STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Hansard Verbatim Report

No. 8 — September 22, 2025

Published under the authority of The Hon. Todd Goudy Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

Thirtieth Legislature

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

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Trent Wotherspoon, Chair
Regina Mount Royal

Sean Wilson, Deputy Chair
Canora-Pelly

Chris Beaudry
Kelvington-Wadena

David Chan
Yorkton

Brad Crassweller
White City-Qu'Appelle

Hugh Gordon
Saskatoon Silverspring

Joan Pratchler
Regina Rochdale

[The committee met at 10:01.]

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, folks, good morning. We'll convene the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. My name is Trent Wotherspoon. I serve as the Chair of the Public Accounts. Good morning and welcome to everyone.

We'll introduce the members of the committee: Deputy Chair Wilson, MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] Beaudry, MLA Crassweller, MLA Pratchler, MLA Gordon. And MLA Hilbert is substituting for MLA Chan.

MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — Mr. Chair, I'd like to introduce a motion, that we provided advance notice to the government on Friday, with respect to the . . .

Chair Wotherspoon: — Just hold. Go ahead and if you've got a motion, you speak to it and then move it.

Hugh Gordon: — Fair enough. Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is a motion we provided advance notice to the government on Friday that we're introducing today, at today's Public Accounts Committee, with respect to the management and procurement of our water bomber fleet here in Saskatchewan during this fire season.

You know, Mr. Chair, one of the really good things about this committee is that even though we can disagree on government policy and decisions, and sometimes vehemently so, by the time we get to this committee, that boat has sailed. It is now our job — all of us here at this committee — to ensure that those government policies and programs and systems and actions are done responsibly, legally of course, but also effectively, efficiently, and that we all ensure that we're getting fair value for public funds and taxpayer dollars.

And quite honestly, you know, everyone at this committee has an interest in ensuring that those policies succeed. That's what we all want here, and I think we all put in a good effort in that regard.

And I think we all understand and know the kind of damage, destruction that the wildfire season caused our people in the North. And people lost their homes, they lost their businesses, they lost their communities, and are desperate to put it all back together. And I think all of us here at this table want to ensure that what happened this summer doesn't happen again and that the government is successful in combatting these wildfires going forward.

And I appreciate that the Auditor General has committed to looking into procurement of the four water bombers, as has been mentioned, in the course of her annual report for '25-26. However my motion here will speak to requesting a special investigation into that and to the management of our fleet. And I will also be calling, in addition to an oral vote, a recorded vote.

So with that, I'll introduce the motion:

> That the Standing Committee on Public Accounts pursuant to subsection 16(1) of *The Provincial Auditor Act* requests that the Provincial Auditor perform a special assignment investigation to examine the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency's policies, expenditures, procedures, and management of public funds regarding the maintenance and procurement of water bomber aircraft.

Thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay. It's been moved by MLA Gordon:

> That the Standing Committee on Public Accounts pursuant to subsection 16(1) of *The Provincial Auditor Act* requests that the Provincial Auditor perform a special assignment investigation to examine the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency's policies, expenditures, procedures, and management of public funds regarding the maintenance and procurement of water bomber aircraft.

Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt this motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Yes.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

Chair Wotherspoon: — I'm going to ask again. Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt this motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Yes.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

Chair Wotherspoon: — The motion is . . . Okay. And there was a request for a recorded vote as well. Those in favour of the motion say aye . . . Yeah, so it seems that the nos have it, but a recorded vote was requested. The recorded vote has been called. The question before the committee is the motion as stated. All those in favour of the motion please raise your hand. I count two. All those opposed to the motion please raise your hand. Four. The motion is defeated.

Just a reminder to the committee or anyone watching, the Chair is a casting vote at the committee, so the Chair would vote in the situation that there is a tie at this table.

Okay, we have the following documents to table: PAC 42-30, Ministry of Education: Report of public losses, March 1st, 2025 to March 31st, 2025; PAC 43-30, Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan: First quarter financial forecast for the three months ending June 30th, 2025; PAC 44-30, Ministry of Health: Report of public losses, April 1st, 2025 to June 30th, 2025; PAC 45-30, Ministry of Finance: Report of public losses, April 1st, 2025 to June 30th, 2025; PAC 46-30, Ministry of Advanced Education: Report of public losses, April 1st, 2025 to June 30th, 2025; PAC 47-30, Ministry of Finance: Government response to first report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, dated August 8th, 2025; PAC 48-30, Ministry of Justice and Attorney

General: Response to questions raised at the January 21st, 2025 meeting.

I'd like to advise members of reports deemed committed to the committee. I would also like to advise the committee that pursuant to rule 142(2), the following documents were committed to the committee: Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan: 2025 report volume 1, sessional paper no. 152; Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan: *Annual Report on Operations for the Year Ended March 31st, 2025*, sessional paper 172; Government of Saskatchewan: 2024-25 Public Accounts volume 1, summary financial statements, sessional paper no. 174.

I'd like to introduce the officials with the Provincial Comptroller's office. I'd like to welcome our new Provincial Comptroller and to thank him for his service and welcome Brent Hebert, our Provincial Comptroller. I'd also like to welcome Jane Borland, assistant provincial comptroller. And certainly we'll do something formal at some point, but we'd like to just offer our great gratitude and appreciation to Chris Bayda for his exceptional service as Provincial Comptroller to the people of this province.

Okay, I'd like to welcome and introduce our Provincial Comptroller, Tara Clemett, and I know she'll be introducing her officials that are with us here in attendance. I guess I'll turn it over if you want to introduce your officials just now.

Tara Clemett: — So good morning. And with me this morning to do the first presentation is Mr. Jason Shaw, and he is a deputy provincial auditor. He is responsible for the portfolio of work that does include Saskatchewan Crop Insurance. Behind me as well is Ms. Michelle Lindenbach, and she is our liaison with this committee. She will be basically joining us all morning, so I won't keep introducing her at the subsequent chapter presentations.

Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation

Chair Wotherspoon: — Perfect. Thank you very much. Our first agenda item will focus on Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation. I'll turn it over briefly to CEO [chief executive officer] Morrow for a brief remark or maybe just to introduce your officials that are here right now. And then we'll turn it back over to the auditor for her presentation on the chapter, and then we'll come back your way for comments on those chapters.

Jeff Morrow: — All right. So introductions. My name is Jeff Morrow. I'm the president and CEO of Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation. And with me today is Kirk Zawislak, executive director of human resources with SCIC [Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation].

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, thank you both for your presence here today and for your service. I'm going to kick it over to the Provincial Auditor to make their presentation and we'll come back your way.

Tara Clemett: — So good morning, Mr. Chair, Deputy Chair, committee members, and officials. With me this morning is, like I said, Mr. Jason Shaw, and he's the deputy provincial auditor that's going to do an overview of the chapter before you.

There is no new recommendations in this chapter for the committee's consideration. This is a follow-up chapter that outlines whether or not progress was made on the recommendations that we originally made in a performance audit that we did undertake. We are very pleased to see, in terms of when we went back in two years' time, that the recommendations that were made were fully addressed and implemented as such.

And I do want to thank the president and CEO for the co-operation that was extended during the course of our work. With that I'm going to turn it over to Jason.

Jason Shaw: — Thank you. To operate and administer its programs, the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation employs qualified staff, including agricultural representatives, consultants, specialists, and managers. In 2016-2017 the corporation identified 50 per cent of its staff were eligible for retirement, making succession management one of its key corporate strategies.

Chapter 32 in our 2021 report volume 2, starting on page 237, reports the results of the progress made on the two recommendations initially made in our 2019 audit of the corporation's succession management process. By August 2021 the corporation implemented the two recommendations. The corporation set and followed its time frames for completing key succession management planning processes. The corporation also assessed candidates' talent, nominated candidates, and approved them as potential successors for critical roles by July 2020 and July 2021. Setting time frames to complete key succession management processes helps the corporation to complete and monitor tasks within a reasonable time frame.

Also the corporation updated its succession management plan with goals, objectives, and targets to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of its succession management processes. By 2021 the corporation had identified 30 roles as critical for succession management. In 2020-2021 it filled 80 per cent of vacant critical roles with succession participants. In April 2020 and April 2021 it reported its progress against developed succession management targets to the board.

Periodically evaluating existing processes helps the corporation continuously improve its succession management.

[10:15]

This concludes my presentation. Thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, thanks for the presentation and the work on this front. Of course for those who are following at home — I suspect that's thousands of folks across Saskatchewan in every corner of this very fine province — just a reminder that this is actually a follow-up. This committee has considered these recommendations. We've supported, concurred with the auditor's recommendations, supported those, and we have the update that's been provided.

And at this time I would like to table that status update. I'll table the document PAC 49-30, Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation: Status update, dated September 22nd, 2025. I'd like to thank those that prepared it and, importantly, those that took on the service and work that's reflected in that update.

I'll kick it over now to CEO Morrow for brief comments. Then we'll see if there's some questions.

Jeff Morrow: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks for the presentation. Maybe just a couple of comments. I think the measures that we've taken, we've continued to build on those targets and continue to evaluate the effectiveness since the provincial audit recommendations.

Maybe just a couple that I would highlight. So as of today, 50 per cent of our critical roles have at least one ready-now successor, and that's up from 13 per cent in 2020. So we've made progress on that measure.

And the other one that I'd like to highlight is that we consistently meet our goal of filling 50 per cent of our critical vacancies with candidates from our succession plan. And I think that this reflects our commitment to developing talent and preparing for critical role transitions.

And so now we'd be pleased to take any questions that the committee may have.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Thank you very much. I'll look to committee members that may have questions. MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — Good day, gentlemen. Thank you for being here. Really appreciate it. I'll begin here, I think, about the process. What process did the corporation use to determine the specific deadlines for each key succession planning activity? And I'm wondering if you could also maybe comment briefly on some of the difficulties in, I guess, determining a time frame to update your workforce plan.

Kirk Zawislak: — Sure, I can take that question. So when we were looking at our processes with strategic workforce planning we really wanted to integrate them with our other foundations of strategic workforce planning, which include regular and ongoing performance management. We do talent management assessments where we take an inventory of our talent across our organization and we place them in the top, middle, and bottom talent pools, which directly feeds into succession.

