



STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN AND CENTRAL AGENCIES

Hansard Verbatim Report

No. 2 — December 9, 2024

**Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Todd Goudy
Speaker**



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

Thirtieth Legislature

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

STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN AND CENTRAL AGENCIES

Doug Steele, Chair
Cypress Hills

Erika Ritchie, Deputy Chair
Saskatoon Nutana

Chris Beaudry
Kelvington-Wadena

Terri Bromm
Carrot River Valley

Hon. Lori Carr
Estevan-Big Muddy

Don McBean
Saskatoon Chief Mistawasis

Jordan McPhail
Cumberland

[The committee met at 14:58.]

Chair Steele: — Okay. Okay, welcome. And we're going to introduce everyone here that's here today. I'm Doug Steele. I'm the Chair of the committee. Erika Ritchie is my Deputy Chair. Chris Beaudry is here. Terri Bromm. Lori Carr is here. And Nathaniel Teed is here at the table for Don McBean, and Mr. Warrington is here for Jordan McPhail. Okay.

Committee, all the estimates. Notwithstanding rule 148(1), the following 2024-25 supplementary estimates no. 2 were commended to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies on December 5th, 2024 by order of Assembly: vote 73, Corrections, Policing and Public Safety; vote 3, Justice and Attorney General; vote 27, Parks, Culture and Sport; vote 33, Public Service Commission; vote 13, SaskBuilds and Procurement. We will consider all of these supplementary estimates today.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — No. 1
Parks, Culture and Sport
Vote 27**

Subvotes (PC01), (PC12), and (PC18)

[15:00]

Chair Steele: — Parks, Culture and sport. We will start with considerations of supplementary estimates no. 1 for Parks, Culture and Sport. Minister Ross is here with her officials. I will remind our officials to identify themselves before they speak, not to touch your mikes. The Hansard operator will turn your mike on for you.

Minister Ross, please make your opening remarks and introduce your officials.

Hon. Alana Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to be here today to answer your questions related to the supplementary estimates for the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport. The officials joining me here in person today are behind me: Drew Lombard, my chief of staff; Greg Gettle, deputy minister to my right; Paul Johnson, assistant deputy minister to my left; Pam Herbert, executive director, strategic and corporate services behind me; and Jessica Jackson, director of corporate services also behind me. Thank you all for being here today.

The ministry requires supplementary appropriations for this fiscal year due to the negotiated salary increases with SGEU [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union] and the corresponding increases for out-of-scope employees. As you know, these are not costs that the ministry can control and will cause us to exceed our current budget allocation. These increases have resulted in an in-year salary pressure of \$5.212 million. Of that, 3.926 million is required to offset compensation increases for our Saskatchewan parks employees. The remaining 1.286 million is to fund compensation increases across our ministry's other divisions.

Now that the negotiated salary increases are known, the ministry has been able to calculate the full impact of the changes. The

calculations account for the estimated compensation costs to the end of the current fiscal year.

With that I will turn it over to the Chair. My officials and I would be happy to take any questions you may have. Thank you.

Chair Steele: — Are there any questions? MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] Warrington.

Darcy Warrington: — Thank you, Madam Minister. My first question: how much of an increase will the SGEU employees represented under this agreement see, and how much over the next four years cumulatively?

Greg Gettle: — Hi. I'm Greg Gettle, deputy minister for the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport. So we actually don't have a four-year projection. What we're here today is just to ask for the supplementary amount that we require for this fiscal year. So for this current fiscal year that we're in, from an in-scope employee standpoint, the appropriation we require is 4.211 million.

Darcy Warrington: — Okay. Next question?

Chair Steele: — Yeah, just continue.

Darcy Warrington: — And a second question to Madam Minister, Mr. Deputy Minister. When does the agreement with SGEU expire?

Hon. Alana Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The agreement starts October 1st, 2022 and ends September 30th, 2025.

Darcy Warrington: — Thank you. And, Madam Minister, how many employees will see an increase in pay because of this agreement being signed?

Greg Gettle: — So to answer that question, there are approximately 438.9, or 439, FTEs [full-time equivalent] that will receive the increase.

Darcy Warrington: — Great. Madam Minister, how many full-time, how many part-time, how many casual staff are represented under this agreement?

Greg Gettle: — So I apologize. We don't have a breakdown by full-time, part-time, and casual, but we do have a breakdown with us on out-of-scope and in-scope and then students. So for out-of-scope it would be 95, for in-scope it would be 264, and for students it would be 80.

Darcy Warrington: — All right. Madam Minister, that takes one of my questions away, which is good. What type of work do the employees in this ministry do?

Paul Johnson: — Paul Johnson, assistant deputy minister for parks division. In the ministry the majority of the employees are in parks division. Of course our labour force builds up in summertime when the parks are busy. And they do all types of work that you can imagine in the parks itself. Maintenance, there's a number of different types of maintenance staff. Some technical trades people we have on staff. We have a lot of

administrative staff, programming and interpretive staff in that FTE number. We have park enforcement staff, rangers, seasonal conservation officers, and we have other staff such as lifeguards, gate attendants as well.

So that gives a snapshot of the majority of the staff in the ministry. Of course there's professional staff as well that do some work on the policy. We have some staff that do some work on engineering requirements on our infrastructure pieces as well. So that gives a bit of an overview of the labour force in parks division.

Darcy Warrington: — And, Madam Minister, are staff under this agreement provided annual training as part of the agreement? If so, what type?

