



# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN AND CENTRAL AGENCIES**

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## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN AND CENTRAL AGENCIES**

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Moosomin

Mr. Daryl Harrison  
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Mr. Terry Jenson  
Martensville-Warman

Mr. Greg Lawrence  
Moose Jaw Wakamow

Mr. Dana Skoropad  
Arm River



[The committee met at 17:59.]

**The Chair:** — Welcome to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies. I'm your Chair, Terry Dennis. With us tonight we have Steve Bonk, Daryl Harrison, Terry Jenson, Dana Skoropad, and Ms. Jennifer Bowes will be substituting for Erika Ritchie for the consideration of SOCO [Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation].

Before we start, I have a few announcements. I would like to table the following documents. We have CCA 5-29, Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan: Report of public losses, October 1st, 2020 to December 31st, 2020. I have CCA 6-29, Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan: Responses to questions raised from the March 4th, 2020 meeting.

[18:00]

Today our committee is also tabling a list from the Law Clerk of regulations filed with the Legislative Assembly between January 1st, 2020 and December 31st, 2020, which have been committed to the committee for review pursuant of rule 147(1). The Law Clerk will assist the committee in its review by submitting the subsequent report at a later date, identifying any regulations that are not in order with the provisions of rule 147(2). However, committee members can also decide to review any of the regulations for policy implications. The document being tabled is CCA 7-29, Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: 2020 regulations filed.

We'll also be doing referral of estimates to the committee. Pursuant to rule 148(1), the following estimates and supplementary estimates were committed to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies on April 12th, 2021, and April 6th, 2021, respectively. In the estimates, 2021-22 estimates were vote 195, Advances to Revolving Funds; 175, Debt Redemption; vote 18, Finance; vote 12, Finance — Debt Servicing; vote 177, Interest on Gross Debt — Crown Enterprise Share; vote 151, Municipal Financing Corp; vote 33, Public Service Commission; vote 139, Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation; vote 154, Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation; vote 152, Saskatchewan Power Corporation; vote 153, Saskatchewan Telecommunications Holding Corporation; vote 140, Saskatchewan Water Corporation; vote 13, SaskBuilds and Procurement; vote 86, SaskBuilds Corporation; vote 150, SaskEnergy Incorporated; vote 176, Sinking Fund Payments — Government Share; and the 2020-2021 supplementary estimates no. 2, vote 18, Finance; vote 175, Debt Redemption.

Just a statement in regard to the committee proceedings in the Chamber before we start. Because we are still implementing measures to facilitate safety in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, if the ministers need to confer privately during the proceedings, you may do so in the hallway or the vestibule in the front Chamber.

And as a reminder, please don't touch the microphones. They are fragile and sensitive. The Hansard operator will turn your microphone on when you are speaking to the committee. Cleaning supplies are located at the tables by the side doors for members and officials to use as they require. If you have any questions about logistics or documents to table, the committee

requests that you contact the Clerk at committees@legassembly.sk.ca. Contact information provided on witness table.

Now today consideration for estimates, today we will be considering the lending and investing activities for Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation and the estimates for the Public Service Commission.

**General Revenue Fund  
Lending and Investing Activities  
Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation  
Vote 154**

**Subvote (SO01)**

**The Chair:** — We will now begin our consideration of vote 154, Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation, loans, subvote (SO01). Minister Morgan is here with his official. Minister, please introduce your official and make your opening comments, please.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to be here this evening for the committee's consideration as pertaining to the Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation, or SOCO. Joining me today is Brent Sukenik, acting president and chief executive officer, who tells me this is his first time through this. So we're expecting him to be polished and professional all the way through. I'm also joined by a ministerial assistant from my office here, Charles Reid.

The purpose of this corporation is to support and facilitate the advancement and success of Saskatchewan's technology and key growth sectors through the development and operation of research parks. As you're aware, SOCO operates the research and technology parks in Regina and Saskatoon on land leased from the universities of Regina and Saskatchewan respectively. Both of these facilities are operated under the registered trade name of Innovation Place.

The core strategic basis for research and technology parks is that the physical clustering of technology organizations in a campus environment provides the opportunity for greater success through the benefits of inter-company collaboration and networking, sector-specific programming in education, and through economies of scale. Implicit in this strategy is that the larger and more engaged the local cluster is, the greater the benefits are.

Since inception, through the growth of the original Innovation Place in Saskatoon, the development of Innovation Place in Regina, and the international renown gained through the success of the parks' many tenants, that original mandate and core strategy have remained the same. The success over that period has been a direct result of the constant commitment to that core strategy and all the supporting strategies that build the cluster, improve networking, and take advantage of economies of scale.

Innovation Place is focused on clustering tenants in specific areas, with tenants either working directly in the cluster or providing support and technical services to the cluster. The primary clusters of focus include agri-tech, information and communications technology, health and life sciences, natural

resources, and industry services and support. Of particular note is that the three largest sectors at Innovation Place are in direct alignment with several of the actions and goals reflected in the Saskatchewan growth plan, providing significant opportunity to be leveraged.

First, information and communications technology is the largest sector in both of the parks, with over 1,350 employees being employed in more than 50 individual companies. Over recent years, the Concourse Building in Saskatoon has become a key focal point for Saskatchewan's entrepreneurial tech community. In addition to the co-working space in the presence of Saskatchewan's first tech incubator, Co.Labs, the Concourse is the central location for the majority of tenants in the ICT [information and communications technologies] sector in Saskatoon. The 80,000-square-foot building, with access to an additional 140,000 square feet of specialized office space in neighbouring 121 Research Drive, makes it an ideal location for tech companies to start and to grow in Saskatchewan.

Secondly, primarily focused in Saskatoon, there are almost 40 agri-tech companies at the parks with nearly 450 employees. These tenants are diversified in activities, ownership, size, and stage of development. Sub-sectors range from plant seed development and engineering tech services to industry associations and funders. Companies span a spectrum from new start-up technologies to established multinational agriculture organizations. Such diversification strengthens this growing sector and creates an excellent foundation at Innovation Place to attract and scale companies.

Currently there are 30 natural resource companies between the parks with an estimated 1,200 employees. Similar to the agri-tech cluster, there is a healthy balance of tenant activities including clean tech, energy, environment, nuclear, technical services, and industry associations.

Being strategically located to Saskatchewan's two universities, Innovation Place is also part of a much larger scientific community that includes university colleges and faculty members, research institutes, and other technology-related institutions. These dynamic, collaborative communities are designed to help move ideas out of the laboratory and into the marketplace. They are also great places for local graduates to begin and grow their careers.

Within the clusters of the parks, the primary target for tenants is Saskatchewan-based private technology companies. These companies have the greatest opportunity for employment growth and will display the strongest ongoing loyalty to Innovation Place and the province. As at March 31st, 2021 there were 144 tenants leasing space at the parks. Eighty-eight per cent of these tenants are private sector businesses and research organizations, all involved in the technology fields. Collectively these tenants employ approximately 3,700 people at these locations. Interestingly, 95 per cent of these employees have completed some form of post-secondary education.

Although having the right tenants at the park provides the foundation for collaboration, a key component of Innovation Place's business model is to actively promote the interaction of tenants. Extensive programming activities at Innovation Place supports an ecosystem that fosters innovation and collaboration

for tenants by facilitating forums to network, learn, and to create business opportunities. In fiscal 2019-20, between Saskatoon and Regina, over 175 programs were delivered to almost 12,000 people. Programming activities were significantly impacted this year due to the pandemic, with most programs being provided virtually.

The specialized nature of buildings and infrastructure at Innovation Place is a key component in providing the appropriate technical environment required by tenants. In addition to high-quality office buildings, tenants have access to research greenhouse space, growth rooms, and a variety of laboratory buildings. The buildings provide tenants with specialized capabilities needed for sophisticated science and technology activities. Mechanical systems provide the air, water, and steam in qualities and quantities that far exceed what is normally available commercially. Certain process utilities such as high-pressure steam and chilled water are distributed on a park-wide basis.

