



STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Trent Wotherspoon, Chair
Regina Mount Royal

James Thorsteinson, Deputy Chair
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Terri Bromm
Carrot River Valley

David Chan
Yorkton

Hugh Gordon
Saskatoon Silverspring

Travis Keisig
Last Mountain-Touchwood

Joan Pratchler
Regina Rochdale

[The committee met at 09:01.]

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, folks, we'll convene the Standing Committee on Public Accounts here this morning. My name is Trent Wotherspoon. I serve as the Chair. I'd like to introduce the members of the committee: Deputy Chair Thorsteinson, MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] Chan, MLA Bromm, MLA Keisig, MLA Pratchler, MLA Gordon.

We have the following documents to table: PAC 94-30, Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan: Correspondence regarding SPSA audit, dated June 23rd, 2026; PAC 96-30, Ministry of Education: Report of public losses, March 1st, 2026 to May 31st, 2026; PAC 97-30, Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan: First quarter financial forecast for the first three months ending June 30th, 2026; PAC 98-30, Ministry of Advanced Education: Report of public losses, April 1st, 2026 to June 30th, 2026; PAC 99-30, Ministry of Finance: Report of public losses, April 1, 2026 to June 30th, 2026; PAC 100-30, Ministry of Finance: Government response to the second report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, dated August 18th, 2026.

I'd like to advise members of reports that are 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: 2026 volume 1, sessional paper no. 238; Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan: *Annual Report on Operations for the Year Ended March 31, 2026*, sessional paper no. 255; Government of Saskatchewan: 2025-26 Public Accounts volume 1, summary financial statements, sessional paper no. 258.

Hugh Gordon: — Mr. Chair.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — Yes, I'd like to introduce a motion for the committee to consider.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, MLA Gordon, if you have a motion, you could briefly speak to it and move that motion.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, members of the committee. My motion is with respect to travel expenses incurred on the part of the Legislative Secretary for Health. We learned very recently about some travel that the MLA from Moosomin had undertaken in his role as Legislative Secretary of Health. By all accounts appears to be fairly expensive travel, what I would deem not to be the norm.

I think we could all agree we as MLAs, whatever role we have here in the legislature — whether we're in the opposition, whether we're on the government side, whether we're a minister, whether we are a Legislative Secretary — we all have a fiduciary duty to the taxpayers of this province to ensure that the dollars are spent wisely and that we are accountable for our decisions with respect to use of those taxpayer dollars.

The opposition has asked for clarification on the travel expenses for the MLA for Moosomin. We've asked the MLA directly

himself. We have asked the Ministers of Health and Finance, and we have not received any word.

So with that, the motion is:

That the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, pursuant to subsection 16(1) of *The Provincial Auditor Act*, request that the Provincial Auditor perform a special assignment investigation to examine expenses claimed by legislative secretaries in the pursuit of their duties.

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

That the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, pursuant to subsection 16(1) of *The Provincial Auditor Act*, request that the Provincial Auditor perform a special assignment investigation to examine expenses claimed by legislative secretaries in the pursuit of their duties.

Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — No.

Some Hon. Members: — Yes.

Hugh Gordon: — Mr. Chair, if I could request a recorded vote please.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay. A recorded vote has been called. The question before the committee is the motion that was just moved by MLA Gordon. Should I read it again, or do you all have it?

David Chan: — Is there any opportunity for some comments?

Chair Wotherspoon: — That would have just been a moment ago when I asked that . . .

David Chan: — Okay.

Chair Wotherspoon: — All those . . . Should I read the motion? You guys got it before you?

David Chan: — Yeah.

Chair Wotherspoon: — It's a recorded vote. All those in favour of the motion, please raise your hand. All those opposed to the motion, please raise your hand.

Those in favour of the motion, two. Those opposed to the motion, four. Just a note to the folks that are following things, the Chair votes in the situation that there is a tie. I declare the motion lost.

Not seeing any other motions, I'd like to introduce officials from the Provincial Comptroller's office that are with us here today: Provincial Comptroller Brent Hebert — thanks for being here — and Donica Smart, assistant provincial comptroller. Thank you

for being here as well.

I'd like to welcome and introduce the Provincial Auditor, Tara Clemett, and welcome all of her officials that are in attendance with us here today and all those that have worked on the audits before us here today too.

Community Safety

Chair Wotherspoon: — Our first order of business here today is the Ministry of Community Safety. I'd like to welcome DM [deputy minister] Kratzig and her team that are with us here today, the officials that are here. Would you briefly introduce the officials that are with you? You can refrain from getting into the comments about the chapters right now because we'll come back to you after the auditor presents.

Kimberly Kratzig: — Good morning, everyone, and welcome. Joining me today from the ministry are Scott Harron, assistant deputy minister, custody services division; Mark McFadyen, executive director, custody services; Ed Renauld, executive director, workforce planning and development; Shannon Janzen, director, occupational health and safety; and Victoria Zhang, manager, internal audit. Thank you for the opportunity, and we look forward to the discussion.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay. Thanks so much. Thank you all for being here. I'm going to turn it over to the Provincial Auditor to make a presentation. And we have five new recommendations before us here today, and then we'll come back your way. Thank you.

Tara Clemett: — So thank you, Mr. Chair, Deputy Chair, committee members, and officials. With me today and on my left is Ms. Tara Kucher. And Tara's a principal in our office, and she was involved in conducting the work that we're going to be discussing today. Behind her is Ms. Michelle Lindenbach, and she is our liaison with this committee.

There are five new recommendations in this chapter for the committee's consideration. Before I do present on the chapter, I do want to thank the deputy minister and her officials for the co-operation that was extended to us during the course of our work.

The Ministry of Community Safety, formerly called the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety, operates five adult secure-custody facilities in the province. At February 2025 Saskatchewan had approximately 2,200 inmates in these correctional facilities. Chapter 9 in our 2025 report volume 2 reports the results of our audit of the ministry's processes to support the mental health of correctional workers employed at its adult secure-custody facilities. We concluded, for the 18-month period ended June 30th, 2025, the ministry had effective processes to support the mental health of correctional workers employed at adult secure-custody facilities other than the areas where we made five recommendations.

First, on page 69 we recommend the Ministry of Community Safety enhance the staff survey it uses to assess the effectiveness of mental health supports it provides to correctional workers. The ministry uses a psychological safety survey to assist in analyzing the effectiveness of mental health supports provided to correctional workers. Because the survey is designed to be used

across all ministries, the questions and results do not always highlight concerns unique to correctional work environments, such as daily exposure to violence and trauma.

Also ministries can choose whether they want the survey to allow for written comments from respondents. The Ministry of Community Safety did not choose this for its 2024 survey.

The ministry indicated it aims for a psychological safety score above 3.0 for all its correctional facilities from the survey. However, four out of its five adult secure-custody correctional facilities, their scores for the 2024 survey were below the target.

To be an effective performance tool, the ministry should revise its psychological safety survey to better assess the unique working environment of correctional workers. Alternatively the ministry could explore developing a separate survey for correctional workers.

In our second recommendation, on page 70, we recommend the Ministry of Community Safety provide clear guidance on when to use the critical incident stress management program to support correctional workers' mental health. The ministry uses the critical incident stress management teams, also referred to as CISM, at its correctional facilities to provide peer support to correctional workers following critical incidents such as suicide or physical attacks. In October 2024 the ministry created formal policies for the CISM program, setting out guidance and expectations for the program.

The ministry did not clearly state in its policy which critical incidents should involve CISM teams, but rather allows correctional facility management to decide whether to offer CISM. The ministry reported it offered CISM support on 84 instances in 2024-25, and correctional workers accepted and utilized CISM in 50 of those instances. This information was manually compiled by the ministry and is not something that was regularly tracked.

We tested 13 incident reports filed by correctional workers and found three reports related to incidents of violence where CISM was not offered. Without clear guidance on when to offer CISM support to correctional workers involved in critical incidents, certain workers may not receive the assistance they need to support their mental health after a critical incident.

