please? Yes.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. I'd like to join with the minister in first thanking yourself, Mr. Chair, as well as the rest of the committee. Thank you for those who kept me hydrated. I greatly appreciate that. And the committee staff as well as yourself, Minister, and Minister Schmalz as well for answering my many questions and putting up with me always. And as well as the officials. I always feel really terrible when I don't get a question to you, and you weren't able to come and answer, especially those who have travelled today.

I just want to say, on behalf of the official opposition, thank you so much for all the work you do every single day. I really appreciate the opportunity to be here in estimates and ask questions of you. And we of course appreciate all of the work that you do and as well as all of the staff that you represent. So thank you so much for that. As well also my thanks goes to *Hansard* and broadcast services for their work this afternoon.

Chair B. McLeod: — Thank you so much. And I echo those comments as well from both the minister and MLA Sarauer. So the committee will now recess until 7 p.m. Don't go far. Thank you.

[The committee recessed from 18:34 until 19:01.]

General Revenue Fund Community Safety Vote 73

Subvote (CS01)

Chair B. McLeod: — Welcome back, everyone, and welcome to all our new guests as well. We will now be considering the estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 for Community Safety. We'll begin with vote 73, Community Safety, central management and services, subvote (CS01).

Minister Weger is here with officials, and just as is normal there, we ask that officials please introduce yourselves when they speak for the first time and don't touch the microphones. The *Hansard* operator will turn them on for you when you speak. So I'm going to ask, Minister, if you'd please introduce your officials and make your opening comments. The floor is yours.

Hon. Michael Weger: — Well thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome to the committee members. Good evening. I'm pleased to introduce the Ministry of Community Safety's budget for the 2026-27 fiscal year and I look forward to answering your questions. This year's budget furthers our government's commitment to protect Saskatchewan communities and

neighbourhoods through new and continued investments in programs and services.

Tonight I am joined by Denise Macza, deputy minister of community safety, and Marlo Pritchard, president of the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency, or SPSA. In the room with me are additional officials from both the ministry and the SPSA.

Joining us from the ministry are: Wanda Lamberti, assistant deputy minister of strategy and central services; Corey Zaharuk, assistant deputy minister of policing and community safety services; Dr. Joshua Freistadt, assistant deputy minister of supervision and rehabilitation services; and Scott Harron, assistant deputy minister of custody services.

From the SPSA we also have Laura Debassige, vice-president, corporate services; and Michelle Broda, executive director, finance and corporate services; and many other officials that have joined us. And I thank them for being here tonight. I will ask other officials to introduce themselves if they need to answer any questions during tonight's discussion.

As the new Minister of Community Safety and Minister Responsible for the SPSA, I have had the honour of attending ride-alongs with several police services to learn more about the policing needs of our communities. I have had the opportunity to meet with ministry staff and community stakeholders who work tirelessly to support youth and adult offenders, help reduce reoffending, and keep our roads and communities safe. And I have had the privilege of meeting with SPSA officials to learn more about the important work they do to prepare and protect our citizens, property, and natural resources from wildfires, floods, and other emergency situations.

This year's budget continues to fund our government's investments in law enforcement and public safety enhancements. This year we are providing \$740 million to support policing and community safety services throughout the Ministry of Community Safety. We are also investing \$140 million to support the work of the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency. For the SPSA, this amounts to more than a \$19.8 million increase over our 2025-26 budget.

Saskatchewan's 2026-27 budget is designed to enhance and support community safety; law enforcement; custody, supervision, and rehabilitation services; and emergency services across the province. \$310 million is being allocated to support RCMP operations across Saskatchewan, including \$26 million for First Nations policing. This reflects roughly a \$50 million increase over last year's support, including \$47.7 million for the RCMP and \$1.9 million for First Nations policing. This increase is designed to address collective bargaining requirements; rising cost pressures related to operations and maintenance vehicles, utilities, equipment, and infrastructure; and specialized operational support enhancements. This investment will help enhance community safety for rural and urban citizens that are served by the RCMP.

To further enhance community safety, an additional \$583,000 is being distributed between six municipalities through the municipal police grant program, for a total investment of nearly \$23.6 million in 2026-27. Municipalities will use this funding to support their local municipal services and enhance front-line

policing efforts in their communities. Our government is continuing its commitment to support the hiring of roughly 100 new municipal police officers in Saskatchewan through the safer communities and neighbourhoods enforcement initiative.

In fall 2024, our government announced a two-year funding agreement to distribute \$11.9 million over two years to municipal police services to increase the number of front-line officers serving in our communities. I'm pleased to announce that \$6 million is being delivered through the program this year to municipal police services in Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Estevan, and Weyburn. Approximately 71 of the 100 positions have been filled, and this funding will help ensure the remaining positions are filled this year.

In addition to this investment, over the past several weeks our government has promoted Saskatchewan law enforcement careers through a national advertising campaign. We believe that by supporting recruitment initiatives at the local level and sharing Saskatchewan's story across the country, this will help fill staffing vacancies in all areas of law enforcement, whether it be through policing, corrections, the Saskatchewan Marshals Service, or the provincial protective services.

Saskatchewan is a great place to live and raise a family, and we are happy to share that story with all Canadians. The ad campaign is performing exceptionally well nationwide, driving nearly 55,000 visits to the "Careers in Law Enforcement" pages on Saskatchewan.ca since February. The video ads have also been viewed nearly 1 million times on key platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. These figures represent mid-campaign results, so we can expect even higher numbers in the final performance report.

To further support community policing in small towns and rural communities across the province, our government is establishing the small town and rural policing grant program, also known as STAR. This year, small town and rural police services in Dalmeny, Luseland, Corman Park, Vanscoy, and Wilton are each receiving \$10,000 per officer to support policing efforts in their communities. As a result, a total of \$190,000 worth of grants are being provided through STAR in our 2026-27 budget.

Each of these police services supports the RCMP in delivering proactive, community-based policing in these small towns and their surrounding rural municipalities. These services have traditionally been paid entirely by the local community and area residents. Our government is pleased to provide this funding to help ensure rural Saskatchewan's policing needs are met in an affordable manner for communities.

This year our budget also includes funding to expand the First Nations community safety officer program, or FNCISO. The FNCISO program offers an affordable, community-driven solution that supports the RCMP in policing northern and First Nations communities in Saskatchewan. FNCISOs respond to low-risk and bylaw infractions, allowing the RCMP to focus their efforts on addressing more serious criminal activities happening in the area. We are proud to invest \$1.4 million to support the expansion of this initiative to bring more FNCISOs to communities across Saskatchewan.

Our ministry is also committed to supporting the Ministry of

Health and the Saskatchewan Health Authority to strengthen hospital security and law enforcement capacity in collaboration with municipal police services. This year we are investing \$1.9 million to establish hospital public safety teams in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert. These teams are the result of partnerships with our municipal police services, and they will be integrated into their existing special constable enforcement support initiatives.

\$2.7 million is also being allocated to help establish complex needs facilities, or CNF, within the cities of North Battleford and Prince Albert. These facilities are operated in partnership with the Ministry of Health. They're designed to ensure individuals experiencing an addiction or mental health crisis receive coordinated wraparound supports. Each CNF is staffed by dedicated health care professionals and security staff to ensure safe, timely care is provided. Individuals in the facility may be monitored for up to 24 hours prior to being connected to appropriate services and long-term supports that promote treatment and recovery.