Another key component in SOCO's business model is the business environment provided to tenants, driven by the view that each tenant has unique needs. Through regular communication and a collaborative approach, SOCO helps build relationships with each of their tenants. These unique business relationships are built around several different factors, including but not limited to how leases are structured, how products are priced, the risk tolerance accepted, and general support provided.

During the 2019-2020 fiscal period, SOCO generated net income of \$3.0 million. However a far more important statistic is that during that fiscal period, 13 new technology businesses were started within the parks. And I'm advised by the official here today that a similar result was achieved in 2020-21, with 12 new technology businesses commencing operation at the Innovation Place parks during the year. It is my pleasure to entertain the committee's questioning concerning SOCO.

**The Chair:** — I thank the minister for his opening comments. I will now open the floor to questions.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Thank you very much. Thank you to the minister for his introductory remarks, and thank you to his officials for being here this evening. I look forward to asking some questions this evening and learning more about SOCO in my role as the new critic here. So both of us new here tonight. So I'll get right into it.

Minister, in 2019 vacancy was 13 per cent in Saskatoon and 5 per cent in Regina. Is there anything specific you can point to that is driving this difference?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I'll let the official answer that. There's a targeted vacancy rate of around 10 per cent, which sounds like something that you would not ordinarily seek. But the desire of the . . . It's to have it so that there's space available if a desirable tenant comes along, or somebody comes along with a need. So they have a projected plan to have vacancy rates in there. But why there would be a difference between one or the other, I'll certainly let . . .

**Mr. Sukenik:** — Sorry, just so I'm clear, you're asking about the difference between the vacancy rate in Saskatoon and Regina?

**Ms. Bowes:** — Yes.

**Mr. Sukenik:** — To answer that question, there really isn't a reason why one location is higher than the other, other than just the trends that's happened up to that date. You know, if we were to look at that as of today, you'd see a shift. Our vacancy in Regina is now higher than Saskatoon. And it's really just to do with the tenant movements that happen throughout the year.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Okay. Thanks. Then I guess, building on that, could you tell me what plans are in place to address the vacancy shortfalls that currently exist at both of the research parks?

**Mr. Sukenik:** — Excellent question. It's actually been top of mind all week with the executive team and the board. And this is something that we had highlighted in the . . . Last year when we were preparing the plan for this year, there was two things that were the top of mind. One was the vacancy rate and the other was COVID. And of course COVID impacts that vacancy rate to some extent.

[18:15]

We've highlighted it as an issue. The reality is there's not a whole lot that can be done in today's environment. We are putting a whole lot more effort on both retaining existing tenants just so we don't have that rate increasing, but we're also starting to shift and look at ways to attract tenants more. Like I said before, the reality is in this marketplace not only is our vacancy high, we're seeing high vacancy rates in both Saskatoon and Regina, and it's difficult to reduce that. COVID's definitely not helping with that. From a vacancy perspective we haven't had a huge impact from COVID but the issue is, is tenants aren't making decisions right now.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Yes. Thanks. I'm interested just in one thing you said about, you know, looking at other ways of, you know, increasing attraction or interest. And could you elaborate on that a bit?

**Mr. Sukenik:** — I think part of what we are focusing on is what we can do differently going forward. We've always had a focus of course on filling space. Going forward it will be an exercise in what can we start doing differently? And how can we start working more with entities with similar mandates as ours? And how we can collaborate with each other and find ways not so much focused on just putting tenants in the space but developing programs that will help build the tech sector as a whole rather than just attracting tenants?

**Ms. Bowes:** — Okay, thanks. And I am also wondering how do the vacancy rates compare with the markets in the two respective cities and as well with markets for research parks?

**Mr. Sukenik:** — I can't answer the question on research parks, but on the . . . I'll just quote some vacancy rates. So our current vacancy in Regina and Saskatoon at March 31st of this year: in Saskatoon our vacancy is about 13.45 per cent and the vacancy in the marketplace at — I don't have a current rate — but at December 31st, it was 15.8 per cent as published in Colliers's information. And for Regina we see it's similar. Our rate at the end of March was just under 19 per cent, and then for the marketplace in Regina again at December 31st was 14.1 per cent.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Okay, thanks. I'm also interested to know — to whoever would prefer to answer — what plans are in place to address aging infrastructure mainly in Saskatoon but also in Regina?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The buildings are not terribly old buildings. They were built over the last number of years. What would it be? I'm guessing 20 years or thereabouts. And I think that SOCO has done a reasonably good job of maintaining the buildings, and as tenants come and go, it refreshes the tenant improvements.

We have one building — I'll let Mr. Sukenik get more specific on it — where there was a tenant I assume that had a technology centre there, and they had a large amount of space that was used for computers. There was an elevated floor and standby generators and a lot of equipment there that would not be what you would typically see in a research park.

So they made the decision at this time not to go ahead to redevelop that space because it's a large space, half of the floor in one of the buildings, and that they would find a tenant or group of tenants . . . that they would do it. And then the effect of new tenants coming in would be redoing the infrastructure or a general update with all of that space. You know, it may change the floor plate and that.

So I'm going to let Mr. Sukenik tell you a little bit about the nature of use that was there before and what some of the options are that are there. And it may involve changing the footprint a bit. So I'll certainly let him . . . He's got the background information.

**Mr. Sukenik:** — Thank you, Minister. The property or the building the minister was referring to has been a single-use building, and it's actually an example of where we haven't adopted our true model to managing our portfolio. So it was managed on . . . The tenant was responsible for the space and managing that space, which is really the reason that it's in the condition . . . not from misuse but just from the lack of continuously upgrading the space.

Our approach across the portfolio is we take a balanced approach from an asset management perspective, and we have a very detailed maintenance program where we're continuously investing in the maintenance as well as from the capital perspective. So we closely monitor the condition of our buildings and make decisions based on the cost to maintain them, or the cost compared to the cost of the asset renewal and replacement.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Okay. Another thing I'm wondering about is if you can provide me with the number of companies that have been created in each of the last two years. Who are the companies, and what sectors do these companies belong to?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — We have tried to be as helpful as we can. SOCO doesn't create businesses, but I think what you're really referring to is tenants that have come or gone. So I'm going to let Mr. Sukenik sort of give you a few of the representative companies there. The names are all available on SOCO's website, every tenant that's there. But I'll let him give you a bit of background about the tenants that are there and some of the ones that he can point to that would be new within the last recent

period of time. So I'll let him do that, and if you want to have follow-up questions, please feel free.

**Mr. Sukenik:** — You know, I have a lot of information here. It's just the tenants themselves. So if we start with the sectors, so our . . . It's pretty consistent each year how many new tenants come to the park. So for example in 2021 we had 17 new tenants enter the park. And although that's down from the previous year, if we looked at that trend over, you know, two, three years, it would be pretty consistent. So we have 17 tenants.

If we look at it from a sector perspective, we see an increase in the number of information communication technology. So we see a lot of new tenants in that area, as well as the agri-tech. So I mean those are the sectors that we're seeing increases in, which shouldn't be a surprise because those are some that's the growth areas.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Yes, thanks. That's what I was getting at. Minister, although the board remuneration has come down in the past few years, in a province with small industry sectors and research parks that are also quite small, is this level of remuneration reasonable? For instance the university board of governors meets more often and is responsible for 1 billion of economic activity and does not receive the same level of remuneration.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I'm going to ask Mr. Sukenik to advise what the per diems are for members.

I thank the member for the question. I'm not able to comment on a comparison with university board of governors because I don't know what the remuneration is there.