In our third recommendation, on page 71, we recommend the Ministry of Community Safety consistently track, analyze, and report on the usage of the critical incident stress management program by correctional workers. The ministry's outlined reporting requirements in its CISM policies force CISM teams to provide certain reports to the correctional facility director. This includes a report after each use of the program, including details such as naming the CISM team members that attended the critical incident, which staff were offered CISM, and the limitations the CISM team faced during deployment.

[09:15]

Also a yearly report is expected, outlining CISM group training, CISM team meetings and minutes, and a list of when CISM was used and which CISM team members attended which incident. We found the ministry did not comply with its reporting

requirements. We found the ministry does not always know when CISM is offered and declined by correctional workers because reports were not always prepared when CISM is declined. Further we found correctional facilities did not prepare and provide the correctional facility director an annual report in 2024-25 about CISM activities.

In March 2025 the ministry engaged the University of Regina to evaluate its CISM program to determine successes and improvements. The ministry expected to receive these results in January 2026.

A well-functioning CISM program supports correctional workers who regularly face violent and traumatic situations as part of their job. Without appropriately tracking information and periodically analyzing CISM use and when is CISM provided or declined, the ministry cannot know whether the program operates effectively.

In our fourth recommendation, on page 72, we recommend the Ministry of Community Safety establish clear expectations for contacting correctional workers on mental health leave. The ministry will periodically check in with correctional workers on extended leave to take necessary steps for injured workers to receive appropriate support they need to improve their mental health and return to work.

We tested leave files for two correctional workers on mental health leave of absence, and it did observe documentation showing ministry staff contacted the correctional worker on leave generally every one to two months to acquire updated medical information or discuss the return to work, which was reasonable.

However the ministry has not established expectations on checking on those workers on leave. Good practice recommends establishing clear expectations for contacting correctional workers on leave. Where possible, prior to leave, ministry staff and the correctional worker should document and agree to planned check-in terms. Without clear expectations, the ministry may not obtain required case management information timely. And also allowing a correctional worker to have input into the process reduces the risk they feel harassed or unsupported by the ministry while on leave.

In the fifth and final recommendation, on page 74, we recommend that the Ministry of Community Safety specifically analyze key information — for example, performance measures and mental health injury data — to assess the effectiveness of mental health supports provided to correctional workers. The ministry had not set specific performance measures and targets to evaluate the effectiveness of mental health supports. Establishing and monitoring key performance indicators can help enhance the supports provided and identify areas for improvement.

Over the last three fiscal years, the ministry has experienced high levels of sick leave and overtime at its adult secure-custody facilities. The ministry's occupational health and safety consultants and return-to-work specialists developed a process to improve its tracking of incidents, leaves, and accommodation details. This tracking is expected to help gather better data to analyze correctional workers on mental health leaves of absence and the effectiveness of its mental health supports provided.

While the ministry did prepare some action plans to address concerns that came out of the various surveys, like the psychological safety survey or the employee engagement survey, we found these action plans incomplete because they didn't specify responsibilities, performance measures, targets, and time frames. Tracking and analyzing key information, like results, against performance measures can help in determining whether the ministry achieved its desired results, or if not, take action.

With that I will now pause for the committee's consideration.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Thank you very much for the presentation, the focus of the work. At this time I'll table the status update as well, table document PAC 101-30, Ministry of Community Safety: Status update, dated October 1st, 2026.

I want to thank whoever has been involved as well in detailing the actions that have been taken in that report to us. And I'd invite DM Kratzig to provide some brief remarks in response. Then we'll open it up for questions.

Kimberly Kratzig: — Thank you to the Provincial Auditor and her team for their work on this chapter and this important issue. The ministry has taken the audit recommendations seriously and has made substantial progress since the audit was completed.

Regarding recommendation 1, noted on page 69, which focuses on enhancing the staff survey used to assess the effectiveness of mental health supports provided to correctional workers, the ministry considers this recommendation fully implemented. Four text box questions were added to the employee health and safety survey to obtain more detailed, qualitative feedback from respondents. The survey will be distributed to ministry employees in November with results expected early in the new year.

Regarding recommendation 2, noted on page 70, relating to providing clear guidance on when to use the critical incident stress management, or CISM, program to support correctional workers' mental health, the ministry considers this recommendation fully implemented. Divisional policy was revised in January of this year to identify situations where the CISM team members must be deployed without exception. Policy review sessions were also held with facility directors, team coordinators, and team leaders.

Regarding recommendation 3, noted on page 71, addressing the need to consistently track, analyze, and report on the usage of the CISM program by correctional workers, the ministry considers this recommendation fully implemented. Divisional policy was revised in January 2026 to include clear language regarding tracking and reporting requirements. Standardized templates were developed and implemented to support the collection of consistent and reliable data. Policy review sessions were also held with facility directors, team coordinators, and team leaders.

Regarding recommendation 4, noted on page 72, related to establishing clear expectations for contacting correctional workers on mental health leave, the ministry considers this recommendation fully implemented. A detailed guide for managers was developed and shared in February 2026, and supporting local directives were developed in March of this year as well.

Together these documents establish clear expectations for maintaining appropriate contact with employees while on medical leave. The documents also provide guidance to managers on conducting supportive wellness check-ins that contribute to employee well-being and recovery. Wellness check-ins are documented to establish a clear record of contact, support consistent application of follow-up practices, and help ensure employees on mental health leave receive ongoing support and engagement throughout their absence.

Regarding recommendation 5, which is noted on page 74, related to analyzing key information including performance measures and mental health injury data to assess the effectiveness of mental health supports provided to correctional workers, the ministry considers this recommendation partially implemented. Work is under way to develop a reporting dashboard that will consolidate key organizational metrics, including correlations between incident and injury data, WCB [Workers' Compensation Board] claims, and approved time loss hours, sick leave utilization, and overtime hours.

Consolidating this information into a single dashboard will enhance our ability to identify trends, monitor emerging issues, and provide analysis to senior leadership regarding the effectiveness of workplace wellness initiatives.

The transition to a new computer system has required updates to the dashboard to accommodate new reporting formats and data structures. These changes are necessary to ensure the dashboard accurately reflects information from the new systems. We anticipate this work will be completed in the coming months and the dashboard will be fully operational by December 31st of this year.

Mr. Chairperson, that concludes my update on the status of the recommendations in this chapter. The team is happy to answer any questions committee members may have. Thanks.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, thanks very much for the presentation and many of the actions that have been taken to address the recommendations. I'd open up now to committee members that may have questions. MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you, Chair.

Welcome and thank you for joining us today. I'm looking at recommendation from page 69. And I know that's been implemented, but I just have a little bit of a question about what informed the choice and the content of those questions that would be in the four of those text box questions.

Kimberly Kratzig: — Thank you for the question. I'll give a high-level response, and then Shannon Janzen, who is much more informed in this area, will sort of round it out a little bit.

I think overall we certainly took some of the Provincial Auditor's observations about the survey and sort of what it assessed. And then also we did an assessment of the existing questions, which are really quite robust. It is a really strong survey. And then we determined what some of those gaps might be that really would help us understand how our correctional officers were feeling about this. So I'll turn it over to Shannon to maybe walk through a bit of that process.

Shannon Janzen: — Thank you. So the survey is a government survey, as mentioned earlier, that is set for all the ministries. So one of the areas that we identified was, when looking at the survey, there was a pre-set question that asked for the stressors, the highest work stressors of the workers. And there was an option for them to choose "none of the above." And we identified, based on our last year's results, that that was something that was selected quite frequently. So we did add an extra text box in there for workers to be able to express what some of their high stressors were that weren't listed.

Another area that we added an open text box is that we asked the user of the survey to please describe their supervisor's level of knowledge regarding psychological health issues. We also added an open text box that asked them to describe their supervisor's level of awareness of psychological health issues.

And then finally we added a text box just asking for suggestions on how we can improve our health and safety within the ministry. And we left those questions quite broad because we wanted to invite as much opportunity for them to answer those, that they can be assessed and we can use those to improve our program.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here today. I think it's a very good look on the part of the Provincial Auditor into this important area of mental health. When I was in the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police], it was something that had to evolve over time about attitudes within the organization as well as members' own awareness of these kinds of issues. So it's good that there's more of a focus going on in the corrections facilities and by the ministry in general.

