



STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN AND CENTRAL AGENCIES

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN AND CENTRAL AGENCIES

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Hon. Tim McLeod
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Mr. Doug Steele
Cypress Hills

[The committee met at 15:30.]

The Chair: — Well good afternoon. And I want to welcome everybody here today and welcome to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies. I'm Fred Bradshaw. I'm the Chair. We have Warren Kaeding substituting for Steven Bonk today. We also have Ken Cheveldayoff, Greg Lawrence, Tim McLeod, and Doug Steele. And substituting for Nathaniel Teed, we have Jennifer Bowes.

Pursuant to rule 148(1), the following estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 were committed to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies on March 30th, 2023 and March 22nd, 2023 respectively.

The 2023-24 estimates are: vote 18, Finance; vote 12, Finance — Debt Servicing; vote 33, Public Service Commission; vote 13, SaskBuilds and Procurement; vote 86, SaskBuilds Corporation; vote 155, Lotteries and Gaming Saskatchewan Corporation; vote 151, Municipal Financing Corporation of Saskatchewan; vote 152, Saskatchewan Power Corporation; vote 153, Saskatchewan Telecommunications Holding Corporation; vote 140, Saskatchewan Water Corporation; vote 150, SaskEnergy Incorporated; vote 175, Debt Redemption; vote 176, Sinking Fund Payments — Government Share; and vote 177, Interest on Gross Debt — Crown Enterprise Share.

And the 2022-23 Supplementary Estimates no. 2 is: vote 18, Finance; vote 12, Finance — Debt Servicing; vote 152, Saskatchewan Power Corporation; vote 153, Saskatchewan Telecommunications Holding Corporation.

And today we will be considering the estimates of vote 33, Public Service Commission; vote 13, SaskBuilds and Procurement; vote 86, SaskBuilds Corporation; and vote number 124 — excuse me, sorry about that; I just got corrected — Bill No. 124.

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

Subvote (PS01)

The Chair: — We will begin with consideration of vote 33, Public Service Commission, Central Management and Services, subvote (PS01).

Minister Carr is here with her officials. As a reminder to the officials, please state your name for Hansard before speaking and don't touch the microphones. And the Hansard operator will turn on your microphone when you are speaking to the committee. Minister, do you want to please introduce your officials and make your opening comments.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — I do. I will. Well thank you very much. I'm pleased to be here today to provide additional information on the estimates for the Public Service Commission. And with me today I have my chief at the back of the room, Sean Wilson. We have Kathryn Pollack, Chair of the PSC [Public Service Commission]; Pat Bokitch, Assistant Chair of the PSC; Claudia Burke, Assistant Chair of the PSC; Josh Freistadt, executive director of corporate services; Carolyn Lewis, executive director of human

resource service centre; and Laura Hunter, executive director of the talent branch. And any other ministry officials are standing by just in case.

The Public Service Commission or the PSC is a central agency for government, providing human resource services for executive government as well as some agencies, boards, and commissions. We enable ministries to have the right people in the right roles at the right time to ensure government can deliver on its goals.

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

We have human resource business partner teams embedded within ministries to serve their HR [human resources] needs. These teams bring HR expertise and perspective to specific ministry initiatives. This approach recognizes the unique business of each ministry and ensures that their HR professionals are fully integrated in their businesses, which helps them provide strategic HR decisions. PSC employees provide strategic support, outstanding service, and are deeply respected as valuable partners to ministry clients.

The PSC's plan for '23-24 is consistent with previous years. The five areas of strategic priority remain the same and they are: effective leadership; high-performing organization; inclusive workplace; health, safety, and wellness; as well as the PSC being engaged and high-performing. We believe we have captured the strategic HR priorities of government in these areas.

PSC's plan is aligned with the growth plan to ensure government has the workforce needed to deliver on provincial priorities to meet the needs of its citizens. The plan also supports the deputy minister to the Premier's priorities for the public service, which are building strong teams, communication and collaboration, employee development, accountability, managing performance, and mental health and well-being.

Our first area of focus, effective leadership, is about ensuring the Government of Saskatchewan has the leadership required to deliver on our commitments. Effective leaders provide clarity of purpose, inspire and engage employees to be the best, and deliver on the government's goals safely and effectively. This includes proactive and targeted recruitment of strong leaders and ensuring senior leaders are supported and well positioned to achieve our goals.

The PSC has a number of tools and training in place to build strong teams and leaders, such as the practice of an effective executive team framework, middle manager excellence, and leadership development programs.

The second area of focus is a high-performing organization. High-performing organizations become this way by design and not by default. This includes proactive and targeted recruitment for pivotal and hard-to-recruit positions, implementing the multi-

year learning and development strategy for government, ensuring managers have the resources, tools, and supports to be effective in their roles. We will continue to build on our corporate culture, guided by our commitment to excellence and core values. 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 make 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.

PSC being engaged and high-performing is our fifth area, and it focuses on PSC's work. This includes enhancing our one-team approach to client service, culture, and decision making, ensuring that the PSC has the workforce we need to successfully execute our plan.

In the past year PSC has made significant progress on many of our plan initiatives. Inclusion and diversity continue to be top of priority for government. We are working to improve diversity hiring and retention. The growth plan sets out a priority for hiring students with disabilities. In 2022 the summer student program introduced specific focus on hiring students with disabilities.

The program saw a 63 per cent increase in applications from students with a disability and 152 per cent increase in hires from this diversity group. This year the summer student program continues to focus on students with disabilities, as it also is putting a priority on hiring Indigenous and visible minority students.

The Government of Saskatchewan is also committed to reconciliation by building a workforce that is representative of the Indigenous people of our province. Across government, ministries are also taking steps to support diversity and inclusion. Ten ministries now employ senior Indigenous advisors, including the PSC. These advisors sit at ministry executive tables and ensure an Indigenous perspective is included in executive decisions. Three ministries have also hired Indigenous advisors. The PSC continues to strengthen relationships with educational and community-based organizations to identify and attract Indigenous talent.

In response to recommendation no. 57 of the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, government offers mandatory Indigenous awareness training to employees. To date, more than 7,000 employees have completed this training. Along with the mandatory Indigenous awareness training, there is more in-depth training for employees in ministries such as Health; Social Services; and Corrections, Policing and Public Safety. Many ministries are also making 4 Seasons of Reconciliation training available to their employees. We continue to implement the government's multi-year inclusion strategy and action plan to help build a more diverse workforce.

In 2022 the PSC in partnership with a cross-ministry working group launched a set of guidelines to support employees who are transgender and gender-diverse as they transition to their

authentic selves in the workplace. These guidelines also provide tools for managers and co-workers to support transgender or gender-diverse employees in the workplace. Launching these guidelines is another step to ensure our workplaces are inclusive and supportive.

There is also a robust inclusion tool kit available for employees and managers. This tool kit provides practical tools for managers to help them develop an inclusive workplace and hire a diverse workforce.

In addition to the tool kit, PSC has a government-wide inclusion community of practice. This group is made up of 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.

We are working on improving our diversity representation numbers. An important part of this is our self-declaration online portal to allow employees to self-declare in a diversity category at any time during their employment. This initiative is helping us more accurately reflect our diversity of numbers and allows diverse employees to self-identify for training and development opportunities.

The Provincial Auditor found that the PSC was effective in advancing diversity and inclusion but did make some recommendations for improvement. In response, PSC is undertaking several actions to continue applying inclusion principles to human resource policies, programs, and services.

PSC supports the government-wide employee networks that support diversity and inclusion. We also celebrate inclusion-related events such as Indigenous History Month, Pride Month, Orange Shirt Day, Black Canadian History Month through corporate communication and ministry events. These initiatives, along with several other training and learning initiatives, are helping to increase the government's diversity representation.

The overall government representation of diversity group members remained relatively steady in 2022. Although we are still behind most of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission's targets, we are improving.

PSC is investing in health, safety, and wellness of employees. PSC supports the government-wide employee family assistance program that provides counselling and resources and 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 continues to be high priority for government.

We are also working on making improvements to our technology. Technology not only improves processes, but it also allows for better information that is more accurate and available quicker, which also allows for better decision making. SaskBuilds and Procurement is leading this project and have partnered with PSC and the ministries of Finance, Highways, and Corrections, Policing and Public Safety on this project.

[15:45]

This new system will increase efficiency, generate 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, world-class system, giving the government one source for information and a consistent user experience for employees and the public. This project is well under way and is expected to go live in 2024.

The focus of PSC for '23-24 is to continue to progress on its plan. We developed a budget . . . allowed us to focus on our priorities. In order to achieve its goals, the Government of Saskatchewan needs the strategic advice and guidance of the PSC to ensure we have the right people with the right skills delivering the right programs and services to the citizens of Saskatchewan.

I am proud of the PSC's accomplishments and confident in the work that is planned for the coming year. The PSC's work helps ministries so that they can meet their goals of building stronger communities and growing a stronger Saskatchewan. So with that, thank you. And I would welcome any questions, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister, for that. Are there any questions? Ms. Bowes.

Ms. Bowes: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to the minister and her officials for being here. It's my first time here for PSC estimates, and so looking forward to learning more through this process. So thank you to the minister for your opening remarks.

I think we'll move straight into it, Mr. Chair, into the questioning. I want to start off . . . Well I do have some questions just stemming from your opening remarks that maybe I'll just hit off the top here. You had talked about — sorry, I just want to find this here — you talked about the Provincial Auditor's recommendations and the fact that the PSC is making changes based on those recommendations. And I was curious to know which of those recommendations the PSC will be acting on.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Well thank you very much for that question, and I'm happy to highlight exactly what the recommendations were and kind of where we're at with those.

So the Provincial Auditor's recommendations and the actions that the public service is taking is as follows: modernization of the employment equity policy, so PSC is refreshing the employment equity policy in alignment with current practices with expected delivery in the '23-24 year that we're going into.

The next recommendation was to create clear indicators and time frames for measuring progress, so PSC is establishing short-, medium-, and long-term goals with measures and indicators of progress in equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Expand the inclusion tool kit for employees was another one. PSC is updating and enhancing the inclusion tool kit content, and we're refreshing resources on a regular basis. And I think that that's maybe something I would just add, probably with all of these recommendations, is that as times change, we need to modernize our policies and our tool kits as we go along, which is what we are committed to doing.

The next recommendation was to monitor ministry equity,

diversity, and inclusion plans and reports on their progresses. So PSC has formalized a process to gather, monitor, and report progress on the ministry's plans and analyze any themes that come out of that.

The next recommendation was to improve data analysis of diversity statistics. So PSC is enhancing use of data to assess initiatives and diversity representation to inform recruitment and retention talent strategies. Once implemented, the new Oracle human capital management system will allow for more effective analytics and the ability to identify trends and patterns.

And the last recommendation was to provide public reporting to show accountability and commitment, and PSC is exploring the options for the public reporting piece of that. I would add that in the Provincial Auditor's report she did find that PSC did have effective processes to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion regarding the collected and reliable data about persons in designated groups, collaboration with key partners, appropriate cross-ministry goals, and training opportunities.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you very much. And in terms of public reporting improvements, what does that exploration look like through the PSC?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — I'm sorry. Can you repeat that?

Ms. Bowes: — Yes. In terms of the public reporting improvements as one of the recommendations, what specifically is the PSC exploring in relation to that recommendation?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Great. Thank you. Okay, thank you. So there's a lot of work that's going on behind the scenes, but I think the most important thing that's coming out of this public reporting improvement is that as we're establishing our progress and we're meeting our goals put forward by the Human Rights Commission, that in the upcoming year we will be publicly reporting in the annual report. So it will be very, very transparent exactly where we're at with all of our . . . with the goals as far as diversity inclusion.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. And so as I understand it then, there aren't any recommendations that were made that the PSC will not be acting on.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — That's correct. We're going to be acting on them all. Some of them may take a little bit longer than others, a work in progress, and I think as I mentioned earlier with all of these, probably that continual lens of, are things changing, do we need to adjust the tool kit, all of that kind of stuff.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. Skipping back to, I think, one of your earlier opening remarks about guidelines in place for trans employees who are transitioning, would you be able to provide a copy of those guidelines? Okay, great.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Yeah, we can.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you. And then I think there was just a few more. You had said that the PSC has still not reached the Human Rights Commission's targets. And how behind exactly is the PSC on those targets?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Great, thank you. So regarding your question, representation in diversity groups have been relatively stable in the Government of Saskatchewan, but does lag the Human Rights Commission's goals. A multi-year inclusion strategy was launched in 2017-18 and updated in December of 2021. An annually refreshed inclusion action plan enables Government of Saskatchewan to move forward on initiatives and priorities supporting improved recruitment and retention of employees who are members of diverse groups.

The Government of Saskatchewan is taking a more proactive and targeted recruitment approach which includes strengthening relationships with educational institutions and community-based organizations. Ministries have established committees to help develop a more inclusive workplace culture and several ministries, including the Public Service Commission, have appointed people to senior Indigenous advisor roles 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.

So as far as the goals set forward by the Human Rights Commission: for persons with disabilities, the target is 22.2 per cent, and we are at 3.6; Aboriginal people, target is 14 per cent, we are 8.9; members of a visible minority group, the target is 10.6, and we are 7.9; and women in under-represented occupations, so women in senior management, the target is 47 per cent, and we are actually at 49.7 per cent — we do well in that category; as well as women in middle and other management, the target is 47 per cent and we are at 56.4 per cent, so we do really well in that category as well.

And I think as we work with our stakeholders and our advisors, we expect to be bringing all of those other numbers up as time goes on.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. And so can I ask, you know, since the multi-year inclusion strategy was implemented in '17-18 to the time that it was updated in 2021, what types of updates were made to try and, you know, bridge those gaps and to achieve those targets?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay, so as far as the work that has been taking place, an annually refreshed inclusion action plan enables the Government of Saskatchewan to move forward on initiatives and priorities supporting improved recruitment and retention of employees who are members of a diversity group.

[16:00]

Diversity inclusion initiatives and priorities include collaboration with ministries to continue to embed and improve the inclusion tool kit; rollout and support of the new gender transition guidelines for employees and managers across all ministries; support to diversity group employee networks that promote awareness and provide education and networking through organized events, such as Aboriginal Government Employees Network, Saskatchewan Visible Minority Employees Association, Disability Support Network, and Pride Alliance Network.