The remuneration paid to most of the Crowns is similar and consistent. In this one, they're essentially dealing with a fairly large real estate holding. And the remuneration paid for the 12-month period ending March 31st, 2020, was an aggregate sum of 152,340 with the Chair receiving \$14,000. He left partway during the year. The Vice-Chair stepped in and received a remuneration of 18,443. And the rest of the members varied in a range between 14,000 up to about 20,000. It was depending on numbers of meetings they've attended to, or which committees they've participated. They would attend a minimum of four meetings per year as well as whatever the committee process they were on. So I think we're, in this particular Crown corporation, consistent with other Crowns and with other entities of this size.

[18:30]

**Ms. Bowes:** — Okay. The next question I have is, can you provide a sense of what shifts are happening in the market and what SOCO is doing to address the shifts in these markets?

**Mr. Sukenik:** — I think the biggest shift that's happening right now is related to COVID. You know, as the majority . . . I shouldn't say the majority. We've got approximately 40 per cent of our tenant employees are working in the parks and another, I'd say, 20 per cent are splitting their time between the parks and working from home, and then the rest is working from home. And what we're seeing in the industry in general is that lack of or that uncertainty on what the impact's going to be long term.

So we are actually, you know, going through a process right now of formulating a plan to get our tenants back to the office and finding out what that's going to mean. So we've actually got . . . There's a six-part strategy that we've adopted, and it's really focused on understanding what our tenants need, understanding what's happening in the real estate sector in general, as well as more specifically at research parks.

So it's understanding the trends, understanding what's needed, and then we'll figure out how to meet those needs going forward. We don't know what those are right now. What we do know that there will be some sort of work from home that will continue, and there's some flexibility that we'll have to meet that need. But it's really just understanding what that is so we can adapt to that and bring the tenants back to the parks.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I think once COVID is behind us, it will be easier to get a better sense of where market conditions are going. I think a lot of times when you look at an innovation park, the term "incubator" is used for the new businesses that are coming in. And I think it's difficult to say that when, to sort of have that kind of a discussion, when nobody is meeting face to face. A large number of people are meeting from home.

I'd mentioned earlier that there's that half floor, the floor vacant on the one building where . . . It was ISM wasn't it, that was there? In any event, there's a large, vacant portion and it will be interesting to see what kind of businesses come forward wanting to use that space and how that space ends up getting redeveloped. That's a really good question as to where research parks go, how they do it, what linkages they look at between existing tenants, and other businesses that might be attracted by virtue of the clustering effect. So the next 12 or 18 months I think are going to be really interesting as long as the recovery continues.

**Ms. Bowes:** — I am just interested to know a little bit more about what you mentioned just now about some sort of work from home will continue. Like over what period of time are you anticipating? Do you really know?

**Mr. Sukenik:** — Right now we don't know. We are essentially starting the process to make sure that we've got a plan in place. And then once the health recommendations allow us to, and then we'll start bringing back . . . We don't know when that will start. We just want to be prepared for that to happen.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Okay. And just to clarify, you said about 20 per cent splitting time right now between coming into . . . physically coming in and working from home.

**Mr. Sukenik:** — Yes, and that's a rough estimate. We haven't been highly successful in getting details on that. But based on what we see happening in the parks, that's a rough estimate.

**Ms. Bowes:** — I just wanted to go back for a second to the vacancy rates. Do you have any indications that those rates are going to be rising based on plans of specific tenants that have been brought to your attention?

**Mr. Sukenik:** — Yes, we do anticipate, based on what we have reflected in our budget, we do expect our overall vacancy rate to increase from our current 15 per cent to around 17 per cent. And that's really one tenant that is downsizing in our park, so that's



the cause of that.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Can you say which tenant?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — It may be that it's commercially sensitive information and it may have been told to Mr. Sukenik. If you maybe give us a minute.

**Mr. Sukenik:** — Thanks for the question. At this time we're unable to provide that although we understand that's going to happen. At this point it's still just an assumption.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Thanks. My next question. There have been some discussions around selling the research parks to U of R [University of Regina] and U of S [University of Saskatchewan] in past years. Is this still something that is off the table, or is there any active consideration of sales at this juncture?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — There's nothing taking place at this point in time. The partnership that exists between the universities and . . . [inaudible] . . . is a good relationship. They have a tenant-approval process from each of the universities. But I'm not aware of anything that's taking place right now.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Okay. And just coming into this so new, I am curious to know if you could let me know the background of . . . I know this was, you know, a number of years back but do you know why specifically that was being considered at the time that it was?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I don't have a lot of information. I know the universities wanted to be somewhat a master of their own destiny and felt that they would be able to have a greater degree of control. They own the land that they're on there; they're essentially the landlord. But the history or the specific conversations I wasn't privy to. I had the Advanced Ed file a number of years ago and I know there was some talk at that time with the then president that was something that in U of S that might be seen as a desirable thing if something could be negotiated. And in any event, at the present time there's no discussions under way that I am aware of.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Okay. Thank you. On a different topic, Minister, I'm also interested to know if there are any diversity targets in hiring, for example, for women or Indigenous peoples?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — There may be some different ones with the tenants but within the particular entity, I'll let Mr. Sukenik speak to that.

**Mr. Sukenik:** — We don't set specific targets. We do have a very small employee base. We're currently, you know, around the 90 and very low turnover, so we haven't set any targets recently.

**Ms. Bowes:** — And is that something that you would consider in future?

**Mr. Sukenik:** — It's something that we revisit every year. It is something that the board considers, and it's always hinged around the low turnover as really not having much of the opportunity to manage that.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Okay. I'm now going to turn to some further questions based on the annual report. There is on page 4 a description and a number of examples of organizations that SOCO actively partners with to provide space at little to no cost for initiatives that assist in achieving SOCO's goals. And I'm wondering, with one of them, with the Cultivator, can the committee get a bit of information on how the Conexus business incubator is doing in Regina?

**Mr. Sukenik:** — The Conexus Cultivator is actually doing very well. It's unfortunate, when they came to us or we went to them . . . I don't know the exact history but they were wanting to do this and were planning on waiting until their head office was done. And through a negotiation process we made space available at Innovation Place so they could start the Cultivator, or their Cultivator, earlier. And it was quite successful. And then unfortunately they've since moved to their head office so they're no longer at Innovation Place, but we do continue to maintain regular communication with them. As the start-ups go through their program, whether it's the incubator or the accelerator program and through the scale-up, we want to make sure that we've got the product available in our park so they can graduate from theirs back to Innovation Place.

**Ms. Bowes:** — And where is their headquarters located?

**Mr. Sukenik:** — It is on College Avenue. I don't know the address.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Okay. And so that was the plan all along, that they were going to move out of the park?

**Mr. Sukenik:** — It was, yes.

**Ms. Bowes:** — I see.

**Mr. Sukenik:** — It was only ever a temporary situation.

**Ms. Bowes:** — One of the other programs I was wondering about is . . . Is it ComIT? Is that how you say?

**Mr. Sukenik:** — I believe so. I don't know much about that though.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Okay. Well I'll ask and if you know, great. I was wondering what the average uptake on the ComIT program is, and if the program is fully subsidized.

**Mr. Sukenik:** — I do not know. Sorry, which page did you say that was on in the annual report?

**Ms. Bowes:** — Page 4.

[18:45]

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Mr. Chair, I'm going to have Mr. Sukenik provide a bit of information on the one entity that was asked. We're not able to give information about, you know, the tenants, where they've gone to afterwards or whatever else. I think we're getting into an area where we're outside of the scope of what we're here for. But certainly the entities that are there that . . . We're talking about partnerships. There's a reference in the report, and I'll ask Mr. Sukenik to give a bit of background on

that. But as to where else people have gone or what else has taken place, it's certainly outside of the purview of what is within the estimates for this evening.