You know, 30 per cent of all members' disability situations in the RCMP — it's probably higher now — was related to operational stress injuries. So this is a very important area. I'm glad to see that the auditor is focused on this area for you as well.

My question is with respect to the completion rate of the 2025 survey. I'm wondering if you could let the committee know what that rate was for 2025 across the ministry generally, but also in particular with the five adult secure-custody facilities.

[09:30]

Kimberly Kratzig: — We don't have that information broken down. We do have it; we can table it with the committee at a future date.

Hugh Gordon: — Yeah, just wondering like how that worked out for you — what kind of responses you got, if there were any questions that employees left blank, if there was any inquiry into why, that kind of thing. So I had some other questions if you did have something related to that but . . .

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon, I'll just stop for a second. I'll just make sure of that. So thanks so much for the undertaking to provide that information back to the committee.

Is 30 days reasonable for that? Okay, great. And that can come through the committee Clerk. They'll make sure you have the information. I'll turn it back over to you, Gordon. I just wanted to make sure we had that sorted. MLA Pratchler?

Joan Pratchler: — I have a question.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Go ahead.

Joan Pratchler: — A recommendation on page 70 was, what were the . . . Oh, pardon me. Your response, your actions were to clearly identify specific circumstances and when it was used. Would you be able to share with us what are the circumstances to engage the critical incident stress management process with your people?

Scott Harron: — Scott Harron, assistant deputy minister of custody services. So yes, we updated the policy. We really appreciate the auditor's recommendation around that to provide that level of clarity. All of our policies are available publicly, but I'll walk through them.

So the facilities are required to deploy CISM in critical incidents. That includes an inmate suicide or death; serious injuries or threats to an inmate, including significant self-harm injuries; any staff assault; serious injuries to staff; any fatal overdoses; escapes or attempted escapes; disturbances; riots; and hostage-taking. So that's the mandatory.

And then discretion is with the facility director to deploy in any other instance where they believe that an employee's mental health might have been impacted by an event. You know, we've had situations where a facility director has said, this doesn't fall within here but we want you out there anyway; we just want to be sure that staff are okay. And they'll deploy in those circumstances too.

The CISM program has been widely used, and according to the University of Regina's early survey seems to be one of the best in Canada.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you. Just wonder if you can tell the committee how many times CISM has been offered and accepted since the policy change, and how did that compare to the same stretch of time last year?

Scott Harron: — So in the Provincial Auditor's report in 2024-25, CISM was deployed 84 times. We don't have it for 2025 because the policy around tracking didn't come into effect until 2026. The auditor back in 2024-25 did a manual count around that.

Between February to August 2026, CISM has been deployed 55 times. We don't have the information yet on how many times that's been accepted. That's a bit of a complicated calculation because if CISM's deployed, it might be deployed to eight staff members. Each of those staff members has a decision to make on whether or not they want to accept any services or have those kinds of conversations. That would be part of the annual reporting requirements that we've implemented that will come kind of at the end of the fiscal.

Hugh Gordon: — Okay. Just as a quick follow-up to that is that I think that's a really important part of determining how effective the program is — how it's being accepted, if there's any issues on the part of employees perhaps still having some perception of stigma, if they self-identify or if they're asked. Yeah, this would be very good information to keep track of for your department. Thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — I would just like to look at recommendation no. 3 on page 71. How was or how is this critical incident stress management process being received by the front-line workers? I mean it's fairly new, the tracking and implementation. How has that been received by people on the front lines?

Scott Harron: — Thank you. A big question; a big, important question. Certainly when we talk to employees, when our facility directors talk to employees, the employees really appreciate having this program. They like the fact that we are paying attention to their mental health. Certainly over the last couple of years we've poured more and more and more attention into that aspect of our business.

You know, when it comes to the tracking, most of the front-line staff won't be involved in the tracking. But the CISM teams, the facility directors, the facility leadership, they like having that mechanism to track it. They like that there's eyes on it. They like that as the senior leaders can look at it from the broader perspective and say, okay, this program's going pretty well but how can we always make it better? How can we always take it to the next level? How do we make sure that it is still best practices in Canada?

And one of the things that we're finding through that U of R [University of Regina] survey or the U of R work is that, you know, not only is it one of the best in Canada but it's kind of right in there with the leading edge right across the world with a lot of Commonwealth countries.

And you know, I'll use this opportunity to give a shout-out to the members of the CISM team, the people, the employees who are out there who put up their hand and say, this is really important to us and we want to be part of this. You know, we provide up to 40 hours of training for those individuals. Last year we did a provincial conference. So we put a lot of resources into this program. And you'll never find a group of people in our custody facilities who are more passionate about something than the CISM members are passionate about this.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. On the U of R's evaluation, I was wondering if you could tell us how their evaluation informed you with respect to the improvements of the updated policies and what those recommendations were, which ones you accepted, which ones you amended?

[09:45]

Scott Harron: — So the evaluation didn't impact the changes that we've made over the last couple of years. It's not completed yet. This is actually something we were doing in parallel, you

know, something we'd already considered doing when this was coming this way. We're in the process right now, kind of working back and forth with the university, touching back, you know, to say, hey this is good, but can you give us a little bit more here?

So right now all we really have is that kind of a high-level "here's generally what we found." So haven't received it yet.

Hugh Gordon: — Fair enough. You're still at work on it?

Scott Harron: — Correct.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you for that.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you. I was wondering if you could tell me who was involved in developing the directives for the return-to-work model or process.

Shannon Janzen: — Thank you for the question. So the directives were built off of the guide that we developed for the medical combination return-to-work. So that guide was built in consultation with myself, and I have some training in return-to-work and what that looks like and how to support employees in that, as well as with our OHS [occupational health and safety] consultants, in consultation with our Public Service Commission and their guidelines.

We also built that guide with some information in it for supervisors on how to create a comfortable environment for those employees when they are reaching out to establish those wellness checks. Things that they can talk about, things that they should avoid talking about to make sure that the employee is comfortable and isn't feeling pressured.

We developed a template for them to also document to ensure that they're staying on track with doing those check-ins. And those check-ins are developed to allow the employee to dictate their comfortability on how they want to be communicated with, how frequent they want to be communicated with.

We also ensure that we've provided some guidance in there to the supervisors, some speaking notes, some difficult-conversation guides to ensure that they are making sure that the employee is comfortable and they are feeling supported, as well as some resources in there for the supervisors to be providing for the employees. And all of the directives were written using that guide to guide what he was going to say.

Joan Pratchler: — So were employees consulted in kind of what comfort levels are involved in those directives as well?

Shannon Janzen: — So the direct building of the guide and the directives, we didn't have direct consultation with the employees. However our experience with dealing with these types of files and with the employees while they're on leave guided our decisions. We do allow in that guiding in the directives to have the supervisor and the employee have a conversation and let the employee tell us where they're comfortable on the frequency of contact.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — I think keeping track of employees who are on leave for, you know, psychological or mental health reasons is really important. That's something that in my former career in the RCMP also evolved. And it's really important to maintain that contact with people who had to take absences from work for various reasons but not the least of which was for mental health reasons.

I was wondering if you could just tell us if . . . I presume you keep track of how many of your employees are on leave for mental health or psychological reasons and how the numbers compare to last year, if it's something you find to be steadily increasing, remains consistent year to year.

Scott Harron: — All right. Figuring out the best way to answer that question. Okay, I'll give you kind of two measures that we're looking at, just kind of that are going to be built into our dashboard over time.

The first isn't actually . . . I'll start with sick leave. So sick leave has been trending down across the division over the last five years. In 2021-22 the average per employee was 131 hours of sick leave annually. The year after that, it was 123. And then it was 115, then 109, and last year it was 99 per employee. So this constant decrease of 24 per cent over the last five years certainly speaks to us doing a lot better job in supporting our staff and in making sure that they're able to work.