The self-declaration option implemented in 2018 provides more opportunities to self-declare, leading to increased opportunities

for targeted training and employment. Delivery of Respect in the Workplace training, so as of December 31st, 2022, 18,895 Government of Saskatchewan employees, past and present, have completed the training. Delivery of Indigenous awareness training, as of December 31st, 2022, 7,656 Government of Saskatchewan employees have completed this training. Delivery of disability awareness training, so as of December 31st, 2022, 4,474 Government of Saskatchewan employees have completed this training. And of course every year we will update those numbers, encourage all of our employees to get all of that training under their belt.

Renewal of the equity policy for the Government of Saskatchewan, and supporting Saskatchewan accessibility legislation and its impacts. The Be at Work program provides managers with supports for proactive and effective medical accommodation practices, and it enables employees to remain safely at work or promotes an earlier return to work. Healthy workplaces initiatives, implementation of the national standard for psychological health and safety in the workplace, guidelines and resources intended to help promote psychological well-being of employees and prevent psychological harm in the workplace.

In 2022 summer student program priority on hiring students experiencing a disability, focusing on candidate and ministry engagement. This resulted in the 63.1 per cent increase in student applications and 152.4 per cent increase in hires of this equity group, which I talked about in my opening comments.

Ministries have hosted inclusion-related events and learning opportunities such as traditional Indigenous ceremonies such as pipe ceremonies, medicine walks, and sweats; speakers, elders, and facilitators teaching 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 of Canada; celebration of the National Indigenous History Month, Indigenous storytelling, Indigenous Peoples Day, Orange Shirt Day, and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation; as well as support for Pride events, parades, and presentations on 2SLGBTQ+ [two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning plus] topics.

So that is the work that we've added from the beginning to where we are now. And of course this is a continual moving, shifting sands as we move forward and we continue to improve.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. Thank you. And so will, you know, the effects of these efforts be assessed on a regular basis, and if so on what sort of intervals?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So internally, as we do all of this work we assess it quarterly to see exactly where we are at, and of course then we have that annual reporting that will be happening in our report.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. I did have a question too about . . . You'd spoken about Indigenous advisors being put in place in certain ministries. And which ministries all have Indigenous advisors in place currently?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Well thank you for that. So I think your question was, which ministries have the Indigenous advisors? So we have Agriculture; Energy and Resources; Advanced

Education; Parks, Culture and Sport; Education; Corrections, Policing and Public Safety; Justice and Attorney General; SaskBuilds and Procurement; and of course our ministry, the Public Service Commission.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. And did I understand correctly that the intention is to have an Indigenous advisor in each ministry across government?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Thank you for the question. So right now the ministries, I guess, will decide when it is time for them to have a senior Indigenous advisor. Having said that, we do have this council of senior Indigenous advisors at this point in time, and that is a group of advisors that really any ministry, if they have questions or concerns, they can call on them for advice. And within the Public Service Commission, we have our senior Indigenous advisor who is available at all times to whatever ministry may need some advice at that point in time.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. Thank you. And so I guess a question there is, how are the Indigenous advisors selected? Is it each ministry that selects their own? And as I understand it, each ministry has the prerogative whether they will have an Indigenous advisor in place or not? Yes. And each does select their own?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Well thank you. So as we already talked about, it's up to the ministries. And it actually is a competitive process, application-based and, depending what they're looking for, determines whether they get the job or not. But I'm just going to let Pat touch on it a little bit further, kind of to expand what that might look like.

Ms. Bokitch: — All right, thank you and thanks for the question. So just in terms of the requirements for those . . . Can you hear me? Oh, I'm sorry. Pat Bokitch, Assistant Chair.

So just in terms of that competitive process mentioned by the minister, that will depend on the specific needs of the ministry and what they're looking to achieve through their senior Indigenous advisor. For example, Education and Agriculture ministries are quite externally and sector focused. Some ministries focus more on engagement, and perhaps others have more of a policy internal development lens.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. Thank you. And what was the impetus, and where did this decision stem from to bring in Indigenous advisors through different ministries in the government?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So we're not exactly sure when the first senior Indigenous advisor was hired. We can get that information if necessary. But Education is the ministry that hired the first senior Indigenous advisor. And as other ministries watched how that rolled out and the successes that they were having, that's when they made decisions to start doing that within their own ministries. And so that's why you see the ministries that have it at this current point in time.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thanks. And then I was just wondering a bit about one of your answers about the government's Indigenous council. And I've never heard of this before, and I was wondering if you could let me know about a bit about how that council is selected and what mandate the council has.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay, so I guess first and foremost the purpose of the senior Indigenous advisors council will collaborate to support the work of their ministries and will share their expertise with other areas within the Government of Saskatchewan as needed.

[16:15]

The goals and objectives is to have a council where senior Indigenous advisors respect diverse viewpoints, share leading practices, ideas, experiences; influencing positive change and resource related to provincial direction to ensure Indigenous culture and protocols are respected, supported, and integrated into ministry initiatives in a consistent manner; providing strategic advice, expertise, and a standardized approach on Indigenous policy and program development and implementation within respective ministries and across the Government of Saskatchewan; building relationships, engaging, and partnering with Indigenous communities to ensure their perspectives and voices are integrated into the policies, programs, and services of the ministries respective to the senior Indigenous advisors and other areas of the Government of Saskatchewan as requested or invited; and to leverage each other's knowledge and resources.

As far as the membership goes, a person holding a position which was posted as a senior Indigenous advisor in the ministry, having the lived experience of being Indigenous, reporting directly to the deputy minister's office, having oversight, and providing an Indigenous lens to all branch and ministry policies, programs, and initiatives. So this council is made up of all of the senior Indigenous advisors.

Their roles and responsibilities are to represent respective ministries, rotate posting and chairing duties, as well as taking minutes; be fully participating members and contribute to discussion around happenings or other current events impacting SIAs' [senior Indigenous advisor] work and if so how; highlights what are SIAs working on, main priorities, projects, and making sure that it has an Indigenous lens; are there any hurdles that they're experiencing and putting an Indigenous lens on that; and hope: what are some of the opportunities and how can senior Indigenous advisors support and collaborate; and then of course to provide updates from the meetings to respective ministries, senior leadership teams, and other appropriate internal staff or committees to further their work and share ideas from the meetings; and of course, strategic direction priorities now comes with respect to deputy ministers in general.

Ms. Bowes: — Great, thank you. I'm not sure if you'd know the timeline for this, but would you happen to know if the Indigenous advisor within the Ministry of Justice was in place prior to the introduction of Bill 88, *The Saskatchewan First Act*, or was that after the bill was introduced?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Thank you for the question. That is not something that we have, but that would definitely be something that the Ministry of Justice would be able to answer for you.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. Can you tell me, are you aware if the Ministry of Government Relations will be seeking an Indigenous advisor?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So just regarding if they're going to be hiring one, that's something that I can't answer. It would be a question that you would have to ask them. But I do know from what I can recall in my time in Government Relations, they did have a division that was Indigenous that they definitely drew on advice from. So once again, Government Relations is really the place for those questions.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. I think for now that's the questions I have from your remarks. I really appreciate that. That was very instructive. I think I'll move on to some of my preplanned questions. I have a few around bargaining. I'm wondering if you can let us know which agencies the PSC bargains on behalf of.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Sorry, could you repeat that?

Ms. Bowes: — Yes. I'm wondering which agencies does the PSC all bargain on behalf of.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay, so we do have a number of bargaining tables that we bargain on behalf of. And there is: PSC, SGEU [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union]; PSC, CUPE 600 [Canadian Union of Public Employees]; SK Arts, SGEU; Sask Crop Insurance, SGEU; Conexus Arts Centre, IATSE [International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees]; Conexus Arts Centre, RWDSU [Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union]; Legal Aid Commission, CUPE; and Water Security Agency, Unifor Local 820.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thanks. And have there been any changes in the list of agencies that the PSC represents over the past five years?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So the list that I provided you is the consistent list that we have had, but I will let Pat just touch briefly on, I guess, some of the anomalies that have happened in the past just because of PSC really is a supportive ministry across government.

Ms. Bokitch: — Yeah. Pat Bokitch, Assistant Chair. So from time to time if there's capacity issues in other organizations around the ELR [employee and labour relations] file in bargaining, the Public Service Commission is asked to provide support and assistance to bargaining, either directly at the table or from a strategy development perspective. And an example that comes to mind several years ago was the Sask Human Rights Commission needed some support, given capacity at that time.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. Thank you. I'm wondering, Minister, what your role is with respect to collective bargaining.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So as Minister of PSC, it is my role to confirm the mandate for PSC. And then I'm also a member of the subcommittee of public sector of bargaining which will make that recommendation to cabinet.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. Can you tell me what is the status currently for bargaining for all Public Service Commission agreements with the agencies?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay, so currently we have two tables that we're actively negotiating with, the CUPE agreement and the

SGEU agreement with the PSC. So we are committed to the collective bargaining process and are confident that a mutually acceptable settlement will be reached at these bargaining tables.

[16:30]

As well, I guess just to the broader question of the status of the different collective bargaining tables although we're not actively negotiating with them right now: the SK Arts, SGEU did expire on September 30th, 2022; Sask Crop Insurance, SGEU expired September 30th, 2022; Conexus Arts Centre, IATSE expired June 30th, 2022; Conexus Arts Centre, RWDSU expired January 26th, 2023; Legal Aid Commission, CUPE, September 30th, 2021.

And so the only table on there that hasn't expired but will later this year is the Water Security Agency, Unifor Local 820, December 31st, 2023. And I guess just for the two tables that we're negotiating with right now, the PSC CUPE 600, it expired September 30, '21 and PSC SGEU expired September 30, 2022.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. So I guess based on your answers, the remaining tables that are not active, all of which have expired except as you mention the Water Security Agency . . . And so can you let us know the reason why those bargaining tables have not commenced.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So the parties will actually determine when they are ready to start bargaining. So for example, I was just informed that we do have notice from Legal Aid that they're going to start tomorrow.

Ms. Bowes: — And is the Public Service Commission the reason for any of the delays with the bargaining commencing for the expired agreements that you mentioned?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So thank you for the question. As I mentioned in my previous answer, when the parties determine they are ready is when they will come forward. And then at that point in time, the PSC will become an active participant. So I guess the short answer is no, we are not responsible for any of these delays.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. Thanks. And then I guess there would be only two agreements where there has been an exchange of proposals, presumably the two active tables. So for those tables, what is the minister's perspective on how far apart the parties are? And what are your expectations for resolution at those tables?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Well I think I would just answer that question with active bargaining is . . . happens, and we're not going to talk about it in a committee or on the floor of the Assembly.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. And I think now, just moving on a little bit away from bargaining. I had mentioned earlier, a bit new to the Public Service Commission and the estimates, and so had a few questions about governance. I was wondering in terms of governance, why the PSC would have a Chair as opposed to a deputy minister. What's the reason for the difference in structure there?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Thank you for the question. So unlike most

statutes that create government ministries, the Public Service Commission Act, 1988, with two exceptions, does not contemplate any legal role whatsoever for the Minister Responsible for the PSC.

The minister has general responsibility for the PSC, including responsibility for answering questions in the Legislative Assembly with respect to personnel transactions and other duties carried out by the Chair and the PSC, giving direction to the Chair with respect to financial and budget matters, and discussing in a very general or macro way the personnel policies and practices of the PSC.

The minister's legal authority is limited to giving direction to the PSC in carrying out its statutory duties with respect to collective bargaining with trade unions representing government employees.

But I am going to pass it over to Kathryn, and she'll talk a little bit more about her specific role.

Ms. Pollack: — Kathryn Pollack, Chair. So I would just add that the structure of the Public Service Commission is a really foundational aspect of the Westminster model of government, which ensures an independent and continued professional public service regardless of what party is in power. And so thus the difference in terms of the minister's role, but then also a Chair versus a deputy minister. So the role of the Chair actually has quite a bit more decision-making authority than a deputy minister in some regards.

Ms. Bowes: — Thanks for that. And then I guess stemming from that, could you speak a bit more about the role of the PSC board?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay, thank you for your question. So the role of the public service commissioners. They are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and are responsible to effectively carry out the provisions of *The Public Service Act* of 1998. Commissioners have all the powers of the commissioners appointed pursuant to *The Public Inquiries Act*, including the powers to administer oaths and declarations; to subpoena witnesses; and to compel the production of books, papers, and records. The Chair and other commissioners have exclusive statutory duties respecting all human resource matters laid out in the Act.

And the role of the Chair. The Chair is responsible for providing direction, advice, or assistance to ministries in the application of HR management policies, standards, regulations, and procedures; developing, providing, assisting in, or coordinating programs concerning employee training, education, and career development; establishing and maintaining an HR management information system; and fulfilling any other responsibilities that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may assign.

The commissionaires . . . delegated to the Chair powers like recruiting and selecting persons within the public service and appointing persons in classified divisions; developing, establishing, and maintaining classification plans; coordinating and development and implementation of employment equity policies and programs; and carrying out research to compensation and working conditions within the public service.

And I'm just going to turn it over to Kathryn, and she'll give you some examples.

[16:45]

Ms. Pollack: — So I'll just share a couple of practical examples of what the commissioners do. So on the one hand, they are very much, in terms of their decision making, are responsible for out-of-scope appeals. So out-of-scope employees who are facing a decision that they wish to appeal, those are heard by the commissioners. And then the other element of the ongoing work of the commissioners is to meet monthly with the Chair and Assistant Chairs to almost act like a sounding board, a bit of an advisory board in terms of our direction at that sort of 10,000-foot level. So we seek their advice in terms of things that we're moving forward and take their input.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you. And I'm wondering if you can tell me when the current board members were appointed and if there are currently any vacancies.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay, thank you very much for the question. So the board consists of five people — Kathryn and four other individuals. And the terms of this board are six years. And we have two people who are actually in their second term. We have two people who are in their first term. And at this current point in time, we have no vacancies.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. So are there term limits?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay. Thank you for the question once again. As far as we can see there are no term limits.

Ms. Bowes: — Thanks. I did want to just come back to one of your responses, Ms. Pollack. You had talked about the board receiving out-of-scope appeals, and I'm wondering for . . . I'm assuming that's for dismissal, suspension, demotion, layoff. I'm wondering for, like, how many of each of those appeals were heard, say, in the last five years and what were the outcomes of those appeals?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So once again, thank you very much for the question. And I'm just going to turn this over to Kathryn as the Chair of the board.