Paul Johnson: — So I'll stick with parks division. Again the majority of the employees in the ministry are parks division. So we provide a significant amount of occupational health and safety training, specifically safety training for our staff every year. Of course safety is the biggest concern for our employees out there when they're working particularly in natural environments or with machinery or equipment in parks. So we do provide a significant amount of training when we onboard our staff every year and when we bring back our labour service recallable staff as well.

Darcy Warrington: — And, Madam Minister, earlier it was suggested there's 95 out-of-scope employees, so they would be outside of SGEU. Is there any adjustments to the amount of money being provided for them through these supplemental estimates?

Greg Gettle: — Yes, there is. And there are increases for the out-of-scope employees. Of the 5.212 million that we're looking for, approximately \$1 million is for increases for out-of-scope employees. Those increases closely mirror the increases for the in-scope employees.

Darcy Warrington: — No further questions, Madam Minister. Thank you.

Chair Steele: — Well do you have any other questions? No. Okay. Seeing no more questions, we will proceed to vote. Minister, do you have any comments, closing comments?

[15:15]

Hon. Alana Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the committee for hearing our presentation today. I would also like to thank my officials for joining me here today and for the Legislative Assembly staff for their work here today.

Chair Steele: — Thank you. Any closing comments from . . .

Darcy Warrington: — I just want to thank Madam Minister and her staff for her guidance on all of this. Thanks for verifying the answers to all of our questions.

Chair Steele: — Okay. Okay, we'll proceed to vote here. Questions are done. Okay, vote 27, Parks, Culture and Sport. Central management and services, subvote (PC01) in the amount of 302,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Carried. We're rolling right along here. Parks, subvote (PC12) in the amount of 4,378,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Carried. Okay, resource stewardship, subvote (PC18) in the amount of 532,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Carried. Okay, Parks, Culture and Sport, vote 27 — 5,212,000.

So I will now ask the member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2025, the following sum for Parks, Culture and Sport in the amount of 5,212,000.

Hon. Lori Carr: — I so move.

Chair Steele: — MLA Carr. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Carried. Okay. We'll change officials. We'll let Parks, Minister Ross . . . Thank you so much for coming.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — No. 1
Public Service Commission
Vote 33**

Subvote (PS01), (PS03), (PS04), and (PS06)

Chair Steele: — Okay. We're going to move into Public Service Commission. We'll move on to supplementary estimates no. 1 for Public Service Commission. Minister Harrison, Meadow Lake, is here with his officials. I will remind our officials to identify themselves before they speak and not to touch the microphone. That microphone is pretty important; I can see that. That's why. The Hansard operator will turn them on for you when it's needed. Minister Harrison, please make your opening comments and introduce your officials.

Hon. Jeremy Harrison: — Sure. Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. Thanks to the committee. I'm here to provide additional information on supplementary estimates for the Public Service Commission or PSC. Before I start I'd like to take a moment to introduce officials here with me today. Greg Tuer, Chair of PSC; Pat Bokitch and Claudia Burke, assistant Chairs; Jarret Boon, executive director of corporate services.

PSC works as a central agency for government providing human resources services for executive government as well as some agencies, boards, and commissions. PSC ensures we have the right people with the right skills at the right time, delivering programs and services to the people of Saskatchewan. This includes providing services such as payroll and benefits, labour relations, organizational development, employee recruitment, retention and development, compensation and classification, as well as health and safety.

Currently there are more than 11,000 employees who work for the Government of Saskatchewan. These employees work in various roles all over the province with unique HR [human resources] challenges and needs, and it is PSC's role to support these employees and their managers.

On behalf of government, PSC negotiated a new three-year collective bargaining agreement with the Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union, SGEU, and Canadian Union of Public Employees, CUPE. The agreement is retroactive to 2022 and ends in the fall of 2025. Out-of-scope compensation was also adjusted in alignment with in-scope increases. In accordance with these new agreements, employee salaries have increased and retroactive pay is being processed this fiscal year.

PSC's budget is largely comprised of employee wages with the remainder tied to fixed operating costs. This means PSC does not have the flexibility to accommodate these unbudgeted increases within their existing budget, and so we are requesting additional funding for PSC to address these increased employee wages.

Thank you. And with that, I'd open the floor to any questions.

Chair Steele: — Any questions? Mr. Teed.

Nathaniel Teed: — Yes. Thank you so much. Minister Harrison, how much of an increase will employees represented under this agreement see, and how much over the next four years cumulatively?

Hon. Jeremy Harrison: — Yeah, no, thanks, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the question. So obviously the increase was three, three, and two over the term of the agreement — '22 is three, '23 is three, and '24 is 1.67 on the economic adjustment. A pension adjustment as well was included in there, so in the context of the general wage increase over three years is estimated at \$122.5 million.

Nathaniel Teed: — Thank you so much. And when does this agreement expire?

Hon. Jeremy Harrison: — In September. September 30th, 2025.

Nathaniel Teed: — Thank you so much. How many employees will see an increase in pay because of this agreement being signed?

Hon. Jeremy Harrison: — Right. With regard to PSC specifically it's right around 300. I think we are at 304 or . . . but it's, yeah, around 300.

Nathaniel Teed: — How many full-time, part-time, and casual staff are represented under this agreement?

Hon. Jeremy Harrison: — In total, included in the PSC allocation is the 300 FTE allocation, yeah.

Nathaniel Teed: — What type of work do the employees in this ministry do? You kind of went off the hop.