In terms of the WCB psychological cases, those have also been trending in the right direction. And this is the number of cases. It isn't necessarily the people who were off at any given time, but the number of cases annually. In 2022-23 there were 50 cases. The following year there were 31, then 39 in 2024-25, 32 in 2025-26.

And so far this year there have been 11, which if we extrapolate out to a four-year, it looks to be about 24, which if we hit will be our lowest year in at least five years. And this is of course at a time when we're also having more staff, more people in custody. So seeing that kind of a trend continually decreasing is certainly very positive for us.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — This new process has been in place roughly . . . well from what we can see in the report, since about January, some of the details. I was wondering, what's your plan for ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the new process?

[10:00]

Scott Harron: — That's a good question. And one of the really nice things that came out of this audit was the Provincial Auditor gave us the tools, the advice we need to really dive deep into that continuous improvement of this program. And not just to the CISM program but of everything we do around mental health.

So when we have this dashboard up and running, it's going to be updated on a monthly basis. Me, as a senior leader, I'll have access to that on a monthly basis. It'll include things like, how are things going when it comes to sick leave, when it comes to the WCB claims, when it comes to overtime. I review all of those on a monthly basis already, but it's certainly going to be nice to

have them all in one place and telling one story.

And then of course once we have that dashboard that's updated monthly we're going to have an annual analysis that comes out of it, taking a look at it and say, okay, from a bigger picture perspective — not month by month, but bigger picture — how did we do this year? Where are the gaps? Where are our strengths? Where do we want to show appreciation to staff and CISM members when they did a really good job? And where are some areas that we can move forward and clean up in the year ahead, which is really where we kind of want to be able to go?

You know, this is a big, big priority for the ministry. We want our staff members to be healthy, to be happy at work. You know, our leadership in all of the facilities, they're aware of how big a priority this is and they're committed to the same. You know, they work with everybody on a day-to-day basis. We want to make sure that our staff are in the best position that they can be to do what is a difficult job. And this audit has been very useful.

I'll end it there.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — Yeah, one last question, from me anyways. You mentioned the dashboard. I'm wondering if you could share with the committee who the vendor is that is developing that dashboard, whether they've been used before, and what their involvement will be for the ministry beyond just the development of it.

Scott Harron: — So the dashboard is built completely in-house. We've got some experts in the ministry who are really good at a program called Power BI, which is essentially a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet kicked up to the next level. So fantastic at pulling information in and being able to display it visually in different ways. It's got different filters that you can use if you want to be able to break down certain subsets of it. You know, you've got a curiosity of, okay well, this one facility we want to take a closer look at. You can use Power BI to kind of dive deeper into what that facility looks like.

So all in-house, yeah.

Hugh Gordon: — So you're developing it yourself, but you're relying on Microsoft products. Do I understand that right? Is that what you said? Microsoft program?

Scott Harron: — I'm not sure which vendor has Power BI. I just know that it's available across government; there's other ministries that use Power BI too. So we're using the tools available to us.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Looking to see if there's any further questions from committee members at this time. Not seeing any at this time, thanks again for the responses to the questions that were presented here today, and thanks for the work that's been taken on, the commitment to implement that last recommendation as well.

I guess I'd welcome a motion to concur and note compliance with recommendations 1 through 4. Moved by Deputy Chair Thorsteinson. All agreed?

Okay, that's carried. And I'd welcome a motion to concur and note progress with respect to recommendation no. 5. Moved by Deputy Chair Thorsteinson. All agreed? Okay. That's carried as well.

Listen, DM Kratzig and all your officials, thanks for your time here with us here today. Any parting words for us before we shift gears?

Kimberly Kratzig: — Just thank you very much.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay. Listen, thanks so much. We'll change it up and have Water Security before us here in a few minutes and get focused there. Thank you. Brief recess.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

Water Security Agency

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, folks, we'll reconvene the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. We're going to turn our attention to the Water Security Agency and the chapters that the auditor's presented with respect to the agency. I'll kick it over to deputy minister, interim president, and CEO [chief executive officer] Cam Swan to just briefly introduce the officials that have joined us here today. Refrain from getting into the chapters at this time. I'll go over to the auditor and then come back here for comments for that. CEO Swan.

Cam Swan: — Okay. Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks for the opportunity to be here today to provide an update on the status of some of the measures under way relative to a couple of different chapters here at the Water Security Agency. My name, as the Chair had indicated, is Cam Swan. I'm the interim president and CEO at Water Security Agency.

I'm joined today by John Fahlman on my right here, vice-president of infrastructure. On my left is Thon Phommavong, vice-president of science and licensing. Immediately behind me is Jenna Boyko, executive director of compliance promotion. To the right here is Aaron Schweitzer, director of water and waste water approvals. And back to the left is Leah Clark, executive director of irrigation and economic development.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, that's great. We have two chapters before us here today. We're going to deal with them both separately. They're different, focused on different areas. First we're going to focus on some dam safety. I'm going to kick it over to the auditor.

Tara Clemett: — So thank you, Mr. Chair, Deputy Chair, committee members, and officials. With me today is Mr. Jason Shaw. He's the deputy provincial auditor that is responsible for the portfolio of work that includes the Water Security Agency. Behind me and on the right is Nicole Dressler. She's a principal in our office, and she was involved in some of the audit work we are discussing today. And beside her on her left is Ms. Michelle Lindenbach, and she's our liaison with this committee.

There are no new recommendations for the committee's consideration in the two presentations that we do plan to present today. We will, though, pause after each chapter for the committee's discussion and consideration. Before we begin, I do

want to thank the officials at the Water Security Agency for the co-operation that was extended to us during our work. With that, I'll turn it over to Jason.

Jason Shaw: — Thank you. The Water Security Agency is responsible for managing the province's water supply, including owning, maintaining, and ensuring the safety of over 70 dams that help preserve a sustainable water source. The agency considers nine of these dams major in that the failure of these dams would risk serious downstream flooding.

Chapter 21 of our 2025 report volume 1, starting on page 201, reports the results of our seventh follow-up of the Water Security Agency's processes to ensure the safety of its major dams. There were four major dams at the time of our original audit work in 2005, so our follow-up work continued to focus on those four. By November 2024 the Water Security Agency fully implemented the two outstanding recommendations.

[10:15]

In section 3.1 we found the agency coordinated discussion-based emergency exercises, called tabletop exercises, to test its plans for its Rafferty, Qu'Appelle River, and Grant Devine dams. At November 2024 the agency planned to similarly test its Gardiner dam emergency plans in early April 2025. Testing emergency plans is essential for the agency to ensure its plans function as intended during an emergency.

The lessons learned from these tests help the agency continuously improve its emergency preparedness. Use of effective emergency plans can safeguard lives, reduce property damage, and help local governments and/or other interested parties to develop their own emergency plans.

In section 3.2 we found the agency established adequate processes to ensure its manuals to operate, maintain, and monitor dam safety are complete and up to date. Each major dam had one main manual that covers dam components and relevant operation, maintenance, and surveillance information.

We examined these manuals for all four major dams and found they included appropriate components and procedures to operate, maintain, and monitor dam safety, such as periodic visual inspections of structures for cracks. Having fully documented operating and maintenance procedures in place help mitigate the risk of dam failure.

Thank you. And that concludes my presentation for this chapter.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Well thanks again for the folks for these chapters. Very important work and the follow-up here. I'll turn it over to CEO Swan for some brief remarks.

I guess what I should do is table as well the status update that you provided. So that's PAC 102-30, Water Security Agency: Status update, dated October 1st, 2026. Go ahead.

Cam Swan: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And my comments will be fairly brief on this particular chapter. And thank you, Ms. Clemett and provincial auditor staff for your efforts on this overall. And we appreciate the recommendations provided by your office as we always seek to improve our operations overall.

So regarding the audit itself, 2025 chapter 21 volume 1, "Ensuring Dam Safety," the two remaining items, as has been highlighted, have been implemented, having up-to-date and tested emergency preparedness plans for each of our major dams and setting a process to ensure manuals always include complete procedures to operate, to maintain, and to monitor dam safety. So I'm pleased to say that we have implemented all of those.