Moving on to protecting our province's roadways, the Saskatchewan Highway Patrol provides invaluable services to the province, conducting commercial and motor vehicle inspections along our highways and at permanent weigh scale locations. These inspections help ensure Saskatchewan roads are safe for residents and visitors. This year \$713,000 is being invested to allow Highway Patrol to conduct more inspections, remove more illicit substances, improve commercial vehicle compliance, and support front-line policing efforts across the province.

To date, 26 out of 70 marshals have been hired to serve with the Saskatchewan Marshals Service. The Marshals Service has been operating since spring 2025, and already they're making a difference in the province. The marshals are designed to target key policing priorities such as gangs, illegal weapons, and drugs, as well as the apprehension of prolific and high-risk offenders and wanted individuals who pose a risk to public safety.

In the 2026-27 budget, the Saskatchewan Marshals Service is receiving \$17 million, which is an increase of \$4.8 million over last year's allocation. This funding will be used to hire new marshals and expand the service's ability to support policing partners and law enforcement agencies across our province.

For custody and community corrections services, our budget continues to support the safe operation of custody facilities and the successful rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals back into their communities. To support this work, \$2.2 million is being invested to increase on-site professional staffing in our large correctional facilities. Through this investment, health care professionals will now be available overnight within our correctional facilities. This will allow staff to more effectively manage offender health care requirements and reduce offender transports to local hospitals for treatments during the night shift, relieving pressures on our hospitals.

\$478,000 is also being invested to establish a new inmate disciplinary process. To ensure fair and impartial hearings for offenders in custody, justices of the peace and disciplinary hearing officers will be hired to lead disciplinary hearings involving offenders accused of major offences within our

correctional facilities. This process will enhance inmate accountability, more effectively manage inmate behaviour, and create safer environments for staff and offenders within our facilities.

A total of \$6.5 million is also being invested to expand the Pine Grove Correctional Centre's admitting unit in Prince Albert. This expansion includes the installation of technologies designed to reduce the smuggling of contraband into the facility, upgrades to security, and accessibility needs to enhance security and accommodate the facility's growing inmate population.

Within community corrections, demand for GPS [global positioning system] electronic monitoring continues to grow. GPS electronic monitoring is one of the most intensive supervision tools a court can order to manage offenders in the community, either on bail or through community sentence orders. With GPS technology, probation officers can closely monitor offenders' movements and designate exclusion zones, such as schools or victims' residences, where the court orders that offenders cannot go. These measures ensure offenders are following the conditions of their release, and if an infraction occurs, police can be notified immediately.

The addition of 50 more GPS units last year helped to alleviate some of our capacity concerns. However those units were fully utilized within four months of receiving them. Since then about half the time we have units available for the court to consider ordering the additional supervision mechanism.

[19:15]

To help meet court demand and further reduce capacity pressures, our government is investing an additional \$2 million to expand the GPS electronic monitoring program this year. This allows community corrections to purchase another additional 100 GPS units for monitoring Saskatchewan offenders in our communities.

In addition to enhancing offender health and supervision, our government is continuing to make investments that ensure offenders can reform and reintegrate into their communities. With an investment of \$312,000 from an agreement with the federal government, this budget will establish a new program aimed to help women and children at risk of gang involvement break gang ties.

On to the SPSA. Of the \$140 million allocated for the SPSA in the 2026-27 budget, \$21.5 million represents increased spending on capital expenditures. This capital investment is part of our four-year plan to purchase four repurposed land-based air tanker aircraft consisting of two Dash 8-Q400AT and two Dash 8-Q400MRE models. The first air tanker was delivered in 2025 and the second air tanker is expected to be delivered in the second quarter of 2026.

This year we are also funding three new initiatives to enhance SPSA's ability to respond to emergency situations and replace or enhance infrastructure that was lost in recent wildfire seasons. \$4.73 million is being allocated over two years starting in 2026-27 to support these initiatives. From this, \$4.58 million will be provided to replace infrastructure that was damaged during the 2025 and previous wildfire seasons.

Over and above the \$4.78 million, through the large response infrastructure project, \$500,000 is being provided this year to establish permanent incident camp infrastructure at six locations: Lower Fishing Lake, Buffalo Narrows, La Loche, La Ronge, Big River, and Pelican Narrows. This funding is the first of a three-year funding agreement to construct permanent operational bases for large emergency response management teams. These bases will help provide more rapid responses to emergencies across the province, providing shelter and supplies for emergency personnel.

We are also investing in the evacuation application project to replace the SPSA's existing web-based evacuation application. This new modern system will help streamline the coordination of evacuations and improve the sharing of communications during emergency situations.

Our 2026-27 budget provides an additional \$500,000 in new funding for the first year of the evacuation application project. This project will take place over two years at a total cost of \$1 million.

As you can see, these targeted investments will help ensure our police partners, correctional staff, and emergency services personnel are well equipped to meet the demands and challenges of today and tomorrow. This budget will help protect Saskatchewan by ensuring the safety and security of communities and citizens across the province.

I'm now pleased to address your questions about the 2026-27 business plan and budget for the Ministry of Community Safety.

Chair B. McLeod: — Thank you, Minister. I will now open the floor to questions. I recognize MLA Sarauer.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you, Minister, for your opening comments. I'm going to start on the corrections side of things with a request for point-in-time counts for all facilities. Yeah, you know the drill.

Scott Harron: — Scott Harron, assistant deputy minister, custody services. All right. Would you like the 2026 data as well as the utilization percentage, I assume? And then last year you asked for the per cent change in population by facility as well as the per cent remand. I've got those this year, if you'd like.

Nicole Sarauer: — Okay, that would be perfect. Thank you so much.

Scott Harron: — Okay, perfect. We'll start at the Regina Correctional Centre. There are currently, as of today, 668 inmates. That is down 1 per cent from last year's total of 675. That is an 84.3 per cent utilization rate. We have a couple of units that are currently undergoing some capital repairs, so they're shut down which is why their utilization is a bit lower. And there's 60.2 per cent remand.

The Saskatoon Correctional Centre currently has 740 inmates. That is 25.6 per cent higher than it was last year. That's because we brought the new SCC [Saskatoon Correctional Centre] expansion online which added 312 beds to the system. That came online in, I think, November we got it fully up and running, and it's been working very well. The staff have been quite pleased

with it, and everything I hear from it coming out is it's working very, very well. It's a 91.7 per cent utilization rate. And it's 57.8 per cent remand.

Prince Albert Correctional Centre, 664 to date. That's 12.7 per cent higher than it was last year or 133.9 per cent utilization. It's 68.4 per cent remand.

Pine Grove Correctional Centre, our women's facility: 266 inmates. That's up 18.8 per cent over last year at 160.2 per cent utilization or 55.3 per cent remand. Interestingly, that remand percentage is actually down 10 per cent, quite significantly, yeah.

White Birch, which is our smaller women's facility in Regina based out of Paul Dojack, has 37 inmates. It's up 8.8 per cent or 108.8 per cent utilization. It's 89.2 per cent remand. It's primarily intended for remands as a short-term stay before they go to Pine Grove.

Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford is at 67 inmates. That's up about 1 per cent. It's just one person different compared to last year; 69.8 per cent utilization and 47.8 per cent remand.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. How much of that is Pine Grove and how much of that is your traditional Sask Hospital?