Hon. Jeremy Harrison: — I did, yeah. No, I appreciate that. But

largely I'm working on managing a number of the payroll and benefits issues, labour relations issues, organizational development, employee recruitment, retention development, kind of what generally you would expect of a very large HR organization.

Nathaniel Teed: — Thank you so much. You mentioned that the negotiations were with SGEU and CUPE. What employees are negotiating under CUPE and which employees are negotiating under SGEU?

Hon. Jeremy Harrison: — So actually I'll maybe ask Greg to speak to that. The vast majority are SGEU, but there's a CUPE element to it as well.

Greg Tuer: — There's a small bargaining unit of CUPE employees that are in the Ministry of Social Services and it's . . . I'll look to Pat but roughly 200 employees. The rest of our in-scope employees would be members of the SGEU.

Nathaniel Teed: — Are staff under this agreement provided any annual training as part of this agreement, and if so, what type of training is offered?

Pat Bokitch: — There's no change to training provisions as a result of the new collective bargaining agreements.

Nathaniel Teed: — Thank you so much. I have no further questions.

Chair Steele: — Seeing no more questions, we will proceed to a vote. Okay, we will vote 33, Public Service Commission. Okay. Central management and services, subvote (PS01) in the amount of 212,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Carried. Human resources consultation services, subvote (PS03) in the amount of 844,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Carried. Employee relations and strategic human services, subvote (PS04) in the amount of 836,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Agreed. Carried. Human resource service centre, subvote (PS06) in the amount of 1,314,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Carried. Public Service Commission, vote 33 — 3,206,000.

I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2025, the following sum for Public Service Commission in the amount of 3,206,000.

Hon. Lori Carr: — I so move.

Chair Steele: — MLA Carr. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Carried. I guess that concludes the business for . . . No? Oh, closing remarks. I'm getting ahead of myself. I'm moving around. Any closing remarks, Minister?

Hon. Jeremy Harrison: — None.

Chair Steele: — Okay, that will conclude our session for Public Service.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — No. 1
SaskBuilds and Procurement
Vote 13**

Subvotes (SP01), (SP02), (SP05), (SP11), and (SP14)

Chair Steele: — Okay, next is consideration of supplementary estimates no. 1 for SaskBuilds and Procurement. Minister Marit is here with his officials. I will remind officials to identify themselves before they speak and not to touch the microphones. The Hansard operator will turn them on when you need them.

Minister Marit, please, your opening remarks and introduce your officials.

Hon. David Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Before I begin I officially want to introduce my officials. My chief of staff, Sean Wilson, is sitting behind me. To my left is Rebecca Carter, the deputy minister of SaskBuilds, and to my right is Jill Zimmer, assistant deputy minister of corporate strategy and services.

The Ministry of SaskBuilds and Procurement has requested supplementary estimates due to salary pressures resulting from the collective bargaining agreement settlement and out-of-scope compensation plan. The salary pressures include retroactive pay for 3 per cent for '22 and '23 and 1.6 per cent for 2024 for in-scope staff and 3 per cent for 2023 and 2024 for out-of-scope staff.

As SaskBuilds and Procurement is a very large ministry, the cost that is associated with these settlements is substantial at 9.4 million. This caused the pressure that requires supplementary funding to manage in the current year. Going forward, these costs have been incorporated into SaskBuilds and Procurement's budget. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chair Steele: — Thank you, Minister. Any questions? I recognize MLA Ritchie.

Erika Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to start by asking the minister, how many employees will be affected by this new agreement?

Hon. David Marit: — All of them.

Erika Ritchie: — And how many would that be exactly, please?

Jill Zimmer: — Approximately 995 FTEs.

Erika Ritchie: — And I'm wondering if you could break that down for me in terms of in-scope and out-of-scope.

Jill Zimmer: — Yes. About 62 per cent of those are in scope and 37.8 per cent are out of scope. Sorry, I have to do the math quickly on that, but that's the breakdown.

[15:30]

Erika Ritchie: — Yes, I notice that in vote 13 it identifies supplementary amounts for central management and services, some property management, transportation and other services, information technology, and infrastructure and procurement. Could you provide me with a breakdown of how many employees would be receiving an increase in each of those areas?

Jill Zimmer: — I could. In (SP01), central management and services, 75 employees; (SP02), property management, 318; (SP05), transportation and other services, 113; information and technology, 318; and (SP14), infrastructure and procurement, 171.

Erika Ritchie: — And where would those employees reside?

Jill Zimmer: — Well, for the property management and transportation and other services subvotes, those employees are dispersed all over the province, and the remainder of them are mainly in Regina.

Erika Ritchie: — And I wonder if you could tell me what type of work these employees undertake.

Hon. David Marit: — Mr. Chair, is that relevant to the estimates?

Chair Steele: — Okay, what I'm being told is we want . . . allow a wide latitude, but we try to keep it back into connected with the relevancy of the question, so if we can connect it that way.

Hon. David Marit: — Repeat the question.

Erika Ritchie: — Sure, yeah. Happy to do that. What type of work do the employees in this ministry do?

Rebecca Carter: — Hi. Rebecca Carter, deputy minister, SaskBuilds and Procurement. Our employees are engaged in a variety of different functions. We have an information technology division which provides a central IT [information technology] service for government. We also have an infrastructure planning and priority function which provides advice on a long-term capital plan for government.

We have the infrastructure design and delivery arm of our ministry, which provides oversight of major capital infrastructure projects. We oversee the province's central vehicle agency, building management, and government property as well as realty services, mail telecommunications and records, and the provincial air ambulance.