Ms. Pollack: — So we don't have the number of appeals over the past five years. That is data that we can get to you if you desire. In terms of sharing the outcomes of those appeals, you know, that information is confidential, and so we don't broadly share information around the decisions. So those are specific to the employee and employer.

In terms of the types of appeals, I would just add that there are also classification appeals and even disciplinary in terms of a letter. So it goes beyond the scope of just terminations and demotions.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. Yeah, thank you for that. And when I asked for outcomes, I didn't mean specifics; I meant outcomes in terms of, you know, whether decisions were upheld or overturned. I assumed they'd be confidential.

Is that the case?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Yeah, we will endeavour to get that number for you. And what we can provide, we'll provide.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, that would be great. I'm going to move on here now a little bit to executive appointments. Does the PSC ensure that executive appointments are based on merit, and if so, how is this ensured?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Once again, thank you for the question. So the hiring process that I'm going to talk about here within the Government of Saskatchewan is up to and including ADMs [assistant deputy minister].

So hiring qualified employees is one of the most important decisions that organizations make. The Government of Saskatchewan supports a non-partisan and professional public service, using consistent, fair, and defensible hiring practices. Public Service Commission is responsible for the development of hiring tools and systems, and works with managers to make good hiring decisions. The Public Service Commission also monitors staffing actions, supports the resolution of staffing grievances, and continues to improve hiring tools and processes.

As far as authority and delegation goes, *The Public Service Act* sets the mandate for Public Service Commission to establish human resource practices to maintain a professional and independent public service. The PSC, as an independent agency, establishes qualifications and ensures that recruitment and staffing processes are in accordance with *The Public Service Act* of 1998, *The Public Service Regulations* of 1999, appropriate collective agreements, either SGEU or CUPE, and established procedures and policies to ensure that the staffing process is fair, open, accessible, and that individuals are qualified for their positions.

The PSC employs well-trained, experienced human resource professionals to help hiring managers with their staffing needs, provide legal and procedural frameworks within which the ministries can carry out their staffing responsibilities, and ensures appropriate checks and balances are in place.

[17:00]

Authority for staffing is delegated to the ministries. Delegated responsibilities include the development of job postings and interview guides, the administration of the hiring process, interviewing and conducting reference checks, making the selection decision, and any related grievance management.

There is a little bit of a difference between in-scope unionized employees versus the out-of-scope staffing. So the permanent in-scope staffing process is conducted as per the appropriate collective agreement, either SGEU or CUPE. Appointment is based on their senior-qualified model, except for some occupations at higher levels where merit-based provisions have been agreed to through collective bargaining. SGEU has the right to representation at any staffing panel for permanent in-scope SGEU competitions, and CUPE has the right to be present for all employment interviews for CUPE competitions. Permanent out-of-scope staffing is conducted in accordance with *The Public Service Act, 1998* and regulations, and appointment is based on merit and fit.

There is also an online career centre. So all permanent full-time and most part-time and non-permanent vacancies are advertised on a central site called The Career Centre of Saskatchewan on saskatchewan.ca. So I'll just clarify that — are advertised on a central site called The Career Centre, and that can be found on saskatchewan.ca. Competitions open to the public may also be posted in newspapers, websites, and on social media such as LinkedIn or Indeed.

Candidates register their employment interest and history; recruiters can access this information in a timely fashion, a key factor for hard-to-recruit positions. Anyone who does not have access to a computer or the internet can get help and access they require at career services centres in their communities, Immigration and Career Training, or at a local library. Candidates can also access a list of available competitions and apply through any smart phone. The system also supports non-electronic applications as well.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. Yeah, I appreciate the information. I was asking exclusively about executive appointments. We've seen a number of people who've been recently appointed to the public service who have political connections. Has the Public Service Commission intervened at any point over the past five years to ensure the continuation of a professional, non-partisan public service?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So I guess just to . . . Your question is if PSC has intervened in these, and no, they haven't.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. Sorry, just one sec. I was skipping around here and lost my place. So are you aware how many individuals have moved from ministers' offices to the public service in each of the past five years?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — I'm sorry. How many have moved from ministers' offices?

Ms. Bowes: — Yeah.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — To . . .

Ms. Bowes: — To the public service in each of the past five years.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay. So thank you for the question. We do not track individuals who have moved from ministers' offices into the public service. And I guess just to add on that, even within the public service we don't track employees who move from ministry to ministry. So if someone happened to be in the Ministry of Agriculture and then they go over to the Ministry of Social Services, we don't track those type of movements either.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. I have a number of other questions along this line but in the interests of time, I think I'm running a bit short here so I might skip through another topic and maybe come back if I have time or submit written questions.

I wanted to come back to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Would you please provide your diversity statistics over the past five years, including women in executive management, Indigenous employees, employees with disabilities, and visible minorities. I know you gave current statistics, but could you list those for the

previous four years as well?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay. So I will start with persons with disabilities. The target is 22.2 per cent. So in '19-20 we had 3.4 per cent. In '20-21, 3.5 per cent. In '21-22, 3.7 per cent. And in '22-23 — now this is just as of December 31st, 2022 so we'll still have three more months of data that we will be gathering for this past fiscal year — it's 3.6 per cent.

And then we also have the category of Aboriginal people, and of course the target is 14 per cent. In '19-20 we had 9.6 per cent. In '20-21, 9.5; in '21-22, 9.2; and then in '22-23 to December 31st, '22, we have 8.9 per cent.

Members of a visible minority, the goal is 10.6 per cent. So in '19-20, 5.7 per cent; '20-21, 6.6 per cent; '21-22, 7.6 per cent; and '22-23, as of December 31st, 2022, 7.9 per cent.

And then of course there was women in under-represented occupations, so women in senior management. The target was 47 per cent. In '19-20 it was 47 per cent. In '20-21 it was 47.4 per cent. In '21-22 it was 47.9 per cent. And then in '22-23, of course as of December 31st, '22, it was 49.7 per cent. That was in women in senior management.

And then we have women in middle and other management. The target as well is 47 per cent. In '19-20 it was 55.2 per cent. In '20-21 it was 56.1 per cent. In '21-22 it was 56.1 per cent. And then in '22-23 as of December 31st, '22, it was 56.4 per cent.

[17:15]

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. And those first stats, that was for employees with a disability. Is that correct?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Yes. The first line item I gave you was persons with disabilities.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. So just looking at these numbers, there hasn't been much significant change over the five-year span by the looks of it with many of these categories at all. We've seen incremental changes in a few, probably the most notable being from 5.7 per cent to 7.9 per cent for employees who are visible minorities. And so can you comment on the lack of progress in achieving these targets over the past five years?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay. So thank you for the question once again. And I guess just when we talk about some of the line items and if we talk about the Indigenous component, at one time we had several employees within our wildfire branch, which of course was eventually absorbed a couple, three years ago by the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency. And so some of those First Nations numbers or Indigenous component that we had are no longer within executive government because now they're over at the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency. So those numbers wouldn't actually be reported in here.

Another component is when employees are hired, and I guess, regardless of which category — disability or Indigenous component — it's something that they self-declare. And so it's that choice as to whether they're going to self-declare or they're not going to self-declare. And just to kind of build on that, some of the changes that were made in 2017 . . . So in 2017, when

Statistics Canada improved their methodology through making changes to the filter questions around activities of daily living, it's better captured disability types.

So this actually increased the reported prevalence of disability from 12.4 per cent to 22.2 per cent. So at one time people with disabilities, the standard was that 12.4 per cent, but then in 2017 the criteria kind of changed. It became a bigger list, more inclusive, and it went up to 22.2 per cent. So that is our new target. So they did that because they found that the old filters were not effective in capturing those experiencing less visible disabilities involving pain, memory, learning, and/or mental illness. Increased prevalence of disability is largely related to improved coverage of all types of disabilities.

There continues to be barriers to employment that government is working to address through initiatives such as focusing on increasing the number of students experiencing disability within our summer student program. And I guess just to touch on that, it gives a specific example of kind of what we are doing within government to help with that.

So the PSC is actually connecting with post-secondary educational institutions to try and build relationships and promote the summer student program. This initiative is aimed at engaging through career fairs, the presentation with the University of Regina and Saskatchewan, First Nations University of Canada, Sask Polytechnic, Gabriel Dumont Institute, and the Saskatchewan institute of technologies. So that's career fairs at all of those institutions, designated summer student opportunities for students at SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies], and partnerships with student accessibility officers where available.

So PSC has ongoing communication with ministries about the summer student program, and available tools and resources to enable hiring from equity groups through social media, email blasts, and the onboarding process. And of course PSC is actively promoting hiring for equity groups in social media, such as LinkedIn. This is just one specific example of what we're trying to boost those numbers and improve year after year.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you. So you talked about self-identification. And so specific to that, I'd like to know then, is that still the PSC's current practice, to verify the status of prospective or current employees who claim to be Indigenous specifically?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So just before we get into answering that question, you had asked the question earlier about the appeals.

Ms. Bowes: — Actually that's okay. If you could get back to me, just because we only have five minutes and I have a few more questions I'm hoping to get to. If you could get back in writing on that, I would really appreciate that.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Fair enough. I will just pass this back. So the answer is yes then.

Ms. Bowes: — So yes to self-identification?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Yeah.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. So I think we've all seen the increasing awareness — the exposure, I guess — of non-Indigenous people in Saskatchewan who are fraudulently claiming to be Indigenous and who are in fact taking up positions that are supposed to be reserved for Indigenous people. And a lot of this awareness — I just want to give credit where credit's due — is on behalf of the Indigenous Women's Collective and the work that they've been doing in exposing this fraud.

And so stemming from that, we've seen especially a number of post-secondary institutions who are taking steps to adapt and change, rework their policies to make sure that self-identification is not being relied on anymore because we're seeing how problematic it is and how it's simply not working.

And so I know my colleague, Betty Nippi-Albright, the opposition critic for First Nations and Métis relations, has proposed that the Public Service Commission implement attestation forms, which would be required to be signed by any employee who is claiming to be Indigenous, whether or not that position in question is a designated position for an Indigenous person.

And so I know the Privacy Commissioner has stated that there are no privacy laws which would prevent the development of such a policy. And so I'd like to know, Minister, will you be looking to implement such a policy within the Public Service Commission?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Thank you for the question. So the Government of Saskatchewan is committed to reconciliation by building a workforce representative of Indigenous people in Saskatchewan. In executive government, proof of status for any self-declaration equity category is typically not requested.

Misrepresentation is a complex issue, and we recognize the legitimate harm from fraudulent claims of Indigenous identity. There are different views within Indigenous community both about being asked for proof and about what would constitute proof.

The Public Service Commission will continue to monitor the issue in executive government and consider appropriate approaches to further explore proof of identity in collaboration and consultation with Indigenous community. The current status right now, candidates who apply for jobs on the Government of Saskatchewan Career Centre are given the following message: "If you are a member of an equity group, you are strongly encouraged to self-declare." And then it also states, "Proof of status may be requested."

Proof of status is typically not requested for any self-declaration equity category, but it could be. We will continue to support positive outcomes in hiring that will maintain current staffing practices while exploring alternative practices to validate identity. And I would like to stress very strongly that to date, we have had, within executive government, no known knowledge of anybody that is misrepresenting themselves. So once again I would encourage that if there is a case that you're aware of, that you please bring that forward to us so it could be dealt with appropriately.

[17:30]

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. Thank you for the response. And I, you know, would suggest that if this hasn't been broached, I guess, already with your ministry's Indigenous advisor, that perhaps that would be something that would be good to explore. I think I may be out of time. Mr. Chair, is that correct?

The Chair: — That is correct.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. Well thank you. I will turn it over to you for any closing remarks.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — I'll just keep it very brief. Just thank you so much to all the officials who came today and supported me in my role. Thank you for the questions. I learned a little bit more today also. And thank you to the committee members for sitting here, and of course Hansard.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you again, Minister, and to your officials. It was really nice to meet you and good to learn a lot through this process. I really appreciate the time you take and the preparation that goes into the estimates. As always, it's very much valued. And to Hansard, thank you.

The Chair: — Okay, we will now adjourn the consideration of the estimates for the Public Service Commission, and we will recess until 5:45.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

General Revenue Fund SaskBuilds and Procurement Vote 13

Subvote (SP01)

The Chair: — Well welcome back everybody, and I have to say that Trent Wotherspoon is now substituting in for Nathaniel Teed, and we'll now consider the estimates for the Ministry of SaskBuilds and Procurement, and SaskBuilds Corporation. We'll begin our consideration with vote 13, SaskBuilds and Procurement, central management and services, subvote (SP01).

Minister, do you have any comments you would like to state now or should we get right into the questions?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Oh no, I absolutely have comments.

The Chair: — Yeah.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay. Well thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to be here to discuss the 2023-24 estimates for the Ministry of SaskBuilds and Procurement, or SPB. With me today are my deputy minister, Kyle Toffan; my assistant deputy minister of infrastructure design and delivery, Miguel Morrissette.

Behind me is my assistant deputy minister of operations and service and delivery, Kelley Moore; my chief procurement officer, Karen Cossitt; my executive director of corporate finance, Hera Kang; the executive director of information security, Fuad Iddrisu — I apologize if I said that wrong — executive director of citizen centric program delivery, John Saltasuk; and my chief of staff, Sean Wilson. I thank them all for

joining me here today to help answer questions about our ministry and its budget.

The '23-24 provincial budget supports growth that works for everyone through investments that support a strong economy, strong finances, a better quality of life for the people of our province. As the ministry where infrastructure, procurement, real property, facility management, logistics, and information technology meet to enable the Government of Saskatchewan's growth plan and programs and services for citizens and communities, SPB plays an important role in delivering the commitments set out in the budget.

This includes coordinating the largest infrastructure investment in Saskatchewan's history, leveraging public procurement and supply chains to support and grow Saskatchewan's supplier capacity, protecting the safety and security of government systems and information, and providing critical operating and infrastructure services to government working with client ministries to find the best solutions for their businesses.

You might wonder what logistics, procurement, infrastructure, facility management, or information technology have in common that makes bringing them together work so well. Since becoming the minister last May, I've seen first-hand that while SPB's business lines are each unique, they all have a single critical shared purpose ensuring government can deliver programs and services to support the best possible outcome for citizens.