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

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you and welcome. When was the most recent emergency prepared test for the dams and what was tested? And were there any areas of concern? And what was the follow-up to those concerns?

Cam Swan: — I'll just turn it right over to John here.

John Fahlman: — Yes, John Fahlman, the vice-president of infrastructure. The most recent tests on one of the dams was in April on Gardiner dam. And it's a tabletop exercise that involves both what we call emergency response plan and emergency preparedness plan. There's two different plans that go with each one. The response plan has an internal target or internal audience that is basically for how the staff manage the emergency, and the external partners is part of the emergency preparedness plan. And there's municipalities and other entities that have an interest in the areas that get flooded.

So what we do is we gather them all together in a space and basically do a mock, and we last did that in April.

Joan Pratchler: — When's the next scheduled tests for each of these dams?

John Fahlman: — We have these scheduled — it's part of our dam safety management policy — every five years. And so because of the number of dams that we do, we have a schedule between 2026 and 2030 by dam of which years we're doing each one. So I don't think you want to hear each one, what year.

Joan Pratchler: — So is the frequency of the tests in any way impacted by the results of the tests?

John Fahlman: — I would say not to date. They basically get lessons learned out of each one. And depending on what lesson's learned, for the most part it's a lot of communication-type stuff; you just implement it right away. Yes, so I guess the short answer to your question is no, unless there's always the option to do that if it made sense.

Cam Swan: — If I can, just to add to John's comment: so far, no. But if there is a risk that identified saying, "No, we need to do more frequent," I would suggest that that would be raised up in our cycle to make sure that we do go monitor it.

Joan Pratchler: — That was my next question. Thank you. How often are the manuals updated?

John Fahlman: — The manuals are updated . . . There's another schedule for that. It's outlined in our policy. It's an ongoing continuous basis is my best answer.

Joan Pratchler: — And when they're updated, how does that flow through to the employees so that they understand the new changes? Like what procedures do you have for moving those through?

John Fahlman: — There's administrative procedures that track all the revisions and document all the revisions. And with each, depending on the type of revision, those will get cascaded down to all the staff that need them.

Joan Pratchler: — Yeah, good. Thank you. Those are all my questions.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — I was wondering if you can share with the committee how having emergency preparedness plans have helped the agency to plan for emergencies and work with other agencies to mitigate them.

John Fahlman: — So what an emergency preparedness plan does and emergency response plan does is you look at the different types of emergencies that could happen and then based on that, you basically enact the procedures to deal with that emergency.

So we have tables of possible things that could go wrong. And based on that, it's very specific as to when you initiate the incident command system and emergency response plans in an organized way, including roles and responsibilities of each of the persons involved and what their duties are in that response — how you stand it up, how you enact it, and how you stand it down — based on the emergency.

Hugh Gordon: — And is that something that all employees are familiar with, both the emergency preparedness plans and the response plans? And if so, how do you ensure from a management perspective that employees are fully aware of these plans and what their roles are with respect to the emergency or the incidents when they occur?

John Fahlman: — Yes, on an annual basis we do review each of the roles and responsibilities for each of the plans. And it's very specified. Each employee is named by name as to their role in each plan. And once a year we do have a gathering, I guess, or another mock exercise just to remind people that and keep them current on their roles and responsibilities.

So the plans themselves for each individual role has its own list of duties and roles that they have to be prepared for as part of their training. And so every year we renew that.

Hugh Gordon: — And have you noticed any improvements in terms of how prepared employees are for emergency and their capability of responding to them?

John Fahlman: — Yes.

Hugh Gordon: — Perfect. Those are all my questions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Looking to committee members that may have other questions. I know for anyone that's observing,

this is a follow-up chapter. Of course we've had the original presentation and fulsome discussion in the past, and we've had the actions that have been taken that have implemented these recommendations.

Not seeing any other questions, I'd welcome a motion of adjournment of this chapter.

James Thorsteinson: — I so move.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Moved by Deputy Chair Thorsteinson. All agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, that's carried. And I'll turn it back over to the Provincial Auditor to present and focus on chapter 25 of the 2026 report regarding regulating water use.

Jason Shaw: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Water Security Agency is responsible for managing the province's water supply, including planning for sustainable water use, by authorizing individuals and companies to draw water from ground or surface water sources and monitor water usage. Chapter 25 of our 2026 report volume 1, starting on page 253, reports the results of our second follow-up of the Water Security Agency's processes to regulate water use to support a sustainable water supply in Saskatchewan.

By March 2026 the agency made progress and partially implemented the five outstanding recommendations we first made in 2020. In section 3.1 the Water Security Agency developed draft procedures for processing and approving applications for water use, but approval of draft procedures and some more guidance is needed.

The agency's draft procedures provided staff guidance on administrative processes, standard water licence terms, and when surface water studies or groundwater supply tests are required. However the procedures lack detailed guidance for staff on decision factors to consider when reviewing applications. For example, the draft procedures did not make clear when a water supply evaluation is required for a surface water application. Once the agency improves its guidance, it needs to approve and use it.

Also we tested 21 water-use applications and found two instances where staff did not sufficiently document its rationale for decisions made. Not having complete written guidance and documented rationale increases the risk of the agency treating applicants inequitably. Written guidance also allows for knowledge transfer when staff turnover occurs.

In section 3.2 the agency developed procedures for estimating water use in February 2024, but more guidance is needed to make and properly record water use estimates. Procedures provide guidance for estimating water use in certain situations, such as when there are no current-year actual water use reports available. However the procedures did not include guidance for staff on when to use certain common estimation methods, for example, using a five-year average of actual water use or estimating water use at 80 per cent of the water allocation allowed under the licence.

We tested 30 estimated water use files and found staff did not adequately document how they estimated water use for five files. In one file we found staff incorrectly estimated water use using the wrong data. Having robust procedures to make and record estimates with adequate documentation will help the agency keep accurate records on water use.

In section 3.3 the agency approved guidance that includes steps to monitor and enforce that licensed water users comply with those licences. However this guidance was not in effect until April 1st, 2026. The guidance included how to assess the significance of any non-compliance identified and enforcement activities to take such as issuing warning letters and fines.

We found 105 licensed water users exceeded their water use allocations in '23 or '24 by a total of over 9000 cubic decametres. Of these, 12 exceeded their water use allocations by more than 100 cubic decametres which is an amount we consider significant. There was no enforcement action by the agency on these exceeded water use allocations.

Without effective written procedures to enforce water use licence conditions, or address significant identified non-compliance, the agency increases the risk that licensees continue to violate licensed conditions without consequences. As a result certain licensees may continue to not report their actual water use to the agency or exceed their allocated water use amount.

Lastly, in section 3.4 the agency has taken steps to provide senior management with written reports on compliance activities, but reporting needs to be more robust. Also the agency needs to begin better identifying and enforcing non-compliance with water use licences to be able to report on the effectiveness of those enforcement actions. The agency developed a template for reporting to senior management about aspects of non-compliance information. The template included information on the number of inspections required and completed for its other regulatory activities, but did not require information on non-compliant water users, types of non-compliance, or steps taken to address non-compliance by water users.

Not having robust reporting to senior management on compliance information increases the risk the agency is not aware of the nature and extent of non-compliance and related implications. Senior management may also not have the necessary information to verify staff take sufficient and appropriate action on non-compliance.

Thank you. That concludes my presentation.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, thanks so much for the presentation. This is, of course, follow-up that I guess comes originally from a report in 2020. Thanks as well for some of the detail, the actions that have taken. I'll kick it over to CEO Swan for some brief remarks, and then we'll see what we've got for questions.

Cam Swan: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you again, Ms. Clemett and the Provincial Auditor team, for the work on the side. My comments will be a little bit more substantive than the last piece because there's more substantive recommendations here, if I can just put it into context overall.

So obviously, yeah, Water Security Agency has taken some tangible actions resulting in continued progress towards addressing the recommendations outlined by the auditor's review of water regulations. Two of the seven recommendations have been fully implemented but clearly, you know, the others have not yet been fully implemented. Clearly documenting key components used to predict water availability for surface water sources and updating key completion date targets within a new four-year strategic plan and our annual business plan have been completed. The other ones have not to date.