Chair Steele: — I'd like to, if you could, please keep it relevant to the connected supplementary estimates.

Erika Ritchie: — And, Mr. Minister, are staff under this agreement provided with annual training as part of this agreement? And if so, what type?

Jill Zimmer: — Jill Zimmer again. They're provided training not necessarily specifically as part of the agreement, but just as part . . . We have many professionals that require training to keep their designations, and that training is provided, of course, by the ministry.

Erika Ritchie: — Thank you. I have no further questions, and I would just like to take this opportunity to thank the minister and his officials for being present here today to answer all of our questions. Thank you.

Chair Steele: — Thank you so much. Any closing comments, Minister? No comments. Okay, we'll move into voting.

Okay. Vote 13, SaskBuilds and Procurement, central management and services, subvote (SP01) in the amount of 752,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Carried. Okay. Property management, subvote (SP02) in the amount of 2.639 million, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Carried. Transportation and other services, subvote (SP05) in the amount of 993,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Information technology, subvote (SP11) in the amount of 2.967 million, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Carried. Okay. Infrastructure and procurement, subvote (SP14) in the amount of 2.020 million, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Carried. Okay. SaskBuilds and Procurement, vote 13 — 9,371,000.

I will now ask a member to vote the following resolution:

Resolution that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2025, the following sum for SaskBuilds and Procurement in the amount of 9,371,000.

Chris Beaudry: — I so move.

Chair Steele: — Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — No. 1**

**Justice and Attorney General
Vote 3**

Subvotes (JU01), (JU03), (JU04), and (JU08)

Chair Steele: — So before we continue, I'd like to acknowledge MLA Nicole Sarauer sitting in for Don McBean. Thank you.

Okay, we'll move into consideration of supplementary estimates no. 1 for Justice and Attorney General. Minister McLeod is here with his officials. I remind officials to identify themselves before they speak and not touch the microphones. The Hansard operator will turn them on when they're necessary.

Minister McLeod, please make your opening comments and introduce your officials, please.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the committee members. I'm pleased this afternoon to attend supplementary estimates to provide information regarding the additional funding required by the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

I'd like to take a moment to introduce the officials joining me here today. To my right, Kimberly Kratzig, deputy minister of Justice. To my left, Max Bilson, deputy attorney general. Seated behind me, Brad Gurash, assistant deputy minister, corporate services division; Rory Jensen, assistant deputy minister, courts and community justice division; and Cindy Froehlich, executive director, financial services.

Mr. Chair, the ministry requires additional funding of \$15.757 million in 2024-2025, primarily for collective bargaining agreement compensation for staff, and operating pressures in several programs.

The ministry requires \$10.817 million to centrally manage pressures related to settlement of the SGEU collective bargaining agreement — I'll refer to that as the CBA — and corresponding out-of-scope compensation.

The remaining \$4.94 million is for a variety of key program areas, including Saskatchewan Legal Aid Commission, Saskatchewan Coroners Service, and the King's Printer.

I would now be pleased to answer any questions the committee may have regarding these areas.

Chair Steele: — Any questions? MLA Sarauer.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Minister, for your opening comments. I'm going to start with a few questions around the ratification of the bargaining agreement and the corresponding increases that have resulted. Could you speak to what the percentage increase this is for employees within the CBA?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — That was regarding in-scope, did you say?

Nicole Sarauer: — Yes.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — So the annual wage increases were 3 per cent on October 9th, 2022; 3 per cent on October 8th, 2023; and 1.67 per cent on October 6th, 2024; plus an increase of 0.4 per cent to pensions for members who were not already at the 9 per cent.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. I understand this includes all of the in-scope employees. How many FTEs does this represent?

Kimberly Kratzig: — Good afternoon. I'm Kimberly Kratzig, deputy minister of Justice. The Ministry of Justice has 1,048 employees — not FTEs, but employees — who will benefit from the increase. 392 are out of scope and 656 are in scope. So about 37 per cent of our workforce are out-of-scope employees.

Nicole Sarauer: — Moving on to the corresponding out-of-scope compensation you spoke about, Minister, could you provide some more detail as to what that compensation looks like for those employees?

Kimberly Kratzig: — Thank you. For the out-of-scope economic adjustments, there's 3 per cent for April 1st, 2023; 3 per cent, April 1st, 2024. There's a 3.41 per cent class plan renewal adjustment for out-of-scope employees November 1st, 2024 and 1.67 per cent April 1st, 2025.

Nicole Sarauer: — And has both the in-scope and out-of-scope already seen the implementation of these increases?

Kimberly Kratzig: — Thank you. The in-scope retro payments were implemented in August of this year. Out-of-scope, it is expected in January of 2025. As well the in-scope class plan renewal that we've talked about, that has not been fully implemented but is in the process of being implemented.

Nicole Sarauer: — Do you have a projected timeline for the implementation of that?

Kimberly Kratzig: — We don't have that with us, no.

Nicole Sarauer: — I'm going to move on to the increases for Legal Aid that has been mentioned, Minister. It's stated in the estimates that there has been some increase due to the ratification of the collective bargaining agreement with CUPE. Could you provide some detail as to what that looks like?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thanks for the question. So with regard to the overall ask of 1.548 million, 1.424 million of that is increase in salary and benefits related to the CUPE signed collective bargaining agreement, including retroactive pay.