**Mr. Sukenik:** — The ComIT space, that's one of our partnership programs. So it's an educational program that the partner . . . So we don't have anything to do with that entity. All we did was provide the space for them to provide that training in our park. Most of our programming or our partnerships are in that line, where we partner with them so they provide the service to our tenants.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Thanks. So then perhaps, if I'm going to ask any more questions about the programs, this is not the place to do so. Is that what was suggested?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Well there's reference in the report to tenant programs and partnerships that are there. So to the extent that those have a relationship with SOCO or a relationship with other tenants, you're welcome to it. But we're not able to give information about where a tenant has gone to or their information that may well be proprietary to them as to what their finances are or whatever else. We can certainly try to be as helpful as we can within that scope.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Okay. Well how about I ask and you can let me know.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Sure.

**Ms. Bowes:** — With one of the other programs, I'm wondering how many students are hired each summer through the STING [Saskatchewan Student Innovation and Growth] program. That's a program to employ summer students.

**Mr. Sukenik:** — Yes. And sorry, I'm not entirely familiar with that one, but that is a program we work with the university. So again we provided them the space and then they put on the program. So we wouldn't have the details on what happened in that program outside of what it was.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Okay. And then I'm looking at a graph here and it's a percentage breakdown by city as of March 31st, 2019. And it shows the breakdown in tenants by sector in both Saskatoon and Regina parks. And so I'm just curious: are these ratios for tenants by sector quite consistent over time, or is there a good deal of fluctuation?

**Mr. Sukenik:** — It will fluctuate. I can tell you it doesn't fluctuate a whole lot year to year. But for example, if we look at, you know, this year compared to two years ago, the percentage of information and communications technology, you know, 36 per cent of our tenants are in that. If we go back two years, there was 30 per cent. So we do see some fluctuation, but it tends to be in small increments each year.

**Ms. Bowes:** — And are the ratios reflective of different training programs in each city?

**Mr. Sukenik:** — [Inaudible] . . . I don't understand the question.

**Ms. Bowes:** — So different training programs, like for instance through the universities, for instance. Like, if we're looking at

Saskatoon here has got, you know, 29 per cent for agri-tech.

**Mr. Sukenik:** — Yes, there is a linkage between our sectors of focus and the priority areas of research at the universities. So for example, in Regina our ag tech sector is, you know, it's miniscule. So we've got very low percentage in ag here, where we've got the high percentage in Saskatoon just because it's that linkage to the university's research programs.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Okay, thanks. And just from page 17 there's a breakdown of the tenants showing that, at least at the time, 107 tenants in Saskatoon and 35 in Regina. Has that changed somewhat from those numbers?

**Mr. Sukenik:** — So at the end of last year we had 117, and then 33 in Regina. I can report at the end of this year — so at March 31st — we had 112 in Saskatoon and 32. So the total number decreased by six, but the breakdown between cities has remained relatively consistent.

**Ms. Bowes:** — I was wondering then, too, in terms of disparity between number of tenants in Regina and Saskatoon, is this related to how much longer the Saskatoon campus has been operating? Or are there other factors at play?

**Mr. Sukenik:** — It's more related to the size of the parks. Our Saskatoon park, we have 1.3 million square feet of space, and in Regina we have under 500,000. And that's really, that is related to the age of the parks. Our Saskatoon park turned 40 this past year, and Regina's only 20 years.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Thanks. So just in looking at some of the previous happenings, I saw that the Prince Albert forest centre was sold to the U of S in March of 2018 for 8.125 million. Regarding that sale, what was the impact on annual revenues?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I think we're getting into something on previous years that's not part of this year's estimates. I mean, those go back to previous years, so I think we're not . . . Unless there was something that directly impacted this year, we're getting into something that is outside of this year's and probably outside of the area of expertise of this particular official.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Okay. So then maybe at the same . . . [inaudible] . . . I'm also looking for an update on its current use if you have that information?

**The Chair:** — I would caution the member to stay on the questions that are pertained to the estimates, please. Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — If your question is to what the use of sold space is, the official may or may not know. But it's not really part of what's there but something that's gone on. But I'll leave it to him if he knows what . . . It's on-campus information, so it may be general public information. Go ahead.

**Mr. Sukenik:** — I can speak to what the intention was when they purchased the building, and they were looking to consolidate their classrooms to one location in Prince Albert. As for what ended up being the use, I can't provide that. I don't know.

**Ms. Bowes:** — So I see here then it says, "In 2014, the SOCO Board of Directors developed and implemented a new strategic

direction . . . many of the resulting priorities and activities did take on a different orientation.” It also says, “Although the 2014 strategic direction has served us well, in 2020 the SOCO Board will be undertaking the development of a new strategic direction.” And so I’m curious to know if a new strategic direction has been established and if you can comment on that.

**Mr. Sukenik:** — It is under way. We went through an exercise last year and that was the old president. And when he announced his retirement, that was put on hold until a permanent president can be hired.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Okay. So then there’s not, at this point, necessarily information to share on what’s new in the corporation’s approach? Is that too soon to say then?

**Mr. Sukenik:** — No, I can share the intent of the new strategic direction, and that’s a lot of what we are starting to do about the thinking bigger, the enhancing the collaboration with other entities, and really building on that focus on the tech ecosystem as a whole rather than just as Innovation Place, the parks.

**Ms. Bowes:** — I’m running a bit short on time here so I’ll wait for my signal, but in the meantime, I’ll squeeze in one or two more. I wanted to know — you talked a bit about this already — but can we get a bit more detail on what the impacts of the pandemic have been on SOCO?

**Mr. Sukenik:** — I don’t think there’s one or two areas that we can say has been impacted. In general, the tech sector hasn’t been impacted a whole lot, so we haven’t seen a huge impact on, you know, tenants vacating and tenants moving. The tenants that have left because of COVID tend to be very small, so they’re business centre suites, and we’re comfortable that we’ll get them back. So from that perspective, there hasn’t been a huge impact.

I’d say the biggest impact on SOCO has been on the community. And you know, the research parks are built on that, you know, innovation driven by collaboration, which really is dependent on the tenants being in the parks. So not only are the majority of the tenants working outside the parks, all of our programming activities have shifted. And definitely, you know, we’ve seen them cut . . . If we look at the number, there’s been a significant decrease in the number of programs, the events that have happened, and they’re all virtual. So you don’t have that same feel. So that’s really the biggest impact, is the impact on our community.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Great. I also see that since 2014, several changes have been made in order to refocus operations on the core business, including transfer of Bio Processing Centre to POS Bio-Sciences, and then it also says, “the elimination of third-party property management and project management services.” And so I’m curious to know who performs the property management at Innovation Place now.

**Mr. Sukenik:** — We do all of the property management function internally. What that was referring to is at one time we managed a few properties on behalf of the university. That’s what that’s referring to. So we no longer do that. But we do manage all of our own properties in both Saskatoon and Regina ourselves.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Then it just goes on to say, “These changes, along

with various restructuring efforts, have resulted in a reduction in staff complement by over 20 per cent.” I would like to know, is workforce reduction an objective at this point? And also, how many positions in terms of FTE [full-time equivalent] does 20 per cent amount to?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I’m not sure what period of time you’re inquiring about. What would be the reduction, or what would be the change . . . Are you inquiring what took place in the preceding year?

**Ms. Bowes:** — Yes.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I think the official would probably be able to give you the staff complement at the beginning and the end of this year. So go ahead.

**Mr. Sukenik:** — Our FTE count right now is about 94. If we look at before we started making the changes to eliminate the non-core businesses, we were around the 114, 120 range. So we’ve seen a decrease in the 20 to 25 employee range.

**Ms. Bowes:** — And I want to know too then has SOCO reconsidered this objective in light of pandemic job losses, the current . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, this will be my last.