[10:30]

The remaining five are now considered partially implemented. And I think, you know, we believe the follow-up audit illustrates progress on all recommendations, showcasing our commitment to refining and improving the water regulation process overall. WSA [Water Security Agency] has also committed to continued work and improvement to address the remaining recommendations that have been identified.

We're in the process of developing written procedures and implementing outcome-based compliance to improve service and address the remaining recommendations. With this, we expect most items will be implemented by the end of the '26-27 fiscal year. The outcome-based compliance model includes different activities required to achieve desired outcomes and generally illustrates our approach to compliance programming. By empowering clients with knowledge and support, we've built trust and collaboration we believe to achieve the desired outcomes overall.

Compliance promotion efforts will be prioritized based on the risk certain activities pose — risk to water basically — improving how resources are used at Water Security Agency. By shifting how we deliver compliance programming to a clear understanding of priorities and pathways project owners can use, we believe we strengthen our ability to manage water and address the auditor's recommendations overall.

This framework will improve the agency's ability to manage water in a way that will continue to support a growing province as well. Overall we believe this will improve oversight and service to Saskatchewan people. We aim to further build public trust as well and thus improve regulatory compliance using a collaborative, transparent, and proportionate approach, proportionate from a risk perspective.

We're moving towards this approach and then preparing the next steps towards the outcome-based compliance by delivering on the '26-27 compliance plan, which includes water use inspections; developing processes and procedures that will ensure compliance promotion activities are delivered using a consistent approach; begin twice-yearly compliance reporting to our executive committee starting in Q3 [third quarter] of this fiscal year, in fact later this month; continuing to engage with our partner stakeholders and clients to solidify collaborative relationships and ensure outcome-based compliance serves the people of Saskatchewan as best it can.

The general framework includes guiding principles and the approach for achieving outcome-based compliance. Program guides then offer detailed instructions or directions on how to

apply the framework for specific programs. Then the processes and procedures will provide detailed guidance for specific compliance actions, ensuring consistency and clarity in operations.

You need all three of those components in order to effectively deliver, in our view. We believe that builds a systematic approach to outcome-based compliance from broad principles to detailed execution, ensuring all recommendations including the details that you have highlighted here will be implemented.

Thank you, and we'd be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Thank you for that. I'll look to committee members now that may have some questions. MLA Keisig.

Travis Keisig: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. The auditor's report showing 9000 cubic decametres were overused by licensed water users, could you just put that number in perspective for the people of Saskatchewan? How much evaporation would happen on, say, Lake Diefenbaker over the course of a year?

Cam Swan: — So I don't have the exact numbers there for you, but just to put it in context, this is a small fraction of what the normal evaporation, net evaporation would be on Lake Diefenbaker for example. But I mean we're still focused on trying to get to 100 per cent compliance, but then in some of those ones that are out of compliance we take a risk-based approach. Some of them we're more concerned about than other ones, to be frank. I mean obviously we want to get to 100 per cent compliance, but that's why we try to, you know, direct our resources to deal with the ones where we really are significantly concerned about the risk.

We also do have additional technology and tools that are starting to help us in being able to get more timely, accurate information so that we can really, you know, like as real time as possible, get information so that we can direct our efforts, so that if there is a concern we can get out there quickly. Not after the fact, so to speak.

But those are foundational things that we have been putting in place. And we've tested a few of them, and that's part of that April 1st outcome-focused piece, that first report coming in at the end of this. But there's some pretty good early results, but it's earlier than the window of what the Provincial Auditor was looking at here.

Travis Keisig: — Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Any further questions? MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you. When I look at the auditor's report, the original one was 2020. It's going to be roughly till '26, '27 before it's implemented — seven years-ish. What's the source of the challenges in getting that completed?

Cam Swan: — Very good question. I mean I would say there's probably multiple pieces to that, but one of the foundational pieces is most of the data is manual data, manually reported data.

So we need to modernize. And we are modernizing a fair bit of what we're doing there overall. So that's part of it.

And I think the other part of it is, I mean, Thon, you probably can speak a lot more to this, but there's a lot of different pieces to this. There's different sectors; there are different components to it. So I know Thon can add to the comment.

Thon Phommavong: — Yeah, thanks, Cam. I'm Thon Phommavong, vice-president of science and licensing. To Cam's point, a lot of touch, a lot of activity in Saskatchewan, not only for drinking but also for economic support at sector for mining's as well as municipal use, private use. And each case has different needs and specific requirements when you talk about also groundwater, you're talking about surface water.

And then so a lot of our work right now, to Cam's point, it's manual, and procedures need to cover a variety of site-specific situations. And so it's important for us to build the foundation, to Cam's point. Once we get that, we feel that we should get rolling fairly quickly.

Cam Swan: — If I can, the recommendations here, I think it's fair to say that there is significant progress, but more details are required. So it's, you know, at least my view is it's not like nothing has happened since 2020. There has been evolution, significant. Needs to be more for sure, and there needs to be, but we believe those foundational pieces that we're getting in place will help us close that fairly quickly in a lot . . . Well by the end of '26-27 most of this should be in place.

Joan Pratchler: — And so most of this data's gathered or recorded manually? Or do you have an IT [information technology] system that can help speed some of this up?

Cam Swan: — Yeah, we have IT systems, multiple ones probably. So I don't want to put it all on just the manual first, but that's a big part of it as well. Like you're getting reporting in from various different sources, right? And then once you get the information in, well first off you need to make it user-friendly so people can actually report it in a timely way and in a way that you'd understand. So yes is the short answer, but we need to continue to improve on that too.

Joan Pratchler: — In that first recommendation it talks about developing procedures for processing and improving applications. And the response or the actions were that more detailed guidance is required. What kind of detailed guidance would that be?

Thon Phommavong: — So maybe I'll just speak to that a little bit. Like I said before, there are different requirements for different types of water use. So for example, mining, there's a different type of requirement. And then there's whether the source is actually surface or groundwater, so whether the water is actually in a different part of the province. So there are many nuances that we have to document, and then each case is different.

So that's why it takes a little bit longer for us to finalize the detail documentation. We have the drafted document, and then we don't feel that it's adequately addressed, and then it needs a little bit more refinement, and we're getting close.

Cam Swan: — If I can just add here . . . And my colleague's reminded me of some pieces here that I forgot about. Sorry. So since 2024 we've been working on the irrigation side with Irrigation Saskatchewan on an online reporting and monitoring tool, and there's some technology that's in there. And there's a couple of observations that we'd say. In the majority of cases there's less water being used than allocated, so that's a good thing overall. And two, it's being built with Irrigation Saskatchewan in that case so that it can be user friendly and people are willing and able to report it in a timely way.

But some of those pilots and some of the use of that, we'll also be using that in other sectors beyond irrigation within Water Security. So we'd think this is going to be a difference maker on this particular piece, but we still have to see how it resolves across the board to really satisfy ourselves, never mind the Provincial Auditor, that we have achieved all of these pieces, right.

Joan Pratchler: — Overall when I read, you know, this chapter, there seemed to be quite a few challenges with procedures, application process, compliance, and enforcement. And can you talk about some of those challenges and the linkages with the Diefenbaker irrigation project? What are we learning about that? And what will we have to make sure is in place so that is running, you know, as properly as it should?

Cam Swan: — Okay. So thanks for the question. There's a few pieces to this so I just wanted to get all of those straight. So that is actually one of the inertia for the outcome-focused piece to make sure that we are focused on the results overall. And some of the tools, the use of, in this case, irrigation and the reporting tools, is that's what we've learned through these pilots since 2024, and that's what we will be applying on those.

So essentially what I'm trying to say is that in any future irrigation use, we'll be using those tools to be able to report. Are they actually using what they have allocated? And in some cases, there's conditional allocations too. It depends upon what moisture and what water is available. So those will allow us to do that, not just on the irrigation of the Lake Diefenbaker westside irrigation project, all the irrigation, but including that.