SPB was created to oversee a new approach to the management of all infrastructure projects and assets: standardize government procurement and IT [information technology] infrastructure as well as support several important long-term government commitments that are set out in Saskatchewan's growth plan; delivering a modern approach to IT service, delivery, and procurement; leveraging government procurement and supply chains to support the development and growth of Saskatchewan businesses; and investing more than 30 billion over the next decade to build the infrastructure to support a growing province, a strong economy, and a better quality of life for Saskatchewan people.

This year's budget provides the biggest infrastructure investment in Saskatchewan history to support growth that works for everyone through a record of more than 3.7 billion in capital projects to meet the needs of citizens and communities across the province. SPB leads and coordinates the development of the government's capital plan each year. This year Saskatchewan's capital plan represents an increase of 543.4 million or 17.1 per cent over the '22-23 budget, including nearly 1.7 billion in capital projects across executive government and approximately 2.1 billion in capital projects by Saskatchewan's commercial Crown corporations.

This brings the Government of Saskatchewan's capital spend for ministries, agencies, and Crown corporations since 2021 to 12.4 billion. We also projected to spend nearly 15.2 billion over the next four years. I can confirm that we are on track to meet the growth plan target of investing 30 billion in infrastructure by 2030. The '22-23 capital plan includes continued investment on several major projects to address the needs of Saskatchewan residents and support local job creation.

While our partner ministries will also provide some details regarding capital spending in their sectors to their respective committees, I do want to take a few minutes to provide members here the broad strokes of this year's capital plan priority investments.

The '23-24 capital plan invests nearly 1.7 billion in executive government infrastructure to deliver the health, education, transportation, and other infrastructure that Saskatchewan families and communities depend on, including 442.9 billion for transportation infrastructure.

348.1 million infrastructure through funding programs such as the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, which SPB staff coordinate in close collaboration with the Ministry of Government Relations and other programs.

338 million for government services capital to fund projects across government, including required upgrades of buildings, provincial dam rehabilitation, courts, correctional facilities, parks and recreational facilities, and IT management systems.

337.6 million for health care capital to build and upgrade long-term care facilities, hospitals, and health centres.

152.3 million for education capital to support several new school builds, renovations, and maintenance work.

And lastly, 58.9 million for post-secondary capital to grow a skilled labour force and add over 550 new training seats as part of the Health Human Resources Action Plan.

I'd like to provide some detail about the sectors where SPB's role extends to also include the design and delivery of projects in collaboration with other ministries and sector partners.

First, the health sector. In '23-24, budget provides the largest health infrastructure investment in history, with 337.6 million directed to health capital, an increase of 181 million or more than double last year's capital investment in this sector. This increase is mainly due to significant construction activities of major projects, with over 204 million dedicated to support ongoing major projects in planning and construction phases.

Several key projects we are delivering in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Saskatchewan Health Authority are expected to move into construction this fiscal year. These include the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital, the Weyburn General Hospital, La Ronge Long-Term Care Centre, Grenfell Long-Term Care centre, and the Regina General Hospital parkade.

I would like to highlight that the Regina urgent care centre is anticipated to finish construction this fiscal, which I'm sure is no surprise to anybody who's driven by the project site on Albert Street and has seen it progress over the winter.

This year's budget also includes funding to continue planning for long-term care centres in Estevan and Watson as well as the Yorkton health centre replacement. These projects are expected to begin preliminary design in '22-23.

We know that every community I've mentioned here is eager for their projects to proceed through design, and I want to thank

community leaders, residents, and local health foundations for their continued support of the projects. I don't think it would surprise any member here today for me to say that health care facilities are among some of the more complex projects that any government designs and delivers, which makes these planning stages all the more important to our ability to deliver them successfully to meet the needs of the communities that they will serve.

The budget also invests 71.5 million in rehabilitation and maintenance for health care facilities around the province and 59 million for IT and medical equipment.

Including this year's record health capital funding, our government has invested more than 2.4 billion in the maintenance and construction of new health care facilities. Even more importantly, we expect to invest almost 1.8 billion more in health care facilities over the next four years.

The next sector is education where we are investing 152.3 million in capital projects this year. SPB is working with the Ministry of Education and school divisions on 20 ongoing projects to build 15 new schools and renovate five existing schools through an investment of 115.7 million. Several major projects will enter construction this fiscal year: the replacement of the Ducharme Elementary in La Loche; the francophone school in Regina; school consolidations in north Regina, Moose Jaw, and Lanigan; and the Saskatoon St. Frances Cree Bilingual School replacement.

This year's education funding also includes 4.4 million to begin planning on five new projects: a new kindergarten to grade 12, or K to 12, school to replace and consolidate the elementary and high school in Carlyle; a new K to 12 francophone school to replace École Valois in Prince Albert; a new francophone elementary school in Saskatoon; renovations and expansion of Greenall High School in Balgonie; and renovations to Campbell Collegiate right here in Regina.

The budget also includes 16 million for relocatable classrooms and 11.3 million for minor capital program. The government has committed approximately 2.4 billion towards infrastructure projects since 2008-2009. That includes 60 new — that's 60 new — or replacement schools as well as 30 renovation projects, with an additional five projects approved through the minor capital renewal program.

Budget '23-24 provides 58.9 million to support post-secondary infrastructure, including 24.6 million for maintenance capital, 12.4 million for equipment and renovations to support expansions in health training programs across the province, 8.7 million for an electrical infrastructure upgrade at the University of Saskatchewan, 6 million for design and planning work for Saskatchewan Polytechnic's campus renewal project in Saskatoon, and 4 million for renovations at the University of Saskatchewan's dental clinic. Since 2008-2009, government has invested over \$780 million in post-secondary infrastructure across Saskatchewan.

[18:00]

This year's budget invests 338 million in government services infrastructure. This includes over 12.3 million for capital

improvements throughout the park system. Parks capital improvements planned for this year include new campground service centres at Meadow Lake, Makwa Lake, and Blackstrap provincial parks; a new group pavilion at Rowan's Ravine Provincial Park; water system upgrades at Cypress Hills, Moose Mountain, Saskatchewan Landing, and Narrow Hills provincial parks; boat launch upgrades at Douglas and Candle Lake provincial parks; and major road upgrades at Makwa and Cypress Hills Provincial Park.

We're also investing 85.6 million in various dams, water supply channel projects, and irrigation projects, including continuing work on the Grant Devine spillway modification project. These investments support Saskatchewan's growth plan commitment to expand the number of irrigable acres in the province.

The budget provides 97.4 million for various courts and correctional facility projects, including continued construction of the remand expansion in Saskatoon Correctional Centre. Completion of this project is scheduled for the summer of 2025.

SPB's infrastructure design and delivery division is currently leading 38 ongoing projects valued at approximately 3 million each, including 18 health projects, 16 education projects, two post-secondary projects, and two government service projects. Twelve new projects led by SPB in '23-24: six in education, four in health, and two in the post-secondary education.

While funding for these projects is allocated to the respective ministries we partner with, our ministry leads them through planning, procurement, design, and construction. Our goal is to deliver each project in a way that meets the needs of citizens and communities they will serve. That's because, as I said earlier, our ministry really only exists to help government deliver the best possible outcome for citizens.

IT is a key part of government's internal infrastructure that supports our ability to deliver programs and services to citizens and communities. This year's budget continues our commitment to IT renewal with a focus on three pillars, including the IT goals of the Saskatchewan growth plan, putting citizens' needs first, and following a one-government approach to work collaboratively across the public sector and to get better value from the IT investments we make. With a focus on innovation being used to deliver the best value and outcomes for Saskatchewan citizens, this work supports a better quality of life to build a stronger Saskatchewan.

IT is also a key factor in some of our complex infrastructure projects, from the health care sector — where IT plays an important role in how our hospitals and long-term care centres will operate and serve patients and residents once they're built — to support people connecting to our justice system and social assistance programs, providing accessible data to agriculture, farmers and ranchers, and the natural resource industry.

We can't discuss IT in today's environment without including cybersecurity. Every year we see more and more examples of the way cyberattacks can impact businesses, governments, and communities. It is a topic of keen interest at every level of government in every jurisdiction in Canada and around the world, including right here in Saskatchewan.

Our government and the ministry makes IT security a top priority. I won't be able to provide many details because every detail that's shared publicly has a potential to create real and lasting harm by providing cybercriminals information they could use to attack government networks, systems, and data.

What I can tell you is that the IT division of our ministry is constantly in contact with partners like Crowns to ensure that if we have knowledge or experience that could benefit others, we share it, and that we are able to learn from others too. We also participate in discussions about cybersecurity with other provinces, territories, and the federal government to ensure that we are able to learn from the experiences of other jurisdictions in Canada and to share information that could benefit everyone.

The fact that cybersecurity attacks are becoming more frequent, more intense, and more sophisticated which means it is critical that we take all measures we can to protect government's IT systems and the data that citizens and businesses entrust us to hold. Just as cybercriminals are always learning, advancing, and becoming more effective, so must we. That's why we are committed to continuously improving to meet the challenges we may face as the world continues to move online and as threats evolve.

Another way our ministry supports the daily operations of government is through the operations and services delivery division. This division provides a wide variety of services, all critical to our client ministries: transportation services through the central vehicle agency; maintenance and operations of hundreds of buildings, facilities, and properties around the province that ministries use to deliver programs and services; and mail and telecommunications services. This division is also home to the Saskatchewan air ambulance service.

Procurement is another area where the work of our ministry does directly support government's ability to serve citizens. It's also a cornerstone of SPB's efforts to support the growth plan. The procurement management division, previously single procurement service, conducts procurements for all ministries across government in a way that ensures best value for taxpayers and fair treatment for Saskatchewan suppliers.

Our procurement professionals also ensure that public procurement in our province is conducted in a way that ensures compliance with multiple trade agreements Saskatchewan is obligated to follow, including the New West Partnership Trade Agreement, Canadian Free Trade Agreement, Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, and the World Trade Organization agreement.

The division's stakeholder relations and Priority Saskatchewan team also focus on actively engaging local suppliers to increase capacity, share opportunities, and reduce barriers to doing business with government. This work is designed to help Saskatchewan businesses succeed both here and at home and beyond our provincial borders.

During '22-23, the procurement management division was involved in awarding just under 500 procurements valued at approximately 563 million. Approximately 82 per cent of those procurements, valued at about 463 million, were awarded to Saskatchewan-based companies.

SPB really is involved in almost everything, from providing the physical or IT infrastructure that other ministries use to serve clients, to the vehicle fleet that allows our counterparts to travel safely across the province to serve communities, to helping them buy the goods and services that make their operations possible.

This is reflected in our estimates in '23-24, which includes two different elements. The first is an expense budget, which is funding appropriated directly to our ministry to support our own operations. The second is recovery costs allocated and recovered from the government ministries and agencies that we serve.

SPB is budgeted to spend 443.03 million in '23-24 to serve our clients across the Government of Saskatchewan. We will recover 307.41 million of that from those clients. Recoverable expenses changes charged to ministry's clients include a 2.94 million increase in property management to address cost pressures related to leases, utilities, and buildings.

With respect to our own appropriation, SPB's '22-23 operating budget is 67.505 million, a decrease of 1.592 million or 2.3 per cent over last year's budget. This includes 6.22 million increase for consolidation of project delivery, realty and facility assessment services, including an internal restatement of 3.36 million from the property management subvote (SP02) which will no longer be recovered from ministries and external agencies; \$340,000 increase for additional project management resources; and a \$400,000 increase to offset operating IT pressures.

Capital expenditures of 60.87 million are planned for upgrading, maintaining, or replacing the government's building infrastructure, machinery, equipment, vehicles, airplanes, and IT systems, including 40.49 million for phase 3 of the enterprise business modernization project.

Finally, SPB also provides funding through a grant transfer to the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan to support core operating costs. This amount remains unchanged from last year at 4.33 million.

So with that, Mr. Chair, I would be happy to take questions about the ministry's estimates for '23-24.

The Chair: — Well thank you, Minister. And I would just like to remind the officials that when you speak, please state your name for Hansard. And also do not touch the mikes or Hansard will come along and slap your wrists. Anyway, are there any questions? Mr. Wotherspoon.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Minister. Thank you to all the officials that have joined us here tonight and all those others that are connected to the important work of SaskBuilds.

I'll get right into some of the questions here. Looking at the subvote (SP02), could you talk a little bit about the operations and maintenance of property budget itself? It's up a bit there. Can you describe what's happening there?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay, well thank you for the question. So I guess in that subvote that you referenced, the net change to the budget is 9.283 million. So 8.1 of that is accounted for by the

accounting standards change related to the public-private partnerships. Essentially, a higher interest rate must be applied to pre-'23-24 years, requiring an appropriation for this year to adjust. This is a non-cash adjustment and essentially represents an accounting entry.

There is a negative 2.177 million, which is asset retirement obligations adjustment. We received a one-time appropriation in '22-23 to record asset retirement obligation expenses, also due to the PSAP [public sector accounting principles] accounting standard changes. The liability was recorded in the '22-23, therefore there is an ongoing need for this funding. This relates to estimated costs of asbestos abatement for Government House and the Legislative Building.

[18:15]

There's also a 3.360 increase which represents facility assessment internal restatement which will no longer be recovered from ministries and external clients. This change has already been reflected in a '22-23 restatement. However, it needs to be added back to (SP02).

As well, all other changes from the above chart are offset by recoveries such as lease changes, utility costs. These increases would be built into the budgets for the ministries . . . [inaudible] . . . entries received for the services that they received.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you very much. Just to make sure I fully understand this statement here, just from the budget or I guess the financial plan, business plan for the year, it states that of the 200-and-some million dollars for operations and maintenance of property, under regional service delivery structure, with most of the services for full cost recovery. Can you just describe what that means exactly with the most of the services for full cost recovery? How is that calculated? What isn't full cost recovery?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay, so if I got your question right, the services that are not cost recovery are services such as the Legislative Building, 2.96 million; appropriated maintenance, which is 250,000, and these are for building code items; and of course the one-time adjustment for the P3 [public-private partnership] of 8.1 million.