Scott Harron: — I think I've got those numbers somewhere. All right, I can give you the data on that from February 11th. It'll be very similar. The male psychiatric unit EPVA [East Prairie View A] is 15. The equivalent unit B for the women is 15 as well. And then the Pine Grove overflow units C and D are 23 and 24.

Nicole Sarauer: — Sorry to interrupt.

Scott Harron: — That's okay. Whitespruce provincial training facility has 28 inmates. It's about 10 per cent down from last year, but within the normal variation we'd see it at a complex like that; 71.8 per cent utilization. They're all sentenced individuals.

And Besnard Lake, the equivalent in the North, has 14. Again that's 22 per cent down from last year, but again within normal variations because of the smaller numbers; 56 per cent utilization and everybody sentenced.

And then the impaired driver treatment program is 24 individuals, 20 per cent higher than last year — 80 per cent utilization and 24 per cent remand.

So if you want the total adult, I assume: 2,508 individuals — about 11.7 per cent over where we were last year — 100.9 per cent utilization as the system as a whole; and 60 per cent remand which is actually down 1 per cent compared to last year. As a comparator point, if you look at the 2023 and 2024 reference year — what they have online through Stats Canada — British Columbia is at 76 per cent; Alberta's 85 per cent; Manitoba, 75; and Ontario is 86 per cent.

We are one or possibly the best in the country when it comes to our remand percentage as a measure of total population.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. Could you provide the numbers for the youth facilities as well?

Scott Harron: — All right. Paul Dojack Youth Centre is 46 — that's down 9.6 per cent from last year — 57.5 per cent utilization and . . . Oh, I didn't do those calculations for remand, but it was 17 remanded individuals out of 46. Kilburn Hall has 25 youth — down 16.7 per cent over last year — 55.6 per cent utilization, and 14 of those youth are on remand. And Prince Albert youth centre has 16 individuals — 14.3 per cent increase from last year — 61.5 per cent utilization, and seven of those are on remand. For a total of 87 youth in custody — that's down 8.4 per cent over last year — 57.6 per cent utilization and 38 of those are remand.

Nicole Sarauer: — Do you have available to you the total number of FTEs working within the correctional facilities?

[19:30]

Scott Harron: — Sorry, we had to double-check the numbers. So custody services this year has 2,264.8 FTEs in our budget. That's up from last year. There are 16.5 FTEs that are dedicated towards the overnight health services side of the world.

Four FTEs that are dedicated towards inmate discipline. This is our hearing officers that'll be conducting these hearings within the facility, so one for each of the four big facilities.

Thirteen for the final year of the SCC expansion. Those are a lot of, you know, admin positions and that sort of thing that didn't need to be hired on day one; they could be hired this year.

And then 250 for the overtime reduction float pool. So what we've done . . . This isn't new bodies on the floor. This is bringing people in on float pools on straight time to cover off things like sick leave, vacation leave, training, that sort of thing, so results in some pretty good overtime savings without adding bodies to the floor.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. You mentioned a few times now the new overnight health services and the FTEs that will be a part of that. Can you speak to how this is going to operate throughout the facilities, how many folks in each facility, and any other details you can provide us would be appreciated.

Josh Freistadt: — Good evening. Josh Freistadt, ADM [assistant deputy minister], supervision and rehabilitation services.

So the 2.2 million investment is 16.5 FTEs for overnight health care. That breaks down to, in each of the adult major facilities, the plan with that money is to increase the charge nurses, to have a presence in the afternoon where there currently is no supervision for nurses, and then also cover the evening shift where there was no nursing clinic running. So that'll be one extra person for the overnight shift.

What that'll allow us to do is it'll allow us to ensure that we don't leave correctional staff who may not have the necessary clinical expertise making decisions about whether to escort someone or not, and may in fact then bring down our unnecessary escorts to a hospital if we have somebody who can maybe provide that care in the facility.

Nicole Sarauer: — And just to be clear, that expansion's occurring in every adult facility?

Josh Freistadt: — The large four, so Pine Grove, P.A. [Prince Albert] Correctional, Regina, and Saskatoon. The other facilities, which already have nursing clinics — like the youth ones — will have access to a dedicated charge nurse in the overnight period on an on-call basis. So they'll benefit by being able to pick up the phone and go, here's the situation we have; can you look this person up in the system and advise?

Of course if there's an emergency where the most expedient thing to do is to phone EMS [emergency medical services], that will still be the protocol, those facilities.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. Could you provide the committee an update on the plan for the recently or previously announced additional correctional centre in Regina?

Hon. Michael Weger: — So with the new women's facility in Regina, that project remains in its early stages. And it's proceeding through the necessary steps of development, and pre-design work is continuing this year through existing budgets.

Nicole Sarauer: — Any idea when the pre-design work will be completed?

Hon. Michael Weger: — The intention is to have the pre-design work done before the end of the fiscal year.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. And just to clarify, I believe you just said this, but there has been no dollars allocated this fiscal that's for this project?

Hon. Michael Weger: — We're using funds available in the base capital budget to continue the work this year.

Nicole Sarauer: — How much money?

Hon. Michael Weger: — So we're relying on base capital budget funding, which is available for approximately \$3.52 million. Of course we have other plans for some of that money. So we would expect it's a small fraction of that, probably close to \$100,000 this year, as far as what we need to complete the pre-planning phase.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. Do you have the total amount spent — this is something I've asked for before — on overtime for staff in our correctional facilities in the last fiscal which you could provide to the committee?

[19:45]

Hon. Michael Weger: — So the amount spent on overtime in 2025-26 was \$35,861,524, which is a 4.61 per cent decrease from the \$37,593,985 in 2024. And those are April to February numbers.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. And you anticipated my follow-up question, which was whether that was an increase or a decrease from the year prior, so appreciate that. Could you provide some further detail about the Pine Grove admittance expansion that has been discussed?

Hon. Michael Weger: — So the Ministry of Community Safety has \$6.5 million allocated in the '26-27 budget to complete the

design and begin construction of the expansion of the Pine Grove Correctional Centre admitting unit. We're pretty much at the end of the design phase as we speak, and there will be an RFP coming forward in the next few months. And then we would expect to have shovels in the ground very shortly thereafter.

And just for the committee's benefit, the existing admitting unit at Pine Grove Correctional Centre is undersized. And we've done a tour together and recognized that. So there's capacity and space pressures being experienced at that centre which will continue on unless we do this expansion. So we are moving forward as quick as possible.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. I know folks are looking forward to the opening of that. Are you able to provide for the committee the total amount of WCB [Workers' Compensation Board] claims for correctional staff in the last fiscal year?

Hon. Michael Weger: — So we had to do some math. I think your question was how many staff in the custody facilities are on Workers' Compensation or had Workers' Compensation claims.

Nicole Sarauer: — Yeah, that's right.

Hon. Michael Weger: — So doing the math based on hours off on Workers' Compensation, we figured out about 91 per cent of the Workers' Compensation hours relate to custody. And so that would have very close to 141 individuals on Workers' Compensation in 2025-26.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. And it's probably . . . You can tell me if it's too much detail at this time to ask if that can be broken down by facility.

Hon. Michael Weger: — I can tell you the hours, the Workers' Compensation hours by facility.

Nicole Sarauer: — Sure.