Joan Pratchler: — Are you confident that there's adequate rigour in the processes that are going to be rolled out?

Cam Swan: — Yes, yes, I am. Yeah.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm wondering if you could tell the committee what the difference in procedure is between issuing of temporary industrial water rights licences and other water use applications.

Thon Phommavong: — I'll get Aaron Schweitzer to speak to the details of that project. He actually managed the licensing of that aspect.

Aaron Schweitzer: — Good morning. Aaron Schweitzer, director of approvals. So good question. The difference between

the temporary industrial water rights licence and just a traditional stand-alone water rights licence is the temporary water rights licence, really there's no permanent works associated with it. So it's typically a tool used to license mainly oil and gas industry on water haulers, say taking water from a dugout, a slough, a reservoir, and then using that at different sites in the oil and gas world. And it's a tool that we use. People buy it online. You get it within five days. We do a review where it's coming from, and off they go. And they use smaller quantities of water on a short-term basis.

Whereas a kind of stand-alone, long-term water allocation would be . . . There's a lot more review that goes into that from a long-term water availability perspective to see, you know, how much water is available at the source, how much water is that user proposing to be allocated, how much is available, and what conditions we would apply to that for that client to use that water long term, along with monitoring, reporting, and conditions of such.

[10:45]

So it's a short-term, easy, quick tool to use for the temporary system versus a long-term, more rigorous allocation that lives with the life of that project, if that makes sense.

Hugh Gordon: — Is that a fairly streamlined procedure on your end?

Aaron Schweitzer: — The temporary?

Hugh Gordon: — Yeah.

Aaron Schweitzer: — Correct, yeah.

Hugh Gordon: — Differentiations?

John Fahlman: — Correct, yeah. The temporary clients can purchase that online and we have an online system that intakes that and that we can administer those licences for. And they typically, they cost money too because you're paying for the use of that water as well in the industrial world. Whereas the traditional or the normal licensing process, it's a lot more rigorous process because it's a long-term licence.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you.

Cam Swan: — It's an example of the risk-based approach essentially, right? At the highest level.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — If I look at the chart on page 258 that talks about licensees exceeding allocated water use in '23 and '24, what is the challenge to curtailing this over-usage and what are the consequences for users that do so?

Cam Swan: — Sorry, I'll try to answer your question here. We might need a little follow-up from the team here. But overall, the risk we believe at the highest level is not major here. But when we would look at each individual situation overall we would talk to them, we would educate, we would . . . obviously always trying to get to compliance.

But ones where we do have a concern, a risk from a water perspective, then we would, you know, go further to be able to ensure that they are actually reporting. They are using as allowed, essentially. I don't know . . . Thon, anything to add to what I said?

Thon Phommavong: — Yeah, in many cases I would say in terms of water allocation what we monitor is . . . What this report is saying is that this amount is allocated and the actual water use.

And then to Cam's point, then we look at the risk. I would say in most cases, even in these cases here, if the folks or the entity that actually had water allocation would come to us and ask, "Hey, you know what, our licence is 100 dam cubed," for argument's sake. "We actually use 101. Could we amend our allocation?" Chances are we probably would give them a new allocation that would be 101.

So that said, I'm not saying it's endorsing the person should break the law. To Cam's point, we have enforcement and compliance framework. It's outcome based. We're just starting that work. Basically we want to educate, intend to educate people, to work with people, and to make sure that the outcome that . . . sustainable water use for all folks in Saskatchewan.

Like our purpose is not . . . well my intention is not to try to catch people and hit them over the head with a big hammer right off the bat, but to work with them to make sure that they actually understand the requirement, educate them, give them a chance to be innovative in terms of meeting the requirements as well as water use. And for the recalcitrants and for those people who just refuse to follow the rules, that's when we can actually take them to prosecution and then follow the legislative authority that we have in place. Basically to prosecution route.

Joan Pratchler: — So what is the challenge to curtailing this over-usage?

Thon Phommavong: — So part of it, we talk about the data but also monitoring the technology itself. We are piloting some of the technologies, and the result is promising, so should eliminate some of the challenge.

The challenge is actually verification of data. For example, right now some of the water use, how do we ask people to submit the data? They say, "Well, here's the size of my pump. I think I used ten hours of pump." I mean that's the estimate. And then — I'm not a lawyer — that's really not a very good indication of, you know, taking somebody to court based on their best effort and the technology that they have. So that's one challenge. The other challenge, it's about manual of the data, right. It's the verification of the data. So that's what we try to mitigate, that challenge.

Cam Swan: — If I can, just to add maybe a little bit, I think there's maybe three categories of challenges. One is people not knowing, and that's some of the education piece that we are continuing to do. The other part is maybe some less-than-solid information that's coming in in some cases, right. And that's what Thon just spoke about. The other category is not caring, and that's the ones we're trying to pick out of the crowd to figure out, are those the . . . That's where we want to spend our efforts and our energies to ensure that when, you know, when we do run into those situations, we do use the tools we have to ensure that there

is compliance.

I would just say that, you know, based on our experience, there are very, very few in that latter category right, but there is some. Like I mean, you're always going to get that in a population, but it's a very, very small piece, based on our experience.

Thon Phommavong: — Yeah. I would also add that even when you look at the table from '23 to '24, even that alone . . . Just to show you how people actually care, and farmers and producers are actually a very good steward of that. If you look at the third-last row, in 2023 there were actual water licence uses exceeding allocation. The cubic decametre was 5365. In 2024 it was actually reduced quite a bit. That's only 3820. So we see, I know that's two years, but it . . . we're moving in the right direction. And we anticipate that when we fully implement our compliance, outcome-based compliance, that number will continue to be lower.

Joan Pratchler: — Yeah, so I guess for the people of Saskatchewan, they want to know what processes are in place for mitigating the challenges. If it's hard to measure how much water they use, what's the agency doing to measure it better?

Thon Phommavong: — Yeah, so I guess we're piloting the couple pilot projects right now in terms of monitoring, real-time monitoring, utilizing the technologies, and that in combination of our modernized database as well as compliance framework that we have.

Cam Swan: — So if I can, just some other contextual pieces here. We have over 17,000 total active projects in surface groundwater use overall, a little over 4,000 water users that require some level of monitoring. So I mean that's, you know, from a higher level in . . . There's some, you know, as highlighted in this report where we . . . they're out of compliance, and we need to figure out why they're out of compliance.

And I think part of it is continuing to, you know, continuing to educate and inform and then continuing to advance our use of technology and tools to be able to monitor, and also I think maybe continuing to advance our compliance tools overall, right. So that's what I would say.

Joan Pratchler: — And what are the consequences for users that do have a lot of over-usage?

Cam Swan: — It will depend upon the situation and the severity and, you know, those pieces. But we can go right to the point of suspending their water licence.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — On that point, have there been any that have had their licences suspended or revoked?

Cam Swan: — My colleagues say no, but we don't view that as failure. We view that as success, because we work with them to ensure that they do get into compliance without getting to that particular stage.

Hugh Gordon: — I'm wondering if also you could share with the committee which licensees are not required to submit water usage reports. And why is there a distinction made between them and other ones that do, such as manufacturing or mining or municipalities?

Cam Swan: — The short answer is low-volume domestic users would not be required for monitoring. If you want more detail I'll have to get my colleague here in to answer it for you.

Hugh Gordon: — Okay, thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — So I'm looking at the recommendation 3.3(b) and I just have a question about, how long has the Water Security Agency been issuing licences for water use?

Cam Swan: — I don't know if we have anybody, including me, at this table that's old enough to actually accurately answer that question, but as long as we've been in existence essentially. Our current organization has been in existence for what, you know, 10, 12 years right, but the predecessors for that would have been issuing water licences as well.

Joan Pratchler: — What would be your best guess on how compliance was monitored back then?

Cam Swan: — I would not hazard a guess. I'm sorry, I can't do that.

Joan Pratchler: — And then the second point of, what was the actions taken to implement since the auditor's report? It says the Water Security Agency has started conducting inspection of water users. When was that stopped?