And of course anything that is recovered from ministries is, like it's all of the building utilities and maintenance, and stuff that we pay for, and it's cost for cost.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — And the 2.96 described for the legislature, is that the asbestos abatement work that's contained there?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So that amount that you just referenced for the Legislative Building is not for the asbestos. It is literally for the ongoing operating of the building, whether it be heat, light, power, cleaning — everything that happens here within the building.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Right. I see the . . . Yeah sorry, I see it broken out there now. I know what that portion's for. You mentioned asbestos abatement in the legislature and Government House. Can you break out or detail those two projects and the

costs?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Sure. Okay. So you were asking about specifically the asbestos in the Legislative Building and Government House. So this 2.177 million is really a liability that's put on the books. That money will be set aside. It's a one-time adjustment, and it'll be used in the future for abatement when it is necessary. The Legislative Building is broke down to 1.4 million and Government House is 0.77 or 777,000. So it really is for future liability when the work has to be done, but it's set aside right now.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Where is the asbestos located in both of the buildings?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay. Well thank you for the question. So with the asbestos, basically what we do is we hire a consulting firm to estimate what they would assume would be in a building, so based on when the building was built, the type of materials that were used at that point in time, and what we could assume asbestos might be. So it could be flooring tiles; it could be pipes. And so we won't really know exactly what has asbestos in it until there's some type of a renovation and things are disturbed. I think you're fully aware of how that works when that happens.

And so at that point in time, when they start a renovation they would determine whether there's asbestos or not in that given area, and then it would be treated at that point in time with the funds that have been put aside.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thanks. And so that's related to a reserve fund that the dollars are actually added to it. And how are those dollars managed? Where are they housed? And where are they placed? How are they invested?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay. So this is an accounting entry, is how this works. So there's no cash associated with it. It's a liability that's put on the books for each individual building.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Yeah. Okay, that makes sense. And as far as the change around the P3, the accounting adjustment that's been described as a requirement because of changes to accounting standards, could you just describe a little bit more that process and what P3s that applies to? Is that all P3s of government? Maybe just a little bit more information there.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So this adjustment that you're talking about on P3s ties back to the PS 3160, which is another accounting policy change that was made.

So this 8.1 million is specifically to Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford, and within that it's because the interest rate went from 4.75 to 5.3. So this 8.1 million is the differential between those two numbers. And it actually dates back to 2019, so it's accumulative of the numbers from then until now. And this is also another non-cash item.

[18:30]

Mr. Wotherspoon: — So described as a non-cash item, is there any fiscal impact to this year or any year moving forward, any impact on the contract?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So the fiscal impact is what you asked about. It is one time. It is non-cash, and we won't see it again.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — So it is a cost in this budget of 8.1 million. Is that correct? Or do you want to describe a little bit more how you're describing it as non-cash? We'll have to get a couple of the good accountants in the room to step up to the microphones.

Ms. Kang: — Hi. Hera Kang, executive director of corporate finance. And the 8.1 million adjustment is just opening balance adjustment account entry, and that is a non-cash item so there is no fiscal, yeah, impact on this year or going forward.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you. Thank you for the information there as well. Maybe I'll move along to a couple other subvotes to just get a bit of a better understanding.

Maybe we could look at subvote (SP07) with respect to major capital asset acquisitions. And looking at the land, buildings, and improvements, last year the budget was 38 million. This year it's 6 million. Obviously a big difference between the two. But just, if you could detail, you know, what the program was last year or what's involved this year.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — It's more accounting, but more specifically, asset retirement obligation. Because we put this on our books last year and we don't need it this year, this is just an accounting entry to get rid of that \$31.4 million. And it was non-cash.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — And you put it on last year, taking it off this year. Why the change of course? And what's instructed your approach this year?

Ms. Kang: — Hi. Hera Kang again. And the 31.42 million is our ARO [asset retirement obligation] set up last year. We needed a one-time appropriation to set up our ARO associated with our buildings. And this year we don't require. Going forward we don't require, so we removed from our appropriation.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Sorry, and that was, did you say 1.42 million?

Ms. Kang: — 31.42.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Yeah, 31 point . . . Gotcha. That makes more sense. Okay, thank you.

Looking at that same subvote there (SP07), remediation of contaminated sites, could you share with the committee the inventory of contaminated sites and the cost, the liability for each?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Careful what you ask for. So what we have here is Sask Polytechnic Regina campus, \$240,000, and that's in Regina; Sask Polytechnic Saskatoon campus site in Saskatoon, \$240,000; Regina PDYC site, Paul Dojack Youth Centre, \$70,000; Regina Government House site, \$220,000; RPCC [Regina Provincial Correctional Centre] site, \$320,000; Sask Polytechnic Moose Jaw campus site, \$310,000; Prince Albert Pine Grove site, \$200,000; 7th Avenue warehouse site, Regina, \$50,000; Meadow Lake North West College site, \$200,000; Maidstone EBS site, \$200,000; Regina Roy Romanow Provincial Lab site, \$40,000; Saskatoon SPCC [Saskatoon Provincial

Correctional Centre], \$280,000; Prince Albert PAPCC [Prince Albert Provincial Correctional Centre] site, \$60,000; Regina Legislative Power House site, \$280,000; Fort Qu'Appelle fish culture station site, \$10,000; Prince Albert repair depot site, \$200,000; Moose Jaw Valley View Centre site, \$230,000; Saskatoon Kilburn Hall site, \$50,000; Dorintosh fire cache site, \$10,000; Regina lift station site, \$200,000.

[18:45]

Wascana site, Broad and College, \$200,000; Estevan EBS site, \$200,000; Sask Polytechnic P.A. [Prince Albert] campus, \$260,000; Regina Cooper Place site, \$20,000; Wascana Centre, \$250,000; Yorkton Orcadia Youth Residence site, \$60,000; Regina exec air hangar site, \$20,000; LF McIntosh Building site, \$20,000 — that's in Prince Albert; Meadow Lake Wiciwaken Place site, \$10,000; Regina CVA [central vehicle agency] building site, \$50,000; Prince Albert air tanker base site, \$10,000; Meadow Lake air tanker base site, \$220,000; Hudson Bay air tanker base site, \$10,000; Buffalo Narrows POB [provincial office building] site, \$40,000; Flin Flon air base site, \$10,000; Green Lake health clinic site, \$10,000; Ile-a-la-Crosse fire cache site, \$20,000; Buffalo Narrows fire cache site, \$60,000; Denare Beach fire cache site, \$20,000; Creighton Broderick building site, \$20,000; Buffalo Narrows air tanker base site, \$230,000; Sandy Bay Health Clinic site, \$20,000; Cumberland House POB site, \$20,000; Air Ronge ESB [equipment storage building] site . . . oh, not that one. La Ronge SERM [Saskatchewan environment and resource management] hangar site, \$10,000; Pinehouse Health Clinic site, \$10,000; Southend EBS site, \$30,000; Cumberland House SERM site, \$10,000; and Pinehouse EBS site, \$30,000.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thanks to the minister for the information. Now is that available on the website or is that . . . No?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — No, it's not something . . . [inaudible].

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Okay, thanks for the information. I guess my question would be . . . so these are contaminated sites that government has responsibility to, and that those numbers there are the liability that you're booking for each of those sites, is that correct, Minister?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Yeah, these are accounting estimates of what the liability might be.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thanks for that as well. If we look at one specifically, like the Regina lift station site, just to break it into a little bit more detail, what sort of contamination are we talking about there?

Mr. Toffan: — Kyle Toffan. So these are really just accounting entries. In order to get more fulsome information you'd have to do a phase 1 environmental assessment. We typically do that if we were to sell an asset or redevelop an asset, that type of thing. It's really just . . . This is just an accounting treatment based on certain criteria that they were using on sites that have had contaminated areas in the past.

So on a wastewater treatment facility it could be a backup diesel generator, for instance. That happens to be the case on many

instances. I'm not saying this is the case on this one, but that could be a contamination situation in here on, you know, lagoons or wastewater treatment facilities.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Okay. Thanks for that information as well. Now last year there was over \$5 million in this budget for remediation of contaminated sites. This year there's not anything there. What's the rationale for no budget or projects on this front?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So just with regards to that, we didn't identify any new contaminated sites this year, so that \$5 million that you referenced was already booked in previous years. We don't rebook the liability, the liability that sits on the books. If there had been a new site identified, then it would have increased.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Well does it show up though? Is that booking it last year as a liability? Or I think it's identifying it as remediation, it would seem to me, so actual action on the contaminated sites, or at least that's what the allocation's description or title would say to me.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So this is . . . Because it's set up as a liability, it is non-cash. And we actually haven't done that work yet. As Mr. Toffan indicated in the last question, that work won't be done until we sell the building or we're making changes that disturbance has to happen. And then there was that class 1 . . . What did you call it?

Mr. Toffan: — Yeah, class 1 environmental assessment.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So then at that point, a class 1 environmental assessment would be done to say exactly what needs to be taken care of, and hopefully we have set a big enough liability aside to cover that.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — And when you say, set a big enough liability, like just it's marked as a liability, you know, that it's an amount that has . . . it's a cost that's going to be incurred at some point for government.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Yes.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — You're not setting any money aside in the . . .

Hon. Ms. Carr: — No, we're not setting any money aside but we set the liability aside because we do know that at some point in the future, this could happen.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — And this is just like public sector accounting, I would assume. It's not requiring you to . . .

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Absolutely. That's exactly what it is, yes.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — And is there no remediation of any contaminated sites within, you know, all the entities and properties that you're responsible for? This year there's no remediation occurring?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — No, there aren't.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thanks for that information. Moving along a bit to some of the other areas. Let's look at the

cybersecurity aspect that was being identified briefly in the minister's remarks. And I suspect that the appropriate vote here would be (SP11), and I'd be interested in . . . So I see the budget is down this year from what it was last year. I'm interested in why that vote, why that budget is down.

And then I also have a question of if you have any other updates from the last fiscal year or up until now as far as any other breaches like we've seen with respect in the past, like SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority] and SRC [Saskatchewan Research Council] and whatnot?

Mr. Iddrisu: — Fuad Iddrisu; I am executive director and chief information security officer. So the question was around budget going down for cyber. Basically the cyber program in government, the way we've been looking at it is . . . Basically it's a challenge when we're trying to address cybersecurity because within government, executive government, we look at the ministries. But the small agencies, boards, and Crowns are the ones that are the weakest link in the cybersecurity chain. So a lot of our effort when it comes to cybersecurity is around focusing on those small agencies, boards, and Crowns.

Within executive government we have a mature cyber program that we've put in place, and we're able to mitigate a lot of cyber tricks in government. But again, as I mentioned, the small agencies and boards don't have mature cyber programs. So what happens is that we tend to spend a lot of our time educating the small agencies, boards, and Crowns to get them up to maturity levels that we are at. And that has been the challenge over the years, now, considering that we have a lot of sophisticated attacks. What was the other question?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Yeah, that's good. I got the rest. Thank you. So that was a great explanation, but I think also to your question was why was the budget down. And so we have the EBMP [enterprise business modernization project] project, which the expenses have changed and it's less this year by \$8.5 million. So that's fairly considerable there. And we have not had any other breaches this year that, like you refer to, happened to SLGA.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you very much. And thank you as well for the answer and the information, the work on these fronts. With respect to mitigating or subverting a cyberattack, could you speak to cyberattacks that were mitigated or subverted in the past year?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So I'm just going to talk briefly about cybersecurity in general and the practices that we're taking, and then I'll turn it over to Fuad to talk about the malware attacks and the preventions that are taking place.

So cybersecurity has become an increasingly important issue as more and more activities are conducted online. The threats posed by cyberattacks can have significant consequences, including loss of sensitive information, disruption of critical services, and financial loss.

The Ministry of SaskBuilds and Procurement has a robust security program that is comprehensive, proactive, and flexible to adapt to evolving threats and risks. The program involves a combination of technical controls, policies and procedures, and employee training to provide a layered defence against potential

security breaches.

[19:00]

The ministry recognizes that addressing cybersecurity threats in government requires a collaborative and coordinated approach across government, so this one-government approach to cybersecurity will help ensure that government agencies, boards, and Crowns are working together effectively to identify and respond to cyberthreats. This approach can improve information sharing, coordinated response, enhanced protection, and improve public trust in government's ability to address cybersecurity risks. And by taking a collaborative approach, government can better protect their citizens and critical infrastructure from these cyberattacks.

So I'll just let Fuad go ahead and explain some malware information.

Mr. Iddrisu: — Right. So within government we get attacked on a daily basis. We block over millions of attack attempts on the government network on a daily basis. We deploy multiple security controls basically to track that type of activity, so we don't see a lot of attacks internally. The little ones that we see, we're able to mitigate. There hasn't been any major cyber breach in our environment — knock on wood.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — How would you report out the state of risk on this front? Are you measuring . . . I believe you have a metric that applies, that quantifies the risk. You're doing some measuring on this front. Where is risk at in this year for government relative to last year and years prior? And what factors are causing any changes on those fronts?

Mr. Iddrisu: — So what we've been doing is that we've been going around conducting maturity assessments basically to understand maturity levels within government. And we engaged a third party, KPMG, basically to perform assessment within executive government. And we basically scored a 3.0, which is above average and is on par with industry peers.

Within the small agencies, boards, and Crowns, that's where we have concerns because they have small . . . their maturity is not that high. And so we're collaborating more so to the one-government approach to try and bring them to maturity levels. When we dealt with the SLGA incident, the hackers had notified us that the small agencies, boards, and Crowns are the weakest link and they will be coming back. So we've been proactively trying to work aggressively with the small agencies, boards, and Crowns to mitigate the risk in a timely manner.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thanks for that. How would you describe the profile of those that are trying to attack government and all of its entities and agencies? Are they, as far as a proportion of those that would be, I don't know, individual hackers, commercial activity, any state actors?

Mr. Iddrisu: — So we do see a lot of attacks from all over, but mostly the attacks that we are seeing that are most sophisticated are the nation-state actors. They're sponsored, they're more sophisticated, and so they have more advanced, persistent threats in our environment, and that's what we're working towards eliminating.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — On any of the nation-state actors I assume there's a protocol and a communication you're working directly with, I would assume national organizations like CSIS [Canadian Security Intelligence Service] and other organizations. Could you speak a little bit about what that protocol's like and what sort of communication has occurred this year on that front?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — I'll just take that one. We probably wouldn't get into those specific details, because we don't want to let people know exactly what we're doing and who we're working with to prevent threats. It could breach the integrity of what we're doing if they know exactly what we're doing to prevent them.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Well they're going to be safe with that level of information.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — I should hope so.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — But just to be clear, we have I'm sure protocols in place here and we're working regularly with CSIS, for example?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Well I think it's fair to say that we have protocols in place to try and prevent this, and we're always working collaboratively across governments to ensure that we're information sharing. And we're aware of I guess attacks that happen other places, learn from things that've happened, and implement things here to help prevent it from happening in our government.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — And it would go two ways: you'd have the national intelligence that would also be connecting with . . . What's their point of contact in Saskatchewan with respect to a potential cyber risk or attack? Yeah, so a CSIS or a national security agency is connecting with government around risks and threats, who are they interfacing with in government?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So just regards to that, there are several different levels of collaboration that take place. So I guess we wouldn't be talking directly to CSIS as per se, but CSIS has a direct line to the federal government.