Hon. Michael Weger: — Okay, we'll start with Besnard Lake community correctional camp, 1,678; Paul Dojack Youth Centre, 2,073; Pine Grove Correctional Centre, 5,928; Prince Albert Correctional Centre, 8,052; Regina Correctional Centre, 6,816; Saskatoon Correctional Centre, 8,072; Saskatchewan Hospital, North Battleford, 1,953; and Whitespruce training centre, 1,300. I think I covered everything off there.

Just one note on that. Speaking to my assistant deputy minister, in corrections we're looking at approximately 1 per cent rate. And if you were to compare across the province, he has colleagues that are up around 10 per cent in many of the provinces. So very happy with those numbers.

Nicole Sarauer: — Just to confirm, those are numbers from the last . . . is that '25-26, the last fiscal?

Hon. Michael Weger: — That's correct, 2025-26.

Nicole Sarauer: — How many offenders died in custody last fiscal?

Hon. Michael Weger: — Okay. So there were two deaths in custody in 2025-26 fiscal year. Of course no death is ever

acceptable, but it is important to note that this is the fewest number of deaths in custody since 2016-2017, despite having a larger custody population.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. Do you have the location of those deaths, and the cause of death?

[20:00]

Hon. Michael Weger: — So both deaths occurred at the Regina Correctional Centre. And one has been determined to be natural causes as per the coroner. And the second death is still under investigation.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. The other program I ask about often is the drug and alcohol substance treatment units in the various facilities. Could you provide me some information as to — by each one, because there's a few now — how many offenders completed the program in the last fiscal? And then if you have the wait-lists as well, the numbers for those would be appreciated. Thank you.

Josh Freistadt: — So for the dedicated substance abuse treatment units, the total program completions for last year were 352 participants. That is 94 from Regina Correctional Centre, 116 from Pine Grove Correctional Centre, 65 from Prince Albert Correctional Centre, and 77 from Saskatoon Correctional Centre.

The total wait-list, and this is as of January 1. So keep in mind, depending on where a cohort is at in their programming really sort of determines where the wait-lists are at. But the total wait-lists across those centres as of January 1st was 116 inmates. That was 66 at Regina Correctional, zero at Pine Grove Correctional, 30 at Prince Albert Correctional Centre, and 20 at Saskatoon Correctional Centre.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. There were no plans this fiscal to expand the program. Could you, Minister, explain why it wasn't considered this time around?

Josh Freistadt: — So the funds for this program are flow-through funds from the federal government through the province's gang-violence reduction strategy. And that agreement, all of the funding is set contractually until that agreement expires with the federal government at the end of the '27-28 fiscal year.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. We had submitted a written question about programming available on remand in various facilities, and the ministry responded that programming such as AA [Alcoholics Anonymous], NA [Narcotics Anonymous], and individual addiction services can be accessed when available. Can you expand on what you meant by "when available."

Josh Freistadt: — Thanks for the question. The further follow-up and context to our written response there was, what we meant by "as available" is that both AA and NA are delivered by community partners. So we rely on them to be able to come into the facilities, and whenever they're able to do that we make the arrangements. So it's not a government-delivered program. It's a community-delivered program, government arranged.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. My colleague Mr. Gordon's

going to ask some questions on the marshals.

Chair B. McLeod: — I recognize MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Minister. Thank you to his entire team, everyone that's here this evening. Much appreciated. I know some of you travelled some ways here tonight.

I see in the estimates there's an extra \$4.8 million assigned to the Saskatchewan Marshals budget for this year. Just wondering what the plans are of the use of the extra dollars in the budget or where it's going to, if you could enlighten us.

Hon. Michael Weger: — So in 2026-27 there's \$4.8 million allocated. \$1.8 million of that is salary for the 23 marshals anticipated to be hired. And the remaining \$3 million would be equipment, operations, the member's kit that they receive, training. All of that is included in that extra 3 million for a total of 4.8 million.

Hugh Gordon: — So that's an anticipatory amount for 23 more officers, which will kind of bring me to my next question. I believe you said in your opening comments that there were 27 out of 70 positions filled. Is that correct?

Hon. Michael Weger: — So the Saskatchewan Marshals Service currently has 26 members, and then two more coming on in May to bring us up to 28.

Hugh Gordon: — To 28?

Hon. Michael Weger: — Twenty-eight at May 1.

Hugh Gordon: — Sorry. I must have misheard. Okay, so how many of the 26 currently are front-line officers? How many are management or supervisory roles?

[20:15]

Hon. Michael Weger: — Okay, so as of May 1st we'll have . . . would be 23 front-line officers. Six of those would be inspectors and 17 would be marshals, which is your equivalent to a constable.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you very much. And then how many . . . I don't know if it's a current number, but how many have registered with the Saskatchewan Police College or are currently in training?

Hon. Michael Weger: — So there are currently two marshals attending the Saskatchewan Police College, and we anticipate that they'll be graduating on June 11th. And I look forward to attending my fourth graduation to watch them graduate that day.

Hugh Gordon: — Good show. I was wondering if you could tell the committee today just how many of your current complement of officers have come from other Saskatchewan law enforcement agencies.

Hon. Michael Weger: — So other than the two marshals that are currently in police college, all of the existing marshals have been lateral hires. We don't have the exact locations today on where

they came from, but I'm not sure that that's really relevant to the estimates.

Hugh Gordon: — Well it's a cost to other police agencies like the RCMP that have lost people, Prince Albert city police that have lost people. It puts an onus on them now to find money in the budget, which comes from your department, to recruit, retain, you know, these individuals. So that's why I believe that question is relevant.

That said, I'd like to ask you a question about the MOUs [memorandum of understanding] that you have signed with other municipalities. How many have you currently signed in the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Michael Weger: — Okay, so just for clarification, with the Marshals Service we refer to memorandums of agreement rather than memorandums of understanding. Currently there's four signed MOAs [memorandum of agreement] with Estevan Police Service, Moose Jaw Police Service, Prince Albert Police Service, and Weyburn Police Service. We have three MOAs in development with Regina Police Service, Saskatoon Police Service, and the RCMP. And we also have at this time . . . while we're working on the MOA with the RCMP, we have a working-level agreement in place with the RCMP.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Sorry, and correct me if I'm wrong, did you not also sign one just recently with James Smith Cree? Did I understand that correctly?

Hon. Michael Weger: — I understood your question just to be who we had memorandum of understandings with as far as other police services. Yeah.

Hugh Gordon: — Oh. How many then, Mr. Minister, include First Nations?

Hon. Michael Weger: — So we do have one memorandum of understanding, which is the term we use when it's with a First Nation, and that's with the Red Pheasant Cree Nation. And that's due to the fact that our regional detachment for the Saskatchewan Marshals Service is on their land on an urban reserve in North Battleford.

Hugh Gordon: — Fair enough. That brings me to the North Battleford detachment. It was announced last year that there would be a presence in that community. I'm just wondering if you could tell the committee where that is at right now.

Hon. Michael Weger: — So the office in North Battleford is referred to as the North Battleford regional headquarters. It's currently operational and it's staffed with three marshals and one inspector.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you. And so they're currently taking calls for service there?

Hon. Michael Weger: — So at the North Battleford location, the Saskatchewan Marshals Service is supporting the RCMP through the working-level agreement. And so I think it's important to point out they don't respond to 911 calls. They respond to calls from the RCMP for assistance, and they're currently supporting the RCMP in that role when the calls for assistance come in.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you. Well I'd like to ask some questions about the kind of service that the marshals is providing. So I mentioned a number of memorandums of agreement you have with municipalities, other police agencies, First Nations. What kind of services are being offered by the marshals to those entities?