So when we were looking at setting some of these time frames, we wanted to integrate it closely with our performance management processes. Following that we then identify those critical roles, based on a set of questions related to impact on the operations, labour market availability, and of course imminence of retirement when employees are transitioning out of the workforce.

So looking at that, we do update our critical roles between the months of March and May. We then perform, you know, that performance management process. We then go on to do that talent inventory, like I spoke about. And then we assess talent and nominate candidates for succession. So we look across our organization and determine who's a good fit based on their performance and their potential, and then we evaluate them and develop an individual competency development plan which tries to narrow the gap so that their readiness score increases to the point where they're ready now to fill that vacancy.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Any further questions from committee members? MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for being here today. Appreciate that. I just want to make sure I wrote down properly and captured the sentiments you just shared. I want to take a peek at page 238 and fast forward to 2025. It says on May 31st you identify changes to critical roles, and then on July 31st you nominate people to, you know, consider those.

In 2021, 40 per cent had successors ready and 80 per cent of critical roles were filled. Did I write down correctly that in 2025, that 50 per cent were successors-ready and 50 per cent had critical roles filled? Or was I in error?

Jeff Morrow: — First part, you're absolutely correct. The second part, as I talked about, we consistently meet our goal of filling 50 per cent of critical vacancies. So that was the goal that we set; so sometimes we're above that. So we consistently meet that goal.

Joan Pratchler: — And so it was 80 per cent in 2021, and this year you're . . .

Jeff Morrow: — I'll defer to my colleague Kirk on that one.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you.

Kirk Zawislak: — So just to clarify your question there, 80 per cent . . . The measure that you're looking at is whether 50 per cent of critical roles with one or more ready-now successors?

Joan Pratchler: — Yes.

Kirk Zawislak: — Okay. Yeah, so in 2025 we met that target of 50 per cent of our critical roles with one or more ready-now successors. So that tends to increase and decrease as we promote people into those critical roles. We see that transition. So it might be at any given time or any given year up to 80 per cent like it was.

We see that number fluctuate from year to year based on the turnover within our organization. And as candidates maybe take on a new assignment within our organization, they might actually opt out of succession for the role they were currently nominated for. So that number is fluid to some extent when we're evaluating that process.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay. Thank you. Yes. Has there been any measurable improvements in leadership continuity or reduced vacancy time since that 2019 implementation?

Kirk Zawislak: — So with regard to leadership continuity, we don't have a significant amount of turnover, I would say, in our leadership roles. The critical roles we do see some turnover from time to time. You know, our president-CEO remarked on the fact that we're able to fulfill or fill internally.

So we have a bit of a process when we go through there. When a role becomes vacant, we're able to, you know, nominate an actor potentially to fill that void and then post for a new incumbent to join our organization, or promote from within. So I don't think there's critical gaps in timelines. I think we tend to fill those gaps

through succession planning and also recruitment efforts that are made.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon. Care to ask a question?

Hugh Gordon: — How often does management reassess and update the list of critical roles?

Kirk Zawislak: — So we do that annually.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you very much. That's it.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Just a question. What roles are the most challenging right now to have succession in place or to fill or recruit for?

Kirk Zawislak: — I would say it varies. I think some of those technical roles find their way into succession planning, and so then we need to be very mindful that we don't employ an abundance of folks with specific technical skills. There's often just sole positions so those tend to take some time to fill. You know, it's really dependent upon the timing for recruitment efforts as well. So I don't know that I have a solid answer to give you on that.

Chair Wotherspoon: — No, that's fair. Is there a particular role that there's been a shortage of or that's a particular challenge for Sask Crop Insurance?

Kirk Zawislak: — I think it's related directly to our executive level of positions, so helping our staff gain that experience in strategic planning, those higher level, decision-making competencies that we're looking for in those roles. So that speaks to why we want a robust plan and put those development plans in place to put some stretch objectives for those successors so they can experience some of that and develop as we don't have those vacancies. But I would pinpoint our executive roles.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Any further questions, folks? Not seeing any, we've already concurred with this recommendation as a committee. We see implementation has occurred. Thanks to all those that were involved in making that good work happen. At this time I'd welcome a motion to conclude consideration of chapter 32, "Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation — Managing Succession of Human Resources," report volume 2, 2021. Moved by MLA Crassweller. All agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Wotherspoon: — That's carried. Okay, well thanks so much, CEO Morrow. Any final remarks before we kick you out of here?

Jeff Morrow: — No. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to the committee. And yeah, that's it. Thank you very much.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay. Well listen, thank you very much. And we'll have a very brief recess as we get ready for the Office of Residential Tenancies and the related chapter.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

Office of Residential Tenancies

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, we'll reconvene and keep the Public Accounts Committee moving here this morning and turn our attention to the Office of Residential Tenancies and chapters related to the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General. I'd really like to welcome to the table here Deputy Minister Kratzig, Ministry of Justice and Attorney General, and also to welcome director of the Office of Residential Tenancies, Anne-Marie Cotter, to our committee here this morning.

I'll turn it over to Deputy Minister Kratzig to just briefly introduce the officials that have joined her here this morning, and then we'll turn it over to the auditor for comment on the Residential Tenancies chapter and come back your way.

Kimberly Kratzig: — Thank you. Good morning, Mr. Chair, other committee members, Provincial Auditor and her team, and the Provincial Comptroller and his team. I'd like to thank the Provincial Auditor and the entire office for their work on the performance audit.

Joining me today is Kylie Head, K.C. [King's Counsel], assistant deputy minister general, justice services and tribunals division; Anne-Marie Cotter, as you had mentioned earlier, director of the Office of Residential Tenancies; and Brad Gurash, assistant deputy minister of corporate services division.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Thank you very much for joining us here this morning. Thanks as well for the status update that's been tabled on this front, and I'll table at this point PAC 50-30, Ministry of Justice and Attorney General: Status update, dated September 22nd, 2025. And I'm going to turn it over to the Provincial Auditor to make her presentation and then we'll come back your way.

Tara Clemett: — So thank you, Mr. Chair, Deputy Chair, committee members, and officials. With me today is Mr. Jason Wandy, and he's the deputy provincial auditor that is responsible for the portfolio of work that includes the Office of Residential Tenancies. There is no recommendations for the committee to consider within this chapter. This is a follow-up chapter, and we were pleased to see that progress was made when we undertook our first follow-up.

Before we do present, I just want to thank the director of the office and her staff for the co-operation that was extended to us during the course of our work. And with that I'll turn it over to Jason.

[10:30]

Jason Wandy: — Thanks, Tara. The Office of Residential Tenancies, or ORT, is responsible for administering *The Residential Tenancies Act, 2006* including adjudicating disputes between landlords and tenants when they are unable to find their own solutions. Adjudicating disputes is similar to court proceedings but provides landlords and tenants with a faster, less formal, and less expensive dispute resolution process than seeking a resolution through the courts.

Chapter 14 of our 2023 report volume 1 reports the results of our first follow-up of management's actions on three

recommendations we first made in our 2021 audit about ORT's processes to provide timely adjudication of disputes to eligible landlords and tenants. By February 2023, ORT implemented all the outstanding recommendations. We found ORT provided hearing officers, or lawyers, with clear written guidance within its hearing officer onboarding manual, including examples about what constitutes a conflict of interest. Having clear guidance on what constitutes a conflict of interest decreases the risk of hearing officers not declaring a conflict of interest.

Additionally our testing found ORT consistently followed up with hearing officers who had outstanding decisions, and documented reasons for significant delays in issuing decisions. ORT issued just over 3,700 decisions between February 2022 and January 2023.

On average, hearing officers submitted decisions to ORT in 1.61 business days and ORT issued decisions on average 1.05 business days later. Data analysis showed ORT improved the timeliness of issuing decisions after a hearing took place, with a maximum of 82 business days for decisions between February 2022 and January 2023 compared to a maximum of 353 days in 2020.

Having an effective adjudication process helps ensure landlords and tenants have their disputes handled fairly and timely. It also reduces the risk of tenants remaining in unsafe living conditions or landlords enduring undue financial burden for long periods.

That concludes my presentation. I'll now pause for the committee's consideration.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Thank you very much for the presentation and for the follow-up work on this front. For those again that are following this committee at home or that have been involved in this work, this committee's already agreed and questioned the entity on these recommendations, and we appreciate again the actions that have been detailed regarding implementation.

I'll turn it over now to . . . I'm not sure if it's going to be Deputy Minister Kratzig or Director Anne-Marie Cotter, that will be providing a response, but I'll turn it over for a brief response. Then we'll open it up if there's questions.

Kimberly Kratzig: — Sure, thank you. A very brief response. Just thank you to the Provincial Auditor again. We are very pleased that the three outstanding recommendations are fully implemented, and that concludes our status update. We'd be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, we'll open it up now to see if there's some questions. MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — Yes, thank you for being here today. And my first question is, what are the updated annual file numbers?

Anne-Marie Cotter: — Thank you so much for the question. So our applications have actually gone up in number since the original audit took place. So for instance in the year closing December 2020, in which the audit took place, we had 2,652 applications. There was a moratorium a few months of that year because of COVID. So for instance, 2023-24 we had 8,840 applications, and in '24-25, 8,597 applications. So we are in high demand.

We had an introduction of the ORT online system since the original audit took place, and we're finding that it has been exceptionally well received by the public. Currently it's about 99 per cent of applications are filed with the online system. We are taking feedback from the public to continuously improve the system, but we see an uptake in the number of applications.

Joan Pratchler: — Can I just get those numbers from '24-25 again?

Anne-Marie Cotter: — Yes, '24-25 was 8,597.

Joan Pratchler: — Good. Thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — Good day. Thank you for being here. Is the timeline in the report for turnaround time for decisions still the same?

Anne-Marie Cotter: — No, it has increased due to a number of factors. One is the number of applications now that we receive. We're trying to bring down the turnaround time with additional deputy directors appointed to hear hearings and additional per-diem hearing officers to hear hearings. But it is a high volume and we're going as quickly as possible while maintaining the quality of decisions.