**Mr. Sukenik:** — We have not focused on FTE reductions for the last couple years. The FTE reductions that we did see was related to moving out of our non-core services. But that is not something that we have looked at. We have had no job losses because of COVID.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Okay, thank you. I’m getting the hook, so thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate you being here, and thanks for giving me a bit of an education on SOCO. Appreciate it.

**The Chair:** — Having reached the agreed-upon time for the consideration of lending and investing activities for SOCO, we will now adjourn our consideration for the lending and investing activities for Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation. Thank you to the ministers and your officials. Are there any closing comments?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I’d like to thank you, the members that are here, as well as the LAS [Legislative Assembly Service] staff and the people in the building: the security, Hansard, broadcast services, the building staff, the people that are here from my own office within the building. And then we have tonight a number of SOCO and CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] staff that are available by electronic means, and so I want to thank all of them.

[19:00]

I know getting ready for something like this, it’s a relatively short meeting but there’s a lot of preparation and getting answers ready so that they can have as much information as possible available. And so I thank them for not just what they’ve done tonight but what they’ve done throughout the year and continue to do. And I would say that about all of the government services that we have and all of the Crowns.

So I want to thank everybody that's been involved, including the member opposite, who has done well for her first time up. So thank you.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Minister. Any closing comments by you, Ms. Bowes?

**Ms. Bowes:** — No, nothing further. Just thanks again. I appreciate the opportunity and look forward to doing this again, hopefully.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. We'll now recess for 10 minutes to change over for the Public Service Commission. Thank you.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

**The Chair:** — I'd like to welcome back everybody. I would like to welcome Ms. Betty Nippi-Albright. She is now substituting for Erika Ritchie for consideration of the Public Service Commission.

Since we have a new agenda item before us, I want to repeat the statement that I made at the top of the meeting regarding committee proceedings in the Chamber. Because we are all still implementing measures to facilitate safety in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, if the minister needs to confer privately during the proceedings, he may do so in the hallway or the vestibule in the front Chamber.

And as a reminder, please don't touch the microphones. They are fragile and sensitive. A Hansard operator will turn on your microphone when you're speaking to the committee. Cleaning supplies are located at the side door for the members and officials to use when they require.

If you have any questions about the logistics or have to table documents, the committee requests that you contact the Clerk at [committees@legassembly.sk.ca](mailto:committees@legassembly.sk.ca). Contact information is provided on the website table.

**General Revenue Fund  
Public Service Commission  
Vote 33**

**Subvote (PS01)**

**The Chair:** — We will now begin our consideration of estimates for the Public Service Commission. We will now consider vote 33, Public Service Commission, central management and services, subvote (PS01). Minister Reiter is here with his official. Minister, please introduce your official and make your opening comments.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'd like to take this opportunity to read some opening comments into the record, and I'm pleased to be here to provide additional information on estimates for the Public Service Commission.

I have with me today Raynelle Wilson, who's Chair of the Public Service Commission and also James Cherewyk, who's a ministerial assistant in my office. We have other ministry officials that are standing by on Webex as needed. So Raynelle and I will be able to confer with them and hopefully get their help

to answer any questions.

The Public Service Commission, or PSC, is a central agency for government, providing human resource services for executive government as well as some agencies, boards, and commissions. We help ministries ensure that they have the right human resources in place to help government deliver on its objectives.

Currently there are more than 11,000 employees who work for the Government of Saskatchewan. These employees work in various roles all over the province. As a central agency of government, the Public Service Commission provides strategic support for labour relations, organizational development, employee recruitment and development, compensation and classification, and health and safety. It also supports foundational services including payroll and benefits.

PSC has HR [human resources] business-partner teams embedded with ministries to serve their human resources needs. This recognizes the unique business that each ministry is in and ensures their human resource professionals are fully integrated in their business, helping them to make the best people decisions. Our employees provide strategic support and outstanding service and are respected as valuable resources to ministry clients.

The PSC's plan for '21-22 is consistent with previous years. The four areas of strategic priority remain the same. They are: no. 1, effective leadership; no. 2, high-performing organization; no. 3, inclusive workforce; and no. 4, health, safety, and wellness. We believe we have captured the strategic HR priorities of government in these areas.

Our first area of focus, effective leadership, is about ensuring the Government of Saskatchewan has leadership required to deliver on its commitments. This includes acquiring leadership capacity through proactive and targeted leadership and recruitment. It also includes enhancing our performance management system; strengthening talent movement throughout the organization; and ensuring the senior leadership has the knowledge and tools necessary to acquire, engage, and grow employees.

The second area of focus is a high-performing organization. It includes proactive and targeted recruitment for pivotal and hard-to-recruit positions, developing competency-based HR programs, implementing the multi-year learning and development strategy for government, and implementing actions to enable middle-manager excellence. We will continue to build on our corporate culture, guided by our commitment to excellence. The goal is to have engaged and productive employees who are valued and appreciated.

The third strategic goal is building an inclusive workforce. We know that having a diverse workforce and inclusive workplaces makes us a better public service. It allows us to better understand and meet the needs of our citizens.

The fourth area of focus in our plan is health, safety, and wellness. In order to have productive employees, you must have healthy employees, both physically and mentally.

We also focus on the PSC being engaged and high-performing. We need to ensure we are enhancing our clients' experience with us by enhancing our one-team approach to client service, culture,

and decision making; leveraging business improvement and innovation initiatives; enhancing organizational performance and accountability; and ensuring that the PSC has the workforce we need to successfully execute on our plan.

In the past year, the PSC has made significant progress on many of our plan initiatives. Inclusion and diversity are a priority for government. We are working to improve diversity hiring and retention. The growth plan sets out a priority for hiring of students with disabilities. The PSC is also supporting managers to make improvements in this area.

[19:15]

We continue to implement government's multi-year inclusion strategy and action plan. We have a robust inclusion tool kit. This tool kit provides practical tools for managers to use to help them develop an inclusive workplace and hire a diverse workforce. This multi-media tool kit includes a getting started section, and acquire, engage, and grow sections. Tools include e-learning modules, videos, articles, templates, dialogue starters, and presentations to help managers and their employees learn about and support inclusion.

In addition to the tool kit, PSC has a government-wide inclusion community of practice. This group is made up of the leaders from each ministry's inclusion committee. These employees are dedicated to leading inclusion work within their ministries. They come together to share information and inform inclusion priorities across government.

In July of 2018, the PSC launched an online portal through PSC Client to allow employees to self-declare in the diversity category at any time. This initiative is helping us more accurately reflect our diversity numbers and allows diversity employees to self-identify for training and development opportunities.

These initiatives, along with several other training and learning initiatives, are slowly helping to increase government's diversity representation. Although we still fall short of most of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission's targets, particularly the disability target that was recently increased, we are making progress. In 2021, government representation of diversity group members has remained roughly the same or slightly increased in all categories. Across government, ministries are also taking steps to support diversity and inclusion.

Seven ministries now employ senior Indigenous advisors. These employees sit at ministry executive tables and ensure an Indigenous perspective is included in all executive decisions. We also have mandatory Aboriginal awareness training for all employees, and more through training for employees in ministries like Social Services and Corrections. All of these actions together will help government support an inclusive workplace and diverse workforce.

Health, safety, and wellness. PSC is investing in the health, safety, and wellness of employees as part of its corporate health and safety plan and healthy workplaces initiative. PSC has an employee and family assistance program administered by Morneau Shepell that provides counselling, interactive resources, and self-help tools with 24/7 service availability. It also provides support and resources for managers to help them

create psychologically safe workplaces. The mental and physical health of employees is important, and even more so during the pandemic. Our safety champion council guides and helps implement our annual health, safety, and wellness plan.