Nicole Sarauer: — What does that increase look like in terms of percentages for employees?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — With regard to the percentages, effective October 1st, 2022, 3 per cent; effective October 1st, 2023, 3 per cent; and effective October 1st, 2024, 2 per cent.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. And I'm assuming, based on the timelines, that those employees have already received the benefit of those increases. That's already been implemented.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — That's correct.

Nicole Sarauer: — Does this budgetary increase represent the entirety of Legal Aid's cost for this additional salary?

[15:45]

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thanks for the question. The answer is yes, the \$1.424 million does fully cost the retroactive salaries.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. Is Legal Aid currently operating at a deficit?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Currently the fiscal pressure on Legal Aid has them in a deficit position, which is why we're here today asking for supplemental funding. And the \$1.424 million is of course attributed to the salaries and benefits that were negotiated. But there's also \$124,000 that's an increase in private bar costs related to staff vacancies, and so those two numbers combined total the ask before the committee this afternoon.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. Just to clarify so that I'm clear, Minister, once this is approved and this money flows to Legal Aid, Legal Aid will no longer be operating at a deficit?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thanks for the question. Yeah, the intent would be to, with these funds, to put Legal Aid in a position where they're fully costed for this fiscal year, of course factoring in that there are some unforeseeables with staffing pressures and so forth that can't be known. But this is certainly based on our best estimate.

Nicole Sarauer: — You had mentioned that some of this money is to deal with pressures — I'm not putting words into your mouth — pressures at capacity that are requiring the use of private bar. Could you speak to those capacity pressures in a little more detail?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — So the use of the private bar is largely due to staff vacancies. However, since the funding increase, the salary increase, the staff vacancies went from where they were at . . . Pardon me. I'll start over.

Staff vacancies went from an all-time high of 18 per cent down to 3.5 per cent and appear to have stabilized around 6 per cent. The staff lawyer vacancy rate has dropped to 13.4 per cent from 36.5 per cent. Legal Aid services was able to recruit senior lawyers with experience to offset the retirement of key senior staff, and the average years of experience of lawyers who have joined since the increase has moved to 6.8 from 4.3 where it was prior to the increase.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you for that. Since you had mentioned that some of this money will go to address the need for use of the private bar, could you speak to how much that usage has been over the past budget cycle?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Just to clarify, you're asking for private bar usage within Legal Aid?

Nicole Sarauer: — Yes.

Kylie Head: — Hi. Just for the record, my name is Kylie Head, assistant deputy attorney general with the Ministry of Justice. So I don't have an exact dollar amount here for you today, but what

I can say is historically in recent years, 25 per cent of the files have been handled by private bar lawyers and 75 per cent have been handled by the staff lawyers. So that's higher than we traditionally would like to see. And the number has gone back down again with the good news story with the salaries increasing and with the positions that were hard to staff being filled.

Traditionally what the private bar lawyers are used for is conflict files that need to be farmed out or if we're unable to staff a position or if there's a lawyer who may be on, for example, a medical leave. And so we need somebody to pick up those files for perhaps a period of time that you wouldn't necessarily hire a replacement but they still need to be handled.

So I don't know what the current percentage is but historically it's been, in the last couple years, that sort of 75/25. And we're seeing a real drop according to the statistics that the minister provided.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you so much. I appreciate that. Being cognizant of the time, I'm going to move on to the piece around the coroner's office. It's mentioned in supplemental estimates that there's been operating pressures resulting from the increases in death investigations and inquests. Can you please provide some more detail?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thanks for the question. So I guess the first thing to recognize is that there's a backlog of death investigations coming out of COVID still that the coroner's office is catching up with. In 2024-2025 eight inquests have been held to date. Twelve inquests have been scheduled. That 20 inquests is a significant increase over the previous two fiscal years, but again largely due to a backlog that those inquests were restricted through COVID. Additionally 11 inquests are ready to be scheduled for 2025-26 and a further 23 investigations are still pending.

Nicole Sarauer: — It's also mentioned in supplemental estimates that not only was there an increase in inquests, but there's also an increase in death investigations. Can you provide some detail about that as well?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Yeah, I would just say that the number of investigations and inquests is increasing proportional to the increase in the population of the province of Saskatchewan. So as the province grows, the number of investigations and inquests is going to grow, and the data is that by and large that growth is happening at a proportional rate.

Nicole Sarauer: — It's not an increase statistically due to overdose deaths or suicides or anything like that?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Well the information that I have before me is that it's proportional. I think causation may be a different question altogether, but the number of inquests and investigations is proportional to the growth of the province.

Nicole Sarauer: — Are you able to provide to the committee some statistics on those deaths at this time?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — We don't have that data available today, but we can certainly endeavour to get that to the committee.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. Could you provide a timeline as to when you could provide that to the committee?

[16:00]

Hon. Tim McLeod: — That can be provided prior to the end of the calendar year.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. I appreciate that. My next question was going to be how many of those deaths were children. If you also don't have that available today, could you also commit to providing that to the committee in the same timeline?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Yes, we can.

Nicole Sarauer: — In the coroner's recommendations a few years back, he had recommended the creation of a child death review. Is there any plan from the ministry to implement that recommendation in the near future within this budget?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — I'm not sure that question falls in line with the supplemental estimates that are before the committee.

Chair Steele: — Can you tie it back to . . .

Nicole Sarauer: — Well I would have if . . . Unfortunately if we knew the statistics in terms of . . . The frustrating thing for me is, I don't have the statistics here at committee on what the increases are for the death investigations, like who is involved in those death investigations, who has passed away in Saskatchewan. It's not available at this time.