The other thing is decisions now have to be much longer and more reasoned, so it is taking the hearing officers longer to write their decisions. So we do again have a plan in place to try to bring the turnaround times down. We don't consider them delays. We keep track of the recommendations; they're still in place. We keep track of the decisions on a weekly basis and sometimes twice a week as to the reason for the decision not submitted. So for instance, if a hearing took place on Friday, we will still follow up on Monday. So we don't consider that a delay.

But I think we welcomed the auditors to our office. It was a pleasant experience because it showcased all the good work that our staff has done and all the innovative changes we've put in place. So we try to make sure that no decision falls through the cracks because there are so many decisions to be done, but I think the process has been greatly improved.

Hugh Gordon: — Can I just quickly add on to that? What's the longest time it's taken to have a decision rendered in the last two years?

Anne-Marie Cotter: — So the maximum, this is just . . . When you see "maximum," it's just an outlier. It doesn't happen regularly. But for 2025-26 it was 217 days. Now the average time is not that long. It just happened to be that that decision might have been extremely complicated, and in order for it to withstand an appeal potentially — a successful appeal — the decision needed to have enough time for the hearing officer to write that decision.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — About how many times have the ORT not met their targeted timeline turnaround?

Anne-Marie Cotter: — Well we don't really have a targeted turnaround per se because we don't consider it a delay. We understand that the reasons that we are tracking now could be high volume or a very complicated case. So we don't really consider it a delay. We have to give that independent hearing officer enough time to give his reasons.

But for instance, we have urgent cases and non-urgent cases. So non-urgent might be a monetary claim as opposed to urgent if there's a tenant that's locked out or an eviction. So we have different timelines in that sense.

And I could tell you that for '24-25, if you don't consider what we call the outliers — these are more unusual ones that would require additional time — for the urgent ones, the turnaround time was four days.

Joan Pratchler: — Is there a disparity amongst centres, i.e., is one location busier than others? If so, why? Can you comment on that?

Anne-Marie Cotter: — Well since the online system, it's . . . Head office is Regina and our second office is in Saskatoon, but somebody from Regina can hear a case in P.A. [Prince Albert] or Battleford or Saskatoon so that's taken away completely.

So we're one office, one team. We pull together. We mind the queues to make sure things are flowing properly. I can tell you I do it daily — several times a day — to make sure, you know, things are moving. And I put staff where they need to be to act as one team and get the best service for the public as possible and as quickly. But preserving that quality that needs to be done.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay, thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you. I have a question here with respect to resources. Does your office feel that you have enough resources to manage your work?

Anne-Marie Cotter: — We could always use more people, of course. We triage daily, hourly to make sure there's coverage because there's so many ways to contact the ORT — again, innovation. We have the counters in Regina and Saskatoon, and we've got several phone systems. So we have an HCC [hosted contact centre] information system that people call in. One of my staff can handle over 100 calls a day. And we mind her mental health to make sure she's fine. She loves her job. But those calls are cleared, I'd say, 99.9 per cent every day.

Now it's teamwork, definitely teamwork; we pull together. We also have a hearing hotline where people could call in. They bypass the HCC system and they get an immediate response from our staff. And if one person's answering that, a second call that's coming in at the same time will go to another staff.

Emails, of course, we try to clear that every day or next business day. And then we have our . . . I created a client service representative specifically when we launched the online system. He has a cell phone, so if he's not assisting somebody else, he can answer that phone immediately.

So we have a number of ways. We also introduced a "Contact Us." It's another email that comes in to us, and we treat those as urgent. But we're triaging constantly. So we're hiring right now for per-diem hearing officers and deputy directors, so I think we're doing very, very well and I'm very proud of our staff.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Thank you. Any further questions? I see MLA Pratchler has another one.

Joan Pratchler: — Could you help me understand some of the steps that the ministry has taken to ensure that the hearing officers understand and follow that new conflict-of-interest guidance?

Anne-Marie Cotter: — Sure. That's done in-house. It's actually been upgraded to our business process manual now, and we introduce that to all our staff. In their mentoring and training, they're given a copy of the business process manual to read. A lot of the lawyers in the office, it's part of their legal training anyways for conflict of interest. But it has never been an issue for our office, thankfully, the conflict of interest. If somebody has raised it as a bias, it's resolved internally.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay, thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — I think you answered one of my other questions here, which was how much of a problem that was, and what kind of conflicts of interest you were actually encountering. But I think you answered that fairly clearly.

Anne-Marie Cotter: — Thank you.

Hugh Gordon: — Can you tell me, have there been any measurable improvements in the timeliness of hearing decision submissions since these recommendations were made?

Anne-Marie Cotter: — Again I wouldn't say improvements or not. We're always on top of trying to get the decisions in, in a timely manner. Again we don't define it as a delay, but the hearing officers and deputy directors are taking the time necessary to give a quality, well-reasoned decision. So I think they're doing their part. We have very few successful appeals at King's Bench and no successful appeal to the Court of Appeal.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you.

Anne-Marie Cotter: — So I think they're doing a good job.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you. Would you be able to provide examples or a summary of what you would see as the common reasons for significant delays that have been documented since the recommendation has been implemented?

Anne-Marie Cotter: — I think the number one is the number of

applications we're receiving; it's significantly higher. And we're finding too that it might be much more complex, requiring additional writing time. So as much as the hearing officers want to submit, for instance, an urgent decision the same day or following day, they might not be able to. Sometimes hearings go long as well and eat into their writing time.

So they're certainly aware of the need to submit their decisions timely, and we believe they're doing that and we're on top of that. But we don't want to compromise quality either and then have more successful appeals.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you.

[10:45]

Chair Wotherspoon: — Any further questions from committee members? Not seeing any at this time, I'd welcome a motion to conclude consideration of this chapter, chapter 14 of the 2023 report volume 1 on the Office of Residential Tenancies. Do I have a mover? MLA Beaudry moves. All agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, that's carried. Okay, well that concludes that chapter. I want to thank Director Anne-Marie Cotter for her time with us here this morning and all those that have been involved in the work that's reflected in the conversations today and all those that are involved in the very important work of this office as well.

I know our Deputy Minister Kratzig is going to be staying on with us for some other chapters here, but I'll turn it over to DM [deputy minister] Kratzig and to Director Anne-Marie Cotter to see if there's any final remarks.

Kimberly Kratzig: — I think on behalf of both of us, we would just say thank you for the opportunity to showcase some of the very good work that ORT has done, and to the Provincial Auditor's office for, you know, highlighting some of the opportunities for improvement. We really appreciate it.

Justice and Attorney General and Corrections, Policing and Public Safety

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, thank you very much. And you're ready down there, correct? Okay, we're going to turn our attention now to the chapters related to the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General and Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety. And we'll focus on chapters 13 and 10 together. These chapters are the 2023 report volume 1 and from the 2025 report volume 1. Those are chapters 13 and 10 respectively.

We'd like to welcome Deputy Minister Macza and all of her team, all the officials that are joining us here today. And at this time I'll turn it over just real briefly to DM Macza to present and just introduce who the officials are that are with us here today. Then I'll kick it over to the auditor to make a presentation on the chapters and come back your way.

Denise Macza: — Perfect, thank you. Good morning, everyone. To begin I want to express my thanks to the Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan, Tara Clemett, and her team for joining us today. Mr. Chairperson, we fully recognize the critical role that the auditor plays in overseeing the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety. We appreciate the insightful analysis and detailed audits provided by the Provincial Auditor.

And so today the representatives with me include Wanda Lamberti, assistant deputy minister of corporate services division. I have Scott Harron, assistant deputy minister of the custody services division. I have Josh Freistadt, he's assistant deputy minister of supervision and rehabilitation services division; Kim Audette, executive director of research and implementation branch. I have Linden Wilkins, director of community safety and well-being branch; Mark McFadyen, executive director of custody services branch; Lindsay Tokarski, director of operational services and custody services branch. I have Dean Carey, executive director for offender services branch; Jill Rowden, executive director of central services branch; Rebecca Kayumba, director of accounting and public reporting unit; Victoria Zhang, manager of internal audit; Nathanial Day, executive advisor to the deputy minister. And of course also joining us is the deputy minister of Justice, Kimberly Kratzig; and assistant deputy attorney general, Elizabeth Hilts, K.C.

So again, thank you for the opportunity to discuss these public accounts today, and they are essential to helping us maintain an open and honest accountable system. So thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, right on. Thanks so much, Deputy Minister Macza and all the officials that are here today and all those that have been involved in the work that's reflected in our conversations and considerations here today. I'm going to table the status update that was provided by the ministry as well, and that was PAC 51-30, Ministry of Justice and Attorney General and Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety: Status update, dated September 22, 2025.

I'm going to turn it over now to the Provincial Auditor to make their presentation and then we'll come back your way.

Tara Clemett: — So thank you, Mr. Chair, Deputy Chair, committee members, and officials. With me today is Mr. Victor Schwab, and he is the deputy provincial auditor that is responsible for the chapters and the work before us. Both chapters are basically follow-up audits. So we are going to do our presentation together, and it was with regards to reducing short-term remand. The committee previously did agree with the recommendations before us, and all six recommendations have been implemented now. I do want to thank both the deputy ministers for the co-operation that was extended to us during the course of our work. With that I'll now turn it over to Victor.

Victor Schwab: — Thank you. The Ministry of Justice and Attorney General and the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety have legislative responsibilities to remand people appropriately. Short-term remand refers to accused individuals awaiting trial held in correctional centres for 31 days or less. Taking effective measures to reduce the number of people on short-term remand is complex, involving the long-term commitment, coordination, and engagement of policing and justice services. It requires balancing competing principles of respecting the liberty rights of the accused and ensuring public safety.

Chapter 13 of our 2023 report, volume 1, on pages 155 to 162, reports the results of our first follow-up audit of the ministries' processes to implement strategies to reduce short-term remand. By January 2023, of the six recommendations we originally made in 2021, the ministries implemented two recommendations. Since the initial performance audit in 2021, the ministries shifted strategic focus from reducing short-term remand to reducing returns to custody.