We're also working to make improvements to our technology. Technology not only improves processes, it also allows for better information that is more accurate and available quicker, which allows for better decision making. PSC is partnering with the ministries of SaskBuilds and Procurement, Finance, Highways, and Corrections, Policing and Public Safety on a new enterprise solution for an integrated financial, human resource, and procurement system.

This new system will increase efficiency, generate significant financial savings, and drive better business outcomes and evidence-based decision making. This project will move all of government's critical business processes into a cloud-based enterprise system, giving the government one integrated source for information and a consistent user experience for employees and the public with world-class security and privacy. Highly integrated systems will eliminate manual processes, reduce overtime costs, and eliminate duplication across government.

Phase 1 of the project was completed in the fall of 2020 and validated the scope and defined the project. Phase 2 is currently under way and will result in a detailed business case with defined cost benefits, resource requirements, and timelines. Pending the results of the business case, phase 3 would design and implement the solution.

Along with the rest of the world, government employees have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout government, employees supported by the Public Service Commission have risen to the challenge. PSC supported managers and employees to transition to working from home, adapting policies, developing guidelines, and answering questions all while themselves transitioning to working from home and continuing to deliver our core services, like payroll, and meeting the needs of clients.

We also have government employees who remained in the workplace to provide critical services to citizens, and PSC helped managers to ensure those employees remain safe in their workplaces. PSC developed guidelines, checklists, questions and answers, and posters and signage to help managers ensure the safety of employees in the workplace.

PSC has also coordinated redeploying employees to support ministries and the Saskatchewan Health Authority throughout the pandemic. So far executive government has redeployed more than 450 employees to help in a number of areas, including contact monitoring, negative results notifications, data entry, cleaning, highway checkpoints, emergency social services, communications, citizen inquiries, and vaccine scheduling. Throughout the pandemic, employees have adapted, implemented innovations and improvements at record speed, and continue to provide outstanding service to clients.

In closing, this year we have an aggressive agenda for the Public Service Commission. We developed a budget that allowed us to focus on our priorities. The focus of the PSC for '21-22 is to continue to advance on its plan. In order to achieve its goals, the

Government of Saskatchewan needs the strategic advice and guidance of the Public Service Commission to ensure we have the right people with the right skills delivering the right programs and services to the citizens of Saskatchewan. I'm proud of the PSC's accomplishments and confident in the work that is planned for the coming year. Our employees are strengthening programs and services to build strong communities and strong families and grow a stronger Saskatchewan. Thank you for your attention, and now we welcome any questions.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Minister. I will now open the floor to any questions. Ms. Nippi-Albright.

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you so much for presenting your information, as I learned a few things here and that is very good. You've answered some things that I had already thought about. Just before I guess I start with the questions, I'm wondering if the ministry officials, if you're unable to answer any questions, if those questions can be . . . if we can table them so that I can review that at a later time. So just for time, for myself, anyway.

So thank you for presenting that. Some of the questions I have — and I was just going through the estimates here — can you explain the variance here, variations? Just here I have two documents that I'm working from. And so here in the human resource consulting services, there's an increase from last year to this year. So I have this one document, and just looking at this one here that we all have, and could you just explain that variance?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Could I just clarify? You said variance. So you're talking about from last year to this year?

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — The change in dollar figures, yes. Correct.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Yes, okay. Sure. I'm just going to ask Raynelle to walk through that for you. Okay.

**Ms. Wilson:** — So yes, that's the subvote (PS03) I think you're referring to. So in '21-22 there is a 3.4 per cent increase which is a salary adjustment. So that's a combination of economic increases and performance pay. And we also adjust salary budgets based on staff salaries. So that would be the majority of the increase included in that subvote.

I can certainly also just speak to . . . So the majority of that subvote funds the salaries and operating expenses for eight human resource partner teams with staff located in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert. And the subvote also funds the executive services branch that provides human resource support to the deputy minister, to the Premier, and senior executives.

So the majority of non-salary costs are for fixed costs like office supplies, in-province travel, copiers, phones, etc.

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Thank you. Just to the salary piece you were talking about, how many of that is for the out-of-scope and of course the senior leadership?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — We're just going to quickly consult with the officials virtually and we'll be right back.

[19:30]

**Ms. Wilson:** — So in terms of the HR consulting services, it's about 90 per cent of the salaries that would be out of scope. So most of the FTEs in that division are out of scope. However, they're not all managers. Some are individual contributors. So that work is really . . . That HR business partner team division is really made up of a number of teams, which would have an executive director of human resource business partner, along with a team of senior business partners and business partners, that would then provide support to our client ministries in all types of different capacities with respect to working directly with senior managers in those client ministries on performance improvement, the labour relation component, and strategic workforce planning, for example.

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Thank you for that. And of those out-of-scope employees, how many of them are senior leaders like VPs [vice-president]? Are these, like, senior . . . Like, I understand there are out-of-scope employees that are not in management positions. I just wanted to know how many of these are for the senior VP-level, director-, executive-level positions.

**Ms. Wilson:** — So we have one Assistant Chair and eight executive directors and 21 senior business partners in that division.

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Great. Do you have . . . Like, you were talking about the different HR . . . implementing government-wide human resource strategies. Do you have any incentive policy for senior leaders, directors, managers to meet their accountability agreements or their performance measures or targets? Do you have incentives or disincentives for that?

**Ms. Wilson:** — For out-of-scope performance, there is an in-range progression that out-of-scope employees have available to them annually, and that's based on performance. So that will range from 0 to 6 per cent depending on their rating. So if they don't meet expectations at all, it's a zero. If they're developmental or they meet some expectations, it's one and a half per cent. If they fully achieve and fully meet expectations, it's 2 per cent. If they exceed expectations, it's 4 per cent. And for outstanding performance, it's 6 per cent. So again that's based on performance and that's only movement within their range. So once they get to the top of their range, they don't exceed that no matter what their rating is. They would top out in terms of their range progression there.

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Just to add just another question around that is, so VPs, those are out-of-scope employees that you've . . . I'm familiar with the out-of-scope and kind of the salary range and percentages that they get after evaluations according to their accountability agreements. So I'm thinking more about . . . I guess have a question more about the VPs, the vice-presidents. And I know that they have performance incentive compensations and bonuses that are usually attached to their work. And how often has that increased from last year to this year? Can you tell me more about that?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — When you're referring to vice-presidents, typically that's in the Crowns. In the Public Service Commission, typically those will be your deputy ministers, your assistant deputy ministers, and your executive directors. And in those

cases what Raynelle just explained, that is the remuneration the way it's calculated. There isn't, you know, the bonus structure and those sorts of things.

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Okay. Thank you for that. Thank you for that clarification. Is there, when out-of-scope, senior out-of-scope . . . I know we all have work plans that we want to achieve and you've outlined four of your, four areas that are a priority. And if those are not achieved, I guess, is there a disincentive for . . . are there then no increase in pay? Is there something where there's a penalty in terms of decreased department funding, or if they don't reach their targets for that fiscal year?

[19:45]

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — So to your question about a reduction for that unit if targets aren't met, that's not what happens. It would be dealt with, the individual employee would be dealt with in the ranges that Raynelle had explained earlier, the 0 to 6 per cent.

If there's still issues beyond that that can't be addressed that way, that becomes a performance management issue, and then senior management deals with that employee individually. And then this difference from the 0 to 6 per cent, depending on a job evaluation, is different than in-scope, which in-scope . . . there's an automatic 4 per cent given to every employee until they reach the top of the range.

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Thank you for that. Actually I was referring to senior leaders that manage a department, those who I was referencing in terms of the disincentives for them if their department is not performing.