And at our FPTs, federal-provincial-territorial meetings, ministers will get together and the federal government will be present also, so we'll have those communications. There are collaborative working tables amongst deputy ministers. There are collaborative working tables amongst individuals like Fuad, and it's right across Canada.

There's information sharing back and forth to try and keep everybody informed of the latest and greatest of what is happening in cybersecurity and prevention of those attacks.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Yeah, thanks for that. Now if there was a specific risk or attack that was pertinent to an entity in Saskatchewan, then that national service, CSIS for example, could work directly with the province, correct?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — That would be a correct assumption.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — It was mentioned here that nation-state actors are a significant risk on this front and that's a focus and a concern. Could you speak to what engagement on this front or

what activity may have occurred in the past year with respect to the People's Republic of China by the People's Republic of China as a nation-state actor?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So I guess just with regards to that, that would be some of that information that we're probably not going to be talking publicly about.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Do you see some changes in trends on these fronts with nation-state actors over the last decade, and if so, can you describe that?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — I think it's fair that if we look at a 10-year time frame . . . I mean things have changed considerably compared to 10 years ago, so the risks as we get more digital, the risks become more but then we adapt to that and we change. And that's why I guess you'll see more money being spent on IT and infrastructure and cybersecurity, and it really is a continual moving, I guess target for lack of a better term, but compared to 10 years ago, of course there's more now than there were then.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Of course there's more attacks or more nation-state actors as a proportion of that?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Yeah, we wouldn't have that level of detail, and I don't know that that's something that I guess we would share as to a proportion, but it is fair to say that just because of the nature of the way the world is going and the amount of electronic communications that we're using and all of that, of course they have all increased.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Does the minister, based on some of the insight and information and risks and information sharing that she's privy to, does she have any perspective on the entry by her government into contract with Huawei a number of years ago? Of course we've, you know, spoken to the risks on those fronts and security concerns and government has made some changes on this front. Could you just speak to those risks and what assessment you may have taken on as a ministry or with the expertise that you have within your ministry on this front?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Thank you very much for the question. I respect where it's coming from but that really truly would be a question for SaskTel.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — The entity SaskBuilds, it brings some expertise across government, one government, and plays a role in facilitating all of that — is that correct?

Mr. Toffan: — So we are focused on executive government, and so we don't do IT or cybersecurity or systems processes related to IT for commercial Crowns. They are separate entities. We do however work with SaskTel, SaskPower, SaskEnergy, and other commercial Crowns on trying to figure out how we can collaborate more on things like cybersecurity so that we're on the same page, that we're sharing resources, we're sharing templates, processes, manuals, those types of things.

And so while we don't oversee IT on commercial Crowns, we do talk to them regularly and we're trying to get more one-government approaches so that we're not all doing things completely different. We do have some connectivity on systems with Crowns as well. Now it's very limited, and on the treasury

board Crown corporations and agencies, boards, commissions right now, as Fuad pointed out, we're really trying to focus on good outcomes, and so that means getting their state of affairs on cybersecurity in a much better state than they were in the past.

So a firm like KPMG would come in, do an assessment of their processes, the systems, and provide recommendations on how they can improve. Really that's where we sit, but we do focus on executive government for our IT business.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thanks for the information. Is it fair to say though in the role that if you had a threat or a concern identified that was, you know, a threat for a Crown corporation or the people of Saskatchewan ultimately, that you would liaise and communicate with that entity?

[19:15]

Mr. Toffan: — So there's often times when we do get involved in, you know, cybersecurity when it's not executive government, right, to share resources for instance as I mentioned. And that's just not on commercial Crowns, that's on treasury board Crowns and even the MASH [municipalities, academic institutions, schools, and hospitals] sector, so municipalities, you know, advanced education, school divisions, and health authorities. Where we get asked to provide assistance and help, we do, absolutely.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Okay. We might come back to this area a bit. I'm lucky I've been joined by our Education critic with the official opposition. Mr. Love has joined us. He's better looking and more brilliant and nice to have him at the table here tonight.

Before I kick it over to him for some focused education capital questions, I'll start with one and then kick it over to him. With respect to SaskBuilds processes around major capital, have you received any feedback or any concerns from the education sector, specifically the Saskatchewan School Boards Association or SASBO [Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials], the business officials?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So once again thank you for the question. I guess regarding major capital and school projects that we're working from, you listed some specific organizations and we haven't heard anything as far as I'm aware directly from those organizations.

Now we do work very closely with all of the individual school boards who are helping with the projects in any given school division. Obviously just the nature of procurement and building capital projects, there's always frustration around whether it be timelines or budgeting, but that is something that we work very, very collaboratively on with them to find solutions.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I'll kick it over to Mr. Love.

Mr. Love: — Hi. Matt Love, opposition critic for Education. Thanks for allowing me to come in and pose a few questions today. I won't take up too much time this evening but do appreciate the time as often the questions related to SaskBuilds are not as easily answered, sometimes deferred during my time with the Minister of Education and his officials. So I appreciate this opportunity.

So just to clarify, Minister, I have heard feedback from the organizations listed by my colleague as well as from several school divisions. If feedback had come to the Ministry of Education . . . Because in the past this process would have been housed within the ministry and now it's completely housed through SaskBuilds. And the feedback is one of frustration. It's been described as a failed experiment, moving it over to SaskBuilds completely.

Would you receive that feedback if it came to the Ministry of Education? And how would you explain that feedback not getting to you as Minister for SaskBuilds?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay. Well I guess just to your comments regarding, I guess, SaskBuilds and Procurement and education capital funding within the province of Saskatchewan, it is a little bit unfortunate that you weren't here earlier for my opening comments because I was able to give a fairly detailed list of some of the projects that are moving forward.

So just to quickly highlight some of the really good work that is going on within the province of Saskatchewan and within all of our school divisions on capital projects, in the '23-24 budget we provide 147.3 million in school infrastructure to continue to provide safe and inclusive learning environments for students.

These include a new kindergarten to grade 12, so a K to 12 school to replace and consolidate the elementary and high school in Carlyle; a new K to 12 francophone school to replace the École Valois in Prince Albert; a new francophone elementary school in Saskatoon; renovations and expansion to the Greenall High School in Balgonie; and renovations at Campbell Collegiate right here in Regina.

There is also 115.7 million to support 20 ongoing capital projects, of which 15 are new schools and we're renovating five existing schools: completing construction on a new joint-use facility with two elementary schools in Regina to replace Argyle and St. Pius elementary schools, a new school to consolidate the elementary school and high school in Carrot River, a new elementary school to replace Ducharme elementary school in La Loche, a new K to 12 school to replace Blaine Lake Composite School, a new K to 12 school to replace and consolidate the elementary school and high school in Lanigan.

Renovations to Yorkton Regional High School, renovations and an addition to John Paul II Collegiate in North Battleford, renovations and addition to Lloydminster Comprehensive High School, renovations and addition to Athol Murray high school of Notre Dame, renovations and addition to Holy Rosary High School in Lloydminster.

Completing design and beginning construction as early as spring 2023 on a new elementary school to replace Princess Alexandra, King George, and Pleasant Hill elementary schools in Saskatoon; a joint facility with two new elementary schools in Moose Jaw to consolidate four existing schools; a new elementary school to replace St. Frances elementary school in Saskatoon; a new francophone elementary school in Regina; a joint-use facility with two elementary schools to replace St. Peter, St. Michael, Imperial, and McDermid elementary schools in Regina; and a new joint-use facility with two elementary schools in Regina's Harbour Landing neighbourhood.

There's also 11.2 million for minor capital renewal projects that allow school divisions to address structural repairs and renovations to prolong the life of schools across Saskatchewan. This includes a consolidation of the elementary school and high school in Kelvington, renovations to St. John Community School in Prince Albert, renovations at Medstead Central School, and beginning construction on renovations at Kyle Composite School and École St. Margaret School in Moose Jaw, as well as 16 million to buy or move relocatable classrooms.

And now I think when you gave your comments and asking the question, you referred to this as a failed experiment. I think I'm going to turn it over to Kyle in a minute to get into the details of exactly how things are going really well within the province of Saskatchewan, and this is not a failed experiment. So, Kyle, if you would take over from here.

Mr. Toffan: — Yeah, thank you. So really we haven't heard that feedback, I guess, is what I would say. And so we're always interested in talking to our stakeholders and learning more how to improve. The reason why we did this in the first place is to raise our game on how we do infrastructure all across every category, all across the province.

So even though education was part of this consolidation into SaskBuilds and Procurement, it's not really just about education. It's really about understanding how we can best utilize all of our resources that we have across government better so that, when we have a huge school build-out like we have right now and not much is going on in the advanced education space, the folks that were doing advanced education work can help. In the past that wasn't the case. And so we're only a year and a bit into this, so we're still sort of trying to find our way on how we can best utilize staff.

But what I would say is that there's a general frustration all across the construction space all over the world right now, and Canada is not immune. And Saskatchewan is definitely not immune with the way our economy is going right now with some very big mining projects. Of course there's BHP Billiton, you know, using a lot of resources in this construction, engineering, and labour space. And so what that's leading to right now is very significant labour crunch for construction. It's leading to supply chain challenges. Getting materials for building construction right now is very challenging. Fuel is obviously a huge factor for any construction, and that deals with roads but also buildings.

We are dealing with an inflationary environment like we've never seen, or at least I've never seen in my 15-, 20-year career. Right now cost increases are in the range of 25 to 35 per cent compared to pre-COVID. And I could appreciate how school divisions and others that are trying to build things are frustrated because we're frustrated in that as well. Because when we have budgets to work within and we can't meet those challenges that we're dealing with on supply chain, labour, fuel, we have to look at options to get the best value for taxpayer money. And that's why this model, I'm convinced, will lead to good outcomes. It's not perfect maybe right now at year-end, but I'm strongly convinced that we're on the right path.

[19:30]

You know, the other thing I want to talk about briefly is just the

different approach we've taken now on capital planning and prioritization of assets. So in the past what's happened typically is governments come into a budget year, and we look at what the budget was last year and for things like maintenance, and maybe you've got a 1 per cent increase or a 1 per cent decrease.

This year if you've kind of followed some of the preventative maintenance dollars, some ministries received a very significant increase and some stayed the same. And that's because we see the fulsome picture now. We can kind of understand what it looks like all across government, and we will be doing a lot of work over the next few years on asset management, understanding on a like-to-like basis what the quality and condition of our buildings are at. In the past we've never been able to do that. A health facility has never been compared to an education facility, never been compared to a university building. In the future we'll be able to do that because of this model that we've created.

So I just wanted to touch on some of those positives. I appreciate there might be some frustration, but in reality we're a year in. And you know, we've seen a lot of successes too, so I just wanted to share those.

Mr. Love: — No, I appreciate your comments. I truly do. And just to clarify, I was listening to the opening remarks. I appreciate you going through . . . I was listening in my office. I appreciate again the listing of the investments that we have.

But the question was about the feedback that I know I'm getting — I know the Minister of Education is getting that feedback — and why that isn't getting to your office. When my colleague posed the question what feedback have you received, you said none. That was my question about how your ministries work together, because this feedback, it is coming in and there's frustration out there.

So to dig into some of that frustration, my question, Minister Carr, is I asked about capital projects in Human Services Committee on April 4th of this year, and Deputy Minister Donna Johnson, who is at the end of a distinguished career — I'd like to quote — and she said . . . Let's get to some of the comments made here by your official. To quote Ms. Johnson:

When prices come back in above that 25 per cent over normal budget, then we are typically working with school divisions, and if the project has already gone to tender, we're working with the bidders to see what other options there are to make the project more affordable.

So I think this gets at what your officials talk about. There are inflationary pressures in the system. My initial question is . . . She indicated we're working with the bidders to see what options are out there. Who is looking at making changes to a project to bring it back in within . . . My understanding from Education is that there is a 25 per cent cushion, I suppose, when projects come in over budget. Who is working with bidders to ensure that these projects are being done within that threshold?

Mr. Morrisette: — Sure. Thank you for the question. Oh. Miguel Morrisette. So thank you for the question. So we work very collaboratively with both the Ministry of Education and the school divisions on any individual project. This starts from early days in the business case stage through early design and then

ultimately to procurement. There's a core project team that we established that has membership from all the relevant agencies on whatever project we're talking about.

As projects go through their different iterations of design, we have them costed independently. Those costs come in and we put that up against where we are budget-wise — we have a set budget; here's the cost. Then we have to work with the school division on refining our design as we kind of go from 30 per cent design, 60, 90, to 100, and make decisions as a group on how we bring that scope back down.

In the case where we do have over-budget pressures and we have unexpected market forces like we're seeing today in the economy, we did put in place a 25 per cent buffer on schools. So that now is not to increase the scope of projects, but rather to account for oil inflation or other market and other forces out there.

We've really changed the way that we work with contractors on finding efficiencies in these projects. In the past, before SaskBuilds merged the different sectors into our ministry, we didn't have this process. So now we go out and we work with the school division on what we call a scope ladder, which is basically options that can be costed by the contractors. So that may lay out different landscaping pieces or materials, etc. that are things that we could get costed to remove if the budget comes in higher than expected.

That's our first stage and that we work with the school division to understand which are appropriate to them, which will work well for them and still allow programming space to be as intended. So a foundational piece is we don't want to reduce or make the programming space worse, so teaching environments and otherwise. So we're looking for low-hanging fruit. That might be changing materials, those kinds of things that don't greatly impact pieces.

Secondarily, once we get to the low bidder that comes in, we ask them to go into value engineering with us before they get the contract. So they work with our design team to look at all of our specs and they say, oh, you can save money here or you can save money there. They'll bring back a proposal to us and then we can accept — again, with the school division and the Ministry of Education — certain elements before we enter into a final contract.

So that's how our process works. It's really a collaboration between all the parties to make sure that what we're building does work for the program areas but also tries to achieve our budget targets.