The ministries established targets conducive to measuring reductions in return to custody. For example in October 2022, the ministries partnered with Saskatoon Tribal Council to deliver a program focused on reintegrating female offenders back into the community and develop an appropriate performance measurement framework for the program. Internally, the ministries also established a pathways committee in April 2022 to oversee strategies for reducing returns to custody. We found the ministries provided the pathways committee with reasonable information, like program evaluations, to support the committee in carrying out its roles and responsibilities.

In chapter 10 of our 2025 report volume 1, on pages 131 to 134, it reports the results of our second follow-up audit. By February 2025, the ministries fully implemented the four outstanding recommendations. The ministries collected appropriate data to evaluate their strategies relating to reducing remand and returns to custody and to inform decision making.

In 2024, the ministries evaluated their two key strategies — early case resolution and rapid remand response — directly aimed at reducing remand, and the one key program done in partnership with the Saskatoon Tribal Council, aimed at reducing returns to custody for female offenders. We found that staff shared evaluation results with senior decision makers in the ministries.

The ministries developed and appropriately used guidelines and procedures to guide in assessing their remand reduction strategies. This includes requirements to document strategy context, for example, time constraints and extent of analysis; data limitations, for example, data excluded from analysis; and key assumptions used when conducting evaluations.

For the program focused on female offenders, the ministries analyzed the offender data monthly from the program partner's — Saskatoon Tribal Council — from their IT [information technology] system on key measures to identify necessary program adjustments that help in reducing returns to custody, for example, the percentage of clients receiving addictions support.

We found the ministries also now used a strategic dashboard to monitor trends in the criminal justice system, such as changes in custody populations as well as length of stay on remand. The ministries use this information to assess trends and inform decisions on programs to reduce remand.

Routine analysis of robust and concise data to determine whether strategies operate as intended can assist the ministries in making informed decisions to reduce the number of people on short-term remand.

This concludes my presentation. I will now pause for the committee's consideration.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Well thank you very much. I'll turn it over to DM Macza for a brief comment on these chapters, and then we'll open it up to the committee members for questions.

Denise Macza: — Sure. Thanks again to the Provincial Auditor team for the work they've done on this chapter. The ministries agree with the Provincial Auditor's assessment that the last four outstanding recommendations are now fully implemented. Thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Thank you. Committee members, any questions? MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you. Thank you for being here today. Was there a reason for the delay in some of the data collection?

Kim Audette: — Yes. So some of the delay just related to accessing the data. It's a really complex system where the data is stored, and it was really about learning which pieces of data were required and then cleaning and validating that data before it was sent over.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you for being here today. Can you tell us what type of data will the ministry be collecting with respect to tracking recidivism rates? And can you tell us, you know, what about the effect of programming to reduce recidivism rates?

Kim Audette: — Thank you very much. So we are able to access information from the administrative system that tracks individuals coming into custody. So that'll be the database where we would be gathering the number of times that individuals return to custody and how frequently they are returning.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — Do the results of the third-party outcome evaluations for ECR [early case resolution], RRR [rapid remand response], and īkwēskīcik iskwēwak program align with internal data? And how have they affected the programs, and can you elaborate on the data dictionary and what stage of development it's in? I know that's a mouthful. We can go over it there, one step at a time.

Kim Audette: — Thank you. I can say that the outcomes that were found in the evaluation do align with the information that we're seeing, or what we're seeing with our programs. So there was no surprises there.

I think your question was related to the development of the program as it stands now. And so every month as information comes in, the stakeholder committee reviews what's happening and can make . . . It's a developmental evaluation approach, so changes to the program to improve implementation can happen as the program is evolving with this pilot.

And the third part of your question, I'm sorry, could you repeat it?

Hugh Gordon: — Sorry, yes, fair enough. Can you elaborate on the data dictionary and what stage of development it's in?

Kim Audette: — So the data dictionary is complete and has been shared with stakeholders. It does get updated as necessary, as changes are made to the program, or data that is being collected.

Hugh Gordon: — And I just want to touch on the third party that you used here to, I guess, evaluate. Can you tell us who that third party was?

Kim Audette: — The third-party evaluator is with the University of Saskatchewan. It's the centre for forensic behavioural justice and justice studies. And that was for the īkwēskīcik iskwēwak program.

Hugh Gordon: — Sorry, who was that again? Sorry.

Kim Audette: — The Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science and Justice Studies with the University of Saskatchewan.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you.

Kim Audette: — You're welcome.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Pratcher.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you. Has there been any measurable decrease in short-term remands since you implemented the performance measurement framework for those two?

Kim Audette: — So we know that our remand rate in Saskatchewan is roughly 60 per cent of the custodial population, which is about the second lowest in Canada. So the national average is roughly 75 per cent of remand rate. So we know that we are below that national average.

[11:00]

Joan Pratchler: — Are you seeing some measures that have more improvement than others, such as stable housing versus family reunification? What would be your sense on that?

Kim Audette: — Are you asking for the ECR, RRR program or the īkwēskīcik iskwēwak?

Joan Pratchler: — The . . .

Kim Audette: — The second one?

Joan Pratchler: — Yes, I'm sorry. I didn't do my homework in practising saying this.

Kim Audette: — It's been years of practice for me. So we do have some information that there are women that are moving towards family reunification with their children and accessing stable housing within the community, as well as increasing their educational opportunities and going back to fulfill their education.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — When can we expect the completion of the 12- and 24-month program evaluations from the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] and the ministry?

Kim Audette: — For which are you referring to?

Hugh Gordon: — I think in the report it noted that there were program evaluations being done by the university and the ministry. Do I have those timelines correct?

Kim Audette: — Those are both completed.

Hugh Gordon: — Okay, thank you very much. And are these two separate evaluations or are both parties collaborating? Like did they collaborate together on those evaluations?

Kim Audette: — So the parties do collaborate. They are by the same third-party provider. The centre has completed both of those evaluations.

Hugh Gordon: — Do you have any findings to share with the committee today that they've provided?

Kim Audette: — So it's a very long report, but I can give you a few high-level findings.

Hugh Gordon: — The Coles Notes is good.

Kim Audette: — Stakeholders agreed that it was the strength of the design of the outcomes-based contract, that allowed the applicants to determine how to implement the program, that allowed the program to be so robust and strong.

For the 12-month report, because it was just a pilot program, the 12-month and 24 evaluations weren't based on outcomes necessarily, but were based on the process of implementation of the program. So ensuring that that program delivery meets what the expectations were is what those findings were.

Some of the high-level things were that, as the programming was available, it was found to be very helpful. Some of the wait times may have been lengthy. Space for programming was essential for the program. All referral sources are adequately engaged by īkwēskīcik iskwēwak in terms of establishing that referral process.

So I can go on, but those are the large highlights, is that the program delivery is working.

Joan Pratchler: — Could I ask what would be the plan to publicly report those findings?

Kim Audette: — So the centre has the permissions and abilities to publicly publish their findings, so it would be public through their centre.

Joan Pratchler: — So your organization wouldn't be publicly making that manual public or any of the data public. It would be incumbent upon the people that wrote it to make it public?

Kim Audette: — That's correct.

Joan Pratchler: — Am I understanding that correctly?

Kim Audette: — That's correct.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay, thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — Can you explain why you shifted the focus from reducing remand to reducing returns to custody? I'm just trying to understand how that helped in reducing remand times and achieve the goal that you set out to achieve.

Scott Harron: — Scott Harron, assistant deputy minister of custody services. So as we were moving through the remand initiative, we reached a point essentially of diminishing returns, whereas if we're looking just at the short-term remand, there's only so much more progress that we can make. As mentioned, our remand rate's around 60 per cent. It's one of the best in the country, short of PEI [Prince Edward Island] who don't have that many people. And we're doing phenomenal in that respect, significantly below the national average. On either side of us, Alberta, I think, is sitting at about 85 per cent and Manitoba is pretty close to that too. So we're very proud of that.

In order to make further progress, what we had to do is start looking away from the short term and into the long term. So how do we make sure that people who are coming into custody don't come back six months later? In an age of meth, in an age of fentanyl, that requires a different focus to make sure that our programming is really hitting the mark in terms of where we need to be. And that's fundamentally what drove that.

We've found that the number of brand new people that we're seeing has actually dropped 25 per cent in the last decade, which is wonderful news, and that our numbers are being generated by people who continually are coming back, who get stuck in that addiction cycle. So that's where that was driven from was, let's start taking a long-term view, get people out of the system permanently.

Hugh Gordon: — I appreciate that. You still track remand data though? You must still be tracking that.

Scott Harron: — Yeah. It's part of the strategic dashboard that gets reported to all the decision makers about once a week. I certainly use it quite a lot to make sure that our numbers are maintaining a stable rate, which we have done over the last several years, which again is not something many of our colleagues are able to say.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you. How will the ministries ensure that collaboration with external partners remains ongoing and not just a one-time event?

Kim Audette: — The stakeholder committee for the programs that are implemented meet monthly, and we are part of those stakeholder committee meetings as well to ensure collaboration is ongoing.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Any other questions, committee members? MLA Crassweller.

Brad Crassweller: — Yeah, I just want to say thank you to you and your team for the incredible work you're doing in our province and, by the sounds of it, for leading the way across Canada. So it's greatly appreciated. So thank you to you and your team, and if you could pass that on, that would be great. Thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Yeah, just to reiterate, thanks so much. It's appreciated when you come before this committee, when you're able to reflect the implementation on recommendations that have come before you. So thank you to your team, all those that are involved in this work, and all those that are involved in the work of this ministry day in, day out.

I would look for a motion to conclude consideration of chapters 13 and 10 that we've been focused on. MLA Crassweller moves. All agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, that's carried. Okay, thanks. Maybe we have some officials that are departing at this point here.

Corrections, Policing and Public Safety

Chair Wotherspoon: — But we're now going to turn our attention to the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety for chapter 9 from the 2024 report volume 1; chapter 15 from the 2024 report volume 2; and chapter 16, 2024 report volume 2. And I think you're going to deal with these separately; that's right. I'll kick it over to the auditor and then we'll come your way.

Tara Clemett: — So thank you, Mr. Chair, Deputy Chair, committee members, and officials. With me is Mr. Victor Schwab, and he's the deputy provincial auditor that is responsible for the chapters before us today.