Cam Swan: — Well, yeah. The answer I believe is that it wasn't really ever stopped. It was less formalized, is probably a better way of describing it. And I can't describe it any better than that at this stage.

Joan Pratchler: — So what was submitted is that Water Security Agency has started conducting inspection of water users. So that's where I assumed it must have stopped if it started up again. So at that . . .

Cam Swan: — Yeah, for me it's the terminology there a little bit. It started more formally in inspections, with a more formal inspection plan overall. I don't think it was a dramatic "we didn't do it and then all of a sudden we started doing it." I don't think that would be accurate. But it was less formal in the past.

Joan Pratchler: — Because it's really important to be able to have rigorous . . . especially in this day and age with how important water is. And yeah, so that's what I didn't understand.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — Yeah. I was wondering if also you could explain why the . . . if the informatics unit's strategic plan was developed in 2022, your status update states it will not modernize reporting and data capture. Was the plan not in place then? Or if not, why not?

Cam Swan: — It's just a . . . trying to catch up on organizational history here a little bit. Sorry. We were looking at it in 2022 and implemented it in 2024. It took a couple years to look at the options and make sure we got the option we felt was best.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Pratchler.

Joan Pratchler: — So what options for future reporting have been considered for proactive compliance of large operations such as nuclear reactors near Saskatchewan waterways?

[11:00]

Cam Swan: — I'll get Aaron to maybe answer that.

Aaron Schweitzer: — So we're working on some pilots right now to basically have that water-use data automatically connected and fed into our system. So we're working with different clients right now to see how that works and how we can build a system that can uptake that from our clients.

Joan Pratchler: — And what are your key metrics?

Aaron Schweitzer: — Well it would just be the volume of water used and when, right. But exactly what would you mean by key metrics for . . .

Joan Pratchler: — So are you doing any testing? Pre, post, anything like that?

Aaron Schweitzer: — Correct, yeah. So there's different flowmeter companies and technologies out there, right. So we're working with different clients on some of what are those different technologies, who are the different vendors, and how can we uptake that information automatically from these clients basically as they're operating.

Joan Pratchler: — So what timelines do you have to have those ready to go for when some of these things start up?

Aaron Schweitzer: — So I mean if we're looking at . . . You know, we're still kind of, year by year, looking at and expanding as we go, as we're learning these systems. The current requirements are kind of more specific to an out-based monitoring and reporting approach, right, so you know, recording your usage monthly, reporting it annually, right. That's the basic requirement for a general facility. But we're looking to refine that, right. So we don't know for sure on that end date for these, but we're working on it as we speak.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you.

Cam Swan: — If I can just add a couple pieces. I think a couple things that Aaron highlighted there, in my mind, are really important. Obviously the water use, but also the timing of that use, that is important as well, right, depending upon the user and what the volume is and all of those pieces.

And it's not like we're starting with nothing. We're continuing to learn along the way, feeding, you know, information around water allocation decisions in the future no matter what sector we're talking about or what industry we're talking about overall. I mean you highlighted one, but there's others as well that we

would need to know what water is being used, right.

Joan Pratchler: — And are you involved in any of the testing after that occurs? Or are you just monitoring the usage, inflow/outflow usage?

Thon Phommavong: — That's where our compliance group comes in. They would have their compliance or inspection protocol. So that's where they can follow the frequency. And that's on the framework that Cam noted earlier. It's an outcome-based framework, so it'll be based on a risk inform. The frequency and the timing and the required monitoring will be based on a risk matrix.

Joan Pratchler: — And would you assume that the same rigour would occur in every part of the province, whether it's way up north or south?

Thon Phommavong: — Yes.

Cam Swan: — Yes. As a high-level statement, yes. But also in making decisions on water allocation and water monitoring, it is risk based, so it depends upon the starting point and the impacts of that overall.

So it might vary depending upon what exactly we're talking about, right? It's not just the water use, but it's the impacts of that that are also important in both the allocation decisions and in the monitoring decisions. So basically that will drive the allocation side. And then that will drive our work on being able to put in place a monitoring system to ensure that they are using what they said they are.

And there's also some conditions sometimes where, you know, if I use irrigation as an example, if you've got a really dry year, you have restrictions placed, right? And in some cases it could go restrictions all the way till you can't use it, right? So that's why I say it's hard to answer in generalities because it is really based upon specific situations that will drive, sort of, the decisions.

Joan Pratchler: — I should have been more specific. I just came back from a tour of the North. They're worried, they really hope the same rigour is implemented with any construction or any work dealing with their waterways up north as would be any other place in the province.

Cam Swan: — Yes.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you.

Chair Wotherspoon: — MLA Gordon.

Hugh Gordon: — Yeah. My last question is, you know, these recommendations were provided to the agency in 2022. I was wondering if you could advise the committee why . . .

Chair Wotherspoon: — 2020.

Hugh Gordon: — 2020, pardon me. Report's 2022, sorry. But I was wondering if you could advise the committee as to why it's taken so long to make some progress in these recommendations.

Chair Wotherspoon: — I think that question was asked. Correct, MLA Pratchler? Was there any additional . . . You asked that question. Any additional information you'd like to speak to?

Cam Swan: — The only thing I would answer, and maybe it's a repetition of what I've said before, is I think we've made significant advancement on these and there's further detail we need in each of them. That would be the answer as to . . . So we believe we've made some progress — not enough — to be able to get there.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Anything further? Anything over here? Anything over here? Okay, and maybe just for anyone following along here, of course there's a follow-up that goes on. We have the commitment to implementation that's laid out in the timeline and the actions that the ministry has laid out here. And so that's the work they'll take on. There is a follow-up of course that's then done by the auditor as well. That gets reported back to this committee before these are sort of off the books, if you will.

But thanks again for the time here today. I guess what I should welcome is a motion to adjourn this chapter, but before that I would just see if CEO Swan has any final remarks.

Cam Swan: — Yeah, a very brief thank you to everyone.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Thank you very much. A motion to adjourn this chapter? Moved by Deputy Chair Thorsteinson. All agreed? Okay. Listen, that's carried. Thank you very much.

Okay, committee members, we'll take a very brief recess here and then we'll reconvene with the final considerations here today.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

[11:15]

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, folks. Committee members will reconvene the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. We've concluded our chapters with respect to the Water Security Agency and of course the Ministry of Community Safety. So I'd like to announce now that the committee will be going in camera for an orientation and professional development session, and I'd ask a member to move to go in camera.

James Thorsteinson: — I so move.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Moved by Deputy Chair Thorsteinson and he'll read his motion.

James Thorsteinson: — Mr. Chair, I move:

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

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, that's moved by Deputy Chair Thorsteinson. All agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, that's carried.

[The committee continued in camera from 11:16 until 12:17.]

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, folks, we will be leaving in camera to recess for the lunch break. We'll keep 'er tight and plan to reconvene at 1 p.m.

[The committee recessed from 12:17 until 13:03.]

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, folks, welcome back. A brief lunch there for everyone. I'd like to announce now that we'll be going back in camera for another orientation and professional development session, but we'll come back to adjourn when the session is finished. I'd ask a member to move a motion to go in camera. Moved by Deputy Chair Thorsteinson.

James Thorsteinson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to move:

That the committee now meet in camera and that Tara Clemett, Trevor St. John, Carolyn O'Quinn, Brent Hebert, and Donica Smart be permitted to remain in attendance.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, that's moved by Deputy Chair Thorsteinson. All agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, this committee moves in camera.

[The committee continued in camera from 13:04 until 13:49]

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, welcome back. We're now out of in camera discussion. I want to thank everybody for all the time and attention today, both in the professional development portions and then of course in the chapters that were focused on and the entities that were before us here today.

Our business is done for the day, and I'd welcome a motion of adjournment.

James Thorsteinson: — I so move.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Moved by Deputy Chair Thorsteinson. All agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Wotherspoon: — Okay, this committee stands adjourned until Tuesday, October 13th, 2026, at 8:30 a.m.

[The committee adjourned at 13:49.]