Mr. Love: — And during that process that you've described, which it's been described to me by school divisions as needing to scale down projects, not the square footage, but what's inside the building. During that process of scaling down projects, are you aware of any of the 20 ongoing capital projects, builds, where schools have had to remove air conditioning from their build plans?

Mr. Morrisette: — Yeah, thank you for your question. Miguel Morrisette. No, we've not had any schools where we've had to remove the air conditioning from the design. So when we do the

scope ladder, there are times where we have that element costed in there as an option to be removed. That's not been exercised at any time.

What we have done, though, in the past is we've changed mechanical systems at times. So once we bring in the low bidder, they'll often come in and say this brand or this specification is a lot cheaper currently, due to different manufacturing sites or different pieces and that, and we could save quite a bit of money that way. But, no, we've not removed it from any school.

Mr. Love: — You mentioned changing materials is one of the things on that scope ladder. Have there been any instances where divisions have had to make a decision to remove energy-efficient measures, for example, triple-pane windows? Or other measures that would save them costs in the long run with utilities, but they've had to cut those measures to make budget for a project?

Mr. Morrisette: — Thank you for the question. Miguel Morrisette. So on the material choices, so again these are very collaborative efforts made with the school division. As I mentioned before, we're facing unprecedented market times, a lot of inflation across the board. We have had to make decisions on materials — things like triple-pane windows, reducing those to double pane — but we do make sure we hit the national building code, which is a very high efficient standard for buildings, including schools. And these decisions are made in the bigger picture of trying to make sure we don't impact and reduce or change programming space for students.

That's really, at the end of the day, the collective goal of the school division, Ministry of Education, and ourselves. So when we have these discussions over the materials, they're always agreed to by all parties. So in the case of the windows, that'll be something agreed to by the school division to make sure that we don't impact other areas that are more student focused.

Mr. Love: — Okay, thanks. Due to the time, I'll just ask one, one final question and turn things over to my seatmate.

[19:45]

So in the past, the Ministry of Education used to keep track of facility condition index. My understanding — and please correct me if I'm wrong — my understanding is that when that is now done through SaskBuilds through a facility audit that is in year four of five, to look at all schools in the province and other facilities.

But with respect to schools, year four of five of facility audit, I asked one year ago on April 4, 2022 in Human Services Committee for an update on this, and the minister committed to checking in with SaskBuilds. I asked for an update in the past that deferred maintenance, the facility condition index was in the neighbourhood of \$1.3 billion of deferred maintenance needed in Saskatchewan schools. The minister couldn't update me at that time — again, over a year ago — said that he would check with SaskBuilds.

I'm wondering, Minister, can you provide an update to the committee on — now that we're, I believe, again, correct me if I'm wrong, four years into this five-year cycle of facility audits — what the total amount is of maintenance that your ministry

would estimate is needed in Saskatchewan schools and when the process will be complete?

Mr. Morrisette: — Thanks for the question. So on the facility condition index piece, when we consolidated the various infrastructure functions for vertical infrastructure into the Ministry of SaskBuilds, one of the big goals of it was to have consistent reporting on asset management. And one indicator of that is facility condition index, which you're asking about.

At the current state of it is, we have a different methodology for calculating it across a number of sectors including the health sector, education, and then our SaskBuilds piece. So as you mentioned, four years ago we started working down a path of consistent numbers. This is our final year of doing this, estimates for the schools, so we'll have those numbers this year in '23-24. They're not completed yet. Part of that as well is that we are standardizing the tool that we use to collect that information and update that information. So that's a procurement we have live right now for a new software program to do that.

So this is kind of the final year of us pulling all that together before we'll have a final number that is at least apples-to-apples. Right now the number we would have would have 20 per cent of the schools with the old calculation versus kind of 80 per cent with the new. So it's bit of a blended approach right now that wouldn't be, you know, appropriate to share.

Mr. Love: — And do you have any update on where you are after four years? Or is there nothing to report until the entire process is done?

Mr. Morrisette: — Yeah, there's nothing to report until the whole process is done just because it's a significant change in methodology. So there's nothing to report until that's done.

Mr. Love: — Thanks. I appreciate those questions that you were able to answer, and I'll turn things back over to my colleague to continue with his question . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, he's very good-looking also.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Okay, moving along just a bit here. Maybe we'll . . . I'd like to get a sense of what your involvement has been with the AIMS [administrative information management system] project and, you know, where things have been a challenge or where things have gone sideways on that project from your perspective, and where that project is at.

Mr. Toffan: — So the AIMS project itself, SaskBuilds and Procurement is not involved in that. We weren't involved from the start. We weren't involved in the build of it, and we're still not involved. We do have conversations as part of one government with the health sector to ensure that lessons learned on AIMS are applied to other initiatives, but we're not involved on a management side or an implementation side.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — What have you learned from the project then as one government that could be applied to other like projects?

Mr. Toffan: — So there's been a lot of lessons learned that we have shared with us from their senior leadership team that's been focused on AIMS. It's things like ensuring that you have a very

solid, proper business case starting off. You have a good road map starting off. Another thing that we've been able to implement on other projects is ensuring that we have a strong governance structure. We want to have appropriate resources in place for that front-end kind of planning and build stage leading up to implementation, people that have experience with major project delivery. So that's been a lesson learned.

Holding the private vendor accountable is another thing we've learned and been able to implement across different systems. And by the way, these are things that we understand have been improved on the AIMS project too over time, right. But we have the ability to apply lessons learned, and at a much earlier stage on other executive government projects.

We, you know, we have these conversations ongoing. They haven't stopped. They're sort of regular check-ins with our team because their project's ongoing. So I guess I would just share that. It's really about lessons learned and sharing information.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thanks so much. On the broader . . . on the health infrastructure side of things, how do you quantify the health facility infrastructure deficit right now?

Mr. Morrisette: — Thanks for the question on the health FCI [facility condition index] piece. So similar to the other ministries that we're responsible for on this side, we started doing facility assessments just in this last fiscal year, in '22-23. So education is on a five-year cycle, so 20 per cent of schools every year. In health we wanted to do a faster catch-up, so we're doing two years at 50 per cent a year. So by the end of next fiscal year we should have all the assessments complete.

It's quite the undertaking. We have to go out and have engineers assess every building, inside and out. We need to converge them into the new software program that I mentioned earlier, so that's happening as well. So by the end of next fiscal year, we should have apples-to-apples across all the vertical infrastructure assets.

So right now we don't have kind of a new number for you on deferred maintenance.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thanks. And what was that asset management program, or what's this called? And what's the cost of undertaking this new process and then this evaluation?

[20:00]

Mr. Morrisette: — Thanks for the question. I'm Miguel Morrisette. So your first question was, what is the framework that we're using for it? And so it's a standardized framework that's been developed from SaskBuilds Corporation previously and now carried forward based on industry best practices.

We're looking at four different categories to assess a building. One is the physical condition of the building; that's the FCI piece. And then it's capacity of the building, so is it underutilized, overutilized. The functional alignment, so does the layout inside the building actually work for the program. So that can be different alignments of corridors or space beside each other. Does it work, or do you have to walk long ways to reach a patient or students, etc. And then risk severity of failure, so what is the ultimate risk of the building failing. So that's at a very high level. Of course

the physical condition is a very technical framework. I won't get into the details on that piece.

We have three different contracts out to do this work. So on the education side it will be \$1.2 million this fiscal year to conduct the assessments for schools, health is about \$1 million for this year, and then SaskBuilds and Procurement which is our corrections, justice facilities, our polytechnic, a number of other pieces we own is about \$450,000 of work.

As I mentioned, we also have a procurement out for that software package right now. So that one is live in procurement right now. So we're just assessing it, so we couldn't disclose the cost there, but there will be a cost and of course annual licensing for that software.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Okay. Thanks for that information. I have a note passed along from a colleague here and just to follow up for them, why do you own the Battlefords District Care Centre instead of the Ministry of Health? And what is its FCI rating?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay. Thank you for the question. So the Battlefords District Care Centre, not sure how much you know about it, but it is a 117-bed facility, 112 long-stay and five temporary care beds. It was constructed in 1942. So needless to say it is a very old building, but it was renovated in 1970. No major renovations have occurred since then. It's actually the oldest active health care facility in the province that we have right now. The current facility condition index is 44.9.

And I think that's why you see this year in the budget that we have put planning dollars in to start planning for the replacement of that facility, and it's \$250,000 for this year and of course as we move forward. But it's important that we get this facility replaced, and that's why you see those dollars there this year.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thanks for that . . .

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Oh, and I guess the ownership piece that you asked on, it really is just historical. It's the way it was in . . .

Mr. Toffan: — A long time ago, probably 1940.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you. Yeah, thank you very much. With respect to the replacement beds and capacity needed with respect to Pioneer Village in Regina, where is all of that?

Mr. Morrisette: — Yeah, thanks for the question. Miguel Morrisette. So on the replacement of the Regina Pioneer Village long-term care facility, we announced in 2021 addition of 600 new LTC [long-term care] beds in Regina. That's intended to support the replacement of those beds. The split between that is 350 in standard beds and 250 in specialized or higher needs beds.

The 350, we're in procurement right now to find the spaces within the community of Regina. So that's something that we'll look for existing spaces to convert into spaces that can be used by those residents. The other 250 specialized will be constructed in Regina. So that'll be new space that we're looking to build. We're in the business case stage right now, which means we're looking at location options, design options, delivery model options, operator options, all those things.

So that's the current state of them is that we're looking to replace 600, and that the first stage of those standard beds should be coming online sooner, much sooner than the specialized, which will take some time to construct in a new location.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — And you're looking at all models on the specialized beds you've identified, so it's really at the preliminary stages. What's the ETA [estimated time of arrival] on those beds?

Mr. Morrisette: — Yeah, so where we are with the project is, as I mentioned, business case stage. So critical to that is trying to find the right site for this and the delivery model. Those two factors are going to very heavily impact the delivery schedule of this. So I don't have a date for you today because we are working through those options. Whatever model we choose could accelerate it or take longer. Or if there's site issues, etc., that could also cause problems. But we are working through the business case.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thanks. We'll turn our attention to procurement just a bit here. Just one question — I should know the answer to this — what's the dollar threshold or the trigger that has SaskBuilds leading procurement, as opposed to whatever government entity?

Mr. Toffan: — Yeah, so there's really a few different thresholds based on the New West Partnership Trade Agreement, and so it's \$10,000 for goods, \$75,000 for services, and \$100,000 for construction. And as you can imagine \$100,000 for construction in 2023 doesn't really buy you much anymore. It's like a shed.

[20:15]

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Yeah. I don't think you can barely build a good outhouse for that price these days.

But with respect to improvement changes, process changes around procurement, can you speak to changes and improvements that were brought in this last year? And of course, we're talking about the budget, anything that's forecast and going to be undertaken in the current fiscal.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So great question. So basically within SaskBuilds and Procurement, we have had some successes this year obviously. The procurement management division was developed to ensure that there is that level playing field for local businesses, establish consistency in the Government of Saskatchewan procurement, and provide the best value in procurement.

So during '22-23, the procurement management division was involved in awarding just under 500 procurements valued at approximately 563 million. Approximately 82 per cent of those procurements, valued at about 463 million, were awarded to Saskatchewan-based companies. The procurement management division, in collaboration with stakeholder relations and Priority Saskatchewan, is committed to engaging the Saskatchewan industry and suppliers to increase their competitiveness and success in Saskatchewan and other jurisdictions.

So this does include sharing lists of upcoming procurements, and when applicable, engaging industry and/or suppliers on specific

procurements to ensure alignment with innovations and ability; as well, encouraging partnerships and consortiums between suppliers to expand capabilities and allow for competition on larger or more complex projects; providing training to public entities on procurement best practices and working to reduce barriers to doing business with government; and lastly, sharing feedback to suppliers and industry through debriefs and engagement sessions to discuss areas of improvement.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you very much. I think, as the minister would know, this is an area that I know I've been very active in and our crew has over a number of years in this legislature as well. And certainly where improvements have been brought, I just want to thank and recognize those that have been involved in the design and the execution of those processes. It's very important to get best value for Saskatchewan taxpayers. Very important to have a fair, level playing field that maximizes economic benefits of those public dollars when you're procuring.

With respect to the target, I see the target for the ministry is 90 per cent of procurement would be let to Saskatchewan companies. I believe that's the target I read out of the business plan. Last year the number I believe was 82 per cent; I think that was communicated. Now my question is, is the 90 per cent target, is that total or is it both? Is it the total value of contracts let? And is it also then the number of contracts let?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Well thank you very much for the question. And that target is based on value, not number of contracts.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — That makes sense. It's a good and important target. Has there been any concerns identified or brought forward to your ministry or to other ministries, concerns of any breaches of integrity of the procurement . . . of any procurement process, or any inappropriate sharing of information, or any conflicts of interest, or anything of the like?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay, well thank you very much. I guess you used three terms there, specifically breach of integrity, sharing of information, and conflict of interest. So I don't think any of those apply now. If we do have a competition where someone is unhappy with the outcome, that's what we have the debriefs for so we can speak to the people who were members of that competition and, you know, explain exactly why they weren't successful in the competition and what we were looking for and different things like that.

And then, I guess, if they're not happy with that, there is a dispute mechanism that can take place that they can absolutely take part of. Sometimes it comes down to, I guess, a difference of opinion on how things may have taken place. But we have very high standards within the Ministry of SaskBuilds and Procurement, and we really want to ensure the integrity of the processes that are taking place. So if we do get feedback on procurement that might have taken place, we take that information. We take it seriously, and if there are improvements that can be made, then we will absolutely make them.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you. And just to be clear, yeah, without a doubt I know those that are involved in program design and delivery, you know, want nothing but the best. And it's just a there's risk involved in all of, you know, all processes and certainly in procurement as well.

So just to be clear, has there been any concerns identified with anyone working in your ministry or involved in this procurement, or with respect to any other ministry or government member, with respect to concerns around any sort of, you know, breach in process or compromised process or corruption?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Not that we're aware of.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Moving along, the target of the 90 per cent procurement within Saskatchewan of all procurement, just looking at what the — and that's the total value — looking at the Regina bypass program. What was the percentage procured in Saskatchewan for that total project?

[20:30]

Hon. Ms. Carr: — I believe these are on this year's estimates.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — And so I think that the bypass is still an entity that we're contractually . . . We have the liability that's still there and we also have maintenance obligations and management obligations. So there's still . . . It's a project that's under the purview of your ministry.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — I think it's fair if you want to ask about the expenses that will occur this year, but the questions that you're asking are dating back several years. So, Chair?