We are going to do our presentations on the three chapters on the agenda separately. We will pause after each presentation for the committee's consideration. There are no new recommendations in the chapters for the committee's consideration. I do want to thank the deputy minister and her staff for the co-operation that was extended to us during the course of our work. With that I'll turn it over to Victor.

Victor Schwab: — Thank you. In 2017 the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety's building partnerships to reduce crime initiative was rebranded as the community safety and well-being initiative. The focus of the initiative shifted to further increase multi-ministry and agency collaboration and determined coordinated responses to connect at-risk individuals and families to support services through community mobilization hubs.

Chapter 9 of our 2024 report volume 1, on pages 149 to 151, reports the results of our third follow-up audit of the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety's actions on the two outstanding recommendations we initially made in our 2016 audit related to the ministry's processes for leading the

community safety and well-being initiative.

By January 2024 the ministry met the intent of the recommendation for one recommendation and the other recommendation was no longer relevant. As of January 2024, 14 community mobilization hubs continued to serve 15 communities across the province. Rather than measure the success of the initiative, the ministry reasonably measured the total number of discussions at the hubs and the number of individuals or families connected to services as a key measure of success of the initiative.

Identifying and monitoring success measures for the community safety and well-being initiative's hubs helps the ministry evaluate the number of individuals and families connected to coordinated services, thus leading to improved outcomes for at-risk individuals and families working with the hubs. In 2023 the hubs connected 51 per cent of the individuals where families discussed services.

The centre of responsibility previously analyzed provincial data to identify systematic issues impacting Saskatchewan and collaborated on longer term solutions on those issues. The centre of responsibility disbanded in June 2019, and as such the second recommendation was assessed as no longer relevant because the centre of responsibility and the hubs no longer collaborate or report.

This concludes my presentation. I will now pause for the committee's consideration.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Thank you very much for the focus and the follow-up on this front. I'll turn it over to DM Macza for a brief remark and then we'll get to the questioning.

Denise Macza: — Okay, thank you. Thanks again to the Provincial Auditor for the work they've done on this chapter. The ministry agrees with the Provincial Auditor's recommendations that all the outstanding recommendations are now fully implemented. Thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, I'll open it up to committee members for questions. Before folks ask questions, I'll just table the status update and say thanks to those that put that together as well, and that's PAC 52-30, Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety: Status update, dated September 22nd, 2025.

Committee members, any questions? MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — Hello. I was wondering if you might be able to help me understand why the centre of responsibility was disbanded.

Joshua Freistadt: — Sure, I can take that. Joshua Freistadt, assistant deputy minister, supervision and rehabilitation services.

So the centre of responsibility was really a community-based committee led by the Prince Albert chief of police. And so I think the key thing to keep in my mind here, Victor characterized it nicely when he talked about this program being a coordinating function for government.

So we bring community partners together, and those community partners decided that they were going to cease the COR [centre of responsibility] as it stood. Now what's happened in P.A. in particular and other communities is that they've found other mechanisms through municipal governments to do that same sort of work and analysis.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Deputy . . . or not deputy minister Gordon. Boy, a few more degrees there and a few more years of public service, but this guy, he's been a good, strong public servant in his life too. But MLA Gordon, go ahead.

Hugh Gordon: — I really just got here, Mr. Chair, so I . . . Thank you for being here today to take our questions. I really appreciate it. I just have a follow-up here on that centre of responsibility after it was disbanded. Can you tell us who is now analyzing reporting on the success of the community safety and well-being initiative in its absence?

Joshua Freistadt: — So that relates to the other recommendation there too. So the primary measure for the community safety and well-being is the number of discussions and connections that are happening through the hub tables. So we monitor that, and that's kind of spoken to in the chapter.

Hugh Gordon: — My next question is, the ministry chose to identify and monitor service connection rates as a measure of success of the community mobilization hubs. Why was this method chosen, and were there any other methods considered?

[11:15]

Joshua Freistadt: — So we relied on another party to come in as well and give us a bit of an evaluation and help us identify those outcome metrics. Those ones are chosen because that was predominantly the intent of the hub tables, is to bring communities together, different service providers together and go, what is the outcome?

In discussions with the third parties, they said that's really where you should probably focus your outcome measures is, how many of those discussions are happening? How many connections are happening? Because the long-term outcomes, because we're dealing in these broad social systems, are pretty difficult to attribute to any single intervention or program. So it's that if your intent is really to bring folks together, then focus on that as your fundamental outcome, the thing to which you really have the most direct control over.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — Could you talk a little bit more about the service connection rates and how they might provide any gaps or challenges in measuring success?

Joshua Freistadt: — Yes, the service connection rates are a measure of, okay, now that we've pulled these parties together, there's a number of stages they go through to determine what's the next step and what sort of information can we share among parties.

So the service connection really measures, did somebody

essentially go and knock on the door of the family that was brought up? And in some cases you'll see in the report there that, you know, it's around 50 to 60 per cent of those cases end up with that. Some cases it will be determined that there's really only one stakeholder at play that really needs to make that connection, so we don't really count that as part of the collaboration.

So I think that's part of the gap is that that shouldn't reflect the only services that are happening. Those families are probably getting connected individually, one on one. But this is when parties are coming together to address. So that gives a little bit of the context behind the number, if that answers your question.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — Will the monitored connection service rates be reported publicly, and if so, how often and where would they be reported if that's the case?

Joshua Freistadt: — Those rates are predominantly used at the individual community hub table, so that's their primary reporting is with the groups that get together for the hub.

Hugh Gordon: — So to follow up on that then, that's not something that would be publicly reported?

Joshua Freistadt: — It is not a business plan metric or anything like that, no.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you. With the centre of responsibility disbanded, had the ministry considered finding alternatives to create the recommended report on the success of the community safety and well-being initiative?

Joshua Freistadt: — Yeah, that sort of goes back to what I was saying before. When the centre stepped away, you know, communities, local groups, which are also responsible for helping address these issues in their neighbourhoods, they take on some of that work. So you see some of that happening through . . . In P.A. for instance they have a branch municipally that talks about, community safety well-being branch it's called, and they do some of that reporting. Some of the other tables and municipalities would have similar groups.

And that becomes the work of the ministry in facilitating those connections. We have about half an FTE [full-time equivalent] that works with communities to help them establish what it is they need. That group will also help point people toward those sort of information sources that were being collected by the core that are publicly available to give them insight into what's going on in their community. So a lot of time spent, you know, helping municipalities or community partners navigate Statistics Canada databases that will give them information about their communities.

Joan Pratchler: — And then the final results, is that funnelled through the ministry and then reported publicly?

Joshua Freistadt: — That work is done by communities. So when you say final results, you mean . . .

Joan Pratchler: — So as a provincial picture of, rather than just . . . I mean obviously the communities are important and they need to know that data, but as a provincial body do you gather those things and then publicly . . .

Joshua Freistadt: — Not through this mechanism, but of course any administration is continually working on gathering data to look at that. So through our regular business development and business planning cycle in government, we would certainly do that to look at national statistics, provincial statistics, etc., to guide business plan development and so forth.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Any further questions from committee members at this time? Not seeing any, I'd welcome a motion to conclude consideration of chapter 9. Anyone care to move? MLA Crassweller. All agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, that's carried. We're going to keep moving along here. We're going to turn our attention to chapter 15 and I'll turn it over to our Provincial Auditor.

Victor Schwab: — Okay. The Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety provides inmate care, control, and supervision for inmates at all four provincial correctional centres, which includes placing inmates on administrative segregation.

Administrative segregation is used in correctional centres to keep an inmate away from the general population for safety or security reasons. Chapter 15 of our 2024 report volume 2, on pages 161 to 168, describes our first follow-up audit of the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety's actions on the recommendations we made in 2022 regarding processes to administratively segregate inmates in its adult secure custody correctional centres.

By August 2024 the ministry implemented five of the seven recommendations we first made in 2022. Upon hiring, the ministry provides all new correctional centre staff 11 weeks of training, which includes a module on administrative segregation. The ministry now requires staff to take refresher training every three years. Directors at each correctional centre track who has taken the training sessions and send status updates weekly to ministry staff.

The ministry requires correctional centre managers to complete an assessment prior to placing an inmate on administrative segregation or within 24 hours of placement. The assessment guides staff through a series of questions to determine whether an inmate's placement on administrative segregation is justified. Of the five inmates placed on administrative segregation between April 2023 and July 2024, all were appropriately approved by correctional facility managers. In addition, in all five cases, staff used the administrative segregation assessment tool and completed initial placement forms.

The ministry's director of standards and compliance is

responsible for the quality assurance process around administrative segregation. Each week, the director reviews all active administrative segregation files and documents the results of review in a tracking sheet. We found the director identified two instances where the correctional centre staff did not perform the required daily reviews. We saw evidence of the director communicating these deficiencies to correctional centre staff.

Reviewing all key policy requirements during the administrative segregation quality assurance process decreases the risk that quality assurance reviews do not identify key areas for improvement. Each year, senior management receives a report that includes statistics on inmates placed on administrative segregation, three-year trend information, and some analysis.

Staff provided the 2023 annual report to senior management in January 2024. It showed all inmates were placed on administrative segregation for less than 15 days. Quality assurance results in the annual report indicated that for the 12 instances of inmates placed on administrative segregation, appropriate reviews and assessments were completed. Having information and analysis on its administrative segregation processes helps senior management identify potential issues with the use of administrative segregation that needs to be addressed.

In 2023, the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety released its first report about the use of administrative segregation to the public. This report related to administrative segregation included number of placement inmates, reason for placement, average length of stay, demographic information, incarceration status, and security threat group. Public reporting about the use of administrative segregation helps the ministry to demonstrate its commitment to reducing the overuse of segregation as well as enhance accountability and encourage oversight.

For the two recommendations not yet fully implemented, the ministry needs to follow its specific requirements for various reviews and assessments in its administrative segregation policy. This includes initial placement review, health care assessments, daily reviews, and long-term reviews. For the five inmate files we tested, we found three instances where some daily reviews were not completed and documented by correctional centre staff. Not completing the daily activity reviews could result in correctional facility managers missing key pieces of information when deciding to continue an inmate on administrative segregation.