So one of my follow-up questions was about whether or not those . . . how many of those were children, and then a preventative question. Because of the increases in death, there is a monetary expenditure. But the question was on prevention, whether or not a child death review is in the works. I can save it for spring.

A Member: — Yes.

Nicole Sarauer: — Okay. I think I'm limited on time here, so I'm going to ask about the King's Printer, which I see there was a decreased revenue. The King's Printer Revolving Fund had a . . . No, sorry. There was decreased revenue from the *Gazette* within the King's Printer Revolving Fund. Can you provide some more detail on that?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — I can. Yeah. There's no longer a requirement for businesses to register in *The Saskatchewan Gazette*. That information is available free of charge through Information Services Corp, so that largely resulted in a decreased revenue for the *Gazette*.

Nicole Sarauer: — I suppose I was surprised that there was any original budgeted estimate for revenue from that. So could you speak as to what was originally targeted and why there's a decrease now.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — With regard to the *Gazette*?

Kimberly Kratzig: — The revenue in '24-25 was anticipated. It would have been about \$350,000. So this, the money that we're

asking for in supplementary estimates, will address that lost revenue. As well as the Publications Centre is transitioning to a new IT hosting service, so it's the cost of the IT transition as well for the Publications Centre.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. I have no further questions with respect to this ministry.

Chair Steele: — Seeing no further questions, we'll proceed to a vote. Closing remarks, Minister?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — No, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

Chair Steele: — Thank you so much. We'll move to a vote. Vote 3, Justice and Attorney General. Central management and services, subvote (JU01) in the amount of 1,611,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Carried. Courts and civil justice, subvote (JU03) in the amount of 3,338,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Carried. Legal and policy services, subvote (JU04) in the amount of 5,909,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Carried. Boards, commissions, and independent offices, subvote (JU08) in the amount of 4,899,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Carried. Justice and Attorney General, vote 3 — 15,757,000.

I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2025, the following sum for Justice and Attorney General in the amount of 15,757,000.

Terri Bromm: — I so move.

Chair Steele: — Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Carried. Okay, we'll move to the next group. Thank you.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — No. 1
Corrections, Policing and Public Safety
Vote 73**

Subvotes (CP06), (CP12), (CP13), and (CP15)

Chair Steele: — We'll get started. Corrections, Policing and Public Safety. We will start with the consideration of

supplementary estimates no. 1 for the Corrections, Policing and Public Safety.

Minister McLeod has his officials here. I will remind all officials to identify themselves before they speak and do not touch the microphones. The Hansard operator will turn them on when necessary. Minister McLeod, please make your opening remarks and introduce your officials, please.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thank you and good afternoon again, Mr. Chair and committee. I'm pleased to attend the committee today to provide information on the additional funding we're requesting for the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

Just take a moment to introduce the ministry officials joining us today. To my right, Denise Macza, deputy minister. To my left, Wanda Lamberti, assistant deputy minister of corporate services. We have seated behind us Nathaniel Day, executive advisor to the deputy minister; Scott Harron, assistant deputy minister, custody; Corey Zaharuk, assistant deputy minister of policing and community safety; Joshua Freistadt, assistant deputy minister, supervision and rehabilitation services; Jill Rowden, executive director of central services; and Ryan Clark, director of infrastructure and finance.

Mr. Chair, the ministry requires additional funding of \$97.165 million in 2024-25, of which 45.923 million is to support the operation of the province's correctional facilities. Our correctional facilities are facing salary pressures associated with the negotiated salary settlements as a result of the new collective bargaining agreement, and overtime requirements, as well as other operational pressures such as food services and offender provisions. The overexpenditure is attributed to an increasing offender population.

This supplementary funding request from the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency of \$35 million includes 1.3 million for the provincial disaster assistance program, 4.3 million for the negotiated salary settlements as a result of the new collective bargaining agreement, and the remaining portion of 29.4 million is for emergency and fire response.

The RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] requires additional funds of \$8.4 million, and this is due to costs related to the contractual obligations associated with the new RCMP collective bargaining agreement negotiated between Treasury Board of Canada and the National Police Federation.

Provincial protective services requires \$4.4 million due to salary pressures associated with the negotiated salary settlements and operating costs associated with the provincial public safety telecommunications network radio fees. Community corrections requires \$2.4 million due to salary pressures associated with the negotiated salary settlements.

Saskatchewan Police College requires \$516,000 due to operational and service delivery pressures related to increased demand and cost to deliver training as well as salary pressures, again associated with negotiated salary settlements. Finally \$365,000 is required to support the custody, supervision, and rehabilitation services program support due to realignment of funding between Corrections, Policing and Public Safety and the

Ministry of Justice and Attorney General, primarily due to legislative authority review that was not completed prior to the finalization of the '24-25 budget.

With that I will now be pleased to answer any questions the committee may have on these additional costs for the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety.

Chair Steele: — Thank you, Minister. Any questions? I recognize Ms. Sarauer.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Minister, for your opening comments. Let's first start with the CBA negotiations. Can you speak to what that percentage increase looked like for in-scope, and then the corresponding out-of-scope increase as well?

Denise Macza: — Hi. Denise Macza, deputy minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety. So the in-scope collective bargaining settlement is, the annual wage increase is 3 per cent on October 9th, 2022; 3 per cent on October 8th, 2023; 1.6 per cent on October 6, 2024, plus an increase of 0.4 per cent for pensions for members who are not already at 9 per cent.