[20:30]

Rob Cameron: — Rob Cameron, chief marshal for the Marshals Service. And if I could just get you just to repeat your question for me just one more time, make sure I'm on the right track for what you want to hear.

Hugh Gordon: — Fair enough. Just you've got a number of these memorandums of agreement with municipalities or First Nations or other policing agencies in the province of Saskatchewan. I just wanted to get a better appreciation what kind of services you have agreed to provide with those MOAs.

Rob Cameron: — Yeah, and that's a great question. We have a wide variety of things that we do as the Marshals Service and what kind of services we provide. So we have an overall mandate of obviously high-risk, high-impact crime — detection, deterring, and disrupting crime within the province. But we have some very specific mandates as well.

One area that we look at is the prolific offender, the apprehension of people that are wanted on different warrants or running from the justice system. So that's actually a large part of what we do right now, but we've tackled all kinds of different crime types and different assistance files. In fact, just from the point of view of some ideas on statistically what we've done, so speaking specifically to assistance files for other agencies, we've looked at about 65, or we have 65 files that we've worked with another police agency on specifically.

We're also involved in . . . For example, when we started and we went operational, one of the first files we had was a homicide, assisting with a homicide. Not to say we were investigating the homicide, because we didn't, but we provided assistance to that police service that had that homicide. Then the very next one was an officer-involved shooting. And so generally speaking we provide that assistance. And many times over now, since we've been going, we provide assistance to police agencies with either scene containment or potentially gathering evidence, securing evidence. And that's been a pretty common occurrence for us since we started.

From the point of view of the other mandates that we have, we do have a mandate with regards to agricultural crime as well, whether that be theft of cattle or other agricultural crime, maybe mischief to farm lands, things like that, although that hasn't been a big factor in what we've done. We've assisted with Animal Protection Services, for example. In the early days that was to provide a keep-the-peace sort of idea, where there was some concern with officer safety for the animal protection officers. And we provided resources to that to ensure that they were able to complete their duties and functions and remain safe.

As an organization we've done to this point roughly 90 — well 92 — warrant apprehensions. From a Criminal Code warrant point of view, 130 executed warrants there. One of the areas

that's kind of interesting for us is also we've been assisting with our colleagues in corrections with the electronic monitoring and the bail monitoring programs. From that point we've done 310 checks, compliance checks, with that.

So of course the idea behind those checks is that these are folks that are on various release conditions, as you would be familiar with that. And the release conditions, making sure that they abide by those conditions, whether it's curfews or abstaining, or whatever the case may be, and that they are of course not reoffending. And that can be obviously a very large deterrent factor when you have dedicated marshals that are going in and making sure that people are complying with particular conditions.

From the point of view of . . . One thing that we're just embarking on now is another partnership with our correctional colleagues and creating a CID-type unit, or criminal investigation division or unit. What that's designed to do is to investigate crimes. And at this point in time, that's going to be regulated to the Prince Albert area for the major correctional facilities there.

What'll happen there is we will take on those investigations to the limit that we have the capacity to do. For example, we wouldn't undertake a homicide investigation. That would be something that the RCMP or maybe the Prince Albert Police Service would have to because we don't have a forensic section or the kinds of tools that you would need to do that. So that would be beyond our capacity. However assaults, assault causing, aggravated assaults, things like that, drug files, certainly things that we could do within our area.

One of the benefits of that, and really why is that important, is because it takes and alleviates some of the pressure off the POJ, police of jurisdiction, which is certainly one of our major mandates and the reasons why we exist, is to enhance that public safety, enhance that policing presence, and be able to relieve some of the pressure from our POJ partners.

And certainly by being able to go into a facility like that right now, for example, in the Prince Albert Correctional Centre, the Prince Albert Police Service has to go and do those files. We can take some of that pressure off, which then redirects some of their resources back to front line and allows the P.A. Police Service to not have to remove cruiser cars or members from the front line and can respond to calls.

In fact that's one of the fringe benefits or one of the major benefits we've seen in recent time is with our assistance files. And whether it's assisting P.A. or assisting RCMP in Craven, for example, what it does is really provides the ability for that police of jurisdiction to refocus their resources back to core policing functions — which is important, right? — so the 911 call.

And as the minister said, we don't necessarily take 911 calls, although we do function as a response from the PRT [protection and response team] point of view, so the protection response team that's in the province. And that was created back in 2018 thereabouts. And that program, which also involves members of PPS [provincial protective services], so the Highway Patrol and the conservation officers. But when that was designed, that model allowed those resources to respond when the RCMP, for example, primarily didn't have the ability to respond quickly to

those areas or was tied up with something else or whatever.

The Marshals Service is in essence that idea expanded and makes it into an ability to leverage a force multiplier, if you will, to be able to address any kind of gaps that they would have there, but the difference being is the members of the Marshals Service are fully trained, fully equipped police officers.

Hugh Gordon: — As a follow-up to that, Chief, just trying to get an appreciation of what your policing footprint is in the province. You mentioned a couple of things, and I don't know if they're contradictory or complementary. You have a mandate for high-risk crime, for agricultural crime, but yet you're mainly an assistance service? And if I'm wrong, please correct me, but I'm just trying to get an appreciation of what you do.

So for example, I would ask you, in the course of all of your duties since you've been operational, how many arrests have you made? How many charges have you laid? How many matters have gone to court? And I'll ask you that question specifically, I guess, if you could provide some insight into that, give me an idea of just what kind of activity you guys are undertaking that takes off the strain from other police forces.

Rob Cameron: — So thank you for your question. So from the point of view of arrests, as I indicated before, you know, warrant apprehensions, that whole area has been really our bread and butter lately here. And we've got, as I said before, 92 arrests there, 130 Criminal Code warrants executed. So there's a fair amount of people there. Now we've laid charges, although today I don't have the information in front of me today to say where they all were. They would be related to some of those arrests, breaches, and things like that.

However, you know, one event and maybe give you some context as to sometimes the way things just transpire when you're in police work, and I know you can appreciate that. But we had an incident where we were assisting RCMP up in the Big River area, I believe, and there was an armed and barricaded situation. And we've had a few of those now, but what was interesting in this particular event was the individual — for whatever reason, and I don't understand totally the motivation for it — only wanted to surrender to our marshal.

So our marshal actually went there and the individual was called out, and as you know, pretty tense situation. Called the individual out and he surrendered to our marshal. So that was a very unique event where we provided a very interesting service to that police service. Not one we anticipated, but at the end of the day, though, we were able to bring that individual out safe. They surrendered and charges were obviously laid.

In most of the cases, charges are laid in those kinds of files by the POJ. We're providing the force multiplier, as I said before, so they can carry out those functions and have the extra resources to manage that scene, particularly in areas that are isolated or rural. Generally though, they lay the charges.

However in cases where we've made arrests on warrants and whatnot, if there's a breach located, what we try to function is we clean what we catch. And so generally speaking, when we take an individual into custody, if there's new charges relating to that, we'll lay those charges. We'll process that file from birth — I

guess, from cradle to grave if you will. So we'll take it through the whole system.

[20:45]

Hugh Gordon: — Yeah, I'm still just trying to visualize what you're describing in terms of the services you provide. I remember I attended a presentation by — and forgive me, I forgot his name — superintendent of your organization last year at an RCMP Veterans Association banquet or lunch. And so there was a little, you know, I won't say confusion but difficulty trying to figure out exactly what your mandate is.