The ministry also needs to have appeals by inmates placed on administrative segregation reviewed by independent adjudicators. Inmates placed on administrative segregation can appeal their placement decision. Correctional centre staff are required to provide a decision on appeal within five business days. Good practice recommends an independent adjudicator — for example, ministry staff, staff at another correctional facility external to the correctional centre — to make the appeal decisions. The ministry indicated it was working on having its legislation amended to address this recommendation. Having an independent adjudicator make appeal decisions helps to ensure fair oversight and reduces the risk of biased decisions.

That concludes my presentation. I now pause for the committee's consideration.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Thanks so much for the work and the follow-up on this front. I'll turn it over to Deputy Minister Macza for brief comments and then we'll open it up for questions.

Denise Macza: — Perfect, thank you. The ministry appreciates the work done by the Provincial Auditor team on this chapter and is pleased with the progress it has made to address these recommendations. The ministry agrees with the Provincial Auditor's assessment that five out of the seven outstanding recommendations are now fully implemented.

Regarding recommendation 3 noted on page 165 relating to the ministry's adhering to its policy for inmates placed on administrative segregation, we consider this recommendation now to be fully implemented. The quality assurance tracking sheet was updated to include tracking of all reviews and assessments. Regular communications are sent out to facilities regarding policy requirements. Provincial policy was revised in 2024 to ensure copies of placement and assessment forms are provided to the correctional centre directors for their review. Provincial policy was also revised to include further direction regarding daily reviews. The director of standards and compliance continues to monitor all placements.

Regarding recommendation 4 noted on page 166 relating to the independent adjudicators reviewing appeals by inmates placed on administrative segregation, *The Correctional Services Act, 2012* states that the director's decision upon appeal is final. As such, to be able to implement this recommendation, legislative changes are required. We do not have a timeline for implementation at this time.

That concludes my status update. I'm happy to answer any questions the committee members may have. Thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Thank you very much. I'll open it up now to committee members. MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — I was just going to jump to section 3.5 on page 166. The independent adjudication of appeals, this is now a constitutional requirement. What is the ministry doing to ensure that they're in line with what is required? And how are they ensuring that they're not just meeting the minimum requirements?

Scott Harron: — Scott Harron, assistant deputy minister of custody services. So there's two different types of segregation. There's administrative segregation, which is what this audit focuses on, and there's disciplinary segregation. Now that was the one that was the subject of the Supreme Court of Canada's recent decision. So there is currently no constitutional requirement to do an independent review for administrative segregation — it's very much a best practice thing — but there is for inmate discipline.

Now we have previously and we do agree with the auditor that this should be something that is independently reviewed. That's best practice. It makes a lot of sense. It takes some of the pressure off my staff as well. So the idea will be to include those while we're doing legislative amendments in order to do the inmate discipline side of things.

Joan Pratchler: — And so does that fall under the legislative

amendments that there's no timeline yet to make that happen? Or is that a separate legislative amendment?

Scott Harron: — They will all go together when it does go ahead. We just don't have a time we can talk about in terms of when that will happen.

Joan Pratchler: — What are we talking about? Like a year?

Scott Harron: — I think at the end of the day it probably isn't our decision to make. So it's not something I am able to say in this forum.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay, thank you. Okay.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon.

[11:30]

Hugh Gordon: — I just want to, like, understand some of the definitions that were, I guess, used by the ministry with respect to administrative segregation and disciplinary segregation. Just I was wondering if you could explain from your view, vantage point, the difference between those two types of segregation and how you determine which one is which.

Lindsay Tokarski: — Hi. I'm Lindsay Tokarski, director of operational services. So administrative segregation is for the security of the correctional facility and the people within it, whereas disciplinary segregation is a result of an infraction, and it really depends on the severity of the incident. For example, last year all persons on administrative segregation were on there for violent or aggressive behaviour. And we're talking repeated aggressive acts against other people.

So other measures are typically used first. Like they'll try discipline. There's behaviour management plans. There's moving them to another unit. Administrative segregation is really a last resort when we don't have any other option of dealing with that behaviour.

Hugh Gordon: — So sorry, just to clarify that, you're saying administrative segregation is for people who've been violent towards others? Or is that disciplinary segregation?

Lindsay Tokarski: — Well it can be both. Disciplinary segregation can be used for any of the infractions that are in our legislation, right? But kind of the difference between the two is that administrative segregation, typically what we're seeing in terms of trends is repeated violent behaviour towards other people. Whereas discipline, it can range from anything from violence as well to major destruction of property. There's quite a number of different infractions.

Hugh Gordon: — I'm just trying to understand how you would decide which is which, you know? Someone's violent towards someone; you're saying to me that they could end up in either-or. If they commit some property damage, they could be either administratively dealt with or disciplinarily dealt with. Do I understand that correct?

Scott Harron: — Sometimes it can be a very fine line. It depends upon the facility director, the management staff, which pathway they want to go. Sometimes where it's helpful for me is that disciplinary segregation tends to be reactive. Something has happened; we're taking action to deal with that, whether that is violence or whether that's disobeying orders, that sort of thing.

Administrative segregation can be more preventative. We believe this is going to happen; it's happened before. We have tried behavioural management plans. We have tried moving you to different units. The same thing has happened. You really just need some time, time away from it all. You can stabilize a little bit during that time and essentially we just don't have any other choice but to put you here.

We don't use it very much. Last year we only used it three times across the entire system. That's a 99 per cent reduction from where it was about five, six years ago. This is one of the reasons why we're hoping to close off the reporting side of things as it is used so infrequently now. We've kind of evolved over the last six years in terms of how we deal with behaviour that it very much is a last resort that's rarely used.

Hugh Gordon: — And so you are referring to administrative segregation?

Scott Harron: — Yes.

Hugh Gordon: — Only three times last year. Okay, thank you very much.

Scott Harron: — Yeah. Very, very few.

Hugh Gordon: — On those three times, can you tell us like how long those were and the length of the stay?

Scott Harron: — I'll give you the high level and then Lindsay will give you the details. All were less than seven days, so way below the 15-day limit that's required. We don't like to have people in administrative segregation longer than they have to be, both because it's better for people to be around people, as well from a staffing perspective that's extra time, extra money on our hands in order to get them there.

Lindsay, do you want to give the times on the three?

Lindsay Tokarski: — Well two were for seven days and one was for six days. So the average length of a stay was 6.7 days.

Hugh Gordon: — How long, sorry?

Lindsay Tokarski: — 6.7 days.

Hugh Gordon: — 6.7 days. Thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Looking to committee members that may have further questions. MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — Why did you decide on three years as a module review cycle length?

Scott Harron: — That mirrors some of our other training. Like our force options training that we implemented last year is also on a three-year rotation. It's enough of a refresher to make sure that it's fresh in people's mind, but not so much that we're

pulling a lot of staff off. Training can be quite expensive when you're dealing with 2,000 employees. So that's a good level.

They also get it in the induction training program, which is the recruitment training program that they get at the beginning. And everybody's been trained up. Pretty much everybody's been trained up since this recommendation came in. We're just kind of picking off the stragglers who may only work one shift every six months.

Joan Pratchler: — If the modules receive minor updates, are all the staff still required to take them? Or how does that get fanned out if there are minor updates?

Scott Harron: — We have quite a robust policy amendment procedure within the ministry. We amend our procedures quite a lot. As I'm sure you can expect, this area of society tends to evolve very quickly, so we want to make sure we're up to date. So when the policies are updated they will go around to all employees with a message saying, "Please make sure you review this. The following changes have happened." The training will be adjusted at the same time.

And particularly if it's anything that's significant, that may not . . . it may be before, and nothing like that has happened since we've put out the policy. But if there ever is, that comes up to the unit leads to then also draw their staff's attention to this, saying, "This is the new procedure. This is how we're going to do this."

Because they happen so infrequently across the system, I suspect our managers probably pull out the policy the moment they have to decide whether to do this and give themselves a bit of an independent refresher. The training is also electronic, so it's available at any time.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay, thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — Yes. We know that there were changes to the tracking sheet that have been implemented and I'm just . . . You mentioned there were only three instances of administrative segregation in the last year. Do I understand that correctly?

Scott Harron: — That's correct.

Hugh Gordon: — But maybe going back to when the recommendation was implemented, I was wondering if you could just tell us briefly if there was a reduction in improper administrative segregation placement decisions, reviews, or health care assessments since that.

Scott Harron: — In terms of the improper ones or just in general?

Hugh Gordon: — Well you know, presumably the changes were made to ensure we catch that so that there weren't like an improper decision or that the decision was noted properly, etc., etc. There weren't any like . . . There was rationale provided; the procedures were followed properly.

Maybe improper isn't quite the right word, but I'm just wondering if you could tell us if you've noticed an improvement in that area in terms of how the decisions were made and if they're properly reasoned, etc., etc., if you've seen a reduction since implementation of this recommendation. Perhaps it's moot because there were only three instances last year, perhaps less the year before. I'm not sure.

Scott Harron: — It's a little bit of both. I would say that it became more robust after we started looking at it, you know, making sure the policies were up to date, adding the tracking sheet, adding the training, you know, putting that rigour around it that makes sure that the decisions that are being made are consistent and step by step.

Back in 2019 we had 247 placements. Before that it was more. So yeah, we've done a lot of work over the last six years to, you know, evolve our approach to making sure that we're trying other options before we try this.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — The auditor noted that there were three out of five tests they did showed that the daily reviews were not being completed. Can you share some of the challenges faced and what is being done to address that?

Scott Harron: — Sure. When some are not completed that doesn't necessarily mean that they're not being all completed for somebody's placement; it means the occasional one was missed. There is a number of other ways that information comes forward.

People on administrative segregation have the same rights as anybody else. They do programming. They have visits, regular meetings with staff. They get time out of their cells to do exercise and recreational activity, that sort of thing. So certainly when we're looking at somebody who's on administrative segregation we're looking at it from a fulsome perspective, that there's a whole bunch of staff who are involved with this individual who talk with them. The daily reports are a nice little consolidation of that, but certainly not the only thing we're basing our information on.