The out-of-scope economic adjustments are, April 1st, 2023 is 3 per cent; April 1st, 2024 is 3 per cent; November 1st, 2024 is 3.4 per cent; April 1st, 2025 is 1.67 per cent.

Nicole Sarauer: — Have all employees now received both their retro pay and their increase moving forward?

Denise Macza: — The out-of-scope have not and are expected to get it in January.

Nicole Sarauer: — But in-scope have?

Denise Macza: — Yeah.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. I would also like to know the number of FTEs in scope and out of scope that are affected by this.

[16:15]

Denise Macza: — Hi, yes, Denise Macza, Deputy Minister of Corrections, Policing, Public Safety. So the most recent information we have in terms of the number of FTEs, about 200,900 in-scope and a little over 300 out-of-scope individuals are affected.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you for that. Let's talk a bit about the pressures within the correctional facilities that your ministry is experiencing right now. You had talked a little bit about increased inmate counts, and you also mentioned a corresponding resulting increase in overtime. Can you provide some more detail as to the increase in overtime that your ministry is experiencing within the correctional facilities?

Scott Harron: — Scott Harron, assistant deputy minister of custody services with Corrections, Policing and Public Safety.

So in two different types of overtime, there's kind of the contingency staffing overtime. It's things like one-on-ones,

hospital shifts, the contingency spaces as a result of the increased numbers — that's about \$27 million of the overtime. The remainder 6.6 I would bulk into kind of a generic overtime — covering off for people who are training, sick leave, that sort of thing.

There's also two things we're undertaking in order to alleviate overtime pressures. The first is staff recruitment. So last year we developed a talent recruitment team, and they've been pulling in some phenomenal numbers. I think we're probably the best placed in Canada when it comes to corrections officer recruitment. Of course if you don't have the vacancies, you have more staff; your overtime numbers decrease.

We have doubled the number of new recruits, more than doubled the number of new recruits we've brought in over the past year. A 70 per cent increase in the number of applications to those positions. A 300 per cent increase in the number of women we're bringing into corrections facilities, and a 50 per cent increase in the number of Indigenous candidates that we're bringing into the custody facilities as well. So not only is that helping us alleviate our overtime pressures, but it's quite literally changing the face of corrections. So it's something I'm particularly proud of.

The second thing we're doing is increasing our float pool staffing. We don't have enough time to get into the complexities around corrections staffing, other than to say the float pool is the group of people you bring in, anticipating things such as the need to send people for hospital visits; people covering off sick leave, vacation, that sort of thing.

By doing this we're converting essentially 150 FTEs to full-time positions, permanently staffing a number of these spots so that we don't have to call people on overtime. Not only will that help us control costs, it'll be easier to schedule. It's better for the employees because they're not being called off . . . to come in on their days constantly. It's also better for the new recruits, who previously used to have to wait for years for a permanent position but will now be able to get one much, much sooner.

So the combination of those two, we're hoping, will have a significant impact on our overtime.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you for that answer. And you anticipated quite a few of the subsequent questions I was going to have for you. I'm going to ask a few around the details that you have just provided though, if that's all right.

I was curious about how many current vacancies there are. And I'm very happy to hear about the recruitment efforts that you made, but where are you currently sitting in terms of vacancies?

Scott Harron: — Scott Harron, assistant deputy minister, custody services. We currently have 73 vacancies across the system. That's about a 3.8 per cent vacancy rate, which is a very healthy vacancy rate. We also just graduated 103 new recruits at the end of November, which isn't included in that vacancy rate, so they'll be able to fill a number of those. So quite, quite healthy.

Nicole Sarauer: — I was wondering if — and I'm sure you're watching this closely — are there any hot spots in terms of vacancies? Do you find that one facility has more vacancies than the other?

Scott Harron: — Scott Harron, assistant deputy minister, custody services. Not particularly. We've got a really good recruitment team that keeps track of where we may need people, and it hasn't been a problem.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you for that. What about sick leave, sick time? Do you have numbers in terms of the sick time impact?

Scott Harron: — Scott Harron, assistant deputy minister, custody services. Very consistent to last year. Sick leave is 117,897 hours; vacation hours is 142,893.

Nicole Sarauer: — Do you know what that averages per employee and how that compares to other roles within various ministries?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — We can certainly endeavour to get the breakdown on a per-employee basis. We don't have the comparative data to other ministries.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you, Minister. Can you provide a timeline as to when you can provide that information to the committee?

Hon. Tim McLeod: — That can be provided before the end of the month.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you so much. Similarly I was curious to know about WCB [Workers' Compensation Board] and OH & S [occupational health and safety] claims and that impact as well on employee absences. Do you have any of that information?

Scott Harron: — Scott Harron, assistant deputy minister, custody services. We currently have 19 employees who are on WCB. We have 1,915 FTEs. That's a very small percentage overall. We have 98 staff who are on some sort of leave, not enough to make a big dent in terms of our overall numbers.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you so much. Conscious of the time, I just have a couple more questions for you in custody services. But can you provide a point-in-time count — you usually have that available as well as percentages per facility — if possible as well, please?

Scott Harron: — Scott Harron, assistant deputy minister, custody services. Counting going down the list: Regina Correctional Centre today has 737; that's 94 per cent capacity. Saskatoon Correctional Centre has 623; that's 123 per cent capacity. And then of course we've got the new remand centre opening there shortly.