**Ms. Wilson:** — So I just want to make sure I'm clarifying this too. So in executive government, so that would be deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers, and executive directors, I think, as we discussed. So just for some additional background, those executive directors have an annual salary range of about 110,388 to 157,872, for example. Deputy minister is another level of example. There's a senior executive level range of pay, so those annual salary ranges would be anywhere between 177,792 to 254,220. So when that discussion happens at the end of the fiscal year about the performance, that's where those out-of-scope employees receive that increase to their salary based on the performance in the previous fiscal year.

So if they did not meet expectations, their individual branch appropriation would not necessarily be reduced. That's not sort of an effect of that. That would really be then either the deputy minister or the assistant deputy minister having that conversation, for example, with that executive director to indicate why they didn't meet expectations, and then set out those clear expectations with that executive director, for example, about what they would be expected to see in the coming year in terms of the performance goals or outcomes that they would be expected to meet.

Because you know, in terms of that performance management approach, that would be that ongoing conversation and ongoing check-in with that individual to ensure then that they start meeting those expectations. But they're not necessarily . . . there's no sort of holdback or disincentive to just their base salary

range associated with that, other than that they may not receive any . . . they may not increase in their range that year. If they don't meet expectations and they get a rating criteria of 1, then they would have zero. So then they wouldn't move within their range in that given year as well.

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Thank you. I'll move on to other questions. I'm sure you're tired of me asking those questions in that area. So your target areas, I'm interested in what is your turnaround in accommodating people with disabilities?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Can I just get you to clarify when you say turnaround?

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Yes. What I mean is when someone has declared a disability and they need accommodation. Like, what is the turnaround? How quickly does that happen? Does it happen when . . . Like, how long does it take? Does it take a month? Does it take eight months? Does it take . . . Like, what is your typical accommodation?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Oh, the time in order to arrange whatever accommodations they need for their job. That's what you're asking?

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Yes.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Okay.

**Ms. Wilson:** — Great question. Thank you. And it really is around having that conversation with the employee on what kind of accommodation is required. So for example, you know, in terms of the accommodation time frame, obviously some of that if it's for example an existing employee, sometimes it can be availability of medical information and just really getting an understanding of what that accommodation is.

Obviously our goal is to get that individual back into the workplace as soon as possible. However we do sort of have an overall strategy to get that existing employee, if they've left and then they require an accommodation coming back into their role, we try to get them back into the workplace within four to six weeks, and we track that. About 80 per cent of the time we do get them back into that four to six weeks. So yes, our first goal is to try to keep them in the workplace. If we can't, then getting them back into the workplace in that four to six weeks, so that's 80 per cent that we typically achieve there.

In terms of, you know, if it's a new employee that, you know, lets us know that they require an accommodation, so that will just depend. So for example if it's a piece of software or technology to help someone with a visual impairment, as an example, the time could just be hours or days to get that software sort of in place. If it's a larger change or it requires some retraining, then that could take longer depending on that.

[20:00]

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Thank you. Thank you for that question. Just on the health and safety wellness, how often do you send out notices and reminders to staff that have . . . How many sick days they have taken?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — I'm just going to make a couple of comments and then Raynelle will give a little bit more detail.

During my opening statement you heard me reference PSC Client. That's the portal that deals with payroll, HR, entitlements for employees. All PSC employees have access to that, and included in that they would all be at any time be able to access and check where they stand as far as sick days used, sick days still available. But there's programs that follow up on that as well, so I'll get Raynelle to address those.

**Ms. Wilson:** — Yes, thanks. So yes, in terms of that, in terms of the employee accessing all of their entitlements on PSC Client, managers can also access the sick leave usage of their direct reports. So they would be expected to be monitoring that and have a discussion with the employee if there's a pattern of excessive sick leave usage. And we do have an attendance support policy that helps to guide managers in those discussions.

And then we've also put in place a Be At Work program, which is another piece that's associated with PSC Client. So if there's an employee with five consecutive days or longer of sick time, then there's some information entered into that Be At Work which again allows that manager to monitor that and engage in that discussion with the employee to find that out. And again, so that PSC Client is available to all Government of Saskatchewan employees, obviously not just employees of the PSC, but all Government of Saskatchewan as well.

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — So just in relation to that question, with COVID I know that there's been people that have COVID and have to stay home. Like, I know that the sick leaves will be permanently on your HR record, right? And is there a clause in there, or not a clause but something, a statement to recognize that, under these unusual circumstances, that the individual that perhaps may have COVID is not negatively impacted in a way that kind of centres them out?

**Ms. Wilson:** — So yes. I mean in terms of if an employee, one of the reasons that they're sick is because they have COVID or they're self-isolating or they're not feeling well, they're symptomatic, and they're not sure. So you know, I don't think that there is necessarily anything that's . . . We wouldn't identify specifically as COVID-related. And you know, in terms of the sick leave usage in any given year, because it's really dependent on that individual employee. So a knee surgery, a hip replacement, you know, in that sort of given year an employee might miss quite easily anywhere between three and six weeks, for example. So really it's to do that.

And I guess I should also clarify that the Be At Work and, you know, having a little bit of that information in there is in terms . . . It's meant to be a supportive measure for managers and employees, not anything to be punitive towards employees because obviously our number one goal is to have that employee at work. Whether it's in the workplace or working at home right now, wherever that is, it's to have them be at work. But there would certainly be nothing COVID-specific sort of in terms of that, related to sort of associated sick time in this last year, for example.

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Okay, thank you. And also just another question on that piece is the carry-over for sick leave. I know

where I worked, there used to be a carry-over where as an out-of-scope employee I would carry over whatever sick time that I didn't use, and I would have a huge amount. Is that still a common practice with out-of-scope employees or with all PSC employees?

**Ms. Wilson:** — So yes, a full-time employee is entitled to those 15 days of sick leave per year, and all unused days carry over throughout their employment so that employees are well supported to be away sick.

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Thank you, thank you. Now just to shift gears again. You have here some government-wide human resource strategies and some of them you've spoken to them already. I'm just wondering if, in part of that strategy, if there's been an anti-oppressive training that's being offered. And I don't mean the mandatory Aboriginal awareness training. I'm talking specifically, asking about the anti-oppression training.

[20:15]

**Ms. Wilson:** — Yes, so in terms of training — and thanks for the clarification — so what we do have is respect-in-the-workplace training, which is a mandatory, online training module for all employees. And it's part of our inclusion and healthy workplace strategy that does align with our commitment to excellence and core values. So the support there is to ensure that we have that standard module to educate, empower leaders and employees with the skills to prevent bullying, abuse, harassment, and discrimination.

And I'm advised that, I think we've had about 14,695 employees have taken respect-in-the-workplace training. We also have an anti-harassment training module that's available through our online learning system. And we do also have unconscious bias training, which we would have available.

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Thank you. Thank you for sharing that. Now I'm just going to go to . . . Oh, I wish I had a bigger table. I'm old school and I love paper. So one of the questions I will ask here is: so when you're looking at efficiency initiatives, whether it's hiring freezes, vacancy management, out-of-province limitations, travel limitations . . . So what have you done in terms of efficiency initiatives in the last fiscal year?

**Ms. Wilson:** — Great. So over the last year some of the efficiency and effectiveness type of endeavours that we've undertaken is an automated process for the temporary assignment of higher duties. We undertook a large file-scanning project in PSC to try to digitize some of our paper and reduce some of our paper usage there. We created an online system to track and report incidents. So it's called the incident reporting and investigation, which saved our ministry clients time, made it easier to report incidents, and again getting away from those paper-based processes.

You know, over the last year the work at home certainly drove a lot of innovation with trying to go paperless and reduce that reliance on paper, so lots of improvement in process with respect to improved paperless type of efficiencies there, and then of course the last year also in terms of the best use of technology. So really in terms of some efficiencies and savings, new manager orientation sessions, executive education-type sessions had to



move entirely online as opposed to being sort of in-person based. So that would have provided some opportunities for savings and efficiencies there. And then we also, you know, just in terms of some of that efficiency, we did put a number of supports in place in terms of a virtual management tool kit to support those managers to manage remotely, with so many of our employees working from home over the last year as well.