Ideally of course, we want to make sure those are getting done consistently. And any time central office notices this, we are following up with staff, with the directors, making sure we're closing those gaps. And I'm proud of the work that we do, and having that central office look at things does make sure that we're keeping a look on it.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — I just want to circle back a little bit to . . . My first question was regarding the appeals. How does the ministry ensure that the current internal appeal decisions are free from bias or conflict of interest given that they're handled within the same correctional centre?

Scott Harron: — Just wanted to double-check. So those go up to the facility director. They are essentially the equivalent of an executive director for the facility. They're quite high up in the management so they wouldn't be involved at the day-to-day side of managing the inmate. They'd be part of the senior leadership team there.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — Just a question with respect to compliance. Are all facilities compliant with legislative and policy requirements? And then what would be the process for enforcing compliance, let's say if it was detected not to be the case?

Lindsay Tokarski: — So we have the director of standards and compliance at central office reviewing all the placements every week. So they go into our system, they check to see if there's any placements, and then they start following and tracking what's going on. And what we've noticed, and especially since we improved our quality assurance tracking, is that the reviews are getting done.

All of the initial placement reviews, if there's a seven-day review or a 14-day review done, they're all getting done. So there's 100 per cent compliance there. And all of the placements also have their health care assessments done, so we have seen a remarkable improvement over time in terms of the completion of the rates of the reviews.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you. I see that the yearly statistics are available online. Do you intend to make the reports on the deficiency available in any form?

Scott Harron: — There is some information available online in terms of our use of administrative segregation. That would be the public reporting that we would do on this. In terms of any misses, that's what this form would do.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay, so that would be included in that is what you're . . .

Scott Harron: — No, no. Just the use of administrative segregation.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay. And do you intend to make any of those deficiencies public at all in any way?

Scott Harron: — No.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay. What further information and analysis has been added to the annual report?

Lindsay Tokarski: — The annual reports, are you talking about the publicly available data?

Joan Pratchler: — Yes, please.

Lindsay Tokarski: — Okay. So we have demographic information. I think it was already mentioned by Mr. Schwab about that. We haven't added anything since we started reporting it. We took a look at what other jurisdictions were doing for their reporting, and we followed along, kind of, the standard that we found across Canada.

Joan Pratchler: — No further questions.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Any other questions, MLAs? And just to clarify, so the one recommendation around the independent — what's the proper term here? — adjudicator, what's required there is legislative change. And the Act right now is 13 years old, right. Okay. No, that's good. So I mean we have other forums to push for that to be a priority and to be addressed.

Thanks so much, Deputy Minister Macza and all of your officials that are here today. I would welcome a motion to conclude consideration of chapter 15. Moved by MLA Beaudry. All agreed? That's carried. And we'll move right along now to chapter 16.

Victor Schwab: — Thank you. Chapter 16 of our 2024 report volume 2, found on pages 169 to 173, reports the results of our sixth follow-up audit on the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety's processes to rehabilitate sentenced adult inmates within provincial correctional centres.

Research indicates inmates participating in rehabilitation programs have lower reoffending rates than inmates who do not receive treatment or participate in programs. Rehabilitated inmates also have more opportunities to return to work and contribute to their community upon release.

[11:45]

In our original audit in 2008, we made four recommendations. By March 2021 the ministry implemented two recommendations and made progress on the other two. This chapter shows the ministry has now implemented the last two outstanding recommendations.

The ministry updated its case management policy in 2023. The policy requires correctional staff to complete an assessment of a sentenced inmate's risks and needs within 35 days of their admission to a secure custody facility. If case management activities cannot be completed within the required 35 days, the ministry's updated policy requires staff to document the reasons why not.

We analyzed the ministry's weekly case management dashboard reports and found a 24 per cent decline in the number of inmates without or having incomplete risk assessments and case plans between '23 and '24. Over about 80 per cent of sentenced inmates had completed plans in 2023. Completing case management activities timely enables inmates with a higher risk of reoffending to access and participate in rehabilitation programming sooner.

In 2023 the ministry also developed the offender services program evaluation strategy. The strategy prioritized evaluating ministry-delivered rehabilitation programs in its correctional facilities. By March 2024 the ministry evaluated five rehabilitation programs at its Saskatoon Correctional Centre and found program results showed evidence of recidivism reduction for all five programs. The ministry evaluation also found offenders are less likely to return to custody if they completed any three of the five evaluated programs during their sentence, compared to those who did not attend similar programming.

We found the ministry appropriately utilized program results to improve rehabilitative programming processes. For example, the

ministry prioritized inmates with the highest risk of reoffending to attend rehabilitation programs, such as its Thinking for a Change program, which focuses on social skill interventions to reduce risky choices. Conducting program evaluations can help the ministry determine successful rehabilitation programs and make adjustments if and where necessary.

That concludes my presentation. I will now pause for the committee's consideration.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Thank you. Thanks very much for the focus here. And I want to give a shout-out as well: thank you for the diligent follow-up over the years on this front, and wonderful to see the actions that have been taken to finally implement these recommendations as well. This has of course been considered at this table before. Full agreement by this committee. Any comments before we open it up for questions?

Denise Macza: — I would just like to say thanks again to the Provincial Auditor team for the work done on this. And we agree that the assessment here, that the two outstanding recommendations are now fully implemented.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Committee members, any questions? MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you. How many inmates were wait-listed to attend a program and were not able to attend a program, that you're aware of?

Joshua Freistadt: — So we don't have that information with us, but we can provide it. It'll depend on what programs we look at specifically. We'd probably focus on the ones in the chapter, like the cognitive behavioural therapy programs that we have.

Hugh Gordon: — I'm just trying to flesh out like how much of that would have been due to a lack of capacity versus perhaps an offender's sentence length might determine that. So yes, I'll look forward to getting that information. Will you be able to provide it to us, say, in a month? To the committee? Thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — And maybe just to confirm. So thanks for the undertaking to provide the information back to the committee. And one month will work to get that? And you can send it through the Clerk and it will be then available to all the members. Thank you. MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — Could you tell me how many times inmates chose not to attend a program?

Joshua Freistadt: — No, we don't have that either.

Joan Pratchler: — Would you be able just to attach it to the document you might be sending?

Joshua Freistadt: — We can see if we can extract that information. As you'll see — and know from the history of this coming back to this table a number of times — what is recorded in the data system is one of the reasons these recommendations have taken a number of follow-ups in order to capture. So I'd have to confirm whether we'd have that specific information in our system. If it is, it will be attached to the undertaking.

Joan Pratchler: — Is it an IT system that just needs another column?

Joshua Freistadt: — If it were that simple. Possibly. But adding another column to an IT system can be a significant endeavour and has a whole host of processes that we have to go through in order to get the budgetary requirements, etc., to upgrade systems.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — Yeah, because we're really just talking about like how what you're doing is actually helping to, you know, reduce recidivism, right. So I just was wondering if the ministry has conducted any formal evaluation or impact analysis to assess whether improved case management and timely completion of risk assessments are actually reducing recidivism. I was wondering if you can speak to that.

Dean Carey: — Dean Carey, executive director of offender services. We've done a number of different evaluations around the importance of having a timely assessment, identifying the identified criminogenic risk needs of the clients that we work with, and then referring them to appropriate programs to address those different needs.

I think within the chapter itself it demonstrates a number of those different programs, whether it be for violence or social skills or a variety of other criminogenic needs. And certainly we know from the evaluations that we've done that if we're able to do that and individuals are able to complete those programs, that it reduces recidivism and the likelihood of them returning is less. Or is greater, sorry. Less, yeah. Sorry.

Hugh Gordon: — As a follow-up, can you speak to like how that has impacted the recidivism rates? Like you're actually seeing a reduction and do you know your numbers in terms of percentages?

Dean Carey: — Well so, interestingly, when we validated the risk assessment in Saskatchewan which we use for adult inmates, if an individual does not complete any programming at all, it identifies that 80 per cent is likely to recidivate. We do do case management. We do do programs. And so, often when we're looking at recidivism rates for the province now, it's definitely under 50 per cent.

The more programs that they're able to complete, that recidivism rate goes down. And so through the creation of this whole process actually, and the creation of a number of lists and reports and being able to do a variety of things, we can much better now monitor and track those pieces and demonstrate that that does in fact happen.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you for that.

Dean Carey: — You're welcome.

Joshua Freistadt: — Further to your question, the most recent information we have on recidivism rates puts 46 per cent of people in general leaving custodial sentence returning within two years.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — How does the ministry prioritize access to programs for high-risk inmates and how is fairness ensured for others awaiting programming?

Dean Carey: — Well we certainly want to try to prioritize high-risk individuals. In terms of, I mean, the greatest reductions, the highest need is with those individuals. So once entered, admitted, assessed, then the criminogenic needs are identified and then they are then referred to available programs with the goal being . . . Going back to your question earlier, they can refuse to enter those programs; however most will agree to enter a program.

Joan Pratchler: — Is there typically a long waiting list then for programming for those that would like to attend?

Dean Carey: — Well it depends on the facility. It depends on the program sometimes. I mean we've certainly expanded programming. So for instance, the dedicated substance abuse treatment unit — which is an addictions program/criminogenic need program which was started at Regina Correctional Centre — in the last number of years we've been able to replicate that program across the other four major centres, which again does a really good job of meeting the need.

In terms of the other cognitive behavioural types of programs that we have, it really is about trying to ensure that they can be offered in a timely fashion and that we can have individuals attend as identified through their risk assessment.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Just a quick question. You mentioned the recidivism rate of 46 per cent across offenders over a two-year period. What's that rate for high-risk offenders?

Dean Carey: — That 46 per cent would be across all offenders.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Right.

Dean Carey: — That's a good question. I'm sure that we could get that information and bring it back to the committee.

Joshua Freistadt: — Sure.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Thanks so much. A similar undertaking, within a month through the Clerk, does that work? That works? Thanks so much. MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — Just a final question. I just was wondering what the ministry's plans were to expand evaluation to other programs and facilities, particularly those delivered in collaboration with partners. For example, cultural or educational programs.