I think the warrant thing came up and whatnot. But there was also talk of, you know, doing this high-risk crime stuff, really specialized things. So then to me as, you know, experienced — now retired, thank goodness — law enforcement officer, having worked on very complex cases, I know what all kind of work that goes into that stuff, the kinds of specialization for things like writing warrants, getting production orders, you know, knowing how to handle sources, knowing how to just . . . you know, the whole case management system. All that stuff requires specialization. It sounded to me like that's something that the Saskatchewan Marshals were going to do.

Yet when I asked — and I'll ask you — I was like, how many of these files are self-generated? How much of this is going to be where you are the lead on items? Is that part of your mandate, or is it strictly going to continue on to be just an assistance basis? And if that is the case, I'm just curious how that assistance arises, if that is also self-generated or something that, let's say, you're essentially waiting for a call.

I know I've thrown a few things in there, but I'm just trying to get a better impression of what your mandate is and how you fit in the policing footprint of the province, you know, and if it's just waiting for a call to come in and pick up an offender or if you're more proactive than that and you're taking things. You've got your own set of goals and objectives and working on particular files, whether they be projects or not.

Rob Cameron: — Thanks again for your question. I guess there's multiple areas in which we're involved. So first of all, we can self-generate files for investigation based on whether it's intelligence or different high priorities within the province or focusing around that high-risk, high-impact crime — gangs, drugs, illegal weapons, things like that. We certainly can do that autonomously and self-generate that.

The other part of that, of course, is every day we are looking for individuals that are wanted and running from the justice system or need to be brought to the justice system, whether it's on warrants or first-instance warrants, things like that. So that's a daily occurrence for us as well.

And then also — maybe the third part of that or the trifecta, if you will — but the third part of that is that ability to respond for calls for assistance or support and provide that to our POJ partners. And it doesn't necessarily have to be just a criminal event. We also have the opportunity and the ability to support, for example, well, natural disasters, the fires, things like that. In fact we provided that support.

But it also can be what we saw when we assisted the RCMP with Craven. So obviously events like that, where there is large crowds, there is, you know, particularly some risk to that. There could be crime elements, but there is also the elements, for example, of a tornado or a storm or something like that comes up.

So adding those additional resources to be able to support the POJ is . . . That's the three primary, if I could group them like that, three areas of how we utilize our mandate.

Hugh Gordon: — So if you could just recap that once again for me. So your first one was to do high-risk stuff that is self-generated. Do I understand that correctly?

Rob Cameron: — Yeah.

Hugh Gordon: — And then your other was to do warrants and apprehensions. And then the last piece was again the assisting other agencies or entities for their requests for service in other areas.

Rob Cameron: — Right. And specifically that could be with a call for assistance to an investigation, a criminal investigation, or it could be a natural disaster or it could be some other . . . It really is dependent on the POJ and what they really need assistance for, but a variety of different things there.

Hugh Gordon: — Fair enough. So I wanted to go back to touch a little bit on your answer to the prior question about charges and arrests and whatnot. And you mentioned the numbers and I've written them down. So I just was curious how many of those charges were handed to another police force to process versus how many you processed. And if you don't have that information here today, if you could agree to provide that to the committee in a reasonable time frame, that would be great.

Hon. Michael Weger: — Okay. We will endeavour to obtain the number of informations laid by the marshals and provide that information to the committee.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you very much. I also want to touch back on your memorandum of agreement with the Red Pheasant First Nation. I'm not sure if I did get the answer to the James Smith Cree Nation. I'm just curious: what services, in your memorandum of agreement with Red Pheasant or with perhaps James Smith, are you providing them?

[21:00]

Hon. Michael Weger: — Okay, so I can provide some clarification on this for you. So with respect to Red Pheasant Cree Nation, that's where we have that one MOU. That's the only MOU that we have currently with any First Nation. And there's a few aspects to that: (1) it established that there be a regional detachment located on their urban reserve, (2) that it would encourage individuals on that First Nation to potentially get involved in policing, and (3) it established that there was an invitation from Red Pheasant Cree Nation for the Saskatchewan Marshals Service to attend onto their traditional lands.

Since then, the Saskatchewan Marshals Service has been involved in additional BCRs, or band council resolutions, and

essentially the band council resolution is signed by the band. It's not signed by the Marshals Service. And there are currently four of those band council resolutions that have been signed: one with One Arrow First Nation, one with Montreal Lake Cree Nation, one with the English River First Nation, and just recently this past Wednesday, I attended to Prince Albert — planned on attending to James Smith Cree Nation, but the weather didn't allow, but I attended to Prince Albert — and met with Chief Kirby via video, Vice-Chief Tootoosis, and some other council members, in which in my presence they signed the band council resolution with James Smith Cree Nation.

Again those band council resolutions are essentially an invitation to the marshals to attend on their traditional land. And the idea and concept behind that is that it's following the Calls to Action relating to policing, in which it was recommended there should be nation-to-nation agreements for policing.

And in addition to the four that have been signed, the Saskatchewan Marshals Service have had the request and interest from 17 further First Nations that have reached out and have intention of signing band council resolutions as well, with the goal of the Saskatchewan Marshals Service to engage with every First Nation in the province around having a band council resolution signed.

It's important to note that the Marshals Service does have jurisdiction all across the province, but their intention is to meet and engage with each First Nation and obtain a band council resolution providing them that permission to attend on their traditional lands.

And I'd also point out that this is essentially a first of its kind across the province, being that the Saskatchewan Marshals Service is the only newly established police service across the country. Being the marshals are the only newly established police service across the country, it's the first opportunity to meet the Call to Action regarding policing.

Chair B. McLeod: — Thank you. Just before the next question, I've given a great deal of latitude in regard to the questioning that has come forward. The very first question that you brought forward worked its way back to the estimates. I need you to work your way back to . . . What we are discussing tonight is the estimates in front of us. I feel like we're going into the weeds in a big, large way in regards to the operation of the marshals and our focus needs to really get back to the estimates and what's in front of us. So I would just encourage you in that regard.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that, and I think for clarity for the purpose of the committee and for everyone here attending today, you know, the relevance here quite frankly is the more service that the marshals provide, the more MOUs or MOAs that they sign, the more BCRs that they engage in, the larger the workload, the demand on the service, the file load grows. You know, your footprint grows larger and ultimately I would imagine stress on your budget. And so it was with that in mind that I was asking you those questions.

And if it pleases the Chair I just would ask one final question: if you have tabled the year-end report, if the marshals have tabled a year-end report and if so, if there was a strategic plan in that report. And if there were any, let's call them identifiers for

successes made in that report or signs of future success, some markers in order to give us an indication of where you're headed.

Hon. Michael Weger: — So for 2025-26 the Saskatchewan Marshals Service would be a part of the Ministry of Community Safety annual report.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chair B. McLeod: — All right. I recognize MLA Sarauer.

Nicole Sarauer: — Mr. Chair, I have some questions about wildfire strategy. First, as you had mentioned today, Minister — and I've seen in other locations it has been mentioned — that there was an internal review done after last year's wildfire season and that changes have already been implemented within the SPSA for this year's wildfire season in response to that internal review. Could you please explain to the committee what changes have been implemented for this wildfire season?