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Just the next question is regarding the COVID efforts. How many, or can you tell me more about if there were any ministry staff that were deployed to help with the COVID efforts?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — So to your question, there has been over 450 Government of Saskatchewan employees and five PSC employees that have been redeployed to support a number of different ministries — the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency, the Saskatchewan Health Authority. They did that in a number of different areas. They've been engaged in contact monitoring and data entry. They worked on highway checkpoints. They've helped with emergency social services. Again with the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority], they've helped with negative-results notifications, communications, vaccine scheduling. So as I said, there's been over 450 across government and they've helped in various areas dealing with COVID.

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Thank you. Thank you so much for that. How much funding was received by the ministry from the federal government for COVID-19 supports or programs?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — For Public Service Commission, there was none.

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Thank you. You talked a bit about you've hired seven Indigenous advisors throughout the different ministries. That's good. One of the questions I have regarding that is how do you — and it also is in your report, in your TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] report from last year that you were expanding the use of the self-declaration beyond reporting — and so how do you ensure that an Indigenous person that is employed or applying is in fact Indigenous?

[20:30]

**Ms. Wilson:** — So in terms of that, we have not asked for proof of status. So we do depend on that self-declaration and we value the trust and integrity of those new employees with respect to that self-declaration.

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — So when you have specific targeted positions for Indigenous individuals . . . And I know that, having worked where I have in the past, that sometimes it is hard to, when there's a designated position, sometimes things slip through the cracks. So is there something that going forward that you would look into to ensure . . . I know other organizations have looked at ensuring that if a person self-identifies as Métis, that, where are they from? If they're First Nations, obviously they would say which First Nation band they're from.

Going forward is that something that the ministry would be open to looking at, since you're the provincial Public Service Commission? And we know federally, what some of the challenges they have had federally with non-Indigenous people

getting targeted Indigenous jobs without that verification.

**Ms. Wilson:** — Thanks for the question. And so at this point we certainly have no evidence that this is a concern in our organization currently. We do, you know, ask all public service employees to sign that oath of office and hold them to account with respect to that. However, you know, we are aware that this has been flagged in other jurisdictions potentially, so we are always looking at some of those best practices that are out there and, you know, would certainly see if there was a bit of a shift in terms of this, I guess what we would call more of a passive approach with respect to this policy. If there was a bit of a shift there in our provincial-territorial partners or federal government, that would be something we would certainly look at.

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Well thank you. Thank you for that. So I was looking at the Indigenous numbers that you have for Indigenous employees that you have. Do you track whether these positions are temporary, casual, permanent full-time, or even the duration of the Indigenous person that was employed? Do you track those?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — So we were just discussing with the staff the numbers that you had asked for. It's going to take a little bit of time to get the actual numbers together, so what I would suggest we do, we can follow up. I'm going to get Raynelle though. She has the total numbers and the percentage breakdown now. She can run through those with you in a minute.

[20:45]

But we'll also, if you like, we can have the staff do the actual numbers, put them in a chart format, and we'll table it with the committee so that you can have a copy of that as well.

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Oh yes, that would be really appreciated.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Okay, great.

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — So also with the breakdown, I'd ask if it could be broken down also into how many are entry-level positions, how many are middle management or senior management. Is that something that could also be tabled?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — They're watching now, so I'll get them to get as detailed with it as they can. And I'll ask Raynelle to read what I referenced earlier and right now, and then again we'll follow up with that, okay?

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Okay.

**Ms. Wilson:** — Yes. So just quickly, you know, as an example, for staffing actions in '19-20, we had 1,014 number of permanent full-time hires and transfers. And so in terms of that, we have that broken down in terms of those external hires of Aboriginal persons, so the permanent full-time, permanent part-time, and labour service is about 6.4 per cent of that number I referenced. The non-permanent, which excludes students, is 7.3 per cent, and then the student hires are 2.5 per cent.

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Well it would be very interesting to see how many, like, how it would be in temporary and casual and etc.

And also it'd be also interesting to know how many of those FTEs or individual Indigenous folks are in the positions because of a promotion or allowing movement in the positions with more responsibility. That would also be good to see if you're able to do that as well.

My next question is, and this was . . . I was really intrigued when I was reading your report on the TRC Calls to Action. And here, if you could tell me more about the diversity sourcing strategy with specific connections to the Indigenous community. Can you tell me more about that?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — So the staff have provided me with a lot of information to a very good question.

The Government of Saskatchewan has identified a number of priorities for '21-22. We continue to embed and continuously improve the inclusion tool kit to support ministries in identifying acquisition, engagement, and our growth strategies to increase representation of Indigenous people at all levels of the organization and to create a more inclusive workplace, strengthening relationships with educational institutions such as the SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies] and Northlands College and community-based organizations to identify and attract Indigenous talent to executive government.

Just a couple of examples they gave me in there were there's two SIIT students that have been hired as summer students for the human resource service centre. There's also been a big emphasis on recruiting SIIT students to government and a number of other things. Just an example they give me is recruiting at the First Nations University trade fair.

And then just going on, ministries have hosted events and learning opportunities, including traditional ceremonies such as pipe ceremonies, medicine walks, sweats, etc.; speakers, elders, and facilitators to teach about the history of colonization, impact of residential schools, and the importance of reconciliation. Additional virtual training such as the 4 Seasons of Reconciliation by First Nations University and introduction to Indigenous studies by Saskatchewan Polytechnic. Several offerings from the First Nations training consultants, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and Office of the Treaty Commissioner. A celebration of National Indigenous History Month, Indigenous Peoples Day, and Orange Shirt Day.

And seven ministries have established senior out-of-scope Indigenous advisor positions, which we talked about earlier, to lead internal and external engagement and to provide advice on ministry strategies, policies, programs, and partnerships that will lead to improving Indigenous outcomes in Saskatchewan.

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Thank you. Thank you for sharing that. It's very interesting. Thank you. So I'm going to just kind of move here about labour relations and just more in particular with middle management. So does the ruling of the labour board that allows supervisory employees to remain in existing bargaining units impact the strategy of labour relations?

**Ms. Wilson:** — So with respect to that, I think, if I'm understanding correctly the question around the supervisory bargaining unit provision in the Act, there was also a provision where the management of employment labour relations for the

government and SGEU [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union] made an irrevocable decision by both parties. That was accessible to them under that Act, where it was agreed to jointly by both parties that we would not establish a separate supervisory unit. So that had been jointly agreed to. So we just keep the two categories that we had existing previously, which would be out-of-scope and in-scope.

**The Chair:** — Having reached our agreed-upon time for the consideration of estimates for PSC, we will now adjourn the consideration of the estimates for the Public Service Commission. Thank you to the ministers and officials. Minister Reiter, is there any closing comments?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — I would, Mr. Chair. I'd like to thank you. I'd like to thank the hon. member for informative and interesting discussion and questions tonight. I'd like to thank the committee members for their participation, Legislative Assembly staff as well. I'd like to thank Raynelle, my office staff, and the senior management team at Public Service Commission who are on a virtual call. As I said, that's who we were conferring with outside. So thank you very much, everybody.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Minister Reiter. The opposition member, Ms. Nippi-Albright, do you have any closing comments?

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — miigwech.

[The hon. member spoke for a time in Saulteaux.]

I just want to say that I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak and also to ask questions regarding the Public Service Commission. And I just say thank you so much, and this was very informative. And I just want to say miigwech.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. That concludes our business for this evening. I'd ask a member to move a motion to adjourn. Mr. Harrison has moved. All agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. This committee stands adjourned until the call of the Chair.

[The committee adjourned at 21:08.]