Joshua Freistadt: — Yeah, so you'll see maybe a reference in the status update. We've got an ongoing sort of evaluation strategy that outlines where we intend to go next. You heard earlier today comments on third-party delivery like the īkwēskīcik iskwēwak program and efforts to work with third parties like the universities to evaluate those.

And then when it comes to cultural services and so on, we're doing some work to identify consistency across. There's some administrative stuff that would have to happen before we look at an outcomes evaluation or that sort of thing.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — Last question. I'm looking at page 173 in a chart that reviews the results of programming. What are the criteria used in the evaluations that are done to establish the reasons for the results, for their efficacy?

Dean Carey: — Sorry, could you repeat that question?

Joan Pratchler: — So the results are in that far right-hand column there.

Dean Carey: — Yes.

Joan Pratchler: — What criteria are used in determining — you know, the evaluations that are done to determine that — why those results were gained? So if there is a 48 per cent completed it, like why is it 48, you know, and not 23? But it was 48. What are the kind of criteria that are used to follow up to get, you know . . . Flush that out a little bit.

Dean Carey: — Sure, okay. So in terms of any of these evaluations, it's really important to construct a methodology that clearly outlines what it is, like what is the outcome, what are you attempting to measure. In this situation, again this goes back to a lot of the work now that's been done over a lot of years to actually create that information, having the technology and the ability to do this.

And so basically what it allows us to do is look at those individuals that were involved and completed a program versus individuals who did not attend the program, did not get programming. And then it's looking at those two numbers and looking at recidivism. And so for those individuals who completed the program, the rate of recidivism or the rate of return to custody is lower than those that did complete the program. Oh, sorry. Those that completed the program, the rate is lower than those that did not complete the program.

Joan Pratchler: — And maybe I didn't ask the question clearly.

Dean Carey: — Okay.

Joan Pratchler: — You have program X. They go to program X. How do you evaluate the content of that program to make sure that that's matching, you know, what is needed, or how that's presented meeting the needs of the people that are taking it, or modifications that need to happen in that programming? Sorry about that.

Joshua Freistadt: — Yeah, that would be a bit of a separate step rather than an outcomes evaluation like you see here. We'll conduct something like a formative evaluation to go, this is how this program is designed in literature, and then occasionally have a third party come in or some quality assurance folks come in and go, okay, observe how it's being delivered, discuss with the facilitators what's going well, what isn't, and make adjustments as needed. So we'll do a step to look at, okay, is this being delivered as intended.

[12:00]

I think further to your question, if you're thinking of criteria and you're going, well, what's the criteria for completion? It means you would have gone through all of the sessions. Now in a custodial environment, typically you start the program and we know how long you're going to be there. And there is really nowhere else for you to go, so most people complete. That's different than a community-delivered environment where, you know, you may have non-completion or program attrition, that sort of thing.

Joan Pratchler: — And I guess what I'm trying to drive at, to make sure that I understand, is how or what is in place to know that that program is meeting the needs of the clients? Like what informs modifications to the content of the program rather than whether they completed it? If it was a really great program, good. If they completed it and you get a lot of people coming back again, how do you know when to adjust that program to really, you know, drill down to what is needed to ensure its success with the clients?

Joshua Freistadt: — I think we would undergo a similar process again to what you heard before. So the first step is being able to evaluate these programs to figure out, are they actually delivering results? The second question is, if they're not, why not? And to look into those sorts of things.

Often in situations like that we might do something like you saw with īkwēskīcik iskwēwak where we'll go, okay, here's the outcome, this program we have delivered. And we'll turn to community providers to go, can you design and deliver something a little less prescriptive, to try and encourage some innovation, among others. Some of those formative evaluations often entail connecting with clients as well too to go, what's working, what isn't, and incorporating some client voice.

In general, most of the programs we pick though are pretty consistent. They're coming out of extensive literature reviews around what works, what does delivery look like. And then we'll spend some time maybe altering that to the Saskatchewan context. So for instance, the dedicated substance abuse treatment units, when we wanted to roll that out to a female facility, we brought in a third party to go, okay, what's this going to look like for female delivery? And how do we ensure that it's meeting, you know, a culturally relevant delivery as well?

Joan Pratchler: — How often are those reviews conducted?

Joshua Freistadt: — That depends on sort of the evaluation strategy we have in front of us. So we have enough programs that they might come up every six or seven years when you consider the amount of work that it takes to evaluate a program. So we usually pick off one at a time.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Thanks again. Do you know how much a program like Thinking for a Change, how much that program costs to deliver annually?

Joshua Freistadt: — So with a program like that, the cost would be predominantly the facilitators, the staff costs that we're having individually. I think you're looking at, depending on the facility, two to four program facilitators per facility, so relatively low. There's isn't like an expensive licence fee with most of those programs, that sort of thing.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Thanks. I guess any of these programs where you see the reduced recidivism, obviously there's a real benefit here. You're talking about reduced harm to community, harm to the offender who's been released as well, and then the reduced costs as far as not interacting with the police and the justice system and not going back into corrections.

So recognizing all the benefits of reducing recidivism, from the value-for-money side, do you ever sort of quantify how much these programs are costing and what, I guess, the savings and the reduced recidivism that may be resulting from that program and that intervention?

Dean Carey: — An example I can give you . . . So the serious violent offender response was a program that was evaluated, and with that what we did was establish a contract with the University of Regina to do a cost-benefit analysis.

And so through that cost-benefit analysis they can clearly identify the cost savings by having those individuals both supervised and reducing their risk to recidivate in terms of overall savings to the province. And many times it's four to six times what you would normally expect in terms of the money you get back in terms of the benefit of doing programs like that.

Chair Wotherspoon: — No, thanks so much. And if you're looking at a program like that Thinking for a Change, how many inmates are going through that program in the last few years on the annual?

Joshua Freistadt: — Wish I had the binder I usually take to estimates. I wouldn't have to table all this stuff. We can endeavour to put that in that. So like, number served in a year and then wait-list at time of snapshot is typically how that information is presented to me, and that's what we would put in the undertaking there.

Chair Wotherspoon: — No, thanks so much. And what's the average cost right now to lock someone up for a year?

Joshua Freistadt: — It's probably not helpful to look at for a year as many people aren't staying in custody for 365 days or what have you. It's probably better to look at marginal costs, so what's the cost of adding an inmate. And there's been extensive study done on that, and depending on the facility I think it ranged from 150 to 250 — this was a couple of years ago before a CBA [collective bargaining agreement] bump — so 150 to 250 per day.

Chair Wotherspoon: — And what's the average stay of an inmate?

Joshua Freistadt: — Were you talking remand or sentenced?

Chair Wotherspoon: — Give me both.

Joshua Freistadt: — I won't know the numbers off the top of my head, and this is public record so let's go . . . Averages are a little bit tricky because of the short-term remand stays and so on. I think probably maybe a large portion of remands will be less than one week, and on the sentenced it's in the chapter there. I think it has the details actually, so you can refer to the chapter or I can look it up here. But I feel like it was . . .

Tara Clemett: — Page 172. 834.

Chair Wotherspoon: — 834, I think, from page 172.

Tara Clemett: — Yeah, have a look at it.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Is that the number?

Tara Clemett: — It says that's the daily number, right?

Joshua Freistadt: — That's the daily number, but I recall seeing in the chapter the length of time, which was what your question was, correct?

Chair Wotherspoon: — Yeah, the question's the average sentence or stay.

Joshua Freistadt: — Yeah. Yeah, sorry. 169. For sentenced inmates, average sentence length was 12.5 months, while the average time served was 8.3.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, thank you very much, and thanks as well for just being open where there might be information that you can supply back to this committee. On some of the undertakings, we'll make sure we have the instructions on how to get that back to us.

And I don't have any further questions. Looking to the committee? Not seeing any, I'd welcome a motion at this time to conclude consideration of chapter 16. Any mover? Moved by MLA Beaudry. All agreed? Okay, that's carried.

So that concludes our business here with the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety. I want to thank DM Macza and her team, all the officials that have joined us here this morning, all those connected to the work as well. And I would turn it over to Deputy Minister Macza to provide any final remark that you may wish to.

Denise Macza: — Just thank you to everyone's time and for helping us prepare for this. Thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, thank you. This committee will recess and . . . Oh, sorry. We have one other piece of business, but thank you to all the officials that have joined us here today.

All right. Okay, folks, we'll move along here. At this time we're going to discuss a nominee with respect to our audit committee, and I'd welcome a motion to move in camera. Moved by MLA Crassweller. All agreed? That's carried.

[The committee continued in camera from 12:11 until 12:16.]

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, welcome back out of that in camera discussion. You know, I would announce that the committee has made a decision regarding the audit committee, and I would recognize a member to make a motion to reflect our decision. MLA Crassweller.

Brad Crassweller: — Yeah, I would make the motion:

> That the Chair consult with the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies prior to forwarding the audit committee member recommendation to the Speaker.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay. All agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Wotherspoon: — That's carried. Okay, folks. We will have a brief recess here and reconvene at 1 p.m.

[The committee recessed from 12:17 until 13:04.]

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, good afternoon. We'll reconvene the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. I'd like to welcome everyone back. And you know, I'll announce at this point that we're going to be moving in camera for an orientation session on the public accounts focused on volume 1. But we'll come back to adjourn when that session is finished.

And so I'll look to a member to move a motion to go in camera for that orientation. MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — Yes, Mr. Chair, I'll be happy to make that motion:

> That the committee do now meet in camera and that Tara Clemett, Carolyn O'Quinn, Trevor St. John, Melanie Heebner, Brent Hebert, and Jane Borland be permitted to remain in attendance.

Chair Wotherspoon: — All right, that's moved. All agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Wotherspoon: — That's carried.

[The committee continued in camera from 13:05 until 14:20.]

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, good afternoon. We've considered all of our items here today on our agenda, and we had a good session to get prepared for consideration of the volume 1 public accounts as well, which is coming up.

But at this point in time we don't have any other business and I'd welcome a motion of adjournment. Moved by MLA Crassweller. All agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Wotherspoon: — All right, this committee stands adjourned until the call of the Chair.

[The committee adjourned at 14:20.]