[21:15]

Hon. Michael Weger: — Thank you for the question. And I'll start out with this answer, and I anticipate some further questions regarding the wildfires.

But I'll start out this answer, just putting on record just the appreciation I have for every woman and man that assisted with the efforts against the wildfires in the 2025 season, whether it was individuals supplying food to the firefighters, to the municipalities supplying firefighters, and then of course to the women and men of the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency which I've been lucky enough to meet some of them. And it's my honour to have met them and get to learn about what they do for our province, the service they provide to our province to protect us in the event of disaster.

And with respect to your question, it's important to note that every year after the wildfire season the SPSA conducts its internal review of that wildfire season. And so again, that's specifically what the SPSA did this year as well.

And I think it comes from the whole idea that if you aren't learning from your experiences, that's when you're failing. And so the SPSA is learning from their experience, the different wildfires they see each year. And we just went through a year where we saw unprecedented wildfires with what many would describe as abnormal fire behaviour.

And so I'm happy to go through a list. It's probably fair to say it's not an exhaustive list, but a list of many improvements and additional steps the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency has taken already in anticipation of the upcoming wildfire season.

So it's things as simple as signing a contract for an additional helicopter to bring us up to eight helicopters that will be on contract for this upcoming wildfire season; formalizing agreements with our various municipal volunteer fire departments; the addition of a third-party contractor who is currently working on the maintenance required on one of our 215 amphibious water bombers; earlier recruitment, bringing on new recruits one month earlier and beginning air and ground training as of April 5th, earlier than previous seasons.

There's additional mitigation projects that the SPSA has been involved in with various communities throughout the North. They reviewed their type 2 community firefighter contracts with their First Nations. I was able to attend Nisbet depot just this past Wednesday. And Howard Georgeson, long-time, experienced employee with the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency, gave me a tour of their stockpile of chainsaws, pumps, hose.

In Nisbet depot just north of Prince Albert, they house 30 per cent of all of the SPSA's supplies that they'll need for the firefighting in the upcoming season. They're fully stocked in P.A. and throughout the province. So they're fully stocked as far as all the supplies have been replenished, serviced, and ready to go. And we're talking pallets and pallets of firehose, pallets of chainsaws, and pumps galore. So that step was taken to obtain those resources and have them all fully stocked and ready for this upcoming wildfire season.

The Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency has also worked with Social Services to ensure that there will be no clawback this year for type 3 firefighters that become involved in wildfire fighting efforts.

They also took the opportunity to review their agreements through CIFFC [Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre], which is within Canada, and they made international compact agreements which have now expanded actually — on the compact agreements — to include California and Nevada. So they have come on board in those compact agreements and been added to that as well.

We've also made improvements at the call centre and working to improve how efficient they are at taking calls at the call centre. And there are also improvements to increase the timeliness of supports in the event that there's an evacuation.

So again a fairly long list. Unfortunately not an exhaustive point-by-point list, but that should give everyone on the committee an idea of the work that has been done in preparation of the 2026 wildfire season.

Nicole Sarauer: — What was the budgeted wildfire expenditure in last year's budget? And how does that compare to this year's budget?

[21:30]

Hon. Michael Weger: — For the '26-27 year the variable incident response amount budgeted is \$14.05 million, and the majority, the vast majority of that is intended for wildfire response, comparing that to Manitoba's budgeted amount for wildfire suppression, which is 13.9 million. And the 14.05 million is the same amount that was budgeted last year, similar to Manitoba that also budgeted \$13.9 million in the previous fiscal year.

Nicole Sarauer: — You said that that was money for preventative work. Is that correct?

Hon. Michael Weger: — That would be for response to wildfires.

Nicole Sarauer: — For response, okay. What work is being done

on prevention, mitigation this wildfire season?

Hon. Michael Weger: — So to provide some context around the answer, I'll start by explaining that the Government of Saskatchewan has been completing fuel mitigation work around communities at risk from wildfire since the 1990s. Fuel mitigation means reducing wildfire behaviour potential by altering the fuels in designated areas through a fuel mitigation plan.

In 2019 the SPSA signed a contribution agreement with Infrastructure Canada through the Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund, or DMAF, to complete fuel mitigation work on 2464 hectares in 84 communities over the course of time from 2019 to 2028. The contribution agreement is for a total of \$33,389,406.

[21:45]

Fuel mitigation is often done adjacent to communities through various methods such as mulching, harvesting, and thinning, with ground crews using chainsaws and brush saws. In 2009 to 2011, the Government of Saskatchewan partnered with the Prince Albert Grand Council to complete several fuel mitigation projects in communities adjacent to and within the boreal forest through Western Economic Diversification funding. As part of this funding, Indigenous residents local to projects were trained and certified to use chainsaws and brush saws and then were the crews that completed the work with the equipment staying with the communities.

The SPSA partnered with northern municipalities, the northern Saskatchewan administration district, and SaskPower to complete the work for the 2019 contribution agreement with Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada. As we enter the seventh year of this nine-year project, over 1350 hectares have been treated at a cost of \$21,487,036. This does not include area treated by SaskPower Corporation.

Another 360 hectares were treated in 2025-26 at a projected cost of \$5,511,821. For 2026-27, the DMAF projects will total \$3.221 million with the SPSA's contribution being \$911,000.

Nicole Sarauer: — What's the current maintenance status of all the water bombers? You mentioned that one of the water bombers is currently being maintained by a third party or undergoing maintenance, but can you provide the current maintenance status of all of them?

Hon. Michael Weger: — I'll just maybe summarize all of the current fleet that the SPSA has.

Nicole Sarauer: — I just want to know what their maintenance status is, please.

Hon. Michael Weger: — Sure. There are two CL-215 turbine amphibious air tankers that are projected to be . . . They're undergoing maintenance right now, as I touched upon. An additional contractor was brought in to assist with the work being done in a timely manner. And the expectation is that they'll be brought online in, I believe . . .

A Member: — In July.

Hon. Michael Weger: — Yeah, in July.

Nicole Sarauer: — Is that it?

Hon. Michael Weger: — That's it.

Nicole Sarauer: — Okay. Can you remind us when the SPSA will receive its next purchased water bomber?

Hon. Michael Weger: — So the second Q400 is a Q400MRE. It's a multi-use as opposed to the first one, which just hauls water. It can be converted. And that Q400 is planned to be delivered by the end of August.

Nicole Sarauer: — So how many usable water bombers will we have if there's a fire situation prior to July?

Hon. Michael Weger: — Okay. Prior to July in 2026, the SPSA will have available the following aircraft to assist with the wildfires. There are three 580-A Convair land-based air tankers, one Q400AT land-based air tanker, seven bird dog Turbo Commander, four CL-215 turbine amphibious air tankers, and eight helicopters.

[22:00]

In addition to these aircraft owned by the SPSA, there will be numerous aircraft available to the SPSA — as they were last year — through the CIFFC agreement, which is within Canada, and compacts which allow assets to be brought in internationally. Important to note that the federal government also has a new multi-million-dollar program bringing an additional four aircraft that will be available through CIFFC.

And for context, last year in the month of May, SPSA received one Q400 from Alaska; two CL . . . I think they were CL-415s from Quebec; one Q400 from Alaska on May 29th as well; May 30th, five 802s and one bird dog from Alberta; and then the SPSA also contracted over 40 additional helicopters last fire season.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. Moving on to the MNP independent report. It was supposed to be released in February. I understand there's been an extension now on that consultation. Can you provide to the committee when that report will be released?