Prince Albert Correctional Centre has 624 at 126 per cent capacity. Pine Grove Correctional Centre has 208; that's 125 per cent capacity. Prince Albert Youth Residence has a unit that their secure unit was transitioned over to women that has 24 in there; that's 100 per cent capacity for that unit.

Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford has 76 individuals there at 79 per cent capacity. White Birch remand centre has 20 at 125 per cent capacity. Whitespruce Provincial Training Centre out in Yorkton has 33; that's 85 per cent. Besnard Lake Correctional Camp has 20, and that's 80 per cent capacity. And the impaired

driver treatment program has 16 at 53 per cent capacity.

That's the adults. I assume you want the youth as well? Youth, Kilburn Hall has 32 at 71 per cent utilization; Paul Dojack Youth Centre has 58 at 73 per cent; and Prince Albert Youth Residence has 8 at 57 per cent.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you for that. I appreciate that a lot. I have more questions I will save for the spring when we have a bit more time together. I'm going to move on and ask some questions around wildfires, please.

You have mentioned in your supplemental estimates, Minister, that there is an increase to the budget for SPSA [Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency] due to increased wildfire response activities. Could you provide some more information, please?

[16:30]

Marlo Pritchard: — Marlo Pritchard, president, Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency. It was a busy year. We had 593 wildfires, over 830 000 hectares burned this year. That is well above the five-year average of 393. And then in 2023 we had 483. So we've had back-to-back very busy years, which of course required us to put in a lot of resources, both type 1's, type 2's, and type 3 staff. We also requested assistance from other provinces in regards to both air assets and resources on the ground.

I'm not sure what else you need to elaborate, but it was really about a response season that started early. We did have a little bit of a break in June when we had extra moisture and then it went long. We just finally wrapped up some of the wildfires in late October, so it was a long season for us.

Nicole Sarauer: — How many years has it been now where we've seen above-average fire activity in Saskatchewan?

Marlo Pritchard: — I'm going to say the last three were above average. We did have a break in 2020 where we saw flooding, but the trend has continued over the last number, at least the last five years.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you. I know, and you've alluded to this, depending on the amount of fire activity, you bring in more staff. But you do have a core base of permanent staff. Can you provide some information as to those numbers, those individuals? And then the amount of people you had to bring in this time?

Marlo Pritchard: — Marlo Pritchard, president, SPSA. We have 457 FTEs that's our core of individuals. We bring on labour service type 2s as well during the season depending on the seasonal response. And then we also have access to community-trained individuals, type 3s. Again, those are as needed.

Anticipating one of your other questions, our out-of-scope are 78.7 and in-scope are 378. We typically, you know, over the long term have staff broken into teams in different regions. We have 13 different bases for different regions and we move resources around the province depending on the severity of the area. And so that is our base FTE count.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you for that. Can you explain to the

committee how information is provided from the SPSA to residents of an area that may be about to be under the effect of a fire fire? Of a fire, sorry, not sure why I said it twice.

Marlo Pritchard: — It starts with our local regional offices with our protection officers and our ESOs [emergency services officer] that are in contact with those communities or individuals that are in those communities. That is our first point of contact. And that information is on our website.

As the season ramps up — I'll use that term — we do utilize our website for information and we also use social media, but it always goes back to our ESOs who, if there is an area that is being threatened, they will go into that area and meet with leadership, community leaders, individuals. So it's really around that connection with that community.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you for that answer. I have no further questions at this time. But before I cede my microphone I do want to take the opportunity to say thank you to you, Minister, for your thoughtful answers to my questions as well as to all of your officials for answering my questions this afternoon, the questions of the committee, as well as all of the work you do each and every day in your very important roles. Please, Minister, pass along my thank you to your Justice officials as well, please.

Chair Steele: — Thank you so much. Seeing no more questions, we'll move to vote. I'll ask the minister for any closing remarks.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would just echo the thanks to my officials but also to yourself and to the committee as well as the Legislative Assembly staff and Hansard for your patience and for your thoughtful questions. Thank you.

Chair Steele: — Thank you. Okay, we'll move into a vote. Vote 73, Corrections, Policing and Public Safety, Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency, subvote (CP06) in the amount of 35,000,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Agreed. Carried. Saskatchewan Police Commission, subvote (CP12) in the amount of 516,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Carried. Okay. Custody, supervision, and rehabilitation services, subvote (CP13) in the amount of 48,000,771. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Policing and community safety services, subvote (CP15) in the amount of 12,878,000. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Carried. Corrections, Policing and Public Safety, vote 73 — 97,165,000.

I will now ask for a member to vote the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2025, the following sum for Corrections, Policing and Public Safety in the amount of 97,165,000.

Is that agreed?

Hon. Lori Carr: — I'll so move.

Chair Steele: — MLA Carr. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Carried.

Okay committee members you have before you a draft of the first report of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central for the thirtieth legislature. We require a member to move the following motion:

That the first report of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies for the thirtieth legislature be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

I recognize MLA Carr.

Hon. Lori Carr: — I move:

That the first report of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies for the thirtieth legislature be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

Chair Steele: — Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Carried. That concludes our business for the day. I would ask the member to move a motion of adjournment.

Hon. Lori Carr: — I so move we adjourn.

Chair Steele: — MLA Carr has moved for adjournment. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Steele: — Carried. The committee stands adjourned to the call of the Chair. Thanks for your patience.

[The committee adjourned at 16:41.]