The Chair: — If you've got expenses for this year that's fine, but it's . . . this is going back eons ago.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Sure. I was just . . . I used to ask that question all that time with a lot of concern around, you know, dollars that were bypassing or shutting out Saskatchewan companies. I was wondering if that experience may have informed some of these targets because we never . . . I don't think there was ever a number shared out of that project. But if you don't have that information I won't press further right now because I'll respect our Chair.

With respect to the bypass project, what about addressing some of the conditions on that bypass these last couple of years where there's been some serious shifting in the road itself. Can you talk about what role your ministry's played on in addressing these and continued efforts to address deterioration and unacceptable conditions on the bypass? Who's paying for that — I certainly hope it's not the government — and talk about the processes to address concerns there.

Mr. Toffan: — Thanks for the question. Our ministry's responsibility on the bypass has basically ended. So we were involved in the front-end planning of it, the procurement of it, of course the business case, and the early contract negotiations. But since that time really that responsibility sits with the Ministry of Highways.

There are very clear performance standards set out in the contract that have to be met by Regina Bypass Partners. But aside from the actual specifics like, you know, to deal with the actual shifting and whatever else, really they have to respond to those questions. I don't have that detail.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Okay. Just out of that experience, if the

minister is able to share, if she has the information, do you know if any sort of rehabilitation or remediation of the concerns and shortcomings of the bypass? That would come at the expense of the vendor, is that correct? Or has the Government of Saskatchewan been on the hook for any of that work?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Yeah, I mean I guess we would just say that we're not aware of anything. But that really is a question that should be asked of Highways.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Okay, I can follow up there. We'll move along a bit here. With respect to the . . . You were talking about the irrigable acres that are being advanced and I've had some conversation with the Minister of Agriculture on these fronts as well. Can you profile the dollars that are part of the capital plan with respect to irrigation and break out how those pertain to whether those are infill acres or if those are new irrigation projects? Just provide a bit of that profile.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Great, thank you very much. So within the budget this year for capital planning for irrigation within the province of Saskatchewan, right now we have \$30 million set aside for the Lake Diefenbaker irrigation project expansion. And we have \$2 million set aside for smaller irrigation projects. I guess specifically to your question of the number of acres and the nature of those acres and all of that kind of information, that really would be with the Water Security Agency would have that detailed breakdown of what that looks like.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — So in the budget then, just to make sure I understand where this comes out of the capital plan, this is dams and water supply channels. There's a budget of 85 million and then 30 million is specifically for the Dief expansion project, and 2 million is as you've described. Could you just profile what the other \$50 million would be?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Sure. So I guess to break down that \$80 million is we've got the 32 million for the irrigation projects that we've already talked about. There's \$40 million in just base maintenance for all of the dam infrastructure across the province, and then there's also specifically \$10 million for the Grant Devine spillway.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Right. Okay, thanks a lot. Now if I look at the projected numbers for the next years moving forward, typically on dam and water supply channels, it's, you know, 74, 51, this year 85, and then the next three fiscals it's 170, 194, 249, or 250. So I'm wondering just . . . That's a significant increase above sort of where the budget's been. Can you describe the factors that are causing it to increase in such a significant way?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So I guess just with the out years, obviously the numbers that we have in the book are assumptions on projects that may or may not take place. So right now one of those assumptions is that we'll continue to rehab the Grant Devine dam. And some of those get into some really big dollars in the out years, but also assuming that we may carry on with irrigation projects as we envision them right now. So those are just estimates of what may happen going forward, nothing set in stone.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Right. Okay, I appreciate that. Just as far as getting the numbers broken out roughly, then, what proportion

of those dollars each year, what value have you estimated around the Diefenbaker expansion project?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay, well, thank you for the question. So we do have placeholders in those numbers that you see in the out years for irrigation, but I guess I just, I would caveat all of that with we are truly still in the predesign of that project, that there are a lot of assumptions that are being made at this point in time. It's very, very early days. So to speculate on what may or may not be in the future years would probably be a little bit inappropriate. I mean, having said that, the Water Security Agency can probably flesh those numbers out a little bit better than us.

[20:45]

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Sure. Could you break those numbers out though, and then maybe also speak to . . . We just have the three years, and we're not speculating. It's just they're written into the budget.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — If you could break those ones out for these three years, and then also, you know, what the total operating is . . . or what the assumption is, in the years beyond that for the project.

Mr. Toffan: — Thanks for the question. And so what I will say is that we . . . with this Saskatchewan capital plan, we're very confident that we're going to meet the \$30 billion commitment over the 10-year period.

There has been significant consideration given to large projects like Diefenbaker irrigation, like Prince Albert Victoria Hospital, like long-term care, and there are placeholders in this plan for those. But as far as individual dollar amounts, those will be dealt with on a budget-by-budget-year basis, and we're not going to provide what those assumptions are at this time.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Well thanks for that. Do I get one more question?

A Member: — No.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Do I get one more?

The Chair: — Too bad. No, we've reached our allotted time. So having reached our allotted time for the consideration of these estimates, we will adjourn consideration of the estimates. And, Minister, would you like to have any closing comments?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — I guess just very briefly I would like to take the time to thank all of the officials that came with me tonight and helped answer some of the very detailed questions that were brought forward by Mr. Wotherspoon. And not just the ones that are here in the room, we've had people giving us information who have been watching. So thank you to all of you out there, to the committee for sitting here again, yeah. And obviously, Mr. Wotherspoon, thank you very much, and to Hansard for doing a great job.

The Chair: — Mr. Wotherspoon?

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks to you. But thanks to the minister and all of the officials that have joined us here tonight — all the leadership and service you provide throughout the year — and of course all those that are connected in this multi-faceted work across Saskatchewan in various ministries, those that are, you know, tuned in here tonight but all those that are involved in the important work of SaskBuilds. Thank you to you for your service and for your work.

The Chair: — Well thank you. And we will now just recess for a little bit here to do Bill 124.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

Bill No. 124 — *The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2022/Loi modificative de 2022 sur la réglementation des boissons alcoolisées et des jeux de hasard*

Clause 1

The Chair: — Well next on our agenda is the consideration of Bill No. 124, *The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2022*, a bilingual bill. We will begin with Clause 1, short title.

Minister Carr is here with her officials. As a reminder to officials, please state your name for the record before speaking for the first time, and please don't touch the microphones. The Hansard operator will turn your microphone on when you're speaking to the committee.

Minister, could you please introduce your officials and make your opening comments?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Yes, I can. I'd like to thank everybody for joining us here this evening. Tonight with me I have Susan Ross, SLGA president and CEO [chief executive officer]; Fiona Cribb, vice-president of regulatory services; and behind me we have Lynnette Skaalrud, the director of policy and legislation. And of course my chief of staff Sean Wilson is in the room with me also.

Before we get to the discussion, I would like to provide a quick update on the legislation we have here to discuss. As the regulator of liquor, gaming, and cannabis in the province, SLGA remains focused on ensuring it continues to modernize its regulatory framework to meet the changing expectations of the public and business.

We are also very much aware that beverage alcohol is a substance that can cause harm and that any changes need to be balanced with the concerns related to public safety. SLGA monitors feedback from stakeholders and regulatory changes in other jurisdictions to ensure Saskatchewan's regulatory framework is both current and appropriate for the opportunities in our province.

Overall the amendments to *The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Act, 1997* that were introduced in the Legislative Assembly last fall are focused on modernizing liquor regulations while also creating new opportunities for communities and businesses. Changes being considered, among others, include providing municipalities and park authorities with the discretion to designate outdoor public places such as parks for consumption of

beverage alcohol by individuals of legal drinking age; simplify the recorking provisions for permittees; allowing homemade beer, wine, and cider to be served at family events that are permitted with a special occasion permit including products manufactured at a u-brew or u-vin facility; and simplifying and adding efficiency to the liquor application process by removing the requirement that applicants publish their intention to obtain a liquor permit in local newspapers.

That's a quick snapshot of some of the amendments being considered by the committee. With that I will end my remarks and welcome any questions anyone may have.

The Chair: — I thank you for that, Minister. Mr. Teed, do you have any questions?

Mr. Teed: — Yes, I think I left all comments on the record during adjourned debates. I'm going to jump right into some questions. First question I had was around parks, and maybe just a little bit of clarification for myself. People consume alcohol in parks at private campsites. Does this legislation then allow parks to allow folks who are visiting the park to consume alcohol outside of their campsite? Is that how the parks situation comes into play?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay, so you are correct when you assume that within your personal campsite you can drink, but what this will allow the park to do is set designated areas for drinking. So I mean, I don't know that a park would actually designate the entire park as an area, but they would designate a specific area. And then that could be open for public consumption.

Mr. Teed: — Pavilions or a beach area.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Yeah.

Mr. Teed: — Okay. Sounds good. My next question is as far as municipalities that cross over with governing bodies like Wascana and the Meewasin Valley Authority. Do those two entities then just have to come to an agreement to designate areas, or is it more of a bylaw issue then for those?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So with regards to Meewasin and Wascana — who really are part of the cities, right — so there actually is a clause within the regulation that says:

If an outdoor public place under the responsibility of any entity mentioned in clauses . . . is located fully or partially within a municipality, the entity shall obtain the approval of the council of the municipality before passing a bylaw, resolution or order with respect to that outdoor public place pursuant to the subsection . . .

So they would have to work in co-operation with their municipality.

Mr. Teed: — Through kind of a bylaw process . . .

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Correct.

Mr. Teed: — With city council. Wonderful. I'm going to move on to around the section where it discusses permits or application for permits in areas where it might not have a current liquor

licence. Can you elaborate a bit on how communities or neighbourhoods will apply for those new permits? And have there been any communities that have reached out or any stakeholders engaged on that front?

Ms. Cribb: — Fiona Cribb. So the Act currently states that if there are no permitted premises in a municipality, then SLGA has to give notice to that municipality to make sure the municipality doesn't want to pass a formal bylaw to say that they don't want any liquor-permitted premises. But the way the Act is written, it doesn't capture manufacturing.

So the amendment is just to ensure that a new manufacturing facility being brought into one of those municipalities that doesn't have a liquor permit would also trigger SLGA notifying the municipality.

Mr. Teed: — Ah, okay.

Ms. Cribb: — So it's the current state, but adding the manufacturers. Manufacturers can have hospitality suites which are, you know, a bit like a tavern or a licensed restaurant. So given that they often have those service areas, it was thought that we should add them to the list of applications that could trigger that duty to consult with the municipality.

Mr. Teed: — Ah, okay. So for example, say Great West decided to jump into a small town in Saskatchewan, but the small town actually said, we're not really interested in having a set manufacturer or a liquor provider. Is that kind of . . .

Ms. Cribb: — Yes.

Mr. Teed: — So as far as . . . It doesn't really go to neighbourhoods or communities within municipalities. Those municipalities may already have been allocated their amount of liquor permits.

[21:00]

Like I'm just thinking in my own, you know, neighbourhood, when I lived in Riversdale, for example, or you know, downtown or Broadway, where maybe liquor establishments or retailers have moved out, this is more so for . . .

Ms. Cribb: — It's only where there is none, like literally none in the municipality.

Mr. Teed: — Okay. That makes sense.

Ms. Cribb: — That would trigger the municipality being able to pass a bylaw that says they don't want any. So anything else within the municipality is typically handled under their zoning. So where they would have taverns or allow restaurants or manufacturers, it would be handled under their zoning provisions.

Mr. Teed: — Okay, perfect. I'm going to jump into two more questions I had through some stakeholder engagement. A lot of folks don't — and this might maybe veer too far, and you can let me know if it does — a lot of folks, you know, don't have any place to legally consume cannabis. And we're talking about public consumption of alcohol. Is there any plans or efforts by

the ministry to include cannabis in public consumption down the road or with any amendments? I'm just thinking of folks who live in apartments; a lot of times they just have no legal area to consume.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Yeah, so at this current point in time obviously, you know, that cannabis consumption is not allowed in public places. And so we are not considering changing the current rules regarding public cannabis consumption at this point in time. Obviously we will watch the landscape across Canada and see what's happening in other jurisdictions, but at this time we're not considering it.

Mr. Teed: — Okay, thank you so much. Lastly, some feedback I received when I went to some stakeholders or from restaurants who had seen some success with off-salting of liquor during the pandemic, but then that policy was rescinded. Is there any opportunity down the road — and again, if I'm veering off the legislation too far — but are there any thoughts or policies being looked at that might allow restaurants to re-engage with that kind of off-sale, possibly in a recovery endeavour?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So things are different than when during the pandemic. And at this point in time, we still will allow them to have some off-sale with the purchase of food, just not alcohol itself.

Mr. Teed: — Wonderful. One last question. I'm going to sort of jump back to parks because I had made a note here. Have there been any conversations with the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport? Are they looking to adopt once this legislation is passed? Have there been recommendations made or conversations had about adopting the policies that are being put forth?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — I guess just with regards to that question, within the framework that we have here now, they could request or designate areas. It's not a conversation they've had with us yet.

Mr. Teed: — Okay, that makes sense. Thank you so much. I think that's all my questions for this evening.

The Chair: — Well thank you. Seeing no more questions, we'll proceed to vote on the clauses. Clause 1, short title, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

The Chair: — Give me time here because I've got to do it because it's a bilingual bill, so I've got to sign two. Anyway, clause 2, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Clauses 2 to 32 inclusive agreed to.]

The Chair: — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent

of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: *The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2022*, a bilingual bill.

I would ask a member to move that we report Bill No. 124, *The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2022*, a bilingual bill.

Mr. Steele: — Sure, I'll do that.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. This concludes our business for today. Minister, do you have any comments?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — No, I'd just like to thank everybody for coming: my support staff here for coming out tonight and helping me answer the questions, Mr. Teed for asking the questions, and the committee and Hansard. Thank you.

The Chair: — Mr. Teed, do you have any comments?

Mr. Teed: — I echo the minister's thanks to the committee and Hansard and all those who make it possible that we do this tonight.

The Chair: — Okay, well thank you very much, and thank everybody for being here tonight. And I'll now ask a member to move that this committee do now adjourn. Mr. Kaeding has moved. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. This committee stands adjourned until Wednesday, May the 3rd, 2023 at 3:30 p.m.

[The committee adjourned at 21:11.]