Hon. Michael Weger: — Thank you for the question. So the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency commissioned MNP to lead the independent review into the 2025 wildfire season. It's important to note that this is the first of its kind in the province. After discussions with MNP, the SPSA extended the review time frame to support the consultation process. This extension was granted after the SPSA received requests from numerous communities and individuals who wanted to engage with the review, acknowledging the importance of their voices and to ensure the report is as accurate as possible. The SPSA agreed to receive the report in late spring 2026.

Nicole Sarauer: — Could you be a little bit more specific about what you mean by late spring? Has the ministry received the report?

Hon. Michael Weger: — No, no. We have not received the

report from MNP.

Nicole Sarauer: — When does the ministry anticipate receiving that report?

Hon. Michael Weger: — So MNP hasn't given us a specific date for when the report will be complete. The use of "by the end of spring" was an estimation considering they're currently writing the report. They've done all the consultation, as I understand, that's required. The end of spring would be June 20th, according to the calendar.

So I would say that again this is a third party doing this report. And really it's a situation of do you want it done right or do you want it done right now. And so we're letting MNP do it right, and we expect the report by the end of spring.

Nicole Sarauer: — It's unfortunate at this stage that the report will be received possibly in the fire season. Are there still any victims of wildfires from last season displaced or in hotels?

Hon. Michael Weger: — So I'll just start with a response to your parting comment after my last question, because I think I'm entitled to respond by recognizing that this MNP report is coming in a very timely manner compared to the years that these reports have taken in other jurisdictions. And I believe my first answer to your first question directed at the SPSA laid out an extensive list of actions by the SPSA this year which shows that the SPSA is not waiting or relying on this report to make positive changes in their wildfire preparations.

With respect to housing, 31 temporary housing units were obtained to support residents in the village of Denare Beach, and the ministry is not aware of any displaced residents that don't have housing. It is always possible that some individuals may be residing with family, friends, or using insurance to cover costs of alternative living arrangements.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. I have more wildfire questions, but I'm cognizant of the time. So I'm going to pass it on to my colleague Mr. Gordon.

Chair B. McLeod: — MLA Gordon, please go ahead.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to talk about the small town and rural policing program a bit. I understand there's \$190,000 allocated in this year's budget towards that program. I was hoping you could enlighten the committee tonight as to how this will operate.

Hon. Michael Weger: — Thank you for the question about the STAR program. And so it's \$190,000. And I was so honoured to be able to attend Corman Park Police Service on April 8th, where we made an announcement accompanied by Chief Duttchen of the Corman Park Police Service; reeve of Corman Park, Joe Hargrave.

And at that event, I think Chief Duttchen gave some very good comments on how this program is going to work for the Corman Park Police Service. And he talked about the ability to use this funding to provide equipment; give them the ability to train their officers to an ever-demanding field of work; talked about the ability to replace the automated external defibrillators that they

carry in their vehicles; the additional cost for body armour, for all the tools that a police officer uses, with the intention to supply them with the tools to be competent and capable.

And so that's the long answer to your question. The short answer is that for every officer, the department receives \$10,000 to use as they see fit.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you. And cognizant of the time, Mr. Chair, I was wondering if we could ask the minister and his team to table that exhaustive list of all the actions taken on wildfire mitigation and planning for this season that you alluded to in your answer. You don't have to have it here. But if you could agree to table that for the committee at a reasonable time frame, that would be good.

Chair B. McLeod: — Thank you. And we've reached our agreed-upon time for consideration of these estimates, and I thank you for that. We will adjourn consideration of the estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 for Community Safety.

I want to thank Minister Weger and the entire group that has been assembled here today. I think you are to be commended for having, shall I say, endured with us tonight. Sometimes I'm sure it's like watching paint dry, but it's important work and it is absolutely necessary that we have that full transparency. So helping to provide that tonight has been really, really appreciated.

Minister, do you have any . . .

Nicole Sarauer: — Sorry to interrupt, Mr. Chair.

Chair B. McLeod: — No, that's okay. No problem.

Nicole Sarauer: — I just wanted . . . We didn't get the minister's full acknowledgement of that, of the request on the record, so . . .

Chair B. McLeod: — Yes.

Nicole Sarauer: — Do you mind if we get that? Then we can do closing remarks. Thank you.

Chair B. McLeod: — Yeah, we can get . . . Minister, are you prepared to table the document as asked for? And I apologize. I should have caught that.

Hon. Michael Weger: — Mr. Chair, my suggestion would be that my answer provided a non-exhaustive list — an extensive list but not exhaustive list — almost impossible to do, Mr. Chair, considering the work is ongoing and there'd be some of the work that you may say would be subjective whether it was done as a result of a change in policy or a review from last year's wildfire season. So I would just direct the member to *Hansard* to review the list that I provided to the committee tonight.

Chair B. McLeod: — Thank you. And I'm just waiting for the light to go on here. So that would be the suggestion that comes forward, and that list, as you indicated, was not exhaustive but it did contain elements that are recorded in today's committee meeting. And so that will be referred to.

So that will close off. And I again thank the officials for their attention and involvement. And, Minister, do you have any

closing comments, please?

Hon. Michael Weger: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to all the committee members. I do thank you for your attentiveness at this hour of the evening. And I recognize that you've already gone through some part of committee before we showed up.

So I hope that everyone in this committee is able to appreciate all of the great work that these officials that have joined us this evening have been doing. And you can see . . . I thank everyone for coming today, and there's a long list of officials that have taken time out of their evening to come and be present here to assist in this process as well. And I think that we can appreciate the work that our ministry is doing, as we are always making sure that we are making the best use of public dollars, Mr. Chair.

I think that, considering the time, I'll make sure I give my thanks to everyone else that is in the room, whether it's individuals working *Hansard*, at the desk with you, Mr. Chair, and a special thank you to the Clerk and to my chief of staff, Ryan Bellamy. He's been such a joy to work with, Mr. Chair, since I've recently taken on this position. He's an excellent co-pilot on the long-distance trips we take over questionable roadways at times, and I'm so appreciative that he hasn't asked for a transfer yet, Mr. Chair.

So with that, again, thank you to everyone for being here, and I'll pass it back to you.

Chair B. McLeod: — And thank you, Minister Weger. And I just want to say my apologies for the omission of not catching the response to that last question. And I did hear it, and I should have acknowledged it. And I apologize for that. Any closing comments from the committee members? Please, MLA Sarauer.

Nicole Sarauer: — Please, thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to, on behalf of my colleagues, first of all thank you, Mr. Chair, for your work this evening as well as the rest of the committee members. Appreciate your attentiveness at this late hour, committee, staff.

And then, Minister, thank you for your responses to our questions and of course to all of your officials in Community Safety, many of whom I've had the pleasure of getting to know and work parallel to over this last several years. Thank you so much for your service on behalf of the province, for yourselves and all of the public servants that you represent here this evening. So thank you for that work.

And apologies if we didn't get to questions that were related to . . . We have lots of questions; unfortunately we never get to all of them in an evening. But just know that that doesn't diminish the work that you do in our eyes. So thank you very much.

Also thank you to *Hansard* of course and broadcast services and all staff in the Legislative Building. Thank you.

Chair B. McLeod: — It being past 10:30, this committee stands adjourned now to the call of the Chair. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 22:35.]